

Dyslexics in India need care, attention

NEW DELHI, Feb 1:

With an estimated three crore of its school-going children suffering from dyslexia, India still lacks facilities to identify these children and give them needed attention, experts say.

Dyslexia refers to a neurological disorder that results in the decline of a child's ability to store or produce information. It affects the ability to read, write, speak and compute. It leaves the usual system of education ineffective in allround development of these children.

"CBSE and ISCE have certain special provisions for dyslexic children appearing in the examinations conducted by these boards. These include - allowing extra time for completing papers, exemption from the third language paper and exemption from the Mathematics second paper. Besides, these children are also allowed to take help of writer who can write for them in the examination", says manjula pooja shroff, chairperson of calorex foundation, a trust working to provide special education to dyslexic children.

But there are only a few states that have taken any steps to provide special education to dyslexic children. "Only the Governments of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu offer certain concessions to dyslexic students in their board examinations", says Nutan Kasliwal, Project Coordinator of Prema, a special school for dyslexic children in Ahmedabad.

However, examination comes at a later stage. "First, a child has to be identified as dyslexic and then the priority must be to provide him with special type of education", says Sunil Trivedi, Principal of Prema.

"Awareness about dyslexia equals to nothing among parents, teachers and even the policy makers in India. Most of the times parents and teachers even fail to recognise a child as dyslexic," says Shroff.

"The dyslexic children do not have a choice but to remain within a system that fails to understand their special needs. As a result, their potential remains untrapped and undeveloped", she says.

The steps taken by CBSE and ISCE are also not sufficient. "All governing bodies in the field of education including CBSE and ISCE must work for providing special education to children having learning difficulties", says Trivedi.

"In most of the schools across India, there are no special norms followed for dyslexic children and there are no specially trained teachers to assist them in day-to-day learning difficulties", says Kasliwal.

To put up an effective fight against dyslexia, proper coordination between parents and teachers is a must. "Parents need to be aware of the problem and every school should provide special treatment to children having learning difficulties", says Shroff.

"NGOs have a great role in spreading awareness about this disorder among parents and teachers. They need to play an active role also in pursuing the Government authorities to design special educational programmes for dyslexic children", she says.

Dyslexia is not a disease and it has no medical cure. It throws challenges that need to be fought every day.

Children suffering from this disorder are not slow learners or mentally challenged. They are of average or above average intelligence. Dyslexia creates a 'gap' between their ability and performance.

"Dyslexic children can be termed as trapped geniuses because though there is a gap between their ability and performance, academically they have the ability to think laterally and innovatively", says Shroff.

Dyslexic children need special type of education. "It is difficult for dyslexic children to learn at the pace that is used in the normal classrooms, they are comfortable with the teaching environment where they are given individualised education depending on their specific needs at a slow pace", says Nutan Kasliwal.