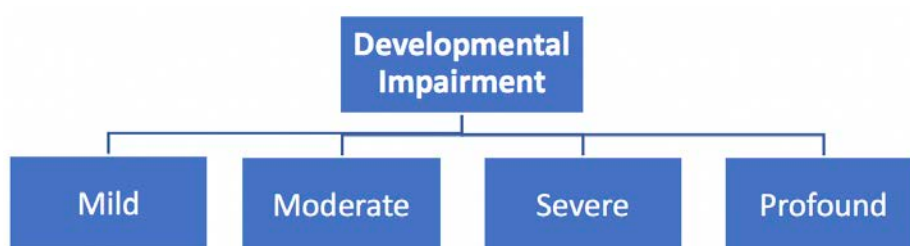


12. Developmental or Intellectual Impairment

Developmental or intellectual impairment are collective terms for a number of conditions that adversely affect children's ability to learn and to cope within society. These conditions are either present at birth or acquired early on in their development, and can be genetic conditions or be caused by problems during pregnancy or at birth, problems with nourishment or result from children's responses to physical and emotional abuse.

The degree of impairment can range from mild to profound:

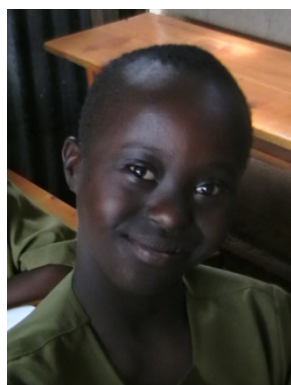


Mild: the pupil will listen and talk, but may find some concepts difficult to understand and have some limitations with expressive language. They will usually cope quite well socially.

Moderate: the pupil will listen and talk, and usually be able to participate in classroom activities. However they are likely to need additional help in developing independent living and social skills.

Severe: the pupil will understand simple communication using signs and gestures, but may have difficulty in understanding and in particular expressing themselves in spoken language. Pupils with severe developmental impairment usually experience great difficulties with day to day life, but can nevertheless be helped to achieve some level of independence.

Profound: the pupil has very limited ability to communicate, and often has limited ability to speak at all. Many of such pupils will need considerable care and attention at all times.



Down's Syndrome is a genetic condition, and is one of the most well known forms of developmental impairment. It affects boys and girls of all races, religions, cultural, social and economic backgrounds. With support, children with Down's Syndrome can make good progress with their learning. The following coping strategies are often very helpful for them:

- Routine and order help them to understand and control their daily lives
- Self-talk often helps children with Down's Syndrome to control their behaviour, express their feelings and make sense of what is going on around them
- Avoiding change and unfamiliar situations
- Stubbornness and refusal to cooperate are often a sign that children with Down's Syndrome do not fully understand what is expected of them.

Identifying pupils with developmental impairment

Sometimes a pupil's developmental impairment will seem quite obvious. However, especially for children with mild or moderate developmental impairment, their difficulties might only become apparent following observation in the classroom.

How can you identify pupils with developmental impairment?

Look for pupils who exhibit one or two of the following signs:

- Difficulty understanding what you are saying, when the rest of the class seem to understand it well
- Talking differently from the other pupils, or not talking at all
- Moving, speaking and learning more slowly than most of the rest of the class
- The pupil's speech is difficult to understand
- The pupil does not play and interact well with other children of a similar age
- Short attention span
- Poor short and/or long-term memory
- Pupil is hyperactive, aggressive or disruptive
- Pupil is apathetic and indifferent
- Pupil has difficulty copying shapes, such as circles and squares



What can you do in your role as a teacher to support the learning of pupils with developmental impairments?

- Use simple words and sentences when giving instructions. Check that the pupil has understood.
- Use real objects that the pupil can touch, rather than just working with pen and paper.
- Do one activity at a time with the pupil.
- Break each task down into small steps, starting with something the pupil can already do. Go back one step if they encounter problems.
- Allow the pupil to practise tasks a number of times so that they can master it and grow in confidence.
- Other pupils can sometimes help with tasks; this will also help the pupil develop their social skills.

- Use praise and encouragement when the pupil masters new skills and/or is trying very hard.
- Encourage the rest of the class to include the pupil in their play and social activities.
- Ignore any undesirable behaviour as much as possible, and give praise and attention when the pupil is behaving well.

Three key principles to remember:

- Divide skill development into small steps and allow for slow progression
- Provide frequent opportunities for repetition
- Provide lots of encouragement, and use praise to reward hard work, progress and good behaviour

Reference:

Adapted from: UNESCO (2015), *Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*, Bangkok: UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001829/182975e.pdf>

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