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Title

**Causes behind slow learners' achievements and
perspectives at the primary school
(Case study: primary level in Tisemssilt)**

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to my mother, and my family. Thank you my mother, for giving me the strength to continue this process when I felt like giving up. To my lovely parents, who instilled in me at an early age the value of education. Without your love, support, and prayers I would not have completed this journey. To my husband Hamid, the love of my life and all his family, thank you for putting up with me throughout this process. To my sisters: Hanane, Souhir, Zineb, Kheira and Marwa. To my little brother Mostapha words cannot express how much I love you. I am deeply sorry for the time we spent apart preparing to complete the process. To my best friends: Soumia, khayra, Iman, Islam, Johara, Chafia, Fatiha, Amira, for encouraging me along the way. thank's all. I will miss you!

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Abstract

My study attempts to look for the reasons behind slow learning of children at primary schools, and its impact on their achievement. It aims to create a sense of awareness in our schools concerning slow learners. A try is made to seek whether individual teachers are interested in developing many effective techniques and strategies for supporting those learners or not. In order to achieve these aims, we have started with shedding the light on some theories and perspectives that are related to slow learning in the introductory chapter; moving to the second one in which we relied on two main methods. They are questionnaire submitted to numbers of teachers at different primary schools, and interview done with parents of three slow learners in order to gather the necessary data about their views toward this category of learners. The results obtained reveal that there are many reasons that lead a student to be slow in learning. The main reason is the neglect of his parents especially at the periods of infancy and preschool because they are regarded as the main periods of child's intellectual growth and development. Moreover, this difficulty which is slow learning surely affects their achievement in negative way depending on what we have reached (their results at school). Considering teachers and parents as the core reason of child's slow learning is what we eventually came to discover, because both parents and teachers take an integral part in student's success in learning. On the other hand, their relationship with them directly impacts their learning outcomes. Children officially need the cooperation between teacher's professional development and parental involvement in the improvement of their learning skills.

Key words: Slow Learning, children, teachers, parents, achievement, questionnaire, interview, learning skills.

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General introduction

Learning is an important issue that takes an integral part in our everyday life. On the other hand, teaching becomes a great challenge, mainly because of the differences among students at the mental level as a whole. Besides, among the most difficult tasks of teaching process is to be in charge of a child described as a slow learner. Actually slow learners are students with below average cognitive abilities; those who take more time to learn than their peers in which they do not considered as disabled learners.

This research study investigates the reasons behind children's slow learning at primary schools and its impact on their achievements. However, it is observed that school environment today does not accommodate all learning styles and all personalities. Learning in a big group sometimes creates an environment that supports some learners and neglects others especially those who really need special help. On the other hand, slow learners represent eight percent of the total school population and this rate should not be ignored. Instead, it should be taken into consideration. Unfortunately, there are some teachers and parents who marginalize their children's problem and consider them as stupid and lazy learners.

The aim of this research is to look for the reasons behind such a problem "Slow Learning" and to create a great awareness and discussion in our schools because this category exists almost in every class, yet a systematic way to identify and help them does not exist. In addition, it is a hope that individual teachers and parents could develop potential effective techniques and strategies to help and support those learners who surely need special help; because the cooperation between teacher's preparation and parental care help student to learn effectively.

After reading this paper, the reader will come to answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons that lead students to be slow in their learning?
2. To which extent do these reasons influence their achievement?
3. Are both parents and teachers responsible for their children's problem in learning?

In fact, there are several reasons that affect students learning including home stability, physical problems, unsecure environment and school factors. Since these reasons influence their learning in negative way, their performance at school is going to be seen very poor. Of course, both parents and teachers are responsible for their below average and poor achievement on account of not giving much interest to such a case.

General introduction

This research paper is divided into three chapters; the first one is a theoretical one which deals with the review of learning and slow learning. It discusses the characteristics of children's growth from six to nine years old, and then moving precisely to allude to the characteristics of that of slow learners. Moreover, it treats the different types of slow learning by spotting the light on the signs and symptoms of slow learners. This chapter also tends to make the distinction between slow learner and learner disabled and tackles the main factors that influence student's learning as well as the causes behind their weaknesses.

The second chapter contains the practical one (data analysis) which deals with the description of teachers' questionnaire and parents' interview and tries to analyze and interpret them. The questionnaire was delivered to teachers at three different primary schools in Tissemsilt (Bicha Belhlma, Omar Zwawi and Abed El Rahman laeboube). These schools are chosen because of their locations which facilitate work. Parents' interview was given to three parents of three main cases which have slow learning. The last chapter includes discussion of findings proposes strategies to teachers and recommendations to parents in order to support and help this category of learners.

Chapter one: the slow learner development

Introduction

Slow learning is a subject that has attracted many scholars and psychologists, which serves as a problem that exists in almost every school. It is a challenging task for teachers to tackle slow learners and to help them learn the academic skills. This term “slow learners” is generally used to describe students who have difficulties in learning and learn slowly than their peers. In addition, the experience of educators proves that there are many students who are so backward in basic subjects, so that they need a special help.

Traditionally, teachers and educators are focusing on encouraging the performance of gifted children and ignore the others. Most importantly, there are some students who cannot cope with their studies because of various reasons that invite the teachers to show a great deal of consideration. The aim of this study is to look for the reasons behind students’ lower average. Specifically, the effects of these reasons on their education and life as well. This introductory chapter includes a number of theories and perspectives of some educators and psychologists concerning learning and slow learners, in addition to the characteristics of growth of children and slow learners as well. Moreover, this chapter is going to spots the light on the distinction between slow learning and learning disability. Further, it is going to examine the main factors that influence children’s learning skills, and concluding by explaining the reasons behind pupil’s slow learning.

1.1. Learning concept

Learning is a complex procedure related to human’s cognitive abilities, in which it changes and develops overtime depending on student’s environment, social relationships and other’s interaction, as well as the level of intelligence. It is, precisely, a process that subconsciously takes place in one’s life since the birth. In this regard, Hebb (1949) argued that the connection between cell bodies and neurons could be affected through experience. What is widely known is that all mental procedures can be linked to networks in the brain. Moreover, learning as a varied issue has been tackled by several educators, theorists, and educational psychologists.

In cognitive psychology, Bloom’s taxonomies of learning (1956), are probably the best illustration in a number of famous papers in this domain, in which he and his colleagues classifies learning into three categories, notably: cognitive domain which involves all what have been related to mental activities and thinking process. The affective domain which

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includes all what have been related to our emotions and feelings, and the last one is psychomotor domain which contains the physical characteristics and sensually skills. More importantly, Bloom's taxonomies focus on the domain that is related to cognition and mental activities, in this regard he categorizes six steps or levels of successful learning and each step is related to the other.

According to Bloom (1956), this categories start with acquiring the information or the fact (knowledge), then understand it (comprehension) before apply it in real life (application), on the other hand it must be taken into consideration the examination and recognition of such data in detail (analyses) in order to discover more about it before using it to manipulation of new ideas (synthesize); at the end the educator has to assess this data (evaluation) to prove and confirm its existence. Furthermore, these categories take an integral part of successful learning .

According to Rossum and Hamer (2010) learning conceptions play a central role in students' study behavior in superior education, Pratt (1992) said that *"we view the world through the lenses of our conceptions, interpreting and acting in accordance with our understanding of the world"* (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, p.3). It means that we learn through conceptualization in addition to the comprehension of things around us. In 1979, five sorts of learning have been found by Roger Saljo; this classification of these concepts was according to students' views, their age ranged between 15 to 73 years. Additionally, Saljo (1979) follows a method which names the phenomenographic:

Phenomenography is a method for describing qualitatively different ways in which people understand or conceptualize an aspect of their world. It moves beyond individual, idiosyncratic understanding of a phenomenon [e.g. learning] to provide a general map of the qualitatively different ways in which the phenomenon is understood. (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2004, p.2)

This method was actually used by Saljo (1979) in order to gather the necessary data about such a topic which is learning. Both Rossum and Hamer (2010) agreed with Saljo (1979) who defines the term learning from five different angles namely:

First, Saljo (1979) considered learning as the increase of knowledge Saljo (1979) argued "to learn, it's to learn new things, other things that you did not know before... a lot of things in History and so on, you did not know about that before, and the same thing in Swedish and Grammar and so on" (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, p.4). It means learning is to recognize new aspects, new concepts, new things that you never know them

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before. Moreover, Saljo (1979) believed that “it is to increase your knowledge ... you kind of start with a small bag and there is not much in it, but then the longer you live, the more you fill it up” (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, p.4). According to him learning is all the facts and the data we consume in our lives, and whenever we face new situations we subconsciously learn from them, in a way we develop our knowledge through experiences and so on.

Second, *learning as memorizing*; Saljo (1979) “to learn... yes, that’s... you have to cram up your homework and learn a little bit of this and that by heart... well that’s about it” (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, p.4). It means to memorize what you have dealt with as they are; Saljo (1979) declared that: “well, it’s to learn what’s in the books. In principle it means to learn in order to be able to answer the questions which the teacher gives you” (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, p.4). That is to say for him learning is repeating what is said by teachers or what is written in books, without creating something new just to have the ability to answer questions.

Third, Rossum and Hamer (2010) argued to Saljo’s (1979) investigation of learning which is the acquisition of data and information as well as actions that can be useful in the future, in here, the process of learning has a strong relation with actions and data have been acquired and their application in real lives. Saljo(1979) said:

Well I think of learning plain facts which you select from your head more or less that is, as regards studies..., but then it is... I mean you have to be able to use it if, if you find yourself in a similar situation to the one you were in earlier or if it reminds you of it, then you should be able to pick out the correct facts so to say or the correct way to proceed . (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, pp.4-5).

He sees learning as the need to acquire facts and procedures in order to use them in the future.

Fourth, learning is the abstraction of meaning .Saljo (1979) believed that “take the subjects he is studying, let’s say history for example, it means that he should be able to understand a lot more about what development really is, sort of understand the process in a country or among a people in some way” (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, p.5). To more understand, whenever a Person studies any topic in any subject, he must take into account its meaning, it is really important to know its content in the purpose of understand it very well. Beaty et al confirmed that:

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[To] have a process of thought that sort of “sets in motion” when you look at something... looking at something new in a far more logical way, and seeing the steps and the moves towards arriving at some sort of conclusion... learning is thinking clearer... Perhaps it is just the skill you have learned of thinking more coherently. (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, p.6)

The student should have a critical mind, he must use his cognitive abilities to find a coherent conclusions.

The last conception of learning, according to Saljo (1979), is that it is an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality. In Saljo's (1979) opinion, all what have been happened with human's everyday life in addition to the comprehension of the link between previous conceptions of learning; for example in the first level, the meaning of learning does not rely on just in teacher's explanation at school, it is more than that. In this regard Saljo (1979) argued:

What's most important really, that's the connection between what I read and what I do and see otherwise during the days. I guess I have discovered this in some way, I guess it's the strategy. I've worked a little bit with problems like these in companies... I mean with problems of learning and teaching new things and then I have tried to... well if you don't see connections between what you read and your own situation, not very much will happen really. In some way I think I've found out that you learn things twice somehow. The first time could have been at school really, the second time is the connection, I mean it becomes conscious in some way. (as cited in Rossum and Hamer, 2010, pp. 6-7).

In his opinion, theory and practice have to be linked because what is read has to be related with real situations in everyday life, for him, what is learned in school is the theoretical part of all what happen in our daily life.

Almost, people are divided into three categories: visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners. In this regard, numbers of theories have been developed; one of them is the theory of multiple intelligences created by Howard Gardner in the late 1970's and early 1980's. According to him, each one has his own style of learning and his own preferences or skills (intelligences), in addition human potential is related to how individuals prefer to learn. Gardner asserts that each person is unique, each one is intelligent but each one is different from the other.

Moreover, Gardner (1970) classifies people into several intelligences namely: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence. That is to say, people who actually prefer learning

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by using words and language, they have linguistic intelligence, otherwise people who use logic and numbers in their learning, they automatically have logical- mathematical intelligence, then people who learn through sounds, music, and rhythm, they have musical intelligence. On the other hand, the person who prefers to learn through moving and using their body, he has bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. However, people who have spatial intelligence, usually they have visual style of learning in which they prefer to learn using images, pictorial imaginations...etc. People who prefer learn into groups, discussing together, and sharing ideas together, they have interpersonal intelligence. Furthermore, people who have intrapersonal intelligence, they believe on self-awareness, they prefer learn alone, they avoid interacting with others when they are learning. Gardner's theory (1970) includes a range of methods and techniques that are useful in teaching in the purpose of helping teachers to develop their students' strengths and preferences as well as to improve their weaknesses. As a result, no one is stupid, no one is useless, but the style of learning stills different among individuals.

To sum up, learning as a huge topic that has been seen and developed by many scholars and psychologists, has a number of meanings and conceptions from different angles. Learning has a strong relation with our cognitive skills and abilities because it is a process that happens in our brains, also from a philosophical perspective, learning is related to our thinking as Descartes said: "I think therefore I am", this quote proves his existence

1.2. Characteristics of growth of children age (6 to 11)

It is widely known that children follow a number of stages in their development from birth until they grow up, in this regard they know different characteristics depending on their environment, their gender, as well as their life experiences, and their age cannot be taken as a norm to know their characteristics. However, they are influence by a set of factors:

1.2.1. Physical development

It includes height, weight, and strengths. According to Boudebza (2014) the child grows up slowly and continually. Furthermore, his height rises of 25%. His head seems as adult's head, large muscles are developed, also his blood pressure raises. In addition, his degree of pulse decreases. In this stage both healthy and alimentary situations must be taken into consideration because they influence the physical development of child.

1.2.2. Cognitive development

During school period, the child is able to use his mental skills as well as his level of operational thinking. He can understand and comprehend things; also he may able to make a distinction between cause and effect. More importantly, Talat (2013) agreed with Piaget

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theory of child's cognitive development. They emphasize on two different levels namely adaptation and organization. Moreover, They define organization as a set of experiences and observations have been seen by children in their environment in order to make a consistent significance because both of them make the thinking proficient, since we don't organize our observation and experiences there will be no connection between them in our brains, in addition adaptation is the ability to alter the environment we live in. Furthermore, concrete operational stage as a third stage of Piaget's cognitive development goes through series of stages namely:

- ✓ **Seriation:** it is the ability to classify objects depending on their size, shape, color ...etc.
- ✓ **Classification:** appearance, in the idea that one thing may include on the other.
- ✓ **Decentering:** in here, the child is able to solve problem for example: he may understand that a short cup of water contains less than a tall cup.
- ✓ **Reversibility:** the child is able to understand that things can change and return to its origin for example: he can understand that $1+1=2$ and $2-1=1$ as well. He may use his logical thinking.
- ✓ **Conservation:** it is child's ability to use quantity.
- ✓ **Elimination of egocentrism:** the child loses his egocentrism in which he starts to take others' point of view into consideration; he starts to solve concrete problems rather than the abstract ones.

1.2.3. Emotional characteristics

Children are characterized by growing up independently in which they like to do things by themselves. according to boys and girls club of America (1999) children at that age need more love from their parents, they need more attention but they are less ready to ask for it, also peer's opinion are more important than before. However, they are sensible of feeling hurts, they are self-centered but they start sense of the other. They fear of school and the failure in their studies in which they need more help to express their feeling and emotions as well.

1.2.4. Social characteristics

The social development is rising because children interact more with their peers, friends as well as more activities outside their home and family. They spend more time with their peers in this regard their self-esteem will develop. Moreover, they play and do group activities but it starts with single gender first then it becomes with the other. Thus, children start to interact with others whether at school or at home.

1.3. Concept of slow learner

Slow learners are students with below average cognitive abilities. They are generally weak on all subjects. In other word, students who achieve less than peers at the same age regarded as slow learners. Moreover, researchers proved that we can't say that this child is slow learner without testing his individual verbal intelligence. Whenever we find that his/her level is between 74 and 91 °, in here, we can consider them as slow learner (about 1 out of 5 students are slow learners). Therefore, they do exist in almost every school. More importantly, slow learners' definition is varied from one person to another, in which there are who define it mentally because of mental reasons, by contrast there are who define it socially because of reasons that are related to the environment and family situations. Thus, we would understand two different definitions of slow learners.

Mentally speaking, the slow learner is everyone who has trouble with cognitive abilities, memory, and attention for example he can't distinguish between the left and right, also he can't remember things (memory problems)...etc. On the other hand there are who say that slow learning is caused by social reasons in which they live on unsecure environment or they have family problems (divorce parents), in addition to that there are who can't adapt with schools and teachers because of their punishment that's why they can't learn easily and have trouble with concentration, attention, and understanding. As a result, they affect negatively their achievement. According to Steven (2010) “ *students who are slow learners frequently see school as a punishment, but classroom strategies enable teachers to tap into these students' strengths to enable them to succeed*” (Steven , 2010, p.12). Almost the slow learners don't like schools and education at all because they fear of failure and punishment as well, in here, teachers have to take into account their strengths in order to help them to achieve. “*Slow learners (i.e., students with borderline intellectual functioning) represent one of the most challenging student populations for administrators and teachers. Standard systems and supports are often ineffective*” (Steven, 2010, p.12). Generally, students with below average, considered as slow learners in which they take an integral part of school's population that definitely needs more help and support from both administrators and teachers, because they undoubtedly have difficulties to deal with this category of students. Since, they help them to overcome these difficulties by supporting and encouraging them, automatically and overtime, slow learners will be well established at high schools.

According to doctor Taouinet (2011), who is a teacher of social science in the field of psychology in Algerian university:

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Slow learners are students who don't have any physical problems, but they still have problems with learning because of reasons have no relation with them (for example the kind of teaching) or their way of thinking is not the same as their teachers. As a result, they can't learn in an effective way even when they try until they give up. In this regard, it occurs a set of unlike habits for them in which there are who see them as a reason to their below average. In fact, they are not. (2011, p.7)

Unquestionably, students who don't have any physical, mental, or psychological problems, but they can't cope with instructions given by teachers in one or more subjects, and this delay occurs in exams (their failure), they are considered as slow learners, even when they succeed in one exam, they can't be aware of this result whether it is true or not. Doctor Taouinet (2011) believed that this sort of students or children has been categorized by a number of characteristics which are:

- ❖ Inability to understand things without diagnostic illustration or the explanation more than twice.
- ❖ Their learning needs a long time more than the other students because of their poor attention.
- ❖ The inability to memorize because they have problems in their long term memory.
- ❖ They have problems to understand their teachers' strategies in teaching.
- ❖ They are less self confident than the others that's why they are a bit confused about their answers.

Why Taouinet (2011) focuses on this category of students? Of course, because if any child who have physical, psycho-social, or mental problems, he automatically find difficulties in learning and loses his desire to study. Consequently, his slow in learning is normal and logical, but when it comes to slow learners, it is not their problem in which they face a several problems within schools, teachers as well as the educational system. Unfortunately, they become the only victims in school, without recognizing the reasons behind this. More importantly, it will increase unexpected consequences and results (social and psychological problems) which negatively influence their life; in addition people see them as lazy, disinterested, irresponsible students. In fact, these kind of people are the main reason of this problem .Since, they take their case into consideration, they may help them learn effectively because motivation is the first step of succeed.

Chauhan (2011) states that students with IQ 80 to 90 who are traditionally labeled dull, they are generally slower to catch on whatever is being taught if it involves symbolic, abstract or conceptual subject matter. According to her, slow learners are children who are so

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backward in basic subjects that approximately exist in every school (it represents about 8 percent of the total school population). Their ability to deal with abstract and symbolic materials, (i.e. language, number and concepts) is very limited and their reasoning in practical situation is inferior to that of average students. In Chauchan's view, *"these pupils differ slightly from normal students in learning ability. They are also unable to deal with relatively complex games and school assignments"* (Chauchan, 2011, p.279). It means that even with other activities slow learners are different from other students; they don't share the same abilities. Most of slow learners have problems with classes and teachers in terms of form or teachers' strategies; that's why they need a special help in order to have their attention. Moreover, Chauchan (2011) believed that their ability to deal with abstract ideas like numbers, symbols is limited. Chauchan (2011) confirmed that:

In teaching backward children, the mental age is often taken as a guide to the levels of attainment to be expected of pupils. Thus, if a child's mental age is 10 years, we assume that his attainment age should also be at the 10 year level. On the contrary, if his attainment age falls below his mental age he is considered a slow learner. (2011, p.280)

That is to say backward children are those pupils who have less mental, cognitive abilities than other pupils at the same age. Slow learners have been classified in terms of mental abilities as well as their rate of learning. Kirk (1962) refused the idea that slow learners are the same with those who are mentally retarded, in which he argued that the slow learner may achieve well and succeed if he encourages himself to adjust with regular classroom programs because they are different from under achiever and learning disabled.

1.3. The characteristics of growth of slow learners

Slow learners are categorized by different characteristics in terms of their growth or development; these characteristics are summarized as follow:

1.4.1. Physical characteristics

According to studies and researches have been recently done; they show that slow learners' rate of growth doesn't the same as the other children because they are less taller, less comports as well as more weightier. On the other hand, they may have problems in hearing, problems in utterance; in addition there are some studies which prove that the majority of slow learners have general weakness. Khouri (2002) stated that *"this general weakness happen with them before going to school, in which it occurs as a number of illnesses depends on genetic factors and the environment as well"* (Khouri , 2002. P55), according to him these problems happen with slow children because of their situation on the environment, maybe

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they grow up with the need to sleep or to eat or maybe these problems are inherited. Despite the fact that the other children may have these problems too, but parents have to pay more attention if they happen with slow learners in order to help them feel more comfortable and relaxed because they need to be more secure of both the psychological and mental levels as well.

1.4.2. Cognitive characteristics

Slow learners have problem with their cognitive abilities in which it is the main factor for being slow in learning. According to khouri (2002) they are different from the other children because they are weak when it comes to thinking skills including recognition, analysis, synthesizing and reasoning , and all these factors are related to intelligence, in addition to that they may generally have trouble with attention span especially with abstract thinking. Hence, they are not mentally retarded.

1.4.3. Psycho-social characteristics

Slow learners' children are less self-confident; they rely on the others, and trust them more than themselves. They are confused at the social level and distressed at the emotional level maybe because of their lack of emotional growth or lack of secure environment.

1.5. Types of slow learners

Slow learning is divided into two main types, the first category is concerned with children who have difficulties caused by their limited mental abilities, and the second category is concerned with children who have difficulties with all subjects (general weaknesses) or only with some of them (specific). According to Chauhan (2011, p.281), the most namely types of slow learners are:

a. The children requiring separation or segregated set-up

This category of children has been categorized by suffering of learning retardation and educational backwardness caused by their limited mental abilities; for example having problems on their cognitive skills (mental retardation development) related to other socio-psychological troubles. They need more help and attention at school that's why they require more special schools and classes.

b. The children served in integrated general set-up

This sort of children has fewer problems with learning than the first type in terms of learning retardation and academic backwardness. Additionally, their backwardness is divided into two types: general and specific. The child who has general weakness or backwardness, he

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is certainly weak in all subjects. However, the child who has specific backwardness, he has difficulty with one or two subjects, and he does well on the other subjects.

1.6. Signs and symptoms of slow learning

Identifying slow learners is an essential issue that must be taken into account by teachers, parents and even administrators because they have to be aware of whether their pupils are slow learners or not, and this recognition has been known through set of signs or symptoms must be carefully observed by both parents and teachers. Dasaradhi et al (2016, p.560) summarize the signs of slow learning as follow:

- Problems with speech.
- Language development problem (broken sentences).
- Inadequate vocabulary.
- Short sentences, grammatically incorrect.
- Student Behavior.
- Spelling Mistake.
- Interaction with other students, they don't have self-confidence.
- Classroom Discussion is limited.
- Reading problem.

According to Dasaradhi et al (2016, p.560) the slow learner is categorized by:

- Short attention and less concentration.
- Slow reaction time.
- Having problems with abstraction and generalization.
- Trouble with making connection between words and sentences.
- They don't have the ability to make common elements into new information.
- Forgetting very quickly in addition to problems with memorizing.
- They are less creative and original.
- They have difficulties with solving problems, reasoning, as well as critical thinking.
- They have problems with higher level of thinking.

According to Chauhan (2011, pp.282-283) slow learners generally have:

❖ **Limited cognitive ability**

Conventionally, children's intelligence and mental skills are affected by the environment they live in, as well as the experiences they are dealt with because intelligence is not just an inborn process but also it is influenced by the environment and its experiences. This is what slow learners don't have; they have problems with abstract thinking, reasoning and so on.

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❖ Poor memory

Since memory is a process that includes a series of cognitive skills (recall, knowledge, recognition), and all these processes are related to learning “*Memory has been seen from the view point of a flow through model. In the flow-through model, information is stored in sensory register for a brief time before it is transferred to short-term memory and long-term memory. But the slow learners have a poor memory power.*”(Chauhan , 2011, p. 282). That is to say slow learners forget what they have been already learnt in a short time in which they have problems with memorization.

❖ lack of concentration and attention problems

Generally speaking, slow learners have short attention and lack of concentration, in which they can't follow the teacher explanation more than thirty minutes. In this regard, they need short lessons, in here; the teacher must be intelligent in choosing his materials of teaching because they must be concrete and various.

❖ incapability to express ideas

Traditionally, the central role of both schools and teachers is teaching students reading and writing skills. However, it is important to teach them how do they express themselves and understand what others say to them. Slow learners have poor words in which they can't express themselves effectively. Moreover, they have problems with communication with others because they can't remember messages and listen to an instruction that's why they can't express themselves.

1.7. The difference between slow learner and learner disabled

It is so interesting to identify slow learners at class as more important to recognize whose children who have specific learning disability. Furthermore, there is a distinction between the two concepts. Griffin (1978) argued that slow learners are students who take more time to learn than their peers. However, they do not have any learning disability which needs special education. In other word, they do not share the same average as their friends or peers. They are slow in learning some subject at school because of heredity, rejection from parents, teachers, or others, low nutrition, and other reasons. On the other hand, Harwell (2001, p.1) argued that “learning disability is a neurological disorder”. This means that it is a brain disorder regarded as a difficulty in the use of learning skills such as reading or writing caused by the dysfunction of the nervous system .Moreover, learning disability cannot be fixed to someone. However, he may succeed in his studies and his life as well.

Generally speaking, a child who has difficulty with learning may have deficit on the basic central neurons that's why children with learning disability may have problems with reading,

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spelling, mathematic....etc. Moreover, each school contains children with learning difficulty or disability; some of them find difficulties with reading. On the other hand, there are who have difficulty with mathematics (learning tables of multiplication), and without doubt, it's a big challenge for teachers to identify them among all students in order to help, encourage and to support them to overcome the challenges of learning disability.

The main difference between slow learner and learner disabled is at the level of intelligence, in which the learners' disabled level of intelligence is 90° as the normal learners but they have problems with writing or reading or counting because of problems on their cognitive skills(memory, attention...etc). Whereas the slow learners' level of intelligence is between 76 and 89°, in addition they have problems with all the subjects (low average) because they take a long time to learn or to understand.

1.8. Factors that influence learning

Learning as a process has been related to our behavior has been influenced by several factors, including individual characteristics, families' factors in addition to their situations at school and class as well. All these factors play a central role on child's education in terms of child personal experiences in learning or his self-image as a learner. Hence, to be aware of all these important factors is the key of successful teaching because it will help teachers to implement a set of affective strategies and techniques to help those children with slow learning. Scientific research on school learning has examined various school factors, which include school systems, and schools' organizational structures and curricula (Wang et al., 1994). These studies prove that there are factors which influence child's learning such as individual's characteristics and strategies have been used in teaching. More importantly, Aro et al (2005) argued that:

We must not focus merely on the child and his/ her skills or lack of skills as we examine problems with learning. We must perceive the child as a part of his/her environment, understanding that today's difficulties may spring from the Child's early experiences and familial factors in addition to the impact of diverse environmental variables, cultural customs, and other unique local structures.(Aro et al, 2002, p.12).

It means that the factors surrounding by children must be taken into consideration including the family, environment and school because they may affect their learning negatively without just focusing on child's skills.

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1.8.1. The school as a factor

It is widely known that the school is the place where important decisions and effective teaching and support for learning take place. A successful teacher is a person whereby effective strategies of teaching are implemented by taken into account the differences among learners; for example: in many African countries, the curriculum is very strict and the teacher is obliged to follow the syllabus that has been officially established. On the other hand, in African context, such as in Zambia, Kenya and Namibia, the respective Ministries of education are responsible of formulating the curriculum, and for each grade level, the syllabus is a part of the curriculum, and teachers have to create their plans of teaching through that syllabus using their guides and pupil's text books.

Student's support of learning comes from the collaboration between both school and home as well, in which this collaboration between them play an integral role in the well-being students. Furthermore, the school is the place where the students learn and educate. Therefore, it must be effective and beneficial.

1.8.2. The classroom as a factor

According to research, the class experiences and teaching have a greater effect on learning results than the general policies and operations of the school (see Wang et al., 1994). That is to say classroom environment certainly affects student's learning; according to Aro et al (2005): the class must contain several comfortable elements that help students learn effectively like the feeling of affinity for the class, reward structures, goal orientation and workable routines. According to them, the classroom is considered as workplace where the pupils find functionality, sufficient lighting, as well as suitable design for teaching.

Pupils learn effectively when teachers use several sensory methods during teaching. In elementary level, pupils prefer and enjoy learning with pictures and tactile cues; also it is very important to pay attention to the time pupils take to perform without neglecting the homework have been done to the pupils and the their teacher's feedback. Moreover, "the teacher's skills in managing and guiding the class are vital. This includes efficient daily practices and the use of teaching materials, as well as controlling disturbing factors and problem behavior within the class. The amount and quality of interaction in learning and teacher-student relations also affect the efficiency of learning" (Aro et al., 2005, p.17). So, the teacher has to be the controller of the class in which he must take everything happens within the classroom into consideration in order to enhance learning to be more effective.

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1.8.3. The home as a factor

As an important duty to the family is offering care and nurturing to their children. They have to take care of their studies by supporting them and showing interest to their learning, as responsible parents, they must show an importance to their children's studies and contribute with their events at school. If there is any problem with learning have been happened with them, they come as a first source of security and enjoyment.

According to research done in African countries, the problems have been faced by parents on their own education affect their child's motivation. Gachathi (1976) believed that there is a strong relationship between the level of parent's education and their children achievement motivation, for example, if parents are educated, they motivate their children to learn because the child can't set goals by himself, he needs the assistant of his parents. Another factor that influences learning is poverty, according to research done by Mebnzi (1997) who argued that socioeconomic background affects learning to read because there are parents who can't buy books to their children, while the rich parents can require all the material of learning to them.

1.9. The causes behind slow learning of children

Unquestionably, slow learning is a learning difficulty used to describe students who learn slowly than their peers in terms of understanding or achieving. Such a problem turns back to numerous reasons which can be inward or outward, these reasons summarized as follow:

1.9.1. Genetic factors

There are some studies which prove that there are some slow learners who were born with such a problem caused by brain injuries or mother's drinking alcohol during the period of pregnancy....etc. It means that one of the causes of slow learning is related to their mothers during the pregnancy. There are who see that the main cause of student's below average is heredity which means that it is something may refers to parents or any member of the family.

1.9.2. Educational factors

One of the reasons behind slow learning refers to school and the quality of teaching, in which there are some schools who has strict curriculum, bad and irresponsible teachers, huge number of lessons. All these factors conclusively affect student's learning, and the majority of students can't adapt with these quality of school and teachers as well. Boudebza (2016,p.89) emphasizes on the role of school materials, books as well as the obligation of pupils to write with one hand can cause difficulty on writing as specific and learning difficulty as general.

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1.9.3. Psychological factors

Boudebza (2016) believed that there several factors that affect the child's learning which include all what have been happened with him at the period of pre-school (environmental and family situations) for example: the divorce of parents, problems at home, in addition to that the rejection from peers, teachers, and parents. So, both period's infancy and preschool are the most important periods among all human's life.

1.9.4. Physical factors

There are some children who have medical problems which affect negatively their learning, such as: problems on their eyes (they can't see clearly) or problems on their ears (they cannot hear clearly). Since parents neglect their children and do not take care of them, in that situation they cannot learn effectively. Therefore, they must regularly follow their child's medical state in order to be aware of the consequences behind such a problem.

Conclusion

In several studies, it is shown that there are several factors that influence child's learning including their environment, physical and psychological states and so on. These factors constantly have a negative effect on their performance. This chapter discusses the notions of learning and slow learning. It sheds the light on the main characteristics of this sort of learners, the difference between slow learning and learning disabled. Moreover, this theoretical chapter represents distinctive views and perspectives of some theorists and scholars such as Bloom, Piaget, and so on concerning the causes behind children's slow learning.

Chapter one: the slow learner development

Chapter two: data collection and analysis

Introduction

This study aims to seek and examine the reasons behind pupil's slow learning at primary schools as well as the strategies done by teachers to help them learn the academic skills. On the other hand it tries to find out the authentic factors that negatively influence their learning and achievement as well. That's why it should be supported by information collected from people most connected with them. These data will be collected through two main tools. The first one "questionnaire" is given to teachers at primary schools, and the second one "interview" is delivered to their parents at home to discuss with them what are the mains signs that lead us to deduce the causes of their below average as well as how they influence their achievement. Therefore, in this chapter a description will take place to teachers and parents' sample as well as their questionnaire and interview. It tends also to analyze and interpret them.

2.1. Teachers questionnaire

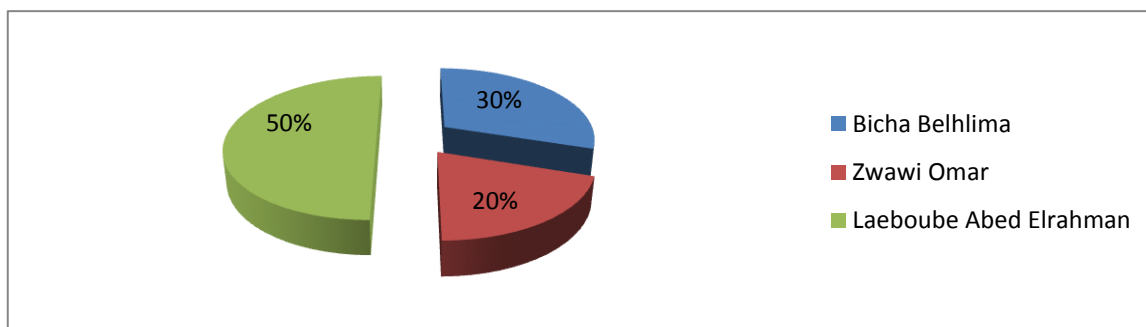
2.1.1. Description of the sample

The sample of this study consists of primary schools' teachers. Most of them are teachers of second and third year primary school.

The population of this study consists of 10 teachers taken from three different primary schools in Tisemssilt. Bicha Belhlma, Omar Zwawi and Abed El Rahman laeboube.

Schools	N of teachers
Bicha Belhlma	3
Zwawi Omar	2
Laeboube Abed Elrahman	5
Total	10

Table 2.1: Numbers of teachers from each school



Graph 2.1: numbers of teachers from each school

2.1.2. Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is an effective way of collecting data concerning a current topic. That's why it takes place in this study in order to investigate what is behind pupil's slow learning at first period of their learning which is primary school. This questionnaire consists of 18 questions that have been given to their teachers; and divided into three main sections: the first one is consisted of five questions which represent related information to pupils, the second one is consisted of five questions which represents strategies of identification of slow learners and the last one is composed of nine questions which aims to examine the strategies and techniques used by teachers to help and support them. The questions are either closed, requiring the teachers to choose "yes" or "no", or to tick out the appropriate answer from a number of choices. While some other questions need their justification.

1.3. Questionnaire analysis

a. Section 01: Related information to pupils

1. Have you ever been confronted to "Slow Learners" within your class? Why do you categorize them as slow learners?

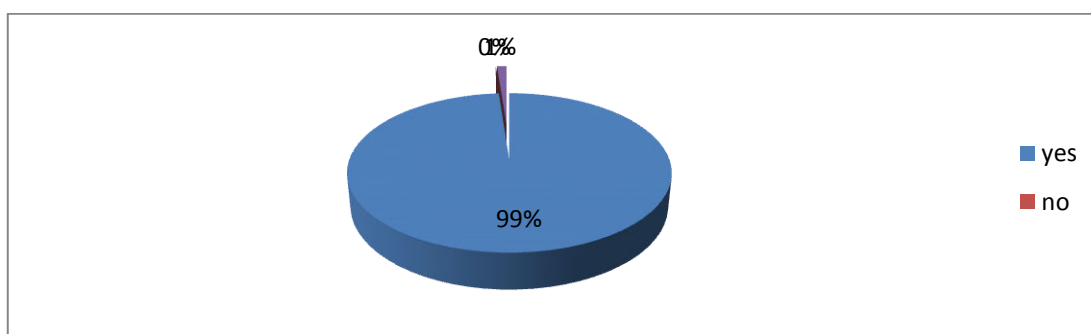
A. Yes

b. no

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. Yes	10	100
b. No	0	0
Total	10	100 %

Table 2.2: confronting slow learners within classroom



Graph 2.2 : confronting with slow learners

Generally, all teachers at primary schools (100%) are confronted with pupils who have problems with learning or slow learners, that's why all of them have been answered "yes", while none (0%) has been answered "no".

2. Why do you categorize them as slow learners?

Teachers at primary schools categorize pupils as slow learners because of various reasons. Firstly, through observation in which they usually observe that they take more time to understand than their peers at the same age, also they briefly lose attention. Secondly, they can't concentrate and have problems with all subjects because of their horrible and weak marks at exams.

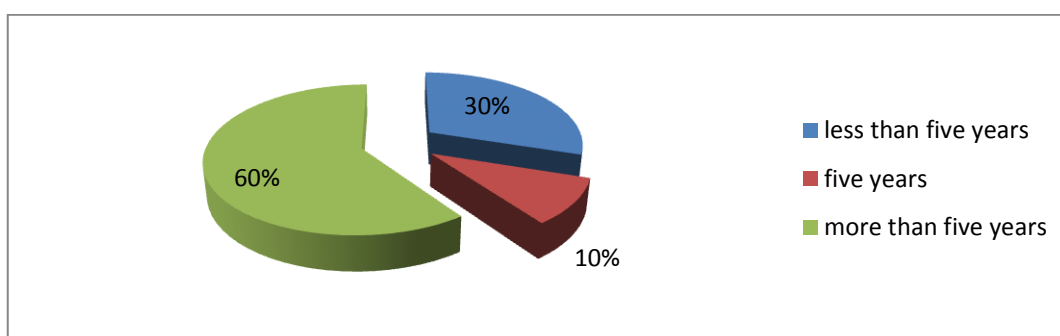
2. How long have you taught this category of children?

1. Less than five years
2. Five years
3. More than five years

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. Less than five years	3	30
b. Five years	1	10
c. More than five years	6	60
Total	10	100%

Table 2.3: teaching experience of slow learners



Graph 2.3: teacher's experience with slow learners

The majority of teachers (6) have more than five years experience of teaching slow learners, and only (3) have five years experience of teaching, while only one teacher has less than five years teaching slow learners. This proves that the majority of them are familiar with that problem which is slow learning.

4. Have these children repeated a grade?

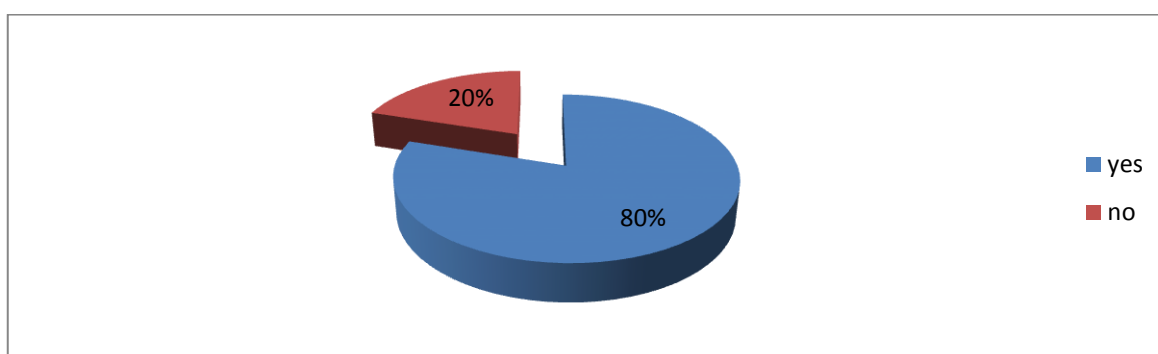
A. yes

b. no

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. Yes	8	80
b. no	2	20
Total	10	100%

Table 2.4: Student's grade repetition



Graph 2.4 :pupils' grade repetition

Almost, all teachers (8) said that the slow learners have been repeated a grade, whereas just two teachers (2%) answered that no one has repeated a grade, that's why the majority of slow learners have less than average level.

5. If yes, which grade?

There are some teachers who have answered that they repeated the second grade, while others affirmed that they repeated the third, and there are some teachers who said that it depends on the pupils in which there are who repeated the first, the second and so on.

b. Section02: Identification of slow learners

1. How do you identify them at the first time?

- A. Using an entry test at the beginning of the semester.
- B. Using the students' exam results from previous years.
- C. Using the result of continuous assessment.
- D. Using intelligence test.

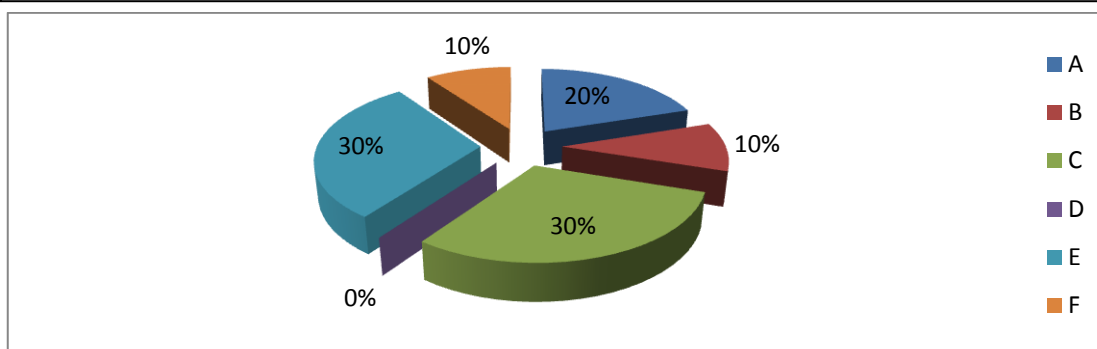
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E. Using observation of the learners in class.

f. Don't identify slow learners.

Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
A	2	20
B	1	10
C	3	30
D	0	00
E	3	30
F	1	10
Total	10	100%

Table 2.5: identification of Slow Learners



Graph 2.5: identification of slow learners

It is revealed that (30%) of teachers take the results of continuous assessment as a strategy of identification of slow learners, also (30%) of them prefer just to observe their students at classroom in order to distinguish between the average and the slow learners. While (20%) of them make an entry test at the beginning of the semester, and just (10%) of teachers rely on students' results of previous years. On the other hand (10%) of them don't identify them at all, and none use an intelligence test.

2. Do your pupils have problems with all subjects?

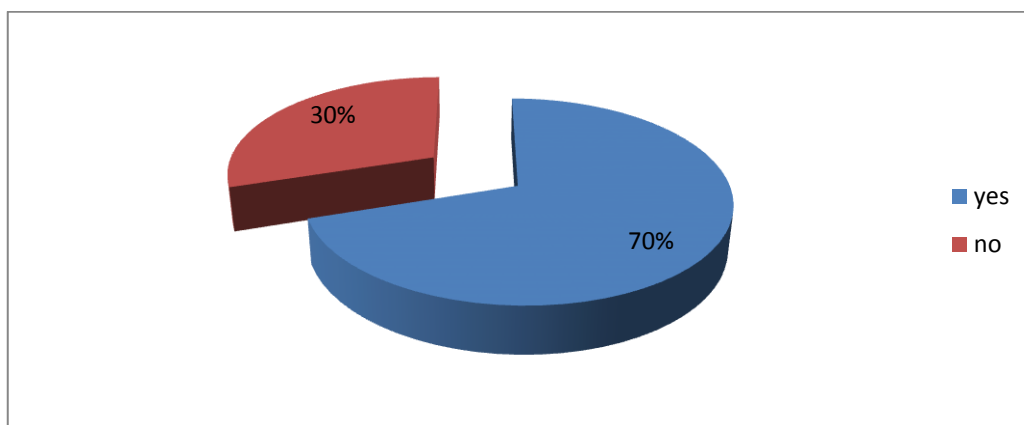
A. Yes

B. no, which ones?

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. Yes	7	70
b. no	3	30
Total	10	100%

Table 2.6: pupils' subjects' problems



Graph 2.6: pupils' subjects' problems

The majority of teachers (80%) said that their pupils' slow learning have problem with almost all the academic subjects, on the other hand (30%) of them answered that their pupils don't have problems with all subject in which there are who confirmed that this kind of students just have problems with subjects that need problem solving or thinking skills such as the scientific subjects. Whereas others believed that there are students who have problems with reading and writing.

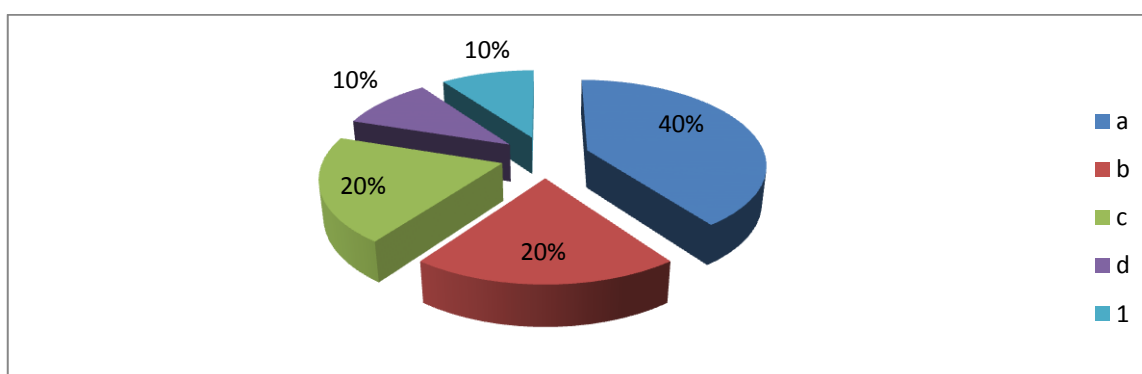
3. What are the pupils' main difficulties that you have observed?

- general ability problems.
- attention problems.
- memorization problems.
- visual problems.
- language problems and mathematical

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
A	4	40
B	4	40
C	2	20
D	2	20
E	1	10
Total	10	100%

Table 2.7: pupils' difficulties in learning



Graph 2.7 : pupils' difficulties in learning

This rate show that (40%) of teachers answered that their students have general ability problems, however (20%) of them noticed that the majority of their slow learners have problems with attention in which they can't concentrate on the lecture more than half an hour in addition the same rate of teachers (20%) believed that their learners have problems with memorization,, while (10%) of teachers answered that their learners suffered from visual problems. Whereas just (10%) of teachers supposed that their pupils have difficulties with language (writing and reading) and mathematical problems as well.

2. What do you think of the reasons behind the pupils' slow learning?

Teachers' answers were nearly similar. Almost all of them agreed that students 'problems with learning depend on their family situations maybe because they are neglected by their parents in which they don't control them as much as they can (related to types of parents). In addition some teachers declared that students can't learn effectively because there are who have medical problems such as poor eyesight.

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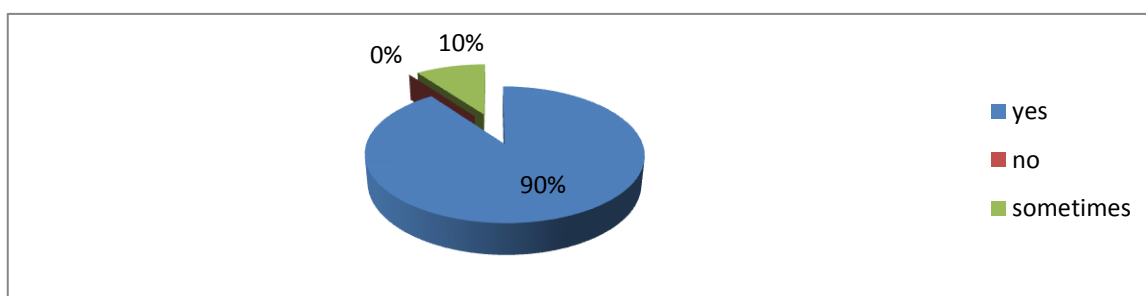
Moreover, there are some teachers who said that the main reason of child's slow learning refers to his abilities in which he doesn't have enough learning capacities (they are useless and careless). Shyness also can consider as a factor that influence students' learning.

4. Do these reasons affect their achievement?

A. yes b. no c. sometimes

Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. Yes	9	90
b. No	0	0
c. sometimes	1	10
Total	10	100%

Table 2.8: the influence of slow learning on pupils' achievement



Graph 2.8: the influence of slow learning on students' achievement

The majority of teachers (90%) said that students' slow learning influence their achievement at school, while just (10%) believed that it sometimes affects their achievement, while none answered "no" in which almost all of them said that unquestionably slow learning affects students' achievement.

Almost all teachers' said that students' slow learning affect their achievement negatively because the result of such a problem occurs on exams and tests. Moreover, their bad and horrible marks prove that how their slowness on learning influences their accomplishment, in addition to the feedback given by their teachers as well as their assessment.

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c. Section 3: strategies for teachers to support slow learners

1. Do you change your language to suit their level?

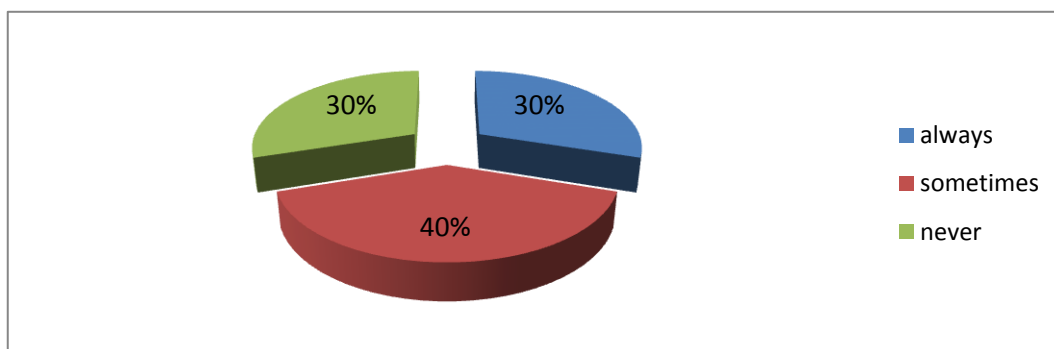
a. always

b. sometimes

c. never

Answers	N of teachers	percentage
a. Always	3	30
b. Sometimes	4	40
c. Never	3	30
Total	10	100%

Table2.9 : changing the language



Graph 2.9 : Changing the language

The results above shows that (40%) of teachers changed their language to suit their learners' level from time to time. Though, (30%) of them always take it as a good strategy and always change it in order to help their learners understand. While (30%) of them never change their language and their answers were “never”.

2. Do you react politely when they answer even if they are incorrect?

a. always

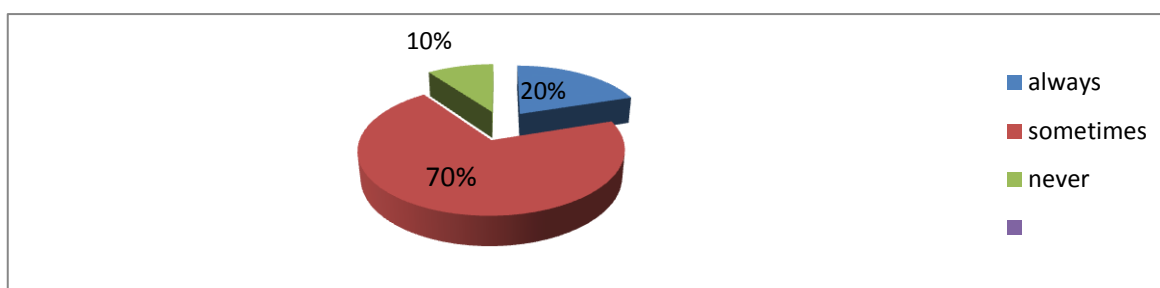
b. sometimes

c. never

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. Always	2	20%
b. Sometimes	7	70%
c. never	1	10%
Total	10	100%

Table 2.10: teachers' reaction to slow learners



Graph 2.10: teachers' reaction to slow learners

Nearly all teachers (70%) answered that they sometimes react politely when slow learners answered incorrect. Whereas (20%) of them always have a positive reaction to those learners. On the other hand just (10%) of them said that they never reply politely to those who slow learners who respond incorrect in which they use different kind of punishment.

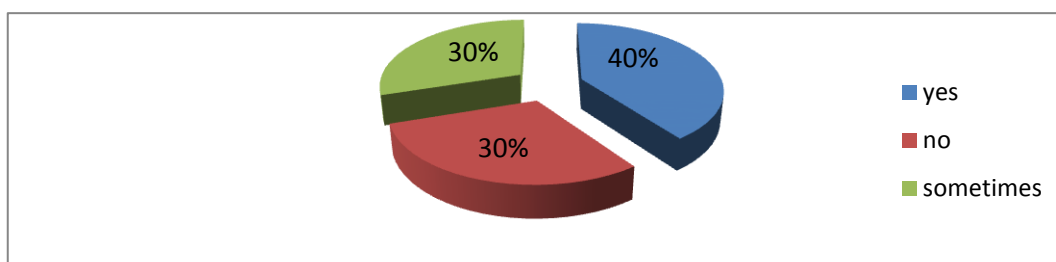
3. Do you group slow learners with normal students in group activities?

a. yes b. no c. sometimes

Answers	N of teachers	percentage
a. yes	4	40
b. no	3	30
c. sometimes	3	30
Total	10	100%

Table 2.11: grouping slow learners with normal pupils

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Graph 2.11: grouping slow learners with normal students

The result of both the table and the figure above shows that most of teachers (40%) believed in grouping slow learners with average students. On the hand, (30%) of them said that they don't use this technique which is grouping slow learners with normal students. While (30%) of them answered that they use it but from time to time.

Teachers who said that they use group work within their class (group slow learners with normal students). They said that it is an effective way to motivate students to learn from each other also to encourage them to avoid shyness.

4. Do you take into consideration your learner's learning style by using deferent teaching techniques to help them?

a. always

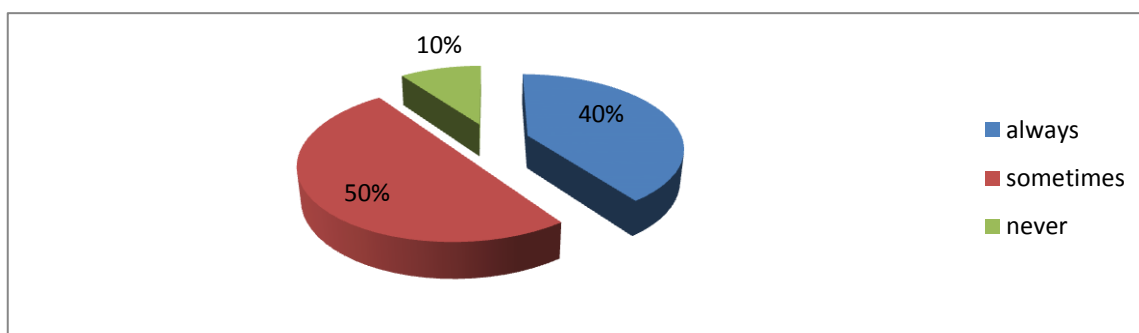
b. sometimes

c. never

Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. always	4	40
b. sometimes	5	50
c. never	1	10
Total	10	100%

Table 2.12: techniques of teaching according to students' learning styles

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Graph 2.12: techniques of teaching according to students' learning styles

The majority of teachers (50%) believed that they sometimes vary their teaching techniques according to their learning styles. Whereas (40%) of them answered that they always change their teaching techniques that suit their learners' styles. On the other hand (10%) respond that they never use their teaching techniques in order to help their students learn.

5. Do you analyze and simplify difficult tasks as well as using simple vocabulary in explanation?

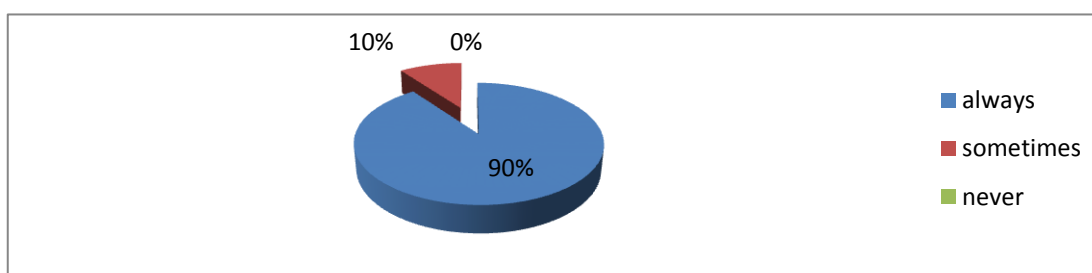
a. always

b. sometimes

c. never

Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. always	9	90
b. sometimes	1	10
c. never	0	0
Total	10	100

Table 2.13: analyzing and simplifying difficult tasks



Graph 2.13: analyzing and simplifying difficult tasks

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It is revealed that almost all teachers (90%) analyze and simplify difficult tasks as well as they use simple vocabulary in explanation. Whereas just (10) of them sometimes simplify learning to their students. While none answered that they never simplify and analyze their learning and use a simple language in order to make learning easy.

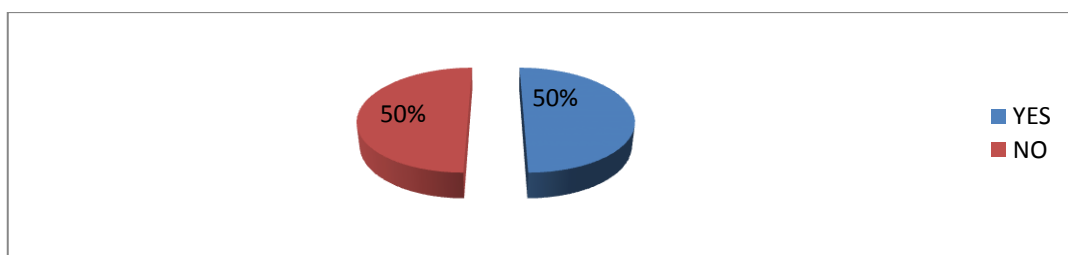
6. Do you try to understand the reasons behind their weaknesses?

a. yes

b. no

Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. yes	5	50
b. no	5	50
Total	10	100%

Table 2.14: Understanding the reasons behind students' weaknesses



Graph 2.14: Understanding the reasons behind students' weaknesses

The result shows that half of teachers (50%) answered that they try to understand the reasons behind students' weaknesses. On the other hand half of them (50%) said that they don't seek to the reasons that lead students to be slow in learning.

8. Do you help them by providing them with special activities and give them more time to think?

a. always

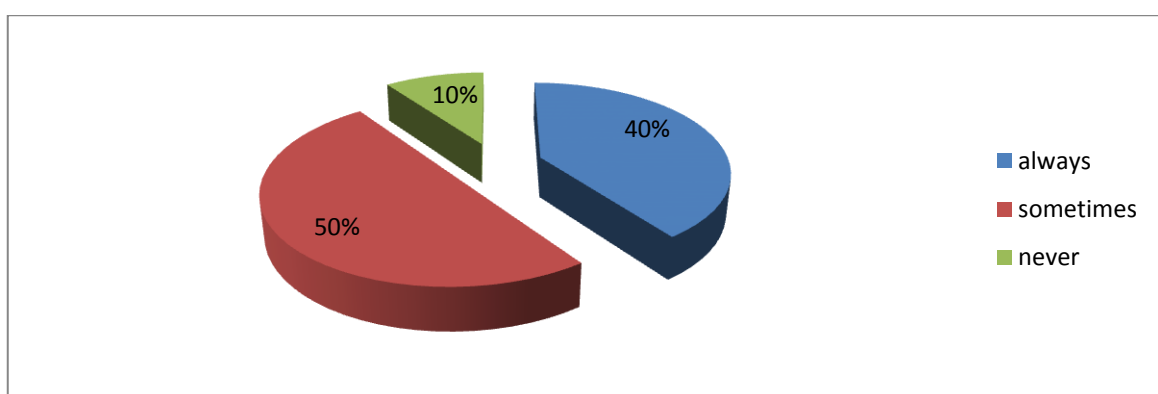
b. sometimes

c. never

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. always	4	40
b. sometimes	5	50
c. never	1	10
Total	10	100

Table 2.15: providing special activities and giving more time to think



Graph 2.15: providing special activities and giving more time to think

Almost all teachers (50%) said that they sometimes provide their slow learners with special activities and give them more times to think. While (40%) of them always provide this category of learners with tasks and activities to help them as well as they give them extra time to think. Whereas (10%) of them never provide special activities or even give them more time to think.

9. Do you meet their parents to discuss their children's' problems with learning.

a. always

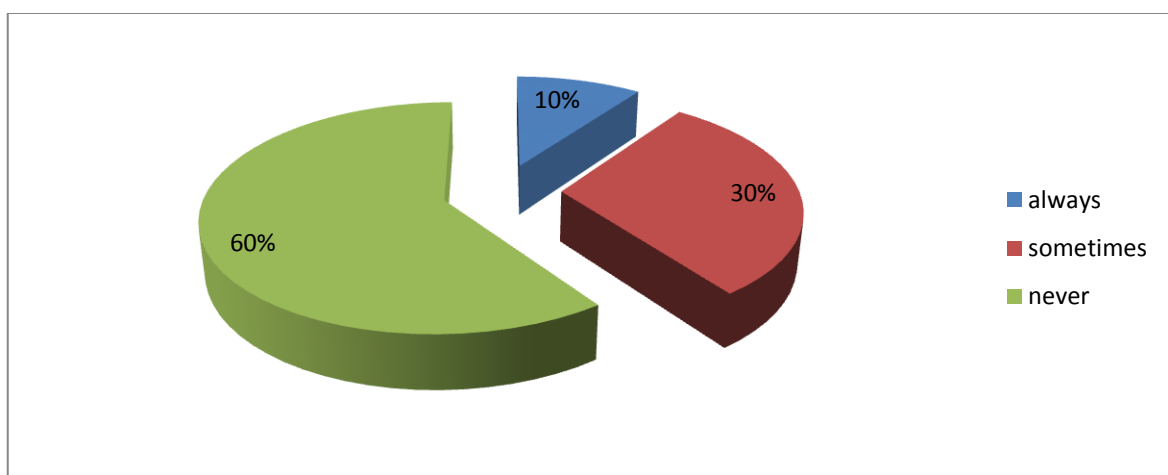
b. sometimes

c. never

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Answers	N of teachers	Percentage
a. always	1	10
b. sometimes	3	30
c. never	6	60
Total	10	100%

Table 2.16: Meeting students' parents



Graph 2.16: Meeting students' parents

It is mentioned on the results above that the majority of teachers (60%) answered that they never meet their students' parents in order to discuss with them their child's problems with learning. However, (30%) of them said that they meet them but from time to time but depends on their parents. Whereas (10%) believed that they always meet them in order to tackle their children's difficulties with learning.

2. Parent's interview

This interview is delivered to parents of some students (cases of slow learners). These cases have been chosen from different primary schools in order to investigate

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the reasons behind their weaknesses because “parental involvement plays a significant role in building the foundation for better-educated children” (Barnett, 2003). This means that student’s success on learning has been started from their environment. Moreover, the purpose of this case study is to examine the real causes that impact child’s learning at the first period of his educational journey which is primary school.

In the parent interview, I used nine (09) open-ended questions to understand the real situations of three cases of children. Each participant (mother or father) was interviewed face to face on site for approximately 50 minutes. The questions include: (a) question to the mother, did you face any problems during the period of pregnancy? (b) Do you have any family problems? (c) What is your social state? (d) Does your child have health problems, and does he/she take medicines? Which kind of illnesses? Are they related to hearing or watching? (e) How do you describe your child periods of infancy and early childhood, from birth to school? (f) Have you noticed before that your child has problems with attention, concentration as well as memorization? When exactly? (g) Did you put them in the kidding garden at the period of preschool in order to get them ready to learn? (h) Did you trace your child’s school formation? (I) Have you ever noticed that your child is slow learner, and try to look for the reasons behind this problem? I used an interview as a second method of collecting data in this study because parents are in daily contact with their children.

2.1. Description of the interview

a. Case one:

Iyad is a child at second year primary school, he has 07 years. He is slow learner in which he has problems with all subjects. He lives in a small family in which both of his parents work. At age of four he made an accident in which the injury was on his hear. He spent all his period of infancy with his grandmother. His marks at the first year were very weak in all subjects.

b. Case two:

Wafaa is a child at fourth year primary school, she has nine years. She has problems with learning; she has problems with attention and concentration. Her father is an employee but he is not educated and her mother works on the court.

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Wafaa has problems with reading, writing attention as well as memorization that's why she always takes bad marks.

c. Case three:

Mohamed studies at first year primary school, he has six years old. He is the youngest on his family in which he has seven sisters and brothers. All of them didn't continue their studies; they left school in early age. His mother is a house wife. She has a chronic disease. His father is a retired. His mother gave him birth at a very late age. He has malnutrition. He has problems with learning even the alphabet and numbers. He can't adjust with education settings.

2.2. Interview analysis

Q 01: Do you face any problems during the period of pregnancy?

According to parents' answers, both Iyad's and Mohamed's mothers didn't face problems during pregnancy. However, unfortunately Wafaa's mother suffered from "Anemia".

Q 02: do you have any family problems?

According to the participants, all of the cases families have problems but it depends on which problems they have and how to deal with such a problem.

Q 03: What is your social state?

According to the interviews above, Iyad's mother and father are always busy. It means that they don't have much time to care of their child. While, Wafaa's home situation is good. On the other hand Mohamed's family situation is not good at all because of his mother's illness, father's pressure...etc.

Q 04: Does your child have health problems, and does he/she take medicines?

Which kind of illnesses? Are they related to hearing or watching?

The result shows that, both Iyad and wafaa don't have any illnesses. But Iyad was taking medicines at age of four. On the other hand Mohamed is suffering from "Anemia" because of his malnutrition as well as he has poor eyesight, and he never takes medicines.

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Q 05: How do you describe your child periods of infancy and early childhood, from birth to school?

All most all children's periods of infancy were quite similar in which all of them spent it far than their parents. They were addicted to watching so much TV and so on. They were not interested to schools materials such as copybook, pen..etc.

Q 06: Have you noticed before that your child has problems with attention, concentration as well as memorization? When exactly?

According to participants' answers, both Iyad and Wafaa have problems with concentration, attention, and memorization, and this happened with them at age of three. Whereas, has not (according to mother's answer).

Q 07: Did you put them in the kidding garden at the period of preschool in order to get them ready to learn?

According to the interviewees, both Iyad and Mohamed never go to the kidding garden in order to get ready to learn. Whereas, Wafaa stays there just one day because she can't adjust with that place.

Q 08: Did you trace your child's school formation?

According to participants' answers, both Wafaa and Mohamed are not followed by their parents in terms of school formation. While, Iyad is under control by his parents.

Q 09: Have you ever noticed that your child is slow learner, and try to look for the reasons behind this problem?

After the discussion with the participants, Iyad's parents noticed before that his child is a slow learner and they started looking for the reasons and solutions as well. They think that his teacher is the main reason behind their child bad results. On the other hand, only Wafaa's mother who notices that her daughter is slow learner, however her father thinks that she is like him when he was young. The third case, Mohamed's father thinks that his child is stupid and better for him to stop his studies as soon as he can, and start thinking of the future (looking for a job).

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Conclusion:

In this case study, I examined the causes behind slow learning of children at primary schools through two different techniques. The first one was questionnaire delivered to teachers at three different schools in order to investigate the strategies done by them to help and support this category of children which needs additional help. The second one was an interview done with parents of three cases of children that have been chosen from different schools, different ages as well as different genders. This chapter contains data collection and data analysis of both questionnaire and interview which at the end aim to identify the real reasons behind pupils' slow learning as well as how does this problem impacts their achievements, by coming back to their teachers' professional development and parental involvement which have a strong relationship with their outcomes.

Chapter three: discussion of the findings and recommendations

Introduction

Slow learning as a term used to describe students with below average cognitive abilities; those who generally have problems in acquiring necessary intellectual skills, requires more awareness and care from both parents and teachers. Those slow learners surely need more attention, more help and repetition from their teachers as well as more emotional support from their parents. More importantly, understanding the reasons behind student's difficulties with learning and looking for solutions to such a problem regard as a challenge, this incontestably involves patient and regular strategies. On the one hand, this chapter depicts discussion of the findings have been done in the previous chapter including both teachers' questionnaire and parents' interview. On the other hand, it attempts to propose a number of technical strategies to teachers in helping and supporting slow learners. Furthermore, it offers recommendations and helpful tips to parents in order to assist their children get rid of their obstacles in learning.

3.1. Discussion of the findings

The following findings are the ones that we got from teachers' questionnaire and parent's interview:

3.1.1 Teachers' questionnaire

According to the questionnaire was distributed to teachers at different primary schools, we attempts to find different results which were developed based on the literature review and were guided by relevant parts of the issue.

The results of the first section shows that all most every class consisted of number of slow learners according to teacher' at different primary schools; they were confronted with this category of learners. Moreover, through observation and students' results on exams and tests they considered as slow learners in addition to that the majority of teachers were experienced teaching that kind of learners more than five years it means that they were familiar with them also the results shows that the majority of students were repeated a grade which means that their marks were weak and less than average and they really have problems with learning.

Pertaining to the second section which concerned with identification of slow learners, we have discovered that teachers used different methods and techniques in order

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to distinguish between the average and the slow learners which certainly differ from one teacher to another. More importantly, the majority of teachers rely on less formal techniques such as observation of the learners at class and using continuous assessment. However, others basically used more formal techniques such as tests and exams. According to those teachers' effective strategies and systematic approach to identify slow learners are not available at most primary schools, that's why each teacher must be responsible by himself to find the appropriate tools to identify those learners. Unfortunately, (10%) of teachers said that they didn't identify slow learners which means that they are careless about their learners. Additionally, the majority of slow learners had problems with almost all academic subjects, that is to say the majority of slow learners had general ability problems as well as problem with attention in a way they lost their concentration during the lecture and exams as well. On the other hand, there are who had problems with memorization which means that they may have deficit in encoding and registering information on memory.

Furthermore, there are some learners who have visual problems which mean that they have poor eyesight which may influence their learning. While (10%) of them had problems with language including reading and writing as well as mathematical problems in a way that we may considered them as disabled learners. The reasons behind this problem, according to teachers' perspectives, were their family situations in addition to the care of their parents which mean they are the only responsible of their students below average. The poor eyesight can be considered as a factor that influences student's learning. Sorry to say, there are some teachers who said that those students are useless, careless and stupid. In fact, they are not. This category of teachers regrettably has no idea about learning and slow learners as well. Further, the greater part of teachers said that student's slow learning affects negatively their achievements and this negative effectiveness unquestionably occurs on their exams' results and their teachers' assessment and this means that students' learning was truly influenced by the previous reasons.

In terms of teachers' strategies to support and help slow learners, they were different from one teacher to another. That is to say, the most useful strategy was analyzing and simplifying difficult tasks as well as using simple vocabulary on explanation. Overall, the majority of teachers reacted politely when they answered even if they were incorrect. Unfortunately, the majority of teachers said that they never meet their learners' parents to discuss with them their learners' weaknesses. Teachers were challenged to use such

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strategies to support slow learners because sometimes they had problems with time. Likewise, and in some cases, teachers found that their parents were not sufficiently involved in supporting slow learners, in doing so those learners need additional help from their teachers. Generally speaking, it is an issue for teachers to look for effective strategies to support and help those learners to overcome their difficulties with learning.

3.1.2. Parent's interview

According to the interview done with slow learners' parents, we have found the following results:

According to Iyad's mother's answers, we have realized that Iyad is a slow learner. Further, the main reason behind his problem with learning was the ignoring of his parents at the period of infancy and preschool ('busy parents'). More importantly, those periods are very important on the combination of child's learning skills as well as the development of his cognitive abilities because in this age he needs full attention of the parents. It is the age of his development. He learns many things from parents. Additionally, his mother said that he made an accident at age of four. Unfortunately, this accident was harm on his head which may causes a brain damage, maybe it influences his learning. Additionally, this problem affects negatively his achievement that's why he took a bad marks in almost all subjects.

After the discussion with Waffa's father we have discovered that she undoubtedly had difficulties with learning, and the main reason behind her slowness on learning was her family situation which includes family problems because of the distinction between parents, problems during the pregnancy (concerning the mother), the father was disinterested about learning because they never trace their child's school formation also he said that it is something natural. So, she needs more help and support from her parents in order to get rid of her problems with learning.

After the interview was done with Mohamed's mother, we actually came to discover that he is slow learner and his case was quite special. First, his family situation was the main reason behind his problem because he needs to be more careful from his parents (there is no support of learning at all). Second, and the most important is his physical health (Anemia) because it was terrible caused by his malnutrition at home. In no doubt, it is another main reason behind his slowness in learning. Third, the ignoring and careless of

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his parents because the child at primary period of his life needs more help and support from the other and especially from his parents, and, sorry to say, this is what Mohamed needs in order to continue his educational journey. Another factor is heredity, all Mohamed's sisters and brothers had problems with learning in which all of them left their studies in very early age. All in all, Mohamed had lack of emotional support from his large family.

3.2. Recommendations and solutions

Based on the pervious results and discussion, on the one side, these recommendations are made in order to propose some practical strategies to teachers at primary schools in order to overcome their pupil's difficulties with learning. On the other sides, they are made on the purpose of finding out solutions to their parents help them with their emotional support.

3.2.1. Strategies to teachers to support slow learners

Slow learning is a problem that exists in almost every school; it requires more responsibility and caring from teachers and parents as well. Unquestionably the professional teacher is the person who knows how to deal with this category of children that needs additional help because these learners have difficulty in some or all learning processes and master them less successfully than their peers at the same age. So, these students need special instructional strategies to overcome their difficulties on learning. Teachers considered as persons who spend a lot of time with these students, have a bigger responsibility than any other person. However, the first step is to recognize them and help them to successfully accomplish their academic goals.

- ❖ **Teaching slow learners:** Teachers should be aware of the principles of teaching which include taking into consideration the level of the learner. Furthermore, the new information must related to the old one, and teachers must respect the capacities of the learners (one idea at time) in addition to the variation of teaching techniques and methods in order to suit learners' learning styles and level as well . In short, the teacher must have an objective of what he is teaching (set goals) and recognize the effective strategies of successful teaching.
- ❖ **Encouragement and support:** The teacher should not just rely on average students by encouraging and praising them because of their good achievement.

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However, he must also encourage the slow learners and support them instead of punishing them all the time and stop considering them as stupid and useless.

- ❖ **Motivation:** Motivation is the key of success that's why teachers should take it into account because children have to be urged to learn. Experience proves that the failure of students caused by poor motivation. Therefore, effective teacher is who sets high goals for his teaching and develops structured plans to achieve those goals. What is important in teaching is how to make it interesting and challenging at the same time.
- ❖ **Making sure of learners' physical and mental health:** Teachers have to control their learner's physical and mental conditions in order to recognize whether they impact students' learning or not. For instance: learners who have poor eyesight, they can't see the black board clearly. As a result, they can't understand and concentrate in addition to those learners who have learning disabilities which make them lazy to read or write. So, teachers must talk with the administration to bring a doctor to school to diagnose those learners and treat them as soon as possible.
- ❖ **Controlling the classroom:** Teachers have to manage of the place where learners should feel comfortable and relaxed which is the classroom including the light, the black board, the chairs, the tables, the walls (pasting pictures)... etc in order to avoid everything may annoy students to learn.
- ❖ **Being friend with them:** Building a friendship relationship with them is very important factor that helps students to learn because they feel that they are interested and break down their shyness, also they feel more comfortable and start respecting the teacher.
- ❖ **Using simple language on explanation:** The language of teachers must be understood by everyone that's why it must be easy and simple in addition to that the teacher must break down difficult tasks and activities as well as giving more time to slow learners to think and react politely even if they are incorrect.
- ❖ **Grouping slow learners with average students:** Collaborative work is very effective in learning because students usually prefer to learn together in order to learn from each other
- ❖ **Using humor in teaching:** Providing activities that give more fun to the lesson is very successful and useful way that helps students in order to be well understood and easy to remember as well.

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- ❖ **Looking for extra hours in order to help them:** The good teacher is the person who helps his learners as much as he can. Why not he looks for extra hours to interact with those slow learners and providing them with simple activities and trying to understand the reasons behind their weaknesses if possible.
- ❖ **Repetition:** Since slow learners take more time to understand and they have poor concentration, teachers have to explain and saying things over and over. Repetition helps concepts to be more concrete. In this regard, the teacher has to be more intelligent by putting posters on the wall of classroom whenever the child lost his concentration, he automatically remember what the rule is or what the activity talks about.
- ❖ **Meeting their parents:** Teachers discuss with them their children's' problem with learning and trying to make their relationship stronger because it influences child's achievement. It is really important to interact with student's parents and develop a good relationship with them by encouraging them to be partners in educating their children.
- ❖ **Adding variety to academic routine:** In order to avoid boredom teachers have to make some changes to the academic routine, for example changes in activities (puzzles, games) or do scholar excursion time to time because they certainly help students learn new things in effective way. So, teachers have to change the routine as much as possible.
- ❖ **Providing concrete activities rather than abstract:** Slow learners actually prefer to learn from concrete examples rather than abstract ones, that's why the teacher should take examples from real life, authentic situations that take place on their everyday life. They are more useful and helpful as well.
- ❖ **The need of counselor or social worker at school:** Teachers have to ask the administration to bring a counselor or a social worker at school in order to let students always under control.

3.2.2. recommendations to parents to help their children

- ❖ **The importance of secure environment:** As parents, they have to take into consideration the obligation of safe atmosphere because safety takes an integral part in learning. Child's brain is interested to survive before to learn. More importantly, feeling safe is one important condition of brain development and growth.

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- ❖ **Create verbal communication with children:** Researches proved that speaking with children increases their intelligence, in which parents have to talk to their children as much as possible because whenever they talk to them positively, regularly and richly they perform better at school. However, parents must be careful of so much TV and DVD players because they drive their children to be isolated, depressed and sad. That's why they must create verbal communication with their children as much as they can.
- ❖ **Encourage open-ended play:** Psychological research confirmed that play supports a quite range of cognitive and emotional development, and a good play balanced considered as a healthy play diet for children. *Whitebread (2012, p15)* stated that:

Recent studies used a range of new research techniques, including neuroscientific and other psychological measures have shown strong and consistent relationships between children's playfulness and their cognitive and emotional development.

This means open-ended play considered as protein for neurons. They make children more creative, more socially skilled, at less stressed, better at language as well as better at memory and better at problem

- ❖ **Provide them with good nutrition:** Parents have to be more careful to their child's nutrition because it strongly influences their learning (concentration and attention), especially their breakfast. Evidence suggests that eating breakfast really does help kids learn because after fasting all night, automatically developing body (and brain) needs a fresh supply of glucose (blood sugar). Additionally, several studies prove that students who eat breakfast perform better than those who do not.
- ❖ **Planning and time management:** Parents need to be well organized especially when their children come back home. They tend to prepare a time table for them including what they have to do and what they do not. For instance, playing, watching TV, eating, and doing home. As a result, they children will be more organized and interested in learning.
- ❖ **Controlling their physical health:** Parents never ever ignore their children's health because healthy brain in healthy body. They have to examine their physical health from time to time such as controlling their eyesight, their hearing, their tooth...etc, because there is a strong relationship between physical and mental health.

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- ❖ **Establishing trust and friendship with them:** Parents must be friend with their children in order to sustain their relationship with them. In doing so, their children feel more relaxed and comfortable by asking what happened with them politely and in very civilized way. As a result, this close friendship between parents and their children aims to increase their self confidence which automatically helps to the increase of their self-esteem.
- ❖ **Be patient and consistent:** If your child does not want to study, you never force him to learn because this problem requires being more patient and consistent. Whenever you force him to do something unwillingly he may do it but the results certainly will be negative. Furthermore, if he learn and does lot of mistakes; do not blame him but let him learn from his mistakes. The more consistent parents are, the more credibility they will have.
- ❖ **Understanding your child learning style:** Parents have to recognize that children learn in different styles; there are visual learners, and there are auditory learners, musical learners and so on. Parents should understand this important point and help them as much as possible to learn after being familiar with their learning styles.
- ❖ **Using compassion:** Encourage children to learn effectively involves high compassion by hugging them as much as possible and praise them time to time to support them do better. However, parents have to avoid talking with them aggressively and stop labeling them as “dumb”, “lazy” and “stupid” or any such absurd monikers, in addition to avoiding ridiculing and laughing at them especially in front of their other sisters and brothers.
- ❖ **Tracing their school formation:** Engaging parents in the learning process regards as an important issue that basically contributes to student’s success. Parents should trace their children’s school formation as much as they can because it helps them to be aware of their child’s situation at school. Moreover, they tend to build a strong relationship with their teachers for the reason that this relationship plays a central role on student’s achievement.

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Conclusion

Conventionally, parents and teachers contribute to child's growth and development; in which both teachers' preparation and parental support help students learn effectively. From that perspective, we proposed numerous strategies and recommendations to both teachers and parents in order to assist their children who are slow learners. Conclusively, children's academic success is related to their parents' encouragement and support that's why they have to create a home learning environment for them. On the other hand, the teachers also represent a sense of recognition, understanding, guidance, and assist to those learners. In short, alert teacher and a diligent can make a big difference in the child's life and future as well.

General conclusion

General conclusion

This work tries to examine the reasons behind children's slow learning, and to what extent these reasons affect their achievement. It also attempts to shed light on practical strategies and tools to encourage and support this category of learners. It is a challenge task to recognize how to deal with such a kind of learners and aid them learn the academic skills. In order to achieve this aim, this investigation goes through three main chapters. The first one deals different theories and perspectives of some educators and theorists whose work focuses on slow learning. However, the second chapter contains the two main tools. The former is a questionnaire submitted to teachers at primary schools and interview with parents of some slow learners at the purpose of seeking the reasons behind slow learning of children at primary schools. On the other hand, the third chapter includes the discussion of the results obtained in the second chapter in addition to useful strategies and tools in order to help both teachers and parents support this special category of children.

After collecting and analyzing the required data, it is found that despite the fact that there are categories of students who have difficulties learning the basic subjects, there are numerous reasons behind their weaknesses. The majority of teachers agree that these students require more attention and care from their parents who are the core reason behind their difficulties. In fact the emotional support and care from their families are what they actually require in addition to the support of their teachers who play a central role in improving their learning performance.

Therefore, the administration has also a vital part in developing guidelines to assist those teachers help slow learners because officially not all children can cope with a strict style of learning. In addition to that, respecting student's learning style and level is what essentially must be maximized. Furthermore, strategies of effective teaching must be applied as soon as possible in order to make the teaching affective and accommodate every single learner.

On the basis of the present study, further research could be done on the other side of slow learning which is whether the Algerian educational system accommodate this category of learners or not.

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Appendix 01: (teacher's questionnaire)

The questionnaire highlights the reasons behind pupil's slow learning at primary school as well as the strategies done by teachers to support and help them. You are kindly requested to contribute to answer this questionnaire. Please read the following questions, and provide answers by ticking the appropriate one.

Section 1: related information to pupils.

1. Have you ever been confronted to "Slow Learners" within your class?

a. Yes ☐ b. no ☐

2. Why do you categorize them as slow learners?

.....
.....
.....
....

3. How long have you taught this category of children?

a. less than five years ☐ b. five years ☐ c. more than five years ☐

4. Have these children repeated a grade?

A. yes ☐ b. no ☐

If yes, which grade?

2. Section 2: Identification of the slow learners.

1. How do you identify them at the first time?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| A. Using an entry test at the beginning of the semester. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Using the students' exam results from previous years. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Using the result of continuous assessment. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Using intelligence test. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Using observation of the learners in class. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Don't identify slow learners. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Do your pupils have problems with all subjects?

A. Yes ☐ B. no, which ones? ☐

3. What are the pupils' main problems that you have observed?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. general ability problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. attention problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. memorization problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. visual problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. language and mathematical problems | <input type="checkbox"/> |

f. Mathematics problems.

4. What do you think of the reasons behind the pupils' slow learning?

.....
.....
.....

c. Section 3: strategies for teachers to support slow learners.

1. Do you change your language to suit their level?

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

2. Do you try to develop your relationship with them?

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

3. Do you react politely when they answer even if they are incorrect?

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

4. Do you group slow learners with normal students in group activities?

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

Why

?.....

5. Do you take into consideration your learner's learning style by using deferent teaching techniques to help them?

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

6. Do you analyze and simplify difficult tasks as well as using simple vocabulary in explanation?

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

7. Do you try to understand the reasons behind their weaknesses?

a. yes ☐ b. no ☐

8. Do you help them by providing them with special activities and give them more time to think?

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

9. Do you meet their parents to discuss their children's' problems with learning.

a. always ☐ b. sometimes ☐ c. never ☐

Appendix 2: (parents' interview)

1. Question to the mother, did you face any problems during the period of pregnancy?
2. Do you have any family problems?
3. What is your social state?
4. Does your child have health problems, and does he/she take medicines? Which kind of illnesses? Are they related to hearing or watching?
5. How do you describe your child periods of infancy and early childhood, from birth to school?
6. Have you noticed before that your child has problems with attention, concentration as well as memorization? When exactly?
7. Did you put them in the kidding garden at the period of preschool in order to get them ready to learn?
8. Did you trace your child's school formation?
9. Have you ever noticed that your child is slow learner, and try to look for the reasons behind this problem?