SOCIAL COMPETENCE AS AN INDICATOR OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Abstract: In the past, the teaching-learning process was considered complete after the completion of a certain level of education e.g. primary school level, secondary school level, college education, university level or any other specific degree or diploma. However, in the present age, the learning begins at a very small age and continues after the retirement. As stated by Rousseau, “Education of man commences at his birth, before he can speak, before he can understand, he is already instructed. Experience is the forerunner of the perfect”. The primary aim of education is to sustain individual and social improvement. Education makes the children socially competent so that they can adapt themselves according to the society. Social competence enables a person to set up and nurture extremely good relations and relations that are acceptable as well as to keep himself away from the ill-treatment. This paper is an extract of M.Phil dissertation entitled “Exploring the social competence of marginalized students with reference to academic achievement”.

Key Words: Social Competence, Academic achievement, primary, Secondary, College and University level or Diploma and Degree.

In 21st century, the world is becoming too competitive. Therefore the quality performance is the main requisite for an individual for personal and professional growth. It is one the reasons that leads the parents to motivate their children to achieve as high performance as they possibly can do. The modern education system also emphasizes on high achievements and best performance by the students. Education plays a vital role in the development of an individual. It is a lifelong process that begins with the birth of an individual and ends with the death. An individual starts learning from the birth and keeps learning throughout the life but the formal education of a child begins when he enters the school where he gets guidance related to skills and competencies that are important for his present as well as future life. The formal education emphasizes on high achievements by the students in the academics.

The level of formal teaching-learning process one has achieved and the potentiality to achieve success in academic studies known as academic achievement. It refers to the scope of attainment of aims and objectives collaboratively by an institution, teacher and student. The attainment of a particular degree or diploma is the representation of academic achievement.
As there is still a controversy related to the most reliable method of evaluating academic achievement and it is also not confined that which aspect of academics is more important i.e. acquisition of skills or learning of facts but generally it is evaluated through examination process. When a child receives high grade, this is example of academic achievement. Good (1964) states “the knowledge attained as skills developed in the school subject, usually designated by first scores or by marks assigned by teachers or both”.

Academic achievement is strongly linked to the positive outcomes that are valued in the society, therefore it is important. The importance of academic achievement also increases the working people needs better educational attainment to hoist future jobs which are based on technology. Good academic grades which also represent a person’s academic achievement, are important for a person to get a job of his own interest. The degree of knowledge and skills acquired by a student through teaching-learning process confirms his academic achievement.

As stated by Gandhiji, “Education is an all round drawing out drawing out of the best in child’s mind, body and spirit”. The aim of education is not only academic success but to grow a children into productive citizens that would be capable to utilize their skills, intelligence, power, aptitude and potential to endure themselves and support others. Therefore the aim of education is to develop the overall personality of a child so that he can adjust better in the society and cope up with his life situations.

As man is a social being, the purpose of education cannot be fulfilled without the social development of child. Ultimately the child has to live in a society. In order to live and cope up with the other members of the society, he needs to have social, emotional and intellectual skills i.e. he has to be socially competent. Social competence means to have social, emotional and cognitive skills and behaviours which are needed to adapt to the society successfully. Socially competent behaviour comprises of insight, perception, good behavioural skills, values etc. As mentioned by (Kostelnik et al., 2002) social competence is comprising of six categories of competence i.e. Acceptance of social ideals, developing the sense of personal identification, possessing mutual skills, learning to balance personal behaviour in accordance with social beliefs, planning and decision-making and develop the cultural competence. Social competence has defined by different characteristics at different stages of development. As stated by Orphinas and Horne (2006) “Social competence is a person’s age appropriate knowledge and skills for functioning peacefully and creatively in his or her own community or social environment”. Therefore social competence varies in terms of age, social situation,
cultural demands as the suitable behaviour of a child may not be suitable to a adult one, the same behaviour that is acceptable in a particular social situation may not be acceptable in another one and the behaviour that is respectable in one culture may not be respected in another culture. In the early years of life, the child mostly interacts with his/her family members, therefore the social competence at this age is defined differently. In the words of 

Guralnick (1990) social competence in early childhood defines as “the ability of young children to successfully and appropriately select and carry out their interpersonal goals”. During the adolescent period, children prefer the company of peers more than the company of parents or other family members. Interaction with the peers develops social competencies such as cooperation and negotiations. As a result of the interactions with the peer an adolescent tries to play different social roles taking him towards independent functioning as an adult away from his emotional dependence on his parents. The learning of adolescents is very much affected by social factors as they are supposed to be competent enough to contribute in the changing needs of the society.

In modern civilization, social competence has evolved as an important ingredient and a required element of the members of ever changing and developing society. The success of an individual as a productive member of society depends that how much he/she socially competent. Although there is a conflict between researches to give a single definition of social competence and defining a standard to evaluate it, but the researches that have been initiated in last 3 decades on social competence made it clear that the socially competent children have better development whether it is psychological, emotional or academic. In contrary, the children who feel lonely and dissatisfied with social relations face development and learning problems in future. Thus, socially incompetence children have always a possibility to face a no. of problems in present as well as in future. Alienation and non-acceptance by peer group can lead low self-esteem and depression. A number of researches that have been done on social competence in the last decades mentioned the importance of social competence for education as well as for the society. As social skills are essential for the children and the youth for the success of their personal, social, emotional and professional life, the adults who guide the children and the youth should take care about developing these skills. (Elias et al., 1997). According to(Katz and McClellan, 1997)a child should possess a minimum level of social competence till he reaches the age of six. Because if it is not done, the child will be at risk for the entire life. Students who have better social competence are confident and they develop a appropriate way of interacting with others i.e. friends, parents,
adults and teachers. A student may have to face poor academic grades and behaviour related problems in the absence of social skills. According to (Mukesh Devi, M.S. Chahar, 2015), social skills play crucial role in deciding the academic achievement of the students. Social skill non deficient school students were found to possess higher academic performance as compared to deficient school students. The social skill non deficient students have higher performance as compared to deficient students in their exams.

Social competence affects the academic performance and educational achievement of students. It develops time and age. In the process of growth and development, a child has experienced various interpersonal social interactions that later on prove to be a means of mastering social skills. An individual keeps interacting with his physical and social environment. During this interaction, he develops certain social skills that ensure his success based on the extent of development of these skills. Social competencies are comprises of social, cognitive, emotional and behaviour skills that are needed by the students for social adjustment. A student is said to be socially competent if he is able to tackle his social relations. Social competence enables a person to go well with others, to build relationships and maintain them, and to behave in an acceptable manner during a social interaction. Academic success of a student also affected by social competence. The students who are socially competent are confident in their behaviour and maintain good relationships with the classmates and teachers. They get better response from the teachers which motivate them for their studies. Social competence affects the personal and professional life of the students. Social competence is positively correlated with the academic success of the students. If the child does not develop necessary social skills then he may face poor academic performance and other behaviour related problems. The students who are socially more competent are more likely to be high achiever. They have high learning motivation level than others which ultimately affects their academic achievement.

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