TROUBLES WITH NUMBERS AND WORD PROBLEMS: AN INNUMERACY AMONG STUDENTS

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Undeniably, many students consider Mathematics as one of the most difficult subjects that they encounter. From the four fundamental operations which are addition, subtraction, multiplication and division that are supposed to be just a piece of cake, these were actually made complicated as the students progress in their grade level. Instead of just having simple computations, this subject was mixed by tricky questions and complicated word problems which cause the students to struggle more in the subject.

According to H.J. Sherman, L.I. Richardson and G.J. Yard (2014), understanding the language of Mathematics is one of the challenges. Students find it hard to understand the terminologies that have special mathematical meaning such as "volume," "yard," "power," and "area" which "seriously hampers students' abilities to focus on and understand terms and operations for algorithms and problem solving." The struggles in understanding mathematical word problems can result into dislike and lack of interest toward Math which can actually lead to innumeracy.

As defined by the RationalWiki (2018), innumeracy is a term used to refer to a growing trend in the inability of people to understand numbers, statistics, and probabilities. As a result, innumeracy "can lead to significant consequences personally and for society as a whole. The potential problems caused by innumeracy are, it must be said, innumerable" because working numbers trains a mind for logical, critical thinking. The more a learner is innumerate, the more he or she was declined of the opportunity to make thought processes that critical thinking are built upon.
The possible consequences of being innumerate are actually dangerous, just like what was mentioned above. In addition to this, Mark C. Chu-Charoll (2007) also stated some setbacks caused by illiteracy in Mathematics as he said "When people can’t understand math, that means that they’re going to be making all sorts of important decisions based on something even worse than ignorance. They don’t just lack knowledge of the relevant facts that affect their decision – they lack the ability to even acquire the knowledge that they need to be able to make the decision."

Therefore, in their early education, literacy in Mathematics should also be prioritized aside from spelling, writing and reading because arithmetic is also fundamental for the development of the learners which opens many doors for their acquisition of different skills. However, it is unavoidable if there are students who find it hard to deal with mathematical problems that is why there are suggested ways to overcome those difficulties that hinder them in learning the topics in that subject.

The teacher should consider making the discussion of Math lessons more interactive by conducting Math games which tackles about Math facts or solving problems, listening to commercially available audiotapes that provide a fun way of learning math facts or letting the students watch animations that teach different Math lessons. These techniques will make the discussion more engaging and it would be less stressful for the students because they enjoy the tools and practice that the teacher is using. The use of concrete objects and specialized materials would also be a great help.

Others might say that what the students learn in Mathematics cannot be applied in real life. They think that the lessons just give distress to the students but this negative thinking that was inculcated in children's minds must be replaced by something in which they will be motivated to learn and be interested in the subject. If the learners find the lessons confusing, the teacher must give extra attention and extra effort because the true essence of being a teacher is not letting the lesson pass if the students were not able to understand and apply it.
References:


https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Innumeracy


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