

TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT SLOW LEARNERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS, THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Slow learner has been a real challenge for the teacher, especially in the early ages of schooling. This study empirically investigated the impact of instructional strategies adopted by teachers and lecturers at school and college level. Data was collected in a survey was conducted from the teachers and professors in teacher training workshop on the topic of dealing with a slow learner. Results show positive impacts of the teacher supporting instructional strategies including easy use of language, relation development with slow learner, using flexible teaching methodologies, activity based and peer based learning.

Keywords: slow learner, supporting instructional strategies, relationship development, activity and peer based learning

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

There can be many symptoms and signs of slow learners; including that slow learner don't keep eye contact with peer especially with teacher, feel shy, having low esteem and self-confidence, covert, feel insecure in an environment (Bascom, 1997), use too much erasers in notebooks, having reading, writing, listening and speaking problems (Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016), never try to take risk to learn new things or to accept challenges, no participation in class activities, psychological problems, having limited vocabulary with short broken sentences, small range of mathematical and scientific formula as compared to class fellows, having verbal disabilities (Ruhela, 2014 ; shaw, 2013; Etsey, 2005), no or slow response when they are asked (Department of Education, 1999), health problems like short sightedness, amnesia, Alexia, Dyslexia, Strephosymbolis (Raja & Selvi, 2011; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2015).

The symptoms of the slow learners indicate that deserve more love, care, attention and support from all stakeholders of the education system, especially the teachers in an educational setting. There are many supporting mechanisms to bring the backward learner to the middle or even front line. Early stage interventions and treatments are more beneficial because they may take less resources and time. Different instruments for assessments, monitoring and evaluation can be developed by teacher locally or can be adopted from national and international consultants for the monitoring and developing of slow learner in educational settings. Some more demanding, easily available and applicable of the interventions for a slow learner, suggested by different researchers and practitioners based on research studies and need are selecting of correct instructional methodology and instrument, flexible academic training, peer-based learning, flexibility in methodology, activity based learning, use of easy language and relationship development (Shaw S. , 2013; Dunne, Humphreys, & Sebba, 2007; National educational psychological services, 2012).

Slower learner was defined by Griffin (1978) is the students who learns slowly as compared to their peers. They are also called struggling learner or back ward learner (Baucum, 1997; Borah, 2013). Their IQ level ranges from 70-90; is higher than mentally retorted student and slower than normal students. Therefore, they are real challenge for the teachers, because they can't be placed in special student classes and similarly can't cope with the normal students. According to research they are 5% of the total school population (Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016; Chauhan, 2011). According to 'Every Child Matter' (ECM) model, we are not supposed to ignore them; otherwise they will become headache for society and economy. So many times we categorize them as a mentally disabled student which is not true, because they don't have any physical or mental deficiency from medical point of view (Reigeluth, 2012; Macleod & Golby, 2003 ; Malik & Hanif, 2012).

Slow learners are the integral part of our society. Psychologically they are more emotional, sensitive therefore need more value and respect and concentration than the normal students. It is direly needed to create awareness among teachers regarding supporting instructional strategies to bring out slow learner from depressing positions and make them active population of the society.

Main focus of the study was to find out symptoms, identification strategies and more easily available and applicable in classroom setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer learning

Peer learning has its origin in cognitive and social psychology and is one of the earliest and effective method of teaching (Chauhan, 2011). This learning style can be casual, informal, non-formal and formal; in or outside the class' time and boundaries. It's also called cooperative and active learning where students help each other and remove their deficiencies by complementing each other in a synergetic way (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2006; Cestone, Levine, & Lane, 2008; Topping, 2005). In classroom setting, teacher role remains passive as an observer while learners are made firmly engaged in activities. Slow learner gives positive response to peer tutoring and improve their academic performance. One reason behind peer-tutoring effectiveness is that students remain close and informal to each other and therefore share all without hesitation and can ask same question for a

number of times. Similarly, spontaneous feedback by co-readers reduces memory workload and the same phenomenon is supported by Adoptive Cognitive Theory (ACT). It also helps in target settings and attainments (Suranjana, Ujjani, & Kanti, 2015; Shaw S. R., 2010; Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2006). Social learning theory, observation learning theory, guided learning theory calls the inclusion of peer learning strategy not only for academic performance improvements but also for behavior modification of the learner and making him active member of the society for the sack of socio-economic development (Lampert, 2012). From cost prospective, it is also one of the most cost effective methodologies, because it cost very little or even nothing in most of the situations but remains productive at all levels (National educational psychological services, 2012). Peer tutoring was tested for mathematics, which is considered one of the most difficult and hated subject among slow learner, but peer teaching has proved its efficiency as an active tool (Abdelkarim & Abuiyada, 2016).

Flexible Methodology

All learners expect diverse and flexible methodology from a teacher. Teaching is itself a diverse activity, where six senses are actively involved for effective teaching and learning processes. By adopting diverse and flexible teaching methodologies; appropriate to the learning needs, curriculum, level and courses enhance slow learners' effectiveness and efficiencies (Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016). Piaget's theory of intellectual development demands flexible instructional design to incorporate new learning experiences to support the cognitive needs of the learner (Simatwa, 2010). Knowledge-Learning-Instruction (KLI) framework, which is a complex of many cognitive and learning theories, states that teaching-learning process is itself very generalized activity, therefore the selection range of instructional methodologies should also be made generalized otherwise best learning may not happen in smoother way (Koedinger, Corbett, & Perfetti, 2012). Besides all these, giving more attentions, allocating extra time to response, designing small activities and assignments for them, appreciations on small achievements, giving them value in the class, seating them in the front lines, using easy and appropriate language, giving them small, prevailing understandable examples, developing friendship and relationship with slow learner are some of the methodologies and interventions to promote slow learner and helping them in learning (Olinghouse, 2008; UNESCO, 2005; Pujar, 2006; University of Oslo, 2008; Lo, 2012). And online learning has been rated more flexible and personal to deal with the slow learner learning (Langford, Smola, & Zinkevich, 2009).

Activity-based learning

Activity Based learning (ABL) is a group of pedagogical strategies focusing on practical activities and active involvement of the learner. It is also called experiential learning. ABL transform learning and learners into a hub of activities where they have to accomplish challenged activities. Environment of cooperation and coordination among peers is created to complete the given task. ABL is also a best tool for self-assessment, where learner judges themselves in a best possible way. It expose learner to the practical learning environment and increase his experiential learning (Ameen, 2012). Students with learning disabilities have shown great interest in activity based learning and improved their performance in different subjects like languages and sciences. One of best application of ABL is, that it develops higher order skills among slow learners and brings creativity in different subjects (Khan, Muhammad, Ahmed, Saeed, & Khan, 2012; Hariharan, 2011).

Use of easy language

According to Shahid (2013) main concern of the teacher and teaching should focus on what is being learnt and caught by the learners, not what is being taught by the teacher. It means that the communication and language among teacher and students should be easy, understandable, convenient and convincing. Language Learning Strategy Theory supports the adaptation of clear and easy language to enhance learning outcomes (Griffiths, 2004). Therefore, teacher should try to avoid to jargons, should break larger sentences into smaller understandable pieces, modify language according to the need and level of slow learner, and if not needed and dictionary vocabularies which may further confuse slow learner instead of clarifying the concepts and constructs. Researcher recommends use of easily understandable and comprehensible vocabulary and prevailing examples to explain subject matter (Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016; Thomson, 2012).

Relationship development

Young are absorbable by their nature. They love to live in friendly, welcoming and supporting environment. And being a social animal, human is interdependent, can't live in isolation, and always needs support and relations with other for their own physical and spiritual satisfaction and existence. Theory of relationship development developed by Mark Knapp (1984) states that every human need support of others at different developmental stages and all the relations are developed step by step for the smooth life functioning. Slow learners become rebellious if they are not made part of the society and will escape from all where because they are not accepted by parents, peer and other stockholder of the society in a welcoming way. Relationship development with slow learners change them from inside out, when they are made closer, supported and encouraged, their world of dealing become changed (Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016). Relationship development is one of the best instructional interventions to groom slow learner (Malik, Rehman, & Hanif, 2012). Relation with slow learner can be developed by rewarding, recognizing and prasing them, giving them value in the class,celebrating their small achievements, seating him in the front line in the calss, setting achievable targets for them, motivating and encouraging them to participate in class activities, giving them extra time, conctacting with their parents, making peer groups with high achiviers and supporting them beyound school's hours (Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016; Borah, 2013; Malik & Hanif, 2012 (Baranek, 1996).

REASERCH METHODOLOGY

Study was quantitative in nature supported by latest available literature. Data was collected using self-constructed and self-administered questionnaire from 113 teachers at school and college level, comprising 38 males and 75 females. The participants were 13 Bachelor, 94 Masters and 06 MS/MPhil degree holders and 35 were having professional qualifications like B. Ed and M.Eds.

Identification of the Slow Learner:

For the slow learner's identifications, different teacher uses different methods and some use more than one/two method. 68.4% teacher conduct test at the beginning of the semester, 60.0% relies on previous year results, 86.5% use continuous assessment techniques, 24.0% use intelligent test, 96% use observation techniques and 10.0% teacher uses no technique for the identification of slow learner.

Result Analysis:

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer Based Support	108	2.25	4.00	3.5602	.48922
Flexibility	110	1.67	4.00	3.2515	.59933
Activity Based Learning	113	1.67	4.00	3.1917	.61690
Easy Language	113	2.00	4.00	3.5457	.45874
Relationship Development	113	2.50	4.00	3.5597	.41629
Valid N (list wise)	105				

Responses were rated as (Never = 1, sometimes =2, usually=3, always=4). Mean results for all constructs of the study are near to the maximum value, which means that most of the respondents were usually or always incorporating slow learner supporting strategies in classrooms. And very less variation and dispersion is seen in the data which further support our first argument.

To see the difference in supporting techniques used by teachers on the basis of academic qualification ANOVA is used. Results are shown in table 2 below. It can be seen that a significant difference is found in supporting techniques used by teachers of different qualification level except for using easy language.

Table 2
ANOVA for Qualification

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Peer Based Support	Between Groups	4.946	1	4.946	25.372	.000
	Within Groups	20.663	106	.195		
	Total	25.609	107			
Flexibility	Between Groups	5.065	1	5.065	16.048	.000
	Within Groups	34.087	108	.316		
	Total	39.153	109			
Activity Based Learning	Between Groups	2.722	1	2.722	7.573	.007
	Within Groups	39.901	111	.359		
	Total	42.623	112			
Easy Language	Between Groups	.229	1	.229	1.090	.299
	Within Groups	23.340	111	.210		
	Total	23.569	112			
Relationship Development	Between Groups	2.096	1	2.096	13.435	.000
	Within Groups	17.314	111	.156		
	Total	19.409	112			

Since difference between the groups is significant as shown in table 2 above, mean comparison in table 3 shows that "Peer based Support" is mostly used by MPhil teachers (M= 3.8, S.D = 0.20) in comparison to Masters (M=3.6, S.D = 0.46) and Bachelor teachers (M=3.13, S.D = 0.49) where M and S.D stands for mean and standard deviation respectively. Teachers with higher qualifications adopt "Flexible Methodology" to teach slow learner. MPhil degree holders adopted flexible teaching methodologies (M= 3.61, S. D= .13) as compare to BS (M= 3.35, S. D=.51) and Master (M=3.2, S. D=.59) degree holders. It's worth mentioning here that BS degree holder proved more flexible in selecting teaching methodology as compared to Master degree holder in our research findings. Similarly teachers with MPhil degree adopt "Activity Based Learning" (M=3.56, S. D=.5) learning approach better than Master degree (M=3.5, S. D=.5) and BS (M=2.76, S.D=.6) and holder teachers. Teachers with MPhil degree (M=3.78, S. D=.13) use "Easy Language" in their pedagogy as compared to Masters (M=3.56, S. D=.48) and Bachelor (M=3.51, S. D=.32) degree holder teachers. Better relation with slow learner were developed by MPhil degree holder teachers (M=3.8, S. D= .10) as compared to Master (M=3.58, S. D=.41) and Bachelor (M=3.2, S. D=.40) degree holders.

Table 3

*Peer Based Support, Flexibility, Activity Based Learning, Easy Language Relationship Development * Qualification*

Qualification		Peer Based Support	Flexibility	Activity Based Learning	Easy Language	Relationship Development
Bachelor	Mean	3.1346	3.3590	2.7692	3.5128	3.2692
	N	13	13	13	13	13
	Std. Deviation	.49598	.51750	.64384	.32247	.40132
Master	Mean	3.6011	3.2125	3.2589	3.5603	3.5851
	N	89	91	94	94	94
	Std. Deviation	.46880	.62166	.59899	.48690	.41406
MPhil	Mean	3.8750	3.6111	3.5556	3.7889	3.7917
	N	6	6	6	6	6
	Std. Deviation	.20917	.13608	.53403	.13608	.10206
Total	Mean	3.5602	3.2515	3.1917	3.5457	3.5597
	N	108	110	113	113	113
	Std. Deviation	.48922	.59933	.61690	.45874	.41629

To see the difference in supporting techniques used by teachers on the basis of professional qualification like M. Ed, B.Ed, Diploma in education, ANOVA is used. Results are shown in table 4 below. It can be seen that a significant difference is found in supporting techniques used by teachers of different qualification level except for using easy language.

Table 4

ANNOVA Impacts of Professional Qualifications on teaching strategies

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Peer Based Support	Between Groups	3.098	2	1.549	7.226	.001
	Within Groups	22.511	105	.214		
	Total	25.609	107			
Flexibility	Between Groups	1.065	2	.532	1.496	.029
	Within Groups	38.088	107	.356		
	Total	39.153	109			
Activity Based Learning	Between Groups	2.856	2	1.428	3.949	.022
	Within Groups	39.768	110	.362		
	Total	42.623	112			
Easy Language	Between Groups	.182	2	.091	.427	.654
	Within Groups	23.388	110	.213		
	Total	23.569	112			
Relationship Development	Between Groups	1.480	2	.740	4.541	.013
	Within Groups	17.929	110	.163		
	Total	19.409	112			

Result of Table 4 show difference between the groups is significant, mean comparison in table 5 shows that teachers with professional qualifications use more "Peer based Support" (M=3.56, S.D=.4) in comparison to (M=3.52, S.D=.54) "Activity based learning" (M=3.34, S.D=.5) in comparison (M=3.12, S.D=.63), "Flexible teaching methodologies" (3.3.6,

S.D=.59)in comparison to (M=3.24, S.D=.6) and develop better relations (M=3.55, S.D=.41) in comparison (M=3.50, S.D=.43) as compared to teachers with no professional qualification.

Table 5

*Peer Based Support, Flexibility, Activity Based Learning, Easy Language Relationship Development * Professional Qualification*

Professional Qualification		Peer Based Support	Flexibility	Activity Based Learning	Easy Language	Relationship Development
No Professional Qualification	Mean	3.5263	3.2444	3.1239	3.5470	3.5096
	N	76	75	78	78	78
	Std. Deviation	.54556	.60611	.63589	.46516	.43478
professional qualification	Mean	3.6406	3.3667	3.3429	3.5429	3.6714
	N	32	35	35	35	35
	Std. Deviation	.31068	.59299	.55121	.45075	.35236
Total	Mean	3.5602	3.2515	3.1917	3.5457	3.5597
	N	108	110	113	113	113
	Std. Deviation	.48922	.59933	.61690	.45874	.41629

To see the difference in supporting techniques used by teachers on the basis of Gender, ANOVA is used. Results are shown in table 6 below. It can be seen that there is no significant difference in supporting strategies used by teachers on the basis except for relationship development.

Table 6
ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Peer Based Support	Between Groups	.294	1	.294	1.232	.270
	Within Groups	25.315	106	.239		
	Total	25.609	107			
Flexibility	Between Groups	.012	1	.012	.033	.857
	Within Groups	39.141	108	.362		
	Total	39.153	109			
Activity Based Learning	Between Groups	1.158	1	1.158	3.100	.081
	Within Groups	41.465	111	.374		
	Total	42.623	112			
Easy Language	Between Groups	.000	1	.000	.002	.965
	Within Groups	23.569	111	.212		
	Total	23.569	112			
Relationship Development	Between Groups	.633	1	.633	3.740	.056
	Within Groups	18.777	111	.169		
	Total	19.409	112			

Table 7

*Peer Based Support, Flexibility, Activity Based Learning, Easy Language, relationship Development * Gender*

Gender		Peer Based Support	Flexibility	Activity Based Learning	Easy Language	Relationship Development
Female	Mean	3.7179	3.4074	3.3022	3.5778	3.6567
	N	70	72	75	75	75
	Std. Deviation	.35335	.49163	.66706	.38490	.35540
Male	Mean	3.2697	2.9561	2.9737	3.4825	3.3684
	N	38	38	38	38	38
	Std. Deviation	.57063	.67638	.43414	.57838	.46403
Total	Mean	3.5602	3.2515	3.1917	3.5457	3.5597
	N	108	110	113	113	113
	Std. Deviation	.48922	.59933	.61690	.45874	.41629

Table 7 results show that there is no significant impact of gender on the selecting teaching strategies to teach slow learner and both behave homogeneously as per statistical data in our study.

DISCUSSION

Slow learners are the integral part of our social and educational system. Their active involvement in socio-economic and developmental processes can be made more effective, productive and efficient if they are concentrated in their school age and other developmental stages. Psychological studies recommend design of developmental tasks for physical and mental development of the learners. Like all other normal students, Slow learner can also be mold and developed. Developing supporting relationship with slow learner, becoming a best friend of them and to remain flexible and adoptable reshape the lives of the slow learners. Adopting suitable instructional strategy according to the need of the subject's matter and pedagogy, that may be peer based learning or activity based learning, helps slow learner to explore their inner and hidden potentials. Use of easy language helps in better communication among teacher and learner, explain technical aspects of learning more comprehensively. Improved qualifications

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Exploratory study creates greater awareness among teachers regarding slow learners. Teachers should adopt diverse range of instructional strategies to teach and engage learner, especially the slow learner and bring them up to the desired level. It would be valuable to develop better learning and training opportunities for enhancing teachers' skills in instructional, social, psychological and emotional domains to make them better able to handle the slow learners. Teacher trainings should be arranged for faculty development to develop further better mechanisms for the support of slow learners. Future research is also recommended to see the impact of educational smart technology in academic and behavioral development of the slow learner.

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