

ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MENTALLY RETARDED LEARNERS

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Abstract

Parents can play a vital role in the training and development of children with intellectual disabilities. In training of functional skills among children with disabilities parents help a lot in achieving target goals. The purpose of the study was to study the role of parent's involvement in education on the academic performance of the mentally retarded learners. Mental retardation is a problem with impact on the whole spectrum of domestic concerns confronting the nation today. The education of students with mental retardation has an interesting history. Mental retardation is a condition characterized by low general intellectual functioning and deficits in adaptive behavior Ndurumo (1993). The American Association on Mental Retardation definition state that mental retardation is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This disability originate before age 10.(Luckasson et al., 2002,p.1). All children are unique individuals and stereotypes or suggestions certain children are a "type" must be avoided. Deborah(1992) notes that, children with intellectual challenges exist in our communities and we should accept the challenges of living and working with them.

The parents are the first and most important teachers for children, as they play the role of teaching during interaction with children (Lin, 1996). Epstein (1992) also pointed out that, the family has an important influence upon children as they stay at home much longer than at school as well as more in-family interaction than schooling. Now the present conceptual papers based on objectives with (i) To understand the basic characteristics of mentally retarded learners'. (ii) To understand the role of parents in education for mentally retarded students. (iii) To discuss the Some Differences Common to Educable Retarded Pupils.

Key Words: Role of Parents, Mentally Retardation



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Introduction:

The parents are the first and most important teachers for children, as they play the role of teaching during interaction with children. Parents can provide different information about
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the developmental characteristics of their children. There are many processes in which parents can be involved, such as, identification, assessment, educational programming, training, teaching, and evaluation. The well informed parents can identify of early signs of a disability. Parents can provide different information about the developmental characteristics of their children. According to the American Association on Mental Deficiency, "Mental retardation refers to subaverage general intellectual functioning which originates during the developmental period and is associated with impairment in adaptive behavior." This impairment in adaptive behavior can be reflected in the rate of maturation, the learning processes, and/or social adjustment. This guide is intended for those who are working with children with mild impairment and whose particular difficulty is reflected in their inability to profit fully from instruction in the regular classroom. These are the children who, by Minnesota standards, are considered educable.

Mentally Retarded Learners':

A striking fact about educable retarded children is that they are basically very similar to other children.

In most respects they are more like other children than they are different:

1. Generally they do not have physical characteristics which set them apart from other children.
2. They are capable of engaging in the same physical activities that other children enjoy.
3. They do not exhibit behavior patterns which deviate noticeably from their peers.
4. Educationally they learn in much the same way that other children do. They begin school at the same age other children do and are able to profit from education as it is presented in the public school frame of reference.
5. With special education and training, the majority of these children will be able, at maturity, to maintain themselves economically and socially in open society.

Now the Mental Retardation persists throughout adulthood. Intellectual functioning level is defined by standardized tests (Weschler-Intelligence Scales) that measure the ability to reason in terms of mental age (intelligence quotient or IQ). Diagnosis of mental retardation is made if an individual has an intellectual functioning level well below average and significant limitations in two or more adaptive skill in various areas. Mental retardation is defined as IQ score below 70 to 75.

Now the Adaptive skills are the skills needed for daily life. Such skills include the ability to produce and understand language (communication); home-living skills; use of community

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resources; health, safety, leisure, self-care, and social skills; self-direction; functional academic skills (reading, writing, and arithmetic); and work skills.

Objectives of the Study:

- (i) To understand the basic characteristics of mentally retarded learners'.
- (ii) To understand the role of parents in education for mentally retarded students.
- (iii) To discuss the Some Differences Common to Educable Retarded Pupils.

Some Differences Common to Educable Retarded Pupils:

There are surprisingly few differences which are common to all retarded students and which single out this group of pupils from other children in school. In fact, only two such differences exist, both of which are interrelated:

1. Intellectually they function at a slower rate of learning than most children in school. Their scores on individual intelligence tests will usually fall between 50 and 80 I.Q. and they generally function at from one-half to three-fourths the rate of children with normal intelligence.
2. Academically they are markedly below their chronological grade level. They not only score below grade level on standardized and teacher-made achievement tests but also function below most of their peers in daily classroom work. For the majority of these students, maximum achievement level in academic work will be third to fifth or sixth grade.

There are, however, many sub-characteristics or by-products of these two differences; for example, difficulty in handling symbols and in engaging in abstract thinking, reduced ability to profit from incidental learning and difficulty in making generalizations and inferences.

Other Differences:

The other differences that are noted in a group of educable retarded pupils are those which can be found in any group of children but seem to occur more frequently among the retarded. These are characteristics which apply to the group or category of educable retarded pupils but not necessarily to the individual child in the special class. That is, because of individual differences among retarded students, some of the special class pupils may have many of these characteristics while others may display only a few. Also,

the differences may be quite pronounced in some pupils and hardly noticeable in others. Some of the more common differences found in the retarded population are included below:

1. **PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS AND SPEECH DISORDERS.** As a group, the retarded usually have poor motor coordination and a relatively high percentage of speech defects.

These factors are generally more pronounced in pupils who are at the lower end of the educable retarded range.

2. **LIMITED SOCIAL MATURITY.** Some of the retarded often have difficulty in understanding and meeting everyday situations; for example, in finding their way around the school building and in assuming personal responsibilities commensurate with their indicated abilities.

3. **POOR PERSONAL-SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT.** The inability of the retarded youngster to compete academically may adversely affect his personal-social adjustment in the school setting. It may lead to pronounced feelings of inferiority and may sharply reduce his ability to realistically assess his abilities and limitations.

4. **BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS.** When a retarded child has experienced repeated failure or rejection, he may respond, much as others do, by becoming timid and withdrawn or hostile and aggressive. This not only further impedes his educational progress but also often disrupts the classroom.

5. **SPECIAL LEARNING DISABILITIES.** Some retarded students may have a psychoneurological disorder which alters the learning process to the extent that they are not able to receive maximum benefit from the usual teaching methods that are effective with most special class pupils.

ROLE OF PARENTS:

The parents are the first and most important teachers for children, as they play the role of teaching during interaction with children (Lin, 1996). Epstein (1992) also pointed out that, the family has an important influence upon children as they stay at home much longer than at school as well as more in-family interaction than schooling. The provision of special education must give strong consideration to the parents to: Give equal opportunities to education to exceptional children, teach their mentally retarded children adaptive skills, advocate for the rights of their children, promote social interactions among the peers and friends.

1. Diaries for Parents:

Parents were given the specially designed diaries with instructions to complete them. In the diaries date and time were also mentioned. Parents were requested to record their observations, thrice a day i, e., morning, afternoon and evening. Parents were asked to identify different environments and sub-environments, where their children are required to function. An orientation session was conducted with parents regarding the use of diaries for

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identification of different environments and Sub- environments and their related tasks. Orientation was based on examples in real life and demonstration was given by filling the tasks in the diaries of one child.

Follow up support was also provided to parents during task identification process. Parents filled the task performed by their children with and without intellectual disability with in fifteen days.

2. Interview with parents for Motivation:

In, interviews with parents were conducted with the purpose to supplement the information collected on diaries from parents. Baine, (1991) developed a list of questions for collecting such information through interviewing of parents and teachers. A modified form of this list was used as a guide for collecting the information. Some questions related like- daily tasks related work, tasks performed by your child in common, special events such as marriage ceremony, birthday etc., please, identify some of the seasonal functional tasks performed by child, daily tasks having low frequency but high importance, daily expected tasks needed to be learnt in the coming days, may be coming years etc.

3. Learning by Doing:

Parents can focus on activity methods are employed which put the emphasis on learning through experience. The mentally handicapped child, whose shortcomings lie in the area of relational and abstract thought, will always have difficulty in learning where he is required to play a passive role, and where the methods of communication is largely verbal. His intellectual deficit is such that he will always tend to learn more easily where ideas are expressed in concrete situations which he can relate to the world as he knows it. So far as possible our teaching must be through materials that make the maximum appeal to his senses – If to auditory and visual percepts can be added tactile and kinesthetic, the learning process is considerably reinforced. Implicit is the idea of activity methods in the involvement of the total personality of the child.

4. Preparing for Learning and create a good atmosphere:

Again, it is important in introducing academic work to the mentally handicapped, that we take cognizance of the concepts of maturation and learning-readiness. These children have the ability to learn to read, to write and to count, provided that the way is prepared for the introduction of these subjects through appropriate readiness programmes.

We must however, be prepared to wait until the child is intellectually and psychologically ready to accept the challenge which they present. In effect this means that mentally retarded

children will be considerably older than ordinary children before making a beginning to these activities. However, the maxim of “making haste slowly” is more than justified.

5. Repetition:

Since mentally handicapped children do tend to have poorer memories than ordinary children, teaching method must provide for a considerable amount of repetition if learned material is to be retained. This, however, is no justification for rote learning procedures devoid of insight. Understanding should always precede measures designed to improve retention. Even in the case of mentally retarded, if they are well-motivated and the material is interesting and has meaningful associations, the memory span can be much increased.

6. Short Periods:

Although the mentally retarded child has limited powers of concentration, and for this reason formal teaching periods should be kept fairly short, at the same time it is remarkable how long he can persevere when he finds the subject stimulating. We should not see in this an invitation to sugar-coat the unpalatable pill of knowledge, but rather a challenge to our understanding of his needs and genuine interests.

7. Concrete Problems:

It is also true to say that mentally retarded children do show lack of imagination and foresight and consequently have difficulty in transferring the learning experience of one situation to a similar but new and an unfamiliar one. Real life problem should be introduced whenever possible so that the immediate application of what is to be learned can be more easily appreciated.

Conclusion:

The mentally retarded children are ignored by the society and very less importance is given to their education and training. The Parents are considered as equal partner with teacher for teaching of children with intellectual disabilities. The role of parents in develops the education for mentally retarded learners'. Parent's role is very significant for developing the entire education system for mentally retired learners.

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