



Influences on Slow Learners and the Teacher's Contribution to Their Progress

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Abstract

Teachers and students are the primary stakeholders in any educational institution. In addition to having a group of high-achieving students, every educational institution also includes a segment of students characterized as "Slow Learners" due to their underwhelming academic performance. This paper focuses on the topic of Slow Learners. Education plays a pivotal role in a nation's progress. Parents have a strong belief in nurturing their children's learning. A teacher has the power to turn this belief into reality through effective teaching. However, there are occasions when they may not succeed in doing so due to various factors. There are different types of learners such as advance learners, average learners, and slow learners. Slow learners' challenges may stem from issues like poor memory, a lack of awareness about the value of education, insufficient foundational knowledge, and psychological factors. If teachers can tap into various methods to unlock the inner talents of learner, it will lead to a more fulfilling learning experience for slow learners.

Keywords: *Slow Learners, Teaching Efficiency, Academic Performance*

Introduction

Many students require special attention due to their challenges in core subjects and a lack of motivation for success. They may appear healthy and energetic but often display carelessness and clumsiness. Slow learners tend to keep to themselves, which hampers their personal growth and academic progress. They struggle with abstract and symbolic materials like reasoning, logic, numbers, complex games, and challenging school assignments. These students benefit greatly from feedback and encouragement from their guardians to complete simple tasks. Chauhan (2011) stressed the importance of implementing structured educational approaches tailored to the needs of slow learners to enhance their development. Providing them with extra attention is crucial to encourage their integration into society and overcome feelings of inadequacy and

insecurity. It is essential for the nation to focus on developing not only advanced skills but also basic skills in its human resources to ensure they can handle their daily responsibilities effectively.

According to Borah's 2013 research, students with cognitive abilities below the average level are often referred to as slow learners. In essence, slow learners are students who may not thrive in traditional teaching methods. In every classroom, there is a diverse range of students with varying learning abilities. Just as no two pupils are identical, they also differ in their thinking, attitudes, adaptability, personality, and more. When these differences are particularly pronounced, it becomes necessary for teachers to provide special attention and consideration. Teachers typically hold high regard for intelligent students, which can lead to a different attitude toward slow learners, who often miss out on this admiration.

Burt (1937) emphasized that the term "slow learner" is specifically used for students who struggle to perform effectively under standard educational conditions when compared to their peers with typical abilities. Conversely, if a student's achievement age lags behind their mental age, they are classified as slow learners. These students pose unique challenges for educators, as they encounter significant difficulties when expected to perform at the same level and pace as their more academically gifted peers. Teachers must invest additional time and potentially modify the curriculum to cater to these students' needs. Typically, teachers find themselves responsible for a group of six to ten slow learners, making it essential for them to learn how to effectively integrate these students into their classrooms.

As per Jenson's findings in 1980, students with IQ levels ranging from 80 to 90 fall into the category of slow learners. These students often encounter challenges in comprehending subject matter that is symbolic, abstract, or conceptual. In their early education, they commonly experience difficulties in areas such as reading and mathematics. They tend to progress at a slower pace and struggle to grasp fundamental concepts that their peers of the same age generally understand. In a broader context, slow learners are individuals who face obstacles in some or all aspects of the learning process, and they tend to achieve mastery in these areas less successfully than their classmates.

Kirk's research in 1962 introduced a classification system for slow learners based on their learning speed. Importantly, he distinguished between slow learners and individuals with mental retardation, considering them distinct categories. Slow learners typically develop the capability to become self-sufficient. During their early years, they often adapt to standard classroom methods as these align with their slower learning pace. It's crucial to note that slow learners are distinct from low achievers and those with learning disabilities.

According to Baker's research in 1953, when slow learners transition into adulthood, they typically focus on immediate goals, often seeking jobs, which are more likely to be unskilled or semi-skilled positions. They tend to belong to the group of workers who change jobs frequently, leading to variable income and periods of unemployment. It's important to recognize that every child is unique and has the potential for improvement. The key lies in providing them with supportive encouragement, which can significantly enhance their quality of life and help address their challenges. Many students fall into this category, yet parents and teachers sometimes underestimate the significance of this situation.

Balado's research in 2006 pointed out specific characteristics of slow learners, including difficulties in communication and future planning, a tendency to set short-term goals, and often having a poor self-image. It's essential to recognize that children learn at varied rates, and research indicates that learning occurs most effectively when children are both mentally and physically prepared. It's crucial to distinguish between slow learners and special needs students. Slow learners typically encounter challenges in the learning process or task execution but may perform well in other settings outside the classroom.

Chauhdary and Hussain's findings in 2012 emphasized the pivotal role of teachers in the teaching and learning process, as their influence greatly impacts students and contributes to the development of their self-confidence. Educational progress among these students can be significantly improved when teachers devote special attention to them. This is more achievable when class sizes are smaller, allowing teachers to provide opportunities and support for slow learners, thereby enhancing their performance. Educational institutions' leadership should explore innovative teaching techniques and creative strategies, ensuring a diverse range of activities to enhance the learning experience.

Merce's 1996 analysis is clear that the slow learners generally outperform mentally retarded students, often achieving higher test scores and demonstrating a strong grasp of concepts. This sharp contrast should make it clear that there should be no confusion or conflation between slow learners and special needs students.

Role of Teachers on Slow Learners

1. Providing Additional Care and Practice

Compared to their peers, slow learners should receive extra care and practice. If necessary, instructors can offer additional classes or allow learners to visit for personalized assistance. Educators might dedicate some of their time to research and discover effective methods to simplify the learning process for these slow learners. They can create practice quizzes or assign engaging homework related to classroom lessons.

2. Repetition for Enhanced Learning

Repeating information multiple times, although it may seem redundant, is an effective technique. For slow learners with limited cognitive abilities, it takes more time to grasp concepts that may seem straightforward to others. Therefore, repetition is valuable in making concepts more tangible for them.

3. Establishing Regular Interaction with Slow Learners

Educators should maintain frequent communication with slow learners, enabling them to monitor each step of the learner's progress and find effective ways to guide them.

4. Providing Thoughtful Attention

Inside the classroom, it is crucial for the instructor to avoid making slow learners feel neglected or unappreciated, as this could lead to feelings of inadequacy affecting their academic performance. Instead, she should pay thoughtful attention to these learners and, if possible, allow them to sit in the front row.

5. Additional Remedial Approaches

Remedial teaching involves the identification of slow learners and providing them with essential guidance to help them overcome their challenges after pinpointing their specific areas of difficulty. Unfortunately, remedial teaching is sometimes carried out without identifying these areas of difficulty or the root causes of their learning delays. Some students are unfairly labelled as "blockheads" without a sincere effort to understand the true reasons behind their slow learning.

6. Arranging Special Learning Resources

Specialized programs using multimedia aids, visuals, presentations, reference materials, online resources, and worksheets should be developed to enhance the learning experience for slow learners.

7. Maintaining Comprehensive Records

Educators should maintain cumulative records to track a learner's progress. These records are essential for instructors to understand how slow learners respond to their teaching methods. If any areas show limited progress, instructors can adjust their teaching approaches and experiment with more effective methods.

8. Fostering a Friendly Relationship

Instructors should aim to be a friend to these learners, offering support and a dependable relationship. Slow learners may find it challenging to express themselves fully to their peers or parents, making it vital for educators to fill that void and contribute to their overall development.

9. Fostering Confidence in Slow Learners

The foremost responsibility of educators is to instil confidence in these learners, ensuring that they believe in their abilities just as much as their peers. Encouraging words and expressions can have a positive impact on slow learners and contribute to their improved performance.

10. Empowering Diverse Activities

Encourage engagement in various activities that allow the child to experience success. Place reminders in their workspace to help them stay on task when their focus wavers. Reiterate these reminders periodically to maintain a healthy level of confidence.

11. Applying the Theory of Multiple Intelligence

Enabling the child to explore a range of activities at a young age not only boosts their confidence but also helps them excel in specific areas, fostering a sense of social acceptance and normalcy. Additionally, games can be utilized to teach various mathematical concepts and algorithms.

12. Implementing Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring is one of the most effective strategies for slow learners. Parents and educators should identify patient and caring peers who can assist the slow learner in their studies. The more a child interacts with peers of their age, the more successful they will feel, alleviating issues related to self-esteem.

13. Identifying the Root Cause of the Learner's Poor Performance

Instructors should initially pinpoint the primary reasons for a learner's underperformance and closely examine the specific areas that require improvement. This is essential to guide slow learners toward better academic performance.

14. Introducing Variety to the Academic Routine

Enhance the academic routine by making learning a fun and interactive process through educational puzzles and games. Slow learners tend to enjoy hands-on activities that allow them to actively participate. This approach enables the child to learn using their sensory perception, leaving a more lasting impression in their memory. Ensure that lessons are brief and frequent rather than lengthy and strenuous.

15. Promoting Oral Expression Over Written Reports

For slow learners, many writing assignments often go unfinished or are started with little enthusiasm because these learners are aware that their written work may not meet even basic writing standards. Consider providing carefully organized audio responses to assignments, which avoids issues related to spelling, grammar, and writing errors.

16. Teaching Learning Skills

Enhance learning skills by teaching techniques such as note-taking, outlining, and active listening. These skills, while acquired through observation by higher-ability students, need to be explicitly taught to slow learners. To keep slow learners engaged in the learning process, utilize captivating visual aids, breaking down the content into manageable sections that ensure a high rate of success.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to raise awareness and stimulate discussions regarding slow learners. Slow learners can be found in every classroom, but there is currently no established systematic approach for recognizing and assisting them. Literature suggests that slow learners require special assistance and support, which should come not only from teachers but also from parents. It is entirely possible to attain strong academic performance from slow learners by consistently applying effective strategies. Achieving positive outcomes requires a collaborative effort from both parents and educators. Having knowledge of what parents and teachers can do to support slow learners enables them to channel their efforts in the right direction and contribute to the future success of these children. While the efforts from the teacher are indeed critical, the end results are rewarding, leaving both the teacher and the learners proud of their accomplishments in overcoming challenges and progressing smoothly.

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