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## The Role of School–Parent Collaboration in Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in Primary Education

### Abstract

This study examines the role of school–parent collaboration in supporting primary school students with learning difficulties and promoting their academic and socio-emotional development. It discusses common types of learning difficulties—including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and attention-related disorders—and analyzes their implications for classroom learning and family dynamics. Emphasizing the shared responsibility of schools and families, the study highlights the importance of parental awareness, psychological support, and inclusive educational practices. It argues that individualized instruction and effective communication between teachers and parents are essential for enhancing learning outcomes. The research also underlines the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach involving educators, psychologists, and families to ensure sustainable progress. Drawing upon both national and international perspectives, the article provides practical recommendations for improving educational environments and strengthening psycho-pedagogical support systems for children with learning difficulties.

**Keywords:** Learning Difficulties, School–Parent Collaboration, Inclusive Education, Individualized Instruction, Psycho-Pedagogical Support

## Okul–Aile İş Birliğinin İlkokul Düzeyinde Öğrenme Güçlüğü Olan Çocukların Desteklenmesindeki Rolü

### Öz

Bu çalışma, öğrenme güçlüğü yaşayan ilkökul öğrencilerinin akademik ve sosyo-duygusal gelişimlerini desteklemede okul–aile iş birliğinin rolünü incelemektedir. Çalışmada disleksi, disgrafi, diskalkuli ve dikkatle ilişkili bozukluklar gibi yaygın öğrenme güçlüğü türleri ele alınmakta ve bu durumların sınıf içi öğrenme süreçleri ile aile dinamikleri üzerindeki etkileri analiz edilmektedir. Okul ve ailelerin paylaşılan sorumluluğuna vurgu yapılarak ebeveyn farkındalığı, psikolojik destek ve kapsayıcı eğitim uygulamalarının önemi öne çıkarılmaktadır. Araştırma, bireyselleştirilmiş öğretim yöntemleri ile öğretmenler ve ebeveynler arasındaki etkili iletişimin öğrenme çıktılarının geliştirilmesi açısından kritik olduğunu savunmaktadır. Ayrıca, eğitimciler, psikologlar ve ailelerin iş birliğini içeren

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*çok disiplinli bir yaklaşımın sürdürülebilir ilerleme için gerekliliği vurgulanmaktadır. Ulusal ve uluslararası perspektiflerden yararlanan bu makale, eğitim ortamlarının iyileştirilmesi ve öğrenme gücü yaşıyan çocuklara yönelik psiko-pedagojik destek sistemlerinin güçlendirilmesi için uygulamaya dönük öneriler sunmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Öğrenme Güçlükleri, Okul–Aile İş Birliği, Kapsayıcı Eğitim, Bireyselleştirilmiş Öğretim, Psiko-Pedagojik Destek

## Introduction

In the contemporary educational landscape, the growing emphasis on individualization and inclusivity has brought forth the necessity of addressing the unique needs of each student. Within this context, the identification of students with learning difficulties at the primary education level, the accurate assessment of their developmental potential, and the provision of appropriate support have emerged as critical components of educational policy and pedagogical practice.

Learning difficulty is a specific condition observed in children who possess average or near-average intellectual capacity but consistently struggle with skills such as reading, writing, comprehension, memory, concentration, and mathematics (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2019). These difficulties not only hinder academic achievement but also negatively affect children's social interactions, emotional well-being, and family dynamics.

Joint reports by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and UNICEF emphasize that early identification of such difficulties and the establishment of appropriate support mechanisms are essential for the advancement of inclusive education. Since primary education constitutes the foundational stage of a child's academic journey, any unresolved challenges at this level may lead to long-term consequences. Therefore, the school adaptation, level of social integration, and the effectiveness of collaboration between families and teachers of students with learning difficulties require special attention.

Furthermore, international research in this field (Smith, 2018; Lerner & Johns, 2015) also highlights that school–family collaboration and access to psychological support services are among the key factors influencing the academic and social development of children with learning difficulties. The purpose of this article is to analyze the main challenges encountered by students with learning difficulties at the primary level, to explore the role of families and collaborative models between parents and teachers, and to propose effective psycho-pedagogical support mechanisms and practical strategies.

## The Concept and Types of Learning Difficulties

The concept of learning difficulties is widely discussed across the fields of psychology, pedagogy, and medicine, and its precise definition and classification vary somewhat among experts. However, there is a general consensus that learning difficulty refers to a specific

condition in which a child or adolescent experiences persistent challenges in meeting the requirements of the school curriculum, despite having average or near-average intellectual abilities (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2019). In other words, students with learning difficulties do not exhibit general developmental disorders such as intellectual disabilities or sensory impairments, but they encounter specific barriers in the learning process.

Learning difficulties are commonly classified into the following main categories: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, attention deficit and hyperactivity, and memory function impairments (Swanson, 2017). Each of these categories has distinctive manifestations, though they can often coexist and create complex learning challenges. Dyslexia, the most widespread type among school-aged children, is primarily characterized by difficulties in acquiring reading and writing skills (Lerner & Johns, 2015). This issue hinders a child's ability to recognize, decode, and comprehend written texts, adversely affecting overall academic performance.

Dyscalculia, on the other hand, involves difficulties in grasping mathematical concepts, developing computational skills, and establishing logical connections. For children suffering from dyscalculia, even basic arithmetic operations can become serious obstacles, which may lead to a decreased interest in the learning process. Dysgraphia is associated with poor written expression skills, including illegible handwriting, disorganized sentence structure, and frequent grammatical errors.

Learning difficulties may also be related to attention and concentration problems, which manifest as distractibility, fatigue, impulsivity, and organizational difficulties. These symptoms are often linked to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Barkley, 2014). Furthermore, impairments in memory functions significantly hinder the learning process, as memory is essential for the reception, retention, and retrieval of information. Problems in either short-term or long-term memory can impede students' ability to absorb curriculum content and may lead to consistent academic underachievement (Gathercole & Alloway, 2008). International research and best practices indicate that the most effective approach to addressing learning difficulties involves early diagnosis, collaborative involvement of parents, teachers, and specialists, as well as the establishment of an inclusive educational environment. Early intervention not only supports the development of a child's potential but also ensures their social, emotional, and academic integration.

### **Modern Approaches and Integrative Support in School-Family Collaboration**

At the primary education level, the successful educational progress of students with learning difficulties depends not only on the support provided within the school but also on the

recognition and consideration of their individual needs within the family environment. Therefore, school–family cooperation, grounded in the principles of mutual support and collaboration, constitutes an essential component of the educational process (Epstein, 2011). As the family represents the child’s first social and learning environment, effective collaboration with the families of children facing learning difficulties is crucial for their development.

Parents of children with learning difficulties often struggle to accurately assess their child's educational needs and may lack awareness of appropriate support strategies. This can result in stress, anxiety, and frequent misunderstandings. For this reason, it is essential for teachers and school psychologists to organize awareness-raising and support programs for family members. Such programs inform parents about their child’s developmental level and introduce evidence-based strategies suitable for addressing learning difficulties (Soodak & Podell, 1996). The main goal of school–family cooperation is to formulate joint strategies that support the educational and social development of the child. To achieve this, a sustainable communication system must be established between schools and families. The student’s progress, encountered difficulties, and individual needs should be regularly discussed. This type of collaboration creates a supportive atmosphere for the child's development and encourages parents to participate more actively in their child’s educational life (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

In addition, parents may require psychological support related to their child’s learning difficulties. Such support helps them develop more patient and empathetic attitudes toward their children. By reducing stress and emotional tension, psychological services assist parents in forming realistic expectations and strengthening family relationships, ultimately leading to a more positive self-image for the child (Kazak, Simms, & Rourke, 2010). Identifying and promoting home-based individual teaching and support strategies for children with learning difficulties is also crucial. A consistent alignment between school-based special education methods and the strategies applied at home by parents significantly enhances the effectiveness of the learning process. For example, parents can be provided with targeted exercises and tasks to reinforce reading, writing, and math skills at home. These tasks should be simple, clear, and appropriate to the child’s abilities to prevent frustration for both the parent and the child (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, & Shogren, 2015). Moreover, creating support groups among families can foster experience sharing, mutual assistance, and a safe space for expressing concerns. These networks benefit not only the parents but also contribute to the social integration of children with learning difficulties (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004). Beyond school and family cooperation, the involvement of the broader

community and local networks is also significant. Public awareness campaigns, parent seminars, and educational training on learning difficulties help establish a more comprehensive support system within the educational environment. Community engagement positively impacts the child's learning experience and strengthens their social integration (Wehmeyer, Shogren, & Schalock, 2013). Ultimately, systematic and goal-oriented collaboration with families of students with learning difficulties at the primary education level is one of the key factors ensuring the child's academic and social development. Such cooperation helps overcome educational barriers, supports emotional stability, and enables families to become active contributors to the child's growth.

This collaboration requires a multifaceted and systematic approach that not only increases parental involvement in education but also addresses their psychological, social, and pedagogical needs (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Learning difficulties can lead to emotional tension within the family, increase parental stress levels, and adversely affect family members' psychological well-being (Whitney & Smith, 2015). Therefore, school-family cooperation must include not only pedagogical but also psychosocial support mechanisms. Involving parents in training programs plays a critical role in helping them adopt appropriate strategies for supporting children with learning difficulties. These programs teach parents how to recognize their child's strengths, apply individualized learning techniques, and meet their educational needs in everyday life (Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker, & Ice, 2005). Additionally, parents learn methods to address emotional challenges, boost motivation, and nurture self-confidence in their children.

Contemporary research shows that effective communication between parents and schools directly contributes to children's academic success (Fan & Chen, 2001). This communication goes beyond information exchange and includes active parental engagement in the instructional process. It provides parents with insights into the student's daily activities, homework performance, and developmental milestones, allowing them to contribute meaningfully. Parental involvement not only enhances academic performance but also supports the child's social adaptation. Family members can observe the child's behavior and peer interactions at school and help resolve arising issues. Their involvement reduces stress and allows the child to express themselves more freely (Bakker, Denessen, & Brus-Laeven, 2013).

To ensure successful parental engagement, schools may implement the following methods:

- Parent meetings and seminars to share the latest scientific findings, applied methods, and practical recommendations to support the child's development.
- Individualized information sharing that provides parents with personalized advice and guidance based on their child's unique needs.
- Digital communication tools such as email, school portals, and other digital platforms to keep parents informed and engaged.
- Psychological support and consultations through collaboration with mental health professionals to provide emotional and relational support to families.

Moreover, the development of children with learning difficulties requires more than school–family cooperation—it also depends on societal attitudes. Increasing public understanding of learning difficulties, promoting inclusive education, and creating broader opportunities for social integration are key objectives. This also ensures that parents do not feel isolated in educational or social environments (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Additionally, the establishment of social services targeted at families plays an important role in addressing learning difficulties. These services offer psychological counseling, social support, access to educational resources, and assistance in the child's daily life (Turnbull et al., 2015). Finally, one of the most critical factors in school–family cooperation is the recognition of individual parental characteristics and the family's sociocultural context. As family needs vary, support strategies must be tailored accordingly (Kalyva & Avramidis, 2005). Schools and professionals must design appropriate support and awareness programs by considering families' cultural and economic backgrounds.

### **Collaboration Strategies with Parents of Primary School Students with Learning Difficulties**

At the primary education level, the role of parents in the development of children with learning difficulties extends far beyond ensuring academic success—it also plays a critical role in safeguarding their emotional, social, and behavioral well-being. Research indicates that active parental involvement and adequate knowledge significantly contribute to the formation of effective support mechanisms for coping with learning difficulties (Epstein, 2001). This section provides an in-depth analysis of key components such as parental awareness, home-based support strategies, psychological support, school cooperation, and the establishment of parent support groups.

### **Parental Awareness and Engagement in the Primary Education Process**

Parental awareness refers to the process of informing parents accurately about the challenges their children face in education. It helps them understand the nature of learning



difficulties and adopt effective support strategies. Awareness initiatives may take the form of seminars, training sessions, webinars, brochures, and individual consultations (Turnbull et al., 2015). Furthermore, involving parents in the primary education process enhances their active participation and strengthens collaboration with the school. Parents should attend school activities, maintain regular communication with teachers, and closely monitor their child's development. This approach supports the coordination of the educational process as a unified system and facilitates early identification of learning-related problems.

### **Implementation of Home-Based Educational and Support Strategies**

Educational strategies implemented by parents at home are crucial in reinforcing the child's learning process. These strategies must be tailored to the child's individual needs and designed to improve their learning abilities (Wang, Hill, & Hofkens, 2020). At home, parents should present instructional materials in a simplified and accessible manner, organize structured learning schedules, and incorporate regular breaks. Additionally, various learning styles—such as visual, kinesthetic, or auditory—should be chosen based on the child's learning preferences. Parents should provide positive reinforcement for their child's successes and help them learn from their mistakes without inducing pressure. It is equally important for parents to eliminate distractions and create a quiet, comfortable learning environment at home. Parents should also assist with homework, offer encouragement, and use interactive activities or educational games to make learning more engaging and enjoyable.

### **Psychological Support and Motivation**

Psychological support is vital for children facing learning difficulties, as they may sometimes feel inferior or different from their peers. Parents must be attuned to their child's emotional state and respond with empathy and positivity. Parental patience and resilience in the face of the child's academic challenges play a key role in building self-confidence (Santrock, 2018). To foster motivation, parents should celebrate small achievements, set attainable goals, and encourage goal-oriented behavior. When motivation is cultivated systematically, children tend to show increased interest in learning, leading to greater academic success. Moreover, parents should be capable of recognizing signs of stress or anxiety and be proactive in seeking professional psychological support when necessary.

### **Effective Communication Between Schools and Parents**

Establishing an efficient communication system between schools and parents is essential for supporting the child's education. Such collaboration allows for a better understanding of the child's needs, strengths, and weaknesses (Epstein, 2001). Regular parent-teacher meetings,

information sharing about student progress, and joint development of learning plans enhance the supportive role of parents. Additionally, schools should organize specific programs and consultation services for parents, addressing their concerns and encouraging their active engagement in the learning process. Effective communication helps parents feel like integral participants in the education process and fosters the development of shared strategies tailored to the child's needs.

### **Establishment of Parent Support Groups**

Parent support groups serve as an important platform where parents of children with learning difficulties can connect, share experiences, and receive emotional support (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson, & Beegle, 2004). These groups enable parents to collectively explore solutions to common challenges, exchange resources relevant to their children's needs, and strengthen their parenting skills. Support groups also help reduce feelings of social isolation and foster a sense of being understood and valued. As a result, parents become more resilient and capable of providing sustainable and effective support to their children with learning difficulties.

### **Methodology**

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of educational practices for primary school students experiencing learning difficulties and to evaluate collaboration mechanisms with their families. A mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods, was employed.

Initially, a systematic review of the existing academic literature was conducted to identify the characteristics of students with learning difficulties, the educational challenges they face, and the prevailing models of family-school collaboration. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, school psychologists, and parents currently involved in primary education settings. These interviews provided insights into real-life experiences, challenges encountered by students, and support mechanisms implemented to assist them.

Additionally, observational methods were employed to assess various forms of educational intervention and their impact on the academic outcomes of students with learning difficulties. To ensure subject-specific relevance and analytical depth, both content analysis and statistical techniques were used to interpret the collected data. This methodological approach contributed to the objectivity of the study and enabled a multidimensional exploration of the issue.



## Conclusion

The findings reveal that the main challenges faced by primary school students with learning difficulties include the absence of individualized instruction, insufficient teacher specialization in this area, and the lack of an effective communication system between schools and families. While the role of parents is undeniably crucial, insufficient emphasis is placed on parental awareness and the provision of psychological support. The implementation of individualized education plans (IEPs) and the provision of regular psychological support were shown to have a positive impact on students' academic achievement. Furthermore, the study highlights significant gaps in the education of students with learning difficulties due to the incomplete implementation of inclusive education principles and limited resource availability in schools. The lack of strong collaboration between schools and families also negatively affects the social adaptation of these students. Observations and interviews underscored the value of a multidisciplinary approach, suggesting that collaborative practices among educators, specialists, and families are essential for improving educational outcomes. Recommendations:

\*Enhancing teacher professional development: Regular training programs and workshops on learning difficulties should be integrated into teacher professional development initiatives. These will enhance pedagogical competencies and promote the use of individualized approaches.

\*Expanding parent–school collaboration: Schools should establish parental awareness programs and psychological support services to increase parents' understanding of learning difficulties and improve their engagement in their child's education.

\*Improving inclusive education environments: Schools must be equipped with appropriate resources, and special education programs should be developed and implemented for students with learning difficulties to ensure equitable learning opportunities.

\*Establishing multidisciplinary collaboration mechanisms: Stronger collaboration should be fostered among teachers, school psychologists, social workers, and parents. A coordinated support system should be developed to facilitate holistic student development.

\*Promoting research and innovation: Continued research into innovative methods and technologies for supporting students with learning difficulties should be encouraged, with a focus on integrating findings into everyday school practice.

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