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Call for more remedial teachers

Economy Bureau

Kolkata, Dec 2

Teachers in Kolkata are keen to learn more about disability in students post a Bollywood movie that deals with the same theme. But, according to city doctors, there is a dearth of remedial teachers in Kolkata.

"There is a real dearth of remedial teachers in the city though learning disability remedies have now been made part of the B ED syllabus in the Jadavpur University," said Anindita Chatterjee, clinical psychologist of Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals, Kolkata.

Ideally, all the schools should have learning disability clinics where students can be given remedies. But "apart from Heritage International and Del-

hi Public School, no other school has experts dealing with students having learning disabilities," Chatterjee said on the sidelines of a press conference of Tata Interactive Learning Disability Forum 2008 here on Tuesday.

When asked about the disability forum, Sanjaya Sharma, chief executive of Tata Interactive Systems, said: "Around 3-7% of the world population suffers from this disability, but it can be overcome if detected at an appropriate time. This is the first such forum in Kolkata. We have a forum in Mumbai too. We have invited international experts on this disability to interact with city doctors, parents and teachers to make them more aware. Right now we are focussing on Kolkata and Mum-

baito spread awareness."

In Mumbai, around 700 schools have learning disability clinics, Sharma said. "Learning disability should be made a part of the B ED, MBBS curricula," he said.

India lags behind in awareness about the disability compared with the West. According to Lorraine Peterson, chief executive officer of Nasen, an organisation supporting and developing quality inclusion in education, every school in the UK appoints a special educational needs co-ordinator, who takes care of such disabilities and other problems faced by students. Laptops are also provided to students who have spelling problems. In the UK, one of every 10 students faces this problem, she said.

The Times of India, Kolkata edition

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Famous schools poor nurturing grounds: Experts

Subhro Niyogi | TNN

Kolkata: Parents may swear by the dozen-odd prestigious schools in Kolkata and vie to get their wards admitted so that they, too, can churn out 90% marks when they pass out a dozen or so years later. But child psychologists and educational consultants in the city insist they are poor nurturing grounds for young minds.

"Most of the old and established schools are closed and rigid. They are child unfriendly and crush the uniqueness of a child by driving every kid through the same system. These schools just refuse to acknowledge that there are children with special needs and label those suffering from learning disabilities (LD) like dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia as stupid, truant, lazy and slow learners," consultant psychiatrist Rima Mukherji told TOI on the sidelines of the Tata Interactive Systems (TIS) Learning Disability Forum, the first such initiative in the city.

And, that is no trifling matter since studies show that one in 14 students have LD of one kind or the other. In an average class of 45 students, there would be three needing special assistance to keep up with the class and a little encouragement to boost their confidence.

"The new schools are much better. Heritage and DPS Megacity have special educators and have trained mainstream teachers to assist students with LD," said counselling psychologist and educational consultant Salony Priya.

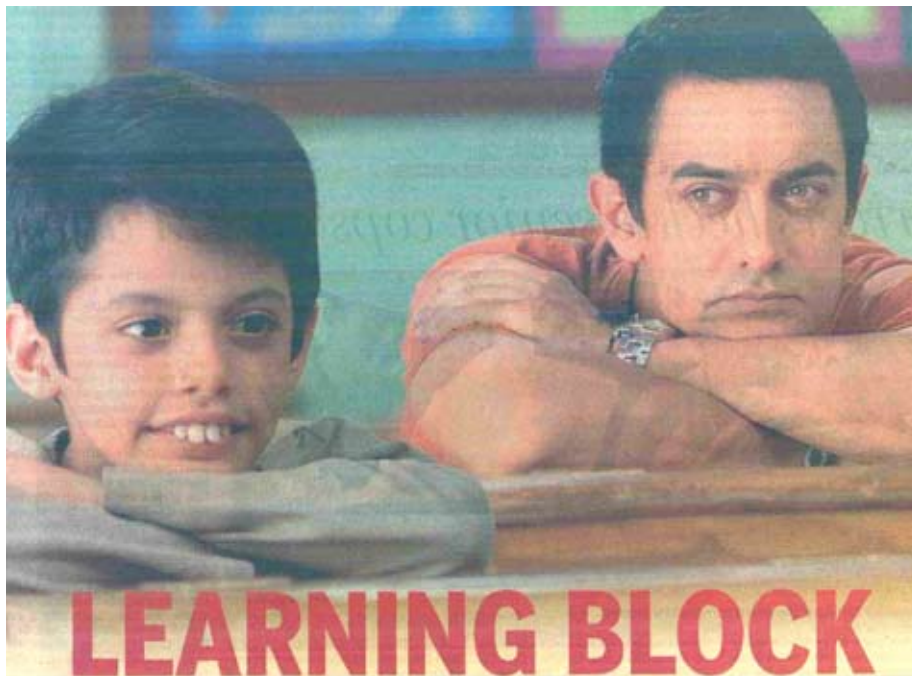


COMPLAINT AGAINST ESTABLISHED SCHOOLS

- Closed and rigid
- Child unfriendly
- Crush uniqueness of a child by driving every kid through the same system
- Refuse to acknowledge that there are children with special needs and label those suffering from learning disabilities as stupid, truant, lazy and slow learners

While ICSE and CBSE boards prescribe remedial education for such children and even offer assistance like dropping a language and mathematics at a higher class, use of calculators in mathematics exam, more time to complete the exam and urge examiners to overlook spelling errors, none of the 'famous' city schools allow any of these.

Tata Interactive Systems, which organised the forum, intends to act as a facilitator, providing training to the education department and raise awareness in schools. "In the past couple of years, our staff in Mumbai have made presentation on LD in about 80 schools. In Kolkata too, we will carry out a similar programme," said TIS chief executive Sanjay Sharma.



LEARNING BLOCK

Early diagnosis is a must

Joydeep Thakur
Kolkata, December 2

THOMAS ALVA Edison, Albert Einstein and Leonardo da Vinci all overcame learning disability. And if your child is afflicted, s/he can be helped to fight it.

On the eve of World Disability Day, doctors have warned that thousands of children are suffering from learning problems. If not diagnosed early, children can go through a tough time as was the case with Ishaan Awasthy in *Taare Zameen Par*. On the other hand, a little awareness can help them become future leaders.

Swarup Sampat Rawal, former Miss India and a special educator and consultant, associated with Lokmanya Tilak Hospital in Mumbai said, "I am dyslexic but I have completed my PhD on this subject."

According to Sampat, recent studies in India and other countries have shown that nearly 7 per cent of children are dyslexic across the world. For a child to be certified dyslexic he or she has to be 12 years or more. Often it is the teacher who diagnoses it first. It has also been found that learning disorder is more common in boys.

UK-based expert Lorraine Petersen said, "An early diagnosis is good for the child as it might lead to bunking school and eventually dropping out, bullying by other children and even juvenile delinquency. However, remedial education cou-

pled with boosting the child's self esteem and confidence would help the individual to outshine others."

Mumbai's Lokmanya Tilak Hospital is the only facility in India to issue a learning disability certificate. The unit is being funded by the Tata Interactive Systems for the last eight years. Learning disability sessions have also been made mandatory by the Maharashtra government in its BEd. and MBBS courses. The state has also kept special provision in its secondary and higher secondary examinations for students with learning disability certificates like options for skipping mathematics, extra time during examinations and lenient checking of answer scripts.

"However, more than 45 per cent of the cases do not opt for remedial action. Often, there is no diagnosis and unfortunately social stigma is also attached to it," said Madhuri Kulkarni a former head of the department of paediatrics at Lokmanya Tilak Hospital and Medical College.

TIS, which has taken up the problem as a part of its corporate social responsibility, is now increasing the awareness level in Mumbai schools. Its next destination is Kolkata. Chief executive of TIS Sanjaya Sharma said, "As our first step we held a forum in Kolkata on Tuesday where experts, representatives from schools, NGOs and government officials interacted.

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Hindustan Times,
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City lacks facilities to help victims

Kolkata, December 2

EXPERTS ON learning disability claim that the situation in Kolkata is worse than other cities as the awareness level is low, there is dearth of professionals and government initiative is lacking.

Anindita Chatterjee, clinical psychologist associated with Apollo Glenegles Hospital, said: "The main problem is in assessment and remedy. There is a dearth of professionals, clinics, data and awareness on the subject are major obstacles."

She said even though there was no data available on learning disorder in Kolkata, the number of cases that doctors encounter suggest that the prevalence is somewhere between 5-10 per cent. This apart, there are few teachers trained in diagnosing LD and experts who can provide remedial education after a child has been diagnosed.

"Jadavpur University's special BEd course has a module on this. No other university provides it. It has also not

been inducted in our MBBS course. Recently, only 40 teachers in 21 vernacular schools have been trained. Private schools such as Heritage and DPS, however, have teachers who are trained on the subject," Rima Mukherjee, consultant psychiatrist, said.

There is a provision in ICSE and CBSE boards where students with learning disability certificates are allowed to drop a subject and given extra time during exams but not many schools allow their students to do so.

"Teachers and parents in Kolkata need to be sensitised and awareness level has to be raised. We have to understand that ridiculing a student or bullying him or throwing him out of the school will only aggravate the problem. The student should be kept in the mainstream and not relegated to the sideline," Salony Priya, counselling psychologist and educational consultant, said.

She also said the government should take steps to tackle such students at the school level.

—JT

Prabhat Khabar,
Kolkata edition
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सेमिनार का आयोजन

कोलकाता : टाटा इंटरैक्टिव लर्निंग डिसेबिलिटी फोरम ने आज विकलांगों की स्थिति पर एक सेमिनार का आयोजन किया. विकलांगों की स्थिति पर फोरम ने कोलकाता में बीते दिनों एक सर्वेक्षण किया था. इसमें अनेक ऐसे तथ्य उभर कर आये जिससे आमलोग अनजान हैं. सर्वेक्षण के अनुसार 12 से 15 वर्ष के विकलांग बच्चे जो छठवीं अथवा सातवीं कक्षा के छात्र हैं, वे पढ़ाई में विशेष रूप से कमजोर हैं. लड़के व लड़कियों में विकलांगता का अनुपात 2.7:1 है. सर्वे के अनुसार अधिकतर अभिभावक, शिक्षक व चिकित्सक बच्चों की मानसिक विकलांगता को दूर करने में असफल रहे हैं. विकलांगों के लिए बनाये गये विशेष स्कूलों में पढ़ रहे विकलांग बच्चों का अपेक्षानुरूप विकास होता है. सामान्य तकनीक से पढ़ने वाले विकलांग बच्चों की स्पेलिंग, रीडिंग, ग्रांमर, गणित व स्मरणशक्ति बेहतर होती है. विकलांग छात्रों की तुलना में छात्राएं अध्ययन की चुनौतियां अधिक स्वीकार करती हैं. सेमिनार में विभिन्न रोगों के विशेषज्ञ चिकित्सक भी शामिल हुए.

Business Standard, Kolkata edition 12/03/2008, Page no. 7

Tata Interactive LD forum

Kolkata: Tata Interactive Learning Disability Forum has moved a step forward from awareness to actual analysis of the current scenario in the field of learning disability. Tata Interactive had undertaken research to find out the realities of life after certification. The research pointed out that children in classes VI/VII are found to be the most commonly affected by learning disability. The male:female ratio among learning disability children is 2.7:1 indicating a higher incidence among boys. According to the report, appointments or visits were cited 36 per cent of the time as the cause of lengthy certification cycles. Tests were regarded by 31 per cent as the cause, with other causes 33 per cent. Once a student undergoes certification there is a lot of support from the certifying agency and the school, the report stated. Almost half (45 per cent) of learning disability cases do not opt for remedial education. Spelling, reading, grammar, memory, maths and simplification techniques were most cited as being useful remedial techniques. Respondents cite the family, rather than schools, as being the key source of post-certification support and for remedial education. Girls are more accepting and supportive of learning disability status than boys. Students feel confident after remedial help, which is an extremely positive indicator in support of learning disability remediation efforts. The report said that girls who opt for remedial education seem to have more difficulty in choosing a stream of higher education. Most respondents are comfortable with pursuing higher education, though older students in higher classes seem to disagree. Most respondents indicate that the learning disability certification posed no handicap during college admission and most do not indicate being faced with critical challenges in college. The report stated that colleges were unsupportive of learning disability, and teachers tend to discourage rather than encourage Learning Disability students. Peer pressure was caused mainly by lack of awareness of learning disability. BS REPORTER