

Intelligence and adaptive behavior research paper

[War](#), [Intelligence](#)



Intelligence and Adaptive Behavior

According to American Association of Mental Retardation, intelligence is the general mental capability (2002). Mental capability is the ability of an individual to plan, solve problems, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly, and learn from experience. From a teacher of students with intellectual disability (MR) perspective, intelligence is the ability to figure out things by pulling together reasoning, experience, and observation (Dage, 2010).

Normally, intelligence is measured using Intelligence Quotient (IQ).

Standardized tests, prepared by professionals, are used to measure IQ. An IQ score of 70 or below indicates present of intellectual disability in an individual. Intelligence cannot be taught in class but it can be nurtured in a person through regular use.

On the other hand, adaptive behavior “ is the collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that have been learned by people in order to function in their everyday lives (American Association of Mental Retardation, 2002).

Adoptive behavior requires everyday application of extra skills essential for steering through daily life requirements. There is no direct relationship between intelligence and adaptive behavior in MR. For instance, an individual with low intelligence can be able to survive very well in hardship areas (such as living on the street) while an individual with higher intelligence (say a college professor) would possibly die if he was required to live in hardship area just for a week (Dage, 2010). This implies that, limitation in adaptive behavior affects a person’s daily life and the ability to respond to specific situations or environment and this does not necessarily mean that a person is mentally retarded. Such limitations may include

conceptual skills, social skills or practical skills. Conceptual skills include ability to read, write, express oneself, money concepts ability and ability to self-direct. Social skills include interpersonal skills, self-esteem, responsibility, ability to follow rules and obey laws, and ability to avoid victimization. Practical skills include personal activities of daily living such as dressing, eating, toileting, mobility; instrumental activities of daily living such as using a telephone, taking medication, preparing meals, doing housekeeping activities, using transportation, and managing money; occupational skills such as maintaining safe living environment (American Association of Mental Retardation, 2002). Adaptive behavior can be taught and learned. Teaching adaptive behavior constitutes a large part of what teachers of students with intellectual disability do in class.

As a teacher of students with intellectual disability, it is important to have a proper understanding of the difference between intelligence and adaptive behavior as well as how the two terms relate to mental retardation.

According to Jacobson (2007), “ most definitions of mental retardation imply that intelligence and adaptive behavior are distinct and nonoverlapping constructs as diagnostic criteria include evidence of significant limitations in both intelligence and adaptive behavior.” However, there are some instances where we can have a person with low intelligence but does not have significant limitations in adaptive behavior. Such a person should not be diagnosed as a mentally retarded person. Similarly, a person with significant low adaptive behavior but does not have low intelligence should not be categorized as a mentally retarded person.

There are various problems associated with assessing students with mental retardation. One of these problems includes inability to make use of assessment tools, which are commonly used to assess students (Koretz, 2003). This is because; many of the students with mental retardation have other problems such as blindness, deafness, and dumbness. Therefore, these students cannot read, others cannot write while others cannot do either of the activities. This eliminates use of assessment tools such as standardized oral tests, written tests, or practical test. It is therefore difficult for teachers of students with MR to make use of these tools while assessing their students.

Use of standardized tests is very common in high schools. However, the design of these tests makes it difficult for teachers of students with MR to use them to assess their students (Koretz, 2003). These tests are usually difficult. Most students with intellectual disability are poor performers on tests. Using tests with sufficient difficulty in assessing students may lead to problems in assessing students with learning disability, including MR students. Difficult tests results into poor assessment results and hence interferes with the process of determining whether a student intellectually disabled or not.

As earlier mentioned students with intellectual disability, have other disabilities such as visual and hearing impairment. Due to these accompanying disabilities, most of them require support while assessment is being conducted on them. Such support include reading test questions for them where tests are used as an assessment tool and writing the answers

for them (for those who cannot write). Even in cases where some of intellectually disabled students have less severe impairments, they still require support during assessment because generally, students with intellectual disability are slow (Dage, 2010). Therefore, teachers need to support them throughout the assessment period.

Another problem associated with assessing students with MR is requirements for numerous trials. This is due to the fact that many of the intellectually disabled students have cognitive and sensory impairments (Dage, 2010). They therefore require more time to learn one single thing. For instance, in one academic year, they might gain only one month of learning in some area. This means that the teacher can spend a whole year teaching the same thing. This also applies while assessing whether a student is MR case or not. The teacher has to keep on giving hundred and hundred of trials in order to verify whether the student is mentally retarded or not.

Students diagnosed with mental retardation may require special education. For a student to be eligible for special education, such a student should portray some characteristics. The decision of whether a student is eligible for special education should be made in a team setting which should constitute the parent(s) and trained professionals such as regular classroom teacher, school psychologist, language pathologist, medical personnel and special education teacher (Eligibility: Determining Whether a Child is Eligible for Special Education Service, 2011). One of the characteristics of teacher's students with MR that result in eligibility for special education is severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in areas of oral

expression, basic reading skills, written expression, listening and reading comprehension and mathematics calculation and reasoning (Eligibility: Determining Whether a Child is Eligible for Special Education Service, 2011). In addition, a student who fails to achieve equally with his/her age and ability levels in one or more of the areas mentioned above is eligible for special education. However, if the discrepancy is as a result of visual impairment, emotional disturbance, environmental or economic disadvantage, then such a student is not eligible for special education.

Autism is yet another characteristic of teacher's students with MR, which makes them eligible for special education. Autism is developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication as well as social interaction (Waterman, 2000). Students with multiple disabilities such as mental retardation-blindness-dumbness, or any other combination of disabilities which requires special accommodation for maximal learning, are also eligible for special education. In making the decision concerning eligibility for special education, a number of tools may be used. Such tools may include intelligence quotient tests, adaptive behavior questionnaires, observation, among others (Dage, 2010).

In summary, intelligence is the general mental capability. Intelligence of an individual is measured by use of intelligence quotient (IQ) test. Experts of IQ say that an IQ test score of 70 and below indicates presence of mental disability in an individual. Adaptive behavior is the application of conceptual, social, and practical skills necessary for steering through daily life requirement. Where intelligence cannot be taught or learned in class, adaptive behavior can be learned and taught in class. Teachers of students

with MR usually spend a lot of time trying to teach adaptive behavior to their students. While assessing students with MR, problems such as inability to make use of common assessment tools, need to support the students during the assessment, and conducting numerous trials before concluding the MR status of a student.

Determining which student is eligible for special education requires that a decision be made after an assessment has been conducted on the student. Characteristics present in students with MR, which makes them eligible for special education include presence of severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in areas of oral expression, basic reading skills, written expression, listening and reading comprehension and mathematics calculation and reasoning, autism, and multiple severe disabilities. In conclusion, students with intellectual disability require special attention, including, special education. Special education teachers, regular classroom teachers and parents should support each other in conducting assessment on MR students and in providing their education requirements.

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