

Effect of Individualized Educational Programme on Functional Skills Among Intellectually Challenged Children

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Abstract

The present study is an endeavor to assess the effect of Individualized Educational Programme on the functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) among intellectually challenged children. The sample of the present study comprised of 100 intellectually challenged children having I.Q. 35 to 50 and with age group 11 to 14 years, who have been selected randomly from 500 intellectually challenged children enrolled in the institutes of intellectually challenged located at various districts of Haryana. Out of these 100 children, 50 formed the experimental group and 50 formed the control group. The present study was conducted in three stages. Initially at the pre-testing stage, the general background information was collected from the parents as well as special educators of all the hundred intellectually challenged children on Case History Performa. Further all the subjects were assessed in functional skills with the help of Functional Assessment Checklist for Programming (FACP). After developing systematic Individualized Educational Programme on the basis of the current level of functional skills in the subjects, it was implemented on each child of experimental group for 6 months. After the experimental treatment, performance of each subject of both the groups was again evaluated and recorded with the help of Functional Assessment Checklist for Programming. The study revealed that there is significant difference in the mean gain scores of functional skills in intellectually challenged children of both the groups. Higher mean gain scores in functional skills of intellectually challenged children of experimental group gives rise to interpretation that systematic use of individualized educational programme is very useful in facilitating the intellectually challenged children to polish their skills to some extent.

• **Key Words: Individualized Educational Programme, Functional Skills, Intellectually Challenged.**

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Introduction

Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) is defined as a document written by a team of professionals and parents, to provide students with handicaps an appropriate intervention. The main purpose of Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) is to provide 'appropriate' education and training for every child with mental retardation. Therefore development of Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) depends on the needs of the child with mental retardation. In order to establish specific instructional objective, it is necessary to acquire instructionally relevant information about the child. This is obtained by assessing the child's current level of performance. Different Individualized Educational Programmes have been prepared and implemented in special schools in different communities. Earlier studies have documented the results obtained when instruction was individualized (Blackcleworth, 1978; Berkson and Romer, 1979). Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) has the following five major components.

1. Current level of performance in specified skills
2. Goal planning - Setting Annual Goals
3. Setting short term objectives
4. Procedure - Instructional methods, learning materials and aids.
5. Evaluation of objectives

The Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) includes all the above components of the curriculum in any course of study. Appropriate curriculum can be developed based on the principles of Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) for determination of levels, fixed goals and short-term objectives, specifying duration and appropriate assessment and evaluation. Each child's particular strengths and weaknesses are identified so that a personalized programme can be developed, based on the child's present knowledge and abilities. The curriculum serves as a criterion referenced instruments to measure short and long term progress. Implementation of curriculum is based on a prescriptive teaching approach, where specific objectives are developed, taught, evaluated and then adjusted for future teaching, based on feedback from evaluation results. This approach entailed constant monitoring of programme implementation and provided specific detailed work plan to guide families in the teaching of their child.

Researchers have advocated that the curriculum should give importance to writing, speaking as well as communication by other means and the practice of the communication in social settings. Snell (1988) also showed the importance of individualizing the curriculum. Development of Individualized Educational

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Programme (IEP), where individualization is a basis for the teaching of all the components i.e., objective, content, teaching learning process and evaluation, is a long process that requires the applications of the expertise and experience of a large number of individuals. Review of researches have shown that use of specially designed instructions given through IEP enhanced different skills of special children mainly in case of intellectually challenged children. American Association of Intellectual and developmental disability (AAIDD) have defined intellectually challenged to mean same thing as mental retardation.

Mental retardation is an irreversible condition. The damage caused to the brain is permanent. No drug has been found to cure the damage occurred to the brain. Mentally challenged children can be trained with available knowledge and techniques for management and treatment of their associated conditions. In the country like India where education is not considered as an important asset, those with mild retardation go unnoticed (Thakur, 1988). Olshansky(1962) speculated that almost all parents who have mentally retarded child suffer from chronic sorrow throughout their lives. The extent of this sorrow may differ from one parent to another but most will have manifestation of sorrow in varying degrees. The birth and continuing case of mentally retarded children's difficulties inevitably touch the lives of those around them (Chronic, Fredrich and Greenberg 1983; Featherstone 1980). Less educated parents, parents belonging to high-income group, rural area and business class have significantly less favourable attitudes towards their spastic mentally retarded children than their counterpart (Gupta and Jain 2002;2005). Gupta & Jain (2011) reported the positive effects of IEP on personal and social skills of mentally challenged children while Gupta, Jain, & Pasrija (2012) revealed that training through IEP enhanced academic and occupational skills among mentally challenged children. Awareness on mental retardation has been increasing rapidly in recent years. We have to go a long way in educating the public on right attitudes, available service facilities and correcting their misconceptions that mentally challenged children can learn different skills in different fields. Thus, investigators decided to examine how much effectively functional skills (personal, social, academic & occupational skills) of intellectually challenged can be improved through a systematic Individualized Educational programme (IEP).

Rationale for the Present Study

Education of intellectually handicapped children has been accepted slowly in the prevailing conditions of India. The Individualized Educational Programme (IEP), the effectiveness of which has been explored and assessed elsewhere, is one strategy, which if found effective, could be introduced for the training and education of intellectually handicapped in Haryana and in India. Worrall and Singh (1983) tested the potential of individualizing of instruction for a rebus programme intended for

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particular studies. Worall and singh (1983) also used individual guidance for testing the effectiveness of programmes. Hooegeveen's (1989) study was focused on testing the approaches of the techniques of individual itself and he found it to be very effective. Snell (1988) showed the importance of individualizing the curriculum and Singh (1988) tested the effectiveness of individualization. As the need for special education is gaining acceptance now-a-days, it is necessary to prepare Individualized Educational Programme for every intellectually handicapped children depending upon the child's present knowledge and abilities to improve their skills.

The investigators felt that implementing the Individualized Educational Programme could be helpful for the intellectually handicapped children to improve their performance according to their abilities. It is a common phenomenon that training with systematic planning enable a child to learn various skills with more efficiency and easily especially in the case of mental retardation. Very few studies are available related to implementation of Individualized Educational Programme for improvement of various skills in the children with special needs in India. The results of this study could be significant and likely to provide the input for charting an entirely new teaching and learning programme for the intellectually challenged children. Therefore all these factors and facilitating conditions motivate the investigators to study the effect of Individualized Educational Programme on Personal, Social, Academic, and Occupational skills in intellectually challenged children. Hence the present study has been undertaken.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To assess and compare functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) among intellectually challenged children before experimental treatment.
2. To develop and implement the Individualized Educational Programme for each one intellectually challenged child of experimental group.
3. To assess and compare functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) among intellectually challenged children after experimental treatment and in terms of mean gain scores of functional skills.

Design

In the present study, pre-test, post-test control group design was used.

Sample

The sample of the present study comprised of 100 intellectually challenged children

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having I.Q 35 to 50 and with age group 11 to 14 years, who have been selected randomly from about 500 intellectually challenged children enrolled in intellectually challenged institutes located at various districts of Haryana. These 100 intellectually challenged children were assessed as moderate by the school authorities at the time of admission in the Institutes. Out of these 100 children, 50 children were selected randomly and formed the experimental group, while the remaining 50 formed the control group.

Tools Used

1. Case History Performa
2. Functional Assessment Checklist for Programming (FACP)
3. Individualized Educational Programme: In the present study, Individualized Educational Programme was developed by the investigators for every intellectually challenged child of experimental group keeping in view his needs and requirements. These components of Individualized Educational Programme for the subjects have also been presented in Fig: 1.

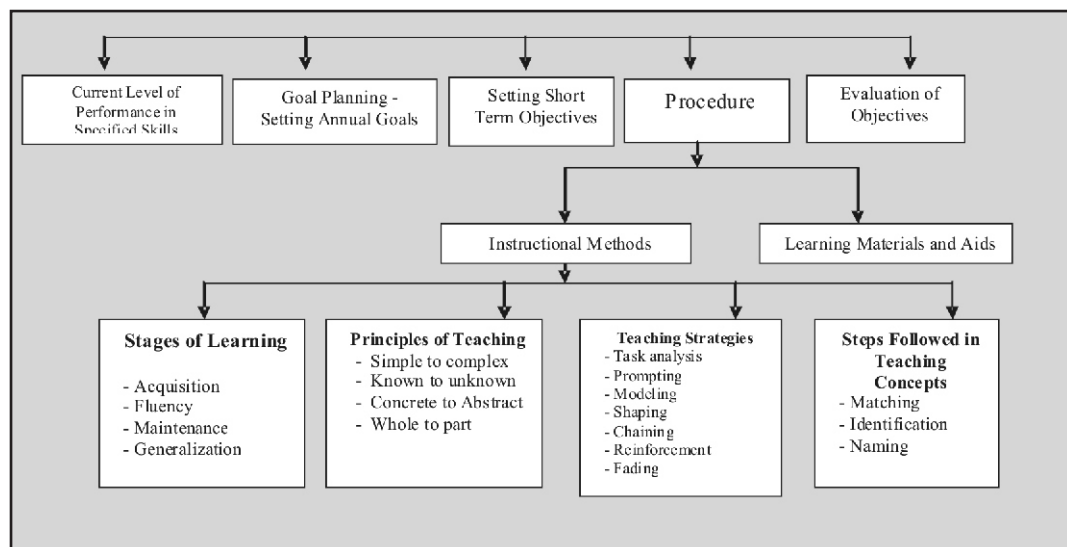


Fig.1: Components of Individualized Educational Programme

Statistical Techniques Used

1. Means and S.D.'s were worked out on the scores of functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills).
2. t-test was applied to compare the performance of two groups.

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Procedure for Data Collection

The present study was conducted in three stages which are as follows:

Pre-Testing Stage: Initially at the pre-testing stage, the investigator collected the general background information about all the 100 intellectually challenged children who have been assessed as moderate by the school authorities at the time of admission. The general background information which was collected from the parents as well as special educator of the intellectually challenged children on case history performa which helped the investigator in planning Individualized Educational Programme. To maintain ethical norms, permission and consent was taken from the Heads of the concerned institutes as well as the parents of the subjects. During the pre-testing stage, Functional Assessment Checklist for programming (FACP) was administered to all the 100 intellectually challenged children who were further equally divided into experimental group and control group.

Experimental Treatment Stage: In the beginning of the training, all the special educators of the concerned institutions, where the experiment treatment was to be carried out, were made aware of the objectives and nature of the experiment training to be conducted. These special educators were also given intensive training and guidance for implementing the Individualized Educational Programme on the subjects. Individualized Educational Programme was developed for every intellectually challenged child of experimental group. For developing the Individualized Educational Programme for the subjects, a systematic process was being followed in the whole study as presented in Fig.2.

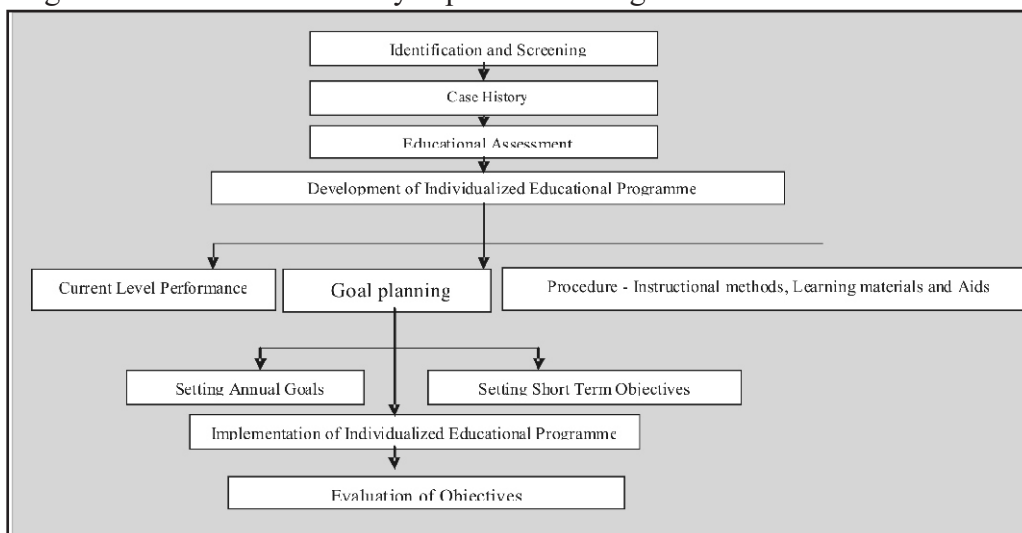


Fig.2: Systematic Process for Developing Individualized Educational Programme for Intellectually challenged Children

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This Educational programme was implemented on the subjects individually for a period of six months only. At this stage, no Individualized Educational Programme was executed on the intellectually challenged children of control group. Hence, no special training was given to the children of control group. The medium of training was Hindi. Training was given to each subject of experimental group for two hours daily in the areas i.e. personal, social, academic and occupational skills, and their performance was recorded every month. This procedure was continued for six months. Appropriate and accurate learning materials and aids were prepared and used for training according to the target behaviour of the subjects.

Post-Testing Stage: After the experimental treatment, performance of each subject of both the groups was again evaluated and recorded in all the four areas with the help of Functional Assessment Checklist for Programming. This was done to check whether the subjects of experimental group have achieved the pre-determined set of objectives of Individualized Educational Programme or not.

Result and Discussion

The present study was designed to study the effect of Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) on functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) in intellectually challenged children. The objectives of the study were to compare the mean pre-test scores, mean post-test scores and mean gain scores of functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group. 't'-test was applied and the results for functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) have been given in Table-1

Table-1
't'-values for Mean Scores of functional skills
(personal, social, academic and occupational skills) for Groups E and C

	Phases	Group	N		Mean		S.D.		't'- value
Personal Skills	Pre-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	9.90	9.84	3.55	2.33	0.09 (NS)
	Post-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	12.06	10.84	3.64	2.07	2.057*
	Gain Scores	E vs C	50	50	2.16	1.00	0.58	0.76	8.58**
Social Skills	Pre-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	2.22	2.12	2.96	2.26	0.19 (NS)
	Post-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	4.18	2.38	3.02	2.35	3.33**
	Gain Scores	E vs C	50	50	1.96	0.26	0.35	0.44	21.34**
Academic Skills	Pre-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	1.54	1.14	1.63	1.12	1.42 (NS)
	Post-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	2.90	1.68	1.81	1.68	4.004**
	Gain Scores	E vs C	50	50	1.36	0.54	0.56	0.64	6.77**
Occupational Skills	Pre-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	1.38	1.2	1.23	1.05	0.78 (NS)
	Post-Test Scores	E vs C	50	50	2.56	1.64	1.25	1.34	3.56**
	Gain Scores	E vs C	50	50	1.18	0.44	0.56	0.54	6.72**

*Significant at 0.05 Level

**Significant at 0.01 Level

NS: Not Significant

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Table-1 depicts that t-values (0.09, 0.19, 1.42 and 0.78) for the mean scores of personal, social, academic and occupational skills respectively of experimental and control group are not significant at pre-test stage. This indicates that both the groups are similar in performing the personal, social, academic and occupational skills at the pre-test stage.

It may be inferred from the table-1 that t-value (2.057) for the mean scores of personal skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group at the post-test stage is significant at 0.05 level. In the context of mean scores, it was found that the mean score of personal skills of experimental group is higher than that of control group. This significant difference may be due to the implementation of effective Individualized Educational Programme on each intellectually challenged child of experimental group. Moreover each child also was given individual guidance with systematic planning in improving his personal skills. A study of Mercer and Snell (1977) also supported appropriate strategies for testing and use of effective techniques for teaching self-help skills.

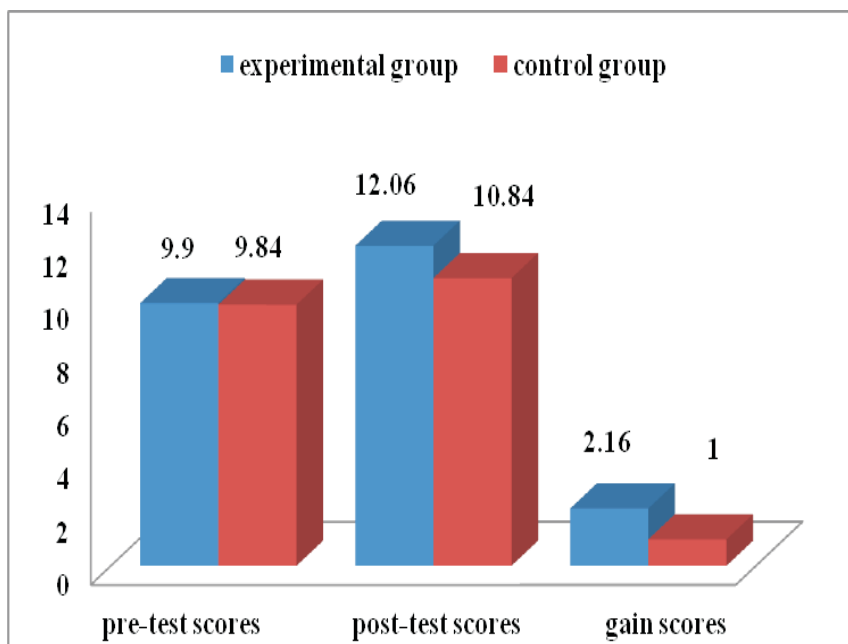


Fig.3: Mean Scores of personal skills of intellectually challenged of groups E and C

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Table-1 also illustrates that t-value (8.58) for the mean gain scores of personal skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group is significant at 0.01 level. However, higher mean gain score of personal skills of experimental group children shows that they have improved their personal skills more than their counterparts. This gives rise to interpretation that proper training may prove beneficial for intellectually challenged children to enable them to be independent for performing their personal daily living activities to some extent. Implementing IEP in group setting was found to be beneficial in enabling the intellectually challenged children to pick up their self-help skills in students with moderate mental retardation (Gupta & Sindhu 2007). Gupta & Jain (2011) also revealed the positive effect of IEP on personal skills among mentally challenged. It is clear from Table-1 that t-value (3.33) for the mean scores of social skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group at the post-test stage is significant at 0.01 level. However, the mean score of social skills of experimental group of the subjects is higher than that of control group. Similar results have also been revealed in the findings by Barry (1977) who reported that greater the mentally retarded child's command over language, greater the chances of his becoming socially integrated. It has also been observed that children, who are previously unable to speak, were able to communicate to others and understand others with the help of training. Findings supported by Glidewell, Kantor, Smith, and Stringer (1966) also showed that social structure of the class room peer group contributed to a great extent to the individual child's self-esteem and general mental health. They found significant improvement in their social and academic growth.

From the Table-1, it can be revealed that t-value (21.34) for the mean gain scores of social skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group are significant at 0.01 level. However, higher mean score of social skills of experimental group children shows that they have improved their social skills more than control group. This implies that systematic training helps such type of children to become socially adequate. However, research also emphasizes the importance of helping children to interact with other children as well as with their teachers. Berkson and Romer (1979) found that moderately retarded children could improve social interaction during their eating time, during watching of television and during other activities.

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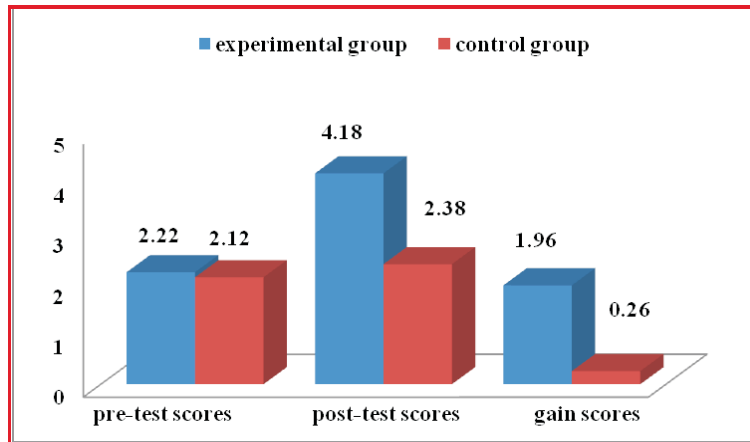


Fig.4: Mean Scores of social skills of intellectually challenged of groups E and C

Matson (1981) did study on mildly mentally retarded persons on use of independent training to teach shopping behaviour in a natural environment to develop social skills. This study showed that mentally retarded could learn complex community adaptations skills if they are properly trained. Landsman Dwyer (1981) also emphasized the importance of social adjustment as a factor in successful adjustment to community life. Romer and Heller (1983) too concluded that social-ecological approach gave positive results on the effectiveness of social skills training programme by using modeling, social reinforcement feedback, coaching instrumental social skills, role playing and the like. The effect of peer interaction support was found to be very effective in the environment. Proper Implementation of IEP and its follow-up can enhance the social skills of the intellectually challenged children (Gupta & Sindhu, 2007; Gupta & Jain, 2011).

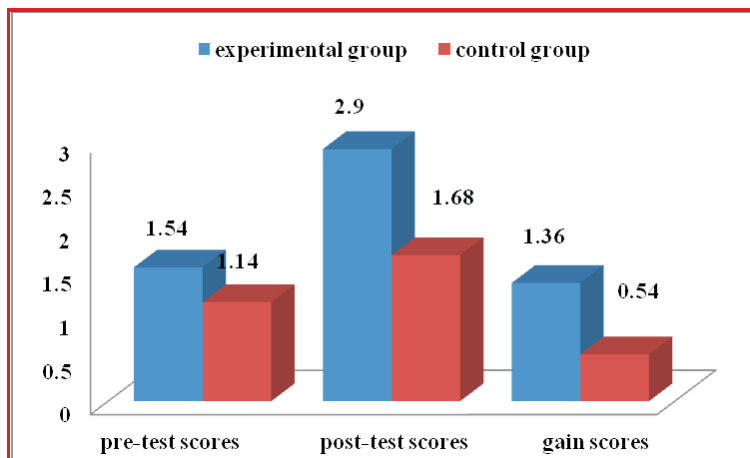


Fig.5: Mean Scores of academic skills of intellectually challenged of groups E and C

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It may be inferred from the table-1 that t-value (4.004) for the mean scores of academic skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group at the post-test stage is significant at 0.01 level. In the context of mean scores, it was found that intellectually challenged children of experimental group have improved their academic skills after getting training than those of control group. This significant difference may be due to the use of appropriate teaching methods used during training such as colourful picture books, matching words with picture drawing and story making etc. Moreover, improved academic skills help such type of children benefit from course work in all content areas. Sharma and Singh(1996) indicated that hyperactive children recalled less number of other than concrete words as compared to normal children. Hirisave and Shanti (2002) revealed that when children have difficulties in acquiring pre-academic skills, they manifest not only learning difficulties but also behaviour problems. Table-1 also illustrates that t-value (6.77) for the mean gain scores of academic skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group is significant at 0.01 level. However, higher mean gain score of academic skills of experimental group children shows that they have improved their academic skills more than their counterparts. This implies that IEP is very beneficial in enabling the intellectually challenged children to improve their academic skills to some extent. Gupta, Jain and Pasrija (2012) also revealed that systematic implementation of IEP is very successful for improving academic skills.

It is clear from Table-1 that t-value (3.56) for the mean scores of occupational skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group at the post-test stage is significant at 0.01 level. It can further be inferred from the table that the mean score of occupational skills of experimental group is higher than that of control group. The possible reason for this significant difference may be due to improvement in fine motor, gross motor and communication skills with the help of demonstration, physically and verbal prompt and proper reinforcement with activity reward during training. This result is also in agreement with the study done by Lock Wood (1979) which showed that an individualized sequential motor development programme resulted in gross motor skills gained by a severely retarded group. This gives rise to interpretation that proper training of a intellectually challenged child helps him to rehabilitate comfortably in the society as a wage earning member whether in a sheltered workshop situation or in an open placement situation. Dave (1990) too found that special programmes prove significant, effective and helped intellectually challenged children in open employment. The similar fact is established by Sunita (2000) that intellectually challenged children can be successfully employed and give contribution to society. With periodical counseling and environmental support they can do skilled and unskilled jobs perfectly and show improvement with training and experience.

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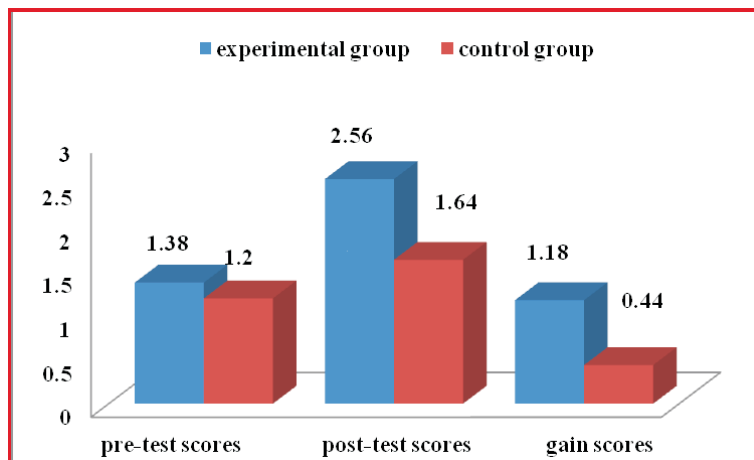


Fig.6: Mean Scores of occupational skills of intellectually challenged of groups E and C

From the Table-1, it can be revealed that t-value (6.72) for the mean gain scores of occupational skills in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group are significant at 0.01 level. However, higher mean score of occupational skills of experimental group children shows that they have improved their occupational skills more than control group. This implies that systematic training helps such type of children to become vocationally adequate. The study done by Romer and Heller (1983) on social adaptation of mentally retarded adults in community setting was encouraging. It concluded that social-ecological approach gave positive results on the effectiveness of occupational skills training programme by using modeling, social reinforcement feedback, coaching instrumental occupational skills, role playing and the like. The effect of peer interaction support was found to be very effective in the environment. Matson (1981) did study on mildly mentally retarded persons on use of independent training to teach shopping behaviour in a natural environment to develop occupational skills. This study showed that mentally retarded could learn complex community adaptations skills if they are properly trained. The proper Implementation of IEP and its follow-up can enhance the occupational skills of the intellectually challenged children (Gupta & Sindhu, 2007; Gupta, Jain and Pasrija, 2012).

Findings of the Study

- a. At the pre-test stage, no significant difference was found in mean score of functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) in intellectually challenged children of experimental and control group. This leads to the conclusion that both the groups of intellectually challenged children performed their functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) in a similar way.

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- b. At post-test stage, the mean score of functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) in the subjects of experimental group is significantly higher than the subjects of control group. This leads to the inference that the children of experimental group have improved their functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) after getting training as compared to those of control group. Also, the proper training of intellectually challenged children help them to rehabilitate comfortably in the society as wage earning members whether in a sheltered workshop situation or in an open placement situation.
- c. Higher mean gain score of functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) in case of intellectually challenged children of experimental group leads to the inference that systematic training is beneficial in enabling such type of children to improve their functional skills (personal, social, academic and occupational skills) to some extent.

Educational implications

- a. Education is a lifelong process and when it is imparted as special education to intellectually challenged children; it delimits not only his disabilities but also provides a better way of living and effective communication with others. For this, such type of child needs considerable systematic guidance and encouragement to imitate the behaviour of others, to learn various skills, pattern of interaction and becoming independent as much as he/she can.
- b. Intellectually challenged children learn more effectively from repetition. Therefore they should be given opportunity to take up and complete simple tasks. Because they often lack a natural drive to learn, it is the task of the special educators to help them to acquire this and to use it to assist development.
- c. The staff, the special educators and others should show acceptance of the child be constantly with them and go through every activity methodically. They should be encouraging, supporting, guiding as well as giving them a feedback on what the children have been able to learn and achieve. Teachers should also learn to work in the closest possible partnership with the child's family and to involve them in depth and detail in furthering the child's development.
- d. Parental involvement in the education of their exceptional child constitutes one of the most significant developments in the field of special education. Parents should, therefore, be helped to understand that they are the true experts who will be able to do the detailed work that will help their

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child to learn and develop new skills. Since casual learning in the case of the retarded is limited, it is the parents' responsibility to provide great opportunity for learning. Parents Teachers Meetings (PTM) should also be organized fortnightly in the institutes to discuss the progress of the child. It is also important that parents should be given every opportunity to be fully involved in the process of assessment of the child's abilities and needs as well as in decision – making leading to the selection of long term and short term curriculum goals. Parents and siblings should receive intensive guidance for promoting the intellectual, physical and social training of the child.

- e. Educating the intellectually challenged involves a great deal of effort on the part of special institutes, educators, parents and siblings, psychologists, social workers and the student himself. Special institutes /school authorities should make adequate efforts in order to create a suitable learning environment for the intellectually challenged children in the institutes. Special educators should be given proper orientation or in-service training by the school authorities from time to time through seminars workshops, conferences, Continuing Rehabilitation Education (CRE) programmes etc. to capture the new research, innovations and new trends in the related fields so that they may add effective teaching behaviour to their behavioural repertoire.
- f. A special school for intellectually challenged children needs not to work only with those children who attend everyday but it can also act as a resource center for all intellectually challenged children in a given area, whether they attend the school or not. This means in practice that some members of the school staff may be employed to work as 'home teachers', working largely or wholly with families while using the resources of the school as a base for their operations.

Thus findings of the present study are of great importance for special teacher trainees, special educators, school authorities, parents, siblings, psychologists, other family members, local and legal guardians, vocational instructors, all the members of multi-disciplinary team and the society at large.

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