

A Comparative Study of Self-concept and Self-esteem of Blind Students Studying in Integrated and Special School Settings.

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Certain landmark changes resolutions, reports and provisions in the recent past with regard to the education and rehabilitation of blind people have more or less emphasized the need and importance of integrated education and mainstreaming as an effective approach for providing natural environment for socialization through interaction with sighted peers, reducing the cost on special education system, providing opportunities for self fulfillment, providing learning experiences in least restrictive environment, bringing the blind into educational and economic mainstream, utilizing the existing educational infrastructure, and achieving the target of universalization of education. An underlying assumption in providing integrated education to the blind children is that it would enhance their social emotional well-being including enhancement of self-concept and self-esteem which remains an important goal in education.

However, despite the above mentioned stated benefits of integrated education the research findings in this regard are contradictory and inconclusive. While some researchers in the field of education and rehabilitation of disabled children have demonstrated the integrated or mainstreamed educational provisions to be socially, emotionally and academically beneficial to the disabled children, there are some researches which have shown no significant difference among disabled children studying in different educational settings or have found the special educational provisions to be more beneficial to the disabled in terms of their social emotional and educational development.

Considering that the researches do not fully agree on the benefits of integrated education, the present study was designed to investigate the variations of self-concept (including its various dimensions) and self esteem in blind students attending integrated school settings and special school settings. The study involved 104 blind children drawn randomly and equally from different schools in NCT Delhi having integrated educational provisions and schools exclusively for the blind children. The sample included 60 boys and 44 girls (30 and 22 each from the two settings) with mean age 16.84 and 16.16 for boys in integrated and special school settings respectively. The mean age of girls in the two groups was 16.65 and 16.57 respectively. The sample from the two settings were matched for age, sex, intelligence and SES by one to one or student to student matching method.

Adopting ex post facto field study method and employing WAIS-R (developed by T.B. Singh); Kuppuswamy's Socio Economic Status Scale; Saraswat's Self Concept Questionnaire and G.P. Thakur and M.S. Prasad's Self Esteem Inventory the data was collected and analysed by ANOVA as main statistical technique. The later two tests were adapted in a pilot study for use with blind students in this study.

The results of the study showed that the students (boys and girls together) from integrated school setting did not differ significantly from their counterparts in special school settings on global self concept ($F = 2.94$). Blind boys and girl student in two setting also did not differ significantly with their counterparts on total self concept ($F = 1.09$ and 2.00 respectively). On physical, educational, moral and intellectual dimensions of self concept also no significant differences were found ($F=.27$, 1.05 , 2.88 and $.91$ respectively).

However on social, and temperamental dimensions of self concept the two groups differed significantly ($F = 17.28$) and 9.21 respectively). Boys and girls in the two groups were compared separately and the result showed that while boys from the two settings differed significantly on social and temperamental dimensions of self concept (4.04 and 7.49 respectively), the girls were not found to be significantly different on any of the dimensions of self concept.

On self-esteem no. significant differences were found between two groups of blind students ($F = 3.06$). Boys and girls in the two settings were also found to be not significantly different ($F=3.36$ for boys and $.24$ for girls) on this variable. The results of the study were discussed and interpreted in context of earlier research studies in the area and some relevant social psychological principles and theories to explain the reason for certain phenomenon which occurred in the present study.