

**TEACHING AND LEARNING - STRATEGIES TO EMPOWER THE SLOW LEARNERS**

**A. JOSEPH LOURDU RAJAH**

**ASSTT. PROF. OF ENGLISH**

**PSNA COLLEGE OF ENGG.& TECH.**

**DINDIGUL, TAMIL NADU, INDIA.**

***Abstract***

*Teachers are viewed as important agents of teaching and learning for empowerment and are expected to play a key role in teaching and learning process especially with slow learners. Teaching becomes so tough in present scenario. Do our teaching and learning make one empowered? The answer would be 'NO'. The teacher needs to adopt creative and innovative teaching methodologies to fit one opt in the process of learning and thus empowered mutually. We, teachers are unable to fit ourselves to change because of our adherence to outmoded forms of instruction that emphasize factual and procedural knowledge at the expense of deeper levels of understanding. New constructivist approaches to teaching and learning, which many reformers advocate, are inconsistent with much of what teachers believe - a problem that may be overcome if teachers are willing to rethink their views on a number of issues. In this article, I would like to suggest certain innovative strategies/ideas that I practice in my classroom to empower the slow learners in their teaching and learning process.*

***Key words: Teaching, Learning, Strategies, Slow Learners and empowerment***

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Teaching is a challenging profession that requires a lot of patience, innovation and motivation from every teacher in order to bring about an all-round development among their students. Inside the classroom we face a mixed section of learners based on their level of intelligence and performance criteria. It is among these learners, we find some who cannot cope up with the lessons taught inside the classroom as their peers do and hence these learners are tagged as the slow learners. Hence here comes the greatest challenge for us to guide and help the slow learners improve in fetching good grades and come out with flying colors.

A good student can always get good grades on his own merits which require very little effort on the teacher's part. But to help a slow learner fetch a good and suitable grade is a challenge that marks the qualities of a good teacher. Since, being a teacher myself I too have faced such problems inside my classroom and here are some ways that I had adopted in order to help a slow learner achieve good grades and graduate successfully from the college.

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. Slow learners are very sensitive and self-conscious as they are very well aware of their weakness in comparison with the fast learners. So the first responsibility of the teacher is to build up confidence among these learners and make them believe that they are no less than others. Encouraging words and phrases may bring about a positive impact on the slow learners and will boost them to perform better.

### **Student's Dossier**

Teachers are first required to find out the main reason behind the learner's weak performance and also to study those areas minutely where she needs to work upon in order to guide the slow learner to perform well. She needs to interact with the slow learners more often so that she can keep a record of every movement of the learner and adopt ways in which the slow learner can be guided.

### **Special Care**

Extra care and practice should be given to the slow learners as compared to their peers. If need the teacher can take extra classes or may allow the learner to come to the place so that one may work out the areas of concern along with these learners. The teacher may utilize some of her time to do a good deal of research in order to find out simple ways of helping these slow learners to study in an easy and simple way. One might set mock tests for the learners or give them simple home assignments which are interesting and related to the lessons completed inside the classroom.

Inside the classroom we must never make the slow learner feel neglected or unwanted as it might create a feeling of inferiority among these learners which might lay an effect on their grades. We must pay equal attention to these learners and may make them sit in the first row if possible.

### **Show Variety in Teaching**

Special programs with the help of the audio-visual aids, graphics, displays, reference books, online material and worksheets must be created for these slow learners and also cumulative records must be maintained by the teachers in order to keep a track of the learner's progress. This cumulative record is mandatory for the teacher to maintain as we will know how the slow learner is responding to our ways of teaching. If we find any area where the learner has not made much improvement then we can change her ways of teaching and try out another way that might be proved comfortable for the learner.

### **The Teaching and Learning Process**

Individual students may be better suited to learning in a particular way, using distinctive modes for thinking, relating and creating. The notion of students having particular learning styles has implications for teaching strategies. Because preferred modes of input and output vary from one individual to another, it is critical that teachers use a range of teaching strategies to effectively meet the needs of individual learners. Sound health instruction should incorporate a variety of teaching methods intended to complement the learning styles of students. This should lead to young learners who are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to inquire, infer, and interpret; to think reflectively, critically and creatively; and in the final analysis to make use of the knowledge and skills they have gained by becoming effective decision- makers.

A number of students will require support to meet the objectives of the prescribed curriculum. This support may be in the form of changes in teaching strategies, approaches or materials and may require the support of teachers.

### **Facilitate Learning**

A teacher needs to be a friend to these learners on whom they can fall back upon. These learners cannot express themselves fully to their peers or to their parents and hence needs

somebody whom they can rely upon. Hence it is up to the teacher to fill up that vacuum and enhance these slow learners' all round development. Although the effort from the teacher's end is simple, yet the result at the end of the day is great enough to make a teacher feel proud of ourselves as well as our learners who had managed to overcome their weakness and come out with flying colors.

### **A Student-Centered Approach**

A student-centered approach which actively engages the young person in the learning process is critical if skills which result in healthy behaviours are to be fostered and developed. Some of the learning strategies that could be incorporated in a comprehensive approach include self-directed learning, co-operative learning, role playing, behavioural rehearsal, peer education and parent involvement. Consideration should be given to allowing students to plan some learning experiences. They could be provided with opportunities to identify topics or areas for further study, contribute information relevant to an issue for study and/or make suggestions for follow-up activities.

### **Self-Assessment**

Students should also be given the opportunity for self-assessment and be encouraged to evaluate their habits, attitudes, and behaviours. This can be accomplished through real-life activities or simulations in which students can become involved in a meaningful way. Activities such as recording extempore, short speech on current affairs and group discussion help young students apply their understanding of concepts to everyday situations and occurrences.

### **Conducive Classroom**

Within the classroom, teachers need to be sensitive to values which are promoted by family, peers and friends, religious and cultural backgrounds. The teacher can provide numerous opportunities for students to share personal anecdotes ask explicit questions and make disclosures. The climate of the classroom must be such that students may speak openly while being assured of the confidentiality, trust and respect of their classmates and teacher.

### **Working with Slow Learners**

Harmer (2001) suggests that students learn more quickly if the teaching methods used match their preferred learning styles. As learning improves so too does self esteem. This has a further positive effect on learning. Students who have become bored with learning may become interested once again. The student-teacher relationship can improve because the student is more successful and is more interested in learning. A number of strategies are suggested in the literature for supporting and motivating slow learners. Lescano (1995), for example, suggests the following:

- Give daily evaluations.
- Use simple vocabulary in directions and instructions.

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- Use standard formats and limited types of responses for each assignment.
- Provide multi-sensory prompts to elicit correct responses.
- Analyze and break down difficult tasks.
- Increase time-on-task rates (more teacher questions, group participation, and effective use of signals, gestures, etc.).
  1. In short the teacher can follow the below points:
  2. The teacher can modify the language to suit their level
  3. The teacher should try to develop a good relationship with the slow learners.
  4. he teacher may make use of excellent students to support slow learners
  5. The teacher can praise them when possible
  6. The teacher needs to react politely to their responses even if they are incorrect
  7. The teacher may mix slow learners with excellent students in group activities to benefit from each other
  8. The teacher needs to use a variety of techniques to suit the different students' learning styles
  9. The teacher can provide clear feedback
  10. The teacher needs analyze and break down difficult tasks
  11. The teacher can use simple vocabulary in directions and instructions
  12. The teacher should try to understand the reasons behind their weaknesses
  13. The teacher needs provide longer wait time after asking questions in order to give slow learners a time to think
  14. The teacher needs engage slow learners in extra curricular activities
  15. The teacher should anticipate their difficulties and prepare activities to help them
  16. The teacher needs to use tasks and activities that add fun to the lesson
  17. The teacher should concentrate on fluency rather than accuracy
  18. The teacher needs to know the slow learners' background
  19. The teacher needs to organize meetings with slow learners' parents to discuss their child's difficulties
  20. The teacher may write the lesson aims on the board at the beginning of the lesson

### **Conclusion**

I am sure that individual teachers have developed many effective techniques for supporting those learners who need additional help. Having taught for nearly nine years, I have understood two common factors among the slow learners. Firstly, they need extra time to complete the tasks and secondly the students must be offered appropriate appreciation or incentives. We should make the lessons, other resources and learning more vital and relevant. Setting determined goals would trigger the learner and help them to achieve the desired level. Thus, create the atmosphere and context for learning for the slow learners.

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