

## LIFE SKILL EDUCATION: A COHESIVE APPROACH THAT DISTANGLES THE CHALLENGES OF SLOW LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

Children of today are the citizens of tomorrow; they are going to be the pillars of the country. Hence it is essential to ensure each pillar is as strong as the other. Teachers are the responsible person for making each pillar the strongest one. It is a fact that normal classrooms consist of a heterogeneous group of pupils. So, teachers are more vigilant to handle these differentially abled children. A very big problem that every school faces is the difficulty to deal with the slow learners. It is a challenging task for the teachers to tackle slow learners and to make them learn the academic subjects. These students do not fall into the category of special education, do well outside the classroom and show no evidence of having a medical problem. They simply do not do well in school or a particular subject. In the day before formal schooling these students would carry on productive lives working and doing tasks that did not require extensive reading, writing or math operations. However, today the emphasis is less on occupational learning and more on academic preparation. Thus, there is a growing need for help to remediate these students to provide them the best possible opportunities in a changing world. Life skills may include emotional skills, coping skills, health and hygiene skills and communication skills etc. It's beneficial as it makes students better members of the society. This enables them not only solve problems but also to think creatively. Having life skills knowledge enable slow learners to relate well with others in a friendly manner. It also influences academic performance as they are able to become judgmental. Life skills education in schools enables slow learners to be confident in solving day to day problems and fosters creativity, thus improving academic performance. The present study is intended to explore the possibility of life skill training programmes to enhance the academic performance of the slow learners.

**KEYWORDS:** Life Skills, Slow Learners

### INTRODUCTION

Learning is an essential but complicated process that we follow life-long. The problem, however, is that not all children can adapt to a rigid style of learning. Some children cannot cope with the fast-paced and rigid approach that is the characteristics of conventional teaching. Due to this, a gap forms between their true ability and their performance level and such children are then termed as slow learners. According to Burt (1937), the term "slow learners" is reserved for those children who are unable to cope with the work normally expected of their age group. Children who are slow learners are not learning- disabled. In general, they want to learn but lack the ability to process information well. It is known to everyone that; slow learners are suffering from numerous problems in day to day classroom interactions. Bright students

complete their task and discourse activity swiftly and with utmost accuracy, whereas slow learners find it difficult to complete with others for completing their assigned task within the stipulated time. This culminates in the slowdown of their self-image and confidence. They always are in an inactive and lethargic mood, and they will try to keep aloof from the active stream. According to Borah (2013), slow learners are normal students but the problem is that they are simply not interested in studying under a traditional accepted system of education.

### **Need and Significance of the Study**

In a society committed to democratic goals, it is essential that the educator should so plan his educational system that all categories of children receive the type of education they need. A slow learner is thought to be one who is not able to exploit fully his innate potentialities and does not register or show up educational success commensurate with his abilities. Everywhere, education is seen as the main way of enabling individuals and notions alike to meet the ever-increasing economic, technological, social and personal challenges. According to Mappudathi (2014) states that to help a slow learner fetch a good grade is a challenge that marks the qualities of the good teacher.

### **Characteristics of Slow Learners**

The children who are below average in intelligence follow the same developmental pattern as their peers with higher IQ, but they differ in the rate and degree of development. It is found that children of low IQ possess characteristics typical of those with average IQ who are younger in age. Children who have IQ above 70, but learn at a reduced rate compared to their peers, are referred to as slow learners, or as borderline children. The upper limit of the slow learner's category is usually fixed as IQ score of 85. Hence one characteristic of slow learners are that they may often appear immature compared to their age mates. This may result in frustration for them as they may not be able to do many things which their peers can do. A tendency of self-evaluation leading to a feeling of inferiority may, therefore, develop in them. They may lack confidence and might develop low self-esteem. This may adversely affect their academic performance. Hence there is a great need for special educational measures for the backward learners to ensure maximum progress they are capable of. We have to give them special attention on humanitarian grounds so that they can overcome the personal inadequacies that are the concomitants of several educational and social failures.

The National Curriculum Framework has suggested that education ideally must prepare learners to face the challenges, for this it needs to be intimately linked with different life skills, the activities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life by developing in them generic skills related to academic and social needs.

Life skill education aims at preparing a child for successful adult life. It must develop such abilities and capacities, which make a child competent enough to deal with various pressures in life coming from family, schools, peer group, etc. If the child is not in a position to cope with those pressures, it will create anxiety, tension, frustration, depression etc. Emotional and personal factors contribute a lot towards the slow learning of children. The psychologist confirmed this through their research analysis. It is a well-known fact that tensions and conflicts exercise a negative effect on the learning of the child. It was found that children who lack self- confidence are usually slow learners. In order to overcome the pressures, the slow learner has to acquire certain competencies and skill that help him to make informed decisions, solve problems, think positively, Communicate effectively, build the healthy relationship and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. For enhancing these abilities education must have focused on the

development of life skills.

UNICEF defines Life Skills as “a behavior change and behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas- knowledge, attitude and skills.” Life Skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of Life Skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings. World Health Organization (WHO) laid emphasis on LIFE SKILLS, which are necessary to all youth alike across the globe. In 1997 the WHO addressed this issue and a well-researched package of Life Skill Development was produced. Life Skills are living skills or abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life”

### **Objectives of the Study**

To identify the problems faced by slow learners in the normal classroom.

To identify the life skill possessed by slow learners.

### **Method of Investigation**

In the present study, the researcher conducted a normative survey as the method for collecting data. Considering the nature of the study random sampling technique was used. Data were collected from 40 teachers of secondary schools in Kannur district, and also from 20 slow learners of respective schools. For identifying slow learners, the investigator verified the previous academic performance of the students from the school records and, also consulting with the class teachers. To find out the problems exhibited by slow learners in the classroom, a structured interview schedule was administered to teachers. It was drafted focusing on the major areas that are likely to be encountered by slow learners in the classroom. For collecting the data on the level of life skills possessed by slow learners, the life skill rating scale was used. The scale consists of 40 statements; 4 statements for measuring each life skill. Altogether 10 core life skills are taken for the purpose. Percentage analysis was done for analyzing the collected data.

### **Analysis and Interpretation of the Data**

A very big problem that every school faces is the difficulty to deal with the slow learners. It is a challenging task for the teachers to tackle slow learners and to make them learn the academic subjects. Early diagnosis of the slow learner is very necessary. Teachers and parents can identify that; the student is a slow learner with a careful observation. They could easily identify the signs of a slow learner

### **Analysis of the Responses Made by the Teachers Regarding the Behavioral Pattern of Slow Learners**

By analyzing the responses made by the teachers, it is inferred that the slow learners exhibit the following signs of behavioral problems.

**Table 1: Percentage Score Obtained For the Behavioral Problems of Slow Learners**

Sl. No.	Items (Behaviour Problems)	Response in Percentages
1	Limited Vocabulary	85%
2	Limited Social Interaction.	90%
3	Poor communication skill	95%
4	Lack of self confidence	98%
5	Lack of self awareness	82%
6	Lack of problem solving ability	80%
7	Lack of stress and time Management	98%
8	Poor decision making ability	85%
9	Poor critical thinking ability	78%
10	Over anxious	95%

When analyzing the responses of the teachers collected through structured interview schedule, it is found that the majority of slow learners have so many limitations in actively participating teaching-learning process inside the classroom. The limitations that the teachers have identified are problems such as poor vocabulary (85%), Poor Interaction with others (90%), Poor communication skill (95%), Lack of self-confidence (98%), Lack of self-awareness (82%) Lack of problem solving ability (80%), Lack of stress and time management (98%), Poor decision making ability (85%), Poor critical thinking ability (78%) and Over anxiety (95%).

So, we reached a conclusion that the majority of students are facing problems when interaction with others because of the lack of vocabulary and self-confidence. The problem of vocabulary can be solved just by enhancing self-confidence. Simultaneously we see that most of them lack problem-solving skill and decision-making capacity. This is because of lack of confidence and self-awareness. So by creating self-confidence, all other limitations can be eradicated. Though, there are many strategies for removing the above-mentioned limitations the most important among them is life skill education.

#### **Analysis of the Level of Life Skill Possessed By Slow Learners**

A life skill rating scale was administered to the selected slow learners, in order to check the level of life skills possessed by them. The obtained percentage score was presented in Table II.

**Table 2: Percentages Obtained For the Life Skills of the Selected Sample of Slow Learners**

Sl. No.	Life Skills	Response in Percentages
1	Self-awareness	21.5
2	Critical Thinking	38
3	Effective Communication	20
4	Problem solving	23
5	Empathy	36
6	Decision Making	21.5
7	Creative Thinking	15.7
8	Inter Personal Relationship	28
9	Coping With Stress	13
10	Coping With Emotion	15.7

From the Table number 2, it is clear that the slow learners possess very a low level of life skills. The percentage score obtained for each component follows through the below description.

**Self-Awareness**

It includes recognition of 'self', our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. The obtained percentage score is 21.5.

**Critical Thinking**

It is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. This skill can assist them to assess the pros and cons of the situation and help them to evaluate their actions. The obtained percentage score is 38.

**Effective Communication**

It means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, and also needs and fears. The obtained percentage score is 20.

**Problem Solving**

It helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain. The obtained percentage score is 23.

**Empathy**

To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples' needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. The obtained percentage score is 36.

**Decision Making**

It helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. It can teach people how to actively make decisions. The obtained percentage score is 21.5.

**Creative Thinking**

A novel way of seeing or doing things. The obtained percentage score is 15.7.

**Interpersonal Relationship**

This skill helps us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships. The obtained percentage score is 28.

**Coping with Stress**

It means, recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, how this affects us, and acting in a way that help us to control our levels of stress. The obtained percentage score is 13.

**Coping With Emotions**

This skill helps us to recognize the emotions and also help us to respond to those emotions appropriately. The obtained percentage score is 15.7.

From the study, it has been concluded that the slow learners possess a very low level of life skills which leads to their low academic performance. Slow learners are much more limited in using their potentiality to the maximum, which impede their school progress and personal development. They need special help in the form of life skill training which help them to face the challenges and problems in the classroom. Rooth (2000) points out that life skill are needed for successful living in the twenty-first century. Life skills include disciplined work habits, caring attitudes, and the ability to cope as well as to create one's own opportunities and all these factors are essential for adult success. Consequently, students need an integrated life skill programme in order to cope with their day to day academic life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Every child is special and different from one another; there is the possibility of improvement, sooner or later. The source of energy is lying within them but the only thing is to stretch the hand of confidence towards them which will solve their problem and improve their quality. If the teachers find time to think about those students, definitely the solution comes into their hand. Students who are slow learners frequently see school as a punishment, but classroom strategies enable teachers to tap into these students' strengths to enable them to succeed (Steven R. Shaw). Many research studies proved that people having ample life skills can cope up with the situation positively and to be successful in everyday life activities. Life skill education when intensified in secondary schools enables student's especially slow learners to be confident in solving day to day problems and fosters creativity thus improving academic performance.

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