International Humanities Studies
Vol. 12(1), June 2026 ISSN 2311-7796 Online

Learning Disabilities, Types, Causes And Symptoms: A Case Study Of East Jerusalem Governorate Schools

Husun Edkadek

Abstract

This study addressed the notion of learning disabilities (LD), its types, causes and symptoms at East Jerusalem Governorate Schools. This study shed the light on the educational challenges facing East Jerusalem, under the on-going Israeli occupation since the 1967, and the deliberate neglect of education and schools by the occupation in particular, as part of specific policies aimed at erasing Palestinian education and identity. Findings showed that learning disabilities (LD) are lifelong, neurological disorders that interfere with basic learning skills like reading, writing, and math, affecting how a person processes information. They are not reflections of intelligence but rather unexpected gaps between potential and performance, often caused by genetic, developmental, or brain-based factors. Finds showed that Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia are the most are the common types of learning disabilities. The study call for an early diagnosis for learning disabilities that involves comprehensive evaluations by specialists (e.g., psychologists, educators) rather than a single test.

Keywords: Learning disabilities, Types, Causes, Symptoms, Schools, East Jerusalem.

1. Introduction

Learning disabilities (LD) are educational challenges that affect society in general, and students in particular. Learning disabilities are not a problem of intelligence or motivation, and children with learning disabilities are not lazy or unintelligent. In fact, most are just as intelligent as anyone else. Their brains are simply wired differently, and this difference affects how they receive and process information.

Children and adults with learning disabilities see, hear, and understand things differently, which can lead to difficulty in learning and using new information and skills. The most common types of learning disabilities include problems with reading, writing, mathematics, reasoning, listening, and

speaking. If a child struggles with homework from time to time, it may indicate a learning disability (Edkadek, 2025).

Learning disabilities can be defined as significant developmental delays in the early years of a child's life, and the degree of disability can vary considerably from one child to another. With some disabilities, some children will never learn to speak and will need help caring for themselves. If the disability is mild, the child is likely to grow up to be independent, but may sometimes find it difficult to solve problems and cope with aspects of life such as dressing, shopping, or filling out forms. Some people with disabilities may not need much support in their lives, while those with severe or profound learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities may need 24-hour support. This is known as multiple profound learning disabilities (PMLD). A learning disability may occur alone or alongside sensory or physical conditions, or medical conditions such as epilepsy (Squibb *et al.,* 2023).

For some children (for example, children with Down syndrome or autism spectrum disorders), there may be a genetic basis for their learning disability. However, for many children, the cause of their learning disability is never known (Edkadek, 2025).

This article will address the concept of learning disability and manifestations, the causes, the diagnosis of learning disabilities, its goals and methods, the symptoms of treating learning disabilities and its methods, the characteristics of students with learning disabilities, its types, and the classification of educational technology media for students with learning disabilities.

2. Background And Literature Review

Educationally, learning disabilities are defined as "A lack of regular development of mental abilities, leading to academic deficits such as an inability to read and write, perform arithmetic operations, or a general weakness in language and spelling. These deficits are not due to weaknesses in mental, auditory, or visual abilities." The educational perspective views learning disabilities as an imbalance in mental ability. Individuals with learning disabilities may perform normally in academic subjects but have specific weaknesses in language or mathematics, and these weaknesses are not caused by intellectual disability or environmental factors such as mental retardation or emotional disorders (Zidan, 2023).

The Education State (2022) indicated that learning disabilities is an umbrella term describing students who experience learning disabilities due to a variety of reasons (e.g., disability, living in foster care) and who cannot access the curriculum through high-quality education alone. This group of students, if provided with greater knowledge and practice, will become more capable of bridging the gap between themselves and their peers. Their peers. Understanding the reasons why a student might experience learning disabilities is an important first step in helping them had better access the curriculum. Learning disabilities are a subset of learning disabilities and are classified as congenital and neurological differences (which may or may not be diagnosed) that include specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia and dyscalculia.

Learning disabilities is also a general term describing a group of students in a regular classroom who demonstrate lower academic achievement than their peers do, even though they possess above-average intelligence. They exhibit difficulty in some learning-related processes, such as comprehension, reasoning, perception, attention, reading, writing, spelling, pronunciation, performing mathematical operations, or in skills related to any of the above. Individuals with intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbances, hearing and vision impairments, and multiple disabilities are excluded from the definition of learning disabilities, as their disabilities may be a direct cause of their difficulties (such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia (Ghani, 2010).

The Palestinian Ministry of Education (2020) defined learning disabilities as, a disorder that may affect one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding and using language, whether written or spoken, and which manifests in various impairments such as listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, and mathematics, and which is not due to intellectual, auditory, or visual impairments, or other types of disabilities, or to educational circumstances or family care.

Deesti (2018) defined learning disabilities as, a dysfunction in the central nervous system during the early stages of development resulting from a defect or disturbance in growth rates, leading to a deficiency in acquiring and using the ability to listen, speak, read, write, think, or perform mathematical tasks.

Learning disabilities stem from a deficiency or delay in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing, or arithmetic. This deficiency may result from a potential

impairment in brain function, or an emotional or behavioral disorder, but it is not caused by intellectual disability, sensory impairment, or cultural factors (Riziq *et al.,* 2022).

Students with learning disabilities are defined as those who experience a deficiency in one or more intellectual, behavioral, emotional, physical, or sensory attributes or abilities compared to their peers (Qorari, 2020).

To sum up, learning disabilities encompass the following elements:

1. Uneven development of intellectual abilities.

2. Learning disabilities represent an unbalanced pattern of intellectual ability.

3. Limited access to the curriculum through quality education.

4. Learning disabilities is a general term describing a group of students in a regular classroom who exhibit lower academic achievement than their peers.

5. The impairment may be in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding and using language, whether written or spoken.

6. Deficits in acquiring and using the ability to listen, speak, read, write, or think.

7. General or specific losses in educational and school-related skills and knowledge (Edkadek, 2025).

3. Manifestations Of Learning Disabilities

Individuals with learning disabilities suffer from multiple and varied problems that are difficult to classify precisely. These difficulties overlap between disorders in thinking patterns and disorders in linguistic and mathematical processes. They can be classified according to the learners' negative interaction with academic achievement and categorized into seven difficulties, which are, memory disorders, visual-spatial and perceptual discrimination disorders, verbal expression disorders, visual-auditory processing difficulties, motor perception difficulties, and attention difficulties. There are also informal classifications of learning disabilities developed by teachers based on the frequency with which learners exhibit them (Zidan, 2023).

Moreover, a study by Khattab (2024) revealed that students with learning disabilities experience the following:

3.1 Poor Concentration

1. Difficulty completing a specific activity.

2. Difficulty persevering and maintaining focus for an extended period.

3. Easily distracted, daydreaming, or lost in thought.

4. Difficulty remembering instructions (short-term memory).

5. Losing or forgetting things.

6. Poor organization.

7. Switching from one activity to another without completing the first.

8. The presence of most symptoms in more than one setting.

9. The absence of sudden events, such as the birth of a new sibling or moving house, as these circumstances can cause a temporary setback if the child is not prepared.

3.2 Poor Memory Skills

1. The child takes longer than other children to memorize and learn information, such as colors and days of the week.

2. They cannot provide information about themselves or their family.

3. They may forget their belongings or books, or forget to complete their homework.

4. They may read a story and forget what they read at the beginning by the end.

3.3 Poor Organizational Skills

1. When given specific instructions, they do not know where or how to begin.

2. They may have difficulty learning and understanding concepts like right and left, above and below, before and after, first and last, and yesterday and today.

3. They may not be aware of the size and boundaries of a table, placing things on the edge, causing them to fall. They may also bump into things while moving around. They may be more active than other children. Regarding language, they may be slow to learn to speak and may pronounce words incorrectly (substituting letters).

4. They may be moody and react violently, disproportionate to the situation. For example, they might suddenly shout and yell when frustrated.

5. They might write their assignments quickly but incorrectly, or write them slowly and without finishing.

3.4 Difficulty With Problem-Solving

They may struggle to learn the sequential steps needed to solve mathematical problems, such as multiplication, long division, and algebraic equations. They may not find different ways to solve a problem, often only using one method.

3.5 Indicators Of Dysgraphia

The main indicators of dysgraphia can be summarized as follows:

1. Inability to learn to read written text and failure to write letters according to their position in a word.

2. Slow writing, writing without punctuation, difficulty distinguishing between long and short vowels, short and long vowels, and inconsistencies in letter structure (incorrect capitalization).

3. Poor handwriting, irregular lines, and lack of spacing between words (words are jumbled).

4. Writing in different directions, such as writing English from right to left and Arabic from left to right.

5. Writing all letters in spirals and mixing up similar letters (ذ، د، ن، ت ي، ى).

6. Writing letters backwards, such as writing the word "apple" as "apples," and similarly writing mathematical numbers backwards.

7. Not using margins, and deleting, adding, or substituting letters within a word.

8. Talking to oneself while writing and feeling tired and exhausted (Zidan (2023; Edkadek, 2025).

The researcher believes that, when artificial intelligence is used and benefited from, students with special needs - who are the third category of special education, which is included in the category of those with learning disabilities (LD) - suffer from a dysfunction in the central nervous system, and they show defects that hinder their learning, such as developmental difficulties: such as dyslexia, repetition of words, mixing of sounds, determining the number of sounds in a word, dividing or cutting words into sounds, hesitation or delay in choosing a word, and other difficulties that appear in students with learning disabilities.

4. Causes Of Learning Disabilities

4.1 Direct Causes

4.1.1 Genetic Causes: Genetic factors are among the causes of some learning disabilities, and may be due to a hereditary cause. This is evidenced by the recurrence of these learning disabilities across different generations and their prevalence among individuals. There are numerous examples of this. Children who lack some of the skills required for reading are likely to have parents with a similar problem. When one twin suffers from learning disabilities in an academic skill, the other may also suffer from the same difficulties. Parents with a language expression disorder may have a reduced ability to communicate with their children, or the language they use may be incomprehensible. In this case, the child lacks a suitable model for learning and language acquisition (Edkadek, 2025).

4.1.2 Biological Causes: Learning disabilities can be caused by minor brain damage affecting some, but not all, aspects of cognitive development.

4.1.3 Environmental Causes: Environmental factors contribute to learning disabilities. There is substantial evidence that children experiencing environmental deprivation are more prone to learning problems, and that inadequate educational experiences and malnutrition are among the most significant environmental factors contributing to learning disabilities.

4.1.4 Biochemical Causes: The human body contains specific proportions of biochemical elements that maintain its balance, vitality, and activity. An increase or decrease in the levels of these elements can affect brain cells, resulting in what is known as minor brain dysfunction.

4.2 Indirect Causes

4.2.1 The Family: All scholars emphasize the role of the family, especially in situations unfavorable to a child's healthy development. The family plays a significant role in the emergence of learning disabilities. Examples include family pressures and disintegration, a lack of emotional warmth in the child's environment, rejection and negative attitudes from others, disciplinary methods employed by the family, and parental attitudes toward the school. All of these are indirect factors that can contribute to exacerbating the problem for the child (Edkadek, 2025).

4.2.2 The School: There is no doubt that the school plays a fundamental role in the rise or fall of students' academic achievement. It is officially and educationally responsible for students' learning of academic subjects. It fulfills this crucial role through the following educational tools: curriculum and syllabi, textbooks, teachers, school activities, the assessment and examination system, the evaluation system, school administration, and the overall learning environment. All of these factors can contribute to the exacerbation of learning disabilities.

Furthermore, there are also reasons related to emergency circumstances, as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the educational process. According to Dahshan study (2020), the most significant of these reasons is the substantial disruption to education. This disruption manifested itself during the teaching of subjects, as teachers and students faced a range of obstacles and challenges, including:

1. Challenges related to planning and assessment in e-learning: These include teachers' lack of preparedness to teach via online platforms and websites, the difficulty of planning, designing, and assessing lessons and educational topics, and the inability of some teachers to identify appropriate teaching strategies for e-learning.

2. Financial and economic challenges: These include the inability of many students and teachers to provide devices and internet access.

3. Professional challenges related to teachers: These include the heavy teaching load for some teachers and their lack of awareness of the value and importance of distance e-learning. Some teachers face technical and logistical challenges, including a lack of familiarity with synchronous teaching methods, both when recording lessons electronically and after recording, how to upload assessment reports and provide feedback online, how to save data and lessons, and other requirements of e-learning. These teachers also need more time and effort to identify appropriate interactive tools for their teaching objectives.

4. Difficulties related to the management of e-learning, such as low intrinsic motivation among some students for distance learning, and the lack of preparedness of some teachers to develop educational, enrichment, and remedial activities for students according to the requirements of e-learning.

5. Prenatal events can also play a role; maternal malnutrition, rubella, diabetes, and birth complications such as oxygen deprivation, premature birth, or birth injuries can significantly increase the risk of learning disabilities in children. Attention must also be paid to genetic factors, which have a strong influence on heredity, neurological factors related to dysfunction or weakness of the central nervous system, and organic chemical factors. Evidence increasingly points to a chemical basis as a contributing factor to learning disabilities (Edkadek, 2025).

Based on the above, the researcher believes it is imperative to detect learning disabilities early, diagnose students, engage with developed countries, utilize modern educational technologies, and adopt advanced technologies to improve the academic performance of this group. She also emphasizes the need to activate the role of psychologists and social workers within educational institutions. Furthermore, she notes that the causes of learning disabilities are diverse and varied, including organic, biological, and genetic factors, among others. She identifies brain damage and functional impairment as the most common cause of learning disabilities, and concludes that children with learning disabilities are the product of the interaction between psychological, physiological, environmental, and inappropriate educational factors.

5. Characteristics Of Students With Learning Disabilities

Edkadek (2025) indicated that students with learning disabilities exhibit several characteristics, the most important of which are:

1. Attention deficit and hyperactivity without a specific goal.

2. Weakness in general cognitive abilities, such as intelligence, perception, reasoning, and memory.

3. Difficulty following and sequencing the learning of various academic skills.

4. Lack of motivation to learn.

5. Constant, persistent, and undefined anxiety.

6. Confusion regarding directions and poor motor coordination.

7. Academic failure and grade repetition due to poor performance.

8. The presence of neurological or psychological disorders, such as irritability, impulsivity, hitting, and verbal abuse (Mohammed, 2014; Edkadek, 2025).

Meanwhile, Aqili (2021) identified the characteristics of students with learning disabilities as follows:

1. Hyperactivity: This is motor behavior that appears aimless and is usually disruptive.

2. Poor general orientation or maladaptive behavior.

3. Attention deficit: This includes difficulties concentrating for sufficient periods and daydreaming.

4. Impulsivity and recklessness, which manifest as acting without considering the consequences. 5. Memory and thinking difficulties, manifested as trouble retrieving information.

6. Speech and hearing difficulties, manifested as difficulties with academic skills such as reading and writing.

7. Emotional instability: characterized by vacillation and fluctuations in mood and behavior that do not seem related to the situation.

8. Nonspecific neurological signs, such as sensory-perceptual problems and delayed language and motor development.

9. Sensory-perceptual impairment: characterized by problems coordinating auditory and visual input with motor responses, such as writing numbers and letters (Aqili (2021; Edkadek, 2025).

6. Diagnosing Of Learning Disabilities

Early diagnosis and treatment of learning disabilities through re-education, parental involvement, educational adaptation, and psychological support are essential for the child, their family, and teachers to prevent the situation from worsening and becoming a permanent disability. To provide an accurate diagnosis of school difficulties and learning disorders, we must adopt a systematic and practical approach that addresses all aspects of the child's overall condition. This requires continuous, longitudinal, and evaluative monitoring (Amal, 2020).

Furthermore, the American Psychiatric Association (2013) indicated that there are four main diagnostic criteria for diagnosing learning disabilities:

1. The student experiences difficulty in learning and using academic skills in specific areas, such as word decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, written expression, or mathematics skills, for at least six months despite interventions targeting these difficulties.

2. The student's level of specific academic skills is significantly lower than expected given their chronological age. This significantly interferes with academic performance or other areas of daily life.

3. Learning disabilities began during the school years.

4. Learning disabilities cannot be better explained by other individual factors, such as intellectual disability, inadequate exposure to academic instruction in a language of competence, psychosocial adversity, or other mental or neurological disorders.

Therefore, the researcher believes that early intervention is essential because the problem escalates very rapidly. Students with learning disabilities may experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, and some may engage in disruptive behavior at school. In such cases, the teacher asks the student's guardian if there are concerns about a learning problem, and the student will initially undergo medical examinations. To rule out hearing and vision problems, or any other medical conditions, the student will then undergo tests conducted by specialists: the student's special

education teacher, psychologist, nurse, social worker, or occupational therapist. There are further stages and subsequent steps to diagnose students with learning disabilities, and to identify them, especially in low academic performance. The student's behavior is observed inside the classroom, through informal assessment of the student's behavior, a team of specialists studies his case, and the results of the diagnosis are written. Identifying learning disorders and the results of tests and observations leads to determining the treatment program and determining the treatment prescription. A diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and anxiety may contribute to a delay in the development of academic skills, and parents should review the student's academic and achievement performance.

7. Methods Of Diagnosing Learning Disabilities

Ismail & Asiri (2022) indicated several methods for identifying learning disabilities, which can be used to determine students who suffer from learning problems and difficulties. These methods include:

7.1 The Divergence Criterion: This criterion for diagnosing learning disabilities relies on the discrepancy between the student's achievement level in a subject and the expected level. This discrepancy manifests in one of the following aspects:

A. The difference between the student's intellectual abilities and their academic achievement level.

B. The variation in the student's academic development across different subjects (Bin Yousef, 2019).

7.2 The Exclusion Criterion: This criterion rules out learning disabilities as being due to problems resulting from intellectual disability, emotional disorders, sensory impairment, or motor disorder.

7.3 The Special Education Criterion: This criterion addresses the need for specialized education for individuals with learning disabilities to assist them in their learning (Samadi and Shamali, 2017).

7.4 The Criterion of Developmental Issues: Developmental rates vary from one child to another; this makes it difficult to facilitate learning processes. It is well established that boys develop at a slower rate than girls, which can leave them cognitively unprepared for learning by the age of five or six.

7.5 The Auditory Criterion: We can infer the presence of learning disabilities in students from minor organic damage to the brain, which can be detected by electroencephalography (EEG) (Ben Yousef, 2019).

8. Addressing Approaches Of Learning Disabilities

Sulaiman study (2022) indicated that if a child has learning disabilities, their teacher or doctor may recommend one of the following approaches to address them:

1. Using new technologies in education: The reading teacher, math teacher, or any other educator specializing in the child's education can use new technologies to improve their behavioral and educational skills.

2. Enrolling the child in an Individualized Education Program (IEP): Some schools offer IEPs for children with learning disabilities, which help improve their learning abilities.

3. Placing the child in special classes: These classes incorporate specific behaviors that support children with learning disabilities, such as giving them more time to complete assignments and exams, having them sit next to the teacher to increase focus and attention, using computer programs that support writing, contain less complex mathematical equations, or include audio to aid reading.

4. Occupational Therapy: Occupational therapy can help a child improve their motor skills, which in turn can improve their writing abilities. A speech-language pathologist can also help improve a child's language difficulties.

5. Medication: In some cases, a doctor may prescribe medication for depression or severe anxiety. They may also recommend medications for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to improve a child's academic performance.

6. Alternative Therapies: More research is needed to support alternative therapies for learning disabilities, such as dietary changes, vitamin use, eye exercises, and neurological therapies.

However, the researcher believes it is necessary to help students who suffer from speech and articulation problems, and to use occupational therapy to improve sensory perception, skills, and fine motor skills, focusing on modifying desired behavior, using modern and advanced techniques

to modify and improve behavioral and educational skills, and dividing the task into small parts so that the student can learn it easily, and meeting the needs of students with individual needs, each separately.

9. Programs Of Learning Disabilities

There are several technology-based programs for the care of individuals with disabilities, including:

1. Prevention and early detection programs.

2. Community-based rehabilitation programs.

3. Development programs and support for institutions and organizations working in the field of disability.

4. The national program for the care and support of individuals with disabilities at the governorate level.

5. Legislative programs for individuals with disabilities.

6. Ongoing media programs and national and social participation to address the problems of individuals with disabilities.

7. Programs for the education and rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, as well as educational programs.

8. The program comprised of research and study centers for the sciences of individuals with disabilities.

9. Employment programs for individuals with disabilities (Mustafa, 2020; Edkadek, 2025).

10. Technology And Learning Disabilities

Evidence of previous literature suggests that more people will be identified as having specific learning disabilities due to advances in science and technology that enable more accurate, earlier,

and broader diagnosis (Carroll *et al.,* 2020)). The education system will need to address the increasing number of people identified as having specific learning disabilities by:

1. The difficult teacher employment situation for learners with specific learning disabilities can be improved by leveraging technology to support early diagnosis and effective learning.

2. The evidence on how technology can be used to support the education of people with specific learning disabilities, summarized in this review, is still relatively rudimentary, fragmentary, and lacks consistency and scale.

3. If advancements in artificial intelligence technology continue, the potential for increased educational achievement for people with specific learning disabilities will be substantial. 4. A clear terminology for educational technology related to learning disabilities will enable the application of data science and help the government effectively utilize technology to educate individuals with specific learning disabilities.

5. If academic researchers are required to make their findings available to both educators and technology developers, there is a greater likelihood of developing appropriate technology for learners with specific learning disabilities and effectively implementing it in education.

6. Creating and accessing large datasets on individuals with specific learning disabilities is a challenge. However, with more people being diagnosed earlier in life, datasets should be compiled and made available to those developing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies to screen and support those with specific learning disabilities.

7. The potential and increasing use of artificial intelligence presents ethical obstacles to large-scale data collection and the design of algorithms involved in using AI for machine learning. These obstacles must be addressed to ensure that the education of learners with specific learning disabilities benefits from advances in science and technology.

8. Early intervention and support for reading and writing difficulties should be prioritized (Edkadek, 2025).

In fact, technology has contributed to the emergence of smart applications that improve the abilities of students with learning disabilities and serve them, thus easing the challenges they face.

Comprehensive support programs are provided, and the government allocates sufficient budgets to provide advanced and modern technology to serve students with learning disabilities. Studies are conducted on the effectiveness of employing technology, mobile learning, and various communication technologies in the educational process for students with learning disabilities, especially in interactive educational programs. These programs aim to engage students and encourage faster interaction. Educational games also help activate social and academic skills, enhance thinking skills, open communication channels, and build global relationships (Edkadek, 2025).

To benefit those with learning disabilities from local, regional and global experiences in employing technology, using analysis and tracking of the student, providing and updating electronic curricula and educational books, providing digital tablets according to the number of students, or bringing personal devices to be used in the educational process, exploiting programs, applications and multimedia to improve the special educational process for those with learning disabilities, the augmented and virtual reality environment that encourages understanding and comprehension, developing the infrastructure, especially the internet, computer labs and technicians, promoting e-learning, and building and designing therapeutic programs based on artificial intelligence to serve students with learning disabilities, especially since updating and renewing information day after day in the current era requires us to renew educational thinking and practices in the school, so it needs interconnected and consistent components for the direction of technology that are related to the content of the materials.

11. Conclusion And Recommendations

Learning disabilities (LD) are lifelong, neurological disorders that interfere with basic learning skills like reading, writing, and math, affecting how a person processes information. They are not reflections of intelligence but rather unexpected gaps between potential and performance, often caused by genetic, developmental, or brain-based factors. This study addressed the educational challenges facing East Jerusalem schools, under the on-going Israeli occupation since the 1967, and the deliberate neglect of education and schools by the occupation in particular, as part of specific policies aimed at erasing Palestinian education and identity. Learning disabilities are not curable but can be managed with specialized instruction, support services, and accommodations to help individuals succeed. Understanding learning disabilities among Palestinian students in East

Jerusalem can reduce the educational challenges, and further research is essential in the area of learning disabilities in East Jerusalem schools using artificial intelligence and the quantitative research design.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER?

Edkadek, H. (2026). Learning Disabilities, Types, Causes And Symptoms: A Case Study Of East Jerusalem Governorate Schools. International Humanities Studies, 12(1), 36-54.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Husun Edkadek, Assistant Professor, Special Education, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Arab American University, Jenin, Palestine. Post-Doctorate Candidate, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Political Sciences and Sociology, Granada University, Granada, Spain. Email: husundk2016@gmail.com