

## Teachers' Relationship and Competency on the Academic Performance of Socially Disadvantaged Students in Higher Secondary Schools

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### **Abstract**

The research paper focusses on introduction to the disadvantaged children, importance of education and review of attributes and factors linked to poor academic performance of socially disadvantaged students, the relationship and competency of teachers in exploring effective teaching strategies by means of adopting innovative beliefs or ideas and alternative models to impart quality and equity of education to improve the academic performance of the disadvantaged students and ultimately, the hiatus and the results drawn forth.

**Key words:** 1.Disadvantaged Students, 2.Academic Performance, 3.Teacher Competency, 4.Indian School Education

### **Introduction**

India is a nation rich in diversity. We can feel its diversity in language, culture, tradition and heritage. The strength of our nation lies in the unity of diversity. We find various sections of people who are physically, emotionally, socially, and economically refined and sound on one hand and the poor and the unsophisticated on the other hand. The poorer sects of people are labelled as the disadvantaged. The educational development of this class remains to be a major concern since the past to the present. The term 'disadvantaged' refers to those children, who come from socio-economically backward communities i.e., the tribal and the rural areas of the country where educational resources are not on par with the privileged class in the urban or metropolitan regions. India has the single largest tribal population in the world compared to any other country with a population of 67.75 million (1991 census). They constitute 8.1% to total population of the country. Majumdar has drawn definition of tribes and quoted by saying, "A tribe may be defined as a community which has a name, endogamous in nature, lives in a common territory, has a common traditional with an unwritten language, is structurally and culturally distinctive, relatively homogenous, largely self-governing with no specialization of function and pervasively self-sufficient and has a consciousness of ethnic identity and of belonging together." (Majumdar, 1958). The scheduled tribe is one of the most disadvantaged groups in terms of educational development. The difference in their mother tongue and the medium of instruction makes their schooling a bit difficult. Even among the relatively advanced tribal groups, the absenteeism and the drop-out rates are high. According to Sujatha, "The high absenteeism, large detention and alarming drop-out rates contribute to the slow progress of education among tribal." (Sujatha, 2004). In other words, the term disadvantaged would include, children who not only belong to the above criteria but children who are exposed to disadvantaged schools in the rural and slum areas. Hence, both the ecology of the family and the ecology of the institution contribute to educational deficits of the disadvantaged. In addition to, cultural deprivation (complex set of conditions) creates intellectual deficiency in a child. These conditions include unstimulated environment, lack of verbal interaction with adults, poor sensory experience and other deleterious environmental factors associated with poverty. According to Heckman, "Today a greater proportion of children are being born into disadvantaged families, many of them from minorities and immigrant backgrounds." (Heckman, 2011).

## **Literature Review:**

### **Academic Performance**

Education is important for everyone to lead a successful life. The higher secondary schooling is the most crucial stage in the academic life of a student. It is said to be a foundation stage for college and further learning to establish a successful career. The higher secondary students are mostly the adolescents. This stage is highly critical period in the life of all students to choose their own area of interest in the field of education. Teachers are central to all education systems and hence they should motivate themselves with specific training skills to support, guide and motivate these children to learn. The gap between a culturally disadvantaged child and a normal child begins to grow with age and exposure to classroom learning. There are many factors linked to the poor academic performance of the socially disadvantaged students. There are many negative factors which are the main cause of concern affecting the academic performance of disadvantaged students. They are poverty, illiteracy, gender disparity, lack of resources, large size families, lack of provision for extra classes or tuitions and so on.

### **Poverty**

The problem of poverty is regarded as one of the major barriers within the course of academic achievements. The individuals residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness experience major financial problems. When their per capita income is low, they experience problems in meeting their educational and school requirements as well as their basic requirements, such as diet and nutrition, health, medical and so forth. Therefore, the problem of poverty is considered as one of the critical factors that hinder the academic performance of the students.

### **Illiteracy**

The parents of the disadvantaged students possess low literacy levels and henceforth they are unable to recognize the factors that are needed to enhance the academic performance of their children. The problem of illiteracy on the part of the parents or other family members, such as siblings or relatives prove to be an impediment not only in the enhancement of academic performance but also in getting promoted to higher standard. The problem of illiteracy is also regarded as an impediment within the course of recognizing the significance of education.

### **Large Families**

When there are more than two children in the family, then it is considered a large family. When there are three or more children, but the family belongs to economically weaker sections of the society, then, usually it becomes difficult for the parents to meet all their needs and requirements. The major fact is, upbringing more children increase their cost of living. The academic performance of the students undergoes detrimental effects as a result of being bred up in the large families with low income. With more children and limited income, it usually becomes difficult to meet the requirements of every child.

### **Lack of Provision for Tuitions or Extra-Classes**

Learning certain subjects is not easy for the students, such as, mathematics and science. In obtaining adequate explanation of difficult concepts, children need private tuitions or training. When the parents are illiterate, and their income is less, they could neither guide nor enrol their wards in private tuitions. In schools, teachers have limited time periods to provide explanation of the concepts and they have to teach large number of students. The disadvantaged students may not be able to acquire proper understanding of difficult concepts in one attempt and may need reiteration. In most cases, lack of assistance regarding difficult subjects may not generate the desired academic outcomes.

### **Lack of Resources**

When home environment lacks sufficient resources, civic amenities and infrastructure, they pose to be a barrier towards the acquisition of education. Civic amenities, such as, clean drinking water, nutritious diet, electricity, technology, textbooks, stationary and other materials are essential to enhance learning. They may not achieve the desired outcomes with empty stomachs and empty pockets.

### **Gender Disparity**

Usually, in rural areas, parents hold the belief that education is meant only for boys wherein the girls are meant to learn the household chores. They are of the perspectives that when boys get educated, they would be able to obtain employment and manage the well-being of the family members. On the other hand, they hold the misconception that girls have to eventually get married and hence, it is vital for them to acquire training in household chores. These mainly include, preparation of meals, cleaning, washing, fetching water, and taking care of siblings and other elderly members of the household. These factors discourage girls from acquisition of education and their academic performance suffer a setback, even when they are enrolled in schools.

### **Poor Health Condition**

Research has indicated that poverty affects the health of the individuals in a negative manner. Besides unaffordability of healthy and a nutritious diet, the individuals feel stressed and anxious. When they do not have the finance, they feel stressed and even get involved into frequent disputes, which may result in detrimental effects. Education, training, medical treatment, child development, and sustenance of living, all require expenses. The poverty-stricken individuals normally have one objective and that is to generate a source of income.

### **Transportation Problems**

In some cases, schools are located at a distance and individuals have to go to schools through public or personal transportation. Transportation incurs cost, hence, poverty-stricken parents experience problems in sending their children to schools. When individuals are unable to meet transportation costs, it results in high rate of absenteeism and low academic performance. This problem not only leads to low academic achievement, but also force the students to drop out of school.

### **Criminal and Violent Acts**

The children belonging to poverty-stricken families have been subjected to criminal and violent acts. These include, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, acid attacks, rape and even murder. Getting subjected to these acts, not only impede their psychological approach, but also the children develop fear and apprehensiveness in going out of their houses and communicating with the other individuals. The children belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society experience these acts within their homes, community as well as within the schools resulting in poor academic performance.

According to Maganga, "In India, there are many schools, which have large number of students in one class. Classroom congestion is considered as a disadvantage in improving academic performance. The main problems due to this factor are experienced by the teachers. They are unable to implement the teaching-learning processes and instructional strategies in an appropriate manner. The teachers are unable to make provision of personal attention and as a result of which, academic performance of the students may undergo detrimental effects.

Some students perform well, whereas others depict errors. In case of errors, the teachers usually ask them to learn from the students, who have performed well. Hence, teachers tend to move on to the next lesson in the next class, as they need to complete the syllabus within limited time." (Maganga, 2016)

### **Teachers' Competency: Critique**

Competency here is used in the context of teacher education and job performance. Competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilizing psychological resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. It is essential to an educator's pursuit of excellence. Teaching competency is an inherent element of an effective training process, one that aspires to contribute to the welfare of students, the society and the nation. Competence can be seen as a combination of knowledge, skills and behaviour to improve performance, or as the state or quality of being adequately qualified and capable of performing a given role.

The role of teacher becomes more important when the education of the disadvantaged children is considered. For an effective teaching learning process, the teacher should have competence, motivation and professional commitment. To empower the teachers to create an impact on the academic performance of these disadvantaged students with sincerity, they should be provided with proper training and orientation. There must be some components in the teacher education curriculum, both in pre-service and in-service, which would help to cater the educational needs of the disadvantaged students. **Agnihotri (1991)** suggested that there were more adjustment problems in the tribal group and so proper remedial measures need to be thought out and executed to improve their adjustment.

Teachers should help them to develop interest in class-room activities by which the absenteeism and dropping out can be prevented to a large extent. Some such components which can be added in teacher training curriculum include: identifying the background of major tribal people in their locality, their vocation and culture, the governmental grants and aids available for ST students, exploring the ways of modification of curricular and co-curricular activities which can help these students to develop their motivation and interest for learning. The school time table should also be modified so that the teachers would get enough time to give special attention to tribal students. If we can impart quality education to tribal students through the counselling and guidance of trained and efficient teachers, it is certain that they can rise up to or even higher than the students from the privileged communities. The study of **Das (1991)** revealed that co-curricular activities had a lot of impact in ensuring ST students attendance.

It is vital for the teachers to be professional in their conduct, especially, while dealing with the disadvantaged students. Professionalism of the teachers is depicted primarily in the teaching-learning processes, instructional strategies, communication and their approachable attitude. When the teachers depict professionalism in these areas, then they are revered by students and they take pleasure in learning from them. There have been cases in schools, when teachers get upset and angry. This is normally due to incompleteness of home-work, assignments and deprived academic performance. In such cases, professionalism and decency in communication must be exhibited by the teachers. They should explain the consequences to the slow learners, especially those from disadvantaged background in a calm manner and any kind of harsh behaviour should be avoided. On the other hand, there have been cases of the disadvantaged students, who do not acquire adequate understanding in just one explanation and imitate their neighbour's work. Lack of sufficient understanding does affect their academic performance in an inappropriate manner. According to Maganga, "In science subjects, when teacher is providing training to the students regarding the implementation of the experiment through making use of test tubes, burners, equipment and procedures, then it is not possible for the teachers to go to each and every student and check, how, he or she is performing". (**Maganga, 2016**).

In academic learning, some of the concepts are difficult to learn and understand by the disadvantaged learners. When these students are unable to achieve the desired grades, then instead of getting angry on them, the teachers and parents need to make provision of help and assistance. They should motivate the students and encourage them to do well in future. They need to understand their weaknesses and help them. According to Srinivas, & Venkatkrishnan, "When students find certain areas difficult to learn, then teachers should repeat the concepts, provide them class and homework assignments, so that they are able to acquire complete understanding of the concepts". (**Srinivas, & Venkatkrishnan, 2016**).

Teachers have an imperative role in influencing the academic performance of the students. They are bestowed with the authority to direct all the classroom activities and administer learning. It is vital for the teachers to possess the traits of professionalism and conscientiousness. They need to possess an approachable nature, listen and provide solutions to the problems experienced by the disadvantaged students. They should possess adequate knowledge and information regarding the subjects that they are teaching, usage of technology, modern and innovative methods in the teaching and learning processes, managing discipline and directing all the classroom activities in a well-organized manner. The teachers in some cases are strict, but strictness should be maintained within limits. According to Maina, "The main objective of the teachers should only be to enhance the academic performance of the students and lead to their effective development." (Maina, 2010).

It is important for the teachers to understand their power as role models. Since students of poverty place emphasis on people, it is important to understand that as teachers, it is easier to get more out of students if they see the adults as a role model or if they show that teacher their respect. Respect is something that must be earned, and if a teacher assumes that by their position of authority, they will lose their students' respect. Teachers have to be aware that students living in poverty do not typically receive as many positive comments as negative comments at home. According to Payne, "Positive comments or remarks to students will be a way to gain that student's respect. (Payne, 2013). If a disadvantaged student breaks a school rule or acts inappropriately, stop the behaviour by pulling the student aside and make him understand why his or her behaviour was wrong. Jensen says, "Never embarrass the student in front of his or her peers." (Jensen, 2013)

Steps may be taken to adopt new techniques of evaluation and continuous assessment of these types will be conducive to improve the academic performance of the disadvantaged students. It is due to the fallacious examination system and evaluation, most of the disadvantaged children fail in the promotional examinations. To bring out modern and sophisticated evaluation techniques, the teachers must be provided with item banks. Considering the stagnation and dropouts, continuous and meticulous evaluation must be introduced to help these children as far as practicable. Extra coaching after school hours may be encouraged to help the weak students. The learning processes of the underprivileged children is subjected to some general principles of learning similar to the learning processes of an average or normal student, but with a different rate, sequence, type of materials and presentation modes. A continuous appraisal of progress and comprehensive measure of assessment-diagnosis via feedback should become a part of every teaching act and basis of planning the next learning experience. According to Heckman, "Children's life chances are strongly influenced by the quality of their education. Schools aim at providing children with knowledge, skills and interpersonal competences required for their development, adult life and contributions to economy and society. Schools can offer learning experiences that a child may not obtain at home, particularly if he or she is living in a disadvantaged environment." (Heckman, 2008; Heckman, 2011).

### Discussion

The studies of Sujatha (1998), Shukla (1994), Prakash (1998) mentioned that the achievement of tribal students are lower than that of non-tribal students. The studies mentioned that the various factors related to school, location and society contribute to their lower level of achievement. Agnihotri (1991) suggested that there were more adjustment problems in the tribal group and so proper remedial measures need to be thought out and executed to improve their adjustment. Biswal (1991) found that the indifference of parents, lack of motivation in pupils, traditional customs and beliefs etc. hinders the progress of ST students. The above studies suggest the need for the proper academic support to the ST students to improve their achievement and motivation and to help them to become well-adjusted individuals.

The study of Das (1991) revealed that co-curricular activities had a lot of impact in ensuring ST students attendance. The study found that strictness and rigidity of timings and schedules and behaviour control

were often detrimental to the performance of tribal children. The study also argued that the teacher's performance needs to be supported through regular and frequent information inputs and training. The study of Kumar (1989) found that the tribal students do not have a favourable attitude towards school and their interested subjects are agriculture, humanities and arts. The study also revealed their vocational interest. These studies suggest that the school curriculum should be modified to cater to the needs of ST students. The importance of teacher training is also stressed. But high-quality teachers are in short supply in low-income countries. Teachers may also not always have the necessary pedagogical skills and sufficient mastery of concepts they are expected to teach. **(UIS 2006)**.

Ekka (1990) found that the tribal students were not mentally deficient; they were capable of picking up complex knowledge, but their pace of assimilation was slower as their cognitive level was relatively lower due to historical reasons.

Mohanty (1989) showed that tribal children were not found to be having lower intelligent score. The studies revealed that the ST students are capable of performing well and are intelligent also.

Most of the teachers opine that the disadvantaged students do not have much behavioural problems and they are intelligent. But the major problem is their absenteeism. This could be due to the lack of motivation both internal and external. Moreover, the curricular and co-curricular activities may not be suitable to their developmental level. Then it will become the duty of teachers to motivate them properly and to modify the teaching learning activities in tune with the needs of ST students. For this the teachers have to change their old concepts about the tribal students. Teachers should motivate themselves to motivate these children to learn. According to recent data on 1,300 villages in India, nearly 24 percent of teachers were absent during unannounced visits, at an associated fiscal cost of US\$1.5 billion a year. Reducing absenteeism in these schools would be over 10 times more cost-effective at increasing student-teacher contact time than hiring additional teachers. **(Muralidharan and others 2017)**

Many developing countries suffer significant losses of instructional time. Unannounced visits to primary schools in six countries found that in public schools, on average, about one teacher in five was absent on a typical school day. Even when teachers are present in school, they may not be teaching. **(Chaudhury and others 2006)**.

Schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students are at greater risk of low performance, affecting education system as a whole. Low performing disadvantaged schools often lack the internal capacity to support to improve as school leaders and teachers and the environments of schools, classrooms, and neighbourhoods frequently fail to offer a high quality learning experience for the most disadvantaged.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

From the above studies it is clear that the disadvantaged students can do things and are intelligent. But they are not motivated well and are having adjustment problems with the school curriculum. Co-curricular activities and vocational training can help to improve their interest to come to school. Government can provide grants and aids for the progress of disadvantaged students, but the final responsibility regarding the educational development of ST students is with the teachers and school authorities.

Much work is not yet done about the need for a teacher preparation programme which can help the teachers to deal effectively with the disadvantaged children in general and the ST students in particular.

Teacher performance is crucial at all stages of schooling since the formulated policies and programmes of education are ultimately interpreted and implemented by teachers. Studies related to the modification of

teacher training programme, practising essential codes of conduct, continuous learning to keep abreast of new concepts, appropriate counselling and mentoring and equity in outlook would help to cater the special needs of disadvantaged students.

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