

**A Brief Study On:**

**“The Learning Problems and Difficulties of  
Students at the Higher Secondary Level of  
Education in Shillong”**

**A Minor Project Report  
For the year  
2016 – 2018**

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## **Acknowledgement**

At the very outset, we would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt obligation to all the persons who have helped us in this endeavour. Without their help, guidance, cooperation and encouragement, we would not have been able to make any headway in this project.

We are very much grateful and thankful to Dr.K.D.Ramsiej, Principal of Shillong College for his kindness in giving us the opportunity and for encouraging us to work on this project, the topic of which is, “ A study of the learning problems of students at the higher secondary level in Shillong.”

We also extend our gratitude to Dr. D.L.Buam and the entire team of the Research Committee for giving us this opportunity and for financing the project.

We are also thankful to Dr. R.Dkhar, Head of the Department of Education for her advice and guidance to us as we worked on this project.

Our acknowledgement also goes towards the Head of the various Higher Secondary Schools and Institutions as well as the teachers, all of whom we owe our gratitude for giving us the permission to conduct the survey in their respective schools and colleges.

Last but not the least our gratitude goes to all our friends and acquaintances who directly and indirectly helped us with this project. Any omission in this brief acknowledgement does not imply lack of gratitude.

## **ABSTRACT**

The students studying at any level of education in the various educational institutions in Shillong come from various backgrounds. With regards to Higher Secondary Level (comprising the Arts, Science and Commerce streams) it has been observed that there exist disparities in learning among students. Therefore in light of the above statement, this project is an attempt to identify the causes to learning difficulties as well as suggesting remedial measures in order to minimize learning difficulties among students.

During the course of the study it has been found that there are various problems affecting the learning of students studying at the higher secondary level in various higher secondary schools and colleges in and around the city of Shillong. These problems may vary from location of the school to classroom environment or atmosphere, to lack of basic facilities in the schools and to individual difficulty of the students in learning certain concepts and ideas which give rise to other learning problems.

## INTRODUCTION

Learning occupies a very important place in our life. Most of what we do or do not do is influenced by what we learn and how we learn it. Any experience whether direct or indirect is found to play a dominant role in moulding and shaping the behaviour of the individual from the very beginning. Broadly the term learning stands for all those changes and modifications in the behaviour of the individual which he undergoes during his lifetime.

The term 'learning' has been interpreted differently by different thinkers and psychologists as may be seen from the following definitions:

1. Gardner Murphy – The term learning covers every modification in behaviour to meet environmental requirements.
2. Henry P. Smith – Learning is the acquisition of new behaviour or the strengthening or weakening of old behaviour as a result of experience.
3. Woodworth – Any activity can be called learning so far as it develops the individual (in any respect, good or bad) and makes him alter behaviour and experiences different from what they would otherwise have been.
4. Crow and Crow – Learning is the acquisition of habits, knowledge and attitudes. It involves new ways of doing things and it operates in an individual's attempts to overcome obstacles or to adjust to new situations. I

On the basis of the above definitions the following facts are revealed:

1. Learning is a process and not a product.
2. It involves all those experiences and training of an individual which help him to produce changes in his behaviour.
3. Learning leads to changes in behaviour but this does not necessarily mean that these changes always bring about improvement or positive development because there is an equal chance that the changes may be negative also.
4. Learning prepares an individual for any adjustment and adaptation that may be necessary.
5. Learning is universal and continuous.
6. Learning is purposeful and goal-oriented.
7. The scope of learning is very wide.
8. Learning involves new ways of doing things but there is no limit to adopting these ways and means. All learning does not take place in the same manner but as a process it is of different types and involves different methods.

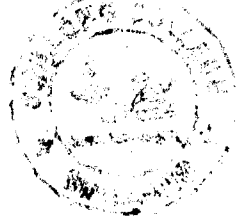
Learning in the classroom –In the classroom a lot of learning is expected to take place. It involves all of the nature and characteristics of learning as a process but it is different in the fact that classroom learning is supposed to bring about behavioural changes that are positive and desirable only. The teacher or educator wants to guide or direct the learning of the students so that educational goals or purposes are accomplished. For this to take place certain factors are involved some of which are:

1. Classroom conditions
2. Motivation
3. Surrounding environment
4. Ability or capacity
5. Purposes or goals
6. Practice
7. Attitude and interest
8. Testing
9. Methodology of teaching and learning.

1. Classroom conditions – The size of the classroom, the seating conditions, the lighting conditions, the sound system- all of these are important factors which has a part in influencing the learning of the students.
2. Motivation -There is very little learning without mental activity on the part of the learner. The most effective learning takes place when there is maximum of mental activity and maximum mental activity is best attained through strong motivation.– Motivation is defined as something which prompts, compels, and energises an individual to act or behave in a particular manner at a particular time for attaining some specific goal or purpose.
3. Surrounding environment – This is also another factor which greatly influences the learning of the students. The location of the town or city and the kind of neighbourhood also has a great bearing on learning.
4. Ability or capacity –this refers to the basic potential of the learner. The results achieved by the learner through a process of learning depend heavily upon his basic potential or his ability and capacity to undergo such learning.
5. Purposes or goals – the philosophy of immediate as well as ultimate goals of one's life affect the process and product of learning. His mode and ways of looking towards things, his

inclination towards learning a particular subject and patience and persistence in pursuing his learning despite the heavy odds- all depend upon his goals and purposes in life.

6. Practice –Review and practice always brings good results in the achievement of learning. A learner who makes use of sufficient drill work, practice, revision and review of his learning can be expected to harvest a good yield in terms of his good retention, reproduction and utilization at the proper time.
7. Attitude and interest –the attitude and interest of the learner towards learning a particular topic or subject or area is an important factor in learning.
8. Testing – testing is an important factor because it directs the learning process. The kind of tests given influences the learner in his methods of study and in the way that he prepares for his examinations. Tests also enable the learner to determine the rightness or wrongness of his response. In addition to this tests also stimulate increased effort.
9. Methodology of teaching and learning – there are sufficient methods and a number of good techniques available for the teaching and learning of different subjects and areas of experiences. The results of learning are always influenced by the nature and quality of the methods and techniques employed for the teaching and learning of a particular content, subject matter or learning experiences like those given in the following:
  - (i) Whether or not the methods and techniques are helpful in learning by memory or by understanding or reflective level.
  - (ii) Whether or not these are teacher-dominated, learner-centred or allow useful teacher-pupil interaction.
  - (iii) Is it possible to proceed on the path of self-learning through them?
- 10 Availability of learning material – the availability of appropriate learning material and facilities like teaching-learning aids, text books, library and laboratory facilities, project works – all of these also influences the learning of the student to a large extent.



**Objectives of the study:-**

1. To find out the types of learning difficulties faced by the students.
2. To identify the causes underlining learning difficulties among students.
3. To identify personal problems of the students that affects their learning.
4. To suggest remedial measures wherever necessary in order to overcome the difficulties in learning among the students.

Hypotheses – Inorder to realise the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated for testing:

- The learning difficulties faced by students whether in the same educational institution or in different educational institutions may be similar or there may be differences in the type of difficulty. Further even in similar cases the degree of the difficulty may vary.
- The learning difficulties faced by the students may be due to certain reasons or causes which hinder proper and effective learning by the students especially in the classroom.
- In addition to the many causes or reasons that affect the learning of the students, some of these may be the personal problems of the students that affects their learning.
- Remedial measures may be suggested wherever it can be implemented practically.



## **METHODOLOGY ADOPTED**

Method—In this study the descriptive survey method was used or adopted. A sample of 8 higher secondary schools both private and deficit in and around Shillong were selected randomly. From these schools about 30 students were selected randomly for the present study.

Tools of the study : Data relating to the study was collected using questionnaire consisting of 52 questions.

Analysis : the data collected was analysed by calculating the percentage based on the responses of the students to the questions in the questionnaire.

The primary data has been collected by the investigators with the help of the teachers from the respective higher secondary sections of various schools and colleges in and around Shillong and this data has been individually studied and collectively analysed.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Based on the study conducted on the sample of students from various educational institutions in Shillong it was found that about half of the total number of students from all the three streams (46.70%) admits that they do struggle in school and 56.73% of the students do take time to comprehend and understand certain concepts/formulas taught in the class. It was also found that 46.70% of the students forget their lessons easily but just 32.45% of the students find reading harder than it should be and just 29.55% finds writing slow and hard for them. However it was found that 68.87% of the students admit to making spelling mistakes. About 63.59% of them have problem with maths or any form that includes calculations. It was also found that almost half of the total number of students i.e., 43.80% finds it difficult to communicate or express themselves in English but just 37.47% of the students wish their teacher explains the lessons in their mother tongue.

On analysing the data we have gathered the following findings –

1. It has been found out that about 60.95 percent of the students are staying at home with their parents while the remaining are staying with guardians.
2. A majority of about 55% have less than 5 siblings while about 35 % have more than 5 siblings and about 10% are the only child in the family.
3. Regarding the question on whether they have time at home to study and to be engaged in any recreational activity about 78% have answered in the positive and only 22% have answered in the negative.
4. As regards the educational qualification of parents it has been found that only about 11% are post-graduates, 22% are graduates, 30% are HSSLC passed, 25% are HSLC passed while 25% of them have not attended school.
5. It has also been found that a majority of students(about 80%) shows a favourable attitude towards attending class everyday.
6. Regarding the location of the college or educational institution, about 60% feels that it is located in a peaceful and good environment while about 40% feels that it is not so.
7. About 50% of the respondents have expressed that they struggle in school, 55% of them take time to comprehend and understand certain concepts or formulas taught, about 45% of them forget their lessons

easily, 32% feel that reading is harder than it should be while 30% finds that they are slow in writing down notes and it is hard for them to keep up when the teacher is dictating or giving notes. About 68% always make spelling mistakes, 64% have problems with mathematics and calculations even though they are science students who are taking the subject. It was also found that almost half (43.80%) of the students finds it difficult to communicate or express in the English language and about 37.47 % of them wish that their teacher would explain to them in their mother tongue.

8. About 48% of the respondents feels that many of their friends have a better educational background than they themselves do.
9. It has also been found that a majority of the respondents of about 80% believe that they have made good selection of their subjects and only a few of them feels that they have made a wrong choice of their subjects.
10. Regarding the question on whether their teachers encourage and motivate them in class, about 80% of the respondents have answered in the positive and only 20% have answered in the negative.
11. On maintaining a time-table to study daily, only 40% of the respondents have answered in the positive whereas 60% have answered in the negative which shows that they do not have a regular time-table to study.
12. Regarding those students within the science stream, this study has revealed that there are some of them who finds difficulty with understanding the different concepts and also with mathematical calculations. The reason for this may be with the teaching methods or with the aptitude of the students for science subjects. Some of them may have taken up science without really having the aptitude nor capacity for it.
13. The teaching method that is mostly used is the lecture method especially within the arts stream while within the science stream it is used together with the discussion method and also the demonstration method. However there are some institutions where teachers also used the discussion method together with the lecture method for teaching within the arts stream.

- 14.Regarding the use of teaching aids by the teachers only some and not all of them use teaching aids other than blackboard and chalk in the classroom.
- 15.The study has also revealed that most teachers at this level prepare notes and give to their students.
- 16.It is also found that most of the teachers at the higher secondary level often conduct class tests for their students while there are some institutions where class tests are not conducted at all.
- 17.Regarding library, some of the higher secondary schools do not have a proper library and even though in some others there is a proper library but the students are not able to borrow any books while in some institutions, the students are able to borrow only one book. It is also found that most students are not aware of any reference books that may be available in their school library or whether their school or college subscribe to any journal or magazine.
- 18.The study has also shown that there are some schools and colleges that do not have a proper computer laboratory nor any internet facilities while there are others that have them but the students do not have access to these facilities.
- 19.There are also some higher secondary schools and colleges that are offering science courses but do not have proper laboratory facilities and some do not have adequate space or enough materials and equipments for the students to properly perform the experiments individually.

## **SUGGESTIONS:**

Based on all the findings of this study we can say that students studying at the higher secondary level of education in and around Shillong are found to struggle with certain problems.

1. The study revealed that a majority of the students struggle either with one kind of problem or another which may be either in understanding concepts or formulas taught in the class or in correctly understanding and communicating in English which is the medium of instruction in the higher secondary schools. Since it is very important for them to understand whatever is taught to them if they are to really learn effectively, then it is necessary to change and modify the ways and methods of teaching not only at this level but maybe changes could be made right from the lower levels of education so that the students may learn by understanding and not only by rote method.

2. Regarding the location of the educational institution it also has a significant influence on the learning of the students because the right location will always enable the right atmosphere which is conducive for students' learning. The study has revealed that there is a good percentage of students studying in an institution which is not located in a peaceful and quiet environment but instead it is located in an environment which is noisy and is disturbing the teaching-learning in the classroom. Hence the location of the institution together with the right kind of atmosphere which would promote learning is necessary.

3. The study also reveals that the classroom conditions and atmosphere are also very important for effective learning. If the seating conditions, the light and other important facilities are not properly provided for the students, it will hamper their learning. Hence it is important for the school authorities to see that classroom infrastructure and conditions are congenial for the comfort of the students and also for their effective learning.

4. Another suggestion is that the educational institution should provide other basic facilities to the students such as proper drinking water, proper common room that the students can use during their break and off-periods and also proper toilets for the students.

5. Regarding library facilities the institution should see that the students are provided with good quality books, reference materials and magazines or journals that would help them with their required subjects and also to instil in them an interest in learning and knowing about other subject areas also.

6. Another suggestion is that the school or educational institution should be a place where students are happy to go to not only to meet their friends but it should be a place where real learning take place not only in the classroom but the kind that teaches them how to manage their time and to be organised and disciplined. This is observed from the fact that many of the students respondents do not keep a study routine which has resulted in their haphazard way of studying and poor performance during the examinations.

7. As it has been observed that most of the students at the higher secondary level are not used to writing their own notes but would prefer their teachers to give notes to them. It is therefore important that they are taught to make and write down their own notes so that they understand what they write and it will promote self- learning when they do things on their own with the teachers as their guide.

8. Through this study it is also observed that there are students who are not sure of the subjects that they have chosen. For this it is suggested that proper guidance and counselling is needed and important right from the secondary level so that students are guided to making the right choice of subjects according to their interest and aptitude.

9. It is also suggested that teachers at this stage need to use different kind of teaching aids especially the audio-visual kind which would really help students to learn better. For this the institutions should help the teachers by providing the facilities that would enable the teachers to do their job effectively.

10. The use of teaching methods also should not be limited only to lecture method which according to the study is the most used method especially with the Arts stream. Hence to make teaching-learning more effective and enjoyable it is suggested that other methods such as discussion method (where students participate actively), project method (to help students do self-study and find things on their own) , demonstration method which is very much needed especially in the Science stream to demonstrate an experiment so that students can then learn from the demonstration and do it on their own.

11. Another important suggestion is the use of motivation and encouragement by the teacher in the classroom to help students to learn effectively. In this area the teacher needs to know and to understand his or her students strengths and weaknesses with regard to their studies and to give the right kind of reinforcement which should always be positive and ate them to learn effectively and to do well.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion we can say that this study has really shown the different kinds of problems that students are facing at the higher secondary level of education in the schools and colleges in and around Shillong.

It is therefore important that the right kind of changes and improvements be made, some of which can be done immediately while others which may require certain financial implications may be done so gradually according to the strength of the institution in order that students at this level may get a good quality education which is very important for their future life.



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