A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF READING HABITS OF CHALLENGED PERSONS IN MAINSTREAM OR ORDINARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to investigate the reading habits and opportunities available to special/challenged persons in inclusive or mainstream education system or in normal educational system, as reading is the most important factor which directly has an effect on achievements not only in education but on future life. Wider analysis shows decrease in purchase of books and decline in reading habits among youth. Two clusters of samples were selected; special persons studying in mainstream education system and those studying in special education system. Thirty samples from each cluster were selected through convenience sampling; data was collected through questionnaire and supplemented through interview. Results indicate that special persons have less opportunities of fulfilling their reading needs. Parents of special need persons are in inclusive setting and are more motivated towards reading habits of their children as compared to these whose children are studying in special institutions. A general environment of mainstream education develops a positive effect on special persons towards reading which in future can have an effect on their achievements.

Introduction:

Children who develop reading habit at an early age enjoy reading in their later age also. This habit provides them opportunity in their educational and employment life to move faster. For developing reading habit there are so many variables which directly or indirectly effect, such as availability of library facilities in schools, colleges or in surrounding environment, If public libraries are present in nearby environment they provide incentive or stimulus to reading, although some time it is not so effective as expected in a survey made in 2006[1] (UK) on adults attitude to reading and children's attitude towards reading habits. The main index shows that only 47% UK adults are registered with their local library, 21% don't know when their local library is open and 13% don't know where it is. Another research about attitude towards reading done by A Mori Social Research study on behalf of the National Literacy Trust (1998)[2] shows that all parents consider reading habit important for their children. They said that they all read to their children when they were young.

[1] A survey Made in 2006 UK

[2] A mori social Research study (1998) sept on behalf of National leteracy Trust P-1

In Pakistan where literacy rate is up to 31% and more than 60% population living in rural areas, readership is very low, because of many other reasons such as poverty, low education rate, and non availability of facilities provided by government and non government organizations. Munizeh Zuberi (2008) says that:

> *"For a country with a population upwards of 160 million book readership in Pakistan is quite low. According to the publishers, even in the case of best sellers no more than 2000 to 3000 copies are printed. This means that the cost of production is quite high and that is reflected in book prices. As a result, the market for the book is further reduced".*[3]

Munizeh Zuberi also mentioned a conversation with Akber Khan Book group who said that they established a library in Orangi Town, Karachi (thought to be an area of very low income group) just to test the myth that there are not enough readers, but the result showed that rush of children was so high that they had to increase library timings. This report shows that increasing the number of libraries can increase reading habits among children and adults, both. When we talked about reading habits among special population with their teachers of special institutes for hearing impaired their views were very negative. Almost all of them said that these special persons can not read a paragraph by themselves, they only verbalize single words or single sentences which they reproduce during their examination. They only like to see picture books but can not understand the description. While teachers of special institute for blind answered that these blind youth love to read and listen to books, news, all types of literatures but reading material for them is not available except syllabus books or material related to their course work. They also mentioned that girls like reading more than the special body. A research carried out in UK about statistics on library use and reading habits also says that "From the age of six, girls read more books than boys, and this trend continues through their lives. Girls are three times more likely than boys to borrow books from a public library[4].

Methodology:

The study is based on descriptive research design. As some problems can not be judged through experimental bases which involve human behavior, this research is intended to find, behavior patterns; likes dislikes, favorable, unfavorable topics etc. The best suited method found was descriptive research method. A represented sample of 60 college going students, 30 of them were special persons/physically challenged visually impaired (Totaly Blind & Low Vision) and students with hearing problems, studying in special colleges like DEWA, ABSA and IDA RIEU. Thirty were those special students who are studying in normal education system. They were selected through convenience sample from Karachi University and from Federal Urdu University. The population consisted of clusters of special students.

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[3] Munizeh Zuberi (2008) Books & Authors Daily Dawn Feb 24, 2008.
[4] Statistics on library use and reading babits in UK (2006)

1. Who are students in normal institutions and
2. Those who are studying in special institutions.

Sample was collected through convenience method as the number of special or challenged students in normal educational institution at graduation level is minimum. Special colleges are serving this population. At present three colleges ABSA, DEWA and IDA RIEU are providing graduate or Master's level education and total number of students is almost 250. Parents prefer their children to attend these colleges for many reasons. A structured questionnaire was used to collect related information which was divided into two parts one was related to general information and the other was related to their reading habit. Twenty questions were framed to touch all angles of their reading habits. Answers were supplemented by interviews with these students and their teachers while filling questionnaires. Data was analyzed through percentage method after tabulation.

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were formulated.

1. Persons with special needs studying in special institutes / colleges have lesser opportunities for getting reading material other than their course books compared to those students who are studying in inclusive or mainstream institutes.
2. Persons with special needs in mainstream/inclusive institutions are more motivated toward reading than persons in special education institutes.
3. Environment of mainstream institutions are more encouraging for developing reading habit in special persons.

Statistical analysis:

1. Parental Involvement in Reading at Higher Level

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
High	10	33	21	70
Low	15	50	05	17
Very low	5	17	04	13
Total	30	100	30	100

2. Monitoring of Reading Literature by the Parents

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	53	21	70
No	04	14	03	10
Sometime	10	33	06	20
Total	30	100	30	100

3. Purpose of Reading

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Pleasure	18	60	24	80
Time Pass	20	67	08	26
Needed for Study	24	80	21	70
Available	13	43	10	33
Others are reading	09	30	16	53
Refreshing mind	14	47	26	86
Future need	11	37	25	83
Increasing knowledge	20	67	25	83
As per availability	19	'63	10	33
Total				

4. Source of Encouragement / Motivation for Reading

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teachers	16	53	25	83
Parents	12	40	17	57
Friend	12	40	20	67
Any others	02	07	00	00
Total	00	100	00	00

5. Types of Books Actually Read

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Fiction	02	07	08	26
Reference Books	10	33	30	100
Course Book	30	100	30	100
Poetry	08	26	06	20
General Knowledge	08	26	19	63
Religious Books	15	50	10	33
News Papers & Magazines	05	17	18	60
Total				

6. Preferred Reading

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
About	*Frequency*	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Cricket	12	40	18	60
	06	20	08	26
Film, TV	26	86	25	83
History	03	10	08	26
Biography	01	03	10	33
Comic Books	08	26	22	73
Poetry	09	30	12	40
Travel	10	33	06	20
Religious Books	19	63	09	30
Recreational Books	15	50	16	53

7. Attitude of Parents / Teachers toward reading books

	Attitude of Parents				Attitude of Teachers			
	Special Institute		Mainstream		Special Institute		Mainstream	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Very Positive	16	53	22	73	25	83	26	86
Positive	07	18	06	20	05	17	04	13
Negative	07	18	02	07	00	00	00	00
Total								

8. Facilities other than syllabus books available for reading

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	40	22	73
No	15	50	01	03
To Some extent	03	10	07	23
Total	30	100	30	100

9. Amount spend on reading material as compared to other objects like CDs, Tapes, and videos

	In Special Institute		In Mainstream	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
More on Books	12	40	19	63
Almost Equal	02	07	04	13
Less on Books	16	53	07	23

10. Attitude towards Buying Books

	Teachers				Parents			
	Special Institute		Mainstream		Special Institute		Mainstream	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Very Positive	06	20	26	86	05	17	18	60
Positive	15	50	04	13	06	20	09	30
Negative	06	30	00	00	17	57	03	10
Total	30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100

Discussion:

Reading is one of the highest function of the human brain. Of all creatures on earth only humans can read. No animal species other than humans can be credited with such an achievement as language. Perhaps even more remarkable is the speed with which humans learn language. A newborn infant has a few distinguishable crying sounds, a twelve month old utters a few words, a four year old produces adult sentences. This is a remarkable change in just a few years. One of the very fundamental acts that enhances a child's language is reading out to him. Thus developing the pathway for reading to children builds vocabulary, stimulates imagination, stretches the attention span, nourishes emotional development, and introduces the textures and nuances of language. No matter how busy parents are, the foremost nurturing they can give a child, next to hugging him, is reading aloud to him. Reading aloud is, in essence, an advertisement for learning to read. We have concentrated so hard on teaching children how to read that we have forgotten to teach them to want to read. Reading is the single most important social factor in our lives today. The more a child reads, the smarter he grows, the smarter he grows, the longer he stays in school. So if we hook a child to reading we influence not only his future but also that of the next generation. It is the child's listening vocabulary that feeds his reading vocabulary. Reading aloud to children is advocated as soon as possible. A mother starts talking to her child the day he / she is born. If a child is old enough to talk to, the child is old enough to be read to. Reading is one of the most important functions in life, since virtually all learning is based on the ability to read. Children can read words when they are one year old, sentences when they are two years old and complete children books when they are three and they love it. It makes no difference to the brain whether it sees a sight or hears a sound. It can understand both equally well. All that is required is that the sound be loud enough the words big enough and clear enough for the eyes to see. Research indicates early readers tend to comprehend better than youngsters who do not read. Early readers absorb a great deal more information than do children whose early attempts to learn are frustrated. From 0-5 years is the ideal age as quest for knowledge is at its peak. By the time a child reaches five years of age, he will have learned upwards of 80% of all he will ever learn. Pumrey concluded that the skills of reading and writing give access to a high proportion of the accumulated thoughts, ideas and feelings of the culture. Reading and writing also facilitate reflections concerning them.[5]

> "Reading is a critical part of our daily lives, children are required to be able to read in school setting or even before they enter school".[6]

All participants of the cited study considered reading as the most important skill for higher education. They all felt that reading habit takes them ahead of others in practical life, although there are many variables that effect on development of reading habit such as social class, income, attitude of the family members, or parents, attitude of the teachers, level of expectation for future etc. Mostly young people studying in inclusive

[5] http://:www.msuedu/vtsaiyich/readingdifficulties.htm.

[6] Ref: "The nature of Factors that cause reading difficulties" Research: by Yi-Chun-Tsai, Michigan State University

education or in the mainstream like reading only subject related books while people studying in special institutions focus only on subject related reading material. They mostly spend their time in watching Television (Hearing Impaired) or listening to radio or tape recorders.

Girls are more interested in reading literature especially fiction or fashion related material beside reference books.

News paper reading is higher in girls than boys. The group discussion found that students in Inclusive Education are mostly encouraged by their teachers, while in Special Education, teachers do not encourage reading other than subject related books. Result also indicates that those students who are in normal education get encouragement from their parents due to healthy competition and they are also provided reading material of their interest and choice. They also read a wide range of material like fiction, poetry and books a general knowledge. Almost all the students stated that their parents consider the interest to read to be very important for their future growth and development, but they cannot spend that much money due to poverty or high costs of books. Parents think that it is the responsibility of the institution to provide reference books or material for reading. Less than 25% answered when asked that they have collection of more than twenty books of their own which indicates change of trend from books to video or tapes.

It is clear from the results that challenged person's reading material or reading habit is less monitored at higher level of education than the students who are studying in mainstream education system.

When asked why they read books, 80% students from special institutions answered that they need reading for study purpose, 67% for increasing their knowledge 60% said they read books for pleasure.

When they were asked about attitude of their teachers toward buying books or reading material, students from special institutions answered very positive 20%. Fifty percent said +ve while students studying in normal institution give 86% very positive from teachers, similar result were found from parents 57% said parents attitude was negative while students in normal institution received 60 +ve attitude of their parents towards buying books or reading material.

- Results also indicate that parents are more encouraging or the source of motivation in mainstream institution is more +ve than in special Institution.

- A list of topics was also presented to these students, asking about the areas of reading. Those students who are in special institute / colleges, like reading about film, TV, recreational books, or religious books, while students from normal institutes like films, TV, cricket comic books, poetry or recreational material.

- When asked about spending money on reading material as compared to videos, CDs or tapes, special students answered that they spend more money on CD's

and videos than on books while students in mainstream spend more on buying books. One very important aspect was also discussed which is parental monitoring of reading literature. Mostly parents are very concerned about what their children read, but at higher level of education they don't care to monitor the reading material.

Conclusion:

It can be safely concluded that reading habits are actively encouraged in Inclusive setting. This is one tangible benefit of sending special children to normal/inclusive institutions. It can also be deduced that parents and teachers in special institutions are reconciled to the limitations suffered by them in expression than their counterparts in inclusive education. It is also indicated that peer attitudes as reflected, in the topics desired by the students is positive.

While book substitutes like Braille and recordings distract students from books in normal schools, their development is a book for Visual Impaired students.

It is wrong to see recordings solely as competition for the written book. In the world of entertainment, books act as a stimulus for film or TV shows, while books based on showbiz or cartoon character act as stimuli for books. This is most visible in the Disney World which has both films and books depicting the same characters and stories.

This is a devise by which books CDs and DVDs can be different agencies for shared interests.

There is no structural hindrance to inculcating book culture among students of special institutions. A positive attitude and a more liberal budget can make the libraries in special institutions, especially if they are multimedia vibrant centers of education.

Recommendations:

- Awareness about diversity and inclusive education should be developed through all the means including media.
- The concept of inclusion skills for implementation, and practice should be included in all teachers training programs at all levels such as: PTC, CT, B. Ed. and M. Ed.
- Proper training programs should be arranged for head of institutions, teachers as well as planners or policy makers.
- Curriculum modification should be done to make room for challenged persons.
- Transitional programs are the most important at this stage, when country trying to achieve its goal of 2010 for Inclusive Education Bridge Program should be developed.

- Parents of normal as well as challenged children should be made aware of the importance and need of inclusion.
- Allocation of funds, proper distribution among all necessary working bodies and utilization should be done and monitored regularly.
- Appointment and training of para-professionals should be done to make transition from special education to inclusive education smooth.
- Feedback from those who are working for inclusion should be taken to get correct picture for future need.
- For developing proper mechanism of inclusion a plan of action should be developed and circulated to at different levels before completely applying this program.
- Libraries and reading circles should be established in every school, or district to develop interest in reading.
- Special reading/learning material should be placed/provided to each educational institute to develop reading habit among special persons.