

CHAPTER 1

DEPRIVATION : A MULTIFACET CONCEPT

DICTIONARY MEANING OF DEPRIVATION

The dictionary definition of “deprivation” emphasises the idea of “loss” but, as generally applied in the literature, the term suggests not only “loss” but also a “lack” of what is essential for adequate development. The concept of deprivation indeed, is a relative one, implying as it does that some individuals lack what others have and since individuals vary greatly in their views of what constitutes deprivation for themselves. It is never easy to determine what essential or desirable needs must be satisfied if adverse consequence are not to follow from lack of satisfaction of these needs.

Townson (1970) for example, look at deprivation not only from the point of view of a family’s income alone. One must not lose sight of the fact that children from affluent homes can be deprived, for example of adequate parental affection and interest while children from poverty stricken homes can be given much love and even a sense of security from parents who show a warm concern for their welfare.

In theory, there is more literature available on “deprivation” rather than on “adequate stimulation”. Deprivation may be considered as the antonym of the concept of adequate stimulation. Deprivation has been equated with failure to provide opportunity to have experiences (Gordon 1965) deficiencies in experiences and condition of learning (Tripathi and Mishra 1976) and as a condition in which particular external and internal factors merge to narrow a person’s behavioural alternative for achieving self-fulfillment (Sinha 1976)

PSYCHOLOGICAL MEANING OF DEPRIVATION

Deprivation means dispossession of withholding of something from or taking away of something from. The dispossession or taking away can

be either whole or partial, either full or half or part there of. Used as a construct in psychology it means a state resulting from withdrawal or taking away of a thing from the person which in normal course should have been with him. It needs to be remembered that 'taking away' or withholding supply of a thing to the person would become deprivation only when the possession of or availability of it is required for his survival and growth and such an act could endanger his existence either partially or wholly. Although this, in general is the meaning of the term deprivation, it has been used differently by different investigators. This is to say, the term, in course of its usage has acquired narrow as well as broad connotations in contemporary psychological literature. Then one can also speak of objective and subjective meaning of deprivation for one may be actually deprived of certain thing but may not feel so.

Deprivation means the limited excess to various facilities of life. It is a very broad term and is of multi nature. "Deprivation" can be of many types, for example " A person who is deprived of normal social life, parental love, adequate physical facility etc. It can be conceived that people who have been brought as orphan, who have been admitted to certified schools, and who live in crippled home might be missing certain things in the life as compared to people who live with their parents, who have normal schooling and who have been physically fit. Thus it can be assumed that orphans, physically handicapped and adolescents brought up in certified schools must be having a feeling of deprivation in various areas of life. It can further be assumed that this sense of deprivation will have an effect on their personality traits. There is still a possibility that these institutionalized groups namely the orphans, physically handicapped and the certified adolescents will be different from the normal group in their patterns of deprivation. It will be worth while to study the patterns of deprivation of the institutionalized adolescent and the normal group of adolescent.

In society, the term deprivation has much broader meaning. This results in division of society into rich and poor, have and have not, ruling and ruled, privileged and non privileged, advantaged and disadvantaged, the poor, the have not, the ruled etc, denoting deprivation. But such categorization tends to over represent actual condition of a given society because no society can be said to have composed of only two distinct class. Social scientists therefore, speak of classes and class relations in relation to a given society. This means there exists various intermediary classes between the ruler and ruled, between rich and poor. It means at societal level deprivation when viewed from class angles acquires multidimensional character. Such a consideration would lead to categorization of deprivation into absolute and relative, full and partial short and long term, intense and mild etc. To an individual who does not have food to eat, cloth to wear, house to live etc. deprivation is absolute. But one who has something to eat and wear and live etc, but not enough of each of it the deprivation is relative.

Gordon (1965) has stated that terms such as socioeconomic deprivation, socially disadvantaged, and culturally alienated reflect concern with deficiencies in the stimulus condition of the childhood. According to Tannenbaum (1969) Social deprivation may be characterized as a condition in which particular external and internal factors merge to narrow, a person's behavioural alternatives for achieving self fulfilment. Wight et al, (1970) have argued that "cultural deprivation must account for deficiencies both in experience and in the conditions of learning". Nurcombe (1970) has opined that "deprivation refers strictly to a dispossession or loss of privileges, opportunities, material goods and the like. it may occur with reference to three interrelated sets of basic needs - physical, psychological and socio-cultural".

Whiteman and Deutsch (1968) have considered social deprivation as a relative term referring exclusively to specific types of environmental

factors. According to them any environmental factor may be treated as deprivational if that factor is (1) associated with certain social grouping such as, socio-economic status and race and (2) when the environmental variable is associated with impaired performance. According to Hunt (1964) Cultural deprivation is failure to provide an opportunity to have the experiences required for adequate development of the semi-autonomous central processes demanded for acquiring skill in cognitive processes. Langmeier (1972) has viewed deprivation as a general phenomenon and defined the same as insufficient satisfaction of basic needs for a prolonged period. According to him, it is a comprehensive phenomenon also which includes sensory, cognitive, emotional, and social deprivation. These aspects overlap one another and in individual cases they are dominant in different ways. They can be studied separately only in specific conditions or in experimental situations.

Sinha (1977) has referred to etymological meaning of "deprivation". It is derived from the verb 'to deprive' which means to disposes or strip (a person or an object), and it implies a "felt loss". The reference obviously is to certain deficiencies in the environment which is not only there but is also experienced as such by the individual. It relates to certain features or aspects of the environment that is inadequate in certain degree and causes an impact on the functioning of the individual. Thus when one talks of deprivation. The emphasis is not on the relevant aspects of the environment which is deficient or wanting in some respects. Therefore, any conceptualization of deprivation should have due emphasis on the environment or the setting in which the individual operates.

According to Panda (1977) the term 'deprivation' seems to be a variation of the term 'social disadvantage, underachievers' 'cultural difference' educationally deprived but it is more than just another euphemism. The word deprivation is multi-dimensional but is not necessarily confined

to low socio-economic homes. Deprivation may also set in and influence low achievement due to inadequate schooling facilities and in a more affluent home because of parental indifference towards child-rearing.

The ecology of the family and the ecology of the institution contribute to educational deficits of the deprived. In a few recent writings (Robinson 1976; Sinha 1976; 1977; Pande, 1977 Rajnarain 1977) a strong plea for an ecological model for understanding of the concept of deprivation has been put forward. Sinha (1976) has suggested that from ecological perspective deprivation consists of two-tier concentric layers. The upper and the more visible layer contains home, school, peer group etc. each providing three dimensions - physical space and materials, social roles and relationship, and activities. The supporting or the surrounding layer embedding the former is provided by the geographic and physical environment and the institutional setting of the general services and amenities.

Mishra and Tripathi (1977) have cogently, argued that the major limitations of the existing approaches in the study of deprivation are as follows : (1) The term 'deprivation' has been used in several ways to denote deficient environmental conditions and impoverished experiences along different dimensions. (2) There is no clarity and unanimity in specification of its empharical referents. (3) majority of the studies deal with only specific aspects of deprivation in isolation inspite of the fact that the various aspects of deprivation occur jointly, and (4) There is lack of precision in use of the concept of deprivation. "Under this assumption it is self evident that the term deprivation can, and should be conceived as a global concept embracing all possible aspects and sources of experiences in human life. Any attempt at studying the psychological effect of deprivation must specify as many operations and sources of deprivation as are possible to differentiate from the spectrum of life in a particular society" (Tripathi & Mishra

1975). It is in this frame work that they have endeavored to treat deprivation.

TYPES OF DEPRIVATION

With regard to study of deprivation in natural setting we find that there is wide difference in researchers with respect to choice of variables identified as referents of "Deprivation". In fact this term has often been employed interchangeably with other term such as cultural deprivation (Kogan 1970; Tulkin 1972), Parental or maternal deprivation (Yarrow 1961), economic deprivation (Symmonds 1968) affective deprivation (Gerwartz 1961) culturally different (Mercer & Lewis 1977), psychological deprivation (Langmeier 1972), relative deprivation (Crobby 1976) cognitive deprivation (Green et al 1967) medical deprivation (Suchman 1967) disadvantage (Havighurst 1964)(Gordon 1968) emotional deprivation (Stott 1974), environmental deprivation (Deutsch 1965) Social Pathology (Coleman 1971) and social disadvantage (Sinha 1976 Singh 1976). Any of these terms could with various degree of precision, be used to denote deprivation. In the following pages certain important types of deprivation phenomenon frequently referred to the researchers are discussed.

CULTURAL DEPRIVATION

Due to poverty in many societies, a large number of children do not get opportunity for their educational development. They live in a cultural setting that does not enable them to take advantage of their social and cultural milieu. Such children have been terms as "culturally deprived".

According to Frank Riessman (1962) the term culturally deprived refers to those aspects of middle class culture such as education, books, formal language from which these groups have not benefited. Often the term culturally deprived is interchangeably used with educationally deprived

to refer to the members of lower socio economic groups who have had limited access to education.

From the above it is quite clear that a child becomes culturally deprived when he does not receive proper education due to poverty. The culturally deprived children are found in lower socio-economic groups. Psychologists and sociologists in the U.S.A. have studied this problem and have listed the following reasons which are responsible for making a child culturally deprived.

- (1) The lack of reading material such as book and periodicals for the children in the home.
- (2) The lack of educational environment in the home.
- (3) The lack of adequate encouragement to go to school.
- (4) The lack of good health and proper diet for children.
- (5) The lack of sufficient languages and reading skills.

More such reasons can be given as they are responsible for making a child culturally deprived. The cultural factors associated with these reasons may be the following.

- (1) Subcultural communal and caste conflicts.
- (2) Class, caste and religious prejudices.
- (3) Chronic unemployment, social isolation, humiliation and ridicule.
- (4) Poor parent, child relationship.
- (5) Inferiority feeling due to indifference of others.
- (6) Social disorganisation creating situation for deviant behaviour.

The culturally deprived child not only socially and culturally remains backward but also becomes a burden on his society because he is unable to play his part in the development and progress of a society. Further

a culturally deprived child is let to become a delinquent on account of unsatisfactory parent child relationship and other type of social relationship. For example Singh (1975) examined the effect of culture contact on the personality structure and found positive results. Mishra (1975) found cultural contacts responsible for high aspirations while Singh (1975) found them causing personality mal-adjustment.

The relationship between cultural background and school learning is neither simple nor well understood. It is generally known that there is a relationship between the social experiences of children and their development, even though it is obvious that this relationship is not one of a simple cause and effect type.

The condition of social, economic, and cultural deprivation usually produce many kinds of deficits. Some of these can be inferred from research available on social class differences in values, behaviour patterns and aspirations. It has been known that low socio-economic class homes have a limited educational tradition and, hence the children from these homes have little "know-how" about the school and its expectations. Uneducated parents who have a meager understanding of the requirements for success in school cannot help their children with academic content.

Generally, also, even if the parents of these children are educationally ambitious, for their children, they cannot effectively communicate these ambitions, because they do not know how to, or else they lack the necessary means to prepare the child to avail himself of learning opportunities.

EDUCATIONAL DEPRIVATION

Since 90% of the 85 million people of India are too poor to afford to the minimum necessary calories, no wonder, the percentage of illiteracy is

also very high among them. The proportion of literates who may be considered as educated is much lower among lower class or lower socio-economic group than in the general population. The disparity between lower socio—economic group and the general population in respect of level of schooling is not as marked in rural areas as in urban areas. Further, the disparity in urban areas become most striking for the population of persons who have acquired education upto matriculation or higher. Rural urban differentials are negligible in respect of primary or Junior basic level education but are sharp in respect of higher level. The percentage of lower socio-economic pupils in the first three grades of school is higher, but as one goes higher the number drop appreciable. It is true that lower class parents are also eager to send their small children to school, but if we look at the 'failures' from the local school it is easy to see that the lower class pupils constitutes most of the failures. If we ask for reasons the head master would give the usual explanation, lack of attendance, lack of parental interest and lack of care and attention in studies. Nenner (1974) attributes the failures of lower socio-economic pupils in education to the play of officers of upper class and to their poor socio-economic condition.

The school climate for the disadvantaged groups of students is qualitatively different than for the advantaged students. In a school situation where advantaged students are put together with the disadvantaged, a feeling of self depreciation is generated. But what is to become of those children who are already in school in which the developed mental patterns cannot be reversed. Little attention has been given on types of intervention by which the deprived child could be helped to perform well in school.

The usual difficulties faced by deprived children in corporation schools of big cities are numerous. These children show a generally poor

performance. They have a high proportion of failure, of drop-outs, of reading and learning difficulties, and of life adjustment problems. Sexton's (1961) tables of correlation between income and education show that the members of lower income group consistently score lower on practically every index. They have lower IQs, achievement and grades, their health is poorer, they are beset with deficiencies in reading and language.

We must educate the deprived because they are a source of needed manpower, or because every one deserves an education. It is essential to democracy to combat the anti-intellectualism, prejudice, and intolerance that are bound to be characteristic of any educationally deprived group. Fundamentally education combats narrow thinking. The groups who lack education have contributed disproportionately to discrimination, and attacks on freedom of thought. Education of the socially disadvantaged has received a great deal of attention from the educators and policy makers in the western countries but not so much in our own country.

SOCIAL DEPRIVATION

The fact that social conditions are at the core of human behaviour has attracted large number of investigators during sixties to ascertain the effects of social deprivation on human behaviour. Rapid development of knowledge of social basis of human behaviour resulting from growing volume of researches in the field of ethology sociology, social psychology, social anthropology, political sociology and political economics has made it abundantly clear that origin and development of higher cognitive processes is dependent upon sociogenic conditions. Luria (1971), demonstrated that cognitive activities are "A social phenomenon in origin, and as a process formed during the course of mastery of general human experiences".

'Social deprivation may be characterized as a condition in which particular behavioural alternatives for achieving self fulfilment are absent.

Social deprivation studies have covered wide range of subjects from physiological, psychological and social point of view. All such studies have revealed that practically all aspect of individuals life is affected by social deprivation. The conclusion that follows from such studies are as follows : (a) There is very close link between social and psychophysiological processes, (b) the nature of relationship between social and psychophysiological process is very complex and (c) a great deal of individual variability across species and within species is found to occur.

Havighurst (1964) maintains, "there is substantial doubt that socially disadvantaged children in our big cities have any positive qualities of potential value in urban society in which they are systematically better than children of families who participate more fully in mass, culture". It appears that disadvantaged children living in there own culture may have more positive value than those in the urban area with middle and upper class children.

Numerous investigators have investigated the effect of social deprivation on various aspects of learning and have shown that learning is adversely effected by it.

Social deprivation is also responsible for personality disorder to a certain extent. Prabha and Shastri (1960) demonstrated that loss of father in adolescence seemed to affect males more and loss of mother between the ages of 6 to 14 years appear to be crucial for the schizophrenics while some loss during the formative period (before the age of 6) appear to be crucial for neurotic. According to Banks and Cappon (1963), it is

the feeling of deprivation rather than the facts of deprivation which is responsible for personality disorders.

Social deprivation is found to give rise to Juvenile delinquency. Anderson (1958) studied the role of maternal and parental deprivation in childhood in the development of delinquency. He found that parental deprivation distinguished the delinquents from non-delinquents.

Social deprivation implies withdrawal of social relations either through experimental manipulation or through natural selection. The overall results of social deprivation studies show that physical, physiological, psychological and social processes are adversely affected by it. Early childhood social deprivation is found to be more damaging than the late childhood social deprivation.

PARENTAL AND MATERNAL DEPRIVATION

Family is the first community of the child. The child needs a recognized place, a status in the society. It is so correctly said that there is no substitute for family. Love builds personality, a child, deprived of love does not develop an integrated personality. The best lesson of citizenship is learnt by the child between the mother's kisses and father's cares.

The term maternal deprivation has been applied to different sets of conditions which singly or in combination, some times appear to have similar consequences. The implicit definition of maternal deprivation is insufficiency of interaction between the child and the mother - figure. The term maternal deprivation has been used also to cover nearly every undesirable kind of interaction between mother and child - rejection, hostility, cruelty, over indulgence, repressive control, lack of affection, and the like.

Mother-child separation also has been subsumed frequently under the term maternal deprivation. However if deprivation is defined as insufficiency of interaction it does not follow that separation necessarily implies deprivation.

Maternal deprivation in child-hood has been found to result in varying degrees of impairment. Some of the variation in degree of damage may be explained by differences in the severity of the deprivation experiences themselves. For example a group of deprived children may be found significantly inferior to non deprived children in family circumstances and some deprived children are found to be more adversely affected than others.

Maternal deprivation has a differential effect on different processes. Although prolonged and very severe deprivation during childhood may at the time affect so many processes that the child seems totally impaired, even then upon close examination some processes are found to be more severely affected than others (the age of the child at the time of the onset of deprivation seems to be important in determining what processes are impaired and to what degrees). For example, the processes through which interpersonalities are established and maintained by may be affected, but one child may emerge as detached and affectionless, while a another may cling anxiously to his mother and seem over dependent on her.

The negative side of the underprivileged family is easy to see; the family may be prematurely broken by divorce, desertion and death; the home is over crowded, the housing facilities inadequate; considerable economic insecurity prevails; both parents frequently work, and thus the children may be neglected; and typically the irritable tired parents use physical punishment in order to maintain disciplines.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEPRIVATION

Deprivation is said to be the property of the environment or organism. If the deprivation is environmental, one refers to the conditions which are responsible for lack of fulfillment of needs. Deprivation in this case is that of the organic inputs and it leads to tissue deficits. Under this category would fall food/nutrition, water, sex and sleep deprivation. Tissue deficit is assumed to be noxious state and drives the individual to take appropriate steps to reduce it. Secondly, the locus of deprivation may be environmental. The dimensions of categorization employed is generally the richness versus poorness of environment e.g. the case of rural urban or slums and non-slum area. One generally operationalizes environmental deficit in terms of level of living (housing, employment, education etc.) or in terms of the absence of objects and persons.

A deprivation environment is often conceptualized and measured by building a catalogue of thing and possession in a home, a neighbourhood. The assumption here is that the lesser the value of the parameters, the greater the deprivation. Generally the parameters of deprivation environment are given unit weight so that all parameters are assumed to exercise the same effect on the dependent variable.

Thus it is the degree of inter-relatedness of part which makes for the complexity of an environment. To the extent an environment is less complex, it may be said to be deprived in relation to more complex environments.

AFFECTIONAL DEPRIVATION

Within the community, the basic unit is the family. Mamoria and others (1963) define the family as the biological unit composed of husband, wife and their children. It is also a functional unit, growing out of biological and economic needs.

The unity of any group is a function of the similarity of values and attitudes among its various members. The unity of the interacting personalities of which the normal family consists is maintained by psychological factors.

The family acts as an educational unit and a socio-cultural agency. The importance of this aspect of the family lies in the fact that all children every where get their earliest instruction in the family. In India this is especially true since a small minority of children, in the past, have attended school. In the family, the child has his first instruction in group relationship and is made familiar with the pattern of social behaviour. In the early stage the mother is the most important person in the development of the child. The family facilitates adjustment to people and group outside the family circle, since the family is an integral part of the larger society, each member has some contacts with the outside world where change is going on in every walk of life. This exposure to change affects the status quo of the family group.

EMOTIONAL DEPRIVATION

The baby who is not given the opportunity to experience the normal emotions of baby hood, especially affection, curiosity, and joy does not thrive physically, is backward in motor and speech development, and does not learn how to establish social contacts or show affection. He usually becomes listless and apathetic and often develops nervous mannerisms, such as thumb sucking.

Emotionally disturbed children are children who have more or less serious problem with other people, peers and authority figures such as parents and teachers or who are unhappy and unable to apply themselves in a manner commensurate with their abilities and interests. In general, one might say that an emotionally disturbed child is one who has a sizable failure pattern in living instead of a success pattern.

PART - II : THE CONCEPT OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES OR DISABILITIES

Learning disabilities is a young field and its history is largely one of the past very few years. Fortunately, it is relatively easy to perceive how the field has developed, what the contributions of major professions have been and what roles some of the pioneers (many of whom are still active workers) have played.

Essentially, all of the relevant history of learning disabilities took place within the twentieth century. In the late 1920s and 1930s some apparently independent events were producing ideas and data were to provide important contributions to the nascent field of learning disabilities. Following world war I, clinical studies of behaviour of soldiers who had suffered various types of head wounds led to the recording and categorization of behaviours peculiar to those with a history of brain lesions (Goldstein, 1927, 1936). At the same time a neurologist (Orton, 1937) was studying the problems of children with developmental language difficulties. His work was also oriented in brain function as he explored the possible effect of cerebral dominance of the right or left lobes on certain learning-related behaviours. Alfred Strauss, a neuropsychiatrist and Heinz Werner (1942) a psychologist, worked on isolating the behaviour characteristics of brain injured children. They used terms like exogenous and endogenous to explain brain injury. But in course of time confusion and misunderstandings began to arise about these terms. Disagreement arose over what actually constituted exogenous as oppose to endogenous injury.

However, according to Hallahan and Cruickshank (1973) during this early formative period, upto 1960, there was “paucity of research, very limited personal and no teacher education” specifically oriented to learning disabilities as a discrete field. Early in 1960, the situation

began to change drastically. Awareness of the existence of an identifiable group of children experiencing some specific learning problem began to grow. More attention began to be drawn to the important issues involved, including the initiation of some badly needed theoretical research. Belmont and Birch (1963), for example, initiated research into lateral dominance and the resulting behaviours in normal and under-achieving children, an area of concern introduced years earlier by Orton (1937). This and similar empirical investigations in other areas grew into involved sequences of research and began to develop a bank of data and knowledge upon which to base important decisions of programme, planning and remediation.

In 1962 one of the first specific definitions of learning disabilities appeared in a college text book dealing with special education (Kirk).

Pressure for more activity and indirectly for better definition, really came largely from parents groups, however, a number of states began to enact legislation for helping children with learning disability problem (although the characteristics were still variously labeled) and the majority of the legislation grew out of the efforts of a few interested professionals associated with groups of highly involved parents. In 1963 an event of historical importance for the whole field of learning disabilities took place in Chicago. A group of parents sponsored a conference to examine and explore the problems of the perceptually handicapped. Foremost in the minds of most of those attending the meeting was concern over the lack of definition of the problems involved and the resulting difficulty in organizing a homogeneous, recognizable group to foster support for training and treatment programs.

Dr. Samuel Kirk of the university of Illinois, a featured speaker at the conference responded directly to the participant's for help and guidance. As he had noted earlier in his book (1962), Kirk called the attention

of the conference to the two major classification of definitions : first, those dealing with causation and etiology involving labels such as brain injury and minimal brain damage and second, those dealing primarily with “behavioral manifestation of the child” and involving such terms as perceptual disorders and dyslexia. Kirk put the issue squarely to the conference. “The term we select should be dependent on your specific aims”. He pointed out that the major direction open lay toward research into etiology (largely a neurological and physiological psychology problem) or toward finding “effective method of diagnosis, management and training of children”. His own bias was made clear as he pointed out that he did not feel that attempts to closely correlate specific Central Nervous System (CNS) etiology and resulting behavioural manifestation had been particularly fruitful and that the behavioral direction offered more tangible, functional rewards.

At the point Kirk introduced to the conference a term he had been using himself learning disabilities, as a more workable, descriptive phrase.

The conference responded quickly to this positive descriptive approach and that very evening voted to organize itself as the Association for children with learning disabilities. A professional Advisory Board was formed and the organization began the world wide growth it has achieved today : this group draws thousands to its annual convention.

Although there were tangible results from the conference, including the issuing of a specialized publication, the Journal of Learning Disabilities, and the appearance of texts dealing totally with learning disabilities, the problems were not over.

Kirk actually was trying both to simplify the issue for laymen and to establish a precedent for using behaviorally descriptive terms rather than labels, unfortunately, popular use of the new term transformed

learning disabilities into a labeled category again, one appearing to be more homogeneous than it was and guided by little research and few trained professional leaders. A functionally operational definition of the term was still lacking. Lay people and too often professionals as well, tended to equate “learning disabilities” with “learning problems” of almost any type. Sensorially handicapped children, mentally retarded children, children with individual behaviour problems - all became confused with the newly defined category. As Hallahan and Cruickshank (1973) point out “The profession was unready and unable to meet the challenge of a new idea”. They indicated the problems at a practical levels.

Reading problems, emotional problems, management problems, intellectual problems, speech problems, handwriting problems and others, irrespective of their etiology or symptomatology, are found grouped together on the premise that each is a learning problem. While the latter point may be valid, the administrative decision regarding placement does not result in a positive intervention program when heterogeneity within a class exhausts the capacity of a teacher to encompass individual difference, particularly when the teacher lacks training in some very complex aspects of teaching.

Thus, even today as the level of sophistication in the field continues to grow, but worked by more research and organized study, there is still a great deal of confusion and disagreement over the actual boundaries which limit the field and the lack of a single, universally accepted definition.

DEFINITION AND FACTORS RELATED TO LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Learning difficulties is a very broad term. There is no clear cut

agreement among the experts with regard to its definition. This is due to partly to some basic theoretical disagreement (For example the role of the central nervous system in learning disabilities) and partly to the fact that contemporary working definitions are constantly being revised. However, it does not mean that workable and acceptable definitions can not be evolved. Definitions are formed, adopted and used successfully. The demand for workable definitions underlines an apparent need for such descriptions in helping workers focus their efforts.

Despite the wide variety of behaviours and learning problems frequently listed under the umbrella of learning disabilities there are some discriminative characteristics that separate children with learning disability problems from those experiencing other type of difficulties. A most common error is to assume that learning disabilities and learning problems encountered in everyday school experiences are identical. The two terms are not synonymous. "Learning disability is used to describe a specific type of exceptional child : it is not a generic term for all children who have learning problem in school" (Myers and Hammill 1969).

The learning disabled child is experiencing a particular type of learning problem difficulty with some discriminable characteristics that are sufficiently identifiable to lead to the deliberate use of the modifier specific in referring to problems to this type; hence the commonly applied phrase, specific learning disabilities.

Variously stated, these characteristic serve as identifying benchmarks:

(a) The L.D. child has average or above intelligence, adequate sensory acuity, but is achieving considerably less than a composite of his intelligence, age and educational ability would predict (Gearheart, 1973).

(b) The L.D. child has specific difficulty in acquiring and using information or skills essential to problem solving (Valett, 1969a).

(c) The L.D. child has integrity emotionally, motorically sensorially, and intellectually but despite these integrities cannot learn in the usual manner (Johnson and Myklehust, 1967).

(d) The L.D. child displays developmental discrepancies in ability has a specific problem that is not a correlate of other primary handicapping conditions and displays behavioural deficits (Kirk, 1972).

(e) The L.D. child exhibits an educationally significant discrepancy between apparent capacity and functioning (Bateman, 1964).

It is logical that these discriminating characteristics, broadly stated should be both drawn from and reflected in the more frequently accepted definitions. Such is indeed the case and as several authors (e.g., Myers and Hammill, 1976; Gearheart, 1973) have pointed out, there is a substantial amount of basic agreement among definitions. Most currently accepted definitions agree upon the following:

1) SOME PRINCIPLE OF DISCREPANCY OR DISPARITY

Such a principle states that there is a significant difference between the level of a child's actual performance and his predicted potential or capacity. Identification of the disparity usually follows a pattern set by the theoretical approach of the assessor, but both breadth and depth of deficit are considered. Isolation of the deficit-disparity area is crucial to successful prescription and remediation.

2) GENERAL ROLE OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

As Gearheart (1973) states, "In many cases it is assumed that there is

a central nervous system dysfunction; however the means whereby this must be shown to exist very greatly. In a similar manner it is generally assumed that one or more of the learning abilities must be malfunctioning but proof of this is not often required for entrance into a program of special services. "Since few if any learning disability specialists are pure dualists who assume that mind (thinking, learning etc.) and body operate independently, there seems to be little attempt to totally rule out the possibility of central nervous system (CNS) involvement in any learning behaviour. Few contemporary definitions, however, focus on the necessity for demonstrating neurological pathology or dysfunction for inclusion in a learning disability category. Remedial techniques, drawn in the part from assumption inferred from definitions, do vary greatly in their focus on CNS structure and function."

3) PRIMARY PHYSIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ARE EXCLUDED

Learning problems or deficits attributed primarily to basic inadequacies or pathologies in specific physiological systems are generally excluded from the category of learning disability. Thus, failure to read caused by a lack of visual acuity that could be corrected by glasses would not be considered a learning disability. Such an exclusion doesn't always apply in all cases of impaired vision or other physiological system dysfunctions. It is quite possible for a child to have both a problem of sensory acuity (e.g. inadequate vision) and a learning disability which actively interact. Such multifaceted problem are commonly encountered and typically are handled through team or cross-disciplinary efforts.

4) SOME SPECIAL PROBLEM AREAS ARE EXCLUDED

Problem arising out of primary causes such as cultural disadvantage, mental retardation and emotional disturbance are frequently excluded from the learning disability category by the more commonly accepted definitions. Specific exclusion decisions will vary from situation to

situation but definitions allow for specific exclusions if local policies dictate operating under such rules.

5) THE RELEVANCE OF THE PROBLEM TO THE LEARNING PROCESS

Most definitions in current use either state or clearly imply that for a problem to be labeled as one of learning disability, it must involve the learning performance and be relevant to educational growth, development, and performance. Various authors categorize the learning process in different ways but the assumption that a learning disability reflects the loss or retardation of such processes or interferes with the use of processes already adequately learned is included in almost all definitions.

In an attempt to resolve the problem of so many different definitions and interpretations the committee of the U.S. Office of Education has given the following definition of learning difficulties.

(a) Learning disability refers to one or more significant deficits in essential learning processes requiring special education techniques for remediation

(b) Children with learning disability generally demonstrate a discrepancy between expected and actual achievement in one or more areas such as spoken, read or written language, mathematics, and spatial orientation.

(c) The Learning disability referred to is not primarily the result of sensory, motor, intellectual or emotional handicap or lack of opportunity to learn.

(d) Significant deficits are defined in terms of accepted diagnostic procedures in education and psychology.

(e) Essential learning processes are those currently referred to in behavioural science as involving perception, integration and expression, either verbal or non-verbal.

(f) Special education techniques for remediation refers to educational planning based on the diagnostic procedure and result.

When the Mainstreaming Act (P.L. 94-142) was enacted in the mid 1970d, the above definition was modified to read :

“Specific learning disabilities means a disorder of one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do arithmetic calculation. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain damage, dylexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps, of mental retardation or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.”

According to Kirk “A learning disability refers to a retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, language writing, or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and / or emotional or behavioural disturbance and from mental retardation, sensory deprivation or cultural or instructional factors.”

THE DEFINITION PROPOSED BY THE NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING (NJCID)

“Learning disabilities 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. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g. sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g. cultural differences, insufficient/inappropriate instruction psychogenic factors). It is not the direct result of those conditions or influence (National Joint Council for Learning Disabilities 1981)."

Because of the pre-eminence that this definition will surely assume and because of the influence of the professional organisations that will endorse the definition, it is important to examine the critical elements of the definition.

"Learning disabilities is a generic term". The committee felt that "Learning disabilities" is a global or generic term under which a variety of specific disorders can be conveniently and reasonably grouped. Most authorities either express or imply allegiance to the idea that learning disabilities are specific in nature. By this they mean that the individual's difficulty is in one or more ability areas but does not encompass all ability area. For example, a child may have severe problems in reading and yet be quite competent in spoken language; or a youngster's spoken language abilities may be extremely poor, even though his or her intellectual abilities fall within or above the normal range when measured through nonverbal performance tests. Therefore when Rappaport (1966) writes of "Insufficiencies", P. Ashlock and Stephen (1966) of "gaps", Gallagher (1966) of "imbalances", and Kirk and Gallagher (1979) of "intraindividual differences", they are all referring to the criterion of specificity in the definition of learning disabilities.

"That refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders". The concept of

disorders that are specific and different in kind. That is heterogeneous, is reinforced in the second element of the definition. Viewed in this light "learning disabilities" is an umbrella term bringing together and encompassing a group of disorders that are manifested in those ability areas detailed by the definition.

"Manifested by significant difficulties". The effects of any one of these disorders on an individual are highly detrimental, that is their presence handicaps and seriously limits the performance by the individual of some key ability. Because there is evidence that in some public schools "Learning disabilities" is used as synonym for "mildly handicapped", The National Joint Council for Learning Disabilities wanted to emphasize the fact that the presence of learning disabilities can be just as debilitating to an individual as the presence of cerebral palsy, mental retardation, blindness, or any other handicapping condition. The committee's intent in the definition is to place itself squarely in the camp of those professionals who feel that the diagnostic label of learning disabilities should be reserved for those "hard-core" case of genuinely serious disability.

No mention is made in the definition of "discrepancies" or of expected level of performance because there has been no attempt to make the definition operational. Operationalization is the next step to be taken, but it should be taken by those schools, agencies and other institutions dealing with the learning disabled. Recent attempts by the U.S. Office of education to develop and establish discrepancy formulas were abandoned, primarily because of negative reactions from the field. The specific arguments against the use of discrepancy formulas are available in the work of Hammill (1976) where it is contended that (1) Uncontrollable test reliability problems arise when the results of various tests are combined in a formula (2) Reporting discrepancy in terms of grade levels makes identification of many primary and preschool

children impossible because tests for very young children do not use grade.

No matter how the operationalization of the definition is undertaken or by whom it is done, the intent of the NJCID and most professionals in the field must be kept in the forefront. Every effort must be made to set objective criteria for identification of the learning disabled that ensure the identification ~~of the learning disabled that ensure the identification~~ of only those serious disorders that present themselves as truly handicapping and debilitating to the individual in whom they can be demonstrated.

"In the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities". For an individual to be considered learning disabled, the disorder has to result in a serious impairment of one or more of the listed abilities. On this point the NJCID has reflected the almost total agreement among professionals in the field of learning disabilities. This agreement is based on the fact that all practitioners remediate, teach, or compensate for reading, speaking, arithmetic or other disabilities as listed, either directly or through attempting to train so-called underlying mentalistic processes (Memory, perception and so on) in the hope that success will generalize to those abilities or will make the child readier to acquire those abilities. Therefore regardless of their particular orientation to learning disabilities, most professionals in the field would agree that the final goal of instructional efforts is to produce or facilitate more efficient performance in reading, listening, talking, arithmetic and the other specified abilities.

"These disorders are intrinsic to the individual". This phrase in the definition means that the source of the disorder is to be found within the person who is affected. The disability is not imposed on the individual as a consequence of economic deprivation, poor child-rearing

practices, faulty school instruction, societal pressures and so on. Where present, such factors may complicate the identification of the disorder and may hamper the treatment of it, but they are not considered to be the cause of the learning disability.

“and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction”. Flatly stated, the cause of the learning disability is known or presumed dysfunction in the central nervous system. These dysfunction may be sequelae of traumatic damage to tissues, inherited factors, biochemical insufficiencies or imbalances, or other similar conditions; but make no mistake, the integrity of the central nervous system in its structure or function is called into question. The phrase is intended to spell out clearly the intent behind the statement that learning disabilities are intrinsic to the individual.

Practically the entire learning disability community, regardless of differing methodological orientations or theoretical frameworks, would probably agree with the positions just expressed. They would certainly adhere to the idea that learning disabilities are fundamentally constitutional in origin.

The National Joint Council for Learning disabilities was quick to point out that in some cases a casual relationship between linguistic or academic problems and central nervous system dysfunction is easy to determine, but that in most cases it is not obvious. For example, the relationship between cause and disability is apparent in cases in which the individual shows a noticeable reduction in language proficiency after experiencing a stroke or brain injury of some sort, that is, in those cases when the onset of the disability is sudden and traumatic. These are acquired disorders, acquired after full language proficiency has been developed. In contrast the vast majority of learning disabilities are developmental in nature. That is, the problems emerge slowly, and

their appearance is manifested only when the child attempts to develop or master some ability area, such as reading. In developmental learning disabilities, attempts to determine the cause of the problem become very difficult and conclusions are often speculative.

Because of the difficulty in establishing cause and effect relationships between the learning disability and central nervous system dysfunction, the NJCID agreed that hard evidence of organicity did not have to be present in order to diagnose a person as learning disabled, but that no person should be labeled as learning disabled unless central nervous system dysfunction was the suspected and presumed cause. Certainly, individuals should not be diagnosed as learning disabled if the cause is known or thought to be something other than central nervous system dysfunction.

“Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions or environmental influences. This clause means very simply that learning disabilities are found among all kinds and types of people including those with other major handicapping conditions, those from all racial and ethnic groups, and those from all levels of economic status. In contrast to the 1968 definition, this is not an exclusion clause, but an inclusion clause, recognizing that individuals may be learning disabled and also blind, deaf and/or mentally retarded; They may be learning disabled and be a member of a different culture; or they may be learning disabled and have suffered extreme economic deprivation. There is no need to catalog the multiplicity of combinations that are possible. Suffice it to say that the definition formally recognizes the possibilities of multiply handicapped learning disabled individuals. In fact, learning disabilities have long been noted among persons having the conditions usually listed in exclusion clauses.

Auxter (1971) has documented the presence of learning disabilities in

some deaf children. He investigated two groups of auditorially handicapped children that were matched in IQ and chronological age. All the subjects were free of gross physical defects. The groups differed only in academic performance. He found differences between groups in motor speed physical fitness and balance. Auxter's work interests us because it demonstrates that sensorially impaired children can demonstrate marked intraindividual differences that cannot be attributed to either subaverage mental ability or their handicapping condition.

Specific learning disabilities have also been found in considerable number among culturally disadvantaged children (Kappelman, Kaplan, and Ganter, 1969). This observation should not surprise any one, for children from poor, minority and disadvantaged homes are considered high risk from the moment of their conception. Parental care among them is rare, maternal and child nutrition is poor, health care for the infant is absent and/or confounded by the ministrations of "Folk doctors", and the prematurity rate is alarmingly high, who would not expect to find more children with both central nervous system dysfunction and learning disability in this group?

It is true that in schools, administrative decisions are made frequently to label students according to their more debilitating handicap. Thus a mentally retarded for overall programming purposes; but this is done in accordance to local or state policies regarding how students are counted for reimbursements and not in response to the intention of the definition.

"it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences". The last element of the definition restates the belief that learning disabilities are different from other handicapping conditions, and although they may coexist in an individual with another handicap, they arise neither

from the presence of another handicap nor from extrinsic, environmental influences. Stated more directly, persons may have a learning disability in addition to another handicap; but they may not have a learning disability because of another handicap.

For example, failure to read print is not learning disability in children who are totally blind, but their inability to use adequate, age-appropriate syntactic forms when speaking might well be evidence of a learning disability. By the same token, a deaf child who is experiencing difficulty in learning to speak clearly with good articulation does not present an example of a learning disability. Only of a learning problem directly resulting from his or her deafness.

PART - III: THE CONCEPT OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The perplexing phenomena of academic under achievement and failure among students at various stages of education have been, and continue to be, a cause of grave concern to the educationists, teachers, counselors and educational planners, the world over and for those in developing countries like India, in particular due to heavy investment in education. The educational costs have increased tremendously at various level of education in Asian Countries during the past few decades.

A closer analysis of wastage in education in India would reveal, that while the two above mentioned maladies namely, Wastage and stagnation are dogging the education at primary level, the secondary and higher secondary stages of education are grappling with the problems of low achievement and failure in the vast majority of students as revealed by the results of large public examinations held for standards X and XII. This necessitated a serious problem into the causes of low achievement and failure. As a sequel, therefore, a large number of research studies were undertaken concerning with intellectual correlates

of academic achievement. This was due to the fact that for a long time in the history of educational institutes, academic performance was conceived to be almost exclusively a function of intelligence and academic aptitude. This view was reputiated convincingly by some foreign investigators in the early 1960s in a number of researches.

A new dimension has been added by the construct of “deprivation” in contemporary research on academic achievement. A plethora of research have been undertaken on the relationship of various kinds of deprivation and academic achievement (Davis 1948; Deutsch, 1960; Khatri, 1965; Chopra, 1969; Singh, 1976, Panda, 1977; Ramoja Rao, 1977; Singh, 1979; and Nair, 1978). The findings of these studies indicate that deprivation of various kind has adverse effect on the academic achievement of school going students.

There is extensive evidence that academic achievement of the scheduled caste children generally tends to be much lower than that of non deprived students. It is commonly observed that in various competitive examination, the mean of qualifying marks for the disadvantaged candidates is much lower than that of the non-deprived candidates. Two parallel sets of studies explain the under-achievement of the deprived children in School. Child’s home and school environment influence his motivation intimately and consequently his school attainment. The question of underachievement of deprived children in schools has to be considered by taking all these factors into consideration. Academic under achievement of children belonging to disadvantaged social groups, such as, the scheduled caste is likely to influence academic motivation of the child negatively. Poor academic motivation will not allow for the acquisition and development of various cognitive skills which are required for effective school performance. Also because of poor motivation, the cognitive skills which have already been acquired are unlikely to find full utilization in school. Poor performance in school will further

influence the academic motivations negatively. The self concept of such a child is likely to become more negative; fear of failure will further go up; and persistence is likely to come down. Poor performance of child will also reinforce the negative evaluations of his teachers, peers and his own parents and thus, results in an increasingly unsupportive climate for him. Initially what may start out as mildly unsupportive educational climate for a disadvantaged child is likely to become more and more negative for him as the years go by. As the pressure of School become more and more severe and as the child finds himself unable to cope with the cognitive and motivational demands of the school, he is likely to take the first exit available to him, either by dropping out from the school or by accepting some lowly placed job.

Bhargova (1982) reported that except few reversals there was a general trend of negative correlation between the prolonged deprivation and academic performance.

Sharma (1983) found that with the increase in prolonged deprivation in economic and socio-cultural areas had detrimental effect on retention while prolonged deprivation in parental interactions had no effect on retention. They further concluded that deprivation in economic area had slightly greater inhibitory effect on retention than deprivation in socio-cultural area, though significant difference was not found.

While several researches have pointed out that poor children as compared with middle class children are not less intelligent in early years of their childhood, they fail to compete and score as well as their middle class counterparts. These differences widen with each passing year as the cumulative deficiencies build up (Singh and Jaiswal, 1980). Various school related learning tasks reiterate this fact (Murlidharan, 1978, Kumar and Murlidharan 1978; Singh. 1978; Rao, 1979; Bevli, 1978; Mohite, 1973). The evidence resulting from an extensive and

intensive investigation reveals the intellectual depression, achievement lag and personality aberrations of the culturally and economically disadvantaged (Rath, 1982).

In response to these findings remedial measures for the total development of these children have been offered by educationists and the psychologists. A commitment to educating all such children to the fullest of their abilities has been found not only in India but in the entire world in the second half of this century. Various intervention programs at homes or in school have been designed and implemented with significant gains (Murlidharan 1978; Mohite, 1976; Murlidharan and Banerjee, 1974; Desai, 1978; Varma and Mistry, 1980). "In India, the need of the time is to put special emphasis on offering well structured teaching programs to the vast disadvantaged masses with a view to bringing them on par with the advantaged sections of the society" (Rath, 1982; P. 245).

It is evident that increasing efforts are made at the National level to bring all children to the school. But experience shows that putting all the children in the schools does not solve the problem of primary education. Systematic socio-economic and psychological studies are not available to pin point the causes of dropouts. There could be various reasons and factors responsible for the "failure and drop out phenomena". Children might dropout due to obligation to earn or due to inability to cope with class room learning for too long. Schools have done more or less what they were doing before, without questioning the worth of what was being done.

Special compensatory programs have been suggested to equip the disadvantaged children with an enriched cognitive background comparable to that of other advantaged children. Disadvantaged children need greater help, especially in subjects like language and arithmetic

(Rath, 1982). They also need greater help in language since their verbal environment is restrictive (Bernstein, 1971).

While researchers gives ample support to the conclusion that the child's impoverished environment leads to his academic failure, Jensen (1971) cautious against attributing this failure solely to impoverished environment. He distinguishes the disadvantaged children from those with sensory deficiencies, the children who suffer from such sensory disability are called "the children with learning difficulties."
