

**THE IMPACT OF REMEDIAL TEACHING ON IMPROVING THE  
COMPETENCIES OF LOW ACHIEVERS**

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**Abstract.** *This research study aimed at identifying the impact of remedial teaching on improving the competencies of low achieving students in Mannar district of Sri Lanka. For this purpose, ninety seven students from rural and urban area were selected from four different schools in Mannar Education Zone. The selection of the primary grade is decided to ensure the effectiveness of the program in primary education. Objectives of this program are to investigate the reasons for the low achievement of students in this zone, to assess the effectiveness of the remedial teaching and to recommend possible actions to be carried out for improvement. The data were collected by interviewing relevant authorities and from the secondary records. Findings show that the socio economic condition of the family and physical and psycho social status of the student cause low achievement. The implemented remedial program proved to be effective with recovering ninety four percentages of students in Tamil Language and ninety three percentages of students in Mathematics. Continuous capacity development of teachers on concept and skills of remedial teaching and strengthening the Referral mechanism to find solution for the socio economic and psycho social reasons to ensure the sustainability of the recovery are strongly recommended*

**Key words:** *Capacity development, Competencies, Low achievers, Remedial Teaching, Psycho-social factors, Socio-economic conditions.*

## 1 .INTRODUCTION

Education contributes to economic growth of a country through creation of new knowledge as well as diffusion and transmission of knowledge. While highly educated individuals become scientist, analyst, technologist and inventor developing new process and technologies, the diffusion and transmission of new knowledge require basic level of education of others to understand and digest the new knowledge. Formal education system provides the basic education level necessary for the diffusion and transmission of new knowledge as well as means of transmission.

Sri Lanka has the formal education system from Grade one to thirteen covering the age group from five to nineteen years. The primary education covers grade one to five and to assess the students based on their achievement of essential learning competencies. The achievement of these competencies are measured through Key Stage one which covers Grade one and two, Key Stage two covers Grade three and four and Key Stage three covers Grade five.

Generally, the achievement of Essential Learning Competencies by children who are in similar grades and undergoing a similar teaching process differs. Some are lower in achievements compare to others due to various reasons. If these students are not provided with proper support to overcome the challenge, they will be gradually dropped out from the school before completing the compulsory education in the formal education system. This will lead to limited knowledge and skilled labour force of the country and hinder the economic growth of the country and will bring negative long term impact in the country's development initiatives. Remedial teaching is one of the acceptable solutions for low achievement. Identification of these low achievers, application of Remedial Teaching with systematic assessment of progress and analysis are needed to understand the effectiveness of the Remedial Teaching.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL

United states, Japan and many European countries have continuous growth over the past hundred or longer years due to expansion of scientific and technical knowledge which increase the productivity of human resources and other factors of production. The study made in United States, found out that the increase in schooling of an average Worker between 1929 to 1982, increased the one fourth of per capita income (Becker, 1994)

According to many economic theorists, certain kind of education equip a man to perform certain job or function or enable him to perform that function effectively because the education enhances one's ability to receive, decode and understand the information and the processing and interpretation of information which is important to perform or learn to perform many jobs. (Richard et al, 1966)

### 2.2 LOW ACHIEVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Children identified with learning disabilities (LD), low achievement (LA), or mild mental retardation (MMR) were contrasted on 41 measures of ability, academic achievement, social skills, problem behaviour, academic engaged time, perceptual-motor skills, and school history. LD group scoring higher on measures of cognitive ability than the LA and MMR groups and the LA group shows higher tested academic achievement than the LD and MMR groups. (Gresham et al, 1996)

Heinemann and Loxley (1983) from World Bank carried out a research on 'The effect of primary school quality on academic achievement across twenty nine high and low income countries.' The findings from Europe, America and Japan conclude that the effect of school or teacher quality on academic achievement is less than the family background or other characteristics of the student.

The findings from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Middle East shows evidence that the effect of school and teacher in primary education is more effective. The reason for this is that low income countries are unable to influence the social status of pupil.

### 2.2 REMEDIAL TEACHING

Remedial Education is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary as 'connected with school students who are slower at learning than others'.

The remedial teaching can also be defined as ‘ the name implies, is designed to cater to the needs of children unable to keep pace with the teaching-learning process in a normal classroom.’ Remedial teaching will act as a safety valve for the students who are behind the expected level of achievement. It involves diagnosis of specific difficulties, provide suitable remedial measures and provide support to prevent reoccurring of them again in future. In one of widely implemented education program called reading recovery program of Maria Clay in New Zealand, students are tested by observation study of literacy achievement in text reading, dictation, letter identification, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, and sight words in beginning and end of the program. (Burris, 2009)

Research by Davidson Tisn, the assessment is defined as a process of gathering and documenting information about the achievement, skills, abilities, and personality variables of an individual. ( Tisn, 2006)

According to Clay Maria, literacy must be looked at from the development perspective and it is important that educators to look at how active learners change overtime within their given context. The journey of learning becoming ideal time for children to become self regulatory and this theory is defined as self extending system, which ensures the more children learn about reading and writing during primary level, the more they will engage in literacy activities.

This theory believes that emphasis on early observation and identifying the strength and weaknesses of students in terms of skills in reading and writing, and one-to-one support in the primary grades by teachers towards their students, incorporate a variety of methods such as modelling, explicit teaching, and prompting and praising student struggling with reading and writing will help students to become self-regulatory in terms of their reading and writing abilities. (Burris, op.cit.)

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Mannar Education Zone identified thousand low achievers in Key Stage two and implements the Remedial Teaching program during 2010. The selection of the primary grade is decided to ensure the effectiveness of the program in primary education which will support the students to gain necessary learning competencies of primary and enter into secondary education without dropping out before or end of this primary cycle. It was decided by the Mannar Education Zone to provide remedial teaching to Key Stage two students since the improvement in their

performance of these students will continue to key stage five in which they will sit for the scholarship examination, which will provide individual benefits to the students as well as

improve the performance of the Education Zone in the examination. Out of thousand students ninety seven students from schools namely St Xevier College, Thalaimannar, Peer Government Tamil Mixed School, Siththi Vinayagar Vidyalayam, and Murungan Maha Vidyalayam from Mannar District were selected for the study based on the judgemental area sampling method.

The assessment marks available in schools will be collected as secondary data and percentage analysis has been done. Focus group discussion with Zonal Education Team, Principals, selected teachers and students were used to collect primary data regarding the reasons for low achievements.

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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4.1 REASONS FOR LOW ACHIEVEMENT

Based on the collected data of the reasons for the low achievement, multiple reasons cause the low achievement of each student. The following table shows the reasons and the number of students affected by each reason.

The first predominant reason is less interest of parents in child’s education which affects fifty four percentage of students. The keenness of parents to meet teachers on request of teacher or by self interest, engage in the discussion with teachers openly , agreement for some follow up at home and commitment to practice the requested follow up were some of the criteria used for the analysis by the teacher. The low literacy level of parents and more attention for daily earning due to the low economic status are the contributing factors for this attitude.

The second pre dominant factor is severe poverty which affects thirty seven percentage of the students. Almost entire families of selected low achievers are belongs to low economic class with irregular income source. This identified thirty six families has no income source and depending on food ration and other subsidies of Government. This reason is identified based on the analysis of the teachers regarding family background and parent’s employment. The poverty creates non conducive learning environment at home due to several issues that the poverty creates.

The irregular attendance and lack of support at home to provide guidance for learning become the third dominant reasons which affect twenty four percentage of the students. The irregular attendance cause missing of lessons and affect the continuity of learning process. The lack of support in learning lessons left the child alone with all the doubts and clarification from the lessons learnt in the school.

The sickness often the children experienced are related to malnutrition and less immunity for diseases. The sickness leads to irregular attendance and missing lessons. Fifteen students affected by this reason.

There are twelve students affected by displacement and stayed in welfare camp. They missed number of school days during the displacement and not acquired the learning competency of the previous grade caused them low achievement of the present grade.

The family disputes and separated parents affected seven students. Another reason identified is slow learning. These children are not suffering from any other complicated or multiple reasons but naturally they were slow in learning process. Fifteen students identified with this reason. In some cases, parents who have displaced and returned to their own villages at present, left their children with friends and relatives to continue the study in Mannar schools. Seven of the students were affected by the fact that they were away from their family.

Excessive alcoholic intake of father affects four students out of ninety seven. This habit causes several issues in the family and made the home non conducive for the child to study. There are three students identified by the teachers as very active students with less concentration on lessons. Their attention distracted very quickly from learning lessons and caused difficulty in learning process.

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