



Success in Education and Misunderstood: Gifted with Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

The concept of a gifted student with a learning disability seems a contradiction in terms. Yet these students do exist. Frequently misunderstood within the classroom, they may achieve at high, average, or below average academic levels. Some are identified solely as gifted, as they compensate for their learning disability. Others are identified as having a learning disability, but their gifted capabilities are ignored, and others are not identified at all. Current education policies in Australia do not recognise the concept of a student who is gifted with learning disabilities. This decreases the likelihood that teachers will be able to identify these students and provide educational programs to assist them in achieving their full potential.

No identification process currently exists to assist Australian teachers in identifying students who are gifted with a learning disability within their classrooms. Without identification, teachers remain unaware that these students can benefit from educational programs designed to cater for both aspects of their ability if they are to achieve their full potential. My research approaches the problem of identification from two angles. First, the existing level of knowledge and understanding teachers may have of students who are gifted and have a learning disability is examined. Secondly, case studies are used to explore how some of these students came to be identified. Analysis of the data obtained by both approaches has resulted in the development of a questionnaire for the identification process for students who are gifted and have a learning disability which is to be trialled across schools in Australia.