

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ACADEMIC SKILLS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS STUDYING IN VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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INTRODUCTION:

The investigator conducted the study with the objective to assess and compare the five areas of academic skills of visually impaired students, who were studying in three settings (special school setting, semi-integrated setting and integrated setting). The objective of the study was also to compare the academic skills of visually impaired boys with visually impaired girls in the three educational settings.

DELIMITATIONS:

The research was restricted to the visually impaired students who did not have functionally useful vision in the State of Delhi in the three settings and five areas of academic skills.

TOOLS:

The researcher after conducting pilot study, designed and developed tools along with guidelines for assessment of academic skill in the five areas of academic skills i.e. (i) reading Braille script, (ii) language usage and comprehension, (iii) solving problems in Mathematics (iv) reasoning in Science and (v) providing information in Social Studies for visually impaired students in various educational settings in terms of scores. The validity was endorsed by the experts and through test retest method it was observed that the tests had high reliability.

METHOD:

The study utilized ex-post facto method of research. This method of research is a systematic, empirical investigation in which the researcher does not have direct control on independent variable because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulative.

SAMPLE:

The visually impaired students were identified in the State of Delhi and were subjected to WISC-R (NIVH adapted Verbal Hindi) to ascertain I.Q. and the results were tabulated. Five girls and five boys each from the classes VI, VII & VIII in three settings were chosen such

that their I.Q. score was between 95 and 110 so as to get the uniform sample of 30 to represent the population in each of three settings. The assessment of academic skills was carried on the sample of 90 students.

FINDINGS:

The analysis of six hypotheses of the study revealed that semi-integrated setting was most effective in imparting academic skills and the visually impaired students in this particular setting were more efficient both in special academic skills like Braille reading as well as general academic skills such as problem solving, reasoning, information providing and language comprehension and usage. This was primarily due to balance between protection and competition among the peer group in the setting.

Another interesting finding was that visually impaired students going to mainstream schools both in integrated as well as semi-integrated setting were good at problem solving and reasoning skills due to greater exposure to the subjects like Mathematics and Science. The investigator concluded that visually impaired children should be admitted to mainstream schools in large numbers. Integrated setting should be promoted and strengthened. Special schools should be utilized to provide resource services as a supplement to integrated setting.

Last but not the least important finding from the analysis of hypotheses was remarkable uniformity between visually impaired boys and visually impaired girls in academic skills. Both were equal in their performance. The investigator concluded that uniform education policy and procedures shall hold good for both.