



Low Achievers, Causes and Educational Strategies

Anand Valmiki

Assistant Professor (Senior Scale) , Department of Education ,
Regional Institute of Education (NCERT) , Bhopal.

Abstract:-

This paper identifies the causes behind the low achievement among certain sections of school children. Various factors such as caste, class, gender, tribe, language, religion, rural, urban-slums etc., play a very crucial role in the educational achievement of the hitherto excluded groups and that suffer from social disadvantage. This paper is an attempt to highlight the educational adaptations that would enhance the achievement patterns of the disadvantaged children. Deriving from the school experiences for over a more than one and half decade, this paper explicates the causes, problems of low achievers and highlights the strategies to enhance the academic achievement of the low achievers in the schools.

Introduction

The reasons for low achievement may be many ranging from psychological to sociological. Indian society is highly stratified and there exist inherent inequalities. Social inequalities of the society are reflected in the schooling process where schooling itself perpetuates and reinforces the existing social inequalities. Better schooling leads to better academic achievement and the better academic achievement leads to better 'life style' and life chances. Education is the one of the powerful driving force behind the social mobility. Furthermore, during the age of "Education for All", the time has come to revisit the nature of schooling and move towards "Quality Education for ALL". In such a context, it is pertinent to focus on low achievers and enable the educational adaptations to enhance the academic achievements of the low achievers

Who are Low Achievers?

1. Warton Hall: Low achiever is one who in school classroom is unable to do the work of the class next to below that which is normal for his age.
2. Shonell: Low achiever is one who, when compared with other pupils of the same chronological age shows educational deficiency.
3. Burt: He has used the term educational quotient for separating low achiever in the class. According to him the children who have EQ less than 85 are low achievers.

Educational Quotient is calculated by the following formula:

$$EQ = \text{Education achievement} / \text{Chronological age} \times 100$$

Characteristics of low achievers

On the basis of the definitions given above, we can arrive at the following conclusions regarding the characteristics of low achievers:

1. Their rate of learning as well as power of retention is very low.
2. They feel frustrated due to their low achievement in the school.
The IQ of these children is low, *i.e.*, less than 80 when measured on an intelligence test. Low IQ leads them to low academic achievement. Since, intelligence is a composition of 150 factors (6 processes X 5 contents X 5 products) and no mentally retarded child lacks all these factors at a time, so, low intelligence will not lead to poor academic achievement in all the subjects simultaneously. Their backwardness may be restricted to one or few subjects only.
3. These children are slow in emotional and social development also.
4. He/she is a slow learner and feels the difficulty in keeping pace with the normal school work..
5. Educationally, he/she is unable to attain what he should. In other words, his educational attainment falls below his natural abilities.
6. He/she falls far behind other children of his age in matters of education. Usually, such children remain in the same class for a number of years.
7. Not only he is unable to learn in his class with the children of his own age but also feels difficulty in learning with the children of lower classes, who are younger than him in age.
8. He/she is necessarily a failure in the academic field and shows educational poor performance.

Causes of Low Achievement

The causes of low achievement are internal *i.e.*, disabilities that are physical and cognitive. Also, the causes of low achievement revolves around social disability such as socially and culturally induced disadvantages

A. Internal Causes

Causes of low achievement lying within the individual child are as follows:

1. **Physical Causes:** Genetically, there may be some physical defects in the body of the child. This defect may be due to the extent of disability too. Due to these defects learning and retention of curricular contents may be adversely affected. Some of these defects are given below.
 - Sensory defects like visual or hearing impairment.
 - Motor defects like defects in legs, feet, hands or speech.
 - Mental retardation due to any disease or brain injury.
 - Defective working of glands.
 - Poor health condition of the child. Infection of a chronic disease like tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS etc.
2. **Mental Causes:** Low educational quotient is most of the time due to low IQ and low IQ is directly related to low functioning of mind which may be due to lot many reasons. Moreover, many intellectual abilities like, thinking, reasoning, manipulation, evaluation, concentration and observation etc. are not properly found in these children, so, they perform poorly in the class.
3. **Emotional Disturbance:** If child is suffering from any emotional disturbance, his emotional development may be faulty and delayed. It will lead to further complication in emotional and

social adjustment. The child may also develop faulty self-concept. All these factors will create problem before the child in the school.

B. Socially disadvantaged Environment

Environment also plays an important role in making the child educationally poor. Important environmental factors are as follows:

1. Family:

- Every family, predominantly among Hindus, belongs to a caste. Some castes are at a disadvantageous position and are seen as low rung castes. Some of the families of these low rung castes with low economic status have had a poor educational opportunities in the past. Though these families aspire to provide education to their children, family environment is not that conducive that motivates and facilitates children academic achievement.
- If economic conditions and social status of the family is very low, the family will not be able to cater to the basic needs of the child. If family is not providing proper educational facilities and guidance to the child, the child will perform poorly on academic skills.
- Similarly, poverty in the family may lead to malnutrition of the child. If it is so, the child's poor health will affect his educational achievement negatively.
- If the background of the family is very backward and child is deprived of elementary general knowledge and life experience, he is expected to perform poorly.
- If students do not get sufficient time to devote to educational tasks given to him because of their excessive engagement at home in occupational tasks, their educational performance will be low.
- If parents are illiterate and child is not helped in the family in completing his school assignment, he will perform poorly.
- Lastly, emotional climate of the family also affects learning and achievement. If there are strained relations between the child and the family or he belongs to a broken or nagging family, or any of his parents is addicted to drugs or habit of gambling, harsh attitude is meted out to the child in the family. The Child feels insecure, unwanted and a burden on the family, all those factors will contribute to low achievement of the child.

School Climate:

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life as it relates to norms and values, interpersonal relations and social interactions, and organizational processes and structures. Research proves that a positive school climate directly impacts telling indicators of success such as increased teacher retention, lower dropout rates, decreased incidences of violence, and higher student achievement. School climate adversely effect the academic achievement of children in the following ways:

- Because of poor economic condition, the child is educated in a school where educational environment is polluted; he/she cannot possibly show higher educational achievement there.
- If discipline is poor due to poor and defective administration and teacher absenteeism and disinterestedness towards teaching, the performance of the school children in general will be low.

- If the method of teaching is defective, uninteresting and lacks innovation and novelty, achievement will be low.
- Lack of adequate resources and materials, ignorance to experimentation and creative work, disregard of co-curricular activities and so on will lead to poor educational achievement of the child.
- If guidance services are not provided in these schools and curriculum is not revised for a long time leading uninteresting curriculum, it will also lead to low educational achievement of the child.
- If sufficient options are not made available for children and they are forced to select only a few subjects, they will perform very poorly in the school.
- If school lacks healthy inter-personal relationship and the environment of the school is surcharged due to communal or any other tensions educational achievement of the child will be low.
- If physical facilities, available in the school are not sufficient, according to the needs of children and more than 100 children are accommodated in a class of 50 students, all of them will perform poorly.
- If the school has not fixed any academic standard and everything is going on in an aimless manner, the performance of the whole school will be low.

Other Influential Factors:

- Peer group that child enters from neighborhood and from the school shape his/her behavior. If they are not having interest in schooling, the child is also expected to be poor in educationally.
- Mass-media such as television also affect educational achievement. If the focus of the child is on the television serials and waste lot of time watching television will affect the educational achievement of the child.
- Indifferent attitude of the people towards education also affects educational achievement. If attitude of the people is not positive, they will not motivate their wards for achieving higher in the class.

Problem of Low Achievers

Corrective Measures and Educational Adaptation

One of the best ways to overcome educational backwardness is to remove the underlying internal as well as external causes of low achievement. If the problem is due to any physical disability up to the level of handicapped, it cannot be removed by a regular teacher through general techniques of teaching. Only a specially trained teacher can do this job. But if low achievement is due to minor physical reasons and major social reasons, it can be removed by the teachers, parents and the society by a combined effort. Following adaptive measures can be taken to minimize the problem of educational backwardness.

1. **Health Interventions:** If educational backwardness is due to physical and health related reasons, it can be removed only by adopting medical measures. Team of doctors should be regularly sent to the school for regular check-up, vaccination, immunization and treatment of students. Adequate medicine should also be supplied to them by the hospitals because they cannot purchase it due to their poverty. (Educationally backward children are mostly seen in

children belonging to poor families). Midday meal programme of the government in the. Connection. It is likely to reduce malnutrition in children making them less vulnerable to infections and deficiency diseases. Thus, it is a good preventive measure adopted by the government. Apart from these, if child needs some other equipment to overcome his disability, he should be supplied either by the government or by school or other organizations.

Apart from these, the services of at least one regular and permanent doctor must be hired by the school for diagnosing the general problems of students and treating them.

2. There is a need to create a vibrant educational climate in the school. A special emphasis has to be made and following things have to be adopted in schools to enhance the academic achievement of low achievers.

Low achievers generally face the problems elaborated below:

1. **Academic Tribulations:** Low achievers are slow in learning and slower in retention. The result is that they cannot get along with the learning pace of other children in the class. Normal children find it difficult to work with them. From educational point of view also, they are not successful in their achievements. They lag behind in studies with the children of their age group. As a result, they do not succeed in various examinations. They lose motivation to achieve and develop disinterestedness in academic achievement
2. **Socio-emotional Issues:** Low achievers may suffer from inferiority complex. They find themselves unable to adjust to the social environment and get isolated. They have fewer friends as it is said “birds of same feather flock together”. Sometimes, they show anti-social behavior as they easily fall in the clutches of anti-social elements.
3. **Psychological Hurdles:** Low achievers feel frustrated and disappointed when they repeatedly are labeled as dull students. When they have to bear insult in school, they get mentally disturbed. As a result many types of problems stream out. They do not concentrate in any activity. They do not get love and respect from teachers and family. In order to make their identity, they indulge in undesirable activities and cause indiscipline in schools.
 - (a). **Focused Attention:** Special attention is paid by the teacher to these low achievers to know their specific problems and to remove them. Individual guidance is given to them by the teacher in the class with remedial measures. The task of the teacher is to remove the inferiority complex and guilty consciousness from them as much as possible
 - (b). **Researching the Causes of Low Achievement:** A teacher cannot reduce the low achievement of children unless he/she knows the causes behind it. So, it is essential to diagnose the responsible causes prior to the remedy by adopting clinical and observation methods or by administering standardized achievement and intelligence tests and attitude inventories to them. Child's educational history and his socio-economic status will also help the teacher to know the causes of poor achievement, after a thorough inquiry, proper educational planning for these children can be made by the teacher and the principal.
 - (c) **Facilitating the Adjustment:** Low achievers face humiliating situations everywhere in their every day. Teachers will have to provide academic and emotional support to them in this regard by using verbal and behavioral reinforcement techniques. If teachers give them love, affection, sympathy and security low achievers get streamlined and participate in the classroom activities and home work more efficiently. Teachers must develop smooth and

healthy environment in the class by controlling other normal students of the class so that they may not create any problem for backward children.

- (d) ***Intrinsic Motivation***: Low achievers generally remain absent minded because they are unable to complete assignments on time given to them and they fear that they will be punished. Teacher must facilitate them through cooperative and collaborative learning and facilitate them with intrinsic motivation.
- (e) ***Pedagogical Strategies***: Pedagogical content knowledge must be integrated with the technology- both hardware and information and communication technology to provide the best educational support to the low achievers in the school classrooms. Some of the pedagogical strategies are as follows:

- Teaching in small steps.
 - Frequent but short assignments.
 - Regular checking of assignments.
 - Frequent revision of the text.
 - Drill exercises of the learnt material.
 - Examination-free teaching.
 - Regular reinforcement for wanted behaviour.
 - Concept-based teaching. Illustration with examples. Regular prompting and cues.
 - Conditioning of study habits by artificial as well as natural stimuli.
 - Writing work should be emphasized more than reading.
- (f) ***Additional Arrangement***: Following additional arrangements can be made for these children to enhance the academic achievement.
- **Curricular Interventions**: Low achievers generally lag behind the normal in academic subjects that is why they are not successful in achieving higher education. In order to overcome this problem, handicrafts and some technical as well as vocational subjects should be included in the curriculum. These subjects will involve more activities and these activities in turn will facilitate them to participate in learn.
 - ***Stress on Co-scholastic Activities and Varied Experiences***: Co-scholastic activities facilitate children to open up themselves in front of others and gain confidence. Low achievers require these activities in the school to compensate their academic deficits through games (indoor and outdoor) and through community services. Those activities help them to restore their self confidence and esteem. These activities also enhance their participation in various academic activities of school.
 - ***Nullifying Negative Environmental Factors***: There are many factors of the environment which work negatively for the child and cause slow educational achievement such as unhygienic condition of school and community leading to infectious diseases, undesirable effect of peer group leading to apathy towards education, poor socio-economic status leading to emotional imbalances and frustration, lack of goal orientation among the children.
 - ***Remedial Classes***: Low achievers need to be provided with remedial classes. Special pedagogical inputs are to be provided through peer tutoring and participatory learning.

CONCLUSION

In the context of universalization of elementary education and quality concern over the secondary education, the issue of low achievers is very detrimental to the system of schooling in India. Inequalities in the nature and type of schooling can be reduced through various strategies and pedagogical intervention highlighted in this paper. Aim of the schooling must be to remove the widening achievement gap between the haves and have-nots. Socio-cultural deprivation must not affect the academic achievement of the children from deprived caste, class, gender region and religion.

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Anand Valmiki

Assistant Professor (Senior Scale) , Department of Education ,Regional Institute of Education (NCERT) , Bhopal.