

An analysis of determinants of psycho-educational assessment for learners with learning disabilities in Brno, Czech Republic

(scientific paper)

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Abstract: *A comprehensive psycho-educational assessment for learners with learning disabilities (LD) is a significant event for parents, psycho-educational assessors, teachers and learners. This research study aimed to analyze the determinants of psycho-educational assessment for learners with LD in the city of Brno in the Czech Republic. Psycho-educational assessment for learners with LD remains a challenge in the Czech Republic, hence, there is an extensive debate as to how to best improve psycho-educational assessment outcomes. Mixed method was used in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Quantitative data from secondary sources as well as in-depth interviews were used to investigate issues and to discover how the psycho-educational assessors and teachers thought and felt about the whole process. Interview data from parents of school-age children with LD who had psycho-educational assessments done within the past one year were crucial for the proposed study to find out their experiences with assessment process. Findings showed that the main challenges in psycho-educational assessment were linked to lack of proper stakeholder collaboration and interests, inadequate funding and resources, time taken in assessment and community backgrounds of the learners. This study recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education should address the critical challenge of funding to ensure enough resources including personnel. The education regulations need to be explicit to all stakeholders to ensure maximum degree of inclusion and access to psycho-educational services by learners with LD without discrimination.*

Keywords: *compulsory education, determinants, integration, inclusive education, learning disability, pedagogical and psychological counselling center (PPCC)*

1 Introduction

Globally, most psycho-education assessment studies have been based on examinations and grading, not on learning, even though the assessors claim that the focus of their assessments are to inform learning as outlined by White & McCloskey (2005). The focus on funding, examination and grading, compromise the overall process of psycho-educational assessment for learners with learning disabilities (LD). World education systems are ever-changing in line with psycho-educational assessments of learners with LD, and hence posing the need for more professionals who meet the requirements of carrying out psycho-educational assessment for appropriate interventions to be accorded to the learners with LD who are currently facing challenges (The Gordon Commission, 2013). In the United States of America (USA) where learners with LD at every level have the probability of performing some educational tasks, most studies still point at gaps in the psycho-educational assessment process (National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2007). Many other countries have continued to source psycho-educational assessment tools from international sources; however, they have used them inappropriately within their local contexts (James B., 2006).

The persistent challenge in reforming assessment is the prevalent lack of attention to appropriate assessment plans, placement options, appropriate legislation and or considerations of the challenges that hinder success in psycho-educational assessment (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). In some of the European countries, for instance Austria, there are no specific laws that apply to LD; however, the Czech Republic has LD legislations. These laws are, characteristically, related to both compulsory and higher education. When reviewing student achievement, tests form part of the assessment plan and are generally driven by policies, systems and goals. Efforts from psycho-educational assessment institutions and programs have led to the mass use of commercial psycho-educational assessment tools (The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic, 2012).

The Czech Republic Education Act no. 561/2004 provides for integration of children with LD in mainstream schools whenever possible. In 1992, 1994, and 1998 Governmental Educational Ordinances unveiled Centers for Special Needs Education, Individual Education Program IEP, adapted technologies to be implemented by the Ministry of Education. The practice for inclusion varies from one institution to another, following school specific policies and management recommendations on school placement options (Riddel, Harris, Smith, & Weedon, 2010). This study is important for borrowing good practices that can be implemented in the Kenyan context since it examined the entire assessment processes at the pre-school and elementary school levels specifically for students with LD and endeavored to articulate the issues around the psycho-educational assessment process for learners with LD

and the implications. By understanding the assessment process, the challenges facing the assessment of learners with LD in Brno, Czech Republic and learning from the experiences, Kenya can implement some of the recommendations to ensure proper assessment for learners with LD.

Statement of the problem

The Czech Republic, just like many other European nations, endeavors to immensely improve the education standards; however, psycho-educational assessment of learners with LD remains a challenge. Even though there are legislative aspects that address stakeholder responsibilities in the Czech Republic, issues such as student assessment, collaboration among teachers, parents and psycho-educational assessors in providing intensive services to learners with LD still needs to be enhanced.

There is an extensive debate in the Czech Republic on how to best proceed with providing effective psycho-educational assessment for learners with LD from different communities especially the Roma. Providing adequate finance for assessment and educational resources and fair disbursement of funds for learners with LD is often a challenge. There is a dire need for research to improve standards of psycho-educational assessments to effectively inform proper placement options and strategies for supporting learners with LD. The problem is to get a clear empirical picture on the psycho-educational assessment process for learners with LD and challenges faced by assessors, teachers and parents. An analysis of determinants of psycho-educational assessment for learners with LD is paramount.

Purpose of the study

This study was designed to analyze the determinants of psycho-educational assessment of learners with LD in Brno, Czech Republic. Specifically, the study sought to understand the assessment plans, assessment placement practices, legislative influence and challenges facing psycho-educational assessment of learners with LD. Objectives of the study were the following:

1. To find out the placement options for learners with LD after psycho-educational assessment process in the city of Brno.
2. To investigate challenges in psycho-educational assessments of learners with LD in Brno.

2 Methodology

Research design

This study used descriptive survey design. Participants answered questions which were administered in the form of interviews and questionnaires. This enabled us to

describe the responses given and to make observations and gain valuable information. Mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. This involved collecting, analyzing and integrating qualitative data gathered from primary sources through interviews and observation, and quantitative (dataset) to better understand the research problem. Mertens (2007), states that mixed methods allow dialogue leaned towards improving social justice hence enriching quantitative data collection process. A study using mixed methods involves not only collecting data through interviews but intentional collection of quantitative and qualitative data for the success of the study (Pasick et al, 2009). Quantitative data analysis was done using SPSS software. Based on chi-square measurement of nominal association, Cramer's V was used to give good norming. The formula for the variance of Cramer's V was used (Devlin and Pothier, 2005). The crosstab involved two nominal variables of multiple categories to give appropriate measure of association.

Target population

The participants of the study included teachers in pre-schools and primary schools, psycho-educational assessment practitioners at the PPCC, and parents of learners with LD. Brno has 137 pre-schools with 987 teachers. There are 66 primary schools with 2.268 teachers. The number of children in pre-school and primary school add to 43.084. The numbers of professionals working in the PPCCs in Brno were as follows: 6 special educators and 6 psychologists for Zachova center, 5 special educators and 5 psychologists for Hybesova center, 7 special educators and 11 psychologists for Kohoutova center, 5 special educators and 7 psychologists for Lomená center, 1 special educator and 6 psychologists for Sladkova center. Data from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2015) shows that there are a total of 6849 children with disabilities, 9.9% equivalent of about 681 of learners are educated in special classes, 50.5% about 3457 of learners are individually integrated and around 2711 of learners which forms 39.6% are educated in schools for children with special needs.

Sampling technique and sample size

In this study, purposive sampling was used for teachers and PPCC professionals, who had worked with learners with LD for the past three years hence had good information. Parents of learners with LD whose children had been assessed in the past 12 months were selected. Sampling of definite cases was reached based on the study purpose. Purposive sampling method (also known as subjective sampling, judgment or selective) is a non-probability sampling method and occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Purposive sampling according to Mason (2010) is done in consideration of the total population.

Purposive sampling was used in this study to select a representative sample that could bring accurate results. The researcher purposefully sampled psycho-educational assessment stakeholders (service providers and parents) and stratified the sample by practice settings (pre-primary schools, primary schools, and PPCCs). Hence, 14 pre-primary schools, 7 primary schools and 3 PPCCs that cater for learners with LD were sampled. The interviews involved 40 participants from 8 pre-primary schools, 7 primary schools and 3 PPCCs that consented to the request from the contacts sent to the sampled institutions and parents; hence, the group met the homogeneous group criteria. Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006) states that twelve and above interviews of a homogenous group is enough for saturation.

Data collection

In-depth interview was used to investigate issues in an in-depth way to gain data on psycho-educational assessments processes and the challenges faced by teachers, parents and assessors. Secondary data included datasets for quantitative and qualitative analysis, which were instrumental in adding more value to the analysis. Documents used were official documents, personal documents, annual reports and datasets. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Special Education and Institutional Education Department provided data on students with disabilities desegregated by the type of impairment found on the website of the Ministry's statistical yearbook. Official documents included legislative documents, annual statistics on children with special needs.

3 Research Results

Learners with LD and placement options

We found a total 6849 learners with different disabilities, who were in different placement options, according to the Ministry of Education Statistical Yearbook 2014/2015 – Performance Indicators. Findings showed that the largest groups of children with special education needs (SEN) are those with LD at 36.71%, placed both in special classes at 6.4% and 29.4% in individual integration, followed by Intellectual Disabilities (ID) with a difference of 11.71%. The lowest at the basic school level is VI at 0.93%. Slightly above half of SEN students in South Moravian region were individually integrated in mainstream schools. Individual integration was at 50.5%, a difference of 10.9% from the special schools for children with SEN and the lowest in special classes at 9.9%.

Sex of the Respondent Learners in/who		Type of Disability								Total
		ID	HI	VI	SD	PH	MI	LD	BD	Autism
Male	Form of Integration	Special Classes			0.9%	0.1%	0.2%	6.7%	0.5%	0.5%
		are Individually integrated Schools for children with SEN		0.5%	0.9%	1.4%	0.5%	29.7%	12.0%	4.4%
	Total			0.5%	4.6%	0.5%	4.3%	0.9%	2.5%	5.8%
Female	Form of Integration	Special Classes			6.3%	1.9%	5.0%	37.4%	14.9%	10.7%
		are Individually integrated Schools for children with SEN		1.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	5.8%	0.2%	0.2%
	Total			0.5%	0.7%	2.6%	0.6%	28.8%	5.8%	1.3%
Total	Form of Integration	Special Classes			4.0%	0.7%	6.1%	0.8%	2.4%	3.6%
		are Individually integrated Schools for children with SEN		0.9%	5.2%	3.3%	7.0%	35.3%	8.4%	5.1%
	Total			0.9%	0.7%	0.1%	0.2%	6.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Total	Form of Integration	Special Classes			0.8%	1.8%	0.5%	29.4%	9.9%	3.4%
		are Individually integrated Schools for children with SEN		0.6%	4.4%	0.5%	4.9%	0.9%	2.5%	5.1%
	Total			0.9%	6.0%	2.4%	5.7%	36.7%	12.7%	8.8%

Figure 1: Cross-tabulation by form of integration, type of disability and sex

The dependent variable was assumed to be placement options (form of integration) and the independent variable to be type of disability. The gender of the students was used as the control variable. According to Hunt and Marshall (2002, p. 119) the reasons for massive increase in identification of students with LD include the premise that children who are underachieving are inaccurately identified as students with LD. This assumptive evaluation criterion is usually too subjective and unreliable. However, the purpose of assessment lies in the intervention and the results should support better placement options and interventions (Grigorenko, 2009). These findings could be related to the fact that there was greater general awareness of LD by the teachers and parents. It could also be assumed that bio-psychosocial stressors may have placed students at risk for acquiring LD hence the increased LD identification. Assessment plans focus upon children's developmental and educational deficits (Schmidt & Bailey, 2014). When early identification is not done, the student may fall behind in reading, writing and math. The Ministry of Education provides a framework for school districts and teachers to identify students with LD and to help them with learning of the essential academic skills.

Relationship between learners diagnosed with LD and placement options

There was strong evidence of a relationship between type of disability and form of integration for both girls and boys in the primary schools {Chi-Square = 2397.820, df = 16, sig. = 0.0001 for boys} and {Chi-Square = 1271.712, df = 16, sig. = 0.0001 for girls} giving a total of {Chi-Square = 3667.472, df = 16, sig. = 0.0001 for both boys and girls}.

Sex of the Respondent		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Male	Pearson Chi-Square	2397.820 ^b	16	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	2783.636	16	.000
	N of Valid Cases	4537		
Female	Pearson Chi-Square	1271.712 ^c	16	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	1538.738	16	.000
	N of Valid Cases	2312		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	3667.472 ^a	16	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	4335.040	16	.000
	N of Valid Cases	6849		

Figure 2: Chi-Square Tests

This finding was statistically significant since sig 0.0001 was way less than 0.05. This suggested that when learners were diagnosed with LD, whether they were male or female, they all end up in the same settings. Hence, the placement procedures between both boys and girls with LD are similar.

The result of the Cramer's V significance test for relationship $P = 0.514$ for boys, $P = 0.524$ for girls and total of $P = 0.517$. Hence, the relationship between the variables of form of integration and type of disability were statistically significant. There was likelihood that there was no sampling error hence there was a true relationship for the learners with LD in Brno and its surroundings from which the sample was drawn.

Sex of the Respondent			Value	Approx. Sig.
Male	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.727	.000
		Cramer's V	.514	.000
	N of Valid Cases		4537	
Female	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.742	.000
		Cramer's V	.524	.000
	N of Valid Cases		2312	
Total	Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.732	.000
		Cramer's V	.517	.000
	N of Valid Cases		6849	

Figure 3: Symmetric Measures

More boys were diagnosed with disabilities than were girls. In the current study, more boys were identified as having SEN than girls hence, 2457 students had SEN, which made about 36.2 % of the total numbers of learners with special needs. When diagnosed with LD both the boys and girls ended up in similar placement options. More boys than girls were identified as having LD. There were more than double the numbers of boys diagnosed with LD as compared to girls with LD hence, 802 girls and 1655 boys with LD were placed in similar forms of educational settings. Therefore, it seems less likely that referral bias was responsible for the increased rate of LD observed among males compared with female learners.

Critical Disability Theory recognizes disability not only as the inevitable consequence of impairment but also as a complex socially constructed interrelationship between impairment, individual response to impairment, and the social environment (Devlin and Pothier, 2005). Hence, social environment may fail to address the needs of students with LD that do not match expectations of society.

According to Hallahan & Pullen (2003, p. 155) biologically boys are more predisposed to the factors causing LD as compared to girls. In addition, Shaywitz et. al (2004) have pointed out that referral bias accounts for gender variations in LD since more male students are likely to be referred by teachers compared to girls for psycho-educational assessment. While most research work suggests potential for increased prevalence of LD among male students due to vulnerability biologically, others have pointed out higher prevalence to referral bias.

Nevertheless, referral was more likely to be given to boys for SEN services because of behaviors, such as hyperactivity when they incur academic challenges. Socially, girls tend to be quieter as compared to boys hence better at hiding the behavioral characteristics therefore teachers rarely send them to the educational-psychological centers. Fuchs, Barnes, Fletcher & Lyon (2007) indicate, however, that boys are twice more likely to have LD compared to girls when referral bias is excluded from the study design.

Teachers held the view that there was a problem with the way recommendations were constructed for the learners. They felt that some of the recommendations were not attainable.

'My biggest challenge is that when we say something in some way, to be able to follow it. To enable our children to be in an environment which they are able to learn what they need to, and they are not to overwhelm them or overload them with tasks, but give them opportunities, in which they are able to learn through it and to live through it.' Teacher TR02 explained.

The teachers generally had the feeling that the assessors just recommended on paper but did not take the time to follow up whether their recommendations were being implemented or implementable. They said that some of the students would benefit more from placement in special classes than in individual integration as recommended by the psycho-educational assessors.

The main challenges in the psycho-educational assessment of LD included lack of proper stakeholder collaboration structures and involvement, community backgrounds of learners, staffing and inadequate resources for learners with LD, policies, and time taken in carrying out the assessment.

Stakeholder collaboration and involvement challenges

The study demonstrated that there was a high level of parental involvement from female parents in collaborating with psycho-educational assessors and teachers. However, the assessors working with schools in Brno spent very little time in direct contact with the teachers and learners with LD during the assessment process and after due to the high number of students being assessed. It was also revealed that the teachers felt parents were imposing influence on assessment results and in schools to suit their own interests. The major challenge with collaboration with parents from the teacher's side was communication.

Teacher TR01 explains her view about the parents' *'Since the last 5 or 10 years, the biggest challenge we face is the communication with parents. Their child is the center of space, nearly of the universe. Usually the parents and in most occasions the mothers are the ones who follow-up the recommendations from the psycho-educational assessment. Some parents think that teachers are a cause to the challenges their children are*

faced with and that it is the failure of the school to meet the needs of their children. They think that it is the school's mistake that their child is having the challenges' (sic).

Hosp and Reschly (2002), explains that strong family-school partnerships led to more positive educational outcomes for children. Lack of time devoted to school consultation and feedback during the assessment process and after is likely, at least in part, a reflection of the high demands placed on school psychologists or special needs consultants. The parents were the key stakeholders for both the teachers and the schools in general. There was need for collaboration between the two key stakeholders in assessments, teachers and the assessors.

Financial challenges

It was established that there was a challenge with funding from governments to provide for additional assessment and intervention processes for schools and the assessment centers, to ensure that assessment practices within school systems and at the assessment centers achieved the purpose accordingly for learners with LD.

'The assessment is generally funded by the local government. Currently the funding is not enough to cater for assessment needs of students. I only wish we had proper legislation to ensure adequate resources on the financial aspects. The reason we have few assessors is that the current funding can only be used for this number of personnel. Bringing in more experts means additional resources, we are limited by this.' Assessor PEA04 explained.

There was dire need to review the remuneration of the assistant teachers, of additional teachers to increase the numbers of teachers, improving the resources and of additional assessment staff at the centers. The Ministry of Education had prepared its reform of regional education funding, which was then waiting the approval by the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The reform applied to schools governed by regions and municipalities (more than 90% of primary schools) (Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2015/2016). Past funding of regional education had been derived from the number of students ('per capita' method), with financial resources provided from the budget of the governing bodies (mostly regions) and the state budget. This funding system has proved to have multiple issues and deficiencies. In funding staff, the system disregards different levels of teachers' salaries determined by the length of teaching practice, expertise-dependent financial supplements.

Community background

There was strong evidence that community background had a relationship with schooling in terms of psycho-educational assessment. Hence, more students diagnosed with LD were from the Roma community than any other community. Teacher TR11 described experience with a student from the Roma community. *'There is a very*

specific case which I had in my classroom of a child from the Roma community. He was able to follow the classroom activities for three months and thereafter he started slowing down on the activities and after that he had to go through the first class again. There has been a great difficulty because he really comes from a very poor social background, he was not given proper care so by the end of the first grade, which he had to go through again, he got recommended to study at a different school which was part of special education for LD...

Roma ethnic group in the Czech Republic constitute a minority. According to the census from 2011, the Roma nationality was reported to be a total of 13.150 inhabitants. Another study conducted by the Czech Ministry of Education in 2010 confirmed that in some regions this is still the case, while across the country Roma children are on average 12 times more likely to attend “special schools” than non-Roma children. Furthermore, the study found that on average Roma children constituted 35% of children diagnosed as having “mild disability” and consequently diverted into “special schools” rising as high as 50% in some regions.

A survey conducted by the European Roma Rights Centre in 2011 found that in 5 of the “special schools” they visited, between 90 and 100% of the student population were Roma, despite the fact that they were not children with intellectual disabilities.

Parent PR04 reported *‘My child was referred to the ghetto school and teachers have continually told me that my child doesn’t show any sign of a disability, I have always thought that it is because my child is Roma but all the same my child is comfortable there because other children are Roma too.’*

Schools such as these are commonly referred to as “ghetto” or “Roma” schools and once identified as such, application for admission from non-Roma families drops down.

Creating space within a society with barriers that make it difficult for students with LD to succeed metaphorically because of disabilities or because of aspects of minority is intensely a societal problem. Most teachers held the view that in the Czech education system this is traced back to the communist era.

Teacher TR08 cited a problem, *‘They don’t understand how and why the assessments are necessary. The most important part is that it is really influenced by the communist era, because it is a phenomenon which can be connected back to the communist times.’*

Marginalization in terms of race or class affiliations forced parents to protect their children. Students with LD were subjected to judgment when decisions following assessment results were made for instance following the need for the professional white class to pursue segregation of students (Ferri & Connor, 2006). The social, political and economic shifts in learners classified with LD, demonstrate that the Roma students are now overrepresented in LD, and in specific schools.

Teacher TR13 reports, *'This school is 99% Roma school, so the other groups do not bring their children here.'* This has created qualitatively different experiences for students from the majority group. Findings illustrate inequality, which parents and children from the Roma group get within assessment system.

Discriminative acts challenge an individual within a structure of routine oppression in everyday life (Moore, Beazley, Maelzer, 1998). There is a bigger population of the Roma students in SEN schools pointing to placement challenges in the education system. Special Needs Education should be able to address student needs; however, it was used to perpetuate marginalization connected to race and the socio-economic class. Functional demands are exercised on students with LD from the social environment as provided by public policy that drive attitudes of the society (Hahn, 1988).

Challenge in carrying out psycho-educational assessment

All the research participants pointed out that the time taken to carry out the assessment was too short, and the report preparation took a very long time. This was reported to be influenced by the high number of students being assessed.

Psycho-educational professional PEA01 cited the challenge with time.

There are many children who require psycho-educational assessments. The demand is high, so we carry out the assessments daily, we are always busy, we are few, but the assessment requests are many. In fact, we are not able to complete the assessments and to write all the recommendations by the end of the year. There are close to 500 children, who are unassessed by the end of the year, but we do our best and I can say that we assess so many students.

The National Centre on Response to Intervention (2010) integrates assessment with instructional interventions calling for the cooperation between the schools and at the assessment centers. It requires that the assessment itself must be a continuous process, not a one or two day process. When appropriate procedures are not followed and quality guidelines with paying attention to standard procedures are not put into consideration then the outcome of the assessment is likely to be untrue to the picture of the learner (Poon & Cohen, 2008).

The practitioners emphasized the objective assessment of skills and abilities of the children. Psycho-educational professional PEA02 provided view about the assessment practice. *'I think that what is important is the objective assessment of skills and abilities of the children, the practitioner has to understand them. Failure of which is like measuring a circle with a ruler and expecting to get accurate results.'*

In addition, the assessors as individuals should be passionate towards providing services and specialize in different areas of assessments to cater for the heterogeneity of learners with LD who are seeking support and services being offered by assessment centers (Grigorenko, 2009).

Challenges of parental, teacher and assessor interest

Our study also found out that most parents preferred the individualized integration as the placement option for their child with LD where their children are supported in the regular classroom because the model met the educational needs of their children. Few parents who favored group integration viewed the needs of their children as very high. Parent PR01 reiterates experience with assessment; *'I never expected any damaging news. The only part I did not agree with was the group integration. You see... today my son is not separated but he is doing well...'*

Parent PR07 explained the reasons for individual integration in the mainstream-classroom as opposed to the special class, *'My child would miss a lot when segregated from the rest of his peers in the name of special class. I don't think it is the right idea, maybe in some situations but generally I believe that my child should be integrated in the general classroom to receive quality education that he needs. I don't want such things like horrible names, loneliness and copying of unusual behavior. In the general classroom, my child received all the materials, plus any educational opportunities that comes with it'*.

Parents felt that individual integration provided more opportunities for student interaction with peers in a mainstream classroom, than in a special class. Teacher TR06 explained the influence of parents, *'... , there is this parent who decided that they wanted to have a highly gifted child and for that they were trying to get recommendations from PPCC, so they kept taking their child again and again in each of every PPCC in Brno to get this information even though their child hadn't been that gifted. So sometimes the parents want to have a diagnosis or to have a recommendation and some special approach from school.'*

Currently over 71% of students with LD visit mainstream primary schools and are provided with special education support, the rest of the students attend special classes. Most teachers felt that the school really tried to provide this information. Teacher TR15 stated, *'It is not easy to communicate what I feel about the child's condition and the need for group integration because most parents in such situations feel it is a kind of justification of the teacher's failure, however, we really try our best to give information as teachers, as much as possible.'*

Some studies have focused on issues of the learning process for instance how a student learns and how best the learner can be instructed, instead of only focusing on the classification and categorization question or eligibility to the program. Tzuriel & Samuels (2000) explain that the name and classification have many implications on attitudinal formation and stigmatization hence loses the full meaning of intervention.

Challenges related to qualified professionals

Findings showed that the schools and assessment centers had highly qualified professionals, however, there was still dire need for more qualified teachers to address the needs of learners with LD in a more effective way as more students were being identified with LD. Four out of 13 teachers interviewed had special education as their area of specialization, however, all the teachers were directly involved with learners with LD.

Teacher TR03 pointed out from a management point of view, *'It can be said that any specific school that is supporting inclusive education and education of children with LD is a single soldier in a battlefield. If the school is not able to prepare their own rules, guidelines and specification on how they can meet the needs of students with disabilities i. e. LD they are unable to help them... The school has to provide the support on activities or tools, special education methods and the teaching and learning aids'*.

The teachers expressed their interest and motivation in working with students with LD stating that their motivation was not just attached to the financial provision but on the work they did. Teachers were given fully funded opportunities to attend workshops and other short courses to be able to accommodate the learners. From the observations, the lesson planning was in accordance with the individual educational plans of the children. Findings show that 40% of the schools that provided education for learners with special needs were also used as centers for research to better accommodate the learners in schools.

5 Recommendations

Recommendations for funding and educational policy

The Ministry of Education should monitor all its departments in order to realize the obligation of enabling students with LD to acquire appropriate and effective psycho-educational assessments. This involves funding assessment needs such as resources for instance a variety of research-based assessment tools for use by the psycho-educational assessment assessors, recruitment of more psycho-educational assessment experts and teacher assistants at school. Moreover, the remuneration of the teachers dealing with learners with SEN in general and including the assistant teachers should be reviewed.

Education regulations need to be explicit to all stakeholders, including requirements for students with LD on placement alternatives to ensure the maximum degree of integration and access is necessary. In line with Article 3 of the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education, the government should introduce legislation that unequivocally protects students' rights. The regional governments should intensify supervision in relation to assessment procedures at the assessment centers.

Recommendation for psycho-educational assessment for learners with LD in Kenya

Kenya can derive from the parental involvement in the assessment process as identified in the Czech Republic. There was awareness of the processes and procedures involved and parents had made significant efforts to ensure psycho-educational assessment for their children. Stakeholders should develop an operational definition of LD and objective diagnostic criteria in Kenya and sensitize all stakeholders on the prevalence of learners with LD and ways of managing their challenges and needs.

Even though there were challenges with placement policies in the Czech Republic, it was evident that there were clear assessment policies and a lot of effort had been made to ensure the implementation of the policies. Kenya can create and implement clear policies, which are lacking in the area of psycho-educational assessment to help guide how psycho-educational assessments are administered. The funding of psycho-educational assessment in Kenya should be streamlined to ensure provision of adequate resources for proper assessments of learners with LD. The assessors at the EARCs in Kenya should be properly trained in psycho-educational assessments to ensure no misdiagnosis of learners with SEN and any discriminative aspects hence, promoting proper placement and recommendations for learners with LD.

Recommendations for further research

Findings from the current study suggest the areas for future research development, by way of replication or extensions of the current study design with different participant groups, or by further exploring some of the additional findings that arose which were more extraneous to the specific research questions addressed in the present study. First, research examining male parents' participation in the psycho-educational assessment process using the methodology and semi-structured interview from this study is needed, to determine if the emerging themes are similar. Extending the current research to include male parents would help to give fathers a voice, as well as elucidate whether there are any differences between maternal and paternal experiences stemming from differing parental roles or diverse parental perspectives regarding the meaning of their children's psycho-educational assessment experience.

Secondly, further investigation of parental experiences with the psycho-educational assessment process and of the experiences which influence adherence to the recommendations with participants of varying cultural backgrounds could be explored. While the parents who participated in this study had children of varying ages in different schools and included assessments conducted all through the public assessment system, most of these participants identified themselves as European and from middle class economic levels. As discussed in the previous section, research has shown that strong cultural differences do exist with respect to education and learning disabilities. In addition, differing cultural views of the causes of student's

LD may lead to dissimilar thoughts and meanings for the family during the psycho-educational assessment process.

Researchers may also consider further exploration of an additional topic that emerged because of the interviews in this study. All participants discussed their difficulty with navigating through the psycho-educational assessment process. For some of the participants, this was the exact reason they decided to pursue an assessment from different assessment center, rather than through the same PPCC. Some parents also described a lack of support from the school in following through with recommendations or frustration from the teachers who had not read the assessment report prior to commenting on their children's behavior. Possibilities for beneficial future research may address these issues and explore parents' perceptions of navigating the educational system throughout the process of obtaining a psycho-educational assessment for their children.

A final area of research may involve a comparison between what parents remember from the information sessions when communicating the assessment results with the psychologist about their children's specific strengths and weaknesses and the information contained in the actual written report. Parents could be asked to provide the psycho-educational assessment report for their children, to get a closer look at parents' true understanding of the information given to them and the recommendations that were made, in addition to their subjective reports of how much they recall. This would be similar to previous work by Williams and Hartlage (1988), described in the literature review section, but would more broadly address assessments conducted by different centers and different special needs conditions, and would not also be dependent on the subjective recall of the psychologist or diagnostician.

6 Conclusion

The current study endeavored to analyze and understand the psycho-educational assessments process and the challenges faced by teachers, parents and psycho-educational assessors to better elucidate their experiences and observance. The study focused specifically on determinants of psycho-educational assessment using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Several additional experiences to those found in previous research studies were founding this study, which led to better understanding of the balance between parents' interests to follow through with psycho-educational assessment recommendations and their experiences of the feasibility of placement options within the existing education system. Some aspects of the policies for learners with LD as reported by the assessors and teachers were not clearly detailed, hence, continued to make it difficult for parents, teachers and the assessors to provide proper assessment. New policies

would positively influence both satisfaction of and adherence by professionals. It is hoped that future research will continue to explore psycho-educational assessment, teachers and parents' participation in the learners' psycho-educational assessments and the impact of assessment results for school as well as families of learners with LD.

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