Resume of the Main Findings
Resume of Main Findings

The study attempts to evaluate education management systems for the visually handicapped by conducting an extensive review of literature, questionnaire based evaluation of different modes of education, seeking responses of leading educators and administering a structured questionnaire to 130 totally blind children of 10-15 years of age, studying in 4th to 6th grades for their performance evaluation in terms of coverage of special groups, social integration, speed and accuracy of braille, social maturity and concept development. A summary of the main findings is presented below:

- **1. Economic Viability:**

  The study establishes that investment on education constitutes an important form of investment in economic development which would result into adequate returns and that justifies promotion of education and training of disadvantaged groups. Such investment is also justified from the point of view of economic growth, its economic gains, its effect on quality of life, human capital, incremental earnings, and equity & social justice. Integrated education emerges economically more viable as compared to residential as well as semi-integrated education due to lower investment, its cost effectiveness, and social desirability.

- **2. Financial Viability:**

  The direct allocable per student expenditure on integrated education is Rs. 2,200 which is lower than one-fifth of such expenditure of Rs. 9,760 in case of residential education. As with the same amount 9 students may be covered under integrated education as compared to 2 of them under residential education, it renders the former mode of education comparatively more cost effective and financially viable.

- **3. Growth Period:**

  The origin of residential schools in Gujarat is traced to the year 1530; semi-integrated education to 1963; and integrated education to 1981. Integrated education witnessed consistent growth during 1981 to 1990, whereas residential schools from 1962 to 1975. The latter has remained stagnant for the last 20 years and the former has revealed tremendous potential for growth. During the period of research study (1989 to 1992), residential schools registered an annual growth of 1 per cent which is insignificant as compared to that of 26 per cent in case of the latter.

- **4. Limited Coverage:**

  The estimated population of the visually impaired in the country is 13 million with 11.05 million (85%) curable and 1.95 million (15%) incurable. The existing 225 to 250 residential schools cover 12,500 children (5%) and integrated and semi-integrated education projects cover another 5,000 children (2%) of estimated 2.5 lakhs school-age blind children. Thus 93 per cent blind children in the country have no scope for their whatsoever education at present.
5. Coverage of Special Groups:

Integrated education is most effective in respect of coverage of special groups which are not being adequately covered under other modes of education.

5.1 Gender Discrimination: Enrolment of blind girls in residential schools is comparatively lower as compared to that of integrated education which extends almost equal opportunities to the boys as well as girls with no evidence of gender discrimination. The overall performance, however, reflects discrimination with a marked preference for boys as for every 7 boys, only 3 girls have been enroled.

5.2 Age Group: Integrated education is more effective than residential education in respect of coverage of younger children which in turn is more effective than semi-integrated education in this respect.

5.3 Congenitally Blind: Integrated education is more effective than semi-integrated education which in turn is more effective than residential education in this respect.

5.4 Occupation: Integrated education is most effective in attracting children from farming community, whereas residential education is effective in respect of children from service class.

5.5 There is no significant difference between three modes as regard coverage of students from different castes and those who had availed or had not availed treatment at the time of on-set of blindness.

6. Social Integration:

Semi-integrated education emerges the most effective as regard acceptance of visually impaired pupils among friends in general and the sighted friends. Residential education emerges the most effective in respect of acceptance of visually impaired children among other like students and the neighbours; as well as performance of passive as well as active activities. Integrated education emerges the least effective in respect of almost all the indicators of social integration.

7. Collective System Failure:

On review of historical, social, administrative and financial perspective of each mode of education, it is observed that it was due to feelings of pity, compassion and charity that residential schools were established and supported. Similarly, to enhance the quantitative coverage and to improve the extent of social integration, both integrated as well as semi-integrated education were initiated. The study establishes that all these modes have generally failed individually and collectively to achieve the objectives of quantitative coverage as well as qualitative educational inputs leading to comprehensive development of blind students.
**Main Findings**

7.1 **Limitations of Residential Schools:** The study establishes that residential education is not suitable for mass coverage of blind children as it is very expansive and results into their isolation. Other major impediments in this case are stagnant enrolment of students, declining teacher-student ratio, charitable outlook and lack of vocational training.

7.2 **Limitations of Integrated Education:** The major stumbling blocks in case of integrated education are lack of requisite qualification of itinerant teachers, extremely poor quality of braille reading and its failure to enhance social integration. These factors result into extremely poor quality of integrated education.

8. **Failure of Integrated Education:**

Integrated education has failed to improve conceptual understanding and concept development among visually impaired children. Even in respect of social maturity, it has no in-built advantage over other modes of education. The quality of integrated education in terms of speed and accuracy of braille of the pupils and that of qualification of teachers is comparatively inferior. In respect of all the four parameters of social integration, speed and accuracy of braille, social maturity and concept development, it emerges the least effective as compared to the other modes of special education.

The research study disproves the claim that integrated education is more effective than residential as well as semi-integrated education in respect of promoting social integration, enhancing social maturity, developing conceptual understanding and concept development among the pupils.

9. **Scope for Improvement:**

The study proposes that educational services under all the three modes of education need to be improved. The deciding factors for selecting a particular mode of special education should, however, be the individual needs and location of the child. The guiding principle should be to extend educational opportunities to a child according to his individual felt needs and other physical, environment and socio-economic constraints.

The quality of itinerant teachers, regular teachers and the extent of support services need to be improved to enhance the quality of integrated education. There is scope for improving facilities at residential schools which should be managed as educational institutes and not as charitable entities.

10. **Selective Educational Placement:**

The study establishes that each mode of education has specific advantages for selected blind children and no single mode meets the needs of all such children optimally. Consequently, special educators support selective educational placement which considers felt needs of each blind child and the quality, extent, nature and proximity of availability of educational facilities while selecting a mode of education.
• 11. Most Ideal Approach:

The study reveals that integrated education has not delivered the desired results in regard enhancing coverage, promoting social integration, and achieving quantitative and qualitative progress. Similarly, residential education has not proved very effective in respect of quality of braille, self care and other modes-specific aspects. The study establishes that the only viable option is promoting all modes of education as complementary and supportive to each other.

11.1 Role of Residential Schools: The study proposes that residential schools should admit only such children who can not otherwise be enrolled under other modes of education due to the extent of disability, their geo-scatter, non-existence of integrated education and such other reasons. The schools should also become the preparatory centres for preparing blind children for integrated education. For the severally handicapped and multi-handicapped and such other children, residential education is the only panacea.

11.2 Role of Semi-integrated Education: It should assume the responsibility for human resource development by conducting appropriate training of resource and itinerant teachers; production of braille material and dissemination of relevant and suitable information pertaining to new developments in the field.

11.3 Role of Integrated Education: It should expand its services in the areas of child screening, eye check-up, refraction, early identification, early intervention, child and family counselling, promotion of comprehensive eye care among children, evaluation of children for deciding appropriate mode of education for each child, providing low vision aids and large print books, promoting pre-braille services and enhancing integration among the children of residential schools as well.

• 12. Futuristic Approach:

The study establishes that no mode of education emerges as a panacea to the problem of limited coverage and far from satisfactory quality of education. It concludes that education programme should be fitted to the child and not the child to the programme.

The study proposes that the only viable and practical option for the future would be promoting education of the visually impaired like that of any other child; involving regular schools for extending them regular educational facilities; bringing special education under the umbrella of regular educational system; and thus enabling a blind child to seek admission to a nearby regular school merely as a child - and not as a special child.

A blind child should face the school environment and to be exposed to the same educational curriculum like any other child. He should have access to the child preparatory services and special educational and mobility material. In other words, education of the disabled should be handled by the regular schools without the education or the educant being "special".