<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Title of the Problem</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Objectives of the Study</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Assumptions of the Study</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Hypotheses of the Study</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Scope of the Study</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8.1</td>
<td>Construction of Tools</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Locale of the Study</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>Sample of the Study</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>Scoring</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>Statistical Techniques used in the Study</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>Findings and Conclusions</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>Implications of the Study</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>Suggestions for Further Research</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1 Introduction

Any educational system is successful if it meets the diversified needs of heterogeneous group of children. All individuals are unique and 'special' with their strengths and weaknesses. The field of special education encompasses heterogeneous groups who demand varied services: visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally retarded, orthopaedically handicapped, children with behaviour disorders, gifted or talented and finally the learning disabled or children with learning difficulties. Special education is meant to provide specially designed instructional programme to compensate / overcome the disabilities in students. Learning disability is the most recent classification to be included as a category of disability but still educators remain unsure about the nature of its category. Kirk (1963) coined the term 'learning disability' who used it to describe a group of children with specific learning deficits. He stated that a learning disability refers to a retardation, disorder, or delayed development in one or more processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing or arithmetic. Ramaa (1992) explains 'general learning disability' as inadequacy or limited ability in learning a wide variety of tasks involving different levels of intellectual functioning. The term specific learning disability is for disabilities observed only in certain areas of learning - reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic disability etc.

Dorothy Smith (1996) states that children with specific difficulties are those who, in the absence of sensory defect or overt 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 (Tansley and Panckhurst, 1981). The term learning disabilities is called learning difficulties in European countries. In America,
the term learning disabilities is widely used in the place of learning difficulties. In India, usage of the term learning disability is more frequent for learning difficulties due to the exposure to American literature. In this study, learning disabilities are referred to as learning difficulties.

In 1969, The National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children (NACHC) developed an acceptable definition under Kirk's leadership.

'Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the 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 do not include learning problems which are primarily due to visual, hearing or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance or environmental disadvantage (USOE, 1968, P. 34)'.

In 1981, the National Joint Committee on Learning disabilities 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 presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Eventhough 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 et al., 1981)'.

Learning difficulties are classified into various types to facilitate the identification of area in which children are facing difficulty. They are:

1. Oral language difficulties
2. Reading difficulties
3. Writing difficulties and
4. Arithmetic difficulties.
The following are the sub-set of the above said difficulties. Dysphasia and Aphasia are oral language difficulties. Dyslexia and Alexia belong to reading difficulties. Difficulty in writing are referred to as dysgraphia and agraphia. Dyscalculia and Acalculia are the two arithmetic difficulties.

Learning difficulties are caused due to acquired trauma, genetic / hereditary influences, environmental influences and bio-chemical abnormalities. Characteristics exhibited by the children with learning difficulties based on the frequency of occurrence have been identified as widely prevalent in individuals with learning disability (Clements, 1966). They are:

1. Hyper activity
2. Perceptual impairment
3. Emotional instability
4. General co-ordination deficits
5. Disorder of attention
6. Impulsivity
7. Disorder of memory and thinking
8. Specific learning disability in the areas of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic
9. Disorders of speech and language
10. Equivocal neurological signs and electro encephalographic irregularities.

The right type of teacher with right type of knowledge and skills or competencies can do better justice to the children with learning difficulties than teachers with general pedagogy backgrounds. Teachers who are most successful with special needs students are those who realise that all students are special, that they have both strengths and weaknesses and that their individuality is to be valued. A teacher has to play the activities related to planning, teaching, guidance & counseling roles.

To perform these activities, the teacher requires specific competencies in the major competency areas such as - knowledge about the nature of learning difficulties, causes and characteristics of learning difficulties, identification and assessment of learning difficulties, development and use of instructional strategies, utilisation of instructional materials and guidance & counseling to the children with learning
difficulties and their parents. Only such competent teachers facilitate the way for better inclusive education in ordinary schools. As a first step, one should list out the specific competencies required by the teachers to tackle learning difficulties in children. The listing out of these competencies pave the way for identifying the existing or possessed competencies and required competencies of primary school teachers. Such an activity has an immense use for organising specific need based training programmes for both pre-service and in-service. The present study is an attempt in this direction.

6.2 Title of the Problem
“Competencies Required for Primary School Teachers to handle Learning difficulties in Children”.

6.3 Objectives of the Study
The following objectives have been framed for the present study:

1. To develop a rating scale to assess the possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children,

2. To develop a questionnaire to identify the required competencies for the primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children,

3. To find out the significant differences if any, in the possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children due to variation in their gender, age, community, educational qualification, type of training received, years of experience, type of school they are working and location of school,

4. To find out the significant differences if any, in the required competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children due to variation in their gender, age, community, educational qualification, type of training received, years of experience, type of school they are working and location of school.

6.4 Assumptions of the Study
1. It is possible to list out the specific competencies required for primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children.
2. It is possible to develop a rating scale to measure the possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children.

3. It is possible to develop a questionnaire to find out the required competencies for primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children.

4. The possessed and required competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children may vary.

6.5 Hypotheses of the Study

1. There exists significant difference in the possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children due to variation in their gender, age, community, educational qualification, type of training received, years of experience, type of school they are working and location of school.

2. There exists significant difference in the required competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children due to variation in their gender, age, community, educational qualification, type of training received, year of experience, type of school they are working and location of school.

6.6 Scope of the Study

In India, the field of special education is still in its infancy stage. Here, and there, there are schools for integrated education and separate schools for special children. The existing schools are not fully equipped in terms of human as well as material resources to meet the diversified needs of special children. This is more true with regard to the children with special needs (learning difficulties) in normal schools. Identification and assessment procedures of children with learning difficulties are of paramount importance in educational system particularly at primary stage. Teaching and training strategies, guidance & counseling activities should be planned based on the assessed needs of these children.

In fact, the teacher plays a vital role in the identification and assessment, teaching and training and guidance & counseling activities. In this context, he / she has to perform various roles in complex situations. In other sense, the complexity of roles to be performed by the teacher demands specific competencies to handle learning difficulties in children.

The prime focus of the study is to list out the competencies required for primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children. The study also
aimed at development of a rating scale to assess the possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children. It also aimed at development of a questionnaire to identify required competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children. It also focuses its attention to find out the effect of the variables such as gender, age, community, educational qualification, type of training received, years of experience, type of school they are working in and location of school on the possessed competencies and required competencies of primary school teachers.

6.7 Need for the Study

Successful provision for children with learning difficulties require a whole school approach in which teachers play a major role. The teacher should have a thorough understanding of the nature of learning difficulties and the process of diagnosis of academic and non-academic problems emanating from them. Teacher has the responsibility for overall curricular experiences of children with learning difficulties in their classes. To accomplish this task effectively, there arises a need to develop certain competencies in teachers. At this juncture, it is essential to spell out the specific competencies for a teacher to be effective in handling learning difficulties in children. The exhaustive list of specific competencies required for primary school teachers in each of the major competency areas such as - nature of learning difficulties, causes and characteristics of learning difficulties, identification and assessment of learning difficulties, development and use of instructional strategies, utilisation and use of instructional materials, media and devices and guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents is very important. Such an exhaustive list helps to identify, to what extent the teachers possess each competency and require that particular competency.

problems faced by the teachers in dealing children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental retardation, and orthopaedically handicapped.

On the other hand, in foreign context, Lerner (1993), Baiden (1984) and Catherine, V. Morsink (1983) have reported incidence and prevalence of learning difficulties. Affleck et al. (1988) compared achievement of learning difficulty children in integrated and resource room programme. Redden and Blackhurst (1978), Reynolds et al. (1980), and Gold Hammer, Rader and Reuschlein (1977) have identified competencies required for the teachers in the area of mainstreaming. Hudson et al. (1987) examined the literature relating to areas of competency for teachers of students with learning difficulties. Nierstheimer and Susan, L. Hodges (1996) attempted to understand the pre-service teachers’ belief about children experiencing difficulty in learning to read. Smith Sally (1993) presented answers to common questions on meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities.

Both in Indian and foreign contexts, studies are concentrated only on learning difficulties and remedial instructions. Review of the related literature clearly indicates that limited number of studies have been conducted in India on teacher competencies in the area of learning difficulties. Studies which concentrate on the listing out of specific competencies needed for normal primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children facilitate inclusive education in general classrooms. Such studies help to assess the possessed competencies and identify the required competencies of normal school teachers which paves way for organising better pre-service and in-service training programmes. Further, studies which explore the effect of independent variables on the teachers’ existing and required competencies help to understand which category of teachers require special orientation training or awareness so as to make them competent to handle learning difficulties in children. The present study is an attempt in this direction.

6.8 Methodology

Survey method is used in this study. The methodology followed in the study are construction of tools, sample design, collection of data, scoring procedure and statistical techniques employed in the analysis of data.
6.8.1 Construction of Tools

To study the possessed and required competencies of primary school teachers, the investigator developed a 3 point rating scale and a questionnaire with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ type respectively.

There were 100 competency statements / aspects in the rating scale and in the questionnaire. In rating scale, against each competency statement 3 ratings were given namely - 'competency to a greater extent', 'competency to certain extent' and 'no competency' having scores 3, 2 and 1 are given respectively.

To find out the required competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children a questionnaire with 'yes' or 'no' type is developed. The same competency statements, which are asked for assessing the possessed competencies of primary school teachers are used in the questionnaire to find out their required competency. The competency statements are grouped under six major headings as it is in the rating scale. Against each competency statement 'yes' or 'no' has been given. The teachers are asked to say 'yes' if they need competency on that competency statement and say 'no' if they do not require competency on that particular competency statement. The scoring for 'yes' is 'one' and for 'no' is 'zero'.

The face validity, content validity and intrinsic validity of the tools have been established. Similarly, reliability of the tools have been established by using split-half method. The detailed procedure adopted in the construction of tools, their validity and reliability have been explained in chapter - IV.

6.9 Locale of the Study

Tamil Nadu is in the southern part of India surrounded by Bay of Bengal in the East, by Kerala in the West, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the North and by the Indian Ocean in the South. There are nineteen revenue districts in Tamil Nadu state. Tamil Nadu has seventy-six educational districts for the purpose of effective educational administration. Madurai Revenue district is selected as the study area.

6.10 Sample of the Study

The area of the study is Madurai district of Tamil Nadu state. Madurai district consists of 3 educational districts - Madurai, Melur and Usilampatti which comprises 13 panchayat unions. In most of these panchayat unions different types of schools such as government schools and government aided schools are functioning both in
urban and rural areas. Here and there unaided schools are also functioning in a very limited number.

For the purpose of the study, the investigator selected seven panchayat unions randomly from the thirteen panchayat unions of Madurai district. The panchayat unions selected are Melur, T. Kallupatti, Kalligudi, Thirumangalam, Thirupparankundram, Madurai East and Madurai West. In all these panchayats, government schools and government aided schools are functioning. There are 577 primary schools in these seven panchayats and there are 3167 teachers working in these schools.

The researcher selected 15% (86) of the primary schools from the 577 schools functioning in the seven unions. These 15% of the schools are selected by using simple random sampling technique. The teachers working in these 15% of the primary schools (530) form the sample of the study.

The characteristics of the selected sample are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Variable</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30 years</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 years</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50 years</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60 years</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward Community - FC</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Community -BC</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Backward Community – MBC</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule Caste / Schedule Tribes-SC/ST</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
d) **Educational Qualifications**

Secondary Grade - 383  
Secondary Grade with Graduation - 88  
Graduate with B. Ed. - 33  
Post Graduate with B. Ed. - 13  
Post Graduate with M. Ed. - 13

e) **Type of Training Received**

Orientation Training in Learning difficulties - 11  
Other Training (like SOFT, MELT, MLL and Joyful Learning etc.) - 519

f) **Years of Experience**

1 - 5 years - 164  
6 - 10 years - 117  
11 - 15 years - 101  
16 - 20 years - 40  
21 and above - 108

g) **Type of School Working**

Government Schools - 268  
Government Aided Schools - 262

h) **Location of School**

i) Rural - 327  
ii) Urban - 203

6.11 **Data Collection**

After selecting sample for the study, the investigator personally visited the schools and a good rapport has been established before administering the tools. Competency Assessment Rating Scale and a Questionnaire to Assess the Required Competencies with 'Yes' or 'No' type along with personal data sheet were given to the primary school teachers. They were explained about the purpose of the study. It was emphasised that the data will be confidential and the teachers were directed not to leave any item without rating. No time limit to respond to the rating scale and
questionnaire was fixed. The investigator collected the filled up rating scale and questionnaire personally.

6.12 Scoring

For purposes of statistical analysis, the collected data should be quantified. In order to facilitate quantification, the following scoring procedure was adopted:

The Competency Assessment Rating Scale and Questionnaire to assess the Required Competencies were supplied to the primary school teachers personally and they were requested to give responses on them. To quantify the responses a uniform scoring procedure has been followed. Against each item three responses have been provided in the Competency Assessment Rating Scale. The scoring for each competency statement was 3, 2 and 1 for 'competency to greater extent', 'competency to certain extent' and 'no competency' respectively. Likewise, to assess the required competency through the questionnaire, for each competency statement 'one' mark is given for 'yes' scoring and 'zero' for 'no' scoring.

6.13 Statistical Techniques used in the Study

The obtained data have been analysed by using appropriate statistical techniques. To find out the possessed competencies of primary school teachers, mean and standard deviations have been computed. By using mean ± ½ SD, the possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties have been divided into three groups - low, moderate and high competency. To find out the required competencies of primary school teachers, the number of teachers requiring and not requiring each competency and the corresponding percentage were computed for each competency statement.

To study the effects of gender, age, community, educational qualification, training, years of experience, type of school and location of the school on the possessed and required competencies of primary school teachers, mean and standard deviation have been calculated. Based on mean and standard deviation, t-test and F-test have been worked out. Whenever two groups are involved in a variable, t-test has been used to know the significant differences between these groups. When more than two groups are involved in a variable, F-test has been worked out to know the significant differences among these groups. When F-test indicates significant differences, then t-test is employed to know between which of the two groups the significant difference lies.
6.14 Findings and Conclusions

Part-I: Descriptive Analysis of the Possessed and Required Competencies of Primary School Teachers to handle Learning difficulties in Children

1. The term learning difficulties has its origin only in 1960s and in India the concept is new and it is an emerging field. The concept and history of learning difficulties have not been incorporated in the teacher training programmes. This may be the reason why the teachers possess low level of competency (mean value: 2.18) in the aspect 'knowledge about the history of learning difficulties' (S. No. 5). The knowledge on this aspect enables the teacher to have a clear picture about brain dysfunction, assessment, treatment methods and teaching techniques. 70% of teachers have felt the need for enrichment, but the remaining 30% of teachers have not felt the need. This may be due to their poor awareness about the concept and nature of learning difficulties. At this point the teacher training programmes should incorporate the history of learning difficulties in pre-service and in-service training programmes and help them to have a clear idea about the concept and nature of learning difficulties.

Moderate level of competency has been found in competency statements S. No. 2, 3, 6, 10, 11 and 12. Even though the field of learning difficulties is a new one, teachers have moderate level of competency about the developmental delay (S. No. 2), relationship between developmental delay and learning difficulties (S. No. 3), understanding the term specific learning difficulty and general learning difficulty (S. No. 6), understanding the concept of arithmetic difficulties (S. No. 10), organisational difficulties (S. No. 11) and language difficulties (S. No. 12) (mean values: 2.23, 2.22, 2.37, 2.35, 2.32 and 2.32 respectively). This moderate level of competency may be due to the superficial knowledge on the above aspects. Realising their limited knowledge, more than 65% of teachers have expressed their readiness to have indepth knowledge in these aspects. To promote this indepth knowledge NCERT, NCTE, SCERT, DIET and other educational bodies can incorporate these aspects in their pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes.

Teachers are highly competent with regard to the competency statements S. No. 1, 4, 7, 8 and 9 (mean values: 2.42, 2.46, 2.69, 2.67 and 2.53 respectively). Knowledge about stages of child development (S. No. 1), differentiating the terms impairment, disability and handicap (S. No. 4), understanding the term reading difficulties (S. No. 7), writing difficulties (S. No. 8) and spelling difficulties are common
competency aspects that every teacher should possess. This high level of competency has been exhibited by the primary school teachers because this reading, writing and spelling difficulties are very common in any Indian classroom situation and generally they are labelled as slow learners. Even then, more than 45% of teachers have expressed their willingness to upgrade their competency level. Hence, while organising pre-service and in-service training programmes, priority should be given to the low level competency aspects followed by moderate and high levels (refer table-1).

2. The primary school teachers have evinced low level of competency on the aspects such as: knowledge about hereditary and environmental influences (S. No. 13), prenatal (S. No. 14), perinatal (S. No. 15), postnatal problems (S. No. 16), encephalitis, meningitis, head trauma (S. No. 17), biochemical imbalances (S. No. 18), sensory - motor & perceptual problems (S. No. 19), causes of hypo and hyperactivity and its effect on learning (S. No. 20), accidents and head injuries at early stage and learning difficulties in later life (S. No. 21), characteristics of children with sensori motor perceptual problems (S.No. 28), cognitive deficits (S. No. 29) and meta cognitive deficits and its impact on learning (S. No. 30) - mean values: 2.14, 1.81, 1.77, 1.88, 1.92, 1.76, 1.98, 2.19, 2.16, 2.06, 2.09 and 2.12 respectively. As the term learning difficulty is not known to many teachers they don't know the problems that cause learning difficulties. Many teachers are new to the concept learning difficulties and they think that the children are facing difficulty in learning because of their low intelligence level and some times curse by the God and fate. This wrong conception may be the reason for low level of competency in the above said aspects. More than 65% of teachers have realised their competency level and expressed their willingness to enrich their competency. At this juncture, it is the duty of the training personnel to wipe out the wrong beliefs that may lead to learning difficulties. Causes and characteristics of learning difficulties in children should be incorporated in the training programme curricula.

Primary school teachers are moderately competent with regard to the aspects - causes of language difficulties (S. No. 22), characteristics of reading difficulties (S. No. 23) writing difficulties (S. No. 24), spelling difficulties (S. No. 25), language difficulties (S. No. 26) and hypo and hyperactive children (S. No. 27) (mean values: 2.30, 2.36, 2.38, 2.38, 2.28 and 2.20 respectively). This moderate level of competency may be due to the superficial knowledge in this aspects. Here too, more
than 65% of primary school teachers have expressed that they wanted to enrich their competency in these aspects.

The NCERT, NCTE, SCERT and DIET should include these aspects in the teacher training programmes. Pre-service and in-service programmes should incorporate the causes and characteristics of children with learning difficulties which in turn will facilitate identification and intervention (refer table - 2).

3. Identification and assessment is a multidimensional process which helps to decide placement services and specific intervention programmes. Teacher is the right person to adjudge the learning difficulties in children. In this study, low level of competency (mean values: 1.92, 1.94, 2.11, 2.16 and 2.14 respectively) has been observed in S. No. 35, 36, 37, 39 and 42 competency statements by the primary school teachers. The components such as informal, formal assessment and administration of standardised assessment tests, informal evaluation for instructional planning, identification and assessment of motor problems are nowhere in the teacher training programmes. This may be the reason why the primary school teachers have exhibited low level of competency on these aspects. Realising their competency level majority of primary school teachers are willing to enhance their competency on the above said aspects. As the field is gaining momentum and more number of standardised tests are of foreign origin, the teachers should be trained to use informal and formal assessment procedures, observation and achievement of the children. This training should be provided for both pre-service and in-service teachers through refreshers course, orientation programmes and workshops.

But the remaining less than 24% of teachers are not sensitised about the importance of identification and assessment of learning difficulties in children. For these teachers sensitisation programmes should be conducted to realise the importance of competencies to identify and assess the learning difficulties in children.

Moderate level competency has been demonstrated by the primary school teachers in the competency statements: skills in identifying children with organisational difficulties (S. No. 33), knowledge in identification of language difficulties (S. No. 34), developing teacher made tests to identify and assess learning difficulties in children (S. No. 38), identifying and assessing the auditory perceptual problems (S. No. 40), identifying and assessing visual perceptual problems (S. No. 41), skill in identifying and assessing co-ordination problems (S. No. 43) and
identification and assessment of social skills (S. No. 45) (mean values: 2.29, 2.23, 2.36, 2.31, 2.26, 2.22 and 2.32 respectively). These teachers have exhibited moderate level of competency because they might have had superficial knowledge during their training programmes. Even though, they possess moderate level of competency on these aspects, more than 65% of primary school teachers have felt the need to enrich these competencies. At this juncture, indepth knowledge should be provided through training programmes by conducting seminars and pre-service and in-service courses etc., whereas the remaining teachers (less than 35%) have not opted for enrichment. For such teachers orientation programmes should be conducted to promote interest to know more about the identification and assessment.

Primary school teachers' competency is high in identifying reading, writing and spelling difficulties (S. No. 31), knowledge in differentiating children with reading, writing and spelling difficulties from normal children (S. No. 32), skill in identifying and assessing listening problems and learning difficulties in children (S. No. 44), and skill in observing pencil grasping, copying shapes, vocabulary, recalling, immediate learning etc. (S. No. 46) (mean values: 2.46, 2.43, 2.51 and 2.40 respectively). Even then, out of 530 teachers more than 60% of teachers wanted to enrich their competencies. But, the remaining teachers less than 40% do not want enrichment.

The NCERT, NCETE, SCERT and DIET should concentrate on including these competency aspects in the pre-service and in-service programmes. To maintain the quality of education and arrest wastage and stagnation the concept of learning difficulties should be incorporated in the training programme particularly for primary school teachers (refer table - 3).

4. Primary school teachers have evinced low level of competency in: structuring individualised education programme based on child's current performance and ability of the child (S. No. 48) and in providing individualised instruction with good communication skills (S. No. 49) (mean values: 2.13 and 2.08 respectively). The reason may be the lack of correct conception of learning difficulties and low ability in identification and assessment leads to low competency in these aspects. Realising their level, most of the teachers (73% and 77%) have an inclination towards enrichment whereas 27% and 23% of teachers do not opt for enriching their knowledge. This type of negative response may be due to their non-sensitisation of the concept. To promote high level of competency the sensitisation programme and
other pre-service and in-service and orientation programmes should be conducted for
the teachers.

Moderate level of competency has been exhibited by the primary school
teachers in the competency statements: ‘providing appropriate placement services
according to the nature and extent of learning difficulties in children (S. No. 47),
setting short-term and long term objectives and goals (S. No. 50) the conditions under
which children with learning difficulties are most likely to learn and applying that
knowledge (S. No. 52), working with professional colleagues, parents and support
services in planning programmes of work and in development of curriculum (S. No.
54), altering the type and amount of instruction (S. No. 57), encouraging the child to
make judgements or choices on the basis of evidence rather than by guessing (S. No.
67), promoting higher order thinking of through questions that encourage application,
analysis and evaluation (S. No. 69), involving students in setting instructional goal and
discussing performance of task (S. No. 70), showing student how to
compensate for learning problems by making lists, rehearsing steps in completing
task, organising thoughts, using mnemonics, cues etc (S. No. 71), and teaching
students how to ‘shut out’ interfering sights and sounds, cope with distraction (S. No.
72) (mean values: 2.29, 2.28, 2.39, 2.28, 2.36, 2.39, 2.26, 2.21 and 2.33
respectively). This moderate level of competency has been exhibited due to the lack
of knowledge about learning difficulties in children. Inspite of their experience they
possess moderate level of competency in teaching children with learning difficulties.
If they are provided training about the nature of learning difficulties, the ways and
means to deal with learning difficulties in children certainly they will possess high level
of competency. Realising their level of competency, more than 60% of teachers have
felt the need to enrich their competencies in the above said competency statements.
Teacher training programmes should incorporate the above aspects in pre-service
and in-service training. On the other hand, the teachers who do not have any
inclination towards enrichment should be given awareness generating programmes
and motivation to develop competency on the above aspects.

The primary school teachers possess high level of competency in : choosing
appropriate instruction timings with proper duration keeping the nature and extent
of learning difficulties in children (S. No. 51), sequencing instruction by task analysis
method (S. No. 53), using creative techniques in teaching new materials in ways that
reduce boredom (S. No. 55), developing and using multi-sensory approach to
overcome learning difficulties in children (S.No. 56), providing step-by-step demonstration involved in learning new information or applying strategies (S. No. 58), reviewing prior lesson for student understanding and assessing the knowledge acquired and re-teaching if necessary (S. No. 59), linking current lesson to previous lesson activities, strategies or content (S. No. 60), describing situations in which the learnt information or strategy is useful (S. No. 61), relating subject matter and content to the real life situations for better learning (S. No. 62), structuring appropriate competitive activities and providing ample time for students to achieve mastery (S.No. 63), providing error correction procedures (prompting, modelling or cueing) rather than telling answer (S. No. 64), providing peer tutoring, co-operative learning and grouping arrangements for students (S. No. 65), providing a variety of independent practice activities and self-monitoring programmes (e.g. self - correction materials, computer assisted instruction, tape recorder assisted instruction and quality home work practice (S. No. 66), and involving the students as active respondents in learning tasks rather than as passive recipients of instruction (S. No. 68) - mean values: 2.46, 2.52, 2.54, 2.51, 2.61, 2.67, 2.59, 2.59, 2.55, 2.53, 2.58, 2.41 and 2.50 respectively. Even then, more than 50% of teachers have opted to enrich their competency level in the above competency statements. But the remaining teachers have not felt the need for enrichment. Hence, the training programmes given by National, State and District level bodies should incorporate these competency aspects in their pre-service and in-service training programmes based on the priority level and shape the teachers to meet the needs of the diversified group of children in regular classrooms (refer table - 4).

5. Low level of competency has been exhibited by the primary school teachers in the competency statements: Making use of micro computers to help the teachers to develop, administer and score teacher made test that focus on the needs of children with learning difficulties (S. No. 74), using of overhead projectors for reading and spelling difficulties in children (S. No. 82), using of picture materials from children's comics, cartoons and rebus approach materials where picture or symbol is in the place of particular word for children with reading difficulties and language difficulties (S. No. 83), and using of head set to avoid extraneous noise and to promoting listening skills in children (S. No. 86) - mean values: 1.92, 2.03, 2.14 and 1.85 respectively. This low level of competency may be due to lack of infrastructure facilities and non availability of materials in regular classroom. Further, teachers have
not been given orientation programmes about how to use microcomputers and develop teacher made tests and score it. Even though, they don't have infrastructure facilities, more than 70% of teachers opted for enrichment. The remaining teachers have not opted for it. Orientation programmes should be conducted for promoting the competencies in using the infrastructure facilities. Infrastructure facilities and materials have to be provided for the schools and training for the teachers to handle those devices should be provided.

Moderate level of competency was exhibited by the primary school teachers in the competency statements: develop a variety of teaching materials and resources while teaching children with learning difficulties (S. No. 73), using of variety of teacher made teaching aids to facilitate the students to overcome their learning difficulties (S. No. 75), using a variety of formats (e.g. objects, pictures, media and computer assisted instructions) to teach content or strategy (S. No. 76), developing variety of instructional materials which facilitate in giving instructions to the child with learning difficulties (S. No. 77), developing innovative teaching materials by using locally available materials to generate interest and motivation in children with learning difficulties (S. No. 78), using of simple mazes and dot-to-dot patterns, instructional materials to overcome writing difficulties (S. No. 81), developing and utilising cards with numbers, pictures, matching items, and comparing and contrasting items for children with arithmetic difficulties (S. No. 84) and possessing knowledge about instructional materials such as arranging blocks, sorting things, arranging items etc., used for children with organisational difficulties (S. No. 85) - mean values: 2.35, 2.31, 2.32, 2.32, 2.33, 2.33, 2.36 and 2.31 respectively. This moderate level of competency is due to the training they received (SOFT, MLL, Joyful learning) in the recent years by DIETs. This knowledge has been applied by the teachers to the children with learning difficulties. This may be the reason for moderate level of competency. More than 60% of teachers have stated that they want to raise their competency in the above aspects. But the remaining 40% teachers have not felt the need for enrichment. Hence, orientation programmes, sensitisation programmes should be given for these teachers to create motivation to enrich their competency in the above said aspects.

Teachers are highly competent in the competency statements: developing and using picture cards and letter cards which can be used for children with learning difficulties (S. No. 79) and preparing and using sentence building materials and flash
cards for the children with learning difficulties (S. No. 80) - mean values: 2.46 and 2.44 respectively. Even then, 61% and 64% of teachers have an inclination to upgrade their competency level whereas 39% and 36% of teachers have not interest to enrich their competency level. Concentration on these aspects during pre-service and in-service training programmes facilitates the teachers to enrich their competency level. NCTE, NCERT, SCERT and DIET at district level should include these aspects in their training curricula based on the priority level (refer table - 5).

6. Primary school teachers have evinced low level of competency in: providing awareness about the services to which parents and their children with learning difficulties are entitled (S. No. 93), providing training to the parents how to tutor their child (S. No. 94), developing favourable public relations which helps the children to be socially and emotionally competent (S. No. 99), and helping and directing parents and their children to the speech and language pathologist for speech and language development (S. No. 100) - mean values: 2.19, 2.13, 2.11 and 2.09 respectively. The reason for the low competency is the concept of learning difficulties is new and the teachers are not aware of the services available for the children with learning difficulties. Even in teacher training programmes, these aspects have not been incorporated. Further, speech and language pathologists are very limited in number and even the available personnel are also not at the teachers disposal at reaching distance. Realising their low level of competency, more than 65% of teachers have opted for enrichment and the rest have not. At this juncture, awareness programmes and training programmes should be organised on the above stated competency aspects.

Moderate level of competency has been exhibited in the competency aspects: generating awareness and understanding among the parents on different aspects of organisational difficulties in children (S. No. 90), involving parent’s in their children’s communication improvement programmes (S. No. 91), alleviating the parents negative attitude through discussions (S. No. 92), helping families to establish positive home environment that support school learning and appropriate behaviour (S. No. 95), providing ideas to parents on how to assist their child at home with learning activities that are co-ordinated with home work (S. No. 97) and, giving suggestions to the parent’s problems, doubts with regard to their children’s learning difficulties (S. No. 98) - mean values: 2.38, 2.29, 2.28, 2.32, and 2.39 respectively. Even then, more than 60% of teachers are interested in improving their competency level.
Training programmes should incorporate the above said aspects so that teachers can develop indepth knowledge and raise their level of competency. On the other hand, less than 40% of the teachers have not felt the need for enrichment. Sensitisation programmes to generate motivation among teachers should be organised so that these teachers can equip themselves with the required competencies.

High level of competency has not exhibited by the primary school teachers in: developing self-confidence, self-esteem and self-management in children with learning difficulties (S. No. 87), guiding students with learning difficulties to realise their capabilities (S. No. 88), generating awareness and understanding among parents on different aspects of learning difficulties (S. No. 89), and in designing effective ways to provide information about school programmes and student’s progress to parents (S. No. 96) - mean values: 2.42, 2.45, 2.49 and 2.40 respectively. Though they possess high level of competency more than 50% have an inclination towards enrichment and the rest do not have such inclination. Hence, pre-service, and in-service teacher training programmes should include the above said aspects of guidance & counseling competencies to tackle learning difficulties in children according to the priority level (refer table - 6).

Part - II

1. Gender has not significantly influenced the possessed competencies of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.76), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.43), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.65), development and use of instructional strategies (t-value: 0.28), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (t-value: 0.46), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 1.21) and competencies as a whole (t-value: 0.15) - refer table - 7.

2. Age has not significantly influenced the possessed competencies of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.24), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.72), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.18), development and use of instructional strategies for learning difficulties (F-value: 1.76), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 1.34), guidance & counseling to
the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 1.09) and competencies as a whole (0.81) - refer table - 8.

3. Community has not significantly influenced the possessed competencies of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 1.24), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 2.00), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.84), development and use of instructional strategies (F-value: 0.57), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 0.28), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 1.11) and, competencies as a whole (F-value: 0.95) - refer table - 9.

4. Educational qualification has not significantly influenced the possessed competencies of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 2.14), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 1.06), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 1.65), development and use of instructional strategies (F-value: 1.35), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 1.61), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 0.67) and, competencies as a whole (F-value: 1.15) - refer table - 10.

5. Type of training received by the primary school teachers has not significantly influenced their possessed competencies of in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.44), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.79), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.14), development and use of instructional strategies (t-value: 0.42), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (t-value: 0.33), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 0.27) and, competencies as a whole (t-value: 0.29) - refer table - 11.

6. Years of experience has not significantly influenced the possessed competencies of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.45) and development and use of instructional strategies (F-value: 1.29). Whereas, it has significantly influenced their possessed competencies in the competency areas - causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 2.91), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 2.42), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 3.45)
utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 2.93) and competencies as a whole (F-value: 3.28) - refer table - 12.

a) Significant differences exist between teachers with 6-10 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 3.03) and between teachers with 11-15 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 2.41). The teachers with 1-5 years of experience possess better competency (mean value: 39.26) than the teachers with 11-15 years of experience (mean value: 36.89) followed by the teachers with 6-10 years of experience (mean value: 36.48).

Contrary to this, teachers with 6-10 years and 11-15 years of experience (t-value: 0.38), teachers with 6-10 years and 21 years and above of experience (t-value: 1.15), teachers with 6-10 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 1.59), teachers with 11-15 years and 21 years and above experience (t-value: 0.70), teachers with 11-15 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 1.17), teachers with 21 years and above and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 0.57), teachers with 21 years and above and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 1.77) and teachers with 16-20 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 0.93) did not differ significantly in their possessed competencies on the causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (refer table - 12 A).

b) Possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties with respect to the competency area 'identification and assessment of learning difficulties' reveals the significant differences between teachers with 6-10 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 2.97). It means, the teachers with 1-5 years of experience possess better competency (mean value: 37.19) than the teachers with 6-10 years of experience (mean value: 34.83).

On the other hand, there is no significant difference between the teachers with 6-10 years and 11-15 years of experience (t-value: 1.03), between teachers with 6-10 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 1.25), between teachers with 6-10 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 1.32), between 11-15 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.09), between the teachers with 11-15 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 0.35), between teachers with 11-15 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 1.76), between 21 years and above and 16-20 years experienced teachers (t-value: 0.30), between the teachers with 21 years and above and 1-5 years
experience (t-value: 1.76) and between the teachers with 16-20 years and 1-5 years (t-value: 1.08) of experience. (refer table - 12 B).

c) Significant differences exist between the teachers with 11-15 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 2.35), between teachers with 11-15 years and 21 years and above experience (t-value: 2.29), between teachers with 6-10 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 2.38), and between teachers with 6-10 years and 21 years and above experience (t-value: 2.32). Further, the teachers with 1-5 years of experience were possessing better competency (mean value: 32.12) in utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (mean value: 32.12) than the teachers with 11-15 years of experience (mean value: 30.48) followed by teachers with 6-10 years of experience. Similarly, teachers with 21 years and above experience were (mean value: 30.50) better in their competency (mean value: 32.18) than the teachers with 11-15 years of experience (mean value: 30.48) followed by teachers with 6-10 years of experience (mean value: 30.50).

Contrary to this, there is no significant difference between the teachers with 11-15 years and 6-10 years of experience (t-value: 0.02), between teachers with 11-15 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 1.68), between 6-10 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 1.68), between 1-5 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 0.06), between 1-5 years and 21 years and above experience (t-value: 0.09) and between teachers with 16-20 years and 21 years and above experience (t-value: 0.01) - refer table - 12 C.

d) Significant differences exist in the possessed competencies of primary school teachers with different years of experience on guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (between teachers with 6-10 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 2.26), 6-10 years and 1-5 years (t-value: 3.04) and 6-10 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 2.81).

The teachers with the experience of 16-20 years (mean value: 33.75) have better competency followed by the teachers with 1-5 years (mean value: 33.22) and 21 years and above (mean value: 32.71) than the teachers with 11-15 years (mean value: 31.79) and 6-10 years of experience (mean value: 30.75).

Contrary to the above, no significant differences exist between teachers with 6-10 years and 11-15 years of experience (t-value: 1.18), between 11-15 years and
21 years and above years of experience (t-value: 1.11), between 11-15 years and 1-5 years (t-value: 1.83), between 11-15 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 1.88), between 21 years and above and 1-5 years (t-value: 0.67), between 21 years and above and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 1.01) and teachers with 1-5 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 0.54) of experienced (refer table: 12D)

e) Significant differences exist between the teachers with 6-10 years and 16-20 years of experience (t-value: 1.97), between 6-10 years and 1-5 years (t-value: 3.19) and between 11-15 years and 1-5 years of experience (t-value: 2.33). The teachers with 1-5 years of experience possess better competency (mean value: 235.11) followed by the teachers with 16-20 years of experience (mean value: 223.18) than the teachers with 6 – 10 years of experience (mean value: 223.16 ). Similarly, teachers with 1-5 years of experience (mean value: 235.11) possess better competency than the teachers with 11-15 years (mean value: 226.34).

No significant differences is found between teachers with 6-10 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 0.77), between 6-10 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 1.77), between 11-15 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.95), between 11-15 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 1.27), between 21 years and above and 16-20 years (t-value: 0.48), between 21 years and above and 1-5 years (t-value: 1.44) and between 16-20 years and 1-5 years (t-value: 0.69) of experience - refer table - 12 E.

7. Type of school has not significantly influenced the possessed competencies of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.92), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.50), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.44), development and use of instructional strategies (t-value: 0.15), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (t-value: 0.28), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 0.37) and competencies as a whole (t-value: 0.02) - refer table-13.

8. Location of school has not significantly influenced the possessed competencies of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.47), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.04), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.92), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (t-value: 1.11), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 0.94) and
competencies as a whole (t-value: 1.30). Whereas, it has significantly influenced the primary school teachers possessed competency in the competency area - 'development and use of instructional strategies for learning difficulties' (t-value: 2.58). Further, rural primary school teachers possess better competency (mean value: 63.85) than the urban primary school teachers (mean value: 61.98) - refer table - 14.

9. Gender has not significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.86), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (t-value: 1.73), development and use of instructional strategies (t-value: 1.92), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (t-value: 0.89), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 1.72) and competencies as a whole (t-value: 1.91). On the other hand, it has significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency area - 'causes and characteristics of learning difficulties' (t-value: 2.05). Further, women teachers require more competency (mean value : 13.22) than men teachers (11.68) - refer table - 15.

10. Age has not significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.17), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.42), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.64), development and use of instructional strategies (F-value: 1.39), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 0.06), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 0.62) and competencies as a whole (F-value: 0.43) - refer table - 16.

11. Community has not significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 1.20), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.98), development and use of instructional strategies (F-value: 1.55), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 1.72), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 0.51) and competencies as a whole (F-value: 1.28). Whereas it has significantly influenced their required competency in the competency area - the identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 2.60) - refer table - 17.
a) Significant differences exist between forward community primary school teachers and most backward community primary school teachers (t-value: 2.57), and between schedule caste / tribes and most backward community primary school teachers (t-value: 2.06). It means most backward community primary school teachers require more competency (mean value: 12.30) than the forward community (mean value: 9.76) and schedule caste / tribes (mean value: 10.48).

On the other hand, no significant difference is found between forward community teachers and schedule caste / tribes teachers (t-value: 0.69), between forward community teachers and backward community teachers (t-value: 1.84), between schedule caste / tribes and backward community teachers (t-value: 1.16) and between backward community and most backward community primary school teachers (t-value: 1.57) - refer table -17 A.

12. Educational Qualification has not significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.50), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.31), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 0.25), development and use of instructional strategies (F-value: 1.56), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 0.29), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 0.95) and competencies as a whole (F-value: 0.49) - refer table -18.

13. Type of training received by the primary school teachers has not significantly influenced their required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 1.44), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.65), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.80), development and use of instructional strategies (t-value: 1.92), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (t-value: 0.80), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 0.77) and competencies as a whole (t-value: 0.66) - refer table - 19.

14. Years of experience has not significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (F-value: 2.24), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (F-value: 0.50), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (F-value: 1.62). Whereas it has significantly influenced the required
competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (F-value: 03.37), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (F-value: 2.42), development and use of instructional strategies (F-value: 2.74) and competencies as a whole (F-value: 2.58) - refer table - 20.

a) Significant differences exist between the teachers with 1-5 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 2.25), between 1-5 years and 21-years and above (t-value: 3.03) and between 1-5 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 3.04) of experience. Further, the desire for enrichment of this competency in 11-15 years of experience primary school teachers is more (mean value: 13.88) followed by 21 and above years of experience (mean value: 13.72) and 6-10 years of experience (mean value: 13.33) than the teachers with 1-5 years of experience (mean value: 11.88) in the competency area causes and characteristics of learning difficulties.

On the other hand, no significant differences are found between teachers with 1-5 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 1.10), between 16-20 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 0.46), between 16-20 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.90), between 16-20 and 11-15 years (t-value: 1.03), between 6-10 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.61), between 6-10 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 0.80) and between 21 years and above and 11-15 years (t-value: 0.24) of experience - refer table - 20 A.

b) Significant differences exist between the teachers with 1-5 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 2.08), and between 1-5 years and 21 years and above years of experience (t-value: 3.03). It means, teachers with 21 years and above of experience and 6-10 years of experience require more enrichment of their competency (mean value: 12.16 and 11.67 respectively) than the teachers with 1-5 years of experience (mean value: 10.39) in identification and assessment of learning difficulties.

Contrary to this, no significant differences are noted between the teachers with 1-5 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 0.88), between 1-5 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 1.43), between 16-20 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 0.22), between 16-20 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 0.64), between 16-20 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 1.24), between 11-15 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 0.52), between 11-15 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 1.31), and between 6-10 years and 21 and above years of experience (t-value: 0.80) - refer table - 20 B.
c) Significant differences exist between the teachers with 1-5 years and 6-10 years of experience (t-value: 2.57) and between 1-5 years and 21 years and above years of experience (t-value: 2.86). Further, teachers with 21 years and above (mean value: 17.39) and 6-10 years of experience (mean value: 16.97) have opted for more enrichment than the teachers with 1-5 years of experience (mean value: 14.27) in the competency area ‘development and use of instructional strategies’.

On the other hand, no significant differences are noted between the teachers with experience 1-5 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 1.80), between 1-5 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 1.44), between 11-15 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 0.20), between 11-15 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 0.65), between 11-15 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.99), between 16-20 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 0.25), between 16-20 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.50) and between 6-10 years and 21 years and above years of experience (t-value: 0.37) - refer table - 20 C.

d) Significant differences exist between the two groups of teachers with experience 1-5 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 2.20), between 1-5 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 2.22) and between 1-5 years and 21 years and above years of experience (t-value: 2.82). Teachers with 21 years and above (mean value: 69.99), 6-10 years (mean value: 68.47), and 11-15 years (mean value: 68.36) have felt the need for more enrichment than the teachers with 1 - 5 years of experience (mean value: 60.82).

There is no significant difference between the teachers with experience 1-5 years and 16-20 years (t-value: 1.20), between 16-20 years and 11-15 years (t-value: 0.30), between 16-20 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 0.33), between 16-20 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.64), between 11-15 years and 6-10 years (t-value: 0.03), between 11-15 years and 21 years and above (t-value: 0.47) and between 6-10 years and 21 and above years of experience (t-value: 0.44) - refer table - 20 D.

15. Type of school has not significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.47), utilisation of materials, media and devices (t-value: 1.20), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 0.87) and competencies as a whole (t-value: 1.87). Whereas it has significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (t-value: 2.03), identification and assessment
of learning difficulties (t-value: 2.10) and development and use of instructional strategies (t-value: 2.15). Further Government aided school teachers require more competency (mean value: 13.49, 11.71 and 16.87 respectively) than the teachers working in Government schools (mean value: 12.58, 10.82 and 15.25 respectively) - refer table - 21.

16. Location of school has not significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency areas - nature of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.56), causes and characteristics of learning difficulties (t-value: 1.14), identification and assessment of learning difficulties (t-value: 0.46), utilisation of instructional materials, media and devices (t-value: 0.42), guidance & counseling to the children with learning difficulties and their parents (t-value: 0.91) and competencies as a whole (t-value: 1.29) (refer table - 22).

On the other hand, it has significantly influenced the required competency of primary school teachers in the competency area - development and use of instructional strategies (t-value: 2.57). Further urban primary school teachers require more enrichment (mean value: 17.26) than the rural primary school teachers (mean value: 15.30) - refer table -22.

6.15 Implications of the Study

1. The study reveals that out of 100 competency statements, primary school teachers possessed low level of competency in 28 competency statements (S. No. 5, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 35, 36, 37, 39, 42, 48, 49, 74, 82, 83, 86, 93, 94, 99 and 100). Realising their low level, of competency more than 70% of teachers have felt the need for enrichment in these competency aspects. But the remaining 30% of teachers have not felt the need. This may be due to their poor awareness about the different aspects of the concept of learning difficulties. At this point sensitisation programmes on learning difficulties through various modes should be provided for those teachers. Nowadays, media is playing a vital role. Sensitisation programmes about the concept of learning difficulties through radio, newspapers and television will reach the teachers more effectively. Awareness generating programmes through discussion, teachers' meetings and teachers association meetings can motivate them to opt for more enrichment. On the other hand, for the teachers who have an inclination towards enrichment, orientation programmes on learning difficulties refresher courses, training programmes and workshops should be
organised by the state and national level educational bodies to promote indepth knowledge about the concept and nature of learning difficulties. At this point, NCERT, NCTE, SCERT and DIET play a vital role in providing pre-service and in-service programmes for the teachers. They are giving training to the teachers to promote quality in education. Even then the dropout, wastage and stagnation are not arrested. The main root cause for this is the learning difficulties experienced by the children at primary stage. So the components that pave the way to overcome learning difficulties in children should be incorporated by the NCERT, NCTE, SCERT and DIET in their training programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers.

2. The study reveals that the primary school teachers possess moderate level of competency in 43 competency statements (S. No. 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 34, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 47, 50, 52, 54, 57, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 84, 85, 90, 91, 92, 95, 97 and 98). Even though, the field of learning difficulties is a new one teachers possess moderate level of competency on this aspects. Knowing their limited competency, 60% of primary school teachers have expressed their readiness to get indepth knowledge in these aspects. The study also reveals that 40% of the teachers possessing moderate level of competency do not feel the need for enrichment of their competencies. For such teachers, once again there is a need to generate awareness and motivation about the learning difficulties concept. This can be done through purposeful staff meetings, workshops and through teachers organisations / association meetings.

3. In this study, primary school teachers have evinced high level of competency in 28 competency statements (S. No. 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 31, 32, 44, 46, 51, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 0, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 79, 80, 87, 88, 89 and 96). Though they possess high competency, more than 50% of teachers have opted to enrich their competency. Such enthusiastic teachers should not be neglected. So the teacher training institutions, NCERT and SCERT should take care of those teachers and provide various tasks like attending conferences and the training courses, and involving in discussions, preparing materials, aids and other instructional packages etc. to handle learning difficulties.

4. Specialised resource teachers can be trained by the NCERT and the Departments of Education at university level who have good expertise in this area. The government should appoint one such resource teacher for each block and he /
she will assist the general primary school teachers in his jurisdiction about the ways and means of overcoming learning difficulties in children.

The resource teachers with the help of NCERT, SCERT, DIET and other educational bodies should develop materials, models, teaching kits, audio-video assisted learning materials, handbooks etc., on learning difficulties. These should be widely used at primary level by the teachers.

5. The trend of the study results shows that teachers with less experience possess better competency than their counterparts on various competency areas of learning difficulties. As such it implies that these teachers have received teacher training in more recent years than their counterparts. Infact, in recent training programmes, the concept of learning difficulties in some form or other, if not directly, has been incorporated at surface level. Likewise, in electronic and print media, one can see here and there, some literature on learning difficulties. Perhaps, this may be the reason why, the less experienced teachers are better in their possessed competencies than the more experienced teachers. If it is so, there is a greater need to organise special orientation courses to the teachers with more experience on these aspects. It doesn't mean that the other teachers do not require training. Priority should be given to the teachers with more experience in the participation of training programmes than younger teachers.

6. National, state, and district level surveys can be conducted to identify the nature and types of learning difficulties and the extent of learning difficulties which inturn will help to tailor the need based training programmes for the primary school teachers. Such an activity will help to avoid drop out, wastage and stagnation at primary stage.

7. The study reveals that only on a limited number of competency aspects, the primary school teachers possess high level of competency and the remaining competencies are at low and moderate level. Even the teachers who have exhibited high level of competency, want to enrich their competencies. In the case of teachers with low and moderate level, more than 70% and 60% respectively want enrichment in their competencies. This shows the enormous need for training programmes. For a country like India, without proper organisational set up, it is very difficult to organise such large number of programmes. This warrants a need for setting up of a national body like National Institute of Learning difficulties / disabilities in tune with the
institutes like National Institute for Visually Handicapped (NIVH), National Institute for Mentally Handicapped (NIMH), Alivar Jung National Institute for Hearing Impaired and so on. Such institute will facilitate the development of resource materials, training programmes, research activities monitoring and evaluation of academic and field programmes. Similarly, publication of a journal at national, state and regional levels considering the local language will be an immense use to generate awareness, positive attitudes and dissemination of innovative teaching and training practices in the field of learning difficulties.

6.16 Limitations of the Study
1. The area of the study is limited to Madurai district of Tamil Nadu State.
2. The study is confined to the teachers working in primary school only.
3. Rating scale is the only tool to assess the possessed competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children.
4. Competencies are listed in the form of Questionnaire of ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ type in order to identify the required competencies of primary school teachers to handle learning difficulties in children.
5. Self ratings of the teachers are the only criteria used to assess and identify the possessed and required competencies respectively.

6.17 Suggestions for Further Research
1. Studies can be made to assess the prevalence of learning difficulties at secondary level.
2. Separate studies can be attempted to assess the awareness of teachers working in high school and higher secondary schools about the learning difficulties of children.
3. Studies can be taken up in other districts also for more accuracy and better reliability. Similar studies can also be attempted at national and state level.
4. Attempts may be made to assess the competency of teachers in dealing children with learning difficulties considering the students achievement as the basis.
5. Studies on normal students attitude towards their peers with learning difficulty may be attempted.
6. Experimental studies can be undertaken to evolve a special instructional strategy to teach children with learning difficulties. The effectiveness of such strategy and its advantage over traditional lecture method can also be measured.

7. Separate studies can be attempted to probe into the causes of learning difficulties and remediations can be suggested for implementation.

8. An indepth study can be made to assess the impact of guidance & counseling on the children with learning difficulties and their parents. The same study may assess the attitude of parents and public towards children with learning difficulties before and after the guidance & counseling programme.

9. A separate study can be undertaken to assess how far the general education classroom strategy reaches out to the children with learning difficulties in an inclusive education setting. Such studies can suggest remedial measures of teaching and learning techniques to overcome learning difficulties at primary level.