VOLUME-7, ISSUE-5, MAY-2018 • PRINT ISSN No 2277 - 8160

Original Research Paper

Education

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON EXPANDED CORE CURRICULAR SKILLS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR THE DISABLED AT SECONDARY STAGE

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ABSTRACT

The Expanded core curriculum (ECC) addresses the essential areas and experiences unique only to visually impaired persons. The present study is about the level and extent of acquisition of expanded core curricular skills by the visually impaired students studying in Inclusive Education at Secondary Stage. This study is descriptive survey in nature. The sample comprised of 120 students, both boys and girls belonging to class IX to XII. There were 70 students with Blindness and 50 were in the category of Low vision. The major areas of ECC Skills were Academic Skills, Career Education, Independent Living Skills, Orientation and Mobility Skills and Application of Technology. There are sub skills in each major area and it was measured and assessed by the investigator with the help of specific devices and techniques. The investigator developed assessment package for each component skill and it has to be completed in 3 minutes. For academic achievement, the Quarterly and Half yearly mark statements were collected to find out the relationship between their acquisition of ECC Skills and Academic Achievement. The statistical techniques such as Mean ±0.5 SD classification, t-test, ANCOVA, Correlation coefficient and Regression analysis were used. The results revealed nearly 70% blind and low vision students acquired ECC skills. ECC skills had significant influence on the Academic Achievement of students. Hence, the present study stands evidence that ECC skills are pivotal for learning of general education curriculum.

KEYWORDS : Visual impairment, Expanded core curriculum, Inclusive Education

Introduction:

Inclusive education is a type of Education in which regular (normal) and special needs learners are brought together in the same academic environment and classroom for the purpose of learning. The expanded core curriculum is a curriculum designed to go beyond the core components- math, reading and writing, and addresses the essential areas and experiences that are unique only to visually impaired persons (Pugh & Erin, 1999). These areas are unique and should be taught in addition to the core curriculum because they are specific to blindness. The expanded core curriculum is initially designed to construct community concept development for blind individuals (National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youth with visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities, Hatlen & Stryker, 1996).

i)Major objectives :

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Study the level of acquisition of Expanded Core Curricular Skills among blind and low vision students separately.
2. Study the effect of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement of blind and low vision students separately with respect to Gender and Grade.
3. Study the influence of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement by considering Grade as covariate among blind and low vision students separately.
4. Analyse the relationship between Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement among blind and low vision students separately.
5. To find out the correlation between Academic Achievement and Expanded Core Curricular Skills.

ii)Hypothesis:

1. There is no significant effect of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement of blind and low vision students.
2. There is no significant effect of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement with respect to Gender and Grade among blind and low vision students separately.
3. There is no significant influence of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement by considering Grade as covariate among blind and low vision students separately.
4. There is no significant relationship between Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement with respect to blind and low vision students separately.
5. There is no correlation between Academic Achievement and Expanded Core Curricular Skills.

II Methodology :

- **Sample**

The present study was descriptive in nature. The sample comprised of 120 students, both boys and girls belonging to class IX to XII. The nature of visual impairment includes blind and low vision. There were 70 students with Blindness and 50 were in the category of Low vision. The students belonging to class IX and X were considered as Secondary Grade level and XI and XII as Higher Secondary Grade level. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. The Higher Secondary Grade group consisted of 79 students; of them 63and 16 were boys and girls respectively. The Secondary Grade group comprised of 41students, of these 25 were boys and 16 girls.

- **Design of the Study**

The present study adopted Descriptive survey method and survey has been employed for the data collection. This design gathered information about the prevailing conditions for the purpose of description and interpretation.

- **Tool**

1.Expanded Core Curricular Skills Assessment:

Expanded Core Curricular Skills assessment tool developed by Wendy Sapp & Iowa ECC Resource Team (2006) and revised by Karen Blankenship (2009) has been adapted for the study suiting to the Indian Context. Some of the skills have been changed and some have been either modified or removed.

The major areas of Expanded Core Curricular Skills for blind students are:

i) Academic Skills, ii) Career Education, iii) Independent Living Skills, iv) Orientation and Mobility Skills and v) Application of Technology.

There are sub skills in each major area. These sub skills were measured and assessed by the investigator with the help of specific devices and techniques. For each sub skill, five questions were asked to test their level of acquisition of the skill. The investigator developed assessment package for each component skill to measure the level of acquisition of Expanded Core Curricular Skills.

For each sub skill assessment, the assessment components were prepared and it has to be completed in 3 minutes. The scoring is based on completing the task, partial completion of task and non performance. The score was '2', '1' & '0' respectively.

For academic achievement, the Quarterly and Half yearly mark statements were collected to find out the relationship between their acquisition of Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement.

III Data Analysis Procedure

For analyzing the data, the following statistical techniques were used.

1. To find out the level of acquisition of Expanded Core Curricular Skills, Mean ± 0.5SD classification procedure was followed.
2. For studying the effect of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement with respect to Gender and Grade among blind and low vision students separately, t-test was used.
3. For studying the influence of Expanded Core Curricular Skills on Academic Achievement by considering Grade as covariate among blind and low vision students separately, ANCOVA was used.
4. For studying the relationship between Expanded Core Curricular Skills and Academic Achievement among blind and low vision students separately, Correlation Coefficient was used.
5. For analysing the correlation between Academic Achievement and Expanded Core Curricular Skills among blind and low vision students separately, Regression was used.

IV Findings:

- Nearly 70% blind and low vision students acquired Expanded Core Curricular Skills.
- Gender and Grade did not influence Expanded Core Curricular Skills acquisition and found to be independent of interaction.
- Regression analysis revealed that Expanded Core Curricular skills had significant influence on the Academic Achievement of blind students. Higher the Expanded Core Curricular skills and higher the Academic Achievement. But Expanded Core Curricular skills did not influence Academic Achievement of Low vision students
- The study revealed that Independent Living Skills and Orientation and Mobility Skills had correlation indicating those who have secured higher score in Independent Living Skills also secured more score in Orientation and Mobility Skills.
- Application of Technology and academic achievement had no correlation among blind students. However, there is significant correlation between Academic skills and Application of Technology among low vision students.

V Conclusion:

Evidence based researches suggest that visually impaired students are successful in inclusive set up provided the right type of instruction coupled with compensatory skills to cope with or get along with the sighted peers. The present study stands evidence that expanded curricular skills are pivotal for learning of general education curriculum.

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