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## CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR SLOW LEARNERS IN THE PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

### Abstract:

*The purpose of the study was to determine the classroom practices being used by teachers to teach slow learners in institutions run under the department of special education, the government of Punjab. The study was quantitative, and it was delimited to government institutions for slow learners in Punjab. The sample of the study was all the educators teaching in the institutes for slow learners and data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire consisted of 42 items. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to calculate Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and t-test to measure classroom practices, gender-wise response differences. The finding showed that almost all the teachers planned the lesson according to the individual needs of students, used motivational, instructional strategies, used simple vocabulary and language, and taught modified curriculum. There was no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers applying these practices in classrooms.*

**Keywords:** special education, slow learners, classroom practices, curriculum

### INTRODUCTION:

Identification of slow learners has been a challenge and topic of concern for researchers from the last few decades (Khan, 2005; Shaw, 2010; Sing, 2004). These students are backward academically and need exceptional help in basic subjects. They have a limited possibility of success and have intelligence quotients falling between the range of 75-90 (Chuhan, 2010; Kaznowski, 2004; Malik, Rahman & Hanif, 2012). Studies showed that about 8 to 9 percent of students in primary schools have below-average IQ levels, and these students are called slow learners. They usually fail in exams and finally leave school due to low attention from teachers and parents (Behnia, 2002; Akerdi, Sadati, Moghaddam, Fereydooni & Moafi, 2014; Bhatti, Parveen, & Ali, 2017). The slow learner is the child who cannot work generally expected to the level of their age group children. Such children have low academic ability naturally and achieve academic success at a slower rate. Physically they seem normal like other children, but they differ in the quality of learning. They lack attention, concentration and abstract thinking with their age group and labeled retarded, disturbed, backward, slow learner, underachievers, and so on (Malik, 2009; Pujar, 2006 & Qian, 2008). Slow learners work hard to adjust themselves in the traditional classroom environment to fulfill educational requirements despite being not interested in studying in such an environment (Singh, 2004; Borah, 2013).

According to the census of 1998, the total population of Punjab province is 73621290, out of which 31129580 ( 45% of the total population ) are of school-going age children, i.e., 16564790 are enrolled in the schools of general education, which means 473279 students are enrolled at each District in Punjab. Suppose we assume that 1% of the total enrolled students in each district are slow learners. In that case, the total population of slow learners in 35 Districts comes to 165648 (say 4733 slow learners in each district) (Department of Special Education, 2006).

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These children need unique instructional pacing, successive input, remedial and helpful direction, and reformed material, all measured under conditions adequately adaptable for effective learning to happen.

The development of relationships is one of the best educational interventions to nurture slow learners (Malik, Rehman, & Hanif, 2012; Ishaq et al. 2019). Relationship with slow learner can be formed by reward, appreciation, love, value in class, celebrations of their minor successes, places them on the front lines of the classroom, sets realistic goals, motivates and inspires them to participate in class activities (Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016; Borah, 2013; Malik & Hanif, 2012). The main interest of students and teachers should be what the learners learn and practice, not what the teacher teaches. This means that teacher and student contact and language should be clear, understandable, easy and persuasive (Turi, Ghani, Javid, & Sorooshian, 2017)..

Activity-based learning (ABL) is a group of pedagogical techniques that concentrate on the realistic experiences of the learner and on constructive engagement. That is often referred to as experiential learning. ABL incorporates learning and learners into a focal point for challenging experiences. It introduces the pupil to the practical learning atmosphere and improves his or her knowledge (Ameen, 2012). One of the best ways to work is to develop higher levels of skills among slow learners and to develop innovation in various subjects (Khan, Muhammad, Ahmed, Saeed & Khan, 2012; Hariharan, 2011).

Teachers should avoid jargon, split larger words into smaller bits, adapt the vocabulary according to the needs and levels of a slow learner (Ishaq et al. 2020; Dasaradhi & Rajeswari, 2016; Thomson, 2012). One typical characteristic of slow learners is that they mostly learn better from watching and listening rather than speaking. Films, videos and audio in lessons allow students to learn techniques in gradual learning modalities (Ruhela, 2014; Manichander, 2018).

To ensure these special classroom practices for backward children like slow learners have been introduced in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab, where the institutions for slow learners work in every district of Punjab to facilitate these children.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOW LEARNERS:**

It is challenging to identify slow learners because they can normally work in most situations, but they look normal in appearance like other children. Lack of concentration, limited cognitive capacity, inability to multilayered problems, work slowly, and poor memory to clearly explain ideas in school and at home are some characteristics of slow learners (Anastasia, Elein, & Effi, 2006; Chauhan, 2006; Shaw, 2008). These children have time management problems due to a short attention span and poor concentration skills. They cannot link new information with the old and face difficulties transferring information learned in one situation to another situation. They lack confidence and tend to be disorganized and easily frustrated (Borah, 2013; Ruhela, 2014).

Similarly, Batchu (2011) marked qualities of a slow learner as score low on achievement tests and have beneath average capacity to comprehend academic ideas. Their functioning capacity is genuinely below that of evaluation level and might not have usual associate hobbies. Similarly, they face trouble in succeeding multi-step instructions, having poor self-interest, and lacking self-confidence. In Clubok (1983) words, slow learners have sentiments of mediocrity, disgrace, and blame, and a negative self-idea which can prompt forceful, gloomy, or withdrawn conduct and relating control issues. Their scores on institutionalized achievement tests are more or less two or more years below grade level.

### **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR SLOW LEARNERS:**

Explicit recognition of the educational programs implied for slow learners empowers the educator to teach them learning productively. Some helpful measures that constitute the educational programs for slow learners are mentioned below.

Academic motivation is essential to building slow learners' academic resilience. The teachers ought to require a positive push to find out the particular incapacity of slow learners. Restore and develop self-confidence among them, prepare a flexible curriculum, instructional material must be carefully evaluated; regular short lessons ought to be presented rather than long lessons consistently. The school environment ought to be sound and sensibly free for slow learners. A slow learner can turn into an ordinary learner after medicinal treatment. Give them audio and video instruction (Chauhan, 2011; Manichander, 2018; Turi, Ghani, Javid & Sorooshian, 2017; Azim, Hussain, & Bhatti, 2021).

Audio-visual aids, displays, aids, graphics, reference books, worksheets, and online material must be prepared as special programs to improve the learning of slow learners (Manichander, 2018; Muppudathi, 2014; Sadiq, 2018). Work with your school management team to develop an Individual Educational Plan for the child using shorter tests, oral testing, redoing tests, and short feedback to enhance slow learners (Borah, 2013). Similarly, Vasudevan (2017) described that slow learners are usually benefited from following plans like carefully guided instruction, individualized instruction, tutoring, and organization of the curriculum. Likewise, Krishnakumar, Geeta, and Palat (2004) and Pujar and Gaonkar (2008) opined that slow learners' academic performance may significantly be improved by implementing an individualized education plan. Modified curriculum with a combination of pictures, models, and charts must be provided to the slow learners as an academic intervention for effective assimilation, modification, and better learning.

Similarly, Clubok (1983) and Manichander (2018) described a free and open classroom environment that provides expulsion of thoughts that ought to be cultivated in classes of slow learners in which a variety of exercises must be utilized. Class exchanges, contextual analyses, imagining and reproductions, visitors and field trips, varying media help, little gathering ventures, individualized activities, repetition, and practice, produce reading skills. The evaluation ought to be extensive, adaptable, and progressing in the everyday process. Slow learners need achievement and genuine consolation from their teachers. Subsequently, in drawing closer assessment, a few key variables ought to be considered.

### **CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR SLOW LEARNERS:**

Multiple agents and their interactions work as a system that involved classroom practice within the classroom. The process can be shown in different arrangements and structures, and its adequacy can be affected by various variables both inside and outside of the classroom (Li, & Oliveira, 2015; Bhatti, Abbas, Azim, & Hussain, 2021). Appropriate inclusion of present-day strategies and procedures enhance the pleasure of educational activities. These include phonics drills, sound tape words, word drills, sentence repetition, response cards, word definition drills, new tests like verbal and written, variety in assignments, continuous task assessment, and rectification of mistakes are essential for classroom practices of slow learners (Ruhela, 2014; Turi, Ghani, Javid, & Sorooshian, 2017). Multimedia software and multimedia learning environments are very supportive and effective in developing literacy and numeracy skills, living skills, and social interaction in children with disabilities (Ng, Bakri, & Rahman, 2016; Wah, 2007). Digital games have been proven very purposeful learning tool for slow learners as game-based learning (Albert, 2018).

Sebastian (2016) and Venkatesan (2017) emphasized the enhancement of close networks between slow learners and the teachers, and the number of teachers per student should be appropriate. Malik (2009) stressed bringing slow learners at par with the average-ability learners in his experimental study and suggested modifying the curriculum and using varied teaching methods for them.

Ramlakshmi (2013) presented two fundamental types of teaching to help slow learners in their study. First was compensatory teaching, and the other was remedial teaching. According to him, first is an instructional approach to present the content and avoid the student's essential weaknesses. It works on content, and the use of pictures versus words, group discussion, imitation, stimulation, and co-operative learning is emphasized. This approach is applied to teach slow learners by the regular classroom teacher. The second type focuses on the use of activities, techniques, and practices to remove slow learners' weaknesses. Old teaching practices like drill and practice are used in this approach to teaching slow learners. Batchu (2011), Borah (2013), and Shaw (2010) described some strategies to increase the learning of slow learners. These strategies include repetition and frequent practice of discrete skills, break down tasks and lessons tasks into short discrete elements, concrete instruction, basic time management and organizational skills, computer-assisted instruction and hands-on activities to reinforce learning, pair students with peer tutors, use shorter tests, oral testing, re-trying tests, one-on-one mentoring, relate learning to real-world experiences, encourage the students' involvement in activities that they enjoy and bring positive results.

These children need unique instructional pacing, successive input, remedial and helpful direction, and reformed material, all measured under conditions adequately adaptable for effective learning to happen. The quality of learning for slow learners depends on focusing classroom practices like teaching-learning process, curriculum, teaching methodology, student assessment, classroom environment, engagement of students, and the relationship between teachers and students. These practices are required to be designed effectively to facilitate slow learners by concentrating their diversified needs and capabilities to ensure this special educational Programs institution for slow learners has been introduced at the district level in Punjab, Pakistan.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The study was conducted with the objectives to:

1. To explore classroom practices in slow learners' institution of Government of Punjab.
2. To find out the gender differences of teachers in classroom practices.

**QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY:**

Following were questions of the study:

1. What are the classroom practices in slow learners' institutions of Government of Punjab?
2. Are there any gender differences between teachers in classroom practices?

**METHODOLOGY:**

The study aimed to explore the classroom practices carried out by teachers to teach slow learners offered in Govt. institutions for slow learners being run under the administrative control of the department of special education, Govt. of Punjab. The study was quantitative, and a questionnaire was used to get information from teachers of slow learners. The study sample consisted of all teachers (145) of Govt. institutions for slow learners in all Districts of Punjab.

The questionnaire was developed to collect data from teachers. The teachers' questionnaire was of a five-point Likert-type scale consisting of response categories, i.e., Never =1, Rarely =2, Sometimes=3, Usually=4, and Always =5. The questionnaire was based on (42) items to get information about the following variables: teaching-learning process, curriculum, Teaching methodology, student assessment, classroom environment, engagement of students, the relationship between teachers and students, etc.

The study's target population was not approachable for the researchers because only one institute is established in each district of Punjab, where the respondents were working. It would take a lot of time and money for the researcher to go to each district himself for data collection. The researcher followed a procedure; first, all slow learner institutes' addresses were collected from the Directorate of Special Education Lahore, Punjab. Secondly, the researchers telephonically contacted all heads of the institutes, got the total number of teachers working in respective institutes. Thirdly, mailed the questionnaires with the instructions to fill up and return the questionnaires and return them within one week after receiving them at the given address. The researchers also followed up those institutes telephonically who did not return the questionnaires in a stipulated period to increase the return rate. The data were analyzed statistically using SPSS (version 21). Classroom practices used by teachers in the forms of Means of each variable and gender-wise response differences were analyzed using means, standard deviation (SD), and sample t-test.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS**

The output of the classroom practices used by teachers for slow learners is presented in table 1.

**Table 1**

Sr. No	Sub factor	N	SD	Mean	MPI
1	Teaching-learning process	105	4.81	45.96	4.18
2	Curriculum	105	2.18	14.52	3.63
3	Teaching techniques	105	2.70	23.98	4.00
4	Student assessment	105	3.62	16.57	3.31
5	Classroom environment	105	3.10	25.90	4.32
6	Engagement of students	105	2.11	16.80	4.20
7	Relationship between teachers and students	105	2.72	25.46	4.24
8	Classroom practices (total)	105	14.46	100.69	4.03

The above table first subfactor (M=4.05) indicated that all teachers always used instructions in the teaching-learning process like planning the lesson, modifying the language, group activities, enhancement confidence, and providing repetitive practices to ensure learning in the classroom.

Responses regarding curriculum (M=3.63) taught to slow learners (fulfilling the needs, specific curriculum, change in curriculum content required, etc.) revealed that teachers were usually satisfied with the current curriculum. Other subfactor related to teaching techniques (M=4.00) highlighted that teachers usually used teaching methodology for the slow learners like (use of simple vocabulary, use of different activities, visual displays), etc. similarly the results regarding student assessment (M=3.31) revealed that (performance level of students, IQ level, specific achievements, etc.) were usually practiced in schools. Other sub-factors (M=4.20) showed that engagement of students in different activities, management, and organizational skills always happened in schools. As far as the relationship between teachers and students was concerned, results indicated that teachers always facilitated them, used individual behavior contracts, and praised their works. General classroom practices (M= 4.03) revealed that all the variables of classroom practices were practically practiced in these institutions.

### GENDER WISE COMPARISON OF CLASSROOM PRACTICES

The output of the gender-wise differences of classroom practices are as below:

**Table 2**

Sub factors	Gender	M	SD	df	T value	P-value
Teaching-learning process	Male	46.00	3.47	103	-0.17	0.86
	Female	46.00	5.07	37		
Curriculum	Male	14.26	2.42	103	-0.57	0.56
	Female	14.58	2.13	25		
Teaching techniques	Male	24.57	2.41	103	1.07	0.29
	Female	23.85	2.75	29		
Student assessment	Male	17.84	4.27	103	1.70	0.91
	Female	16.29	3.43	23		
Classroom environment	Male	25.94	2.39	103	0.81	0.93
	Female	25.88	3.24	34		
Engagement of students	Male	17.26	1.45	103	1.38	0.18
	Female	16.70	2.23	40		
Relationship of teachers and students	Male	25.58	2.17	103	0.21	0.83
	Female	25.43	2.84	33		
Classroom practices (total)	Male	100.7	12.12	103	0.70	0.50
	Female	100.7	14.96	31		

A T-test was applied to compare the means based on gender. The above table showed no statistically significant difference found between the classroom practices of male teachers (M=100.7) and female teachers (100.7) for slow learners in Govt. institutions for slow learners.

### DISCUSSION:

The present study was conducted to determine teachers' classroom practices for slow learners in variables like a teaching-learning process, curriculum, teaching methodology, student assessment, classroom environment, student engagement, and the relationship between students and teachers. Results related to the teaching-learning process were consistent with Chauhan (2011) study, who emphasized that use of instructional strategies focused on individualized instruction, etc. Similarly, Chauhan also emphasized the elastic curriculum, while such a curriculum is also practiced in slow learners institutions. Teachers of slow learners used simple vocabulary, use different activities, repetitive, and practice. In their findings (Clubok, 1983; Borah, 2013), they also emphasized the said practices for slow learners because they might not have competed with normal children. As for as results related to the relationship between teachers and students were concerned, results revealed that teachers always facilitated them, use individual contracts and praise their works, which ( Ramlakshmi, 2013 and Sebastian. 2016 ) also

emphasized upon the teachers to build positive and good relation with students. It was also observed that there were no significant differences between the classroom practices performed by male and female teachers because they were professional and trained teachers and very well aware of the diversified needs and capabilities of slow learners.

#### CONCLUSION:

As the study was based on teachers' classroom practices in Govt. institutions for slow learners, it was concluded from the findings of the study that slow learners need special care and attention to overcome their learning related issues and educational achievements in the classroom. Classroom practices including the teaching-learning process, curriculum, teaching methodology, student assessment, classroom environment, student engagement, the relationship between teachers and students, etc. proved very effective measures to develop a good learning environment and to improve the achievement level of slow learners.

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