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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE FUNCTIONAL SKILLS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS IN IED-SS.

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Abstract

The overall objective of the study is to find out the Functional skills of visually impaired students in Coimbatore district and difference among them due to age, gender and nature. The present study revealed that significant differences were observed. The present study reported that the totally blind children showed independency in achieving Functional skills. Likewise the study also discovered that there is no difference in achieving Functional skills among different age groups and gender.

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Introduction:-

Inclusive education has grown from the belief that education is a basic human right and that it provides the foundation for a more just society. All learners have a right to education, regardless of their individual characteristics or difficulties. Inclusive education initiatives often have a particular focus on those groups, which, in the past, have been excluded from educational opportunities

Inclusive education is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighbourhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum (Bui, Quirk, Almazan, & Valenti, 2010; Alquraini & Gut, 2012) There are an estimated 25 million children out of school in India (MHRD 2003 statistics, cited in World Bank, 2004), many of whom are marginalised by dimensions such as poverty, gender, disability, and caste. While many educational programmes have attempted to reach out to these previously excluded children, those with disabilities are often forgotten, emphasising their invisible status in a rigidly categorised society (Singal, 2005) clearly perceives inclusive education as "...a concept that has been adopted from the international discourse, but has not been engaged with in the Indian scenario." Though they were quick to accept that this thinking has not yet prevailed. (Singal, 2005). Inclusive schools have a collaborative and respectful school culture where students with disabilities are presumed to be competent, develop positive social relationships with peers, and are full participating members of the school community (Jelas & Ali, 2014; Lamichhane, 2017).

"Inclusive education is considered as one system for all .An education which evolves from an environment where diversity of relationships is encouraged and valued. In this education system all children have the right to a local school where no child is excluded, where diversity is celebrated and where everyone's contribution is valued; where learning, choices, relationships, play and friendships are central to creating a fair, just and equitable system, and the wider community works together to ensure meaningful continued inclusion treating everyone with respect and kindness .It provides education with a granted and guaranteed culture of accepting and welcoming all people to teach and learn together. Inclusive education is a way of creating a welcoming learning environment where each, irrespective of their culture, creed or ability, can develop at their own pace, whilst sharing space together to build a

Corresponding Author:-Mrs.T.Premalatha.

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sense of safety and belonging through supportive relationships Functional skills refer to the skills that students learn that provide them with the opportunity to work, play, socialize, and take care of personal needs to the highest level possible. Students who are blind or visually impaired, require adaptations to the curriculum that address their unique learning needs. All students with disabilities, and especially those who are blind or visually impaired, will need concrete experiences, unifying experiences and opportunities to learn by doing within a natural setting. Students with visual impairments will need particular assistance with those skills acquired primarily through vision.

Significance Of The Study

Functional skills have been given important consideration keeping in mind their significance towards the performance in day to day tasks. Comparatively significant research has been conducted on achievement of Functional skills in relation to age, gender and nature of visually impaired students.

Objectives:-

1. To study the achievement of Functional skills by visually impaired students in relation to their age in inclusive set up.
2. To study the achievement of Functional skills by visually impaired students in relation to the gender in inclusive classroom.
3. To study the achievement of Functional skills by visually impaired students in relation to nature in inclusive education.

Scope And Limitations

This research study the achievement of Functional skills of visually impaired students in Coimbatore district school students in relation to a few selected variables like age, gender and nature. The Functional skills are measured by using checklist and questionnaire. The main purpose of the study is to find out whether there is differences in age, gender and nature. Based on the analysis and discussion of results implications are drawn. Due to practical constraints the sample size was limited to 40 students in Coimbatore district in Inclusive schools. However, it is felt that inspite of the above mentioned limitations the findings of the study can be generalized to a great extent , since care was taken to make every step in the procedure of the study as objective as possible.

Review Of The Related Literature

Rahaman, Muhammed Mahbubur (2011) viewed a phenomenological study to understand and describe the inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in secondary schools in Bangladesh. This study intends to answer the main research question: How do teachers in secondary schools in Bangladesh understand inclusion? The research used a phenomenological research design consisting of participant interviews and observations. An additional questionnaire was used to measure teacher attitudes and understanding of teaching strategies. A total of 12 interviews (two for each participant classroom teacher) and 12 observations (two of each participant) were conducted. Participants found that student-centric evidence-based teaching and learning strategies are more effective than their traditional lecture-based teaching and

Mumthas, N. S.; Shamina, E. (2011) conducted a study involving teachers in USA it was found that only 29 percent of general educators felt that they had enough expertise or training in inclusion (Hobbs and Westling 2002). The present study is an attempt to find out whether the prospective teachers have adequate awareness on the concept of inclusive education through an Awareness Test on Inclusive Education (Mumthas & Shamina, 2010). A sample of 300 prospective teachers at secondary level from various teacher-training institutions of Malappuram and Calicut districts were selected for the study. It is found that prospective teachers do not have adequate Awareness on Inclusive Education and it does not differ significantly irrespective of their gender, locale of Institution and type of management of institution. The study suggests that adequate training programs on Inclusive Education should be given to prospective teachers for successful implementation of Inclusive Education.

Jeanette, et al (2012) conducted a study to investigate the influence of three types of variables (teachers' backgrounds, the current teaching situation and characteristics of students with disabilities) on Taiwanese first-grade teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. A mail survey was conducted with all first-grade teachers in a metropolitan city in central Taiwan. After excluding cases with missing data, the sample size for this study was 321. Results showed that in general teachers' perceptions of inclusive education were in the middle range, neither highly negative nor highly positive.

Erten, et al (2012) conducted a study on conceptual and methodological challenges of doing research in the field of inclusive education and revisit school effectiveness research literature to inform future research. First, we present the rationale for inclusive education and briefly review the evolution of special needs education. Then, we discuss limitations of current research on inclusive education. Next, we present school- and classroom-level findings of school effectiveness research to highlight how it can influence the inclusive education research agenda. We conclude by presenting future directions for research.

Kathleen Tait & Nola Purdie (2010) used the Interaction with Disabled Persons scale to explore the attitudes of pre-service teachers at a large Australian University to people with disabilities. Using structural equation modeling the factor structure of the IDP was tested. The findings reported significant effects for type of course, age, gender, language and frequency of contact the magnitude of these effects was minimal. It was also found that changes in student teachers attitudes toward disability over a one year general teacher training course were found to be minimal.

Methodology:-

“ The survey is in briefly a method of analysis in scientific and orderly form for defined purpose of given social situation of problem or population” Herman,(2005).The method adopted in the study is survey method. “ Survey research is an organized attempt to analyze interpret and report the present status of social institution group or area Whitney, F. L (2005)

Selection Of Tool

Tool is an important instrument to collect data. For collecting new, unknown data required for the study of any problem one may use various devices. For every type of research we need certain instrument to gather new facts or to explore new fields. In the present study the investigator selected “checklist” as the most important tool for collecting data.

Construction of tool

Checklist:

The checklist was prepared to find out the functional and social skills of visually impaired students. The checklist consists of 30 questions including social skills, emotional management skills ,communication skills, verbal behaviour and response skills and personal care skills. The response from the students for the above skills will be evaluated and marked by the researcher for every student selected for the research study.

Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small scale replica of the main study. It is the rehearsal of the main study. It covers the entire process of research preparation of a broad plan of the study, construction of tools, collection of data, processing and analysis of data and report writing. The selected tool was first used with Avinashilingam Girls higher Secondary school and C.S.I Girls Higher secondary school with 14 Visually impaired children to find the reliability of the tool. After the tool was found to be reliable, it was used to collect data from other students in the other school for final study.

Selection Of The Area

The area selected for the purpose of the study was limited to Coimbatore district only. The example selected for the present study consists of 40 students in 5 schools implementing IED –SS programme in and around Coimbatore district.

Distribution of sample for the present study:

Table 1:-

S.NO	SCHOOLS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
1	Avinashilingam Girls Hr.Sec.School, Coimbatore		8	8
2	Government Hr.Sec.School,Karamadai	4	1	5
3	CSI Boys Hr.Sec.School,Coimbatore	16		16
4	CSI Girls Hr.Sec.School,Coimbatore		6	6
5	St.Michael Hr.Sec.School,Coimbatore	5	5	
	TOTAL	20	20	40

The above table reveals that there are 40 visually impaired students in IED-SS programme in Coimbatore district. Out of 40 students 20 are boys and 20 are girls.

Analysis And Interpretation Of The Data

The data after collection has to be processed and analyzed in accordance with the outline laid down for the purpose at the time of developing research plan. The term processing implies editing, coding, classification and tabulation of collected data so that they are manageable for analysis. The term analysis refers to the computation of certain measures along with searching for patterns relationships that existing among data groups (Kothari, 1990).

Interpretation refers to the task of drawing inferences from the collected facts after an analytical or experimental study. Interpretation leads to the establishment of explanatory concepts that can serve as guide for future research studies; it opens new avenues of intellectual adventure and stimulates the quest for more knowledge - Kothari (2006)

The percentage analysis of functional skills and social skill among visually impaired students was done by the investigator and corroborated under the following headings.

Age Of Selected Students

The percentage analysis of selected students with regard to their age groups was calculated in the following table.

Table 2:-Age of selected students

AGE	No.	Percent
14-16 Years	20	50.0
17-19 Years	20	50.0
Total	40	100.0

From the above table it can be said that visually impaired children in the age groups of 14 – 16 yrs and 17 – 19 yrs are 50 %.

Gender Of Selected Students

The percentage analysis of selected students with regard to their gender was calculated and presented in the following table.

Table 3:-Gender Of Selected Students

GENDER	No.	Percent
Boys	26	65.0
Girls	14	35.0
Total	40	100.0

It can be said from the above table that majority of them (65 percentage) were visually impaired boys and 35 percentage were visually impaired girls.

Nature Of Selected Students

The percentage analysis of selected students with regard to their nature was calculated and presented in the following table.

Table 4:-nature Of Selected Students

NATURE	No.	Percent
Total blind	13	32.5
Low vision	27	67.5
Total	40	100.0

From the above table it can be discussed that 67.5 percentages were low vision and 32.5 percentages of students were totally blind. Majority of the sample were low vision students.

Comparison Of Functional Skills Of Visually Impaired Children Based On Their Age

The T-test was applied to find out whether there is significant difference among the group in the average Functional skill scores.

Comparison Of Functional Skills Of Visually Impaired Children Based On Their Age

Table 5:-

		FUNCTIONAL SKILLS			T	df	Sig
		Mean	S.D	No.			
AGE	14-16 Years	16.40	1.73	20	0.000	38	NS
	17-19 Years	16.40	2.62	20			
TOTAL		16.40	2.19	40			

NS- Not Significant

The above table shows that the calculated T - value 0.000 which is lesser than the table value of 2.024 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is lesser than the table value it is inferred that there is no significant difference among the age groups in the average scores. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Comparison Of Functional Skills Of Visually Impaired Children Based On Their Gender

The T-test was applied to find out whether there is significant difference among the group in the average Functional skill scores.

Table 6:-Comparison Of Functional Skills Of Visually Impaired Children Based On Their Gender

		FUNCTIONAL SKILLS			T	df	Sig
		Mean	S.D	No.			
GENDER	Boys	16.50	2.40	26	.389	38	NS
	Girls	16.21	1.81	14			
TOTAL		16.40	2.19	40			

NS- Not Significant

The above table shows that the calculated T - value 0.389 which is lesser than the table value of 2.024 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is lesser than the table value it is inferred that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in the average scores.

Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Comparison Of Functional Skills Of Students Based On Their Nature

The T-test was applied to find out whether there is significant difference among the group in the average Functional skill scores tabulated and represented graphically in fig.7.

Table 7:-Comparison Of Functional Skills Of Students Based On Their Nature

		FUNCTIONAL SKILLS			T	df	Sig
		Mean	S.D	No.			
NATURE	Total blind	17.38	2.63	13	2.049	38	*
	Low vision	15.93	1.82	27			
TOTAL		16.40	2.19	40			

* - Significant at 5% level

The above table shows that the calculated T - value 2.049 which is higher than the table value of 2.024 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is higher than the table value it is inferred that there is significant difference between totally blind and low vision children in the average scores. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. From the table it is inferred that totally blind showed independency in achieving Functional skills.

Summary And Conclusions:-

The findings of the study are as follows

1. By viewing the background information of students, it was found that both visually impaired boys and visually impaired girls were in equal percentage. (20 %).
2. It was found that majority of them 65 % were visually impaired boys and 35 % were visually impaired girls.

3. Regarding the nature, 67.5 % students were low vision and 32.5 % of students were totally blind. Majority of the sample were low vision students.
4. The T-test was applied to find out whether there is significant difference among the group in the average Functional skill scores. The calculated T - value 0.000 which is lesser than the table value of 2.024 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is lesser than the table value it is inferred that there is no significant difference among the age groups in the average scores.
5. The T-test was applied to find out whether there is significant difference among the group in the average Functional skill scores. The calculated T - value 0.389 which is lesser than the table value of 2.024 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is lesser than the table value it is inferred that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in the average scores.
6. The T-test was applied to find out whether there is significant difference among the group in the average Functional skill scores. The calculated T - value 2.049 which is higher than the table value of 2.024 at 5 % level of significance. Since the calculated value is higher than the table value it is inferred that there is significant difference between totally blind and low vision children in the average scores. From the table it is inferred that totally blind showed independency in achieving Functional skills

Recommendations

The research report's recommendations are outlined below, and presented thematically.

1. The teachers and parents should give more attention to tackle the problems faced by the visually impaired children in developing functional skills.
2. Provide in-service training to all mainstream teachers and primary education advisors on inclusive education.
3. To develop flexible curricula in accordance with individual needs of children, which will allow using different forms and methods of education.
4. The teaching should aim at the provision of sufficient experience for visually impaired children for optimum utilisation of their potentialities.

Conclusion:-

From the study it is well understood that majority of visually impaired children falls under average category. The visually impaired children feel better in inclusive set up than in special school. A group with parent, teacher, society and student can bring anonymous change in inclusive education through co-operation. Parents and pupils have important contributions to make to shape the implementation of inclusion (Lindsay , 2007). Inclusion is focused on presence, participation, and achievement. If everyone focus on this , the barriers in inclusive education will be eradicated which facilitate the visually impaired to excel academically and face challenges in all walks of life.

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