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## ENHANCING STUDENTS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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has been established as the leading power to promote the wellbeing of society by promoting economic growth, creating wealth and development. Throughout the world, people are looking to education to pave the way for a more just social order, on the grounds that education instills in the young crucial humanitarian values such as equity, tolerance and peace. Progress in education is also taken to be essential for sustainable development, environmental protection, improvement in maternal and child health and participation in democratic social and political processes. Education is also currently becoming the most important contributor to national economic growth. Access to good-quality schooling is thus, of central importance to national development. For education to play these roles it needs to meet minimum quality standard (UNESCO, 1990). Quality education contributes to higher lifetime earnings and more strong national economic growth, and helps individuals make more informed choices about

### ABSTRACT

**G**etting a good education and doing well in school are widely regarded as critical preparation for most types of success in life. However, academic achievement depends on more than what takes place within school walls. Research generally indicates that characteristics outside the formal educational setting—or non-school factors—also have a lot to do with whether children and adolescents are successful in school. Therefore, it seems important to examine not only how schools can be improved but also how non-school factors can be enhanced to foster learning and educational attainment. This paper is an attempt to discuss major factors

*affecting academic achievement of a child and strategies for improvement of academic achievement.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Students Academic Achievement, academic achievement, child and strategies.*

### INTRODUCTION

Education plays a significant role in political, economic and social realms of development. Quality is at the heart of any educational system. In today's world, simply getting children into schools is not enough; governments must ensure that children complete the primary cycle and attain the basic knowledge and skills needed for personal well-being and national development. Education

fertility and other matters important to their welfare. Achieving universal participation also depends fundamentally upon the quality of education available. Parents make judgments about school quality when investing in their children's education. People in all countries expect schooling to help children develop creative thinking and acquire the skills, values and attitudes necessary for them to lead productive lives and become responsible citizens (the Dakar frame work for action, 2000). Many studies have examined how total resources devoted to education or resources per student affect education outcomes. Other studies have sought to define the dimensions of quality education. For example, the World Bank's Primary Education Policy Paper (1990), based in large part upon a comprehensive review of research up to that time, and identified five principal contributors to primary education effectiveness: (1) curriculum, (2) learning materials, (3) instructional time, (4) classroom teaching, and (5) students' learning capacity. This review assesses how the research, especially since 1990, has addressed the importance of these as well as other factors (such as school facilities, teacher training, and management), and offers some insights into the circumstances under which the various factors make a difference.

### MEANING OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university. School systems mostly define cognitive goals that either apply across multiple subject areas (e.g., critical thinking) or include the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in a specific intellectual domain (e.g., numeracy, literacy, science, history).

Academic achievement has become an index of child's future in this highly competitive world. Academic achievement is a key mechanism through which adolescents learn about their talents, abilities and competencies which are an important part of developing career aspirations (Lent et al. , 2000) academic achievement and career aspirations in adolescence are often correlated (Abu-Hilal, 2000).

Dictionary of Psychology (Chaplin, 1965) define as educational or academic achievement as specified level of attainment or proficiency in academic work as evaluated by the teachers, by standardized tests or by a combination of both.

### FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

Achievement of an individual depends on intellectual abilities like intelligence, aptitude, imagination, memory, study habits, perceptual power and attention, emotional tendencies of the children, physical fitness, environmental factors like, home where he lives, the racial, natural and religious background of his family. The social economic and educational status of his parents, his neighbourhood, and the moral qualities of his associates, the books, magazines he reads, the movies or television shows he watches etc. Here are some of the factors that may affect a student's academic achievement:

**Student factors:** Age, gender, distance from home to school, time spend on study at home every day, inadequate preparation of students for learning at different grade levels, study environment at home, number of textbook at home, types of educational materials, parents support, the influence of technology and drugs, Student reading outside the school, absenteeism

**Parent`s factors:** Family type, family size, education level, occupation, monthly household income and birth order.

**Teacher`s factors:** Age, gender, rank, academic qualification, time spend in lesson plan per week, training in education/pedagogical skills, in-service training to increase your skills, earlier measured achievement, in-service teacher training, subject knowledge, experience, salary, instructional time, class preparation time, frequent homework, teacher effectiveness, the practices of continuous assessment, professional support, lack of incentives, professional competence, motivation and commitment, and student's interest for learning.

**School factors:** Leadership roles, assessment, resources, curriculum, average class size, availability of textbooks, supplementary readers, teaching guides, desks, instructional media, quality of facilities, school library, science laboratories, child nutrition and feeding, school cluster membership, principal's staff assessment principal's

training level, school inspection visits, school type and school environment

**Strategies for improving Academic Achievement in the Schools:** The school initiatives and youth programs included in this paper is concrete examples of efforts to increase achievement. However, no “magic bullet” was found, that is, no one strategy was found to guarantee program success. Rather, it is recommended that practitioners implement a comprehensive set of the following strategies and continuously evaluate their effects. The ten most frequent strategies identified are listed below:

- Program quality. Quality of implementation, leadership and accountability are three essential components of effective strategies that help ensure high program standards.
- Academically demanding curriculum. All early childhood programs included in this report provide preschool-aged children with challenging educational activities that are also developmentally appropriate. Concern with challenging curricula was equally apparent in K- 12 programs.
- Professional development. Many of the evaluations report professional development activities including staff orientation, summer sessions, ongoing training during the school year and/or when changes in curriculum or school structure are implemented. Programs that rely on tutors or mentors offer them training and supervision.
- Family involvement. Approximately 40% of the evaluations report activities geared toward improving communication with families, or increasing family involvement with the programs. Although such efforts are concentrated on initiatives for young children, at least two high school programs also include activities to promote greater involvement of families.
- Reduced student-to-teacher ratios. Many programs showing academic gains for minority students include a range of strategies to reduce student-to-teacher ratios, including smaller classes, small learning communities, teacher aides, team teaching, tutoring, mentoring and other ancillary supports.
- Individualized supports. For students who are struggling academically, individualized support may be the difference between falling behind and moving ahead. Many programs utilize community members, college students, employers and other groups as tutors and mentors to address the academic needs of specific students, or offer support, feedback and encouragement.
- Extended learning time. Several programs use longer school hours, extra school days, Saturday and summer courses to provide students with more learning time.
- Community involvement. Several programs involve communities, both individuals living close to the program and the larger community such as employers, museums and artists. Community participation takes many forms, from reinforcing cultural traditions and knowledge, to advocating for improved academic achievement of minority students, to offering work-based learning opportunities for students.
- Long-term (multiple-year) supports for youth. Several programs encourage long-term, stable relationships between participants and knowledgeable adults, from two to five years in most cases.
- Scholarships and/or financial support. Several K-12 programs offer financial help to students who demonstrate high academic performance.

Measures to develop Academic Achievement by DODEA, Baltimore.

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) has identified six elements for quality teaching:

- Teaching practices reflect high expectations for student achievement
- Students have multiple opportunities to meet and exceed educational standards
- Varied questioning strategies are used to support student learning
- Varied teaching strategies are used to support inquiry, higher order thinking and problem solving
- Varied and flexible groupings are used to assist students in achieving and exceeding educational goals
- Technology is meaningfully integrated through instruction to support student achievement.

Strategies to Encourage Academic Excellence according to DODEA, Baltimore

Demonstrate through words and actions that academics are the focus of the school.

- Free teachers from trivial, nonacademic tasks—such as hall monitoring and pass writing—to reinforce the message that teaching is the most important aspect of their jobs.
- Remove obstacles to teaching, such as administrative disruptions and lack of classroom materials.



- Reward innovation, whatever the outcome, by recognizing teachers through informal notes and positive comments as well as formal awards, certificates and evaluations.
- Provide teachers with in-service training and professional development opportunities, which will be interpreted as a vote of confidence in their potential.
  - Reward students for academic achievement, but also reward improvement and best efforts. One art teacher, for example, noticed dramatic improvement in student work after displaying all students' work on a hallway wall. Develop high expectations and support for learning.
- Eliminate tracking, which communicates low expectations.
- Hold students accountable for work completion.
- Provide "second-try" opportunities, based on feedback, for students to improve their assignments.
- Provide support for attaining academic goals, such as tutoring, study-skill sessions and summer or Saturday catch-up opportunities.
- Engage students in their future; students who had frequent conversations about their futures had on average higher educational expectations for themselves and higher rates of postsecondary education participation. Improve and diversify teaching methods.
  - Encourage a variety of teaching techniques and provide training to support their effective application.
  - Sensitize teachers to use effective teaching strategies with all students, not just high achievers, and strengthen their ability to select best methods through professional programs and workshops.
  - Choose materials based on students' interests and developmental needs.
  - Offer interdisciplinary and applied projects as well as service learning to connect academics to real life.

### CONCLUSION:

Promoting educational achievement and attainment is not just a school issue. Many factors beyond the classroom can affect whether children and youth succeed in school. Whereas within-school standards, practices, staffing, and curricula clearly are vital to raising the academic achievement of the nation's children and youth, addressing non-school factors could augment efforts being made in schools. By addressing each of these issues with effective intervention approaches, the academic achievement levels of our students may be enhanced and school programs may see greater success. When that happens, everyone wins.

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