



A Comparative Study of the Fulfillment of Special Educational Needs of Visually Challenged Students Studying in Inclusive and Exclusive Setting

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Abstract:

Visual impairment change the way of obtaining information about the world in which they grow and function. In order to compensate the effect of vision loss children with visual impairment need to learn acquiring knowledge in alternative ways. That's why, in addition to their regular classroom studies, visually challenged children need to learn specialized skills. In this research study, we try to focus on the fulfillments of special educational needs or, expanded core curriculum in inclusive and exclusive settings of students with visual impairment. These special educational needs are taken as Functional Academic Skills, Orientation and Mobility, Social interaction Skills, Independent Living Skills, Recreation and Leisure Skills, Career Education, Technology and Visual Efficiency Skills in this particular research study. Moreover, results show that the effect of inclusive and exclusive settings are equal but somehow inclusive school becomes the right choice in present days.

Key Words: Special educational needs, visually challenged students, Inclusive and Exclusive settings.

Students with visual impairment have unique educational needs. Through the sense of sight much of what is

generally referred to as knowledge is received and processed. Children who are visually impaired, therefore, need to learn acquiring knowledge in alternative ways. They need to learn the necessary compensatory skills and adaptive techniques—such as using Braille or optical devices for written communication. Some of the other areas uniquely affected by impaired vision are concept development, or the ability to understand the relationships between and functions of objects and abstract ideas; sensory-motor activities, or the ability to coordinate vision, hearing, and other senses with physical actions; socialization; and career or vocational preparation.

Visual impairment changes the way of obtaining information about the world in which they grow and function. This means that, in addition to their regular classroom studies, visually challenged children need to learn specialized skills. According to the American Foundation for the Blind

“The specialized skills visually impaired children must learn include: Technology and computer proficiency—using computer and telecommunication equipment and software adapted for blind or visually impaired people. Literacy—reading and writing with Braille, large print, optical devices, or training in effective use of available vision. Safe and independent mobility—using specific orientation and mobility techniques, long canes, or other mobility tools. Social interaction skills—understanding body language and other visual concepts. Personal management and independent living skills—learning specialized techniques for personal grooming, food preparation, money management, and other tasks. (www.afb.org/)

Inclusive education purports to provide educational opportunities for disabled children in regular schools. It aims at normalizing the life and education of visually impaired children and to integrate the disabled with the general community at all levels as equal partners to prepare them for normal growth and face life with courage and confidence. Educational integration refers to measures taken to provide education within the regular education system with some extra support (i.e resource room, resource teacher etc.) for children with special educational needs. Special schools are residential in nature and children are kept in segregation from society.

Special schools are an educational setting in which the challenged children are provided comprehensive educational services but live apart from normal family environment other than holidays and weekends. Frampton & Kerney (1953), as quoted by Punani and Rawal (2000), defined special school for the visually impaired as

“A boarding school offering education and care to blind children from ages three to twenty-one, or from pre-school through the high school. Educationally speaking, these schools attempt to provide complete education and care for the blind children. These services include medical, academic, musical, social, vocational courses, placement, and follow-up.”

Need & Rationale of the Study:

Currently educational provisions for children with disabilities are covered by ‘special schools’ and inclusive mainstream schools (IECYD 2005). The government of India seems committed to provide education through inclusive schools for children with disabilities, in accordance with the provisions of the PWD Act, 1995, RCI Act (1992), National Trust Act (1999). NPE, 1986, POA 1992, Kothari commission 1964-66 all advocate to provide educational opportunities for the disabled children in common schools. But at ground level true picture of inclusive setting schools are different.

“Inclusive setting schools are incapable in rendering the basic requirements like Braille books, reader facility, mobility training, apparatus for learning elementary mathematics to their visually impaired students etc” (Rai 2006).

No doubt inclusive education is logical, practical, viable, and educationally sound and can be accomplished at a minimum cost. But Advani (1990) as quoted by Punani and Rawal (2000) maintains that inclusive education in Indian context is not as cost effective as is considered. Decades have passed, and the most appropriate educational environment for students with disabilities continues to be an issue of intense debate in our public school systems. Freeman and Alkin (2000) report, “While some continue to argue for the advantages of maintaining exclusive special education settings, there is increasing recognition of the long-term social and academic cost

of segregation as well as the benefits of full inclusion for all students.”

After Extensive and intensive review of related study on this topic, it is found that not even a single study has been conducted in the recent past on this topic. Specific studies or research in local context are required to compare the fulfillments of the special educational needs of visually challenged children in exclusive and inclusive setting and to provide with the information need to determine the best educational option for visually challenged child. Hence, the worthwhileness of this study is justified.

Statement of the problem- The problem of this study has been stated as follows: A comparative study of the fulfillment of special educational needs of visually challenged students studying in inclusive setting and exclusive setting.

Operational definitions: The key terms related to this study have been defined as –

Visually challenged children: Children who are totally blind or low vision students.

Inclusive setting: It refers to those educational settings in which visually challenged students study with non-disabled students in regular classroom.

Exclusive setting: It means special schools specifically meant for visually challenged students.

Special educational needs: It refers to compensatory skills which support visually challenged children in order to maximize their learning skills and skills to live independently. These may also call as expanded core curriculum. It includes areas such as:

- 1) Functional Academic Skills,
- 2) Orientation and Mobility,
- 3) Social interaction Skills,
- 4) Independent Living Skills
- 5) Recreation and Leisure Skills
- 6) Career Education
- 7) Technology
- 8) Visual Efficiency Skills

Objectives of the study:

To compare the fulfillment of the educational needs of visually challenged children in inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in relation to

1. Functional Academic Skills,
2. Orientation and Mobility,
3. Social interaction Skills,
4. Independent Living Skills
5. Recreation and Leisure Skills
6. Career Education
7. Technology
8. Visual Efficiency Skills

Hypothesis:

Ho.1 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the functional educational needs of visually challenged children.

Ho. 2 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of orientation and mobility skills of visually challenged children.

Ho .3 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of social interaction skills of visually challenged children.

Ho .4 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of independent living skills of visually challenged children.

Ho .5 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of recreation and leisure skills of visually challenged children.

Ho .6 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of career education for visually challenged children.

Ho.7 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of Technology for visually challenged children.

Ho.8 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of visual efficiency skills for visually challenged children.

Method of the study: Descriptive survey method has been used in this study.

Population: All visually challenged children studying in special schools and inclusive schools in Varanasi would constitute population of this study.

Sample: 30 students each from special schools and from inclusive school situated in Varanasi city.

Sampling technique: Purposive sample method has been used in selecting the representative sample.

Data collection: Researchers made questionnaire comprising eight dimensions i.e Functional Academic Skills, Orientation and Mobility, Social interaction Skills, Independent Living Skills, Recreation and Leisure Skills, Career Education, Technology, Visual Efficiency Skills.

Results & Discussions

Dimension 1. Findings related to Functional Academic Skills

Ho.1 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the functional educational needs of visually challenged children.

Dim 1	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
	Inclusive Setting	125	175	1	61.53	Significant at 0.01 level
	Exclusive Setting	220	80			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Hence the related null hypothesis Ho.1 is rejected i.e. there is significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) is fulfilling the functional educational needs to visually challenged children. In other words, inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) differs in fulfilling the functional academic needs of visually challenged children.

On the basis of percentage frequency it can be said that special schools are better than inclusive schools in respect to fulfill the function academic needs visually challenged children.

Dimension-2: Orientation and Mobility

Ho .2 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of orientation and mobility skills of visually challenged children.

	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
Dim 2	Inclusive Setting	86	214	1	20.62	Significant at 0.05 level
	Exclusive Setting	140	160			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the related null hypothesis Ho.2 is rejected i.e. there is significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the need of orientation and mobility skills of visually challenged children. In other words, inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) differs in fulfilling the needs of orientation and mobility skills of visually challenged children.

On the basis of percentage frequency it can be said that special schools are better than inclusive schools in respect to fulfill the skill of orientation and mobility of visually challenged children.

Dimension-3: Social interaction skills

Ho .3 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of social interaction skills of visually challenged children.

	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
Dim 3	Inclusive Setting	207	33	1	33.42	Significant at 0.01 level
	Exclusive Setting	152	88			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the related null hypothesis Ho.3 is rejected i.e. there is significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the

needs of social interaction skills of visually challenged children. In other words, inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) differs in fulfilling the needs of social interaction skills of visually challenged children.

On the basis of percentage frequency it can be said that special schools are better than inclusive schools in respect to fulfill the social interaction skills of visually challenged children.

Dimension-4: Independent living skills

Ho .4 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of independent living skills of visually challenged children.

Dim 4	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
	Inclusive Setting	150	60	1	0.98	Significant at 0.01 level
	Exclusive Setting	159	51			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the related null hypothesis Ho.4 is rejected i.e. there is significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) is fulfilling the needs of independent living skills of visually challenged children. In other words, inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) differs in fulfilling the functional academic needs of independent living skills of visually challenged children.

Dimension-5: Recreation and Leisure skills

Ho.5 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of recreation and leisure skills of visually challenged children.

Dim 5	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
	Inclusive Setting	185	115	1	2.74	Significant at 0.05 level
	Exclusive Setting	165	135			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the related null hypothesis Ho 3.5 is rejected i.e. there is significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of recreation and leisure skills of visually challenged children. In other words, inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) differs in fulfilling the needs of recreation and leisure skills of visually challenged children.

Dimension-6: Career Education

Ho.6 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of career education for visually challenged children.

Dim 6	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
	Inclusive Setting	33	267	1	110.6	Significant at 0.01 level
	Exclusive Setting	152	148			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the related null hypothesis Ho 3.6 is rejected i.e. there is significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of career education for the visually challenged children. In other words, inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) differs in fulfilling the needs of career education for visually challenged children.

On the basis of percentage frequency it can be said that special schools are better than inclusive schools in respect to fulfill the needs of career education of visually challenged children.

Dimension-7: Technology

Ho.7 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of Technology for visually challenged children.

Dim 7	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
	Inclusive Setting	15	375	1	345.0	Significant at 0.01 level
	Exclusive Setting	264	126			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the related null hypothesis Ho 3.7 is rejected i.e. there is significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of technology for the visually challenged children. In other words, inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) differs in fulfilling the needs of technology for visually challenged children.

On the basis of percentage frequency it can be said that special schools are better than inclusive schools in respect to fulfill the needs of technology for the visually challenged children.

Dimension-8: Visual Efficiency Skills

Ho.8 There is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the needs of visual efficiency skills for visually challenged children.

Dim 8	Setting	Responses		df	Chi-square	Inference
		Yes	No			
	Inclusive Setting	0	120	1	345.0	No Significant difference
	Exclusive Setting	0	120			

The above table reveals that “chi value” is not significant at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the related null hypothesis Ho.8 is accepted i.e. there is no significant difference between inclusive and exclusive setting (special schools) in fulfilling the visual efficiency needs to visually challenged children. In other words inclusive and exclusive settings (special schools) do not differ in fulfilling the needs of visual efficiency skills for the visually challenged children.

Educational Implications:

- The present study has the following implications-
- It will identify areas that need more care in order to fulfill the special educational needs of visually challenged children.
- It will provide insight as to how educational programs must be conducted to meet needs of student with visual impairment.
- Parents and families of visually impaired are provided with the information they need to determine the best educational option for their child.
- School administrators and management of both setting may evaluate their school setting and can make modification accordingly.
- It will provide adequate essential information to educational administrators at different levels, RCI and Ministry of social justice and Empowerment, in fact full range of individual involved in the educational service, whether visually challenged children are getting adequate facilities as per their needs or not.

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