SLOW LEARNER: THEIR CHARACTERISTICS AND ROLE OF TEACHERS IN HELPING THEM

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Abstract

Human resource development should be at the focus of any educator for a developing country. In Pakistan, it is observed that the human resources i.e. teachers and learners are underdeveloped and perform less than their capabilities. Even some of the most efficient teachers are not adequately equipped to identify and guide the backward students like slow learners to reach their optimum levels. As a result the institutions in turn are not able to send their products into society as fully developed learners. There is a need to conduct research in order to highlight how teacher can help slow learners and what measures can be taken in this regard.

Introduction

There are many children who need special attention because they are weak in compulsory subjects. They do not plan for any kind of success. They are different from ordinary learners only in this respect that they are slow in accepting or following any kind of activity. They look quite well and energetic but rather careless and clumsy. Slow learners never like to mix up with other students and remain calm and unemotional which inhibit their personal development and school progress. They lack competency in dealing with abstract and symbolic materials such as reasoning questions, logic, numbers, complicated games and difficult assignments of school. They need feedback and encouragement on the

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part of guardians to carry out simple tasks. Chauhan (2011) suggested that there is a desire need to plan different and organized educational measures for slow learners in order to maximize progress and development. We need to give them especial attention so that they try to become useful member of society and overcome the happiness and insecurity. It is imperative that first of all the country should develop its human resources not only to develop higher skills but also to develop ordinary skills so that they are capable of handling their routine tasks.

According to Borah (2013) the students whom cognitive abilities are below the average level are called slow learners. In short, slow learners are the same students but they do not want to learn under traditional methods and systems. In every classroom there are children that very in learning abilities. It is same as just no two pupils look exactly the same or alike, so that they differ in their thinking, attitudes, adjustment, personality and so on, when these difference are extreme, the pupil requires special consideration and attention on the part of teachers. The teachers usually admire intelligent students. And the slow learners are always deprived of this admiration and teacher’s attitude towards them is always different.

Burt (1937) has pointed out that the word slow learner is used only for those students who are unable to work under ordinary conditions as compared to the normal students. On the contrary, if his attainment age falls below his mental age, he is considered a slow learner. The Slow learner is of special concern to the teacher, the learners face great difficulties, when they are expected to perform in the same way and at the same rate as others bright pupils do. The teachers need to give more time to them or bring some modifications in the teaching programme. Usually teachers have to attend six or ten students who are slow learners so it is imperative that teachers need to learn low to accommodate these students in their classrooms.

Jenson (1980) stated that the students having IQ level 80 to 90 are considered slow learner and whatever is being taught to them are not understood by them especially symbolic, abstract or conceptual subject matter. At the primary level, they faced problems in reading and mathematics. They learn as slowly as they lag behind to grasp the simple concepts which are understood by majority of their age groups. Generally speaking, slow learners are the people who face difficulties in
some or all learning process and masters them less successfully than their peers.

According to Kirk (1962) the slow learners can be classified according to their rate of learning. He did not consider slow learner and mentally retarded equal. Slow learners usually become self – supporting. In his early age the slow learner adapts himself to regular classroom strategies because it fits their slow learning ability. These slow learners are totally different from low achievers and learning disabled.

Baker (1953) suggested that when slow learners reach adulthood they usually concentrate on present goals. They try to find jobs and if they got it, it is more likely unskilled or semi-skilled area. They probably will belong to the class of workers that changes jobs frequently. Their income will be variable and part of the time they probably will be without work of any kind. Every child is unique but has the potential to improve but the main thing is to support them with encouragement that will definitely improve their quality and solve their problems. Several students fall in this category but parents and teachers take this situation low as give no importance.

Balado (2006) identified some characteristic of slow learners such as; they have poor communication and relation for their future, showing short term goals and poor self-image. Children learn at different rates and according to some well-known researches, children learn when they are mentally and physically prepared. There is difference between slow learners and special students. Slow learners students face problems while learning, or executing some task, they do well outside and show no problem outside the class.

Chauhdary & Hussain (2012) concluded that teacher plays a pivot role in teaching learning process which effect students and help in developing self-confidence. Their educational progress can be positively influenced when teachers’ pay attention to these learners. It will possible if number of students are less in class and teachers provide opportunities to these slow learners and support them to enhance their performance. The head of institutions should try new techniques and creative strategies for teaching. There should be variety among all the activities.

Merce (1996) stated that we cannot consider slow learner as special student. Their performance are much better than mentally retarded
students. Their test scores are high, have firm believe and concepts are clear as compared to special students. So, there should be no confusion between slow learners and special students.

**Characteristics of Slow Learner**

Willard Abraham (1964) suggested the following characteristics of slow learners when comparing them with the normal children.

i. Short attention and interest span.

ii. Limited imagination and limited creative thinking.

iii. Slow reaction time.

iv. Apathy, diffidence, dependence, placidity but frequent presence of excitability, sensitivity.

v. Academic retardation, especially in reading, achievement age lagging behind chronological age.

vi. Absence or easy loss of self-confidence;

vii. Instability, shyness, submissiveness.

viii. Low power of retention and memory.

ix. Inability to do abstract thinking, to evaluate results, to foresee consequence of acts.

x. Failure to transfer ideas, to extend beyond local point of view in time or place, or retain interest if results are deferred or in tangible

xi. Limited powers of self-direction, of adapting to change in situation and people.

xii. Low levels of initiative, persistence, concentration, reasoning and defining.

xiii. Ease of confusion fair, anxieties.

xiv. Laziness, but perhaps due to ill health or emotional mal adjusting Rather than as a constitutional factor.

xv. Less well-developed physically height, weight, proportion, general health, unexplained fatigue.

**Role of Teacher**

As the teacher observes a slow learner in the performance of his school work she may find that he is often passive and seems uninterested, he writes poorly, he is poor in reading skills, he has little or no skill in interpreting data, he cannot plan his work for himself, he has poor study habits, he tires of an activity quickly, and he tends to give up more quickly than the average student (Ber, 2000).
Teaching is a very challenging profession in which the whole system moves around one figure i.e teacher. Teacher’s motivation, aspiration, ideas and planning are important factor and plays pivot role in the holistic development of an individual. In a class the teacher deals with number of students. Some of the students are unable to understand the lesson taught to them as other learners do. So these learners are called slow learners.

It is a big challenge for teacher to help slow learners and provide guidance to them so that they can achieve good grades. Slow learners learn at their own pace, the great challenge face by teacher and guardian is to understand when the slow learners are ready to learn and where does their interest lie (Jarais, 1998). They need to develop strategic plan in order to cover the syllabus within given time period. Slow learners are very well aware of their weaknesses as compared to other fast learners. Muppudathi(2014) suggested the following responsibilities of teacher through which slow learner could be helped.

i. Building up Confidence among Slow Learner.
The foremost duty of the teacher is to build up confidence among these learners and ensure them that they are as special as others.

ii. Causes behind the Learner’s weak Performance.
To find out what are the major causes of weak performance of slow learners and to plan how to know about the areas where the slow learners need guidance in order to perform well.

iii. Interact with The Slow Learners More Often.
Teacher needs to communicate with slow learners and keep the record of every moment of the learner. Through the records proper guidance could be given to slow learners.

iv. Giving Extra Care and Practice
Extra care and practice should be given to the slow learners as compared to other students. The teacher should arrange extra classes for the weak learners’. And should do a great deal of research work in order to find out the simple ways of helping these learners so that they could study in a very easy and simple way.

v. Pay Equal Attention In the Classroom
Pay equal attention to weak learner and never make them feel lonely and not develop a since of inferiority complex among
them. Give extra attention to these learners and make them set in the first row if possible.

vi. **Arrangement for Special Learning Resources**
Special programs with the help of the audio-visual aids, graphics, displays, reference books, online material and worksheets must be created for these slow learners to enhance their learning.

vii. **Maintenance of Cumulative Records**
The teacher should maintain slow learner record, this will help the teacher to know whether they are responding will for her teaching mythology or not. If she find out that learner are not showing any improvement then she can change her way of teaching and seeks other ways convenient for them.

viii. **Maintaining Friendly Relationship**
The teacher should develop friendly relationship with learner so that they can easily share their thoughts, feelings and expressions with the teacher and considered them their well-wisher.

ix. **Repetition**
Repetition is important factors in helping slow learner. They can easily grasp the concept when it is repeated again and again. The concept or ideas easily understood by other fast learner or not easily comprehend by them they need repetition all the time.

x. **Encouraging other Activities**
Encourage on other activities helping the child to experience success. Put up posters in his work space. So whenever his concentration drifts, he is constantly reminded of the task at hand. Repeat these from time to time so as to keep up a healthy level of confidence.

xi. **Arranging for Peer Tutoring**
Peer tutoring is considered one of the effective ways of teaching slow learner. These peer should be tolerant and caring and tried to teach each slow learner a good way. The main objective is to work is to slow learner and make them to learn the abstract concept.

xii. **Adding Variety to the Academic Routine**
The learning among slow learner should be based on play way method. A single method should not be used for teaching learning process. To introduce innovative strategies is essential part of teaching to slow learner.
Encouraging Oral Expression Instead of written Reports
Oral activities should be used for slow learner because they do not take interest written assignment. This has the advantage of avoiding spelling, syntax and writing errors.

Teaching Learning Skills
Learning skills can be learnt through observation by fast students, but this method should be taught to slow learners as well. For this purpose concrete visual stimuli should be maintained for slow learners as well as vary instructional material should be used for motivating them.

Conclusion
The objective of the paper is to create awareness and discussion about slow learners. Slow learners are present in almost every class, yet at present a systematic way of identifying and supporting them does not identified. Through from the literature it is understood that slow learners need special help and support not only on the part of teachers but parents as well. These students should not be treated as mentally retarded students but using different strategies, their problem could be solved. Joint efforts of both parents and teachers are important to achieve positive results. It is imperative that teacher should share and communicate their work with slow learners. Further research should be conducted to prepare guidelines for supporting slow learners.

Recommendations
- The concrete and the visual should be emphasized.
- Proper training should be given to teachers so that they could deal with such cases.
- Base homework on work previously covered in class.
- Inform parents of success and progress in addition to failures.
- Provide opportunities to encourage them to continue their education.
- Slow learners should be integrated with other children for those activities in which they can perform on a relatively equal basis.
- Slow learners should be permitted and encouraged to participate in extramural and athletic activities on the same as other students.
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