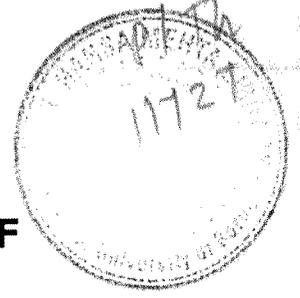


**A CASE STUDY OF TOP-RANKERS OF
SECONDARY
EDUCATION BOARD, ASSAM**



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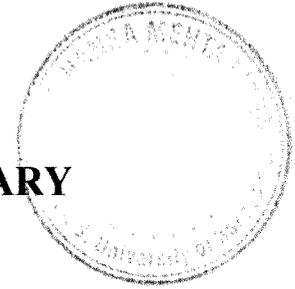
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary times, a common societal value is academic achievement. Many teachers and administrators have come to view academic success and failure in absolute terms, because for a student 'academic success' means acceptance and affection from the parents, the teachers and the peers. It leads to the satisfaction of their need for understanding power and affiliation, and thereby strengthens their self-concept. Higher achievement is also interpreted as “a student who does more than what is expected of him on the basis of his ability”. And failure also means failing to achieve according to their potentiality. The group of under achievers can consist of children who are not intellectually dull, but are at least of average and may even be of superior ability. The failure in such children is of great concern to a developing country like ours, which cannot remain indifferent to this loss of potential manpower within the higher ability range.

2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Any institution aims at all-round development of all its students. It is seen that in Secondary Board examination, some of the students excel whereas, many fails. Although it is essential yet very difficult to find a proper explanation as to how they excel because the phenomenon is so complex to explain. It is observed that few of the students who are brilliant and of high I.Q, enjoy good parental support also fail. The matter of student's excelling in academic sphere is studied by numerous researches and is a topic of many committees and commissions. The most serious weakness in this field is that it has not provided a better understanding and explanation about overall cause behind the great success of few students.

In Assam Board examinations only 5% to 6% of students of the total number appear for this exam secure more than 60% marks. Among them the percentage of high achievers is very low. Whereas students passing in second class marks are on an average 9 to 10 percent

and in third division 28 to 29 percent of the total candidate passes and about 50 percent of students fail to achieve even pass percentage. This condition is prevailing through years.

This scenario gives birth to many doubts like; whether the problem lies with the educational system of Assam? Or there is problem of society or people over there? Or could it be that the curriculum of SEBA is not efficient? Many such other questions emerge in the mind of the researcher as to why the performance levels of students in standard X are so low in Assam? Now the question further arises is that if so is the condition, how few students are still able to achieve so high? It is not so that in a year all the students who appear for board examination are dullards and among those, few will have to be topper. Rather these are those students among thousands, who have made it to top position and achieve so high percentage of marks in the secondary board examinations. The answer of this question will guide us to know the exceptional features related to the students and there by the problems of low achievements and failure may be avoided

To understand any phenomenon it is very essential to study the extreme cases. But the study of extreme high achievers (toppers) or failures will provide us relevant understanding and that may help us to redesign our education and home environment. In this study top rankers who are at one extreme are proposed to be studied so that the peculiar aspect related to them could be deduced which will help to gain an understanding as to why they were successful.

The findings of this study will be of real values to all the secondary school students and parents in their quest to raise the academic standard of the child in the state of Assam and other parts of the country. It is needed therefore to unearth the reality through in-depth study of few top rankers in the recent years 2003 and 2004 of secondary level.

From the above mentioned rationale of the study the following questions got emerged which need an explanation through a systematic investigation.

- Who makes it to the top at Board examination of Assam?
- How some students make it to the top rank?
- What is the support system enjoyed by top rankers from parents, teachers, peer groups, neighborhood, surrounding, etc.?

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

“A case study of top-rankers of Secondary Education Board, Assam.”

4. OBJECTIVES

To identify, Understand and explain the pathways followed and the support system enjoyed by the top rankers of SEBA.

5. METHODOLOGY

It is essential to make an in-depth study of top rankers as the review of literature revealed that no one or few factors is solely responsible for the success of a child. The investigator planned to have case study method as it is an ideal methodology where a holistic and in-depth investigation is needed. 20 Cases for this study were selected from the last two years (i.e. 2003 and 2004) Secondary Education Board of Assam result.

Data Collection: For data collection unstructured interview and observation were main tools. All the 20 cases and related persons who can provide relevant information about these 20 cases were interviewed personally. Track records of academic achievement and attendance were checked by the researcher.

Through data analysis, conclusion were arrived at from all the twenty individual case histories which supplies relatively clear picture about who they are, the path ways followed and the support system received by them. For data analysis, the field notes were read thoroughly and for a number of times. Latter two major steps were followed for analysis viz. data reduction and data display.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS: Major findings of the study are presented below.

BACKGROUND: These were the children who were physically and mentally very healthy. Their diet was balanced and had sound sleep all through. These children had never encountered any major disease.

The top rankers were brilliant and intelligent students. They were rank holders in their

past since primary classes whereas in few cases performance got raised since secondary classes. Most of them were fast learner since childhood and had interest in education and attending school. They had very little difficulty in understanding the lessons taught in the class. One of the common aspects among all the high achievers was their firm determination and will power to succeed. They were self-confident and ambitious children.

All the children belonged to nuclear family. Except few, all the parents were highly educated and understood the value of being educated. The surrounding of their house was peaceful and there was no disturbance in their surrounding.

Most of the students have completed schooling from a single school where as few have transferred school due to some reasons but this change didn't affect either their performance or their interest in studies. Students belonged to different kind of schools with different set ups. There was no uniformity among the number of students per class. Even number of teacher differed among different schools. It can be said that the organization and infrastructure of the school didn't have any affect on students' performance level.

PATHWAYS FOLLOWED: These high achievers had a fixed future goal to be achieved for which they worked very hard. Among these cases, all were either motivated intrinsically or extrinsically and have put hard work to do well in examination. In almost all the cases, children worked according to their aspiration and were not forced by any one to do so.

They submitted homework always in time. They were regular in studies. They devoted 2-3 hours daily for self studies throughout the year with the expectation to achieve high in their examination. They were always attentive towards the teachers' instruction and explanation in the classroom. Whenever any doubt emerged in their mind they use to clarify it from the teachers. They did not left or laid less importance to any portion of any subject. For them text books were the richest source of information. They made intensive reading of text books. Also prepared notes in their own language. These high achievers laid more emphasis on understanding of content rather than cognition aspect. They had



spent 8 to 10 hours for studies and had revised their course in details for 2-3 times after pre-boards examination.

All most all of these children had favorable attitude towards their school, teachers, peers, different subject of study, etc. They were having positive attitude towards life and education.

It seems that some students were introvert and some were extrovert but their nature was not a hurdle in their study habit as they maintained full concentration towards their work. Although these children did not roam yet were not always stuck to their course books. They have not avoided watching television or any other source of recreation. Most of them had a habit of reading books, magazines, newspaper, etc.

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Parents of these children were very supportive and encouraging. They guided their children to work hard and perform well. They reflected faith on the caliber of their children. Although most of them were in-service yet were very much attached and conscious regarding the future of their children. They tried to understand the needs and requirement of their child and spend quality time with them. There was no discrimination made by the parents among their children. They love and cared all equally.

Most of them were of middle class family whereas few were also from very poor family. Yet they have tried to provide all the required facilities for education. They tried to avoid any kind of extra burden on their children that might have affected their performance. But if the child was interested in some co-curricular activities, they provided encouragement for recreation. At least one of the two parents of each case was very strict and disciplined especially regarding studies. Most of the parents didn't have very high expectation from their children, although they wanted them to perform well in all the examinations. Parents maintained good relation with their neighbors and even neighbors provided support and help to them. They had good social reputation.

In most of the cases, school teachers were highly qualified (especially for secondary level). Highly qualified and not so qualified teachers with less or more experience, were appreciated for their way of teaching by the students. Teachers were unbiased and did not

show any special inclination towards these students. Even in most of the cases they were not having high expectation from these students. Yet they had always helped if students approached them for study related matters. They checked home work at time and never overburden them with its load.

Almost all of the students had undergone private tuitions in higher classes which have strengthened their knowledge of the subject. Even in many cases in the primary classes their parents or some other family member have taught them in-spite of some tuition teachers. Friends directly or indirectly used to help each other in studies.

7. Implication of the Findings

Following points can be proved of practical utility which are derived from the present study.

1. From the findings of this study it was revealed that the hard work and will to succeed of the top-rankers made them to achieve so high. Forthcoming students by following the pathways of hard work and by sustaining will to succeed might led them to achieve maximum according to their potential.
2. It is clearly understood by the present study that only preliminary preparation before any examination is not enough, a regular study habit is essential. Some quality time per day throughout the year and some extra-efforts before examination were found effective in all the cases. Similarly, other students can inculcate such study habit in their life to become successful.
3. Past performance do have impact on future achievement, therefore since childhood parents must consider education of the child important and should try to develop good habit by involving themselves in learning activities of their child.
4. Strong motivation and future goal directs students to do well, if a student is not intrinsically motivated towards studies then parents, teachers or any other influential

agencies should try to reinforce and guide him/her to work according to individual caliber.

5. Parents should try to maintain congenial and conducive atmosphere at home.

6. Neighbors, peer group, extended family, etc can realize their role in the success of a child.

7. Many a times a myth is formed that factors like caste, medium of instruction, birth ordered, working-mothers, personality types, type of school, etc. forms barrier in the path of academic success of a child. After going through all the twenty cases in detail it can be understood that these hinderances can never become hurdle in the path of success if there is will to do.

8. Furthre, teachers can also identify the requirements of the students that help them to achieve high viz. regular correction of homework, clarification of all the doubts of the students, having understanding and caring nature, encouraging and appreciating child's qualities can enhance confidence and performance level of the students.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Children definitely want to work for success. This in fact reinforces performances and releases further energy and generate favorable attitude towards learning. There may be some children who really want to improve but are unable to see as to how to do so. If they get this scientific explanation about the top rankers, they might be able to guide themselves and teachers can also direct the incoming students from being failure in school. Students and associated person could be beneficial from this investigation as it displays different environmental set up and background, vivid learning habit, school settings and some common habit followed by high achievers. This report will be of worth if it inspires students to maximize their performance according to their caliber.