Communication Patterns of Visually Impaired Students: A Survey based study on Punjab

The study was conducted in an attempt to find out the way visually impaired students communicate with the persons they are surrounded with i.e. their parents, teachers (blind and sighted both), friends (blind and sighted both), strangers. To find the problems faced by visually impaired students while communicating and to locate the problems faced by their teachers/trainers while teaching them was one of the main objective of the study. Besides this, the importance and contribution of media in the life of visually impaired students was also worked out.

This study was conducted in Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana covering six institutes namely Andh Vidyalaya, Soorma Singh Ashram, Bibi Bhani Istarti Netraheen Kirat ate Sikhlayi Kendra from Amritsar, Vocational Rehabilitation Training Centre and Government institute for Blinds from Ludhiana and Rashtriya Andh Vidyalaya from Jalandhar. A total of 250 respondents and 30 teachers were interviewed through a structured questionnaire during the course of study. Besides few case studies were also undertaken. Following findings were derived from the study.

1. Blinds feel more comfortable with their blind teacher as they feel a sighted teacher doesn’t show that much patience to teach.

2. Achievements of blinds in different fields inspire the blind students more.

3. Students show interest in studies and they feel satisfied with their teacher.

4. Blinds also agreed that they understand better in one to one teaching where learning of Braille, music instruments, stenography, caning, weaving were concerned.

5. As students are more interested in studying, so now the trend towards learning music among blind students has reduced.
6. The emphasis was seen more on music in Soorma Singh Ashram, Putlighar, Amritsar.

7. Lack of orientation and mobility training was observed in these institutes.

8. Blinds and partial sighted are able to work on computers through JAW software.

9. Blinds and their parents feel that education can make them independent and this infills in them the feeling of being the breadwinner for the family.

10. There should be no discrimination of duties between blinds and sighted.

11. The students felt secured when they joined special schools.

12. Dearth of teachers make them lose interest in studies. As one teacher teaches more than two three subjects.

13. Blinds and partial sighted feel that education to blinds should be given in normal schools so that from the very beginning student can start learning with sighted students. So that a gap between blind and sighted can be reduced.

14. Blinds admitted as Braille is their language of expression, so they should be taught Braille if they go to schools for sighted.

15. As teachers try their best to inculcate the habit of reading among students, they love to read books besides their text book and they experience a level of satisfaction while reading books.

16. Besides Education, students show their interest in sports also. Students play both indoor and outdoor games like cricket, chess, carom, uno, cards etc and have participated in the national level competitions.
17. While teaching music, training is given first through listening. As students are required to learn the ‘swar’ first in order to learn music. Initially oral lessons are taught and then playing the instrument is taught.

18. Teachers prefer to teach one to one for Braille and music but for other subjects and for new concepts, group teaching is preferred. Group teaching gives them a sense of belongingness.

19. Teachers face problems while teaching English as it requires the right pronunciation.

20. Teachers were of the opinion that age really doesn’t matter rather the IQ level and touch power of a student matter while learning Braille.

21. Teachers were of the opinion that using new technology is useful for studies but when to start using them has to be ascertained.