

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.015.168](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.015.168)

RISHAN SINGH

University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) & Durban University of Technology, South Africa

**SOME SUGGESTIONS AND THOUGHTS ON LEARNER
PERFORMANCES AFFECTED FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD:
PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

Abstract:

The impact of education systems on learners with and without disabilities vary between religions, ethnicities and race groups. Many factors such as peer-pressure, outcomes-based education, teaching techniques and attributes (teacher, parent and learner characteristics) have an influence on childhood development currently. At present, there are many views concerning the method that one should use to encourage learners so that they attain the complete benefit of what is taught, however, children with disorders (either from birth or with age) are viewed, sometimes, as an additional factor that's required to be accounted for in the design of teaching curricula. Furthermore, with individuals being left- and right-brained, designing teaching curricula to suit individual learner needs is very complicated (in all situations - whether in rural or urban schools). This article, therefore, looks at different learner and teacher situations in classrooms, in attempts that possibly can be made by parents and teachers, to enable children to achieve their goal in the face of socio-economic pressures.

Keywords:

society, OBE, learning disorders, childhood, parents, curriculum design, attributes

I. Introduction

In society, on a daily basis, parents and teachers from different walks of life (i.e. those from different educational backgrounds, living standards and working professions) consider the importance of instilling good qualities in children at varied degrees. These qualities include attributes that contribute toward childhood development; from the time a child is conceived to it entering childhood and finally adulthood in which a child is considered, usually by parents and society, as an independent grown-up. However, independence isn't befitting especially if a child is born or develops a learning disability in time, because a struggle in grasping or understanding important concepts and ideas in a classroom hinders the educational development of such children greatly. Nonetheless, children with disabilities are just as important as those who don't possess them, because these children (who are found in urban and rural settlements) may possess hidden talents which can be discovered if teachers and their parents adopt the correct teaching techniques to help them cope or overcome their disability (ies).

Society is plagued by numerous pressures due to the fluctuating economy, from a material and humanistic point of view. These pressures include peer-pressure, social rejection, sexual assault and harassment, as well as children associating with negative influences. These negative influences, in some cases and over-and-above parents who are in strained relationships, may result in unexpected pregnancies and children born with faecal alcoholic syndrome – a brain disorder characterised by learning disabilities of various kinds (such as visual and auditory processing disorders). In addition, in some communities around the world, the transformation of a once traditional education system to one based purely on learner outcomes has created some controversy about the current teaching practices used to educate learners with and without disabilities in classrooms. This controversy centres around the teaching methodologies used by teachers, and parents, and in particular the attributes and design of teaching materials they utilise to motivate and encourage learners so that they overcome their personal and learning problems with ease. Furthermore, some parents complain that an Outcomes-Based Education system is disadvantageous toward their children's educational development as a result of it being too lenient compared to the traditional system, whereby teachers had to follow a stricter code of conduct in teaching, in which very little attention was given to the personal needs of children in a classroom. This meant that children with learning disabilities had to often be shifted to learning-centres that could accommodate their specific need (in terms of the education they wanted to acquire as well as the skills they needed to survive in the growing economy in adulthood) to learn specific skills and subjects. Communication between teachers and the parents of children with and without disabilities, is thus considered as essential because parents have the first-hand access to identifying whether their children are academically- or creatively-inclined from childhood. This communication would probably help teachers to mould their teaching skills (and thus design teaching materials) that can meet the needs of

both right-brained (creatively-inclined) and left-brained (academically-inclined) children within a classroom. Furthermore, different visual, auditory and other aids, that can help children with learning disorders cope with the material being taught, can be designed by teachers so that such children gain full access to quality education. However, whether a learner is committed to studying and understanding the subject/s him/her is being taught, would also depend on whether a child has been taught discipline from a young age or not – even though Outcomes-Based Education has been viewed as a considerate mode of teaching learners from different cultures and racial groups throughout the world with a considerate amount of success.

It's obvious that the development of children from urban and rural areas require different needs in order for them to overcome different kinds of challenges they encounter in everyday life. Society and the changing education systems can be considered as two major factors that contribute toward knowledge transfer as well as the creation of crime that leads to poverty, in specific regions of the world. Although, OBE facilitates easy access to academic knowledge and the transfer of ideas between teacher-learner, learner-teacher, learner-learner and teacher-teacher interactions, it is the level of education attained in different schools (in rural and urbanised settlements) that create communication problems in civilised and not-so-civilised societies throughout the world. This, in-turn, has resulted in education systems changing in order to accommodate specific learner needs in attempts of ensuring that they are equipped to survive in changing societies (privileged or unprivileged communities), and that future generations would contribute toward the sustenance of the economy in terms of being more understanding and knowledgeable about the importance of honing-in on their OBE skills to gaining access to employment, thus reducing crime and poverty in the changing world. This article, therefore, explores some interesting concepts about children development and the importance of communication and the design of teaching material in relation to the specific needs of children in different regions, settlements and education systems throughout the world. The different kinds of learners encountered within a classroom, as well as some approaches to teaching learners with disabilities are also provided. Furthermore, consideration is given to crucial factors that have a considerable impact on learner development within the education system.

II. Children, society and changing education systems

Children in different regions of the world usually enter schools at three different phases (i.e. either the pre-primary, primary or secondary phases), and the knowledge acquired by the learners in the same phases and/or grades of different schools vary considerably in content and quality. Therefore, in general, it's common to encounter, in society, learners and ordinary people having different opinions and changing views on one or many topics, which can sometimes cause a conflict-of-interest. This conflict-of-interest, however, does not only emerge due to knowledge differences amongst learners of different or similar grades, but due to differences in

cultural and religious upbringing between children belonging to different sections of society as well. This implies that people have a great impact, or more importantly an influence, on the academic course of life that a child would undertake, because only positive learner-teacher engagements would provoke such conflicts-of-interest in the greater sense. Conflicts-of-interest, however, whether it occurs amongst learners, teachers and ordinary people in communities, have one important purpose in life: it allows for propagating new ideas or thoughts on individual topics and integrating those with other topics. Therefore, it's obvious that conflicts-of-interest amongst people of different societies, as a result of their upbringing in relation to the quality and type of education they have received through the evolving education systems, are true as the only cause for the diverse amounts of information that is available.

Parents in the 21st century have communication gaps with their children often, mostly because their children are now engaged in learning at schools where the methods and strategies of teaching have considerably changed compared to when they were at schools in the traditional education system. In South Africa, Ireland, India, America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Thailand, Egypt and several other countries where Outcomes Based Education (or OBE) has been implemented, children learn only for the sake of acquiring the knowledge they are taught through unprescribed teaching methods. In this learning system, which has been found to be successful in some developed countries like America for example, learners are taught using different teaching methods like group- and self-teaching so that specific outcomes are met within the classroom. The communication gaps that occur between different sections of society and people of different age categories therefore exist as a consequence of many people belonging to the older generation having being taught in a much more structured (less flexible) and stricter manner within the traditional system of learning. In this system, learners are taught in a prescribed manner; so that teachers accomplish their goal of completing the syllabus or curriculum of a subject within a specific period of time. It is therefore evident that in the traditional learning/teaching system learners are not entirely assessed for grasping the knowledge they have been taught, and that the grades learners achieve in a subject, or range of subjects, is attributed mostly to the effort put into it/them by learners. This implies that OBE, although an education system used as more convenient compared to the traditional system, fosters and aids the educational development of children since it considers whether or not learners have understood the content of a subject that they are taught while considering the needs of the learners, be it personal or academically-related. In society, this leniency in the present OBE system has been viewed by many parents as being a major downfall, though, toward their children's holistic educational development since they believe that their children have been more free as a result of teachers being more concerned about their children's wellbeing. This concern includes the fact that teachers within the OBE system often use study aids, and provide children with learning supplements to assist the learning process within the classroom and outside of it.

Although conflicts-of-interest when exchanging ideas amongst people (children, adults, the educated and uneducated e.t.c.) in communities is an advantage, as mentioned, conflicts-of-interest in topics due to people acquiring education through different (or changing) education systems, is obvious. However, one may speculate that parents with disabled children, as well as those parents having children with learning disabilities or disorders, may be more satisfied with OBE since, to some degree, it offers more comfort that teachers are more caring and thoughtful compared to the traditional teachers of the past, or with those with traditional teaching experience only. Therefore, Outcomes Based Education is indeed advantageous in its ability and duty of transforming societies through learning that is clear, flexible, competent and interactive, because a teacher's only goal in OBE is to achieve the outcome of children understanding (and knowing) what is being taught through clearly defined objectives and aims; one of which is that a learner completing school in the OBE system would be employable just through the skills he/she has acquired through flexible learning methods (or strategies) in the classroom. In addition, whereas in the past disabled children and those with learning disorders had to be given special education with great difficulty in traditional schools, OBE shifts the tedious burden of the parents of such children in having to move them to special schools in order to ensure their children would be able to face the reality of the world in adulthood and working-life.

The benefits of Outcomes-Based Education (flexibility, employability and educate) has been greatly felt in many countries that face poverty and the alleviation of it on a daily basis. In South Africa though, learner poor performances in subjects within the OBE system has suggested that a new education system be implemented at the behest. Perhaps, a more traditional and/or structured approach in OBE would prevent children from getting involved in negative and dangerous activities (*viz.* drug abuse, prostitution, peer-pressure and related unexpected pregnancies), that probably are attributed to the abundance of social freedom OBE offers learners. This means that social acceptance for a child in OBE is crucial for them to stay on the right path in life, since OBE doesn't obligate learners to study independently i.e. this is a choice for the learner as most of the learning is conducted within the classroom with or without the use of learning aids. However, learners in society need to be made aware about social rejection and its unimportance in one's life, irrespective of the education system that a country's government adopts from positive sources; the most important one being family members or parents. Hence, a good upbringing would potentially alleviate negative conflicts-of-interest and protect mankind from engaging in activities that provoke poverty, crime and unwanted social rejection (i.e. discrimination and hatespeech as a result of it, for example). Therefore, parents (i.e. those who are rolemodels and idols in a child's life) must instil sensible and understandable actions in their children to ensure they prosper in life with the transformation of education systems throughout the world. And those children, should in turn, encourage those who lack caring and loving parents, idols and

rolemodels, in order to continue the quest in alleviating poverty and resolving conflicts amongst different people of the world.

III. Challenges facing children in rural and urban schools: The Past vs. Present

Rural and urban schools differ from each other only in terms of their regional settings. However, this has an impact on the educational development of learners since rural schools are seldomly well-resourced, with suitably qualified educators, to impart quality knowledge onto children. Urban schools, on the other hand, are less challenged because learners who attend such schools have access to educators even in the absence of permanent qualified educators in the form of state-paid substitute educators. Therefore, children in rural schools face many difficulties in accessing quality education because of resource-limitations (which include the lack of textbooks, state-paid substitute educators, internet facilities and transport-links to libraries in urbanised areas). Although a lot of effort has been put in by state governments of countries to provide facilities and financial support to uplift the quality of rural schools currently, the children attending these schools still face difficulties. Often, when it's raining for example, children living in rural settlements don't attend school due to many being unable to afford public transport. The hope and aspirations of such intellectual minds are shattered often. Another challenge for many children who attend OBE urban and rural schools, is that some are unable to get the individual attention required to learn specific subjects or sections of work, since learning is based purely on attaining a specific outcome. This challenge, though, has been well highlighted by the fact that teachers probably wouldn't be able to adapt their teaching methods to meet every learners needs in a class of 45 learners or so holistically, since it may become too stressful for teachers, particularly due to time constraints between teaching time and family time. This, in general, means that children, even in OBE may be deprived of learning certain important skills needed for employment once they have completed school. It is for that reason that many parents still prefer the traditional education system over the Outcomes-Based Education system, more so because learners in the former, has little or no expectations to receive teacher support of any kind.

In the past, peer-pressure (as a result of children in adolescence being influenced by the friends or close companions) had been viewed as a negative factor that impedes on learner development. Hence, peer-pressure has become widespread in both urban and rural schools, where it's observed that children attitudes and attributes change or fluctuate as a result of it – a fact that is obvious. As we know, this change can be positive, for example, when a learner has a friend or peers who influences him/her to do something for the community, charity or to even develop other learners in his/her classroom. However, peer-pressure can be detrimental to learners who are easily influenced by negative company, since the change in attributes, lifestyle, taste, and optimism in influenced learners, lead to them falling astray and resulting to illegal and unlawful activities often (such as alcoholism/substance abuse, unprotected sex, unsafe abortions, multiple sexual partners e.t.c.). In a world where

everything requires/has momentary value, children in urban and rural schools are no different in acquiring negative traits of peer-pressure since it's an easy option to relieve personal and learning difficulties. The challenge that learners face, is therefore one that's difficult to achieve i.e. the abstinence of learners from the negative company and options (or guidance) for carefully and/or wisely choosing their friends. However, this would depend on their upbringing, over-and-above their development from adherence to childhood. The past and present situation with regard to peer-pressure would thus (still) remain variable in rural and urban settlements in the years to come.

Disrespecting of teachers is becoming more and more common due to children having problems at home, such as their parents being unemployed and the loss of loved ones which have a definite effect on learner performance. In such instances, children require psychological help, which school guidance counsellors are unable to provide them with adequately. Rural schools are unable to afford such counsellors. In addition, children in rural areas don't have access to proper health-care facilities. This results in outbreaks of poverty and (racial) discrimination amongst people from different regions of the world. In the past, teachers had an obligation to teach and to be strict in their approach. Very little time was spent on engaging in conversations about learner's lives. Students were to learn discipline through the strict approach of teaching evoked by their teachers in the classroom. This strict approach was common in both rural and urbanised schools, though now, students are required to be disciplined from home, since Outcomes-Based Education only factors the knowledge students are required to know upon completing school, rather than instilling discipline in students as well. In South Africa, OBE, as mentioned, has been viewed as a system to enable more school finishers to gain access to higher education, irrespective of the grades they achieve.

Children attending rural schools seldom have good/healthy nutritious food prior to leaving home to eat, since the parents of such children work only for the livelihood of their families, and nothing further. This, potentially, could have an impact on the ability of rural children to think efficiently, and to work at the same pace, as children attending urban schools. Children living in rural areas though, may have access to such organic foods, since farming is viewed as a source of major income within colonial settlements. Therefore, in different regions of the world, rural scholars, or disadvantaged scholars in general, are found to give more constructive and well thought-out responses during written and oral examinations compared to some living in urbanised areas. Furthermore, although children living in urbanised areas are recognised as being more privileged, many of them are spoilt and as a result of a luxurious or comfortable lifestyle, they neglect their health (or nutritional status). This is another reason why some urbanised school children perform poorly in tests or examinations compared to the way some rural school children do. The challenge is therefore for urbanised school children to discipline (balance) their eating habits and

freedom in relation to their degree of study focus in order for them to achieve the highest possible school leaving results, irrespective of curriculum changes.

The economy (and the high cost of living) has also, indirectly, had an impact on the behaviour of children in urban and rural schools, particularly due to the inflated rate of living and inability of schools to pay new adequately qualified educators to assist struggling students. The lack of family support, in addition to their social responsibilities in conjunction with being deprived of quality education, forces children in schools to resort to negative activities. In the rural schools these negative activities, which include intravenous drug use and smoking *dakka*, cocaine and painkillers, is not a new campaign to relieve the heartache of struggling school children in general, but it is viewed new to the conventional OBE education system since at one time such activities were never so frequently heard of in the media. Furthermore, in the traditional system, learners were well aware about the repercussions of resorting to such negative activities, which included expulsion as a serious consequence. In the OBE education system though, due to the friendly nature of most teachers and the student-student and student-teacher activities required to meet assessment outcomes, expulsion isn't viewed as a serious consequence and as a result many of disadvantaged and suffering students are forced into a life of poverty. Currently, many rural and disadvantaged school children embark on a lifetime journey of struggle upon finishing school, since their parents mostly work for the survival of their children, other than like with urban and modern city school children, whose parents give them an opportunity to embark on a career, by furthering their education, after completing school.

The children of the past and future have dreams, like their educators have or had, but the type of schools children attend have a huge impact on the route they would take to accomplish their dreams. Rural schools face a shortage of a major resource – textbooks – which students depend on to obtain good grades. In urban schools, however, there are cases where the resources are available, but due to selfish behaviour or attitudes of not wanting to share the available resources, some very intelligent children are deprived from learning to the best of their abilities. This greatly impacts on learner performances. In the context of resource availability, whether electronic (e.g. internet), mechanical (e.g. plant biotechnology blenders) or physical (e.g. books), students of urban and rural schools need to practice the human value of sharing and loving amongst each other. Furthermore, students should respect whatever resources their schools can provide them with and they should make the best use of those for knowledge acquisition mostly, rather than for just focussing on momentary rewards. Therefore, something needs to be done in order for rural and urban school students to maintain their self-respect, respect for their teachers, and respect for resources, and they should use obedience and sharing as attributes to rise above their difficulties, in preparation for a future of some sort after school.

IV. Science and technology, prenatal and parental care, can nourish the world instead of destroying it

Currently, with the advances in technology, children are becoming more and more addicted to electronic devices, like cell phones, laptops and the PlayStations, for the wrong reasons. It has been known that children fall astray to negative activities like pornography, by accessing internet websites using their cell phones, and this impacts negatively on education. As mentioned, due to peer-pressure (an outside influence) amongst school children, pornography also is another addiction that most school children experience. Although some children may have the tendency to control this addiction, others require help which isn't available to school children because pornography is regarded as an 'introverted' addiction that not many school children would speak about. During childhood development, between ages 1 – 7 years, it is thus advisable for parents to love their children enough by teaching them the correct reasons for using technology or multimedia devices, so that as children progress through the generations in life, through higher levels of education, they are aware about what is right and wrong conduct. This means that parental care is an essential part of a child's upbringing so that the child is equipped with the wisdom to make the right choices in life. Therefore, given the right upbringing, children would be able to use technology for many valuable reasons other than just networking. This use includes online entrepreneurship, promotion, advertising and learning. Hence that utilising technology in a respectable and semi-professional manner by children through parental care, could potentially take thousands of homeless and rural children off the street, inadvertently, by helping the world's economy grow through online momentary or charity activities. However, technology is required to perform science – a subject which encompasses many disciplines, including the arts, humanities, literature, physics, accounting, mathematics, biology and medicine. Once again, hence, the importance of instilling good values for the purposeful usage of technologies by children is reiterated as a world norm; one that could alleviate crime, and make the world a brighter place to live in.

Creating a positive mind-set in children, in general, isn't difficult if we are able to inculcate good values in them from the time a child is conceived (prenatal care) to being born (parental care). Studies have shown that although some children develop learning disabilities (or disorders) as they grow up, some are actually born with learning disorders due to a condition called Foetal Alcoholic Syndrome (or FASD). Foetal Alcoholic Syndrome is experienced by children whose mothers were consuming alcohol during pregnancy. These children often experience speech, thinking, hearing and comprehending defects, with the most severe of which is mental retardation. Children are special and a mentally retarded child can develop specific skills if they are provided with proper parental care. This means that the parents (or mothers) of mentally-retarded children, or of children who are affect by FASD due to prenatal alcohol exposures, should be advised to seek counselling so that their children (or child) has the opportunity to succeed in their life, in spite of a

learning disability imposed on their child (or children) by them. FASD, broadly speaking, in children, causes central nervous system impairment [(viz. motor abnormalities – movements, delayed milestones, gross (running, jumping) and fine (cutting, writing) motor abnormalities, neurobehavioural disorders (impulse control, short attention span, hyperactive), language disabilities (viz. late onset, delayed sentence usage, uneven expression and receptor skills) and behavioural manifestations (viz. persistent tantrums and short term memory loss)]. FASD-affected children can be encouraged to rise above their disabled condition through motivation that parents can obtain from various sources, such as health care professionals that specialise in a particular condition that their children are experiencing, school guidance councillors their children feel safe around, teachers who are patient with FASD-affected children, and friends and family who view FASD-affected children as their equal. Here, it is evident that the human qualities of love, equality, compassion and giving, from a spiritual and religious perspective, could trigger neural and muscular centres in the brain that could be healing, potentially. This fact is reiterated if we envisage the way in which some patients in comas gain consciousness, after hearing the love, honesty, compassion and confessions from their loved ones – who may or may not have hurt him/her in some way or another prior to experiencing a traumatic incident.

V. Parents might not know what teachers do about their children – Listen, Learn, Consolidate, Intervene

Teachers, perhaps, are the first to notice that a child has a problem learning new information and skills and putting them to use i.e. teachers may be able to identify a disability in a particular child which his or her parents isn't aware about. These may either be a reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), mathematics (dyscalculia), reasoning (dyspraxia), listening (auditory processing disorder) or speaking (dysphasia/aphasia) disorder.

Teachers are in contact with children for most of the day and so by monitoring patterns in the student's work, and progress reports, teachers can possibly diagnose that a particular child has a particular disability, while bearing in mind that children who are healthy and don't have any difficulties in learning, may experience some disorder symptoms at some point in their lives e.g. a person giving a speech at a huge public event, who never had a learning disability, may stammer but it doesn't mean that he has the chronic symptoms of a particular disorder (dysphasia).

Teachers teaching a child in more than one grade, would notice a learning disability more accurately compared to a teacher who has only been exposed to children for one particular subject and in one grade only in that child's entire schooling (be it at preschool, primary school or senior primary to high school). In cases of schools containing all grades, including college, teachers can easily identify that a child has a learning disability. For example, a child in preschool (<5 years) might have problems learning to tie his shoe lace, reading phonics, colours, shapes, days of the week and

colouring neatly within a drawing that are easily identified for this age group as common, while a child in primary school might have problems learning the connection between words and sounds, telling time accurately and blending sounds to make words. At the high school level, the same teacher would be able to accurately identify that the child has a learning disorder if he/she lacks the ability to think intellectually, since higher levels of thinking are required in higher grades of schooling. Some learning problems that teachers usually identify between the age groups of 10 – 13 years are the inability of the child to read comprehensions with clarity, expression of thought without freedom and ease as well as poor handwriting and organisation of ideas.

Since teachers are in contact with children for most of the day, the evidence they give to the parents of children they teach can be taken seriously, especially since teachers who have taught a child in multiple grades would have a good grasp about the academic development, and hence any learning disability that that particular child may possess. The advantages of the information obtained by concerned parents from these teachers, during parent meetings for example, is that it would allow them to find methods of improving the learning capacity of their children by treating the disability. For example, a child who has been diagnosed by a speech and hearing specialist with dysphasia, may be advised by his or her parents to take additional English tuitions in addition to the speech and hearing therapy the doctor has prescribed, in order to obtain a higher symbol in English. Hence, although childhood development charts are followed by parents from time a child was born until about the age when the child has reached primary school, a learning disability can possibly only be picked up once a child has been actually involved in learning activities for a period of time, and the amount of contact time the child engaged with such activities with the person-in-charge (or conducting the activity). An important confounder to consider is that certain learning disabilities may in fact not be a disability, but rather a gesture towards a teacher's personality, because certain children are afraid (or don't feel as comfortable) about opening-up to certain kinds of teacher personalities. This means that children would engage easily with a particular type of personality, usually depending on the personality types they have been surrounded by from birth or through most of their lives. However, teachers are aware of this, and because of OBE, a more friendly teaching approach has been adopted in classrooms throughout the world compared to the traditional education system. Therefore, parents can trust teachers, in general, about the probability of certain kids possessing a particular learning disorder or a spectrum of them. However, apart from parents trusting their children's teachers, parents would learn that although they may have not detected any learning disabilities in the early stages of their child's life (as confirmed by their professional developmental milestones chart), there is a possibility for a developmental lag phase before the symptoms of a learning disability appear in children. In this way, teachers would help parents to understand that the onset of a learning disorder can be early in a child's life, but go unsuspected by health-care

practitioners, thereby securing the future of a whole family (i.e. the child affected by a learning disability detected by the teacher and his or her siblings) in the process.

VI. Developing personal attributes, teaching materials and activities to aid childhood development

Every child is unique and has/needs his/her own special requirements to learn at their best. Some may need more love and attention than others, while others may need different resources and learning aids to help them cope with learning. This applies to children in rural and urban schools, since the technologies available in different schools vary considerably.

Childhood development starts from the time a mother breastfeeds her children until the age of 18 or 21 (depending on religious customs), or when a child is competent enough to face the world on his or her own. However, this development refers to the behaviour or attributes of a child during maturation, which also includes educational development – if any is included in his/her home upbringing.

Parents implement or use different interventions to facilitate teaching their children, depending on their child's subject weaknesses and strengths. For example, as mentioned, some children – even within one family – may be excellent in mathematics whereas the other is stronger in English. This highlights the importance of being able for teachers to design teaching materials and academic activities that are in line with the learner's strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, developing or instilling good qualities in children requires a person's attributes or personality as being holistic and loving for children to assert these qualities as they grow and become competent adults in their working fields.

It's fair enough that teachers as well as parents should always show love to children, irrespective of their racial denomination, academic calibre or social standing, while aiding them using resources/activities that they enjoy working on, though it isn't always achievable in a classroom of 45 learners; some of them having a single disability or more. As mentioned earlier, it is therefore crucial for parents to trust teachers who have identified a particular disorder or range of disorders in a child in order to ensure they seek the right kind of help to ensure the mental development of their child.

Although children are unique and special in their own strengths and weaknesses, it's a scientific fact that the brain development amongst individuals of the human population varies greatly, and that although some children may have an identified learning disability in early age, it doesn't necessarily mean that the disability would persist throughout a child's livelihood particularly since some children may be more creative than others. Parents and teachers, similarly, vary in respect of their approaches to instilling values in their children i.e. some may be more creative- or academically-inclined than others. This means that in order for parents to develop the proper attributes, teaching aids and skills to help their children prosper in life, it

would be essential for them to isolate a childhood learning disability from a child's likes or dislikes and preferred learning strategy – a conceited challenge on its own.

The human brain is divided into different hemispheres and regions which assist with different functions of the body. The left-side or hemisphere is objective and academic, while the right-hemisphere is what makes us creative. Though, in society, a few children exercise both hemispheres; only few individuals in general ever do. Once again, as a result of this difference – and aside a learning disability – learning strengths and weaknesses in children are identifiable, but teachers/parents need to develop teaching aids very objectively so that they are tailored to help a child while factoring his/her subject strengths, weakness, disabilities and learning preferences. This means that a learning weakness in a particular area shouldn't necessarily be viewed as a learning disability. For example, a child who is asked to draw a picture, may not necessarily draw a clear picture. This could simply imply that the child is left-brained and prefer more structured and sequenced activities like writing an essay or solving a mathematics paradigm other than engaging in right-brained creative activities. However, not making a clear drawing could also imply either a visual processing or auditory processing disorder, whereby the child's brain isn't able to visualise the picture he/she is instructed to draw from, or his auditory disability precludes him/her from hearing an instruction of making a 'clear' drawing. Hence, designing learning study aids and the development of personal attributes pass much of a challenge to teachers and parents, and their attitudes have to be adjusted according to a given situation. It seems that the only way of being able to inculcate good learning or studying attributes (*viz.* diligence, enthusiasm and interest) in learners and children would be for parents and teachers to adjust their teaching methods and materials according to the needs of a child. One way of accomplishing this would be for teachers, a known fact, to include a mixture of learning activities in their class so that children become socially interactive with each other, irrespective of whether one child is right-brained and another is left-brained. In this way learners would become accustomed, in time, to use both brain-centres to the best of their ability and learning would become more enjoyable to learners/children in general.

The human brain is a unique organ because of its ability to control the body's movements and coordinate various processes in a regulated manner. However, it cannot function optimally without acquiring the necessary dietary minerals and nutritional supplements. One way of teachers/parents helping their children develop personal attributes, could be by including nutritional supplements (like vitamins and minerals) in their lifestyle. This may also potentially help children cope with some or any identified learning disability or disorder. For example, a child who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease could be recommended by his teacher/s to include *Ginkgo biloba*, a natural plant-derived supplement, which may help improve his/her natural ability to think and concentrate in class, as part of his daily life. Such a child may unexpectedly be able to develop the brain-hemisphere he/she isn't very strong in performing particular creative or academic activities with.

Childhood development, however, also involves a strong communication between teachers, learners and parents. This means that once a child has been diagnosed with a particular disability, the communication of that finding with the child's teachers should be an integral part of the child's learning process. Communication would become an integral part of the learning process because an identified learning disability or disorder in a particular child would enable teachers to change their personal attributes (e.g. the time needed for teachers to spend with that particular child to grasp particular concept in class) and teaching strategies in order to accommodate all children, including those with minor to serious disabilities. However, the challenge in developing personal teaching and learning attributes in children (by parents and teachers) in the quest of a unified world and society is far from over due to the pressures of the OBE and other education systems that are designed in their own specific way, and therefore a lot of time has to be spent on the teachers (which most teacher's don't have) part in understanding the needs of their children, outside of the classroom.

VII. Perspectives and conclusion

Children, in general, are important to the future development of one's own country and thus the world at large. However, communication between teachers and parents as well as teachers with the education departments of their countries to facilitate curriculum development and/or changes, are important so that learner-needs are met in a holistic manner in order to ensure that they understand the material taught to the best of their abilities. It has been believed for many years that teacher support, and chivalrous qualities evoked by parents and teachers, may in fact tap into the (un)hidden talents of children – including those who are born with learning disabilities and some who develop them with age. However, changing societies as a consequence of fluctuations in the economy, has become common and one of the major factors that contribute toward crime statistics – as mentioned – in different regions or sections of society. From a religious viewpoint, childhood development should start from home, whereby parents inculcate good values into their children. One such value, which is considered essential to the educational development of a child, is discipline. However, over-and-above this quality, parents also are required to identify their child's or children's learning strengths and weaknesses so that a weakness in a particular learning area or subject isn't viewed as a learning disability or disorder.

Currently, the mind-set of children needs to be changed in a holistic and therapeutic manner so that they refrain from negative influences, in spite of communities belonging to different social standings worldwide. This can only be achieved if stricter measures within the teaching system are intertwined with an outcomes-based education that certainly accommodates children from different caste systems, ethnic groups, language-barriers and brain-strengths in general. As a norm, it is possible to suggest that by teachers becoming more proactive in childhood development, that much of this privilege is taken away from parents (a choice that

needs to be abducted from parents). In addition, it is essential for parents to understand their roles as guardians in changing society so that an education system that focuses on well-cultured learners is formed to meet the demands of the economy. All that can be realised right now, is that in the fight for a just world, the development of an education system that meets every learner's needs is complex and would probably take decades or even centuries before one is formed. Communities can only hope for a unified world where our children can thrive for their personal wellbeing for now.

VIII. References

I. Introduction

Not applicable

II. Children, society and changing education systems

(i) Children with learning disorders. August 2013. Facts for Families 16: 08/13. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Washington DC, United States of America.

(ii) MacDonald R., Sacramone S., Mansfield R., Wiltz K., Ahearn W.H. 2009. Using video modelling to teach reciprocal pretend play to children with autism. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Analysis* 41(1): 43–55.

(iii) Sands S.A. 2000. Nonverbal Learning Disabilities. *Child Study Center* 4(5): no page numbers (School of Medicine, New York University, United States of America).

(iv) Nag S, Snowling M. 2012. School underachievement and specific learning difficulties In Rey J.M. (ed), *IACAPAP e-Textbook of Child and Adolescent Mental Health*. Geneva: International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions. Chapter 3.

III. Challenges facing children in rural and urban schools: The Past vs. Present

(i) Bylund R.A., Reeves E.B. 2005. Are rural schools inferior to urban schools? A multilevel analysis of school accountability trends in Kentucky. *Rural Sociology* 70 (3): 360–386.

(ii) Gabby M.B., Cowie V., Kerr B., Purdy B. 2000. Too ill to learn: double jeopardy in education for sick children. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 93: 114–117. (issue of the day).

(iii) Lu Y., Zhou H. 2013. Academic achievement and loneliness of migrant children in China: School segregation and segmented assimilation. *National Institute of Health Public Access* (online).

(iv) Marteleto L., Lam D., Ranchhod 2008. Sexual behaviour, pregnancy, and schooling among young people in urban South Africa. *National Institute of Health Public Access* (online).

(v) Senbanjo I.O., Olayiwola I.O., Afolabi W.A., Senbanjo O.C. 2013. Maternal and child under-nutrition in rural and urban communities of Lagos state, Nigeria: the relationship and risk factors. *BMC Research Notes* 6: 286.

IV. Science and technology, prenatal and parental care, can nourish the world instead of destroying it

(i) A handbook on learning disabilities. 2009. *Integra: Improving the lives of children and youth with learning disabilities*. Ontario's Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

(ii) MacDonald R., Sacramone S., Mansfield R., Wiltz K., Ahearn W.H. 2009. Using video modelling to teach reciprocal pretend play to children with autism. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Analysis* 41(1): 43–55.

(iii) Shillingsburg M.A., Powell N.M., Bowen C.N. 2013. Teaching children with autism spectrum disorders to mand for the removal of stimuli that prevent access to preferred items. *The Analysis of Verbal Behaviour* 29: 51–57.

V. Parents might not know what teachers do about their children – Listen, Learn, Consolidate, Intervene

(i) Children with learning disorders. August 2013. *Facts for Families* 16: 08/13. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Washington DC, United States of America.

(ii) Gabby M.B., Cowie V., Kerr B., Purdy B. 2000. Too ill to learn: double jeopardy in education for sick children. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 93: 114–117. (issue of the day).

VI. Developing personal attributes, teaching materials and activities to aid childhood development

(i) Danquah A.O., Amoah A.N., Opare-Obisaw C. 2013. Nutritional status of upper primary school pupils in a rural setting in Ghana. *International Journal of Nutrition and Food Sciences* 2(6): 320–326. Doi: 10.11648/j.ijnfs.20130206.19

(ii) Dubow E.F., Boxer P., Huesmann L.R. 2009. Long-term effects of parent's education on children's educational and occupational success: Mediation by family interactions, child aggression, and teenage aspirations. National Institute of Health Public Access, University of Michigan (online).

(iii) Heal N.A., Hanley G.P., Layer S.A. 2009. An evaluation of the relative efficacy of and children's preferences for teaching strategies that differ in amount of teacher directedness. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Analysis* 42(1): 123–143.

(iv) Lycke K.H., Grøttum P., Strømsø H.I. 2006. Student learning strategies, mental models and learning outcomes in problem-based and traditional curricula in medicine. *Med Tech Dec* 28(8): 717–722.

(v) MacDonald R., Sacramone S., Mansfield R., Wiltz K., Ahearn W.H. 2009. Using video modelling to teach reciprocal pretend play to children with autism. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Analysis* 41(1): 43–55.

(vi) South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education. 2014. *Sathya Sai education in human values: For secular school educators* (module 3).

(vii) Wei S., Ju L., Wang W. 2011. Child health and nutrition: Getting better and facing new challenges in China. *Australasian Medical Journal AMJ* 4(3): 123–132.

VII. Perspectives and conclusion

Not applicable

VIII. Disclaimer: No part of this article can be used, stored in a retrieval system, replicated or duplicated without permission granted by the author. This article doesn't represent any particular section of society, nor is it intended to hurt or harm the reputation of anyone within academia or other fields. This article is written to educate and inform society, scientists and the broader public. The references presented prior to this disclaimer are for personal reading

purposes only, which could be used by people to highlight or supplement the views expressed by the author. The article is written with the author's personal views and perception of the world at the forefront of possibly, other, similar disseminations.

Author Biography

Rishan Singh is a South African poet, a biologist, a writer and a qualified English language Instructor. Although he's quite a popular figure in his hometown after appearing in a film, he is more known for his published writings; which include poetry and articles spanning many scientific disciplines. In 2008, he received the Golden Key International Award for academic excellence. Six years later, he was awarded an eThekweni Municipality Library Award for a writing piece about democracy and the usage of the library over the past 20 years. In pursuit of excellence, in 2011, he had the opportunity to meet with The Honorable Consulate-General of India, Mr. Anil. K. Sharan (during a prize-giving ceremony) – an opportunity he wholehearted took. He has appeared in many publications, and continues to strive for excellence.