

1. Intervention to Combat Risk Factors for Academic Wellness of Children

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1.1 Introduction:

Academic backwardness in school is not simply an intellectual matter, but that it is a condition where normal school achievement has been prevented by a variety of interacting influences it is a universal truth that all children are basically same but are different up to a limit from each other physically, mentally, educationally and socially. It is therefore, not unusual to find in classroom, many students who do not benefit much from the usual classroom teaching mostly designed for the normal or averages. Among such children, there may lay two groups of children, the first one who possess a superior intellectual potential and a unique creative ability to deal with their environment, known as “gifted” children and the second one who do not progress from grade to grade according to the normal rate of the school system and who constantly require special assistance in the classes in which they are enrolled and are called “backward” (Karande and Kulkarni, 2005).

It has already been shown by various researches that backwardness in school is not simply an intellectual matter, but that it is a condition where normal school achievement has been prevented by a variety of interacting influences.

A significant number of children fail to perform adequately in academics without any apparent limitation. In a considerable number of these incidences, there is a discrepancy between the children's potential and their actual performance. It is a known fact that each student of the class brings a unique set of characteristics to the classroom: different background knowledge, intelligence, a unique learning style, a variety of interests and varied parental support and expectations. Every student possesses different intelligence, interests, learning styles and educational problems which may influence his academic achievement. It is an important fact that these variables definitely affect the educational backwardness.

A low general intelligence-the inborn general capacity, is found to be the commonest and most serious in all the causes of educational sub-normality (Cyril Burt, 1937). But it is not necessary that all backward children have less than average IQ or ability. It may possible that a child may be backward in spite of having high intelligence.

Quite a number of children with high intelligence show a great deal of 'scatter' in their scholastic achievement because of the impact of emotional and social maladjustment. It is considered that students generally face various educational problems. Because of these problems, the students may not concentrate on their studies and become educationally backward. Hence, many problems related to teachers and teaching, social atmosphere, organizational or administration and cultural causes, may be responsible for low academic achievement.

Under these circumstances, the students are surrounded by many problems which may be related to poor self-concept, lack of parent's involvement and encouragement, damaging peer pressure, cultural deprivation, emotional problems, and physical illness.

Therefore, it is necessary that not only the teachers but also the parents of the backward students must root out the causes of the backwardness and create such type of environment where such students take interest in educational activities and make their academic achievement high. With this background, a study has been conducted to identify the risk factors and to study the impact of intervention on reasons of academic backwardness among school going children.

1.2 Materials and Methods:

The sample comprised of 76 academically backward children out of 139 normal population including both the gender studying in 8th and 9th standards from two villages of Dharwad taluk. Academically backward children were identified based on two criteria i.e. academic performance of the children in the previous year (those who secure 'C' grade & attending remedial classes) & opinion of respective class teachers' about children.

Further the selected children were administered with a self-structured checklist developed (AICRP – CD) on reasons for academic backwardness. The tool consisted 42 statements with respect to academic, familial and health aspects of children with two alternative responses namely 'yes' and 'no'. The scores obtained by the children were taken as pre test scores, later the same group were intervened through lectures, videos and demonstration by subject experts through different sessions for about 8 hours. Intervention includes the topics like,

- Method for accurate reading
- How to develop concentration
- When to study? What to study? How much to study? for better retention
- Methods for memorizing
- Organization of reading material etc.

The same children were followed up for posttest with one week gap, the children were again administered with same checklist on reasons for academic background and scores were considered as post test scores. During posttest, due the reason of irregular attendance 8 children were dropped.

1.3 Results and Discussion:

It is evident that, more number of children felt very hard to study some subjects (67%) followed by slow writing (63.2%), inability to give answers to all the questions in the exams (55.3%) in pretest.

It is interesting to note from the post test scores that, there was drastic reduction in the percentages of children with problems related to academic reasons. After the intervention, the students were improved with understanding the subjects taught in the class, making themselves able to prepare hard prior to the exams, motivating themselves to study the difficult part of the subject, able to sit for the long lasting class and lastly adjust with teachers, peers and with school environment.

This result is in support with study of Chaturvedi (2009) investigated the effect of school environment on academic achievement of young adolescents.

He reported that, facing difficulty in understanding the subjects, long duration of teaching, partiality in the class were the major contributing factors for the academic backwardness in children. It is observed that, in pretest, boys quoted many academic reasons compared to their counter parts. For boys it is very hard to study some subjects (68.9%), about 65 per cent write very slowly, postponing studies for examination time (48.9%), dislike some subjects (48.9%) and not having good language to communicate (37.8%). More number of girls facing the problems like inability to understand what teachers teach in the class, unable to give answers to all questions in the exam and feeling that sometimes teacher's behavior is bias when treating with other student. At posttest, particularly among boys there was a drastic reduction in academic problems except the problem like some subjects are hard (83.8%).

For understanding the subject, putting continuous effort by means of hard work, long hours of studying, extra classes, discussion with teachers, peers and in addition, interest and inner motivation to study from the student side is very much necessary to succeed. Similar result were found in the studies conducted by Umunadi (2009) and Garikai (2010) empirically examined the perception of both boys and girls on quoting reasons for poor academic performance of the school students. The findings indicated that there was a difference in academic performance of male and female students with male students quoted many reasons for their backwardness like disliking of difficult subjects, teacher's favoritism, long hours of class, peer relation and extra tuition work were the most important factors hindering their study.

Regarding the familial reasons, about 20-30 per cent of children at pretest perceived that, their home environment is not conducive for the study, family income and parents occupation disturbing their studies, parents and family members did not contributing much to their studies and lack of expected cooperation from family members together interfering in the academic achievement of the children. At posttest, the children were showed lot of decrement in these problems.

The intervention was found to be effective in reducing the familial problems which are hampering the child's academic achievement. Results are in line with study of Muola (2010) reported the positive relationship between parent's education and academic achievement of the students and concluding that, educated parents can make study arrangements for their children to avoid academic backwardness in them. Nayak *et.al* (2017) reported that, 88% didn't receive any academic help from their parents. Lower education status of the father and unhappy family were found to predict poor scholastic performance in adolescents. Study also revealed the percentage distribution of familial problems by gender at pre and posttest. In pretest more number of boys facing many problems in their family than girls.

About 20-40 per cent of boys perceived their family environment as not conducive for learning, engaging themselves in income generating activities due to lack of money, lack of cooperation and encouragement from parents and family members, lack of facilities for study, lack of education and family disputes were the major contributing factors for their academic backwardness. At posttest, to some extent the family problems were solved through intervention. Presence of parents during the intervention makes them more cooperative in their children studies.

This result is line with studies conducted by Singh and Praveen (2010) studied the relationship of social maturity with academic achievement of high school students. Results revealed that, girls were found to be more socially mature than boys. Therefore instead of feeling uncomfortable due to their family problems girls cope up themselves to activate themselves in all the areas and this might be the reason for not reasoning more familial factors as risk factors for their academic backwardness by girls.

Health problems of academically backward children at pre and posttest is given under the table 5. At pretest, around 30-40 per cent of children showed very few health problems such as worry, tension and stress during study, tiredness due to the long distance of school from home, lack of concentration, headache and restlessness making the child to underachieve in the school. At posttest, more number of the children made arrangements for their daily school attendance like coming to the school by bus or by riding bicycle, so it was help them to save the time, energy and make them livelier during the classes. Therefore it was possible for them to attend the classes with more eagerness and make them able to concentrate on the studies. Chronic medical illnesses were found to be more in children with scholastic backwardness. It is well established that children with chronic illnesses have poor academic functioning compared to healthy children. Nayak *et.al* reported that, the students who suffered from acute disease within fifteen days before examination and who had had fever showed poor performance in the school examination. Low achievement is not simply a result of school absenteeism due to the illness, but due to the inherent aspects of the illness. Children with chronic illnesses and the added disadvantage of low socioeconomic status, are at particular risk for poor school achievement. It emphasizes the importance of providing educational support to children with health problems.

Discussion on the gender difference with respect to health problems. Both boys and girls were suffering from very few health problems like tension, headache, poor concentration and acute worry have major role in disturbing the academic achievement of the children. From availed results it was concluded that both the groups are on par with each other at pre and post test.

1.4 Conclusion:

Academic backwardness is one of the common problem in the present scenario but, it calls for the professionals help to overcome. It is the result of mixture of various reasons including school, familial and health aspects. These risk factors exploit child's innate capacities and does not register or show up educational success. This builds up stress and tension in the child so his potentials may be burned up merely handling the stress.

Result of the present study also reported the same trend that, combinations of above mentioned factors hinders the academic achievement of school going children and leads to backwardness in every facets of academics.

Study results encouraging the early recognition and proper intervention at right age at right time. Hence there is need to educate the parents and teachers to work out on the child's academic achievement.

1.5 References:

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