

Ensuring Learning in Slow Learners

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ABSTRACT

Education is relevant only if we take care of our learners. Teachers must therefore be sensitive not to the covering of the curriculum but to the learning that has taken place in the transaction. Teachers cannot ignore the students who do not keep pace with the teaching-learning process. Some students do feel neglected and unwanted in the whole transaction of the school system. This category of students need to be taken utmost care and tackled in a manner that will produce better output from them. In the process, they will tend to realize themselves in a better way and develop positive attitudes towards themselves. The study thus has focused its attention on teachers in particular, their attitude towards slow learners and the efforts taken for them for their overall development.

Keywords: Slow learners, Attitude towards slow learners, Efforts taken for slow learners, Learner profile, peer tutoring.

Slow learners are the learners who do not show any outward interest in the learning activities conducted in the school. They may be psychologically de motivated students and need a little push from the teachers. These students may or may not have a below average IQ and may require help, to realize their potential. In this study, slow learners fall under any category of students in the psychological classification of special learners. In a class of over 60 students teachers find the individual attention

giving a major difficulty. It is an inability of teachers considering the time and resources in hand. Teachers are not fully trained to handle the differently abled students who are into the mainstream of education. It takes a great deal of sensitivity and patience to pay attention to this group of learners.

In an effort to develop a better perspective of the situation, the study looks at two aspects the attitude of teachers towards slow learners and the other the various efforts taken by them to ensure effective learning for such students. Teachers are working under different constraints but the study assumes that they must take efforts to look into the learning needs of this section of learners. The study keeps in mind these aspects to have a complete understanding of how the slow learners are tackled in the schools.

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Rationale of the study

The increasing masses in the school system has been a major concern for all educationists. The population is increasing by leaps and bounds and the infrastructure for education has not increased at the same rate. The government has not taken the full responsibility of special children in the educational system. A need for a special educator or a counsellor in all schools is a must but without this provision the normal teachers have to take the responsibility of deviant children. It is seen that our colleges of education also have not given importance to the training of their student teachers thus ignored holistic learning in teaching.

In the light of the current scenario it is felt that slow learners are at a major disadvantage. These learners find it difficult to keep pace with other learners and take a little more time to adjust with students around them. They do not meet the expectations of teachers, parents and their peers. There are a number of such students who will be suffering due to the inadequacies of the teachers and administrators.

One way that the researcher learnt from the review of conceptual literature was to understand the attitude of teachers towards these learners and secondly to learn what efforts are taken. This study thus aims to formulate certain strategies to understand the slow learners and help them in a positive way.

Review of related literature

Shaw S. and Bulman J. (2005) conducted a study on 'Educating Slow learners: Are Charter schools the last. Best Hope for their Educational success? The study concluded that setting up of more charter schools to deal exclusively with slow learners should be explored more intensively if we are to give these students a fair chance in today's increasing competitive world.

Younis, S. conducted a study on Slow learners : How they are identified and supported? The study mainly deals with how the English teachers in Oman have identified slow learners in their classrooms and the strategies that they adopt to support them. It was found that a small percentage of classrooms did not make any effort to identify slow learners at all. Among the strategies

adopted by the teachers to support slow learners, the most common ones identified were modifying to teacher talk to the learner's level, developing a good relationship with them and using better learners to support the slower ones.

Borah, R. (2013) conducted a study - Slow learners: Role of teachers and Guardians in knowing their hidden skills, identified the major characteristics of slow learners. In the discussion with the interventions for slow learners, it discusses certain specific strategies like reducing environmental distractions, shorter assignments, alternative forms of assessment like orals etc.

Shaw, S. based his study on 'Rescuing students from the slow learner trap; this looked into the problem of slow learners from secondary schools' perspective highlighting certain organizational challenges in these schools which are characterized by a large number of students per teacher. This majorly inhibits the development of close relationships between students and teachers, which are required by slow learners. The article lays down practicing concrete and experiential instruction explicitly teaching academic motivation. The study promotes sensitivity towards slow learners. The study also urges teachers to have a slow pace of teaching to suit the slow learners, with more practice sessions.

Malik, S. (2009) studied the 'Effect of Intervention training on Mental Abilities of Slow learners', an experimental study that establishes the fact that it is possible to bring the slow learners at par with the average-ability learners, with respect to the curriculum and the instruction designed for them.

The review revealed certain lacunae in the studies conducted. The studies did not always consider the perspectives of teachers and also did not study the attitudes of teachers towards the slow learners. The studies highlighted the methodologies used to handle slow learners.

Scope and delimitations of the study

The study is delimited to teachers' perceptions only. The study does not include perceptions of students. The study includes English medium teachers in the Mumbai

Region. The teachers who are engaging classes from 6th - 9th Stds are included in the study. The only mode of getting the data for the study was through the rating scale. All the statements included in the rating scale are closed ended therefore had an inherent limitation.

Significance of the study

Teachers must know their own attitude towards slow learners. Sometimes the efforts and behavior are affected by an individual's attitude. The study will help teachers to know her attitude towards slow learners. The study can be a model for other teachers as the efforts taken for the slow learners are mentioned in the study. All schools need to be sensitive towards such learners, the study can bring in, this sensitivity. A constant dialogue between teachers is necessary and this study will promote this as the data are collected from teachers only. In answering the tool it is expected that the process of sensitization has begun. The study also helps us to get an overall perspective of slow learners. It is important that more such studies are done to bring to the notice of higher authorities that this group of learners also need much attention thus making this study more significant.

Statement of the problem

A study of the attitude of teachers towards the slow learners in relation to the efforts taken by the teachers to ensure their learning in secondary schools.

Variables of the study

The variables of the study are – attitude of teachers towards the slow learners and the efforts taken by the teachers to ensure their learning. The attitude of teachers were correlated with the efforts taken by them.

Operational Definition

- ❑ **Slow learners:** These are a set of learners who do not show any outward interest in learning, do not participate in the class and also show poor performance in the class tests or exams. In extreme cases they may feel ignored by the teacher and their peers. They may turn introverts and may sometimes be incommunicable. Any teacher without professional knowledge would be able to identify these learners.

- ❑ **Attitude of teachers towards slow learners:** The general disposition of teachers towards slow learners and awareness of their characteristics and certain beliefs they hold about them. It could also be a feeling of acceptance towards such learners.
- ❑ **Efforts taken to ensure learning of slow learners:** The various steps designed by the teachers to help slow learners feel involved in the classroom practices, peer interaction as well as improving their communication skills and their overall performance.
- ❑ **Aim of the study:** The aim of the study is : To find out the relationship between the attitude of teachers towards slow learners and the efforts taken by them for such learners.
- ❑ **Objectives of the study:** The following are the objectives of the study:
 1. To study the attitude of teachers towards slow learners.
 2. To study the efforts taken by them towards slow learners.
 3. To study the percentage wise distribution of the attitude of teachers towards slow learners.
 4. To study the percentage wise distribution of the efforts taken by them towards slow learners.
 5. To study the relationship between the attitude of teachers and efforts taken by them towards slow learners.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the attitude of teachers towards slow learners and the efforts taken by teachers for slow learners.

Methodology

The Descriptive method of study was used for the study. The study had a large sample and used the questionnaire to collect large amount of data for analysis.

Sample

30 teachers from English medium SSC schools, teaching standards 6th to 9th teaching school subjects other than physical training, craft etc. were included in the study.

Sampling technique

The sampling technique was purposive sampling technique as teachers who have identified the slow learners in their class were included in the study.

Tool for the study

The tool had two parts. Part A consists of statements which measures the attitude of teachers towards slow-

learners. Each statement had to be rated on a four point scale – Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The scale had positive and negative statements. Part B consists of statements that measure the efforts taken by the teachers to ensure the learning of slow learners.

Table 1: Sample questions for Part A of the tool

| S.No. | Part A | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | All students in my class are unique individuals | | | | |
| 2. | All students in my class possess the same abilities | | | | |

Table 2: Sample questions for Part B of the tool

| S.No. | Part A | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | I study the performances of slow learners in my class to find patterns of error if any | | | | |
| 2. | I conduct conversations with slow learners to understand their perspective on their performance | | | | |

Data collection

Teachers were oriented to the research and were told the purpose of the research. They were explained how to rate the tool and were given some time to reflect and fill the tool.

Analysis of Data

Descriptive and Inferential analysis was done. The correlational technique was used to find out whether there is a relationship between the attitude of teachers towards slow learners and the efforts taken by them.

Descriptive statistics (graph)

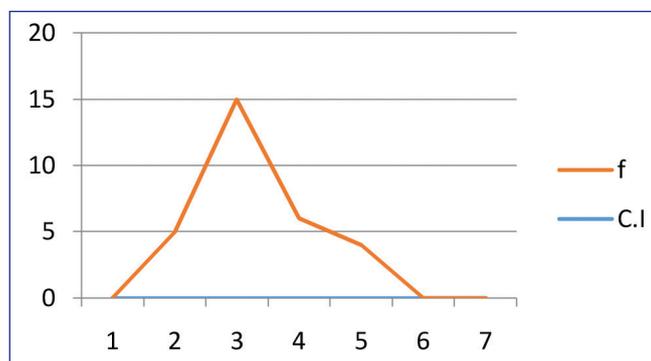


Fig. 1: Line graph showing scores of Attitude of teachers towards slow learners

The Fig. 1 shows that the attitude of the teachers are somewhat normally distributed. There are teachers with very positive attitude and some with low attitude towards slow learners. The picture that appears shows sensitivity to such learners by the teachers in the sample.

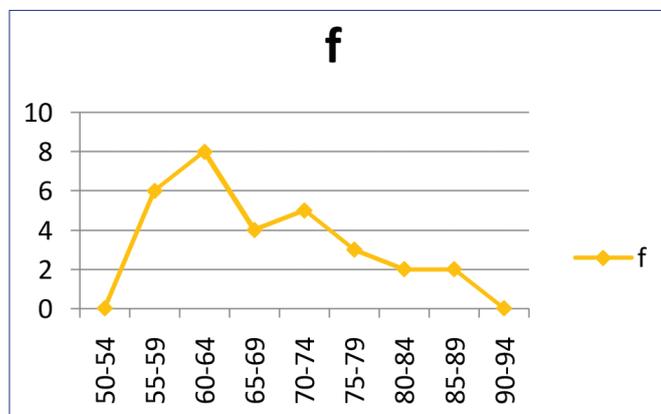


Fig. 2: Line graph showing scores of Efforts taken by teachers towards slow learners

The Fig. 2 plotted for efforts of teachers towards slow learners have proved that most teachers are concerned towards this section of learners. The scores show few teachers in the high range and more teachers in the low range. The teachers included in the sample are much sensitized towards such learners and are taking efforts for their learning, although more participation is expected. The positively skewed curve shows that teachers need to be more aware of the situation.

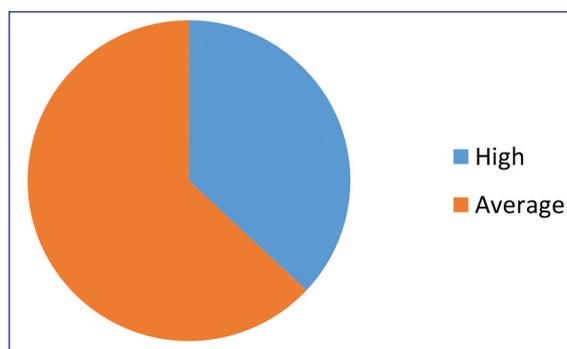


Fig. 3: Pie chart showing the levels of attitude of teachers towards slow learners

Teachers mostly show an average attitude (63%) towards slow learners. Few teachers have a very high (37%) attitude towards slow learners.

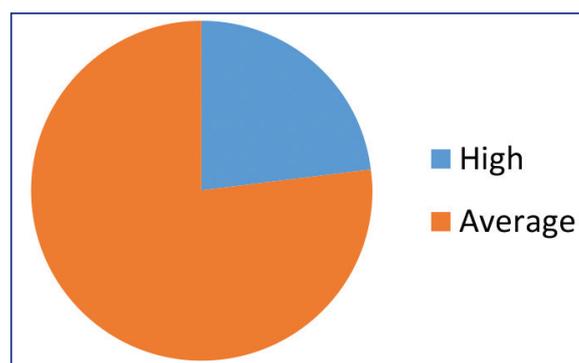


Fig. 4: Pie Chart showing levels of efforts taken by teachers towards slow learners

Teachers do make efforts to ensure learning in slow learners, average attitude towards efforts taken (77%) and very high attitude(23%) towards the efforts taken by teachers towards positive learning in slow learners.

Inferential statistics (Correlation)

The correlation coefficient 'r' was calculated as 0.08 and was not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no correlation between the attitude and the efforts taken for slow learners.

Results of the study

The descriptive analysis in the form of graphs and pie charts showed that most teachers have a positive

attitude towards slow learners. The scores for efforts taken for the slow learners when plotted on a graph showed that teachers are making high efforts to see that slow learners. The pie diagram showed that only 37% of the teachers have very high attitude towards slow learners and 23% of the teachers really make very high efforts to focus on the learning of the slow learners.

The inferential analysis through correlation method has shown that there is no significant correlation between attitude towards slow learners and efforts taken by them to ensure learning.

Discussion and Suggestions for the study

Slow learners are learners who have the capability to learn but are slow in terms of rate and depth of learning. In most schools these children go unattended and labelled by their teachers and peers. The literature in psychology says that these learners can be motivated to give their best through various teaching strategies. The learners falling under the category of slow learners do not have any intellectual disability. Teachers today are hard pressed with loads of work due to large number of students in the class, to add to it the overloaded curriculum adds to the burden.

It is also seen that since the slow learners have decreased pace of teaching, they may not be inclined for higher order thinking skills. Teachers may get frustrated getting slow learners work on higher order problems.

The study has brought to light several strategies of dealing with slow learners. Some of the strategies identified by the researcher are as follows:

- Study the performance of slow learners to understand their pattern of learning.
- Conduct conversations with slow learners to understand their perspective on their performance.
- Motivate them constantly.
- Support them in overcoming their difficulties in learning.
- Devise a customized plan for them.
- Modify the pace of teaching and methodologies according to the needs of slow learners.

- Collaborate with other teachers to see what best can be done.
- Collaborate with parents to understand them more holistically.
- Inform parents regularly about their progress and get them involved in the endeavor.
- Devise certain strategies with parents so that they can work out at home.
- Separate tasks/assignments can be devised to help slow learners.
- Remedial instruction catering to their needs can be programmed for them.
- Classroom atmosphere can be made more inclusive in nature.
- Help slow learners to develop independent learning skills to boost their confidence.
- Involve them in evaluating their own work and give a qualitative judgement.
- Students could be involved in making future decisions about their learning.
- A constant introspection could develop a feeling of accountability.
- Celebrate even their smallest success.
- Encourage peer tutoring so that the slow learners can achieve better, share their problems more openly and a spirit of sensitivity develops in the class.
- Slow learners must be able to contribute to all the activities of the class.
- Feedback to the slow learners must be detailed and regular.

Moreover the finding of the study states that the attitude of teachers do not have a correlation with the efforts taken by them. The finding of the study shows that whether the teachers have a positive or a negative attitude they do make efforts to work on the slow learners. This may happen if teachers are imposed certain methods to deal with the slow learners by the school authorities. Teachers know their children well as they deal with them on a day to day basis. They must develop an attitude of sensitivity towards these children

and work closely to see that they excel. The strategies thus must be such that it is tailor made for every student in order to see the positive changes in them.

The school must indulge in learner- centered practices like developing a learner profile, providing counselling services within the school, having a teacher mentor for each student, involving parents in decision making and student related problems. It is advisable that the whole atmosphere in the school is more fun loving than study oriented. Most children feel that they go to school to study but it must be impressed on each child that school is a place where they can discover themselves, their talents and their potential. Schools must thus aim to convey positive feelings of appreciation in order to optimize learning.

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