

Slow Learning - Causes, Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

Every teacher in a school faces the problem of dealing with the slow learners. Each class room consists of gifted, average, below average students and slow learners. The slow learners are neither disabled nor mentally retarded and there is no need for special education. They are not incapable of everything; they are skilled at something that they like. They have poor cognitive abilities and struggle to cope up with the demands of the regular classroom activities. So it is the duty of the class teacher to identify them to help them to get involved in the learning process. There are incidents and evidences in history that many slow learners became Doctors, Engineers, Professors, and Writers in their life. So teaching must be made easier in a way in which these children can enjoy what they learn. Anything that is learnt with enjoyment is learnt in a better way. The teachers must handle these children in an appropriate way there by increasing the learning capability and making teaching –learning more purposeful.

Key Words: *Slow learner, teacher, classroom, learn, handle, purposeful, education.*

Introduction

“Train up a child in the way he should go: even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

HOLY BIBLE

Learning is a function of development and so are adapting and changing. The pace and pattern of development vary from one child to another. Some children grow from “chick to hen”, some others grow from “caterpillar to butterfly”, some grow like “fish in water” and others struggle like “fish out of water”. These children are termed “SLOW LEARNERS”. They have below average cognitive abilities and struggle to cope up with the traditional demands of the regular class room. These children should not be confused with mentally retarded students or reluctant learners who are non cooperative. A child who fails in one subject may excel in some other. So, if a child fails in some subjects doesn't mean that he or she is a slow learner. It is the duty of the teacher to identify them to get involved in the learning process. Muppudathi (2014), states that to help a learner to fetch a good grade is a challenge that marks the qualities of a good teacher. There are incidents and evidences in history that many slow learners became scientists, doctors, engineers, writers, etc. The teacher must direct the slow learners in an appropriate way there by increasing the learning capability of the slow learner making teaching –learning more purposeful.

Characteristics of a slow learner

Slow learners may display some or all of these characteristics which are given below:

* Immature enough in their relations with others.
* Emotional, sensitive, and innocent.
* have short attention span and poor concentration skills.
* prefer to work at their own pace.
*Do not easily master skills.
*Do not show interest in having long time goals.
*Unable to learn on their own.
*Lose track of time.
* work very slowly.

Causes of the slow learners

Actually slow learners are normal students who are simply not interested in studying under traditionally acceptable system of education. There are so many factors that could cause the process of slow learning.

Short attention span

The slow learners have a short attention span with which they cannot concentrate for long time. They have the problem of short memory and they do not remember what they learn. They get bored easily and develop no interest towards learning process.

Defective vision

The children who have defective vision will not be able to see properly what is written on the black board and unable to copy it correctly. It also affect the child's growth and development and ability to function in society. It also affects the self esteem and confidence which could lead to depression. If it is not treated properly the child may be left behind in the class.

Health problem and Absenteeism

Health problem is the main cause of slow learning. Poor health hurdles the growth and development of the child. IT is a apparent that frequent absence may affect a child's progress when the school is not supplemented by the home i.e. when the parents have no interest in the child's education. It may be true that frequent period of absence from the class are more detrimental than an occasional long one. The child will not be able to cope up with his classmates of his level and loses his self confidence. As a result, he isolates himself from the class mates and slowly becomes a slow learner.

Parents (busy, illiterate and poor)

When parents have no time for their child, he may feel unsecured and isolated. He could not share his problems or the difficulties that he faces in the school. The child keeps everything in his mind and develops hatred towards education and school. Illiterate parents, who are

mentally backward and have no idea about education, do not care about the education of their child. Some parents force their child to get good marks. If not they beat the child which worsens the situation. Busy parents and poor parents go to their work early in the morning and come late in the evening spare no time with their children and have no time for them to enquire about their studies or about their problems which results in a stunting of the learning process which is possibly irretrievable.

Violence and showing partiality

Violence in schools is another cause for slow learning. The child develops hatred towards the teacher and withdraws his studies because caning the students psychologically affects the learning abilities. The child often gets nightmares and will not show any progress towards studies. Sometimes it leads to emotional problems and aggression, which affects the cognitive abilities. Some teachers show partiality towards the students which affects the learning processes and the child hates both the teacher as well as the subject.

Awkwardness

The child who is hampered by over protective parents, by fear engendered, by accidents, warnings to be careful, by environmental obstacles or by lack of opportunity to practice becomes awkward as compared with other children of his age. He cannot keep up with them and as a result he is left out of their play. He soon comes to think that they are better and develop inferiority complex and slowly he would withdraw himself from his friends and from learning.

Emotional and social hazards

If the child experiences too many of the unpleasant emotions and very few of the pleasant ones, it will distort his outlook on life and encourage the development of an unpleasant disposition. The child who does not receive affection from others is likely to become self bound, and this prevents him from having an emotional exchange with them. If the child is ignored and proper care is not provided then the child builds a negative emotion and initially avoid his parents and later on other people, and they isolate themselves from the outer world. Furthermore, a neglected child feels rejected, and unsecured .It may affect the developing skills of the child to socialize with other children.

Problems & solutions

If the student is identified as a slow learner, proper evaluation should be done to identify the weakness of the child and relevant strategies must be implemented to overcome it. No single instructional approach is best for all the students. The goal of the teacher is to use more than one modality in every lesson. Providing instruction in a variety of ways may attract and sustain the interest of all learners.

Motivation and Reward

The child should be motivated and rewarded for every success .If the teacher appreciates him with encouraging words and give confidence, the slow learner will definitely comes out with flying colors and the sky will be the limit for them. So reward and praise should be given immediately after the desired or correct behavior.

Friendly Attitude

The teacher must be a friend to the slow learner .The teacher should move with them in a friendly manner with more patience .Students learn better from people whom they love and respect. He will also feel grateful as the teacher takes more care in his studies .The mystery of all success lies only in mutual understanding, team work, collective effort and friendship.

Psychological Analysis and Problem solution

The teacher must have a friendly talk with the student, bringing in questions about the child's family background, his friends, personal conflicts, in order to know the difficulties the child is facing, if any. In this way, the teacher can psychologically analyze the problem of the child and he/she can help the child get through the problem which will be helpful to the child to study better in future.

Alternative to traditional home work tasks

Home work is an endless source of problems to the kids and the parents. The slow learner has probably worked twice in the classroom as hard as every other child did to keep up remembering all the lessons that he/she has learnt in the school. So, giving them home works may cause high stress when the child gets home, so home work may be given in a easy way i.e., minimize the written work in particular.

Intensive Session

The teacher may create an opportunity for intensive session with a student, using individual or small group sessions. The teacher should not get boredom and frustrated with the slow learner, instead she can use interesting, challenging, self-correction extension work for the rest of the class, while spending time with the slow learners.

Cordial relationship

Just a smile makes wonders in one's life. When the teacher looks at the slow learner, the smile of the teacher may change the slow learner. It makes him to feel that the teacher is for him in the class and she cares for him. So, automatically the student recognizes the teacher and obeys whatever the teacher says.

Fixing a goal

As a slow learner he may not be able to fix a goal in his life. He does not know how to learn things and how to get good marks .So the teacher should observe the student, inspire him and motivate him to fix a goal for his life, encourage him ,and help him to achieve the same.

Giving importance

It is always seen that in every class room that the teacher give importance only to the child who learns faster and not to the slow learners. Some teachers talk ill about the child who is not learning and getting low marks always. This is the reason that the child sit in one corner of the classroom and started doing all sorts of nonsense and creating a worst situations. Even though the teacher is running towards the completion of the syllabus, he must think about the slow learners go near by him and enquire about his learning. During question hours the

teacher may give importance to the slow learner and help him to answer. Giving importance may help a slow learner to come up.

Teaching Hope in the class room

The teacher must teach about hope in the class room. Because the sense of hopelessness decreases the intellectual curiosity and active involvement in the entire learning process. Students that have learned to feel helpless in situations that are hopeless turn off, tune out, and give up. When a child tries to solve the problem he has to believe that he can and will solve the problem. A child who does not believe he can solve the problem, might start the process of looking for a solution, but will stop before he finds the solution, because he gives up. So it is the duty of the teacher to teach hope in the class room and encourage the student.

Role of the teacher

Teachers are bound to recognize a percentage of students who are restless in class, who takes more time to learn concepts, who disturbs the class, who are noisy, who shy away from participating, who are withdrawn, who does not talk, who answers verbally but refuses to write, who are poor with spellings, who have poor hand writing, who show inappropriate behavior, who present reduced motivation to study and who tend to get into fights frequently. He must analyze their needs in an honest and realistic way –the needs they have now and those they will have in the future. The teacher should concern herself with building up relationship with the child, making her learning procedures appropriate, and with the development of good motivation.

Role of the parents

Parents value their child as a source of happiness, an opportunity to realize their dreams, sometimes they are considered to be a burden, and they expect them to be with them in their old age. In these circumstances the magic and pleasure of the child is destroyed. It is important for parents to establish trust and friendship with a child. They should not make the mistake of trying to force to study their lesson. The parent must be careful, sensitive, and caring to help their child keep up with the same pace with others.

Conclusion

Slow learners, though in an ordinary class ought to be the minority, just as the gifted students. They want the teacher to accompany them in their journey to success. Every child is God's Gift, and each one is good in one thing or the other, and no child is beyond hope. Praising and motivating the child at every stage generate wonders and joy in learning. Teacher and parents must help the child to learn even from frivolous success as well as fruitful failure. By expanding the teaching styles, the teacher can support opportunities for student with different learning styles to increase their learning process. To conclude, it is only in the hands of the individual teachers to follow effective techniques, to support the slow learners and those who need additional help.

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