



Slow Learning: Exploring Some Causes

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Abstract: The students whose intelligence quotient is below the average are generally termed as Slow Learners. Academic performances and thinking skills of slow learners have exhibited more slowly than other children of equal age group. This type of students faces several difficulties to keep pace with other peer students. They do not meet the expectations of teachers and parents. Presence of a large number of slow learners in our educational institutions is a threat to teaching learning process. To cope up with the problems of slow learning children, first of all we should be aware with the causes of slow learning. This present paper deals with the different causes of slow learning. Different causes like low intellectual abilities such as sub-normal intelligence, personal factors, environmental factors, emotional factors etc are discussed in the present paper. Young researchers, parents, guardians, teachers, and experts can get help from the present study to fight against the problems of slow learners of any educational institutions.

Key Words: Slow learners, causes, intelligence, academic performance.

Introduction

Slow learners are generally described as those children who are somewhat below average in academic performances and mental abilities. In terms of intelligence tests their intelligence quotients range from 70 to 90. Many of them have limitations in factors such as physical conditions, personality and in other areas. Since slow learners shows only minor deviations from normal children, they often pass the test assigned for normal children. However, every teacher should be aware about the possibility of slow learners.

We should be very careful not to confuse slow learners with the emotionally disturbed, educationally retarded, and mentally retarded children. There are some children in our society who have borderline mental retardation and some have mild mental retardation. Individuals with borderline mental retardation blend with the normal children, and with proper training they can achieve social and vocational adequacy. This group of children and those mild mental retardate children who remain undetected in our society are often called as 'slow learners.' A slow learning children is one who is not necessarily retarded or in need of special education but is likely to need some extra attention and help in a regular classroom. The slow learning children are capable of learning just about anything that the average child is capable of; it just takes some more time. In other words, a slow learner is one who learns or is learning at a slower rate than average children.

According to Chauhan (2011), Malik (2009), and Shaw (2010), a slow learner child is having an IQ in between 76 and 89 with slightly differ from the normal children and limited ability in solving problem. For example, the slow learners learn to read approximately one year later than the majority of the children at the same level grade. They grasp the skills and concept even slower than is expected for children in same age group. The slow learner are mostly identified as low ability in reasoning on particular situation as well as to deal with abstract and symbols, such as in languages, numbers and concepts (Chauhan, 2011).

Slow learning children display weakness in thinking, finding out relationships, similarity, familiarity, reasoning, poor development of concept, language, and number concepts, memory techniques. Slow learners are having limited cognitive capacity, low in intelligent quotient (IQ), information processing weakness, poor in memory or short-term memory span, lack of concentration with short attention ability. They also show some socio-emotional characteristics like feeling of insecurity, immaturity, regression and fantasy. Their limitation has also been giving a great impact in dealing with complex problems and learning. This has leads slow learners who have very limited cognitive ability to the situation of 'backward' performance in educational institutions (Reddy, Ramar, & Kusuma, 1997).

Significance of the Study

The present population is increasing day by day. The increasing number of students in the educational institutions has been a major concern for all educationists and government bodies. The government is unable to take the full responsibility of all categories of special children in the same educational system. A need for a special educator or a counselor in all educational institutions is a must but without this, the normal teachers have to take the responsibility of the deviant children.

In the light of the current scenario it is felt that slow learning children are at a major disadvantage position. This type of students find it difficult to keep pace with other peer students and take a little more time to adjust with other students around them. They do not meet the expectations of teachers, parents and guardians. Obviously, some causes are responsible for the slow learning. All the concerned people should be aware about such types of

causes. By knowing the causes of slow learning, we can diminish the problems associated with this phenomena. In this context, the researcher learnt from the review of conceptual literature that proper identification of causes of slow learning is the most urgent and essential step to fight against the problems of slow learners. The present study thus aims to identify the causes of slow learning and help them in a positive way. The study will also help the parents, teachers, experts and administrators to know the causes of slow learning.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To study the different causes of slow learning.
- ii. To help the parents, teachers, experts and administrators and young researchers to identify the causes of slow learning.

Methodology

It was a descriptive type study. Data and information presented in the study were collected from secondary sources like various reports and articles published by national and international agencies on slow learning. Information was also collected from various authentic websites. Some journals were also referred relating to identification of the causes of slow learning.

Causes of Slow Learning

Behind every behavior one or more definite cause exists. The behavioral characteristics of slow learners are effects of some causes or factors present either within the child or outside the child. A variety of causes or factors are responsible for slow learning such as:

1. Low intellectual abilities such as subnormal intelligence

Low intellectual abilities such as sub-normal intelligence are responsible for slow learning among students. Intellectual abilities of individuals are measured by intelligence tests and are reported in the form of mental ages, Intelligence Quotients (IQ), percentiles, etc. Mental age is the age level at which the child performs the intelligence test. The chronological age is the actual calendar age of individual in years.

Intelligence Quotients popularly called as I.Q. are calculated in the following manner

$$I.Q. = (\text{mental age} / \text{chronological age}) \times 100$$

I.Q. level helps us to understand the distribution of intelligence in the general child population. The distribution of intelligence in the general child population (and among adults) follows normal probability curve. This means that if we take 100 I.Q. score as the mean score, the majority of children (68.26%) have I.Q. between 85/90 to 110/115. These children are said to be children of average intelligence. On the higher side, about 14% of children are in the

I.Q. range 110/115 to 125/130. These children are considered to be of superior intelligence. A very small percentage (3%) of children has I.Q. above 130. These children are considered as gifted, highly gifted children etc.

On the lower side, a little less than 14% fall in the I.Q. range 70/75 to 85/90. We refer this group of children as slow-learners. About 2.14% of the population falls in the I.Q. range 55/60 to 70/75. These children are considered as mildly retarded group.

The next lower group in the range of intelligence is the moderately retarded children who are in the I.Q. range 40/55 to 55/60. The percentage of such children in the normal child population is very small, about 1.3%. The severely retarded and the profoundly retarded come at the bottom of the scale of intelligence. They require constant help and nursing care. Therefore, they will not be in schools meant for normal children and thus, they will not be discussed here.

From the normal distribution of intelligence we find that children whose intellectual functioning is markedly below the average (i.e. below 85% I.Q.) of their age group, are considered mentally retarded. According to their degree of retardation, they are classified into sub-groups. This enables us to make suitable provision for their education and care.

The sub-groups are as follows:

- i) The slow-learners are in the I.Q. range 70/75 to 85/90. These children can study in school for normal children and experience moderate academic success provided some special provisions are made for them. Strictly speaking these children do not fall in the category of the mentally retarded, as they are capable of a considerable amount of learning at the concrete, and some learners at the abstract level.
- ii) The mildly retarded children are also frequently referred to as the mildly subnormal and in older texts, as the educable mentally retarded. They fall in the I.Q. range 55/60 to 70/75.

This group of children, along with the above mentioned category of the dull, forms the 'slow learning' group.

2. Personal Factors

i) Long Illness: Sometimes suffering from long illness by different diseases may hamper the abilities of learning among individuals. As a result, some individuals may face the problems of slow learning by these long illnesses.

ii) Physical Defects: Some children born with some physical defects. It may be detected or undetected. Physical defects also may occur after birth by illness or accidents. These in-born and / or after-born physical defects may result slow learning among students.

iii) Poor Cognitive Characteristics: Poor cognitive characteristics may decrease the abilities of learning of students.

As a result, slow learning may occur in these categories of students.

iv) Long Absence from School: Long absence from school with or without any reason makes students uninterested in their study. It decreases the abilities of learning of students. As a result, this creates the problem of slow learning among long absentee students.

v) Shortage of sleep: Shortage of sleeping time due to some physical problems and other environmental issues hampers the learning abilities of individuals.

3. Emotional Factors

i) Lack of confidence: Lack of confidence in self causes loss of interest in study among students. It results slow learning among individuals.

ii) Extreme Anxiety: Extreme anxiety hampers the pace of learning. Due to the extreme anxiety some students face the problem of slow learning.

iii) Extreme Timidity: Due to extreme timidity some students get segregated themselves from the class activities and learning processes. So, they face the problem of slow learning.

iv) Negative parental attitude towards school: Some parents have some negative attitudes towards the school. It creates similar adverse attitudes among their children. These phenomena ultimately push the students towards slow learning.

4. Environmental Factors

i) Non-conducive home environment: Learning of students mostly depends on home environment. Many students do not have conducive home environment for study. Non-conducive home environment decreases the learning abilities and pace of learning of students.

ii) Social disturbances: Several social disturbances caused by political conflict, communal riots etc create non-conducive social environment which is responsible for slow learning of some individuals.

iii) Student unrest: Student unrest in some educational institutions particularly in higher educational institutions are responsible for slow learning of some borderline students.

iv) Poor quality and low quantity of food: Poor quality and low quantity of food intake by individuals are responsible for slow learning. It may create problems of malnutrition, vitamin and minerals deficiency syndromes etc which ultimately decrease the pace of learning among some students.

v) Adverse parental attitudes: Some parents of students have adverse attitude towards education. They do not help their wards for learning. Sometimes, some of these type of parents even create obstacles to their children to continue the study.

vi) Teacher Pupil ratio: In some educational institutions, teacher pupil ratio is very high. It is quiet impossible to look after equally all the students in a big class by a single teacher. The backbencher students get less attention by teachers in comparison to frontline students. As a result, learning of backbencher students become slower.

vii) Poor quality of teaching: Due to poor quality of teaching by some teaching faculties are responsible for slow learning of individuals. Poor quality of teaching also decreases the interest for study of students.

viii) Long time closure of educational institutions: Long time closure of educational institutions due to some natural calamities like flood, earthquake, landslides etc decreases regular study habits of students. At present unexpected long closing of educational institutions due to lockdown to prevent wide spread of COVID-19 viruses is a major problem which ultimately destroying the study habits of students. As a result, recently a big number of students are facing the problem of slow learning.

Conclusion:

Identification of the causes of slow learning in any educational institution can help researchers, parents, guardians, teachers, experts, administrators as well as policy makers to implement the educational policies properly. It also helps teaching learning process for smooth functioning. There are different types of causes of slow learning. Among these, low intellectual abilities such as sub-normal IQs, some personal factors, psychological factors, environmental factors etc are very common causes of slow learning.

In observation process by observing child's behavior and activities in different situations and analyzing and interpreting the information an observer may identify the causes of slow learning. Case study is a process where detailed information of children can be gathered by acute study of family history, early life and home environment over a period of time can be recorded about a person or a small group of individuals during identification the causes of slow learning. General and specific problems and causes of anomalies of slow learning children can be identified and evaluated properly through standardized scholastic assessment tests by teachers and experts. By medical examinations, experts can find out the physical and psychological anomalies which lead to slow learning among children. A child's early childhood history can be closely verified by the medical experts. Attempts can be made by psychologists, teachers, and experts through some personality tests to throw light on the emotional characteristics of children as well as some temperamental traits. Intelligence Tests are measures developed by psychologists to make the assessment of individual's intellectual ability more objective and scientific. Generally the results of these tests are reported in the form of mental ages, Intelligence Quotients (IQ), percentiles, etc. which are important parameters to identify slow learners. Sometimes, different types of tests can be administered simultaneously to identify the causes of slow learning and this mechanism of tests is called blended tests. Some innovative tests may also be very useful to identify the causes of slow learning in any educational institutions. By identifying the causes of slow learning parents, teachers, experts and researchers can take appropriate measures to

eradicate the problem of slow learning completely or partially. In this context, we should be aware that, any type of test, technique may add further pressure on slow learners. Therefore, everyone should apply any tests and techniques to know the causes of slow learning only in absolute necessity and should handle very carefully.

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