Understanding Learning Disabilities: Knowing the Child Is More Important than Knowing the Law

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Abstract
Many have come to feel that the very minds that have led the way in developing the concept of learning disabilities (LD) appear to be questioning its continued viability as a scientifically supportable model. This is, in fact, not true. However, the lack of a common rubric for understanding and categorising specific learning disabilities (SLDs) is a weakness in the model that makes it vulnerable. This article: (1) addresses the nature of LD, a consensus as to characteristics recognised within the scientific and advocacy communities; (2) suggests a nosology, a system of classification of SLD; (3) describes Dyslexia, the best understood and most common of all SLD; (4) identifies the link between SLDs and antisocial behaviour, a social and human cost not widely understood or recognised; (5) identifies a common psychological phenomenon that compounds the difficulties faced by the individual with an SLD, an influence that must be understood if the initiative, persistence, and resilience of the SLD child is to be preserved and nurtured. (HK J Paediatr (new series) 2005;10:140-148)

Key words: Cognitive deficits; Cognitive dissonance; Dyslexia; Learning disabilities; Nosology