CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education in India is under reconstruction process. The education system has the constitutional obligation of universal education to children. It is our common experience that educational provisions in ordinary schools are confined to meet the educational needs of average students only. In any class, about 15-20% students fall under the category of children with special educational needs. If these children are not provided with special help and treatment, they may tend to become dropouts or delinquents.

The Programme of Action 1992 on National policy on education 1986 (updated-1992) has emphasized education for all/ universalization of elementary education as an integral part of general education at the school stage. It is also stated in the policy that not only access to provide education of comparable quality but success in the educational process should also be ensured for all students.

The child as the torch bearer of human race, is required to learn not only during childhood, but through out the life. The process of learning goes on whether the formal schooling takes place or not, but the speed and range of learning are different between one category of children and other. Broadly there are four categories of learning potentiality in children (Srivastava and

Srivastava, 1983). The Categories are :—

(i)   Bright children

(ii)   Average children

(iii)   Slow learning children

(iv)   Retarded children

The problem that every teacher/educator face today is how to identify the slow learners. According to Srivastava and Srivastava, (1983) a child unable to succeed in academic situation on an average rate is a slow learner. Most of the teacher agree with this. They also think that slow learners are those whose performance is low in the class in comparison to other normal students. But this is not the only reason of slow learning,thus for proper know-how, seeking knowledge and identification becomes an essential activity which should be conducted at the earliest.

In normal situations teachers categorize all the students whether they are slow learners, under achievers, learning disabled or educable mentally retarded, in single group. But psychology believes in individual differences, according to which all these groups are very much different from one another.

Slow learners are those who are unable to cope with the work normally expected of their age group children. The Intelligence quotient of slow learners range between 69-89 (Chintamanikar, 1982) where as the Intelligence quotient of learning disabled and children of other categories ranges average to above average.

Learning disabled are those who might be average or above average but have problems in spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, listening and comprehension because of difficulties in their psychological processes i.e. perception, memory and information processing (Singh and Beale, 1992).

Educable mentally retarded are those who have minimum educational retardation in school subjects and they have problems of social adjustment also. They have difficulty in understanding even the basic concepts in the class (Premlata, 1988)

Under achievers are those whose achievement in the class is low because of the reasons other than Intelligence Quiotent. It may be environmental, social, cultural, economic factors etc.

So it becomes the duty of teachers to identify and differentiate one group from other and bring them back in the mainstream.

Generally for the identification Intelligence test has been considered as the basic tool. The test for intelligence is always standardized and for the effective measurement it requires special skills and trained teachers. The non trained teachers cannot use Intelligence test. Also the reliability and validity of the Intelligence test donot give appropriate result in present condition.

With the progress in the field of psychoanalysis it has been found that intelligence test are insufficient to figure out the exact status of a child. Hence, now a days along with intelligence test, other subsidiary test has also been used including emotional intelligence test etc.
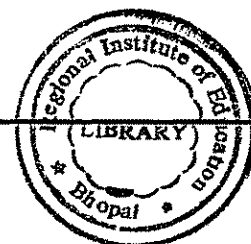
Siegal (1989) argued that, Intelligence Quotient is irrelevant to the definition of learning disabilities. So the investigator thought that it might be applicable for slow learners also.

For the remediation of the problems of slow learners teachers have to first identify them. As they cannot use sophisticated tools because it requires proper training and skills. So some alternative arrangements should be made to identify slow learners.

In Indian context there is a lack of tool or checklist that can be used for the identification or screening of slow learning as cognitive, language, auditory perception, social and emotional and behavioural areas. On the basis of these characteristics the regular teacher can identify slow learners and provide guidance to each of them.

1.2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The First provision in England for mentally deficient children come with opening of the Royal Earlswood Institute in 1848. It was not until 1892 that the school for educable mentally deficient was started by the school board of Leicester (Cleugh, 1951)

The 1944 act. has result in a great expansion of special services for backward children. The development plans have included schemes for special educational treatment in ordinary school, experimental remedial authorities and other bodies have organized many courses for teachers on slow learning children (Cleugh, 1951).

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Carroll (1963) explained that if the amount of learning time is adjusted according to the need of the slow learners, then necessary desired development may take place.

1.3   DEFINITIONS OF SLOW LEARNERS

The term slow learners is defined by different psychologists in different ways

Cleugh (1951) has defined slow learners as one whose attainments are less than 80% of the normal for his age; this include all dull children whose Intelligence quotient are less than 80 and also any other children of whatever grade of intelligence whose attainment are seriously below their age level.

Burt (1956) States that "Slow learners are those who in the middle of their school career would be unable to do the work of the class next below that which is normal for their age".

Srivastava and Srivastava (1983) defined slow learners as the students who are generally unable to cope with the work normally expected of their age group.

Shonell (1989) States that "Backward pupils is one who compared with other pupils of the same chronological age show marked educational deficiency.

Thus the child who have Intelligence Quotient above 69, but learn at a reduced rate compared to peers, are referred as slow learners, or as borderline children. The upper limit of the slow learner category is established by an I.Q score of 89.
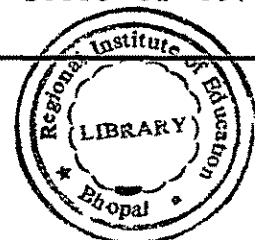
1.4   CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOW LEARNERS

The following general characteristics of slow learners have been reported by chintamanikar, 1982; Panda, 1997 and srivastava and Srivastava, 1983.

(1)   **Self Concept** - Children may learn at a very young age that they are "Stupid". Many children will not ever attempt a task because they are afraid of failure.

(2)   **Cognitive Problem** - Slow learners have limited cognitive capacity. They fail to cope with learning situations and to reason abstractly. These children show interest in learning where relationship are clearly demonstrated. And also they require more practice and revision in comparison with normal children.

(3)   **Poor Memory** - This pertinent characteristics occur due to lack of concentration and short attention span.

(4)   **Language Problem** - Slow learners are unable to communicate concept they do understand. They also lack imagination and foresight.

(5)   **Poor self control** - Some Children may be explosive, hyperactive or erratic. They always seems to be in motion. They rarely sit quiet. This typical behaviours is also associated with poor motivation.

(6)   **Social as well as educational problem** - Some dull students are very poor in scholastic achievement in the school. Their performance is not satisfactory. But some children who came from sophisticated homes show good performance
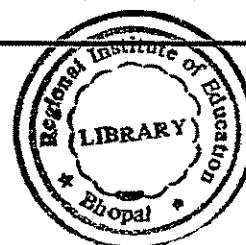
because they get help and encouragement from home. This is only possible at the primary stage of education. But at the secondary stage, the frustrations and failures come from different sources. The children develop an attitude of resentment towards the authorities and create problems. This kind of attitude may lead to antisocial behaviour in the future.

1.5 CAUSES OF SLOW LEARNING

Mecarthy and Mecarthy (1977) have reported the following reasons of learning difficulties among children.

First reason is concerned with central Nervous System (CNS) i.e. brain. If there is any damage in the CNS of the child, he would face learning difficulties in the class. One major category related to CNS which cause learning problems in the child, is mental retardation.

Second reason is related to Peripheral Nervous system (PNS) i.e. sense organs (Eye, Ear). If there is anything wrong with the PNS of the students, he/she would face learning difficulties.

The third reason is related to

(i)   Emotional disturbance

      —   Psychological tensions.

      —   Parental conflicts.

      —   Relationship between the siblings.

      —   Relationship between children and parents.

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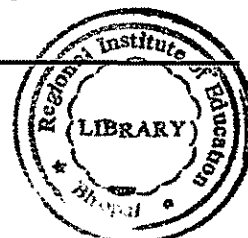
(ii) Socio-economic conditions

- Poverty .

(iii) Cultural deprivation

(iv) Environmental disadvantage.

(v) School conditions

- Irregular attendance.

- Inefficient teaching

(vi) Home conditions

- Intellectual conditions of the parents.

- The conditions of neighbourhood.

1.6 NEED OF THE STUDY

Education is the right of the Child whether normal or deficient. Today we talk about universalization of Elementary Education/Education for All which has been the atmost objective of the education after independence. Many efforts has already been made for educational development that too precisely for the normal and average children, ignoring the special needs of deficient children. One such category is of slow learners. Also most of the teachers are not knowledgeable to handle the educational needs of slow learners.

Society should be egalitarian, so that with the help of education we can try to promote all the categories of the students and to give them equal opportunities.

While searching the context, in the research paper of shankar, et.al (Research Seminar, 2000) Whose objective was to identify the weakest class among all the sections of class VII. And his identification was based on the results of various classes for the past two years. Investigator found this way of identification very unscientific and illogical. Hence to achieve a better and more scientific method, Investigator decided to work on this topic i.e. identification of slow learners.

Children of today are the citizens of tomorrow hence it is very essential to ensure that each student is as strong/efficient as the other. Therefore it is very necessary to identify the slow learners and provide special instructional strategies. If this area is neglected, the country may face high dropouts and delinquents, which would be the major defect in achieving the goals of universalization of Elementary Education.

1.7 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is an attempt to identify slow learners by using a checklist developed by taking characteristics generally shown by slow learners in the area of B.H.E.L., Bhopal.

1.8 OBJECTIVES

The following were the major objectives of the study :

(1)   to prepare a checklist for the identification of slow learners,

(2)   to identify the slow learners by using the checklist,

(3)   to study the main characteristics of the slow learners as reported by the teachers,
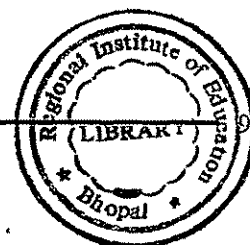
(4) to compare the observation made by the teachers with intelligence test, and

(5) to study the weightage of the characteristics of slow learners as reported by the teachers.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following were the research questions :

(1) What type of characteristics slow learners are exhibiting in the classroom so that they can be included in the checklist of identification of slow learners ?

(2) What special type of characteristics are being performed by the girls (Slow learners) in the class room ?

(3) What special type of characteristics are being performed by the boys (slow learners) in the class room ?

(4) What type of characteristics are being performed by the slow learners of private schools in the classroom ?

(5) What type of characteristics are being performed by the slow learners of society schools in the classroom ?

1.9 DELIMITATIONS

This is an emerging and extensive field of research. In western countries a good number of researches have been done in this field. However in India research in this field are comparatively low. Therefore it is necessary to start the investigation with slow learning population itself. The following were the limitations of this study :
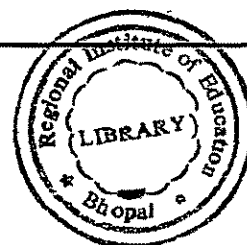
(1) The study had been restricted to slow learning population of B.H.E.L. area Bhopal only.

(2) Sample of the study consisted of both private and society schools.

(3) Data has been collected on both boys and girls slow learners.

(4) Sample consisted of 41 slow learners of Bhopal.

(5) The Study was confined to the slow learners of class VII grade.

(6) The identification of slow learners was done by checklist (Self made)