CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“The maturity of a society is reflected when special needs services are included in Education”


Significant progress has been witnessed over the last few decades for students with learning disabilities (LD) in higher education. Legal mandates and policies of each country regarding equal access and opportunities to participate in programs, activities and services help students to graduate successfully. The colleges and universities have started to embrace students having disabilities which pose unique challenges to faculty to meet the needs of students having various learning needs. It is thus, increasingly important that institutions of higher education equip themselves to meet the needs of the growing population of students with LD. Disability related training for the faculty, to improve their knowledge and attitudes should be targeted as priority, as lack of knowledge among faculty is one of the main concerns for supporting students with LD. It is also important to provide resources, appropriate academic adjustments and services to students with LD.

To train the faculty on LD, the most straightforward and well researched approach is to first make them aware of this disability which is not so easily understood.
1.1 Learning Disabilities (LD)

According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 2005),

LD is a general 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, and may appear across life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with LD but do not themselves constitute a LD. Although LD may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural difference, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD, 2009) defines LD as

A neurological disorder that affects the brain’s ability to receive, process, store and respond to information. The term LD is used to describe the seemingly unexplained difficulty a person of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills. These skills are essential for success at school and work, and for coping with life in general. LD is not a single disorder. It is a term that refers to a group of disorders.

LD affects one or more processes for input (taking in), integration (organizing, sequencing, remembering), and output (expression) of the information. LD is called
hidden disabilities because they are not visible and are not physically obvious. In fact, some students may not realize that they have a disability and remain undiagnosed until they are faced with the challenges of a college or a graduate-level program. Eckes and Ochoa (2005) found that students with LD get less noticed and supported compared to students with physical, vision or hearing impairments. Faculty is often more accommodating towards students with more apparent or visible disabilities.

According to Levine (1992), the most accurate sign that a student has a LD is when the student suffers academic failure at a time when he or she is capable of producing better work. According to Saltus (1992), LD may be caused by a neurological breakdown or processing problem that makes an array of academic-related tasks difficult to master. The identification of a learning disabled student is actually a difficult task that produces uncertain outcomes (Thomas, 2004).

Similarly, Siegel and Lipka (2008) reviewed over 100 articles from the Journal of Learning Disabilities from 1968 to 2007 in order to investigate how researchers translated definition of LD into operational definitions. They maintain that the formula that should be used to diagnose LD in an accurate way is the grade/age vs. achievement formula. Using this formula, they argue that the scores of the achievement tests should be significantly below the age or the grade level scores and this would constitute to LD.

Types of LD

Students with LD are a heterogeneous group. While some struggle with reading and language related tasks, other students have problems with mathematics, coordination, writing or social skills at a higher education level. In order to have an understanding of LD in the context of higher education, it is important to look at the various types of
learning difficulties students might have in colleges and universities, which is also shown graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Types of LD.

**Dyslexia**

According to the International Dyslexia Association (2002),

Dyslexia is a specific LD that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary sequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.
Dysgraphia

According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2009),

Dysgraphia as an LD that affects writing, which requires a complex set of motor and information processing skills. Dysgraphia makes the act of writing difficult. It can lead to problems with spelling, poor handwriting and putting thoughts on paper. People with dysgraphia can have trouble organizing letters, numbers and words on a line or page.

Dyspraxia

According to the Dyspraxia foundation,

Dyspraxia, a form of developmental coordination disorder (DCD) is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination, in children and adults. While DCD is often regarded as an umbrella term to cover motor coordination difficulties, dyspraxia refers to those people who have additional problems planning, organizing and carrying out movements in the right order in everyday situations. Dyspraxia can also affect articulation and speech, perception and thought.

Dyscalculia

According the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2006),

Dyscalculia is a term referring to a wide range of life-long learning disabilities involving math. These disabilities affect a person’s ability to understand and/or
manipulate numbers, perform mathematical operations, and/or conceptualize numbers themselves as an abstract concept for comparative quantities.

**Causes of LD**

Researchers have not reached a consensus as to the cause of LD. Currently, LD is suspected to be caused by one or more of the following: abnormal brain development, hereditary factors, bio-chemical abnormalities, social-environmental factors, and teratogens (i.e. environmental toxins; Brownnell, League & Seo 2007). That is, LD can be inherited from parents; it can be caused by exposure to pollutants such as lead, mercury, or pesticides during pregnancy; or it can stem from the absence or presence of certain biochemical products.

However, having an LD does not mean that the person is a failure in life. Teachers can play a very important role in the educational experience of these students. In fact, increasing the willingness on the part of faculty to mentor students with LD can leave lasting impacts. Famous people like Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein and Steve Jobs have also had some form of LD.

**1.2 Current Scenario and Future Projections of LD**

A global perspective of English speaking countries reveals that, a majority of students with disabilities in higher education have LD. Adult students with LD represent one of the fastest growing populations of students attending colleges and universities (Mull, Sitlington, & Alper 2001). In fact, as many as four percent of college students in America struggle with LD (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Heiligenstien, Guenther, Levy, Savino & Fulwiler, 1998; Shifrin, Proctor & Prevatt, 2009). Students with LD are the largest number of students who seek accommodations in higher education (Ochoa & Eckes, 2005).

Although the largest growing groups of students are those with LD, there are very few colleges / universities which provide training to faculty to meet the needs of these
students. As increasing number of young adults with LD enter post-secondary settings, it is important to develop further understanding about the contextual processes and supports within college and university environments (Madaus & Shaw, 2006). Concern about academic success for students with LD in higher education has increased as the proportion of students with disabilities has increased.

Although the overall numbers of youth with LD attending postsecondary schools continue to lag behind rates of attendance in the general population (Horn & Nevill, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 1999), these trends are promising and suggest that a greater number of students with LD are receiving access to this important post-high-school educational opportunity (Mull, Sitlington, & Alper, 2001). As graphically represented in Figure 2, LD have the highest prevalence and incidence rates and are fastest growing among other categories and the faculty have to be equipped to work with them in classrooms.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of various disabilities in the US

The most common type of LDs’ are reading disorders commonly referred to as “dyslexia”- accounting for nearly 80% of all diagnosis (Shaywitz, Gruen & Shaywitz, 2008).

In addition to core academic areas, students with LD can exhibit problems with memory and metacognition. Students with LD may have social and emotional problems and run a greater risk of suffering depression, social rejection, suicidal thoughts, and loneliness (Mercer & Pullen, 2009).

One of the main reasons for college students with LD to be less identified and supported because they come across as typically intelligent, talented and motivated. These students are often very talented and develop a variety of creative skills for compensating for their difficulty in academics, like interest in sports, debates, entertainment and other extra-curricular activities. Hence students with LD struggle to cope with the academic demands of higher education.

A regional perspective of Arabic countries, just as other countries reveal government legislations and policies exists, that recognize the need to provide opportunities that safeguard the rights of individuals with special needs. The UAE has a Federal Law No. 29, 2006, dealing with “The Rights of People with Disabilities”. This law is designed to safeguard the rights of people with disabilities, and provide students with the opportunity to develop their potentials. Acceptance of students with special needs is a priority (Arif & Gaad, 2008; Al Roumi, 2008).

The higher education sector in the UAE, where the study was conducted, is undergoing rapid change in response to the rapidly developing society, the legislative policies and the socio-cultural changes. In the UAE, educational institutions are
progressing towards providing reasonable accommodations and support for such students in order to allow them to undertake class based and independent studies. It is important that students with special needs are provided with an equal opportunity to be involved in education (Sultana and Hayhoe 2013). Arabic is the mother tongue of students and English being the second language in schooling, the students in higher education has problems as the medium of instruction is English.

Around 5,130 students in the UAE, or 8.55 per cent of the total, have different disabilities when it comes to school learning, as per the latest national statistics of 2012 (“Difficulty in Learning”, 2012, November 14).

In a study by Rima (2009), on female students attending a UAE University, findings suggest that the prevalence of features consistent with dyslexia is 17.6% among female Emirati university students, and they experience these difficulties in both English and Arabic. Findings also confirm the need for systematic screening programs for dyslexia and more importantly proves that dyslexia crosses language boundaries.

While an increasing number of students having LD are being admitted in mainstream classrooms the faculty is facing new challenges particularly regarding mentoring students having different LD. Moreover, in the UAE, generic research on special needs in higher education has been very limited until today and is the need of the hour.

1.3 Effects of LD in Higher Education

For over three decades, students with LD have been educated at different levels. They are identified usually in school itself based on their deficits in language, mathematics, poor phonics or issues with attention. Continued strides are being focused
on helping students who struggle. However, students who have English as second or additional language (ESOL) face particular difficulties. While assessments are developed for English speaking populations, assessing ESOL students whose mother tongue is Arabic for instance, can make it much more challenging for faculty to understand whether it is a LD or difficulty in learning English which is the medium of instruction.

As students transit from school to college, they can experience problems in one or more of the following areas such as cognitive processing, executive functioning, technology skills, social skills and most importantly academic achievement.

Studies on the achievement of students with LD have consistently demonstrated that they perform poorly on academic tasks and are poor at problem solving. This has been attributed not to low ability, but to a lack of or an inappropriate use and poor monitoring of the process of learning strategies (Chan & Cole, 1986; Hallahan, Kauffman, & Lloyd, 1996; Larson & Gerber, 1987; Overalle & Metsenare, 1990). A potential source of support that can drastically improve the achievement of students with LD academically at this point is faculty support. However, trying to meet the individual needs of all students is not easy for any teacher today, but is even more challenging when teachers are required to provide support to students with LD to succeed in their academic pursuits.

1.4 Professional Training for Faculty

Faculty members play an important role in the student’s educational experience, and hence it is important to increase faculty awareness, knowledge and skills in order to teach students with LD effectively. Faculty education was one of the earliest areas identified as essential in promoting access for students with disabilities (Jastram, 1979).
Faculty participation and education were identified in early campus models (Vogel, 1982) as well as ongoing strategies for structuring support (Brinckerhoff, Shaw, & McGuire, 1993; Gajar, 1982; Hill, 1996; Mangrum & Strichart, 1988; Rose, 1993).

Colleges and universities should address the faculty members’ attitudes and perceptions through targeted interventions and professional development training on disability awareness (Lombardi, 2010). The field of LD support services needs to expand its faculty education efforts to keep pace with the evolving role of college faculty in participating in and providing access for college students with LD (Scott & Gregg, 2000).

Knowledge of LD

Previous research has studied the impact of providing faculty training on best inclusive practices, universal design, beliefs and perceptions and willingness to support students with LD. However, increasing the knowledge, willingness, attitudes and interaction of postsecondary faculty to effectively teach learners with disabilities has the potential to improve postsecondary education and career outcomes for students with disabilities. The knowledge and skills of instructors impact the learning of all students. Unfortunately, most postsecondary instructors have little experience in teaching students with LD and little or no specific training in effective strategies for making their curricula accessible. In order to develop faculty understanding of college students with LD, Lunderberg and Svien (1988) suggested (a) assessing faculty needs and concerns; (b) designing the faculty in-services training to address these needs; and (c) evaluating the outcomes of the training.
Most authors have recommended that faculty training should focus on LD support services such as providing information on learning difficulties like definitions, characteristics, types of LD, legal mandates, classroom modifications, general instructional strategies, campus resources and institutional responsibilities in meeting the needs of students with LD (Anderson & McGuire, 1993; Aune & Ness, 1991; DuChossois, 1993; Lundeberg & Svien, 1988; Stewart, 1989).

Although students with disabilities are now able to attend postsecondary institutions, these students continue to experience feelings of exclusion. Disability stereotyping often occurs when people have negative attitudes toward students with disabilities because of their lack of knowledge about the particular disability (Burgstahler, 2003). Hunt and Hunt (2004), argued that the only way to decrease negative attitudes and stereotypes about individuals with disabilities was to educate faculty regarding different types of disabilities and what could be done to accommodate the student.

Abundant research suggests tremendous outcome benefits which can be achieved by including disability education training for faculty members on instructing students with disabilities. (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995; Campbell & Gilmore, 2003; Fichten, Amsel, Bourdon & Creti, 1998; Nelson, Dodd & Smith, 1990; Odom, Brantlinger, Gersten, Horner, Thompson, & Harris, 2005; Parasuram, 2006; Rao, 2004; Scott & Gregg, 2000; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008).

Mukherjee, Foot, and Sloper (2000) as cited by Lodge and Lynch (2004) pointed out that teachers need to have a full understanding of the implications of particular impairments if they are to inform other students or support students with impairments. Disability awareness training and education is required for all teaching professionals in order to help and mentor students with LD with the requirements and demands of postsecondary education.
Psychological Skill Training

Training faculty on LD has undergone a major pedagogical shift in the last decade. Calderhead (1996), Pianta (1999) and Watson (2003) have described teaching as an intense psychological process and believe a teacher’s ability to maintain productive classroom environments, motivate students and make decisions depends on their personal qualities and their ability to create personal relationships with the students. These effective attitudes and actions employed by teachers ultimately can make a positive difference on the lives of their students.

A reported barrier to postsecondary success of students with disabilities is negative faculty attitudes and perceptions of disability (Leyser, Vogel, Brulle, & Wyland, 1998; Reed, Lund-Lucas, & O’Rourke, 2003; Vogel, Leyser, Wyland, & Brulle, 1999).

An important area that warrants training for faculty is a psychological skill training which focuses on positive attitudes, interaction and willingness to support students with LD. Recommendations and procedures have been proposed in the literature to promote positive faculty attitudes towards and increased understanding of the needs of students with LD (Lunderberg & Svien, 1988; Aksamit, Morris, & Leuenberger, 1987; Rose, 1993; Stewart, 1989; Tolman, Farrell, & Geis, 1989).

The most important influence is the attitude of teacher and the degree to which the teacher models acceptance of students with special needs. Inclusion classroom teachers must directly address the importance of mutual acceptance and support within the classroom, and they must reflect on their own attitudes and ability to demonstrate such acceptance (Kochhar, West, & Taymans, 2000).
Disability support programs and services, as well as faculty attitudes, beliefs, and practices are obvious sources of support to students. A growing body of research has focused on understanding how these services and supports can contribute to the success of students with LD in post-secondary settings (Dukes & Shaw, 1999; Finn, 1998). Harris (2011) noted that one-on-one involvement with faculty members gives students a sense of belonging to the university community and a better understanding of the academic expectations at the university.

The goal of teachers, regardless of whether they teach in general or special education and whether they work exclusively with students with LD, those who have no disabilities, or those who have more substantial disabilities should be to meet the unique needs of their students. Perhaps the most important concept that the study of LD has contributed to education is that individuals have different strengths and weaknesses and those should be taken into account in planning and providing education for them (Hallahan, Lloyd, Kauffman, Weiss, & Martinez, 2005).

In order to address this need training programs must be developed to not only educate faculty on the knowledge of LD, teaching strategies and support services that are available on campus but also on psychological skills such as attitudes, general beliefs, willingness to provide support, reducing social discomfort, fears, vulnerability, positive interaction, teacher preparedness and willingness to advocate for the students having LD.

Faculty members can contribute by being instrumental in the success of students with LD by taking on the role of mentors and provide them with all the guidance and support necessary.
Mentoring Students with LD

“Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.” (Eric Parsloe, The Oxford School of Coaching & Mentoring http://www.benelectfoundation.org/mentorapplication). A mentor is a trusted and experienced advisor who has a direct interest in the development and education of a less experienced individual. Preparedness and skills of faculty members to mentor students with LD are some of the reasons for students to continue and not drop-out.

Accommodations

In order to understand the kind of reasonable support that is being provided to students having LD, it is critical to examine the concept of accommodations in the context of higher education. Thurlow (2000) defined accommodations as “changes in materials or procedures that provide access to instruction and assessments for students with disabilities” and enable the student to show his or her knowledge and ability rather than the effect of the disability. The different types of accommodations / support that can be offered to students with LD are as follows;

Examination Accommodations

Faculty can provide reasonable support during examinations in the presentation, response, scheduling / timing and setting of assessments. Reading, writing, mathematics and listening test support services are examples of examination accommodations.
Classroom and Assignment Accommodations

Faculty can include different strategies in instruction and adapting various teaching methods like providing the student with a copy of the lecture notes outline, copies of overheads and power point presentations, finding effective peer note-takers from the class, allowing the student to tape record lectures, extend due dates for assignments, allow extra time to meet the students to clarify and/or review the course related content, reduce overall course reading load, take proctored exams in a supervised location outside of the normal exam location etc.

Creating a Positive Impact

According to Pierangelo and Giuliani (2007), the most important influence on positive classroom relationships and social attitudes is the attitude of the teacher and the degree to which the teacher models acceptance of students with special needs. A positive classroom climate can be created by using student’s name and knowing something about each student, knowing the students strengths and challenges, promote student feedback and encourage them to approach faculty when in doubt.

Teachers who can empathize with the challenge of disabilities are in the best position to seek solutions and to share their knowledge and understanding with others. A call to awareness involves an intellectual understanding of student’s needs, as well as the emotional sensitivity to realize their ongoing challenge.
1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study was derived from the theoretical framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Krathwodl’s Taxanomy of Affective Domain.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theoretical framework for studying the level of knowledge, willingness, attitudes, and interaction of faculty members towards students having LD is traced from the theories formulated by Ajzen and Fishbein of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). This theory was related to voluntary behavior which has been widely used to study how personal attitudes impact an individual’s behavior. Later on, the theory was called the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The Theory of Planned Behavior is a theory which predicts deliberate behavior, because behavior can be deliberative and planned. This theory also evolved from the Theory of Reasoned Action and helps explain how the behavior of people can be changed and suggests attitudes are a product of salient beliefs (Lowe, Bennett, Walker, Milne, & Bozionelos, 2003).

Figure 3. Conceptual model- Theory of planned behavior.

The Theory of Planned Behavior holds that only specific attitudes toward the behavior in question can be expected to predict that behavior. In addition to measuring attitudes toward the behavior, we also need to measure people’s subjective norms, their beliefs about how people they care about will view the behavior in question. To predict someone’s intentions, knowing these beliefs can be as important as knowing the person’s attitudes.

Finally, perceived behavioral control influences intentions. Perceived behavioral control refers to people's perceptions of their ability to perform a given behavior. These predictors lead to intention. As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and the subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control the stronger should the person’s intention to perform the behavior in question. ("Theory of planned,")

Thus it is theorized that, attitudes may be based on any one of or a combination of, three components: cognitive information (what one knows about an object or situation), affective information (how one feels about the object or situation), and behavior information (how one has acted on the object or situation in the past). The attitudes of college faculty members towards students with disabilities may be associated with these elements in the following example: I like students with LD because they are talented (cognitive), I have treated students with LD equally in the past (behavioral), and I am not uncomfortable working with students with LD (affective).

As applied to this study, the theory holds that it would be expected for the independent variable, the training program, to provide the following:

- Cognitive information - the knowledge on LD.
- Behavior information - ways to mentor and improving the one on one interaction.
- Affective information - improving the attitudes, willingness and general beliefs towards students with LD.

The training program will influence or explain the dependent variables of change such as knowledge, attitudes, willingness and interactions of faculty towards students
with LD. The change in attitude towards mentoring (attitude towards behavior), their beliefs on how to mentor (subjective norm), and how positive they perceive themselves to mentor will actually enhance their mentoring ability (perceived behavioral control) and will lead to process of mentoring students with LD.

It is also expected that the training program would bring about an increase in the faculty knowledge and improvement in the attitudes, willingness and interaction of faculty members towards students with LD. After receiving the training in knowledge and psychological aspects, the faculty should be equipped in dealing with students having LD more favorably than before.

**Krathwohl’s Taxonomy of Affective Domain**

Another important theory upon which this study is based on is the Krathwohl’s affective domain theory in which the learning moves from general awareness to internalization of beliefs, values and behavior. In Krathwohl's affective domain taxonomy:

"The taxonomy is ordered according to the principle of internalization. Internalization refers to the process whereby a person's affect toward an object passes from a general awareness level to a point where the affect is 'internalized' and consistently guides or controls the person's behavior" (Seels & Glasgow, 1990).

![Figure 4. Conceptual model - Krathwohl’s taxonomy of affective domain.

Source: Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964).
Receiving is being aware of or sensitive to the existence of certain ideas, material, or phenomena and being willing to tolerate them. Examples include: to differentiate, to accept, to listen (for) and respond to.

Responding is committed in some small measure to the ideas, materials, or phenomena involved by actively responding to them. Examples are: to comply with, to follow, to commend, to volunteer, to spend leisure time in, to acclaim.

Valuing is willing to be perceived by others as valuing certain ideas, materials, or phenomena. Examples include: to increase measured proficiency in, to relinquish, to subsidize, to support, to debate.

Organization is to relate the value to those already held and bring it into a harmonious and internally consistent philosophy. Examples are: to discuss, to theorize, to formulate, to balance, to examine.

Characterization by value or value set is to act consistently in accordance with the values he or she has internalized. Examples include: to revise, to require, to be rated high in the value, to avoid, to resist, to manage, to resolve.(Krik, 2013)

In the current study, Krawthon’s theory helps to ascertain the general awareness of faculty before being subjected to the training and uses of the principles of ‘internalization’. The process of internalization is explained in terms of training that is aimed at helping faculty to move from general awareness to a specific, deliberate and more focused behavior that is internalized by faculty to further guide and mentor students with LD in a more positive and consistent manner.

The theory has great relevance to the current study in which the faculty will be made aware and sensitized to the need to support students with LD in higher education. Since the faculty will volunteer to take part in the training, information will be received
with certain amount of involvement and willingness to support. The faculty would be willing to value the need to support and mentor students based on the knowledge received. The faculty will be able to assimilate their thoughts, understanding, skills and knowledge that they have received and increase their attitudes and behavior towards students with LD. And finally and most importantly, the faculty members will be able to internalize their learning and be able to provide the best support possible in a consistent manner in accordance with the learning that has been internalized.

1.6 Need for the Study

In the past, students with LD have been largely ignored and not attended to in higher education. The present era has opened doors to students having LD being granted equal access to all aspects of college life. In recent years, there has been a call for more mainstreaming and inclusive practices to be implemented in the education system (Parasuram, 2006; Vogel, Fresko, & Wertheim, 2007). Attending college provides students with the opportunity to fulfill their academic pursuits and develop holistically. It can be an exciting phase for most youth but not a great experience for students with disabilities. A student’s ability to attain his or her goals may be impeded if they have a disability (Pollock & Wayne, 2009).

LD is the category of disability that has the highest increase in college admission according to Leyser et al., (2000). As this trend is anticipated to increase with every passing year, it is important for college faculty to be equipped to deal with students having various special educational needs.

Although there has been a lot of research in schools related to LD, there is very little research done on the higher education sector particularly in the UAE. Existing
Research revolves around the importance of training the faculty in improving their
knowledge of LD, however not much research is available on the need to provide training
on improving both the knowledge as well as the psychological skills of faculty.

Lack of knowledge, willingness and preparedness among college faculty members
are seen as barriers to success for students with LD. A number of researchers have
suggested that the success of college students with LD is directly influenced by their
perception of faculty support (Allsopp, Minskoff, & Sc Bolt, 2005; Troiano, 2003;
Wallace, Abel, Sc Ropers, & Huilman, 2000).

Faculty attitudes towards students with disabilities in the postsecondary
institutions / higher education / advanced institutions of learning are one of the important
contributors to the success of students enrolled in these institutions, colleges, and
universities. Fichten (1988), concluded that attitudes of faculty and administrators could
be a vital ingredient in the success or failure of students with a disability and in the
overall success of the mainstreaming effort in postsecondary education.

Faculty attitude towards students with disabilities is one of the most important
contributors to their success and concludes that little research has been done to look
specifically at this phenomenon (Rao, 2004). Moreover, there is a causal link between
attitudes of teachers and success of students with LD which is why it is important to study
the impact of psychological skill training on faculty to improve faculty behavior towards
students with LD that would in turn motivate them to teach and mentor students better.

Based on the need to train faculty on the knowledge of LD and psychological
skills, through understanding their demographic factors, the current investigation was
conducted and the research thus addressed the pressing questions;
Will training the faculty on both knowledge of LD and psychological skills have a better impact than training the faculty only on knowledge of LD?

Will there be a perceived change and impact on faculty on the knowledge, willingness, attitudes and interaction towards students with LD after the training?

Will the socio-demographic factors of the faculty such as gender, age, academic rank, teaching experience and frequency of contact with students having LD have an impact on the knowledge, willingness, attitudes and interaction towards students having LD?

1.7 Significance of the Study

An increasing number of students with LD have entered post-secondary educational environments in recent years. Although legal mandates ensure equal educational access to students with LD in higher education there is an education gap that exists between students having LD and their counterparts.

Faculty members are direct mentors and can play a pivotal part in the educational experience of students. Faculty members rarely receive formal training in pedagogy (Weimer, 1990) or in strategies for creating inclusive classrooms (Burgstahler, Duclos & Turcotte, 1999). Investigating the faculty members’ attitudes towards students with LD will benefit in designing professional training programs, potential interventions and practices for faculty to serve students. Also, improving the knowledge, willingness, attitudes and interaction of faculty members can have a great impact on student retention and student success at a higher educational level.

Disability services and academic departments need to work collaboratively with faculty in order to create welcoming learning environments for students with LD (Bourke, Strehorn & Silver, 2000; Murray, Flannery, & Wren, 2008). There is thus an urgent need to design effective training programs for faculty on psychological and student support services to deal with students having LD in higher education. Overall, the main theme of
such intervention work is to understand the importance of training, particularly, psychological skill training for faculty in dealing with students having unique learning needs.

Empowering faculty through training to support college students with LD will help increase rates of student success, student retention, identify at risk students, help make colleges and universities more welcoming, provide equal opportunities to all students irrespective of disabilities and increase overall faculty participation and involvement.

1.8 Organization of Study

This research study contains five chapters.

Chapter one included the introduction to LD in higher education, current scenario and future projections, effects of LD in higher education, professional training for faculty, role of faculty in supporting students with LD, theoretical framework, need for study, significance of the study and organization of the study.

Chapter two contains a review of the literature related to LD in higher education, problems, inclusive practices, barriers towards inclusion, role of faculty, faculty as mentors, accommodations, influence of demographic factors, importance of training on knowledge of LD, willingness, attitudes and interaction towards students with LD.

Chapter three provides a discussion of methodological information including the statement of problem, objectives, hypothesis, operational definitions, research design, population, sampling procedures, instrumentation, pilot study, training procedure, processing and analysis of data.

Chapter four includes a summary of the research findings and analysis of the data.

Chapter five contains a discussion of the findings, implications of actions, recommendations for future research, and conclusion of the research study.