

**DIANA HUDSON (2018) SPECIFIČNE TEŠKOĆE U UČENJU:
ŠTO UČITELJI I NASTAVNICI TREBAJUZNATI
(SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES -
WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW)**

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Specifične teškoće u učenju: što učitelji i nastavnici trebaju znati (original title: Specific Learning Difficulties - What Teachers Need to Know) was authored by Diana Hudson, PhD, a British teacher with 30 years of experience in teaching. On some two-hundred pages, the author presents the most common difficulties that both students and teachers can encounter. Each chapter is devoted to one of the difficulties in order to ensure sufficient space for outlining ideas and recommendations. The book is comprised of 11 chapters, preceded by an Acknowledgement section and an Introduction section, where the author explains her reasons for writing the book, addressing the reader-teacher directly. She devoted the first chapter to Brains That Work a Little Differently, where she explores the basic principles of memory, learning and adapting teaching. In short, she prepares the reader for the content in the following seven chapters.

Chapters two to eight deal with specific learning difficulties: Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Asperger Syndrome, as well as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Chapter nine is dedicated to Organisational Skills, and to explaining reasons why students with learning difficulties are not always organised in their work. The second last chapter, Exams and Revision, is concerned with alternative ways of checking the knowledge of students with learning difficulties, having in mind issues that could occur during standard examination or testing. In chapter eleven, A Final Word, the author calls on teachers not to perceive students with learning difficulties as one of the difficulties in their work. The book also contains a Glossary, Appendix, References and Useful Information, Author Biography, Artist Biography and Index.

As the author states herself, the book is intended as a reference book that does not have to be read from beginning to end. Each chapter was conceived as a separate unit on a specific difficulty, which enables teachers to find what they need quickly and easily. Each chapter starts with questions that serve as an introduction to the topic, and concludes with a summary of the "key ideas" presented in the previous pages. The text is accompanied by illustrations and ta-

bles, sometimes even by an example of how a difficulty can manifest itself as, for instance, two images of visual stress on page 23 in the chapter on dyslexia. In many instances, there are “Did you know?” sections that provide additional information, as well as statistical data on a certain phenomenon.

The chapters on difficulties are structured in a similar manner. After introducing the difficulty, starting from the Greek origin of the work to the expected presence in the population, listed are the most frequent signs of the difficulty in question. The author stresses that this first step is the most difficult: to recognise that the student actually has a learning difficulty, meaning that the student has to be approached in an appropriate manner. This is followed by a detailed description of frequent disadvantages, as well as of advantages that individual students can have. The latter mostly refers to school subjects in which the student can achieve above-average results for the same difficulty that makes learning other subjects much more difficult. Although this often means that chapters are reduced to listing, teachers have, at one place, all of the signs that can help them to “decipher” the students and their needs. Also worthy of praise is the fact that the book is in tune with the times; many recommendations include technology such as mobile phones, computers, the Internet and so on.

A significant part of the success in overcoming difficulties can, according to the author, be attributed to the attitude of a teacher. Almost every chapter ends with an appeal to teachers to adjust their attitudes to the circumstances, in particular not to perceive students with

learning difficulties as an obstacle when performing their tasks. Stating how she, herself, had to cope with a specific learning difficulty, the author provides arguments why students with learning difficulties should not be considered a problem since they do not intentionally interrupt class, as is sometimes presented. Simple guidelines are provided on how to have them involved in a manner that suits everybody, without losing anything from the intended lesson plan. Provided that the teacher has a positive attitude and applies recommendations on how to deal with students with learning difficulties, such difficulties might even go unnoticed.

At the end, there is a glossary of terms used in the book. Since technical terms cannot always be avoided, the glossary makes it easier for readers to keep up to date. Explained are terms such as difficulty, syndromes, parts of the brain, learning techniques, types of memory etc. This makes the book suitable for a wider public who do not necessarily have such extensive, professional knowledge on the topic. The Appendix provides a “Table of Most Common Areas of Difficulty” that lists the correlations between difficulties and activities. For instance, the table shows that poor organisation can be expected in students with dyscalculia, as opposed to students with dysgraphia. After the Appendix, the author included References and Useful Information, mostly containing the websites of organisations and associations that deal with specific difficulties. Although they are all from abroad, they could be useful for Croatian readers as well. Finally, the Index refers the reader to relevant pages.

Dr Diana Hudson provided, with her book, a thorough and useful overview of the most frequent learning difficulties present in the classroom. Her goal was not only to present a particular difficulty, but also to offer guidelines on how to deal with it, for almost every school subject. However, it could be said that an important goal of this book is to raise awareness on the need to adapt teaching to students with difficulties. In almost every chapter, the author appeals to teachers to adjust to students' needs,

pointing out the importance of a positive attitude. If the students realise that they are not considered a problem, according to Dr Hudson, then the road to success has been paved. Although a specific target audience is mentioned in the subtitle of the book, due to style of writing and contemporary approach, the book can be recommend to all of those who deal with children with learning difficulties.

Filip Brčić,
Poslijediplomski doktorski studij pedagogije