

Bright Underachievers: Prevalence and Profile

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KEYWORDS Bright adolescents; high IQ; academic achievement; median split of marks; bright underachievers

ABSTRACT Six hundred adolescents in the age range of 15-17 yrs. were tested for their IQ. From these children, 120 bright children having IQ 110 and above were selected. Academic achievement of these bright children was assessed. Children were divided into high and low achievers following median split method of marks. Academic performance of high and low achieving bright adolescents was found to be significantly different while their intelligence level was same. In this way existence of bright underachiever population was proved. Their profile was studied to get a general idea of their background.

INTRODUCTION

Intelligence is the greatest human resource. Individuals differ in their level of intelligence. The lowest level presents mental retardation and the highest level shows giftedness. In India, research and education for mentally retarded children have received considerable attention. Government as well as non – government agencies have made appreciable efforts in this field during last two decades. But the gifted Indian students, who need an equal amount of attention, remain neglected. The main reason of this neglect is the unfamiliarity with the concept of IQ and the uncommon use of intelligence tests. Most of the Indian parents do not understand the term IQ. Indian schools do not assess the mental abilities of students through intelligence tests. Age is considered the only criterion for admission to different grades and the academic performance of the students is considered the strongest indicator of their potential. Following this norm, the high IQ children who give poor performance in academics are labeled "dull" or "poor" by their parents and teachers. Hence, the underachieving gifted students remain unidentified and unattended. Though there is abundance of studies on academic achievement of Indian students in general (e.g. Ahmed, 1998; Badhdev, 1999; Devi et al., 1998; Khare, 1996; Taj, 1999; Malik and Balda, 2002), the problem of underachievement among bright students has not been studied specifically. Taking inspiration from large body of foreign research on gifted underachieving students, the present study was conducted with an aim to prove that, like western countries, the population of bright underachievers exists in India

also. The identification of this population may arise the interest of researchers and educators towards studying the needs and problems of these underachieving bright students and help them achieve according to their potential.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The study was conducted in Hisar city of Haryana state. Six hundred adolescents in the age range of 15-17 studying in three schools (each with a different fee structure representing three economic groups) were included in the study.

These students were tested for their IQ with the help of Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Revised (WISC-R) devised by David Wechsler (1978). WISC-R is most widely used intelligence test all over the world. It has a Verbal Subscale and a Performance Subscale, each containing six subtests. Verbal scale yields Verbal IQ and Performance subscale yields Performance IQ. Verbal IQ and Performance IQ are summed up to give Full Scale IQ. WISC-R was administered individually to each child. From these children, 120 children having IQ 110 and above were identified as bright children.

The academic achievement of these students was assessed on the basis of average of percentage of marks obtained by them in last three examinations.

These adolescents were divided into 60 low achievers and 60 high achievers using median split of marks obtained.

Information related to students' profile was gained with the help of a schedule structured by the researcher.

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