
Effective Strategies in Remedial Instruction

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Abstract

Remedial Programs are meant for those students who are weak in academic performance to improve their basic skills to reach as per the level of their peers. It is effective through various stages like identifying or diagnosing their individual difficulty in learning, modifying them as per their need, using effective materials as required and teaching through simple step by step approach and giving proper feedback and correction and finally coordinating with their parents to assess their level of improvement in learning process. This paper presents mainly the preparation, strategies and the methodologies involved in remedial instruction.

Keywords: Diagnose, Strategies, Remediation, individual differences, Reinforce, Evaluation

Introduction

Remedial instruction is meant to improve a learning skill or rectify a problem area. It can help struggling learners to shore up their skills. This extra support can help them to reach up to their peers. Remedial instruction might be taught individually or in groups and targets academic weakness that may hinder learning. The Objective of remedial instruction is to support those students who lag far behind their peers in academic performance or basic academic skills. This white paper explores how remedial programs function and how to spot effective remedial programs. A remedial program as observed by Weisman Bullakowski and J Umisko (1997) is designed “----- to enable students to gain the skills necessary to complete college- level courses and academic programs successfully.”

Diagnosis of Problem/Error

Diagnosis has an important role in teaching process. Learning process will be incomplete without diagnosis process of pupils’ strengths, weaknesses, errors and requirements. No new learning

will take place until wrong learning has been cancelled and corrected in a particular area of learning. The appropriate strategy can be designed as per the types of errors which have to be dealt with. They need to be classified as different groups/types as all the individual errors can be dealt in general, not in particular as it takes too much time.

There can be many possible reasons behind the poor performance of students. It can be academic or sometimes even personal. It is not very difficult for experienced teachers to identify the issues and the students who need remedial instruction. Frequent absence or attention issues can often lead to poor academic performance. Some physical problems or behavioral issues may also lead to weak performance in academic skills. There are many students who have poor memory, lack of confidence, motivation and difficulty in understanding new concepts/abstract ideas. Thus weak comprehensive power and short span of attention may also lead to weak academic performance. Another possible cause of poor performance in learning can be due to interference from concepts that previously learnt or over generalization on the basis of previous learning. So, suitable strategy of remediation can be decided by the types of errors which have to be dealt with. Thus diagnosis of problem or error is an important factor in remedial instruction.

Individual Differences

Effective remediation considers individual difference in learning. Each pupil has his own style of learning with his own strengths and weaknesses. Students may encounter different problems in their studies, so the instructors should carefully notice their performance and support them with proper assistance. Some students are good in visual learning where as some are better in task based learning activities. There are students who are competent in audio learning while there are many students who prefer to learn through games. There may be slow learners, average or fast learners in a mixed ability classroom.

Various Strategies

There are so many strategies which can be involved in remedial instruction. After diagnosing individual problem and individual difference teacher can focus individualized instruction. Remedial activities should be conducted at student's pace. Instructors can modify the curriculum

to meet the special needs of the pupils. As the pupils have different characteristics, teachers should identify pupils' diverse learning needs and design appropriate learning tasks for effective learning process. Step by step teaching is more preferable, offer regular reviews and provides simple practice exercise to reinforce learning process. While teaching, teachers can sum up the key words; write the main points on the board to re-in force learning. Also, oral or writing drill may contribute to effective learning process. Remedial instructors should encourage pupils' active participation by more frequent use of teaching aids, games and activities. When marking students' assignments or homework, teacher should take note of common errors of pupils and provide correct answers to them promptly without any delay. Proper feedback on right time is very important in remedial learning. Teachers can prepare pleasant and comfortable learning environment for pupils which may motivate even weak students. Reward scheme also plays an important role in enhancing students' motivation. Coordination with parents may strengthen learning and develop students' potential.

Different Methodologies

There are many approaches or methods which can be adopted in remedial teaching.

1) Separate class room for low performers

Separate classroom for low performing students can be formed to support weak students. Students would return to their regular classroom with their peers, once they achieved the required skills.

2) Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring may also be an affordable option that can benefit all involved. As per the plan of the instructor, bright students can help their peers during their free time. As per Sacerdote(2001), Hoxby(2000) and Zimmerman(2003), 'students who work with peers who are higher achievers than themselves tend to improve better.'

3) One-to- One Tutoring

One-to-One Tutoring by the teachers during their school/college time may help pupils to overcome their difficulties in learning. Here, teachers can allot their free time, an hour weekly for poor performers.

4) Computer Assisted Learning

As it is the world of technology, children are more motivated by learning applications which are easily available to them. New generations feel more comfortable with these apps which can easily motivate them and thereby enhance learning process. Now-a-days, students feel comfortable in virtual world.

5) Team Work/ Group Work

Let weaker students work in mixed group with other children who are better in their studies. Bright ones can support the weak students even while doing tasks in group. This can be applied even in regular classes daily.

6) Private Tutions

It is important to acknowledge that private tutoring, meaning instruction that is delivered for profit, has become a thriving business in developing countries and it can contribute to the increase of social inequalities (Bray, 2007). One of the major problems in private tutoring is a phenomenon that is propagating inequality in education since poor families who cannot afford private tutors to prepare their children for exams; they will likely have low score in exams. However, according to Bray, private tutoring has also been widely used as remedial strategy and while it can be effective in improving academic achievement and reducing main stream teacher's workload (Bray, 2009).

Selection of Teaching Materials

Selection of apt remedial materials is highly important in the remediation process. A major issue in remedial teaching is the lack of effective teaching materials. Most of the published materials have been designed for group teaching, not for special individual learning purpose. So some

materials can be designed, modified and graded for the purpose of corrective teaching task. The materials can be selected from websites, newspapers, magazines, or even from any authentic sources which may be turned in to enjoyable activities to enhance effectiveness in learning.

Evaluation/ Follow up

The benefit or the result of the remedial programs should be evaluated. Standardized tests can be conducted before and after the program. Pre-diagnostic and Post diagnostic tests should be administered before and after certain period of remedial learning process. The result of the program must be evaluated individually for each student than in terms of class average. Coordination with parents may also help to assess the level of students' progress in learning.

Advantages

Students who lack basic skills and general knowledge will be benefited from remediation. Students, who are absent for a short period, may also benefit from it. As we discussed earlier, it can take care of individual differences. For example, pupils who are shy due to lack of confidence and the students who suffer from speech disorders may have trouble with communication skills. Remediation may help these students to overcome these issues and finally they will become academically proficient. Thus, teaching remedial activities will support students to gain knowledge and basic skills that can be applied to all subject areas and help reduce feelings of inadequacy that lead to behavioral or motivational issues. In short, remedial teaching aims at helping students to provide a strong foundation for subject learning. It evaluates the learning of students and the progress of academic performance in learning process.

Limitations

Even though remediation helps weak students to gain the skills necessary to excel in their studies, a large number of reasons are stacked against it. Some students in the remedial class also struggle with the thought that they are perceived as stupid, so separate class for weak students can't be much supported or recommended for remedial classes as it may lead to more harmful effect. Bettings and Long (2008) also observe that remediation may be harmful because it

increases the number of requirements and lengthens the time it takes to graduate which aggregate may lower the likelihood of degree completion.

Conclusion

There is a general agreement among educationists and researchers; however, the students who do not meet admission requirements of universities require remedial education. Remedial education should be the part of teacher education or teacher training. Remedial programs can help children improve learning levels but students need to continue to receive quality education where learning gains can be sustained so they will not fall back (Slavian et.at 20009).

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