

## UNIT 1. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES



### Contents

- Historical approach of Learning Disabilities
- Concept and classification of LD
- Situación actual de la Dificultades de Aprendizaje en España
- Response to Intervention Model

### What are we going to learn in this unit?

1. What are the most important historical moments in the development of the LD field?
2. What are Learning Disabilities?
3. What are individuals with LD like?
4. Why is it important to understand LD?
5. ¿Cuál es la situación actual de las DA en España?
6. What is the RTI model?

### Materials for this unit

- Torgessen, J.K. (2004). Learning Disabilities: An Historical and Conceptual overview. In Wong, B. Learning about Learning Disabilities. NY: Elsevier Science.
- Hallahan, D.P., Lloyd, J. W., Kauffman, J.M., Weiss, M.P. & Martinez, E.A. (2005). *Learning Disabilities: Foundations, Characteristics, and Effective Teaching*. Boston: Pearson.
- LOE (Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2006) y LEA (2007)
- <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti>

**Let's start Unit 1 (and the course) with an overview of the Learning Disabilities concept. Please, read carefully.**

Learning disability (LD) is a term currently used to describe a group of neurological conditions that interfere with a person's learning. Under the umbrella called LD, there are disorders related to **listening, speaking, reading, writing and mathematical** calculation. Individuals with LD have intelligence in the near average or average range. Because these individuals do not appear to be different, **difficulties are not expected**. The impact of the conditions may range from **mild to severe**. As we expand our knowledge of LD, we have come to realize that learning disabilities **may also include** an attention-deficit component, a socioemotional component, and perhaps emotional issues.

If a child can't learn the way *we* teach, maybe we should teach the way *they* learn.

Unlike physical disabilities, LD are not so obvious and have been referred to as the **"hidden handicap"**. Sometimes these disabilities go unrecognized by parents, teachers, and physicians. As a result, individuals with learning disabilities may be thought of as "underachievers", "lazy", or "dumb".

Learning disabled individuals **have to work harder to succeed**. They receive more negative feedback regarding their work. They may experience feelings of frustration, anger, depression, anxiety, and worthlessness.

Individuals with LD **need early identification**, sound **remedial teaching** appropriate to their needs, personal and family counseling, continuous training in social skills, vocational guidance, and on-the-job coaching.

**Read the part of chapter by Torgessen about HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE and answer these questions:**

1. There are three main periods in the development of LD. What is the main idea in each phase?
2. What are the elements proposed by Werner and Strauss to the education of exceptional children?
3. What is the year for the formal beginnings of LD field?
4. What are the major challenges for the LD field in its inception?
5. See the five influential leaders in the pages 10 and 11 of Hallahan, which two are the most important to you? Support your choices.
6. Make a timeline which shows the main events about the history of LD.
7. Busca el concepto "Dificultades de Aprendizaje" en la **LOE (2006)** y en la **LEA (2007)** y responde a las siguientes preguntas:
  - a. ¿Es la primera vez que aparece o ya se incluía en la leyes de Educación anteriores?
  - b. ¿Aparece una definición?
  - c. ¿El texto incluye criterios para la intervención?
  - d. ¿Contiene medidas concretas que ayuden a los maestros a saber qué tienen que hacer con este tipo de niños?

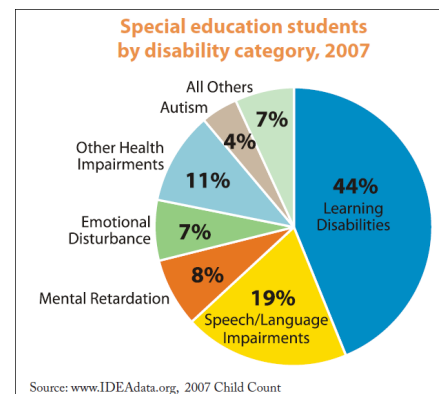
- e. Describe, desde tu punto de vista, cómo es la situación actual en España y Andalucía con respecto a los niños con Dificultades de Aprendizaje.
8. Los días 18, 19 y 20 de octubre se celebra en Cartagena el I Congreso de Dificultades Específicas de Aprendizaje. Navega por la página web del congreso (<http://diversidad.murciaeduca.es/congresos/deatecnoneet/index.php>) y analiza sus objetivos y actividades. ¿Piensas que este congreso es un indicio de la creciente preocupación por las DA en España?

**Read the chapter by Hallahan and answer these questions:**

9. Each individual with LD is unique. Read the Jamal and Shannon cases. Do you remember any children like them in your school?
10. Write a reflection on the paragraph on page 5: "Perhaps the most important concept that the study of LD has contributed to education is that individuals have different strengths and weaknesses and those strengths and weaknesses should be taken into account in planning and providing education for them. Education needs to be flexible and adapt to student´s characteristics".
11. It is very important to understand LD. The text gives us three reasons. Explain in your own words each reason (see more information about first reason in pics below).

**Prevalence**

In 2007, there were 2.7 million American public school students (approximately 5 ½% of the total public school enrollment) identified with learning disabilities so that they could be served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These students represented 44% of the more-than-6 million school-age children with all kinds of disabilities who receive special education services.



12. Could you give me more? See some information below ;)

15. Las dificultades de aprendizaje. Las dificultades de atención. Su identificación. Intervención educativa: estrategias metodológicas, coordinación con la familia y con otros profesionales implicados.

15.1 Las dificultades de aprendizaje.

15.2 Las dificultades de atención.

15.3 Su identificación.

15.4 Intervención educativa: estrategias metodológicas, coordinación con la familia y con otros profesionales implicados.

*Extracto del temario de oposiciones para Educación Primaria*

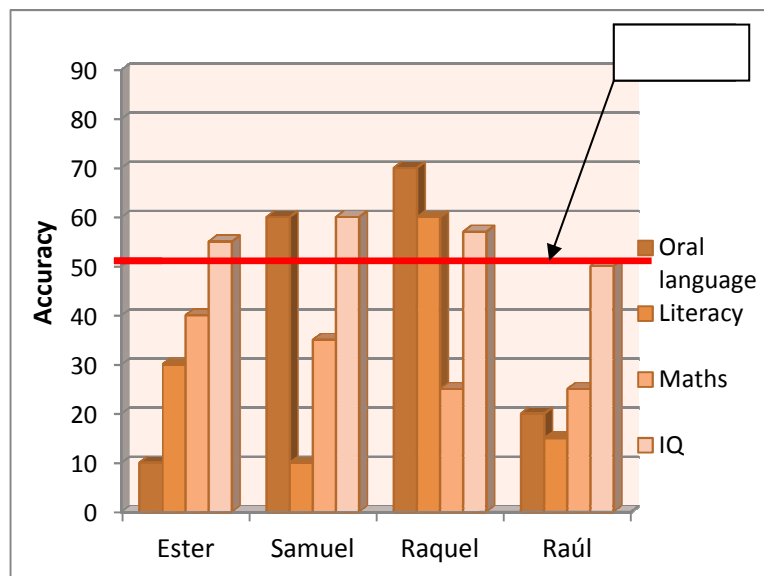
13. Read the epigraph "Defining Learning Disabilities has been difficult" and answer these questions:
- a. Why do you think it is difficult to define LD?
  - b. What components of the definition are repeated in all the definition proposals?
  - c. Propose your own definition about LD.

14. Observe these cases and tell me which ones are examples of LD. Support your choices.

- a. Carlos presenta dificultad en el lenguaje oral. Desde el nacimiento presenta una deficiencia auditiva severa.
- b. Carmen tiene problemas en el lenguaje oral (no tiene problemas auditivos). Además, presenta déficit de atención.
- c. Laura tiene una inteligencia adecuada y no presenta ningún problema auditivo ni visual pero su lectura es como la de una niña dos años menor que ella.
- d. Pablo tiene un entorno sociofamiliar desfavorecido y su lectura es como la de un niño dos años menor que él.
- e. Luis tiene problemas en matemáticas. Su CI es de 60.
- f. Lucía presenta dificultades en la lectura pero realiza estupendamente las operaciones matemáticas.

15. One of the cases showed the concept "comorbidity". What is it? Explain your choice.

16. See this graph with cases of children with LD and explain the component "intra-individual differences" in the definition of LD.



17. What do you think about the differences between the student with LD and students with underachievement?

**Read the information about RTI model at [www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti](http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti) and answer these questions:**

18. What is RTI?
19. What are the essential components?
20. Summarize in your words each tier of this model.
21. ¿Este modelo se está aplicando en España? (realiza una búsqueda con el término "Respuesta a la Intervención en España").