Review

Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With Learning Disabilities: Self-Perception Problems of Students With LD and Their Relationships With Others

Kuniko KAWANISHI* and Satoru TAKAHASHI**

The purpose of the present paper is to clarify trends, results, and future issues in studies of the self-perception of students with learning disabilities (LD), through a review of studies in the published literature from many countries, from the 1970s, when the problem began to receive attention, to the present. Many researchers have reported that students with LD had lower academic self-perception than other students, and that their self-perception was influenced by their educational placement, perception of their disabilities, social support from others, and other people’s understanding of students with LD. Recently, researchers who have examined the self-perception of students with LD in terms of its relation to the perceptions of others have reported that there are discrepancies between them. The future research should clarify the cause of such discrepancies and find problems relevant to them, as well as examine the details and degree of discrepancy between the self-perception of students with LD and other people’s perceptions. Through these investigations, we need to reconsider the issues of the self-perception of students with LD, in terms of their relationships with others.

Key Words: learning disabilities (LD), self-perception, self-concept, relationships with others, discrepancies between perceptions

Introduction

In recent years, various writers have pointed out the importance of helping people with developmental disabilities to acquire the strengths of self-determination and self-choice in their selection of their future course and career (Hara, Utsumi, & Ogata, 2002; Shirai, 2002). On the basis of these strengths, it is also important to promote the subjective formation of self and the self-concept of people with intellectual disabilities (Oyama & Konno, 2002). Thus, the self-perception of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities has been attracting increasing interest.

*Graduate School of Education, Tokyo Gakugei University
**Faculty of Education and United Graduate School of Education, Tokyo Gakugei University
K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi

Recent studies in particular have focused on the issue of the self-perception of children with mild developmental disabilities such as learning disabilities (LD). These children tend to have low self-esteem or a negative self-perception stemming from inappropriate treatment that they receive from others as a result of others’ lack of understanding of the disabilities (Miyamoto, 2000). This problem is considered to be a bigger problem than their intrinsic difficulties (Ito, Ohta, & Ninomiya, 2001). However, some authors have pointed out that this model, which regards the problem of self-perception as a secondary matter resulting from maladjustment, includes little consideration of what the self should be, and therefore “the more complicated model for children with very sensitive self and difficulties caused by disabilities would be interrupted by inappropriate treatment from other people. It is necessary to find an essential solution to the problem of the self-perception of children with mild developmental disabilities” (Tsuneta, 2004). In other words, self-perception should be considered a central problem of children with mild developmental disabilities.

Acquiring a positive self-perception is a major educational task for all children, whether or not they have disabilities, but it is an especially significant matter for children with mild developmental disabilities. Increased self-understanding and understanding of their own disabilities based on a positive self-perception are thought to be significant for their identity formation and for their employment and community participation in their adolescence and adulthood (Cook, 1979; Mochizuki, 2002; Spekman, Goldberg, & Herman, 1992). According to the Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s “Guidelines for Preparing Educational Support Systems for Children and Students with LD (Learning Disabilities), ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder), and High Functioning Autism in Elementary and Junior High Schools (tentative plan)” (2004), it is important that parents and teachers help these students to acquire a positive self-perception based on a better understanding of their disabilities, and that parents and teachers also support the children’s self-understanding and understanding of their own disabilities so that the children gain a proper knowledge of disabilities and recognize their own strengths and weaknesses in the light of a positive self-perception.

Thus, discussions about the self-perception of children with mild developmental disabilities have emphasized the necessity of support. However, it is also essential to grasp the details of their self-perception with respect to the question of how they recognize their disabilities, difficulties, and needs in relation to that self-perception. The self-perception of children with LD has been studied in many countries since the 1970s, mainly from comparisons with other children. These studies, which explored the environmental and personal factors that influence self-perception, considered the matter of self-perception from the perspective of a person’s relations with others.

In Japan, although some studies on self-perception of children with LD began to appear in the 1990s (e.g., Ito & Notomi, 1994; Ito, 1999), previous studies are few, and those which were done failed to provide a general review of this issue. However, responding to the recently increased interest in the issue of the self-perception of students with LD, it is necessary to clarify the trends, accomplishments, and issues
Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With LD

raised by these studies, and to consider specific support for the self-perception of students with LD on the basis of the knowledge gained from these studies. Therefore, the purpose of the present paper is to clarify the trends, results, and future issues in studies of the self-perception of students with LD through a review of studies in the literature from many countries, from the 1970s when the problem begun to receive attention to the present.

First, we would like to define self-perception. Self-perception is a person’s own appraisal based on his or her own or significant others’ expectations, and it provides a gauge of the effects of academic and social difficulties on students’ sense of self and emotional well-being (Vaughn & Elbaum; 1999). In previous studies in which researchers used the terms “self-concept,” “perceived competence,” “self-image,” and “self-evaluation,” these terms referred to how people judged and perceived themselves and thus were synonyms for self-perception. In the present paper, therefore, we also examine studies in which those terms were used.

Characteristics of Self-Perception of Students With LD

Self-Perception of Students With LD from Comparison With Other Students

Research on the self-perception of students with LD began in the early 1970s. At first, researchers expected that students with LD would have more negative self-perceptions than other students because of repeated experiences with failure, labeling, and placement in special education classes, and so they investigated the self-perception of students with LD in comparison with other students.

For example, Rosenthal (1973) compared the self-concept of children with dyslexia with that of children without such disabilities, and reported lower self-concept in the children with dyslexia. Also, Larsen (1973) reported that students with learning difficulties demonstrated significantly greater discrepancies between the real and ideal self than other children. In later studies, as reported by Silverman and Zigmond (1983), some researchers suggested that there were no significant differences between the self-concept of children with LD and that of their peers (e.g., Ribner, 1978), while other research had findings that supported the assumption that children with LD have significantly lower self-concepts than other students (e.g., Black, 1974; Margalit & Zak, 1984).

It may be supposed that these contradictory findings resulted from the heterogeneity of the samples of children with LD that were studied (Durrant, Cunningham, & Voelker, 1990; Kistner, Haskett, White, & Robbins, 1987), or from the inconsistencies in the self-concept inventories used and the components of self-concept that were assessed (Silverman & Zigmond, 1983). However, as Ribner (1978) pointed out, “the inconsistency of the findings on self-concept may stem from a failure to consider self-image as a multidimensional concept embracing a variety of factors.” The instruments that measure self-concept by using a single score rather than a domain-specific approach may also have contributed to the contradictory findings.

— 533 —
K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi

In the 1980s, researchers emphasized that it was important to use a domain-specific approach in the assessment of self-concept, based on the assumption that individuals may not view themselves equally across different domains, and that self-concept should be assessed in each domain, on the assumption that self-concept is multidimensional. Many studies using this approach reported significant differences in self-concept in the academic domain between students with and without LD when the domain of academic self-perception (e.g., scholastic competence and cognitive self-concept) was examined independently from other domains. In other words, many studies reported the comparatively consistent result that students with LD demonstrated significantly lower self-perceptions in the academic domain than did other students, although there were no significant differences in general self-concept or global self-worth between the two groups (e.g., Chapman, Silva, & Williams, 1984; Margalit & Zak, 1984; Renick & Harter, 1989; Rogers & Saklofske, 1985; Winne, Woodlands, & Wong, 1982).

Cooley and Ayres (1988) reported that students with LD have significantly poorer self-concept compared with other students, not only in the academic domain, but also in the global domain. But when they removed the academic component in the instrument from the analysis, no difference in global self-concept was found between the two groups. Therefore, they concluded that the difference found in global self-concept between the two groups was primarily due to differences in academic self-concepts, and their findings suggested that the differences in academic self-concept between students with and without LD might affect their global self-concept.

In addition to lower academic self-concept in students with LD, some studies indicated that students with LD demonstrate lower self-concept in the social domain than other students, and that these students often had social difficulties (e.g., Renick & Harter, 1989; Rosenberg & Gainer, 1977). However, Coleman, McHam, and Minnett (1992) pointed out that there was little evidence to link social skills deficits with LD, even though social difficulties were considered a criterion for defining LD in previous research. They examined differences in social competencies between children with LD and low achieving peers (LA). They found no differences between the two groups, and reported that academic deficiency, not learning disabilities, might be the denominator for children with social difficulties. When they compared social competence of students with and without LD, they found little difference between the groups. Rather, their findings showed that children who were rejected by their peers had lower social competence regardless of whether they were diagnosed as having LD, and they suggested that differences in children's social competence might be related to their social status, rather than to their disabilities (Coleman & Minnett, 1992).

On the other hand, it has also been reported that the social competence of students with LD did not differ significantly from that of other students with other academic achievement levels (Vaughn & Haager, 1994).
Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With LD

Interpretation of Characteristics of the Self-Concept of Students With LD

As mentioned above, many studies have reported few differences in global self-concept and self-esteem between students with LD and other students, although students with LD demonstrate lower academic self-concept than other students. However some researchers have been interested in the question of why such students are able to maintain positive feelings of global self-worth, in spite of their lower academic self-perception. Grolnick and Ryan (1990) stated that "one possible explanation for these somewhat surprising findings is that students with LD may derive their general self-perceptions from areas other than school," and some researchers have suggested a compensatory hypothesis, which assumes that students with LD compensate for their lower academic self-concept with a higher self-concept in other domains (e.g., Silverman & Zigmond, 1983; Winne et al., 1982).

Kistner and Osborne (1987) found that perceptions of cognitive competence in children with LD were not significantly related to their self-esteem or other competence. Analysis without the cognitive competence subscale, however, showed that the self-esteem of children with LD was significantly related to their perception of their non-academic competence. Hagborg (1996) compared three subgroups of students with LD, divided according to scholastic competence subscale scores: low, medium, and high groups. His findings indicated that students with a more positive self-concept in nonacademic domains were more likely to report a higher scholastic competence, and he concluded that a compensatory interpretation was supported by the findings.

Another hypothesis for the maintenance of positive self-esteem in students with LD is a discounting hypothesis, which suggests that students with LD do not emphasize the importance of academic success. The discounting hypothesis is based on the assumption that the lack of significant correlation between lower academic self-concept and self-esteem in students with LD reflects their indifference to academic success, that is, that students with LD discount the importance of competence in academic areas (Kistner & Osborne; 1987).

However, Kloomok and Cosden (1994) reported that students with LD valued the importance of academics, regardless of their perceived lack of competence in the academic domain, and some studies reported no difference between students with LD and other students in ratings of the importance of academics. Neither of these findings supports the discounting hypothesis.

On these same lines, Clever, Bear, and Juvonen (1992) found that children with scholastic difficulties recognized their difficulties, but did not discount the importance of this domain. Later, Weisman (1997) found that discrepancies between the ratings of perceived competence and the ratings of importance by both students with LD and other students. Her findings suggest that students who do not rate the academic domain (academic competence) as very important are likely to have a higher global self-concept, although both groups in her study rated the academic domain as important. Thus, there are inconsistencies in the findings about the discounting hypothesis.
K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi

As mentioned above, interpretation of the characteristics of the self-perception of students with LD has been made within a limited framework shaped by assessment of self-perception based on a certain instrument. Researchers did not attempt to clarify internal and external factors influencing the self-perception of students with LD. The trends in research on this matter are examined in the following.

**Factors Affecting the Self-Perception of Students With LD**

**Influence of Educational Placement**

In examining factors that affect the self-perception of students with LD, the focus of some early researchers was on educational placement, and its influence on social comparison and choice of reference group. Renick and Harter (1989) stated that students with LD lived in two academic worlds, that of regular education and that of special education, and that these two settings influenced their perceived scholastic competence differently. It was thus important to know which setting children were focusing on in making a judgment about their academic competence, as this was critical to understanding how they felt about themselves.

Arguments about the influence of educational settings were related to the discussion about which educational setting was appropriate for children with LD, viz., integration in regular education or placement in special education. People who insisted on integration emphasized that students who were placed in regular classes would have a more positive self-concept than students in special classes, because segregated settings promote stigmatization. However, some studies (e.g., Ribner, 1978) reported findings that conflicted with this assumption. Bear et al. (1991) used social comparison theory to explain why integrated children with LD experienced a negative self-concept, noting especially that the “proximity effect” had a greater influence on the determination of their reference group. According to social comparison theory, students with LD placed in more segregated settings might be expected to have more positive self-perceptions because they compare themselves with other students placed in the same settings (Vaughn & Elbaum, 1999).

Based on these hypotheses, many studies have examined the effects of two educational settings, producing mixed results. In a longitudinal study comparing self-concept among groups with LD in maximum special class placement (LDMP), partial placement (LDPP), and without placement (LDNP), Beltempo and Achille (1990) focused on the degree of placement (based on the percentage of the students’ time in the placement). Their findings showed that the partial placement group had a higher self-concept at the beginning and end of the academic year than any of the other groups. They therefore concluded that children with LD benefited most when they received partial placement and were maximally integrated within regular class settings where they could be exposed to an adequate reference group.

Renick and Harter (1989) examined the influence of social comparison processes on students with LD. Their findings showed that students with LD perceived themselves to be much more academically competent in the class for students with
Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With LD

LD than in the regular class, and that most of them spontaneously compared themselves with their regular class peers. However, Smith and Nagle (1995) investigated the relation between self-perception of students with LD and their spontaneous reference group choices, and reported that the students' self-perceptions were not influenced by their choice of reference group. Thus, findings on the influences of educational setting have been inconsistent.

Furthermore, recent research has suggested that educational settings do not have a critical impact on students' academic self-concept (Bear et al., 2002; Elbaum, 2002; Vaughn & Elbaum, 1996). Bear and Minke (1996) also reported that the feelings of global self-worth of children with LD were influenced by the setting that provides favorable feedback. Therefore, it is expected that the self-perception of children with LD is influenced by the education and support provided for them in the setting, rather than the educational setting itself. However, few studies have focused on these quality aspects of educational settings.

**Influences of Individual Differences in Students With LD**

As discussed earlier, although some researchers have pointed out the influence of educational environment factors on the self-perception of students with LD, others have emphasized individual differences among students with LD. Durrant et al. (1990) indicated that the limitation of many studies was the heterogeneity of the samples of students with LD. They investigated differences in self-concept among students classified into behavioral subgroups; namely, groups with and without behavioral difficulties. Their findings suggested that students with LD with significant behavioral difficulties had lower self-concepts than others, and they emphasized the importance of acknowledging the heterogeneity of the population of students with LD and the multidimensionality of the self-concept, in order to gain further understanding of these students' self-perceptions.

Researchers noted early that the locus of control of students with LD and their attributions were among the factors contributing to individual differences. Some studies reported that students with LD were more likely to have an external locus of control orientation than other students, and that there was a relation between the self-concept of students with LD and their attribution style (e.g., Ayres, Cooley, & Dune, 1990; Lincoln & Chazan, 1979; Rogers & Saklofske, 1985). Concerning the correlation between scholastic self-concept and attribution, Cooley and Ayres (1988) said that children with a low self-concept of school performance had a tendency to explain their successes as being caused by external factors, and to explain their failures as being due to lack of ability, rather than lack of effort. More recent research has found that students with poor academic self-concepts also demonstrate lower academic self-efficacy and a negative attribution style in academic areas (Tabassam & Grainger, 2002). It is suggested that the self-perception of students with LD might be influenced by differences in their attribution style; therefore, the importance of changing inappropriate attribution styles in order to improve negative self-perceptions of students with LD may be emphasized.
K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi

In the early 1990s, some researchers investigated the influence of students’ perceptions of their learning disabilities on their self-perception. Heyman (1987, 1990) was the first to study this, and, on the basis of other research on people's attitudes toward and acceptance of physical disabilities, developed an instrument called “Self-Perception of a Learning Disability (SPLD).” This instrument assessed students' perceptions of their learning problems from three views: not stigmatizing, delimited rather than global, and modifiable rather than permanently limiting. Through investigation of the relation between students’ self-concept and their perception of learning disabilities, Heyman (1987, 1990) reported that their perception of learning disabilities was related to their self-esteem and academic self-concept, and that a more neutral perception of LD was associated with both higher self-esteem and higher academic self-concept.

Rothman and Cosden (1995) administered the “Self-Perception of a Learning Disability” instrument to children with LD, and found that students with a less negative view of their disabilities had a more positive global self-concept. According to Cosden, Elliott, Noble, and Kelemen (1999), the way children perceive their learning disabilities affects their self-esteem, and children with higher self-esteem are likely to view their learning disabilities more positively. These findings suggest that the perception, understanding, and acceptance of their disabilities by students with LD may be closely related to their self-understanding and self-perception.

The three views of perception of learning disabilities proposed by Heyman (1987, 1990) were reported in other studies. Wilczenski (1992) held group meetings for students with LD aimed at examining their perception of their disabilities and promoting acceptance, and, when she classified the participants’ descriptive data about their perception of their disabilities, identified three themes which were similar to those proposed by Heyman (1987, 1990). Wilczenski (1992) concluded that, by arming themselves with a circumscribed view of the nature of their learning disabilities, students with LD were less likely to form global negative self-evaluations. Thus, it has been recognized that the perceptions and understanding by students with LD of their disabilities are important factors in improving their self-perception, so that counseling and learning about their disabilities should be included in intervention programs for improving the self-concept of and promoting self-understanding by students with LD. (e.g., Guindon, 1993).

These approaches, which help students with LD to understand their disabilities, are expected to promote their positive self-perception. However, as McLoughlin, Clark, Mauck, and Petrosko (1987) point out, the perceptions of significant others, including parents, siblings, and other family members, affect the self-concept and motivation of children with LD. That is, the perceptions by students with LD of their disabilities are influenced by other people’s views about such disabilities and by the relations that other people with children with LD, based on those views. It is assumed also that these relations and views affect the attributions of students with LD, making it necessary to consider the issue of the self-perception of students with LD from the viewpoint of their relations with others.
Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With LD

Self-Perception of Students With LD From the Viewpoint of Their Relations With Others

Influences on the Self-Perception of Students With LD From Their Relations With Others

In parallel with the arguments introduced above, the influence of relations with others on the self-perception of students with LD began to be studied around the 1990s. Forman (1988) showed that students with LD who had higher levels of perceived social support from a variety of sources (parents, classmates, teachers, and friends) tended to have higher self-esteem in several areas. Kloomok and Cosden (1994) reported similar findings. As mentioned above they failed to explain the self-perception of students with LD with the discounting hypothesis; however, they reported that students with higher global and academic self-concept perceived higher levels of social support from parents and friends. Because their findings showed that perception of social support from parents was an important predictor of global self-concept, they supposed that the perception of social support, particularly from parents, was an important factor in the development of these students’ positive self-concept.

Some studies have suggested that social support from other people might have a positive influence not only on the self-perception and self-concept of students with LD, but also on their perception of their disabilities. Rothman and Cosden (1995) found a correlation between the self-concept of students with LD and their understanding of their disabilities, and moreover, they reported that students with higher levels of perceived social support from parents and peers had a less negative perception of their learning disabilities. These findings suggested a positive relation between perception of disabilities and perception of social support, although the causality relation was uncertain. Raviv and Stone (1991) investigated the relation between self-image of adolescents with LD and parental knowledge and acceptance of their child’s LD. They found a positive correlation between them, indicating that parental knowledge and acceptance might have a positive influence on self-image of adolescents with LD.

From the above findings, it is supposed that the self-perception of students with LD is influenced by their relations with others, as well as by other persons’ perception or understandings of students with LD, which would form the basis of this relationship.

Discrepancies Between the Self-Perception of Students With LD and Other People’s Perceptions

Since around the 1990s, there have been studies focusing on the relation between self-perception (self-ratings) of students with LD and perceptions of others, such as parents or teachers. From these studies, researchers have consistently reported that the self-perceptions/ratings of students with LD were higher than their parents’ or
K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi

teachers’ perceptions/ratings of them, showing discrepancies between self-ratings and the ratings of others.

McLoughlin et al. (1987) compared the perceptions of difficulties related to disabilities between adolescents with LD and their parents, and reported differences between the parents and their children, with parents having more negative perceptions of their children’s learning disabilities than did the adolescents with LD themselves. They stated that this difference between the perception of learning disabilities by parents and by students with LD raised the question of whose perception was more accurate. Some studies that focused on this question assumed that overestimation of students with LD caused the low concordance between self-perception and perceptions of others. A study that compared self-ratings with ratings by teachers reported that self-evaluations of their cognitive competence by children with LD were higher than their teachers’ evaluations, and that this positive bias was greater in children with LD than in their peers without LD (Priel & Leshem, 1990).

Other studies that examined the congruence between students’ perceptions and teachers’ judgments of students’ strategy and performance in the academic domain, reported that teachers’ ratings were more negative than students’, and that there were remarkable discrepancies between ratings of the students’ performance in the academic and organizational areas. Also, studies that compared students’ and teachers’ ratings of student effort in the classroom reported that the teachers’ judgments were more negative than the students’, and that there was low concordance between them (Meltzer, Roditi, Houser, & Perlman, 1998; Meltzer, Katzir-Cohen, Miller, & Roditi, 2001).

Similar findings have been obtained in studies that compared students’ and parents’ perceptions. Studies have found that self-ratings of students with LD were significantly higher than their parents’ ratings, and that such discrepancies were not found between other students’ self-ratings and their parents’ ratings, even though the self-ratings of students with LD were lower than those of other students (Raviv & Stone, 1991; Stone & May, 2002).

Later studies revealed that similar discrepancies were found among the perceptions of different raters (parents and teachers), not only between the self-perception of students with LD and perception of others. Haager and Vaughn (1995) investigated the extent to which students with LD, low achievers, and average to high achievers differed on ratings of social skills, behavior problems, peer acceptance, and self-perception of social competence, as seen from the perspectives of parents, teachers, peers, and themselves. They found low correlations between the ratings of general education teachers and parents, and moderate correlations between the ratings of general and special teachers, with regard to the social skills of students with LD. They concluded that these low to moderate correlations might indicate that students with LD receive inconsistent feedback. Similarly, Silver, Elder, and DeBolt (1999), who compared self-ratings of the social skills of children who had specific arithmetic disabilities (AD) with the ratings of their parents and teachers, reported that the
Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With LD

children who had arithmetic disabilities were rated by their teachers as having below average social skills, and by their parents as having average to below average social skills, although the children rated themselves as average. Moreover, these findings showed evidence of discrepancies between the ratings of teachers and parents.

Stone (1997) reported similar findings of differences between parents’ and teachers’ ratings. In his research, students were requested to rate their skills relative to their classmates in 21 domains, parents were asked to rate their children’s skills relative to other students of the same age, and teachers were asked to rate each student’s skills relative to other students at their school. He found that the self-ratings of students tended to be higher than those of their parents and teachers, and that, in some domains, teachers’ ratings tended to be higher than parents’. Furthermore, it was shown that the parents and the students agreed in their ratings of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the students with LD, and tended to rate the same skills similarly. The correspondence in ratings between students with LD and their parents was stronger than between parents and teachers or between teachers and students, suggesting not only that the extent of discrepancy in the ratings differs among raters, but also that the disagreement among them has various aspects.

Challenges in Studies of the Self-Perception of Students With LD

Although many studies have revealed a low concordance between students’ and others’ perceptions of students with LD, the initiation of investigations of the self-perceptions of students with LD from the viewpoint of their relations with others marked a major turning point. Some researchers proposed that the discrepancies in ratings resulted from a lack of meta-cognitive abilities or from overestimation for self-protection by students with LD (e.g., Stone & May 2002). However, it is necessary to reconsider the discrepancies in light of the relations of students with LD with others. We should not interpret the cause of the discrepancies as rooted in a problem that the students with LD have.

Some researchers considered the cause of the discrepancies to be a lack of open communication between students with LD and their parents (McLoughlin et al., 1987; Raviv & Stone, 1991). In more recent research, Dyson (2003) reported that mismatches found between the ratings of students with LD and their parents might have been caused by parental expectations for their children with LD being higher than those the children hold for themselves. That framework suggests that the discrepancies in perceptions between students with LD and others should be examined more closely.

Stone (1997) suggested that the incongruence is a significant predictor of low self-perception in students with LD, and emphasized the effectiveness of studying these discrepancies, stating that the ultimate purpose in studying parental perceptions of students’ capabilities is to examine the potential implications of these perceptions for the students’ success in school. In particular, he noted the value of studying the effect of parent-student and parent-teacher incongruence on the stu-
K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi

dents’ general sense of self-worth and academic progress.

Thus it has been suggested that the discrepancies may be the result of the relations between students with LD and others, and that the students’ self-perception might be influenced by these discrepancies. Some researchers have emphasized the necessity of further studies of these discrepancies. However, it is necessary to examine the details of the discrepancies in perception between students with LD and others before investigating the cause and influence of these discrepancies in terms of the relations of students with LD with others.

The greatest problem concerning the self-perception of students with LD is that these students and others are unconscious of the discrepancies, even though such discrepancies or mismatches between the perceptions among students with LD and others have been shown to exist. As mentioned above, discrepancies in perceptions were reported among students, teachers, and parents, and the degree and details of these inconsistencies have been shown to vary. This has been referred to as “the lack of convergence in different raters’ perspectives” (Haager & Vaughn, 1995, p. 213); or, in other words, an absence of a common understanding about students’ problems among these raters.

A common understanding based on an appropriate perception of students’ difficulties, needs, strengths, and weaknesses is required in order to provide appropriate teaching and support to meet the needs of students with LD. Therefore, future research should examine the details and degree of discrepancy in perceptions between students with LD and others, such as parents, teachers, and classmates, including the type and size of the discrepancies. Special support for problems in the self-perception of students with LD could be devised if these problems were considered from the viewpoint of the discrepancy and mismatch between the self-perception of the students and the perceptions of them by others.

A recent study which assessed the self-perception of people without disabilities from the viewpoint of their relations with others considered self-perception to be closely related to a person’s relations with others (Mizogami, 2002). Corresponding to the contemporary shift in the concept of disabilities to one that considers disabilities in terms of social interaction with the environment rather than as a personal problem, a change of viewpoint to consider the problem of the self-perception of students with LD in the light of their relations with others, and not only as a personal problem, may offer a new perspective on how to understand their difficulties and needs, and on ways to support and teach them.

From this fundamental point of view, future research issues include clarifying the cause of such discrepancies/mismatches and finding problems relevant to them, as well as examining the details and degree of the discrepancies between the self-perception of students with LD and other people’s perceptions. In these investigations, the self-perception of students with LD in terms of their relations with others should be reconsidered.
Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With LD

References


— 543 —
K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi


Trends and Issues in Research on the Self-Perception of Students With LD


Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2004) Guidelines for preparing educational support systems for children and students with LD (learning disabilities), ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder), and high functioning autism in elementary and junior high schools (tentative plan). Author, Tokyo. (in Japanese)


K. Kawanishi & S. Takahashi

(in Japanese)


—Received August 16, 2004; Accepted December 4, 2004—