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SLOW LEARNER

Meaning and definition of the slow learner:-

Slow learners are the students who are unable to cope up with the work as expected of their age group. They have intelligence quotients between 70 and 90. Their ability to deal with abstracted and symbolic materials is very limited and their reasoning in practical situation is inferior to that of average students. A slight difference can be seen when compared to the learning ability of normal students. They learn slowly because they lag behind in developmental willingness to comprehend.

The concepts that are within easy reach of the majority of their age group. So, they may be categorized as “Slow developers” than slow learners. Through efforts a great deal of improvement is bound to take place. Not only this, sometimes even their teachers do not accept them as such, when they find that the child is slightly weak in studies. They delegate the cause to some physiological and psychological factors. However, today everybody feels that slow learners should be identified and realities pertaining to them should be accepted. Not only should this be good, but by appropriate teaching programmes and steps of guidance be evolved to make these slow learners as useful members of the society in the national interest. Research investigator has defined slow learners differently.

According to Schonell “Slow Learning child is one who is compared with other pupils of the same chronological age shows marked educational deficiency”. Educationally, he is not able to attain what he should. In other words, his educational attainment falls below his natural abilities.

Characteristics of slow learner:-

Research investigator has shown that slow learners have limited cognitive capacity and poor memory; they lack concentration and have problems in expressing ideas and properties. Emotional instability is also one of the chief characteristics of slow learners. These characteristics of slow learners are invariably found in all-slow learners. A short description of the characteristics is given below:

1. Poor Restraint

Slow learners have poor self-control; some children may be explosive, hyperactive or erratic. They always seem to be in motion. They rarely sit still and often wander aimlessly about the room. Research investigator indicates that these actions may be triggered or aggravated by diet. Much research still needs to be done on how diet affects children. Hyper-active children require a structured environment with few extraneous distractions.

2. Linguistic problem

Slow learners may be unable to read simple directions, equation or mathematical symbols. They may have some problems to communicate the concepts they do understand. Children who have difficulty in learning mathematics often have language difficulties. They may not understand such common mathematical vocabulary as up, down, in two, plus etc.

3. Memory and Application

Studies show that slow retarded children are not capable of learning complex motor and verbal skills. Their retention may be similar to that of younger children of the same mental age. Burt(1946) remarks that all the special mental disabilities that hamper educational progress, the most frequent is a weakness in what many be termed long term memory. Slow learners need to go over material many times before it is fixed in their minds. The efficiency of initial learning is important as well as actual retention and recall; these all are influenced by attitudes, interests and emotional states. But slow learners are unable to retain information in memory storage for a long time and recall the information when it is needed. One of the causes of poor memory in slow learners is weakness in attention.

4. Poor Perception

Schonell (1942) defines “general intelligence as an inborn; all round mental power, slightly altered in degree by environmental influences, though its realization and direction are determined by experience”. Intelligence is viewed not merely as an unfolding or maturing of his innate potentiality but also as something that grows and develops in the course of the child’s active experience of his environment. This is what the slow learners lack in. Due to limited cognitive capacity, slow learners fail to cope with learning situations and to reasoning. They are usually slower to observe the features of things and to perceive relationships between things in their experience. So they are poor in the process of developing concepts or general ideas, which underline a great deal of school work, especially in language and number. Executive function helps to provide a format for understanding how we retrieve information.

5. Short Range of Focus

Slow learners often have short attention span. This may be because problems are too difficult, too long, or uninteresting. Children will work for relatively long periods on interesting problems suited to their levels. Research works of Curtis and Shaver (1980) reveals that attention spans of the slow learners are relatively short. Also, they lack concentration. They cannot concentrate at a stretch. They need short and frequent lessons on the instruction of the teacher, which is mostly verbal exposition for more than thirty minutes better perception. Research studies (Sunderaja Rao and Rajaguru, 1995) reveal that when the learning materials are presented through concrete situations, the slow learners attention and concentration do not differ significantly compared to normal students. They are able to concentrate on enjoyable and successful work for a considerable time.

6. Lack of Expression

Tansley and Guilford (1962), state that schools give considerable thought to the ways of achieving good standards in reading and writing. However, it must not be forgotten that these are only subsidiary skills in language development. Children's ability to express themselves orally and to comprehend what is said to them more important. This is where the slow learners are lacking. Slow learners have difficulty in finding and combining words, their immaturity and emotional reluctance being one of the chief reasons for their backwardness in expression. They often have recourse to gestures or to action rather than words. Slow learner is a collective term. While it is possible to list common attributes of slow learners, no individual would be expected to possess all these characteristics.

Identification of the slow learner:-

There is every possibility that in a classroom there must be some slow learners. These children consist of a group with mild handicaps. They come to school regularly but they are likely to become dropouts if their needs are not met. From the psychological point of view, it would be conducive that such children be identified earlier. Then necessary steps can be taken to help them in their learning. Survey works reveal that it is somehow easier to identify more severely handicapped children than the mildly handicapped ones. A class teacher is easily able to identify any deviation in classroom behaviour pertaining to learning difficulties of children. He has primary knowledge about the fact which spells out clearly that the slow learners require more time and more help to acquire the skills in comparison with the average children. These children also rely more on concrete learning rather than abstract learning. Researcher uses various tools and techniques to identify slow learners. These are as follows:

1. **Observation Technique:** Observation of children's behaviour is made by the researcher which helped in identifying slow learners. This observation is done under simple as well as controllable conditions. While observing children's behaviour, a strict watch is kept for their reaction to various situations. A child's behaviour is not only observed in the classroom, but also on the playground, home and in the group. Observation is done by just watching the child's behaviour directly and by moving along with the child. It should be kept in mind that for this technique, the observer should have the capacity for analyzing and interpreting the information he gets from his observation. Observation technique is conducive for ascertaining the recreational, occupation and extracurricular interest of children.

2. **Case study method:** As we know, by this technique, the history of the child, his family, his early life and home environment are revealed. Through this method, the researcher also tried to study the learning difficulties, adjustment problems and behavioural problems of a child. By finding out the causes of such abnormalities of children, the researcher was able to suggest the best possible remedial measures. Of course, this is a long drawn process but the researcher undergoes a strain in interviewing such children, their relatives and parents at short intervals.

3. **Medical Examination:** The researcher before confirmation, the developmental history from early childhood was to be meticulously verified by a qualified medical practitioner, under strict physical and medical examination, the anomalies, disabilities and handicaps are highlighted.

4. **Scholastic Test:** Evaluation or deficiencies in school achievement can be measured through scholastic tests. These tests throw light on areas like arithmetic, reading, spelling, composition, writing, language and comprehension. General and specific problems of children are identified by the researcher through scholastic tests, and causes of anomalies are also evaluated.

5. **Intelligence Test:** Through the use of any standardized intelligence tests the intellectual level of children can be assessed. Both verbal intelligence tests and non-verbal tests can be used for this purpose. But the researcher preferred individual non- verbal test to the group. There by the researcher will get a true picture of the mental capacities of backward children by giving intelligence tests. A single test is not sufficient to bring out the full picture of the mental capacities of a child. But for the study sake the researcher has conducted RPM test.

GIFTED LEARNER

Meaning of Gifted / talented Learner:

Gifted students are those whose skills are distinctly above average in one or more areas of human performance. He is a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment.

Gifted' learners are those with abilities in one or more academic subjects, such as Mathematics or English.

Gifted learners are those who have practical skills in areas such as sport, music, design or creative and performing arts.

Skills and attributes such as leadership, decision-making and organization may also be taken into account.

Characteristics of Gifted Learner:

- Unusual alertness, even in infancy.
- Rapid learner; puts thoughts together quickly.
- Excellent memory.
- Unusually large vocabulary and complex sentence structure for age.
- Advanced comprehension of word nuances, metaphors and abstract ideas.



Characteristics of a Gifted/Talented Student

- Avid reader
- Outstanding in academics
- Wide range of interests
- Anxious to try new things
- Alert & gives rapid answers
- Self-motivated
- Dominate peers
- Has self-confidence
- Sensitive to other & situations
- Can solve problems ingeniously
- Creative thoughts, ideas & innovations
- Desire to excel
- Verbally expressive

Identifying gifted and talented behaviors of the learners:

- fast rate of progress
- high level of motivation
- rapid acquisition of English (evidenced by oral/written work)
- good memory
- sustained initiative, e.g. use of dictionary
- being well organized
- monitoring own learning
- asking questions
- being keen to do homework and asking for help
- readily applying previous learning
- problem-solving ability
- very good concentration
- being demanding and anxious, wanting to learn too fast
- being curious and observant
- highly developed interpersonal skills
- being prepared to do extra-curricular activities or commit to hobbies.

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS:

What Is Learned Helplessness?

Learned helplessness is a state that occurs after a person has experienced a stressful situation repeatedly. They come to believe that they are unable to control or change the situation, so they do not try — even when opportunities for change become available.

Learned helplessness occurs when an animal is repeatedly subjected to an aversive stimulus that it cannot escape. Eventually, the animal will stop trying to avoid the stimulus and behave as if it is utterly helpless to change the situation. Even when opportunities to escape are presented, this learned helplessness will prevent any action. While the concept is strongly tied to animal psychology and behavior, it can also apply to many situations involving human beings.

Learned Helplessness in People

The impact of learned helplessness has been demonstrated in different animal species, but its effects can also be seen in people.

Consider one often-used example: A child who performs poorly on math tests and assignments will quickly begin to feel that nothing he does will have any effect on his math performance. When later faced with any type of math-related task, he may experience a sense of helplessness.

Learned helplessness has also be associated with several different psychological disorders. Depression, anxiety, phobias, shyness, and loneliness can all be exacerbated by learned helplessness.

For example, a woman who feels shy in social situations may eventually begin to feel that there is nothing she can do to overcome her symptoms. This sense that her symptoms are out of her direct control may lead her to stop trying to engage herself in social situations, thus making her shyness even more pronounced.

Researchers have found, however, that learned helplessness does not always generalize across all settings and situations. A student who experiences learned helplessness with regards to math class will not necessarily experience that same helplessness when faced with performing calculations in the real world. In other cases, people may experience learned helplessness that generalizes across a wide variety of situations.

Learned helplessness in children

Often, learned helplessness begins in childhood.

When caregivers do not respond appropriately to a child's need for help, the child may learn that they cannot change their situation. If this occurs regularly, the state of learned helplessness may persist into adulthood.

Children with a history of prolonged abuse and neglect, for example, can develop learned helplessness and feelings of powerlessness.

Some characteristics of learned helplessness in children include:

- low self-esteem
- low motivation
- low expectations of success
- less persistence
- not asking for help
- ascribing a lack of success to a lack of ability
- ascribing success to factors beyond their control, such as luck

In childhood, learned helplessness often presents at school. If a child studies hard in order to do well in their schoolwork, but ultimately does poorly, they may feel helpless and hopeless.

A 2004 study examined the effects of learned helplessness on test taking in students. Each child involved took one of two tests. The first began with very difficult questions and the other with easier questions.

Students who took the first test seemed to become frustrated, doubted their academic ability, and missed the easy questions. The authors suggest that learned helplessness affected their test scores. Those who took the second test did not experience these effects.

Children may avoid learned helplessness by building resilience. Among the many factors that can contribute to resilience are a positive attachment to caregivers, humor, and independence.

How to Overcome Learned Helplessness

1. Awareness

While it is difficult to overcome something as complicated and serious as learned helplessness, the first step is to be aware of your struggles. Once you realize the symptoms in yourself, try to discover what the cause might be.

Because learned helplessness can result from one situation where you were put in inevitable emotional or physical harm, no matter how large or small, it can be difficult to discover the origin point. It is helpful to think back to childhood events or developmental events that may have caused the problem. Sometimes speaking with someone who knew you at a younger age can help you find the source. Common causes are abuse, neglect, or seeing someone else with learned helplessness and adopting it for yourself.

Whether or not you can identify how your learned helplessness began, the next step is to be aware of your current negative beliefs and how learned helplessness is following you throughout your day. Try examining your behavior and questioning the beliefs behind how you behave.

Examine your language to detect helpless or self-harming words. Keep track of all the negative thoughts you have throughout the day. Being aware is the first step in being able to stop.

2. Change

Now that you are aware of your helpless tendencies, it's time to get out of them. If you have found that your thoughts are constantly negative, it can potentially lead to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. To stop this spiral, do a "reality check" on every thought. For example, if you think "no one will ever love me," ask yourself if this is factual or not. Thinking rationally about the fact that you could meet someone at any minute negates that debilitating thought. Approaching many other fallacies in the same way will help you to think more clearly. If the reality check doesn't work, try to look for other explanations for your worries. If you are convinced your boss is mad at you and you're going to get fired, you won't be able to do your work properly. So, think about any other reason that she might have ignored you this morning. She could be busy, she could be having a bad day herself, or she simply could not have heard you say "hi." Not only will this be empowering, but also your stress is likely to decrease as well.

When you do encounter issues in life that are not simply events of learned helplessness, it is crucial to use them as learning experiences instead of reasons to give up. Give yourself daily affirmations of what you are good at and what you want to improve. Don't let the "improvement" process be debilitating. Frame growth as a movement toward strength. For some, it helps to write out a list of things they like about themselves or even to ask others what they admire about you. They might say something positive you didn't realize previously.

If you spend a lot of time with others who also have learned helplessness, it may be time to take a break, as you can have a depressing effect on each other. Once you are both on your journey of recovery, reconnect again.

3. Take Control

Moving past helplessness can begin by setting realistic and achievable goals. For someone who is accustomed to feeling helpless, setting goals can feel like taking control - especially when you achieve them. Try setting small ones throughout the day that you can achieve, but also larger long-term goals that you can constantly be working towards. Use the "SMART goal strategy" to ensure your goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound.

Next, celebrate! Be sure to reward yourself during your path of recovery. If you accomplish a small goal throughout the day, let yourself have a break, a sweet, or any other type of small reward. If you accomplish one of your long-term goals like getting a new job, throw a party! Many people who suffer from learned helplessness believe their accomplishments are not valid or worthy of praise, but they are. So, make sure you celebrate!

It is important to develop a support system so that you will have positive relationships to turn to throughout your journey. Spending time with optimistic others with "can-do" attitudes can have a contagious effect, enforcing your newfound hopefulness. If you don't have people like this in your life already, try finding some at organizations or clubs.

Finally, take care of yourself. If you need time on your own, take it. If you need self-care, have a spa day. Make sure you are putting yourself and your journey to recovery first, and don't hesitate to contact a professional if it becomes too much to handle yourself.