

Role of Teachers and Parents in Educating Slow Learners

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Abstract

The experience of educators confirms that there are many children who are so backward in basic subjects that they need special help. Jensen states that, students with IQ 80 to 90 who are traditionally labelled dull normal are generally slower to „catch on“ to whatever is being taught if it involves symbolic, abstract or conceptual subject matter. In the early grades in school, they most often have problems in reading and arithmetic and are labelled slow learners“. But it is really not that they learn so slowly as that they lag behind in developmental readiness to grasp the concepts that are within easy reach of the majority of their age mates. So they may be called rather slow developers than slow learners. Students with below average cognitive abilities whom we cannot term as disabled are called slow learners. They struggle to cope with the traditional academic demands of the regular classroom. Actually slow learners are normal students but the problem is that they are simply not interested in studying under traditionally accepted system of education. Slow learners should not be confused with students in need of special education or reluctant learners who are non-cooperative. A student may fail to excel in some classes or in some subjects but it does not imply that he or she is a slow learner. The teachers and guardians may resort to some of the teaching aids available to special education students that may enhance interest of slow learners and help them get involved in the learning process. Every child is special. As every child is different, there is every possibility of improvement, sooner or later. The source of energy is lying within them but the only thing is to stretch the hand of confidence towards them which will solve their problem and improve their quality. Several students in a class fall under this category, but most parents or guardians prefer to remain in mute mode, which worsens the situation. The objective of this article is to understand the characteristics of a slow learner and the role of teachers and guardians to improve them in achieving new heights.

Key Words

Slow Learner, characteristics of a slow learner, Special Education and Role of parents

Introduction

Slow learners are not mentally retarded but they are normal like other children in many aspects. However, they differ from average children in rate of learning. They are unable to cope with the work normally expected of their age group. In many instances they are referred as low achievers or underachievers. It is noticed that about 18.20 % of school going children are slow learners. It is a considerable figure and not ignorable.

Burt (1937) has rightly pointed out that term “backward or slow learner” is reserved for those children who are unable to cope with the work normally expected of their age group in teaching slow learners children the mental age is often taken as a guide to the levels of attainment to be expected of pupils. Thus if a child’s mental age is 10 years, one assumes that their attainment age should also be at the 10 year level on the contrary, if their attainment age falls below his mental age they are considered as slow learners.

Who is A Slow- Learning Child?

The slow learning child is the one whose achievement is low primarily because of native intellectual endowment. The slow learner is in fact a dull child. However, the term “slow learning” is more civilized and decent. It is preferable to such term as “dull-normal “or “dull”

And as stated earlier, a dull child is always a backward child and hence has been discussed as a backward child earlier. But if the question is on slow learners exclusively, then the falling information may be made use of by the students.

Definition: The most common practice in identifying children who may be called ‘slow learners’ is by the intelligence quotient. There is not complete agreement as to wherein the distribution line should be drawn which separates the slow learner from the mentally deficient on the one hand and the normal on the other. We shall decide the matter. Children who have I.Q. of 80 and round about it are dull. This population is the population of slow

learners.

Achievement in school is another index which is sometimes used. This can be helpful but it can be miss-leading. Even a normal child can have low achievement say in mathematics—we need not call him slow learner. Achievement in school is a combination of many factors, of which native intelligence is one. Even children with high intelligence can score low on certain subjects. It will be devastating errors to classify them as slow learners.

Neither intelligence quotient nor achievement can be used as sole guides for the identification of slow learning children. The best diagnosis according to wing is one which takes into account the total development of the child and an understanding of home and community in which he lives. However, the following characteristics will further help you to identify the slow –learners

Special Characteristics of The Slow Learners:

These characteristics have been taken from “Elementary school Student Teaching” by G-man Wing. The list is by no means exhaustive but will certainly help us to understand this group of children.

1. The slow- learner differs from the normal in degree rather kind: These children are not divided from the normal and the bright by the sharp lines of the demarcation, for the same characteristics are found in all. This is no absolute lack of any one thing say memory which is always found in a bright person. We take the position that slow learners are not qualitatively different. He is only qualitatively different, e.g. he has less of intelligence as compared to a bright child

2. The slow learner is mentally immature for his age, and his potential is lower: He is not going to achieve as far intellectually as brighter children, and it is taking him longer to get where he is going. His mental age is, of course, and it is taken him longer to get where he is going. His mental age is, of course less than his chronological age and will be well below the average for the group.

3. Strong drives and interests tend to be lacking in slow-learning children: They fail to make plans, and their method of attack not only is poor, but gets under way slowly. Although one finds superior students who are able to perform a task well, even though they are not highly motivated, a slow learner rarely can. It goes without saying that motivation would come from the genuine drives of pupils, rather than through more artificial drives and tricks. And motivator is a must.

4. The slow-learning pupil is usually very weak in reading: Anything involving abstraction is difficult for the slow-learner. And symbols of language, where highly abstract. He has difficulty with all forms of language, whether written or oral, and is weak in forming associations between word and ideas. Slow learners have vocabularies which are more restricted than those of average children, and this of course, is related to their reading difficulties.

5. The slow learner is often superior in motor abilities in comparison with his ability for abstract reasoning: It appears that, both in and out of school, tasks which involve motion and physical co-ordination are easier for the slow learner to master than task involving abstract reasoning. He needs to be taught by concrete things.

6. It is the higher mental processes which most clearly differentiate the slow learning pupils from the bright: It hardly needs any explanation. It is clear itself. It is here that the dull children are caught. Anyway, to explain this point in a nut shell: slow learners find it difficult to detect an absurdity in an illogical statement. They make absurd statement. The truth is that the pupil does not know that he is wrong.

- These children are also limited with respect to imagination. They cannot project themselves.
- The slow learner has a short attention span, at least for most school activities.
- Most important of all, the slow learner has difficulty in generalizing. Each example is taken as it is. He cannot see identical elements.

Origin of Slow Learning

Even though there are various causative factors for slow learning, only some important ones are discussed below. An insight into the causative factors of slow learning will enable the teachers to identify and combat slow learning at early stage itself. The earlier they are identified, the sooner remedial instruction can be imparted. It is not that all factors are at work in case of all the slow learners. One or more factors or the interaction between these factors may cause slow learning in case of each slow learner.

The following are the prominent causative factors.

- Poverty:
- Intelligence of Family Members:
- Emotional Factors :
- Personal Factors :

Special Education For Slow Learners And Education Classes:

Perhaps the greatest challenge to an educator is a child who is a slow learner. These children do not fall into the category special education; they do well outside the classroom, and show no evidence of having a medical problem. They simply do not do well in school or a particular subject. Slow learners may have problems not only with math and reading but also with co-ordination such as penmanship, sports or dressing. Often they are quiet and shy,

and they have trouble making friends. They may have a poor self confidence. They have trouble with abstract thinking such as in social studies or doing math word problems. They often have a short attention span. All of this problems cause them to have a poor self esteem.

In the days before formal schooling, these students would carry on productive lives working as tasks that did not require extensive reading, writing or math. However, now a days the emphasis is less on occupational learning and more on academic preparation. Thus, to provide them the best possible opportunities in a changing world there is growing need to help remediate these children. There are basically to commonalities emerge with slow learners. First, they need more or extra time to complete tasks. This means parents or guardians must be willing to augment what happens at school regardless of the fact how fruitless it might appear. Secondly, the child must be offered appropriate incentives. Depending on the child, the best incentives are family projects or activities, such as building a model or attending a concert or game. The incentives should require delayed gratification, so the child learns patience. The next area which is very important is proper nutrition, like children need good breakfast. Research suggests a quality breakfast and proper sleep are the two best ways to improve student performance. Finally, a teacher or parent seek lessons and other resources that makes it easier to differentiate the curriculum and make learning more vital and relevant. To this end, special education sites on the Internet have some great ideas. Although slow learners do not qualify for special education classes, the concepts teachers use with special education students are ideal for helping a slow learner once the student's weaknesses have been diagnosed. Having a slow learning child is not unusual, about 10 percent or slow learners in a classroom.

The Role of Parents

Be a role model for learners: In the early years, parents are their children's first teachers — exploring nature, reading together, and counting together. When a young child begins formal school, the parent's job is to show him how school can extend the learning you began together at home, and how exciting and meaningful this learning can be. As preschoolers grow into school age kids, parents become their children's learning coaches.

Pay attention to what your child loves: "One of the most important things a parent can do is notice her child. Is he a talker or is he shy? Find out what interests him and help him explore it. Let your child show you the way he likes to learn," recommends Dalton Miller-Jones, Ph.D.

Tune into how your child learns. : Many children use a combination of modalities to study and learn. Some learn visually through making and seeing pictures, others through tactile experiences, like building block towers and working with clay. By paying attention to how your child learns, you may be able to pique his interest and explain tough topics by drawing pictures together, creating charts, building models, singing songs and even making up rhymes.

Practice what your child learns at school. Many teachers encourage parents to go over what their young children are learning in a non-pressured way and to practice what they may need extra help with. This doesn't mean drilling them for success, but it may mean going over basic counting skills, multiplication tables or letter recognition, depending on the needs and learning level of your child.

Set aside time to read together. Read aloud regularly, even to

older kids. If your child is a reluctant reader, reading aloud will expose her to the structure and vocabulary of good literature and get her interested in reading more. "Reading the first two chapters of a book together can help, because these are often the toughest in terms of plot.

Connect what your child learns to everyday life. Make learning part of your child's every day experience, especially when it comes out of your child's natural questions. When you cook together, do measuring math. When you drive in the car, count license plates and talk about the states. Watching Pictures and Reading New s Pepars.etc.

Connect what your child learns to the world. Find age-appropriate ways to help your older child connect his school learning to world events. Start by asking questions. For example, ask a second-grader if she knows about a recent event, and what's she heard.

Don't over-schedule your child. While you may want to supplement school with outside activities, be judicious about how much you let or urge your child to do. Kids need down time as much as they may to pursue extra-curricular activities. "If a child has homework and organized sports and a music lesson and is part of a youth group in church or synagogue, it can quickly become a joyless race from one thing to another.

Keep TV to a minimum. "Watching lots of TV does not give children the chance to develop their own interests and explore on their own, because it controls the agenda

Learn something new yourself. Learning something new yourself is a great way to model the learning process for your child. Take up a new language or craft, or read about an unfamiliar topic. Show your child what you are learning and how you may be struggling. You'll gain a better understanding of what your child is going through and your child may learn study skills by watching you study. You might even establish a joint study time.

Suggestion for Education: In brief, this is what we can do:

- Give special attention to health.
- Be realistic about the vocational goals of slow learners.
- Providing stimulating reading environment.
- Give practical instruction in home and family living
- Utilize firsthand experience.
- Goals must have value here and now
- Keep the activities simple.
- Drill only after the process has meaning.

Conclusion

This objective of the paper is to create greater awareness and discussion about slow learners. Learners in this category will exist in almost every class, yet at present a systematic way of identifying and supporting them does not exist. There is no doubt that the individual teachers have developed many effective techniques for supporting those learners who did additional help. It would be valuable therefore if opportunities could be created for teachers to share and discuss their work with slow learners. It is also important for further research to build on this initial study to develop guidelines to assist teachers supporting slow learners.

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