

Categorical Diagnostic Analysis of “Slow Learners”

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Abstract

Slow learner: “It is a student with the ability to acquire all necessary academic skills, at a rate and depth below that of the average student”. Currently, there are many ways to diagnose the kind of students that teachers have in class. But there is also lack of experience in identifying slow learners, and sometimes they are considered as disable learners. This article tries to explain the concept about diagnostic analysis, and also how to differentiate it from a disability. Taking into consideration that learning began in the preschool years, the period where the children assimilate the fundamental issues of the scientific knowledge, abilities and values; the researchers can give examples of how to take care of this kind of student, through the observation among others and from their own experience in teaching and growing up children. To support and confirm the validity of this work the document analysis of updated scientific literature related to this topic was developed. Finally, to corroborate its notion, experts’ opinions were taken into consideration. “Being a slow learner is a lifelong problem. A Slow Learner is a child whose IQ is low enough to cause considerable difficulty in keeping up in the classroom. An average IQ is 100%. Slow learners score between 70% and 90% on IQ tests. Less than 70% is considered Mentally Retarded. Slow Learners are not Mentally Retarded” This article tries to give an analysis of the slow learners’ concept, since the point of view that they are normal students. The differences can be managed among the diversity of each group. It also deals with the teacher responsibility on preparing themselves to provide a good teaching learning process in and out the classroom, that not only the teachers are involved in this process, also parents have the commitment on educating their children. We also give a wide connotation to the diagnosis and the different characteristics and needs of the slow learners. Finally, they include some example of exercises that can be developed in the classroom with standards or average and slow students; the fact is on the way the teacher manage each activity in order to help the slow learners without discriminating them

Keywords: slow learners, normal students, standard students

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1. Introduction

Classrooms are a magic trip to knowledge. Teaching is a very demanding task, although it is beautiful and it is also considered not hard work, it is. This profession requires a large imagination for creating new ways of motivating student every day, and to be quite tolerant in order to facilitate the development of the teaching-learning process.

Nowadays teachers have to face a big challenge in the teaching learning process. In the classrooms there are students with diversities of intelligence, motivation, learning styles, necessities, aspirations and cognitive requirements. That is why the role of the teacher is to identify the mixture they have in class and prepare themselves for teaching, taking into account all those characteristics. Among the students there are some that are hiding; it means that it is very hard to identify them because of their specific personality. Those are the slow learners; this is just a term not a diagnostic category to identify a disability, as Muppudathi, G. pp.98 2014 define slow learning.

There are many methods and techniques to diagnose the diversity in a class. But the teacher has to select the most appropriate one to get to an accurate result. For an adequate development of the teaching and learning process, a correct management to the diversity in and out the classroom is essential. There are prerequisites for beginning a course as: to determine the most appropriate way to motivate, to grasp the students interests, aspiration and necessities, to know their learning styles and knowledge capacity with an exact identity of the diversity in a classroom.

According to the study we have developed, we consider there are some characteristics of slow learners that the teachers must know. It is a good reason to give wide information about all the analysis made, related to learners’ behavior and teachers’ way of acting. Slow learners need time to achieve the curriculum aims, in order to develop habits and abilities and fix the contents. They need that teachers and parents work together in helping them to organize their work, priorities, getting materials they need to answer their homework.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Slow Learning

Slow learning has not been a very polemic topic; most of the authors have the same opinion in many facts. For example: Carroll pp.205 1998 stated that “...students with below averages cognitive abilities and who struggle to

cope with the traditional academic demands of the regular classrooms...” Houk, K. pp.1 2012 assured that “Slow learners are not non-learners! They must be taught and they so want to learn and succeed! A few adjustments in their learning process can make a big difference!” Borah, R. pp.139 2013 said that “...students with below average cognitive abilities whom we cannot term as disabled...” “...students but the problem is that they are simply not interested in studying under traditionally accepted system of education...” Muppudathi, G. pp.98 2014 considered that “Slow learning is not a learning disability that can be classified as a diagnostic category. It is simply a term used to describe a student with the ability to acquire all necessary academic skills, but at a rate and depth below that of the average student”. It is important to point out that we use the term “standard” to refer to the students that are not slow learners. Martin, Ruth and Martin, William (NA) used the term normal to refer to them. There is a contradiction when it is said that slow learners are normal children. After the authors of this paper analyzed all the previous definitions, they coincide that slow learners are normal children, without any disability. They only go at a slow pace through the learning process. That is why they need more time to figure things out than the standard ones to get the contents. They also require of more persistence to cope with academic demands. Martin, Ruth and Martin, William pp.8 (NA) stated that “Most of the educational materials available are prepared on the basis of the needs of the normal child, and must be modified before they are suitable for slow learners.” Sometimes slow learners are not concentrating in learning under the education regulations and the teaching materials designed for them (textbooks, workbooks, etc). As Borah, R. pp.139 2013 said “they are simply not interested in studying under traditionally accepted system of education”. For that reason teachers have to create new materials and techniques to motivate and help them to understand. Slow learning is just a term to define those students that have the capacity to learn all the knowledge that correspond to their age according to the curriculum, but at their own pace. It is absurd to suppose that they accomplish the same standards of the standard ones. They need more time to acquire new concepts and solve problems. They not only have problems in learning but also with habitual actions like: games, social relationship, habits and abilities. As Borah, R. pp.139-140 2013 expressed “Often they are quiet and shy, and they have trouble making friends. They may have a poor self confidence... All of these problems cause them to have a poor self esteem”

2.2 Learners' Characteristics

According to different authors there are peculiar characteristics to identify slow learners. “First, slow learners are recurrently immature in their relations with others and do poorly in school” said Borah, R. pp.140 2013. Among the most common characteristics that allow the teachers to recognize this element, there are: poor vocabulary, sometimes inferior motor skills and coordination, dislike of school, mood of inferiority, susceptible, confused and shay. “Secondly, they cannot do multifaceted or complex problems and work very slowly” affirm Borah, R. pp.140 2013. But it is due to their delay intelligence quotient (IQ), as Martin, R. and Martin, W. pp.4 (NA) stated this retardation varies from six months to two years. “They lose track of time and cannot convey what they have learned from one task to another well. They do not easily master skills that are academic in nature, such as the time tables or spelling rules” According to Borah, R. pp.140 2013, that is because knowledge is not kept in mind for so long in order that they could apply it in a given situation. All these authors agree that slow learners have a short attention span and poor concentration; they are not able to have long-term goals. Martin, Ruth and Martin, William (NA), Borah, R. (2013) and Muppudathi (2014) have made a deep study and have proposed good ideas to cope with slow learners, like that it is important to take into consideration that although they have difficulties in developing abstract thinking, they have greater interest in the concrete things. It means that experiences are very important for them; they imitate plans, thinking, reasons, experiments, they generalize and transfer knowledge from past experiences to new situations. As their critical thinking does not achieve the same level as the standards students, they are less imaginative and able to solve problems. They arrive at conclusions without a sufficient analysis of other options, admitting any practical solution or estimated effect. They are disposing for the activities that are going to be useful for them, and with an urgent desire of getting to the end, another way they lose interest. They need a good rapport to be motivated towards knowledge in order to achieve the relation between the cognitive and effective categories.

Taking as a starting point the reason that they can develop the same abilities as the standard students but in a longer period of time; it is essential to admit that their learning is going to increase by stages. But, they learn and keep in mind just the things that are meaningful to them. As a result of this, they need to be given part of responsibility; it means that they have to develop autonomy towards their duties in schools as well as at home. It allows them to develop certain self-confidence while interacting in any environment, with good relationships and feel equal as the others.

Instruction is very important too, they need to know how to use tools for school and daily life. They have to be very well oriented on how each machine operates and they need a clear explanation on what every heading means; when defining the terms read, write, count, find, define, summarize, compose, etc. Specific situations must be explained, described, narrated, and illustrated.

Slow learners have a great need to be trained in both oral and written communication. They demand

opportunities to explain, describe, express, ask questions and say answers. They also have to participate in group discussions and interviews. As grammatical relationship requires abstract reasoning and it is not within slow learners' ability, they possibly dislike language abilities. Learning the rules by heart can be used, but if they don't know how to apply the rule, the effort is unsuccessful. But in the case of slow learners the repetition is successful, that is why the teacher has them exercise on writing sentences, paragraphs and any kind of written exercise more than the standard students.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Diagnostic Analysis of slow learners

In our case study we are using students hence need to get permission from school administration to allow us carry out research with the new form one within the school. There are teachers that have been teaching for long period of time, and have years of experience. It is believed that experienced teacher is possible to recognize the psychological framework of an student and hence necessary to diagnose them. There are also teachers that have been training the same learners for more than a course, and they assume they are already familiar with them, but the problem is that at the same time children have been growing up, each of them in a different content. The teacher has the responsibility to select the appropriate way to make a diagnosis in order not to confuse a slow learner with a disable one or a standard one. As the education of slow learners differs from the education of the standard ones, the first thing a teacher has to do is a diagnosis to identify the students according different categories, slow learners is just one of them.

As slow learners learn at their own pace the teacher should use different strategies and approaches to follow their advances and be continuously evaluating the diagnosis according their IQ. This control requires a constantly update of the teacher, in order to create new ways to exercise and motivate them to learn and fix their knowledge. Sometimes these kinds of students have been confused, because there are some teachers who don't know how to differentiate them from the standard ones taking into consideration they often have similar nature, it includes physical appearance, intellect, education, and emotional characteristics. It is so superficial to try to distinguish them by just the observation method.

3.2 Steps and Ways of Examining a diagnosed Learners

3.2.1 Listening

Listening to recorded materials, watching films or short stories and after that discussing about it. It also helps to integrate abilities. Listening to a story and draw a picture about it. Tape recorders: Use tape recorder to record class conversations, oral reports, reading, and dramatizations. Find unfamiliar words in the dictionary by listening to the sounds from a recorder.

3.2.2 Speaking

Story telling: The teacher begins to tell an imaginary story and ask a student to continue it, then another student will add something else till all of them have created a piece of the story and get to the end of it. Art work by describing pictures on the textbooks, workbooks, real ones, etc. Game: "Family words". One student is going to say a word and the next is going to say another one that belongs to the same group, like: colors, animals, vegetables, etc.

3.2.3 Reading

Here, written stories were divided into chunks and administered to students in groups of 6. The teacher hands out the stories, giving one to each team. Each member of the team will have a piece of paper with a part of the story. He or she is going to read it in order they decide the order of the story. When they finish organizing it they will stand up and read the story in the correct order. Associating words with pictures. The group activity was to provide independent work values

3.2.4 Writing

Diary: Have the students write a diary about their daily life. Parody: teachers will have them to write a parody using a sequence of picture. Create familiar situations with places, objects, activities they like in order ask them to write a composition. Have the students to write a poem, short stories, tells, etc

3.2.5 Mathematical Skills

Slow learners need to incorporate Mathematics vocabulary related to: numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division; also units of measurement among others. Most of the mathematic problems are very hard to understand for slow learners. As it has been said, practical activities, use of experiences, daily life necessity are helpful to fix knowledge in slow learners. There are some examples of exercises teachers can use to train mathematical abilities. There are some enjoyable games that stimulate the student's interest such as: Arithmetic Tag by Martin, Ruth and Martin, William (NA). We divided flash cards into two piles and the class into two teams. Each team lines up behind a desk with a pile of cards on it. Each team has half of the blackboard to work on. At a signal, the first person in each line takes the top card, goes to the blackboard, and works the example. He carries the card back and puts it on the "Used" pile before the next person goes up. The

teams move along as fast as they can. As soon as one team finishes its pile, the game stops. The examples are corrected, and points are taken off for the number of unused cards of the other team. The team having the most examples correct are the winners

4. Data Analysis

Table 1
The Development of Poor Self-Esteem
 Three Primary Barriers

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Auditory Processing Deficits | Slow learner Label | Lack of Advocacy |
| Results in | Results in | Results in |
| Language Deficits Reading Difficulties Lack of Basic Skills Lack of Appropriate Accommodations | Lack of Inclusion Lack of Educational Solutions Lack of Education Opportunities | Denial of Appropriate Services and Resources |
| Results in | Results in | Results in |
| Academic Failures | Social Isolation Teasing Feelings of Hopelessness | Unequal Educational opportunities |
| Poor Self-Esteem | | |
| Results in | | |
| Academic Fears Anxiety Disorders School Phobias Social Withdrawal | | |
| Results in Student in Crisis | | |
| Depression Substance Abuse | | |

Table 2
Poor Self-Esteem Prevention
a Caring and Supportive Community

| | |
|--|---|
| Links to Services: Parental Advocacy, Coaches Qualified and Caring Educators and Counselors, Personal Friends Advocates | Slow learner associated with Auditory Accommodations and Language Remediation |
| Leads to: | |
| Academic Solutions, No slow learner Stigma, Inclusion, Basic Skills, Positive Educational Experiences, Self-Understanding and Self-Advocacy . Foundation for Secondary Success Positive Self-Esteem without Anxiety Disorders Skills needed for Secondary Success | |

Table 3
Positive Self-Esteem Re-building Process
Interventions: Advocates, the Links to Services and Accommodation

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Academic Failures | Auditory Processing Deficits | Anxiety and School Phobias Slow Learners Label Stigma Depression | Lack of Advocacy |
| Advocates – Links to Services | | | |
| Supportive Educators and Counselors | Qualified Agency Service Providers for Referrals to Language and Other Private Specialists | Counselors Therapists Coaches Support Groups Other Agency Support Groups | Family Members Caring Friends Advocates Coaches Service Providers Educators Counselors |
| Academic Accommodations Inclusion | Basic Skills Academic Success | Coping Strategies for Anxiety | Referrals to Service Providers Self-Confidence Self-Advocacy |
| Results in A cademic Success and Improved self-esteem | | | |

5. Conclusion

From these results development of low self esteem from slow learners, is as a result of; Auditory process deficit, slow learner label and lack of advocacy. Slow learner is a child who learns at a pace little behind other of their age and grade level, so there is need to create more time to engage them in appropriate learning activities to improve their learning process. Level of performance of slow learners directly related to the time dedicated to them, appropriate teaching resources and activities (didactic, psychology and pedagogy). Slow learners are normal students that just need more time than the standard ones to get knowledge. The first thing to identify them is to diagnose. The teachers have to distinguish all the characteristic of slow learners in order not to confuse them with the standards. They also have to be patient, with good imagination and creativity to cope with all the slow learners' features. Using appropriate methods and techniques with the adequate activities and exercise will provide a successful learning process to slow learners. Finally, these we considered that it is not a task of teachers alone; it is also the students' autonomy and the family responsibility. Every human being has the right to be educated and instructed for living in a society.

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