

Abstract

Background Tribal students have social, cultural, linguistic, economic and tradition differences that may affect the academic outcome. Causes of academic underachievement and characteristic have an important role to improve their school success.

Objectives To identify causes and characteristics of tribal students with learning difficulty in a northern province in Thailand.

Method This is a 2-phase cross-sectional study. Phase 1 was to identify causes of learning difficulty with Brief Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test and academic screening. The second phase was to gather characteristics of the participants with parent- and teacher-questionnaires.

Results 204 participants who studied in grade three elementary to grade three secondary educations and had learning difficulty were enrolled in phase 1 study. Cognitive impairment was found to be the major cause of school underachievement. There were 71 participants remained in phase 2, which median Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of them was 60 (min 22, max 79). There were participants, parents and educational system factors influenced academic underachievement.

Conclusion Language intervention and the specific curriculum to facilitate Thai language literacy learning from the younger age providing by the teachers will be the significant strategies for tribal child.

Keywords: academic/school underachievement, tribal students, cause, characteristic, factors

