

Every Child Is Unique: A Study of Rising Stars in an International Primary School

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ABSTRACT

'Rising Stars' is a term used to define slow learners who have the ability to achieve academic skills but at a slower rate than their peers. Slow learners are normal students who are simply not interested in studying under traditionally acceptable system of education. As every child is different, there is every 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 .Today, the children slowly learn many encountered not only in school inclusion, but in regular schools too. The goal of this research is to implement adequate learning and teaching strategies to help slow learners at the primary level. It focuses on experiences of teachers and Head of the institution in implementing different techniques. The study finds that to attain success, the sum total of methodologies in the classroom and at the school level is fruitful. With more parent involvement and good parent-teacher interaction the future of this research will be adept for 'Rising Stars'.

Keywords: slow learners, rising stars, strategies, education, primary

"If I cannot learn the way you teach, will you teach me the way I can learn?"(L.D.CHILD)

Introduction

Education is the right of all people; children-normal children and children with special needs- adolescents, and adults.Everyone has the right to develop the potential of humanity to be fully human through education. This is consistent with the concept of education for all (*education for all*).

Education for all can be achieved by organizing inclusive education in early childhood education (PAUD), primary education (SD / MI and SMP / MTS), secondary education (High School / MA and SMK / MAK), and higher education. Inclusive education is an education system that accommodates all children, both normal children and children with special needs in regular schools, with different characteristics, development, and the need for children to develop their potential optimally. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education Article 2 (Sue Stubbs, 2002: 123) states that the regular school-oriented inclusive is the most effective institution to tackle discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

A slow learner (RISING STAR) is a child of below average intelligence, whose thinking skills have developed significantly more slowly than the norm for his/her age. In short, if there is a discrepancy between the children's potential and actual achievement. Or in simpler way, a child who is dull, that is of low intelligence and who is lagging behind in the class is considered as slow learner.

Slow learning or educationally subnormal children have limited intellectual development. Many of these children grow up in circumstances which limit rather than foster the development of intelligence. Very poor homes rarely provide good opportunities for the incidental learning as average or good homes do.

“By backward children we understand as a rule those children whose one or more years behind their school fellows of the same chronological age. This backwardness may have various causes. It may be due to illness or to any other cause of irregular school attendance or to frequent changes of school or to faculty teaching. This backwardness can be cured and for these backward children- and for these only- it is useful to organize remedial classes or lessons.” (PG101 WHO ARE THE MOST BACKWARD CHILDREN”)

Reviews of some scholars

Cooter, Cooter Jr., and Wiley (in Nani Triani and Amir, 2013: 3) explains that, the child is a slow learner child who has a low learning achievement or slightly below normal average child at one or all academic areas and have a score IQ between 70 and 90.

Mumpuniarti (2007: 14) identifies slow learner child as a child who has an IQ between 70 and 89. Based on the Wechsler intelligence scale (in Sugihartono, et al., 2007: 41), children with an IQ of 70 to 89 including *borderline* (70-79) and *a low average or dull* (80-89).

Burt (in GL Reddy, R. Ramar, and A. Kusuma, 2006: 2) explains that the term *backward* or *slow learners* are given to children who cannot do the work that should be done by his age. Jenson (GL Reddy, R. Ramar, and A. Kusuma, 2006: 2) added, the slow learner child with an IQ of 80 to 90 slower in grasping the subject matter associated with symbols, abstract or conceptual material. Most children slow learner having problems in reading and math.

In addition, Munawir Yusuf (2005: 111) identifies some of the symptoms or slow learner child characteristics, including; a) the average learning achievement is low, usually less than six; b) often late in completing academic tasks, when compared to their classmates; c) the grasp of the lesson is slow; and d) once lived classes.

Characteristics of the rising stars:

- 1) Short attention span
- 2) Poor memory
- 3) Poor reading or writing ability.
- 4) Lack of originality and creativeness
- 5) Inability to discriminate between/among letters, numerals or sounds.

Causes of backwardness in learning:

1. Home conditions not proper: unfavorable conditions at home, Lack of accommodation, overcrowding, illiterate parents, etc.
2. General Health not good: such as ill health, malnutrition, suffering from diseases, etc.
3. Intellectual Defects: (inborn dullness)
4. School conditions: - inefficient teaching, unsympathetic or rude behavior of teachers, etc.
5. Long absence in school.
6. Constant fear of failure deprives him of confidence

TECHNIQUES TO IDENTIFY SLOW LEARNERS.

(1) Observation Technique:

Observation of children's behavior by the teacher as well as experts may help in identifying slow learners. While observing children's behavior, a child's behavior is not only observed in the classroom, but also on the playground, home and in the group etc.

Observation may be done by just watching the child's behavior directly and by moving along with the child. Observation technique is conducive for ascertaining the recreational, occupation and extra-curricular interest of children.

(2) Case Study Method:

As we know by this technique, the history of the child, his family, his early life and home environment are revealed. Through this method, psychologists also try to study the learning difficulties, adjustment problems and behavioral problems of a child. It can be generalized and treated accordingly by finding out the causes of such abnormalities of children.

(3) Medical Examination:

Before conformation, the developmental history from early childhood should be meticulously verified by a qualified medical expert or medical practitioner. Under strict physical and medical examination, the anomalies, disabilities and handicaps can be recognized.

(4) Scholastic Tests:

Evaluation or deficiencies in school achievement can be possible through scholastic tests. These tests can throw light on areas like arithmetic, reading, spelling, composition, writing, language and comprehension. General and specific problems of children are single out by the psychologists and educationists through scholastic tests and causes of anomalies can also be evaluated properly.

(5) Personality Test:

Through personality tests, attempts can be made by psychologists to throw light on the emotional characteristics as well as temperamental traits of children. Evidence shows that there are certain personality traits which have direct relationship with specific backwardness.

Research analyses by W.P. Alexander have also revealed that teacher's assessment of children's traits for personality can be very profitable and used for diagnostic and productive purposes.

(6) Intelligence Test:

Through the use of any standardized intelligence tests the intellectual level of children can be assessed. Both verbal intelligence tests and non-verbal tests can be used for this purpose. But psychologists prefer individual verbal tests to group verbal tests. An expert

can get a true picture of the mental capacities of backward children by giving many intelligent tests. A single test is not sufficient to bring out the full picture of the mental capacities of a child. Psychologists use more than one standardized test to ascertain a particular anomaly.

(7) Psychometric and Psychological Tests:

For diagnostic purposes, psychologists use psychometric tests which are of a sensory nature. For better appraisal, analysis and evaluation of specific skills of backward children, these tests are primarily used. By these theses, psychologists try to discover the exact nature of errors made by the backward children. Again some other psychological tests may also be used to assess span of attention, auditory perception, steadiness, and memory and reasoning powers.

Strategies for teaching ‘rising stars’:

- 1) Remedial teaching.
- 2) Develop lessons that incorporate students' interests, needs, and experiences.
- 3) Frequently vary instructional technique.
- 4) Incorporate individualized learning materials.
- 5) Incorporate audio and visual material.

Education programs and remedial measures for slow writers:

- 1) Assignments given to the slow learners should be simple.
- 2) Repeat each learning point more than you normally give.
- 3) Guide students to the main points of lessons and tests
- 4) Use audio and visual aids.
- 5) Teach reading skills.
- 6) Individual attention.
- 7) Use real-life examples when teaching math.
- 8) Summaries and recapitulation work should be more frequent by the teachers.
- 9) Praise their successes.
- 10) Get the child tested for learning disabilities.
- 11) Motivation

- 12) Train them in improving their LSRW skills.
- 13) Use empathetic words.
- 14) Listen to them carefully.
- 15) Check for understanding during lessons.
- 16) Give your child the chance to excel in non-academic arenas
- 17) Teach the other students to empathize with the slow learners. Ask them not to bully or tease slow learners. Ensure these timely sessions in the slow learners' absence. Change their seating arrangements to promote attentiveness.
18. Take small break between teachings.
19. Reduce distractions.
20. Sufficient time should be given to the slow learners to express themselves.
21. Teach the other students to empathize with the slow learners. Ask them not to bully or tease slow learners. Ensure these timely sessions in the slow learner's absence.

1. A few don'ts:

- 1) Do not let them quit trying. Encourage them to continue the hard work to complete their tasks even if it means postponing it.
- 2) Do not reprimand in front of the class. You may do that in private
- 3) Do not be overprotective. Let their slow learning not become their introduction.

STRATEGIES ADOPTED IN J.P.S TO HELP AND SUPPORT OUR RISING STARS SINCE APRIL 2019:

First of all we decided about how to identify rising stars. After collecting the data we discussed with our teachers their methodologies to deal with them.

- 1) **BEST SPEAKER BADGES:** the purpose of BEST SPEAKER BADGE is that we are encouraging our students to communicate only in English language' inside and outside of the classroom.

- 2) **STAR STUDENT BADGES:** Special STAR STUDENT BADGES were designed by HEADMISTRESS of J.P.S, exclusively given to those students who maintain cleanliness, civic sense, body language, and Social behavior. The purpose is to motivate and encourage children to do good terms every day. Every week we are changing students and also 'GOOD COMMENTS' given to the students in their diary for their encouragement parents should also know

about the student's achievement. We want to inform parents about it so that their full co-operation we can get in the overall development of the child.

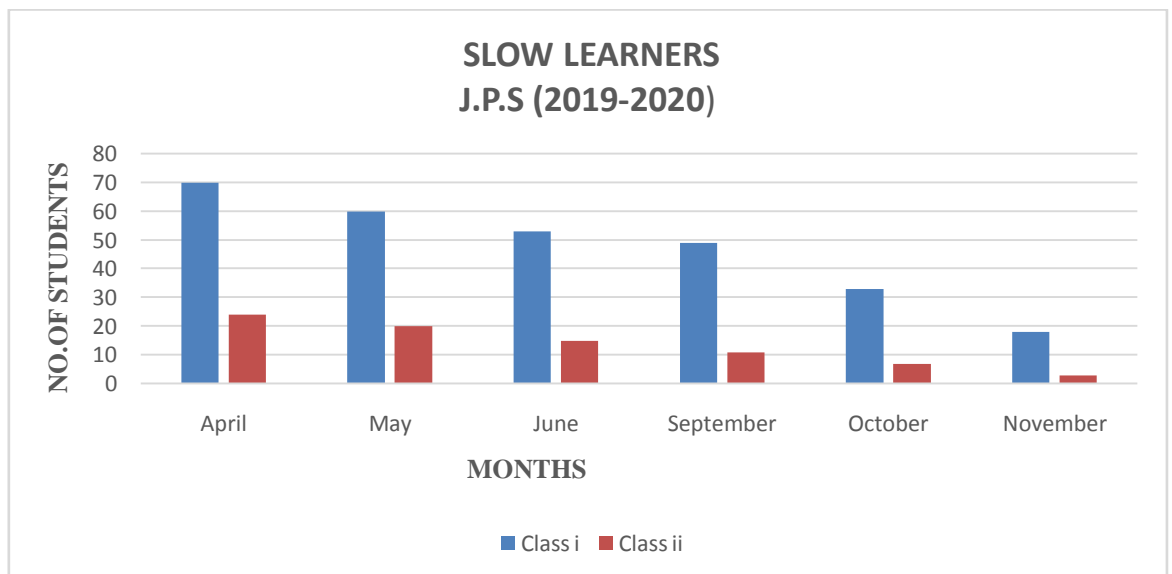
- 3) **BEST CLASS TROPHY:** Best class trophy' was decided every month on the basis of students' discipline, cleanliness maintaining inside and outside the classroom by the students, their notebooks competition etc.
- 4) **MORNING ASSEMBLY:** morning assembly conducts frequently, and we are taking them and giving those works according to their capability and interest.
- 5) By creating "**BOTANICAL GARDEN**": We are trying to elevate aesthetic and environmental sense of our students. We have included and planned lesson plan in that way of E.V.S so that students will get a chance to come out of the classroom and feel, touch plants and understand it properly.



6) **BIRD FEEDER IN J.P.S**" is another interesting area where we want to make our children aware about the surroundings, we put grains in bird feeder and hanged it on 4 corners in the open shade area of J.P.S. so that students will get chance to see BIRDS here in SAUDI ARABIA live.



7) Monthly we are collecting **CUMULATIVE RECORDS** data in which teachers are giving us the progress of the slow learners.



The chart provides the information about the rising stars (slow learners) of JPS collecting during April 2019 to November 2020. It is clear from the chart that the number of rising stars declines with time. According to the chart, the number of slow learners in April is more than in June, the main reason for this decline is the effort of the class teachers. Respective class teachers are involving different techniques to resolve the problems of slow learners.

8) **CLT WORDS** in assembly: we are displaying pluck cards with CLT words flashed on it as it will provide a chance to give our students to get more familiar with the words and usage of it.



9) **READING CARDS** in library period is giving our students a chance to read different kinds of stories under the supervision of their teachers.

10) **READ ALOUD**: of 'READING CARDS' by the class teacher in the class is giving our students a chance to understand correct pronunciation and practice the way teacher is reading story in the class.

11) **DISCIPLINARY PORTFOLIO OF J.P.S STUDENTS**: We are maintaining disciplinary records of J.P.S. students and taking help of our school counselor in the presence of their parents, so that a complete good environment can be set up for the all round development of the child(SLOW LEARNERS).

CONCLUSION:

The greatest factor for the success of the life of the child is his encouragement and motivation. If a teacher tries to find out the strengths of the weak child they come across some of them. If he/she tries to applaud him with encouraging words & give confidence he/she will definitely feel his/her importance & worth. Once the child has grown his/her confidence means he/she will definitely improve. Motivation is a necessity so that learning becomes a continuing, improving, interesting and hopefully enjoyable process.

With the joint venture of parents and teachers involvement we can bring tremendous changes in the academic growth of 'SLOW LEARNERS'. It may be little time taking but definitely the result will be apparent. The thing which is needed is strong determination of the teachers and their confidence in the rising stars. It is also be a task for the teacher to be from good teacher to "great teacher". Off course teaching is such a noble profession and the students remember those teachers throughout their life who were helpful, empathetic, sympathetic and made their learning a joyful journey. Completed unique activities, creating situations where the students can work in groups, creating a reward system are just a few ideas.

Based on the strategies adopted to help and support our rising stars we can conclude our studies under following points.

BEST SPEAKER BADGE encouraged the students to communicate only in English. STAR STUDENT BADGE maintained **cleanliness, civic sense, body language, and Social behavior** among the students. The development of BOTANICAL GARDEN in the campus elevated the aesthetic and environmental sense of students. READING CARDS and READ ALOUD practices enhance the children's reading skill as well their pronunciation also improved.

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