

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL
IMPAIRMENT AT THE WENCHI METHODIST SENIOR HIGH
SCHOOL, BONO REGION**



MARTIN AGBEMEHIA

2023

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(202114320)



**A Thesis in the department of SPECIAL EDUCATION, Faculty of
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES, submitted to school of Graduate Studies, University
of Education, Winneba, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of
the Masters of Philosophy (Special Education) degree.**

2023

DECLARATION

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Martin Agbemehia, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

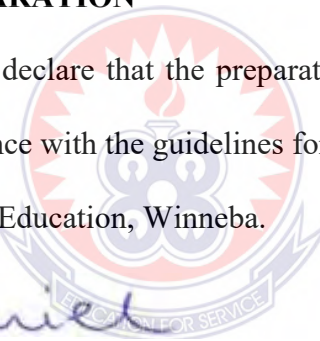
SIGNATURE.....

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I, Dr Daniel Fobi, hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

SIGNATURE

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central figure holding a torch, surrounded by a sunburst pattern. Below the figure is a banner with the motto "DEDICATION FOR SERVICE". The entire emblem is set against a red and white background.

Daniel

DATE 25/11/2023

DEDICATION

To Agbemehia family of Agbozume and all students with visual impairment.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my research advisor and supervisor Dr. Daniel Fobi and his wife Joyce Fobi for their supports, words of encouragement, prayers and patience. Every discussion and chats on phone and email exchanges with them enhanced my understanding and professional growth in research, am forever grateful. Also. special thanks to Madam Precious Amedzo-Sek for her advice, guidance and support when I was down and my health kept deteriorating. I also appreciate the support I received from my dear wife Judith Afu Amewoanu and my children, Senam, Selasi and Seli, I highly appreciate all that you have done for me. I acknowledge the contributions from the staff of the Department of Special Education. I also thank my colleagues for their immense suggestions and criticisms in the course of this project.



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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the inclusive education practices for visually impaired students in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School, Wenchi. Sixteen students with visual impairments were purposively sampled for the study. Focused group semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Data were coded and analyzed using thematic approach. Results of the study showed that, students with visual impairment tend to perform better in their academic work when the needed support services and resources are at their disposal. They also asserted to the fact that the school environment when adapted to meet their mobility needs will enhance socialization and independence. The study also revealed that students with visual impairment are accepted and supported by their sighted peers in the school, which promoted friendship and cordiality among the two categories of students. I recommended that there should be the provision of enough support services for students with visual impairment for their academic work. Also, the new buildings must be disability friendly thereby making it accessible by all. In addition, there must be enough education on acceptance and diversity among categories of learners.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

In Ghana, inclusive education started as a pilot programme in 2003/2004 academic year with Educational Strategic Plan (ESP) (2003-2015) (UNESCO Report, 1994). In 2015, it was rolled out in all schools through the Inclusive Education Policy which aimed at ensuring access to quality education of all children irrespective of their socio-cultural background, religious affiliations and disability status.

In Wenchi Senior High School, students with visual impairment are educated in the same school environment with their sighted counterparts with the adoption of special education resource teacher model. Inclusive education as practiced in Wenchi Methodist involves admitting persons with special educational needs with the major focus on students with visual impairment thus increasing the participation of all students in schools. This is made possible with the adoption of some inclusive education practices, such as specialized teaching methods, Braille teaching and writing, resource teacher's support and how to access information via online and use of technological devices. There has also been some renovation such as constructing ramps for persons with physical disabilities to make accessing all school facilities easy for all. Orientation and mobility trainings are usually organized for fresh and continuing students to get acquainted to the school environment. Inclusive education practices are set of designed activities or practices that are geared towards improving the learning needs of persons with disabilities to enable the access the regular curriculum in schools. In the classroom, textbooks are embossed in braille to enable students with visual impairment make good use of these books. Large prints are also provided for the students who are partially blind during exams and regular class

exercises. Regular teachers are also trained on how to teach students with visual impairment. During lessons, they are encouraged to spell out difficult words for the visually impaired students. All these and many more Inclusive Education (IE) practices need periodic assessment or appraisal in order to bring more modifications to make the policy a reality. In Wenchi SHS, these inclusive education practices are adopted in ways that disadvantage the students with visual impairment. Some teachers disregard these practices and teach as if all students are sighted and can read the prints. At times, some discriminate against the students with visual impairment and opposed their admission into the school. They often fail to assist them in their daily task and activities. All these problems were observed personally as I serve in the school and the resource centre for the students with visual impairment for a period as a teacher and resource personnel.

Many researchers have been done both nationally and internationally in the area of inclusive education particularly, ensuring fairness, access to quality education by all, awareness creation, and attitudinal change towards persons with disability (Cole, 2009; Fobi, 2021; & Acheampong, 2017). A gap in research continues to exist since no research work was done in regard to assessing inclusive educational practices for students with visual impairment in Wenchi Secondary School to bring the lapses in the inclusive education practices in the school to light for redress. Access to quality education is a constitutional right, all children regardless of their status, creed, colour or race must be denied. To achieve successful implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy of 2015, in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School, there is the need to assess the inclusive practices currently being adopted in the school and find solutions to the challenges. There is therefore the need for this study which seeks to assess the support services available to the students with visual impairment, the

environmental adaptations that exist for easy mobility and accessibility to school facilities, as well as the type of friendship that exists between students with visual impairments and their sighted counterparts at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The implementation of inclusive education in various countries, including Ghana, has been fraught with difficulties. Concerns have been expressed about instructors' lack of professionalism and attitude, which appears to be leading in the isolation and segregation of children with impairments (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011). Furthermore, there is the issue of normal education instructors who are opposed to the entry of pupils with disabilities into mainstream schools (Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2003). Obeng (2007) discovered that, despite teachers' respect and compassion for children with disabilities, they are hesitant to integrate them in their mainstream classrooms in a study of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in Ghana.

However, Wenchi Secondary School since 1963 started admitting students with visual impairment to access secondary education with the help of resource teachers. During my interaction with the students with visual impairment, I observed that some of them have problems with some of the inclusive practices in and out of the classroom. For example, some teachers feel reluctant to spell out difficult words during comprehension lessons, they rather write those words on the board which in a way disadvantage students with visual impairment. At times they write the same exams with the sighted counterparts without any adaptation to meet their needs. Meanwhile the sighted counterparts have access to more reading and other educational materials than the students with visual impairment, not to even mention the high cost of procuring assistive devices for students who are visually impaired. Some complained of not doing well in the classroom due to some of these practices adopted by the

teachers. Some of the students also complained about their sighted colleagues shying away from them, thus making them isolate themselves during extra curriculum activities. They feel discriminated against, hence show disinterest in school activities. In addition, through further interaction I realised that there is no clear mode of appraisal or assessment on how teachers, peers, support services and logistics, level of acceptance and the nature of the environment, unfriendly walkways, stony and rocky pavements, the roads leading to the classrooms, library and the dormitories are not accessible for the students with visual impairment, all these affect the social and academic needs of students with visual impairment and needs redress for future modifications. A study conducted by Amoako (2015) at Bechem, Bono –East Region of Ghana at St. Joseph’s Practice Basic Inclusive School on the support services and adaptation for students with visual impairment without looking at how they affect their academic and social lives. Similarly, Acheampong (2017) explored experiences of students with visual impairment at the University of Education, Winneba. He looked at how the students with visual impairment establish friendship with their sighted counterparts as well as social skills acquisition. The friendship skills are usually established at the formative years as a result of the practices adopted by teachers, peers and their sighted counterparts.

According to UNESCO (1994), effective inclusive education practice involves changes and modifications in contents, approaches, structures and strategies with a common vision, which covers all children with appropriate age range, and conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. Based on this notion, there are challenges or some constraints observed in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School regarding the specific inclusive education practices adopted to enhance the academic performance of these category of students taking into consideration the

support services available for students who are visually impaired, the way students with visual impairment interact with their sighted counterparts (social life), suitability of the physical environment and the level of acceptance among students who are visually impaired, sighted counterparts and the teachers. Hence the need to undertake this study to bring these issues to light for redress.

1.2 Purpose of this study

This study sought to examine the inclusive education practices for students with visual impairment in Wenchi Senior High School in the Bono Region of Ghana.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to ascertain the:

1. Support services available for students with visual impairment for effective inclusive education practice in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School.
2. Environmental adaptations that exist for easy mobility and socialization in the School.
3. Nature of social interaction that exists between students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts in the School.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What support services are available for students with visual impairment for effective inclusive education practice in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School?
2. What environmental adaptations exist for easy mobility and socialization for students with visual impairment in the School?

3. What is the nature of social interaction that exists between the students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts at the School?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research would disclose the amount of support services available to teachers and students at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School, this would allow the teachers and the other support or service providers to formulate more effective ways of practicing Inclusive Education at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School.

The findings of this study would also highlight the school's infrastructure arrangement in support of mobility for visually impaired students. This would alert school officials and authority if necessary to put in place the needed infrastructure that brings about a welcoming atmosphere for inclusion. Finally, the result of the study would bring out the type of friendship that exist between the students with visual impairment and their sighted colleagues at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School. This would aid the school officials to address any unhealthy form of friendship that might work against effective implementation of Inclusive Education at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

Even though, there were students with visual impairment in other inclusive senior high schools in Ghana, this study focused only on students with visual impairment at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School. This is because Wenchi SHS has been one of the leading Senior High Schools educating students with visual impairment in the country and has all categories of students with visual impairment. There experienced teachers and resource personnel who could provide the information needed. The study assessed only the inclusive education practices for visually impaired students in terms

of support services, infrastructure and nature of friendship among sighted and visually impaired students in Wenchi Senior High School in the Bono Region of Ghana.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The practice of the double track education system in secondary schools delayed data collection. The double track system allows that, some student go on vacation while some are in school. Therefore, the researcher had to wait for the group (the green) that has more students with visual impairment to reopen so he can get the number of students for data collection. Secondly, the researcher's current health condition also delayed the work. The researcher has to arrange with a private hospital closer to the study centre where he can have access to dialyses often in order not to have more complications while on the field for data collection.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Assessment: a process of appraising something or someone, thus measuring the quality, value or importance of something or someone in order to identify the level of performance of that thing or person.

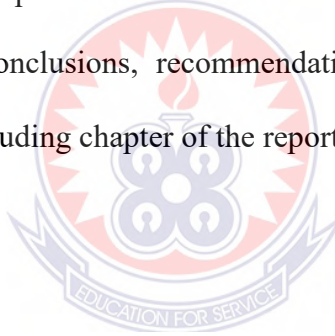
Inclusive Education: It refers to the process of removing all barriers to education to enable all children of school going age to be enrolled in regular education classrooms with the needed support services available to help them access the regular curriculum.

Inclusive Education Practices: It involves all practices or activities that are carried out within educational settings which allows students with special needs to access the regular school curriculum both in and outside the classroom.

Students with visual impairment: Students with visual impairments is an umbrella concept which involves students with various degrees of visual loss and those who are blind.

1.9 Organization of the Study

In line with the in-house style of the UEW, this thesis was presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 comprised of the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations, and operational definition of terms and general layout of the study. Chapter 2 focused on the literature review taking into account the research objectives and the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 3 dealt with the methodology including sample and sampling techniques, research design, population, instruments used in data collection and analysis, description and distribution of instruments. Chapter 4 covered the presentation and analysis of data collected and Chapter 5 focused on interpretation and discussion of results. Chapter 6, finally, the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research formed the concluding chapter of the report.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents the literature reviewed for the study. The literature was reviewed from research articles, refereed journals, and books. The literature reviewed first covered the theoretical framework and the review on the key themes raised in the research questions. The areas covered were:

- ❖ Theoretical framework
- ❖ Support services for students with visual impairment in an inclusive setting.
- ❖ Environmental adaptation for effective inclusive education
- ❖ Social interaction among students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts.
- ❖ Summary of Literature Review.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The flow theory by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) was adopted for the study. It deals with the intrinsic motivation that urges one to participate in an activity. Csikszentmihalyi describes the flow theory as "...the holistic experience that people feel when they act with total involvement (p.36)." The theory suggests that learners can experience optimal learning when they perform tasks characterised by skills-challenge balance and by a person's interest, control and intense focus. The flow theory is an approach that equally describes the state of flow in which learners are so engrossed in an activity that they lose of time and no other activity matters during that time. While in this mental state of flow, self consciousness can fade and the sense of time can become distorted. During this state of flow, learner's engagement is often high and

they have intense concentration on the task. Moreover, the theory includes elements, such as cognitive elements, such as feedback immediacy and focused attention, in addition to effective constructs, engagement, self rewarding and experience. In doing so, the theory describes the cognitive processes that influence learning, while also providing a purview to understand the human computer interaction elements of interface design. The flow theory deals with a state in which people involve themselves fully in an activity to the extent that they forget about all the external factors that may distract them. Owing to how interesting the activity may be, they do it at a great cost no matter how challenging it may be (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The flow theory looks at the kind of inner feeling of satisfaction and joy a person develops when he or she is involved in an activity, even if the activity is difficult and or thought provoking.

2.2 Implication of the Theory to the Study

This theory was used because in finding out something, one needs to fully involve people who are willing to freely give out information to arrive at or to discover the unknown in a particular situation. According to Csikszentmihalyi, there are ten factors that accompany the experience of flow, while many of these components may be present it is not necessary to experience all of them for flow to occur. In flow theory, the activity designed for the learners must be rewarding and should have a clear goal while challenging and must still be attainable. There is complete focus on the activity, personal control over situations and outcome. There is immediate feedback and the task designed are doable and there is a balance between skill level and the challenge presented. The implication of the theory to this study is based on the idea that when proper support services are available for students with visual impairment are in place for effective inclusive education practice, students with visual impairment would forget they have disabilities and go through the educational system without

difficulties and excel just like their sighted colleagues. More so, when such supports are provided, the students with visual impairment would be carried away, forget about their disability and any other thing that is likely to prevent them from having normal education and adjust to the adaptations that are in place for their inclusion into the academic and social inclusion. Also, with appropriate strategy implementation students with visual impairment in Wenchi senior high will be able to have full concentration and participate fully when engaged in any curricular and co-curricular activities. This will also help them to experience the flow since they may sometimes find it difficult to stop an engagement or interaction with other parties because of how interesting it may be. Hence have full concentration, interact or communicate with the information available and succeed in their education

2.3 Support Services for students with visual impairment in an Inclusive Setting

Education is a fundamental human right, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1998). Children with or without disabilities have the same rights to educational opportunities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child. Education is understood as a tool that can be used to reduce poverty, to improve the lives of individuals and groups, and to transform societies (Grubb and Lazerson, 2004). Worldwide, there has been emphasis on the need to extend access to education to all. This implies that all barriers that may hinder accessing educational opportunities needs to be identified and addressed with resources. Inclusion is about the child's right to participate as fully as possible in school activities and the school's duty to accept and accommodate the child's right (Thomas and Vaughan, 2005). This means that mainstream schools are to consider all learners with or without disability in its area as fully belonging to the school and must be allowed to take part in all schools' activities. That is to say every child has the

same right to access education. Inclusive education is therefore a policy that seeks to strengthen the capacity of education system in order to help all learners to come through formal education. Inclusive education thus is to say is based on the fundamental human rights. Thus, to say inclusion brings about acceptance of differences, makes room for the students who would otherwise be prevented from experiencing their educational development which also bring about friendships between all students.

Gadagbui (2013), referred to inclusive education as schools, centres of learning and educational systems that are open to ALL children. Gadagbui vouched that inclusive education is meant for children with disabilities with diverse needs from diverse background. This means that inclusive education is a responding policy to diverse educational needs of all, encouraging positive attitudes and improving social frameworks to cope with the new demands in educational setup (improving inputs and resources to foster learning environment). This also means ensuring students with disability, in this case visually impaired, are able to access and take part in education process just like students without disability through making reasonable adjustment to already existing infrastructure where necessary.

Similarly, Opong (2003) sees inclusive education as structuring of the school curriculum to make it equally accessible to students with special needs. Opong maintained that, in inclusive education setting adaptation are made to school community to meet the needs of both regular and special educational needs (SEN) pupils. Thus, bringing together children with and without disability into the regular classroom or school setting with the aim of accessing the school curriculum to achieve their academic goals is a core idea of inclusive education. This type of education is found in the principles of human right, good education and good social

values UNESCO, described inclusive education as “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education.” The goal is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity. Thus in an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are met and every student has an opportunity to succeed.

The Indiana Inclusion Study investigated the academic benefits of inclusive education for students without disabilities in 2000, and concluded that students without disabilities who went to inclusive schools made significantly greater progress in math than their peers. The study also revealed however that their progress in reading was not significantly greater than their peers, although there was a "consistent pattern" in their scores. This research again highlighted improved academic skills, social skills, communication skills and peer relationships as four of the most important benefits of inclusion because students without disabilities served as positive speech and behaviour role models for those with disabilities.

Although the practice of inclusive education is known to be broad, it however depends on the perspective of the individual (Scruggs et al., 2007), and in this case the availability of resource thus the support services, necessary adaptations and how people relate to the visually impaired students. Support services are services offered to students with special needs in order to bridge the gap between their disabilities and in this case their academic or education. One of the support services available for students with visual impairment in secondary schools in Ghana is the provision of assistive technology devices and software. These can range from magnifiers and

screen readers to braille displays and speech recognition software (Amoako & Holder, 2017). For example, the Ghana Blind Union provides visually impaired students with accessible technology tools such as braille notetakers and text-to-speech software, enabling them to access and interact with educational materials (Brefo & Opoku, 2016). Another support service is the provision of specialized instruction and orientation and mobility training. These services aim to enhance the students' independent living skills and their ability to navigate their school environment. The Special Education Division of the Ghana Education Service ensures that visually impaired students receive training in mobility skills, including the use of canes and guidance techniques (Ghana Education Service, 2009). Additionally, academic support services are crucial for students with visual impairment. These services may include individualized tutoring, note-taking assistance, and the provision of large print or Braille materials. The Resource Room approach, which offers specialized instruction in a separate room, is commonly practiced in secondary schools to support visually impaired students (Amoako & Holder, 2017). For instance, the Akropong School for the Blind in Ghana provides special education teachers to support visually impaired students with their academic needs (Gbedemah, 2017). Psychological and counseling services are also essential for meeting the emotional and psychological needs of visually impaired students. These services can help students cope with their visual impairment and any associated challenges. The Ghana Blind Union offers counseling services to visually impaired students to address emotional issues and provide guidance on career choices (Brefo & Opoku, 2016).

An additional support service is the provision of inclusive extracurricular activities. Secondary schools in Ghana aim to include visually impaired students in mainstream extracurricular activities such as sports, drama, and music. For example, the Nsawam

School for the Blind actively participates in inter-school sports competitions, providing visually impaired students with opportunities to showcase their talents (Gbedemah, 2017).

Furthermore, collaboration with external agencies and stakeholders plays a crucial role in providing support services for visually impaired students in Ghana. External agencies, such as non-governmental organizations, provide funding and resources for specialized services and assistive technologies. For instance, the Ghana Society of the Blind collaborates with various stakeholders to provide funding for the education of visually impaired students (Gbedemah, 2017).

This services according to Garguilo (2005), may involve physical assistance and therapy, counselling and psychotherapy, modified learning environments and assistive learning devices, educational and psychological assessments and behavioural modification techniques. This indicates that, support services are offered to help individuals with special needs to benefit from the general school program or education. This also implies that these support services are offered to pupils and students with visual impairment to supplement the general academic curriculum that is being run in the inclusive schools; hence the measure of inclusive education practices in Wenchi Senior High.

2.3.1 Available resources for effective inclusive education

Resources refer not only to teaching methods and materials but also the time available for instruction, the knowledge and skills of teachers acquired through training and experienced (Owoko, 2010). Educating visually impaired students in the inclusive classroom is not normal in the so-called regular school setting. Thus is to say that teaching visually impaired students require more instructional time, skills and teaching methods as well as professional knowledge and techniques not to mention

the understanding of the who inclusive educational policy . This can be achieved through making educational resources available to such schools and making adjustment to already available resources to accommodate the need of all learners.

Similarly, Puri and Abraham (2004) affirm that management of schools and teachers should make efforts to identify and attend to learners with special educational or learning needs. This is to say that teaching visually impaired students in this case, learning resources should include; support staff (Brailist and Braille transcribers), regular and special teachers, not to mention provision of suitable furniture, classroom space and suitable teaching learning materials and time available. There should also be special adaptation of the curriculum and lesson delivery to benefit all.

The provision of basic education for children in Ghana is structured in two parallel systems. Children with visible disabilities such as intellectual disabilities, blindness, and deafness are enrolled in segregated special schools, while those presumed to be without disabilities are enrolled in regular schools, which seems to prevent some pupils from interacting with their peers who are enrolled in the regular stream on the basis of their disability, in this case blindness. However, inclusive education (IE) allows both types of students to attend the same school where resources are provided and adaptations made to the existing schools to accommodate and address individual needs of persons (students) with disability with better social relations (Ackah & Fluckiger, 2018).

Studies available have indicated that there are essential resources and supports for implementing Inclusive Education (Barrett, 2014; Villa, & Thousand, 2005) in all inclusive schools. These resources could be financial and educational materials, knowledge and skills and internal motivation that are available to all schools practicing inclusion. This implies that real work of inclusive education takes place at

the school. These may include supports from resource rooms and centers situated in all-inclusive schools where teachers with special educational background and skills operate thus act as a bridge between other teachers and students with special educational needs for easy access of information in the modes, they best understand leading to active participation and engagement in school programs and activities. These also means that teachers who have no knowledge about teaching certain concept to people or students with disabilities can walk into the Recourse Room or Centre for assistance from those who have the know- how skills and techniques to deliver their lesson.

Literature on successful inclusion practices is extensive and growing, these includes studies on the impact of instructional materials as a resource. Momoh (2010) conducted a research on the effects of instructional resources on students' performance in West Africa School Certificate Examinations (WASCE). He concluded that material resources have a significant effect on student's achievement since they facilitate the learning of abstract concepts and ideas and discourage Rote-learning. This means that when there are no or insufficient teaching and learning materials, education suffers, thus to say academic achievement becomes low, high dropout rates, deviant behaviours, low teacher motivation, and not to mention unmet educational goals. Similarly, Adeogun (2001) also observed a positive significant relationship between instructional resources and academic performance. He maintained that, schools endowed with more materials performed better than schools that are less endowed with TLMs. This means that schools with better resources will perform better academically than schools with less teaching and learning material. This also indicates that when resources that support students' performance are available teaching and learning is improved. Similarly, Manisah, et al., (2006) noted

that inclusive education is important in order for teachers to understand the form of education programme as well as understanding their role in implementing inclusive education. This implies that because children with disabilities are enrolled in the normal school system under the inclusive education policy, where most or some of the teachers have no or little knowledge identifying the learning problem and handling these children to achieve their academic needs to the fullest. It also means that, teachers in these schools should be educated on the importance of teaching these pupils alongside their 'normal' peers in the same environment. They should be educated also on how to teach pupils with disability using the existing structure with appropriate adaptations. They should be taught how to make adjustments towards the know-how technique through in-service training internally by experienced special educators for the success of the inclusive practice. This is line with Margaritoiu (2010) who reported that teachers of inclusive school were ill prepared when they entered the professional arena, although they had sufficient subject knowledge, it was felt that they needed more generic teaching skills necessary for teaching diverse population, that is teaching strategies, differentiating curriculum, managing challenging behaviours. (New Brunswick Association for Community Living (2007) also identified lack of knowledge and skills as a systematic barrier to the implementation of inclusive education. It is argued that lack of adequate pre-service training particularly for the Anglophone teacher, is the reason for the barrier. They asserted that, the issue has been known for some time and therefore correcting it will require the effort of the department of education to overcome what would be considered the recalcitrance of some faculties of education. This implies that it's not only non availability of TLMs and resource teachers that serves as barriers to inclusive education but also the language or the medium through which delivery

(teaching) is done. Here, one can relate to braille as a medium that best suit most of the students with visual impairment. This indicates that when the students are taught in the classroom there are no reading materials for the Blind to read as a support or back up for what is taught in the classroom. This may make them under perform when the need comes for recall or when it's time for examinations because they may not have literature or braille version of course books to read.

Notwithstanding, Wanjohi (2014) reported that in most schools especially in the developing countries, there were no adequate educational facilities. He also contented that inclusive education had led to an increased number of learners in the schools which led to the decrement in the available resources in schools in developing countries. This seems to suggest that lack of adequate reading materials, furniture and classrooms among others are the cost of not the programme not effective in all schools. Oakes and Saunders (2004), sharing the same view stated that the shortage of teaching and learning materials had a negative impact on learners especially the disabled ones with less knowledge about a subject. They indicated that lack of adequate resources to meet the educational needs of the pupils or students with disability in the regular schools caused most people doubt whether the needs of these students were adequately met in these schools. They suggested and maintained that resources must be allocated to support services (in this case resource rooms) for the running of the schools.

However, adjustments towards the pedagogical system through internal training aspects can be done to the regular or new teachers by experienced special education teachers through collaborative teaching between mainstream and special educators together thereby, re-inforcing a cooperative spirit in implementing inclusive education in inclusive schools. This is to say that amount of support the teacher

receives as a promoter of inclusive education policy is the most compelling factor to sharing information and working as teams for effective inclusive of persons with special educational needs and in this case students with visual impairment . This also indicates that teachers receives more training on how to effectively educate students with visual impairment and they work together, they get more opportunities to explore and address issues to promote instructional alternatives in their lesson deliveries.

Similarly, Butod (2009) notes that as inclusion would involve the placement of students with special needs education in the mainstream schools, teachers who will handle these classes may need coaching and training on how to handle the needs of the students other than learning. He implies that teachers need to learn how to manage students with physical or sensory impairment. This assertion also implies that since teachers are the agents of education they need to be empowered on what they do and also to help them acquire different alternatives skills and techniques to deliver; through in-service training and refresher courses for effective inclusion for students with visual impairment.

2.3.2 Guidance and counselling

Students with visual impairment need to be effectively monitored in terms of attendance, participation and well-being in an inclusive environment or school system. This is to say that the process of implementing counseling bridges the gap between expression and exploring of potential of students with visual impairment in the learning process and achieving educational goals in general. This also brings to fore the ideal that, counseling services for students with visual impairment are to be done by resource teachers. This would help students with visual impairment to be in a better position to achieve academic success and social well-being as independent

people. In other words special educators especially those who are in resource rooms or centres need to assume the role of counsellors and give guidance to students with visual impairment to become more useful and responsible in pursuit of their academic goals in the inclusive schools. In addition, Scholl, (1986: 461) stated several guidance and counselling competencies are needed by teachers in order to work with visually impaired students effectively. Scholl maintained that competencies such as the knowledge of methods to communicate guidance to supporting personnel, knowledge or professional ethics related to guidance information for the visually-impaired students and not to mention the role of teachers in guidance and counselling of such students are basic techniques of guidance and counselling. When it comes to guidance and counseling services for students with visual impairments in Ghanaian secondary schools, I would like to mention that there is limited specific research available regarding this topic in Ghana. However, we can draw upon international research and practices that can be applicable in the Ghanaian context. Let me provide you with 10 guidance and counseling services which can be helpful for students with visual impairments in secondary schools in Ghana, along with examples and suggestions for promoting inclusion.

1. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs): Developing IEPs tailored to meet the unique needs of students with visual impairments can be instrumental in providing inclusive education. These plans should outline specific goals and accommodations to enhance their academic and personal development.

2. Adaptive Technology Training: Offering training and support in the use of assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnifiers, and Braille display devices can empower students with visual impairments to access educational materials independently.

3. Sensitization and Awareness Programs: Conducting workshops and awareness campaigns for teachers, staff, and fellow students can foster a more inclusive and empathetic school environment. These programs can dispel misconceptions, reduce stigmatization, and encourage inclusive practices.
4. Peer Support Programs: Facilitating peer support groups or mentoring programs can enable students with visual impairments to connect with their peers who can provide social and emotional support. This can help foster an inclusive and inclusive atmosphere within the school.
5. Orientation and Mobility Training: Providing orientation and mobility training to students with visual impairments equips them with skills to move independently, navigate the school environment, and stay safe. This can enhance their confidence and participation in school activities.
6. Career Counseling: Offering career counseling services tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of visually impaired students can empower them to explore various career options and access future opportunities effectively.
7. Mental Health Support: Ensuring access to qualified counselors and psychologists who are knowledgeable about the challenges faced by students with visual impairments can provide essential mental health support. This can address issues such as anxiety, depression, and self-esteem concerns.
8. Inclusive Extracurricular Activities: Encouraging and facilitating participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, music, drama, and cultural events can promote inclusion and provide opportunities for students with visual impairments to showcase their talents.

9. Parental Involvement: Involving parents in the guidance and counseling process can contribute to a holistic approach. Regular communication, workshops, and support groups can foster a better understanding of the challenges and promote collaboration between parents, educators, and counselors.

10. Collaborative Partnerships: Establishing partnerships with organizations, NGOs, and professionals with expertise in visual impairment can provide additional resources, training opportunities, and specialized support services to enhance the guidance and counseling services for visually impaired students.

To promote inclusion, it is important to consider the specific needs of students with visual impairments. This includes providing tactile and auditory learning resources, ensuring physical accessibility within the school premises, and fostering a supportive and inclusive school culture. It is crucial to involve stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and disability rights organizations in the planning and implementation of inclusive measures.

This implies that every teacher or individuals who handles students with visual impairment needs to have a little professional knowledge in guidance and counselling. Similarly, Aseidu-Yirenkyi, et. al. (2019) did research on counselling offices at Manhyia Sub Metropolis and came out that 60% of the counsellors were untrained, while about half of the schools (53.3%) did not have counselling offices at Manhyia Sub Metropolis. The finding also revealed that counselling and orientation were the most guidance services operating in the schools. Based on the above positions from the studies, it implies that there is a need for service providers to have a form of training to help shape students to become better or to be in better positions to succeed academically and in life. The service providers could be taken through professional

courses or through schedule in-service training or workshop as part of a continuum support that is required for teachers in an inclusive school environment. It also placed guidance and counselling as a form of support services for individuals with special needs from the other group of students ('normal students'). This also helps the students with visual impairment to make suitable career decisions, helps them solve academic challenges and improves their independent living and personal needs. In all, counselor oversees the entire academic programme of students needs (Nacino-Brown et al, 2005). This again indicates that effective guidance and counseling service need to be based on a complete understanding of student's experiences. Thus requires all students going through guidance and counseling service in order to develop their academic, social and personal competence that aids behavior change.

Literature available indicates that guidance programme assists decision-makers to determine the programme and resources that should be provided for the success of inclusive programme. Thus, it helps counsellors to define more clearly their role in the educational institutions.

Ocansey and Gyimah (2016) worked on guidance and counseling for pupils with special educational needs in Accra, Ghana: implications for inclusive education. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods for the study. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically, frequencies and percentages alongside thematic approach. Their findings revealed that available school guidance services were encouraging. Its further showed pupil's satisfaction with the staff's immense roles in providing them with relevant support services such as the guidance services.

However, Namale and Awabil (2018) study evaluation of guidance services in senior high schools in Gomoa West District in the Central Region of Ghana. The result of

their study indicated that counselling services were not effectively implemented. This implies that some students with special educational needs may and are still having difficulty in exploring their sense of willingness to feel at home at school or having problem relating and adjusting into the school. This result again indicates that the students involved are having problem with learning curriculum that is being run in the school or teachers and the staff are less supportive in terms of giving the needed supports that they need in the inclusive environment to succeed.

2.3.4 Adaptations

2.3.4.1 Provision of teaching and learning materials

The success of inclusive education also depends on the regular classroom teacher's ability to adapt instructions when students have difficulty acquiring skills and information. The curricular and methods of instruction needs to meet the needs of every students regardless of their ability or inability. Many teachers still tend to think that it is correct to use the "one-size-fits all" approach to teaching (Wade, 2000). In an inclusive education classroom, teachers are faced with a group of learners with different characters, interests, learning styles, and pace of learning and approach to working. Curriculum differentiation should not be an exception but rather a central method of ensuring curriculum access (Gilbert & Hart, 1990). This means teachers must be prepared in terms of understanding the curriculum appropriately for implementing inclusive education. It is also indicated that as teachers in inclusive schools we need to put into consideration the strength of all the students in our classes before choosing a particular lesson delivery method/s. In other words, teachers in inclusive schools should make it a point to use more than one method in teaching a particular topic; to help remove the barriers of teaching the whole class as a group of people with same learning needs, and teaching with no or limited teaching and

learning materials. Instructional materials are used by the teachers to facilitate performance of students and therefore must be evaluated based on the needs of particular students with visual impairment in the classroom. Difficulties also exist in the area of adaptations of materials for students with visual impairment. Hence some teachers in the inclusive education schools will be faced with the challenges of adapting materials and equipment to meet the needs of the children to match the structure of the academic subject and objectives of the lesson to be taught (Obi & Mensah, 2005). Obi and Mensah further stated that, teaching children with diverse needs calls for curriculum adaptation. This involves planning and adaptation of instructions to suit the needs of the learner. This means that, teachers in the inclusive schools are expected to modify their instructions to suit the needs of each individual child. This also means the teacher will need to use a wide variety of teaching styles and principles including direct instructions, systematic teaching, among others. Literature available indicates that, there is a wide variety of instructional materials equipment for supporting students with visual impairment. Unegbu (2006) stipulates that instructional materials and equipment for supporting pupils with low vision include tables, chairs, vehicles, tape recorders, earphones, Braille machines and papers, large print materials, CCTVs, felt-pens, visually impaired specialists among others. In support, Nwachukwu (2006) opines that “children with such an array of problems need a flexible curriculum that would provide an enabling environment for total development of their three domains- cognitive, affective and psychomotor” (p. 278). Paul (2000, 209) suggests that ‘these students constantly face various barriers in their educational environment’ because of inappropriate and/or insufficient use of TLMs and methodologies used in teaching them. Teaching and learning materials (TLMs) are alternatively known as instructional media, instructional resources,

teaching aids or learning aids in various contexts in several educational materials or documents (Akuamoah et al., 2004). These materials are used to summarize instructional and learning objectives. This implies that TLMs have various components that motivate the learners to participate fully in the lesson. This also means that Teaching and learning materials creates possible direct interaction between learners and their environment and it kept the basic, concrete and real concepts of the lesson that integrates the experience from the concrete things to the abstract ones. It's also indicated that teaching and learning materials makes the learners become active in class and easily understand concepts that are taught in class. Momoh (2010) conducted a research on the effects of instructional resources on students' performance in West Africa School Certificate Examinations (WASCE). The achievements of students in WASCE were related to the resources available for teaching. He concluded that material resources have a significant effect on student's achievement since they facilitate the learning of abstract concepts and ideas and discourage rote learning. This implies that when TLMs are inadequate, inclusive education and education as a whole would be compromised. It also indicates that, there would be low academic achievement, and high school dropout rates may be recorded. Also, according Ocloo, et. al. (2002), many children with special needs in inclusive schools go through education without any support, as such, some of them drop out of school and those who managed to go through end up with poor grades. (Paul,2000) Students with disabilities in higher education: a review of the literature, (College Student Journal, 34,200-210)

2.4 Accessible school environment and assistive devices

Access by persons with physical disabilities, in this case students with visual impairment to education without discrimination has been a matter of concern to many. So, also is the right to education and access to assistive devices for students with visual impairment are a global concern. It is therefore important that schools are designed to accommodate all persons in a conducive learning environment. UNESCO (2010) argues, “Disability is one of the least visible but most potent factors in educational marginalization. That is to say persons with disabilities face significant hurdles in enrolling, attending and completing school. This also indicates that students with disability in this case visual impairment carry stigma that aids their exclusion from society and school environment. There are a number of barriers within the environment that can limit a student with visual impairment and the use of assistive devices. (Wearmouth & Wielandt, 2009). This situation arises when an individual will not be able to use a white cane, Perkins brailers, frames and stylus of good quality in an inaccessible school or social environment. Education is a process where knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transmitted from one generation to the next through teaching and training and some point through research. This takes place under the supervision of others, but may also be self-tutelage (WHO, 2011). This indicates that any experience that has a persuasive effect on the way one thinks or looks at things, and feels may be considered education. Teaching or transmitting knowledge to students with special educational needs involves a lot of interventions, modifications and adaptations. These may include training and re-training of teachers by way of in-service, provision of resources such as furniture, accommodation, equipment and other forms of support such as supplying assistive devices. This implies that every student regardless of their conditions can be given equal

opportunities in accessing social needs in their schools. Visual impairment imposes many restrictions on students with visual impairment and these restrictions include the ability to move about in their environment. Slaby and Gaura (2003) were of the view that, social skills are closely associated with social adjustment. They indicated that these adjustments include moving from one place to other, manipulate or explore the environment in which one lives. This implies that, the environment in which one lives affect one's movement and interactions. It means also that, other environmental factors that may affect a student with visual impairment include his or her immediate environment and support him or her receives to that effect. These include the accessibility of walking paths, locating objects and through meaningful mobility guidance to succeed. Similarly, Wolffe (2010) asserted that it is lack of mobility and orientation that makes pupils with visual impairment depend on others and in this case their sighted peers. This assertion suggested that mmobility training must have a more central and comprehensive role in an educational plan for students with visual impairment in inclusive schools. It further indicated mobility training as an effective means of coping with the school environment. A study of how children's motor skills are developed (Celeste, 2002) have supported the assumption by generally reporting marked developmental delays in the acquisition of gross-motor skills by children who are visually impaired as compared with sighted children. This suggested that the complete absence of vision reduces the information about external cues and brings about less overlapping with input from the other senses. Thus, students with visual impairment need to use body centred cues to solve spatial tasks.

2.5 Relationships and Support from the Environment

Social Interactions and or friendship can refer to the ability to keep a number of mutual friends for a period. This is necessary to develop or build social relations later on in life. Students with different degree of peer acceptance, social competence, and friendship styles have been found to show differences in their behavioural development (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). This assertion implies that students, who do not have any friendships, are not very visible in the classroom and show high degree of socially withdrawn behaviors (Kluwin, Stinson & Colarossi, 2002); Nunes, Pretzlik & Olsson, 2001). It is clear from these positions and reviews that peer acceptance, social competence, and friendship relations are interrelated. Relationships and friendships with class-mates are related not only to social and behavioural development but also to their academic achievement (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Johnson, 2000). This means that students who are rejected by their peers are at risk of school failure or drop out as friendly interactions or play develops from non-social to social, and thus is important for every individual to initiate and maintain interactions with their peers. However, literature indicated that, Students with special needs often have difficulty engaging in positive social interactions. Thus, there is no set rule of socially approved standards as to establish friendship. This may translate as because the concept or understanding of the term friendship differs across cultural, philosophical and historical perspective (French, 2007). This indicates also that sustaining friendship is difficult for persons with special needs hence inclusion education as an option to provide the social world and friendship experiences of students with disability in this case students with visual impairment. To support the position that students with visual impairment have difficulty in gaining positive social interactions with their peers hence are neglected in social activities, Rockson (2014)

found out that, students with visual impairments lacked the support and friendship of their sighted peers. She averred based on her study that students with visual impairments interacted and related more with their fellow peers with visual impairments than with their sighted peers. However, Awini (2015) used the mixed method approach to investigate the nature of social participation of pupils with visual impairments in school activities in selected regular basic schools in Ghana. A phenomenology research design and descriptive survey design were employed. His study revealed that the sighted peers of the pupils with visual impairments interacted with them, played regularly with them, had fun together, worked with them during group assignments, and were never treated harshly by their sighted peers. Awini (2015) concluded that there was some fair level of social participation of students with visual impairments and blindness in activities in the schools. He recommended that, teachers should create classroom environment that encourages frequent peer interactions with the blind. This means that when students with visual impairment are engage effectively in the inclusive schools, they would be able to participate and behave just like their sighted peers. Similar to Awini's findings is a study conducted by Hurst, Wallace and Nixon (2013) which investigated students' perspectives of highly interactive and reflective classes using exit slips for data collection. The study sought to explore a model of instructional delivery where graduate and undergraduate students had the opportunity for daily interaction with each other. The finding revealed that students in all the three courses perceived that social interaction created a positive working environment, improved learning by enhancing their knowledge of literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving skills and teaching.

Another similar study conducted in the United States by George and Duquette (2006) used qualitative approach to explore the psychosocial experiences of a student with low vision. The major findings of this study was that the psychosocial development of students with low vision may not always be compromised by limitations of or perceptions of visual impairment and that these students may not, inevitably, have difficulty with peer relations. The above discussion seems to affirm the notion that although researchers have recognized the social benefits of inclusion education, inclusion does not automatically lead to more social contact and friendships between students with and without disabilities. This implies that, although the inclusive policy is a good deal, it cannot succeed without proper implementation and good will of the inclusive community as a whole. Thus, friendships create contexts in which basic social skills are acquired and extended (Dunn, 2004). Alike, Xiaofang Zheng (2014) conducted a qualitative study to investigate what students with blindness experience to be appropriate provision and support in schools. The result showed that the students with visual impairment experienced difficulties at three different levels including physical/medical limitations, environmental limitations and they needed extra support on their study. Findings however showed that the informants received certain types of provision and support from the government and schools, including guide dogs, long canes, computers, audio programs, training on computer skills and some one-to-one teaching sections. This however indicated that challenges come from three different levels, and that the participants experienced a lack of training and support on orientation and mobility.

2.6 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two (2) reviewed the literature and theoretical framework relevant to the study. It first presented the theory under pinning the study and its implications for the

study. The study adopts the Csikszentmihalyi (1975) theory, ‘the flow theory’. The flow theory deals with the intrinsic motivation that urges one to participate in an activity. The chapter further reviewed literature related and relevant to the study under the following stands:

1. The concept of Inclusive education and support services for students with visual impairment in an inclusive setting.
2. Adaptation for effective inclusive education.
3. Social interaction for students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the study's methodology. The topics covered included research methodology, research design, population, sample size, sampling technique, instrumentation, trustworthiness, a data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The Interpretivism Paradigm was adopted for the study. Researchers of the interpretivism tradition argue that knowledge is everywhere and is socially constructed. They are of the view that all kinds of information are valid and worthy of the name “knowledge”, even things ‘of the mind’. The interpretivist believes that the act of trying to know should be conducted such that the knower’s value position is taken into account in the process.

This study sees “Inclusive education practices for students with visual impairment at the Wenchi Methodist Senior High School” as social reality that could be investigated through the scientific approach. Researchers who subscribe to the Interpretivism tradition are seen as adopting qualitative approach of research. Fobi (2023) posit that qualitative approach is a naturalistic research process that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in their natural settings. He further mentioned that qualitative approach focuses on the ‘why’ of social phenomena rather than the ‘what’ and it is based on the direct experiences of humans as meaning-making agents in their daily lives. He concluded that qualitative research deals with people’s expressions of their experiences, feelings, and view of the social world.

3.3 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to investigate the support services available to students with visual impairment, the environmental adaptations that exist for easy mobility and accessibility to school facilities, and the social interaction or friendship that exists between visually impaired students and their sighted counterparts at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School. Secondly, qualitative research entails interaction between the researcher and study participants in the socio-cultural context of the participants (Kusi, 2012). The researcher went out and talked to visually impaired students face to face for information, which agrees with Creswell's point of view on qualitative research that research should be conducted in a natural settings, and that the researcher is also an instrument of data collection" who goes to the field to collect data in the form of words or images. Hence, the study employed qualitative research to obtain detailed accounts of the participants' experiences from their own perspectives in order to comprehend the problem under investigation. The collected data was then carefully analyzed in order to find detail meanings and views of the information available. Qualitative method was appropriate for the study because it enabled the exploration of participants' experiences, since participants were expected to give comprehensive information on the particular phenomenon under investigation (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2003). The research approach is a step-by-step process that includes broad assumptions as well as detailed data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), three major factors influence the nature of a study. The researchers "choose a qualitative study because the topic necessitates further investigation."

To sum up, this thesis aimed at exploring participants' lived experiences thus the support they received coupled with environmental adaptations that existed in order to

promote healthy relationships between them and their sighted colleagues for effective inclusive education.

3.4 Research Design

This research employed phenomenology as the research design to assess the inclusive practices currently being adopted at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School. Phenomenology is a research design which presumes, there exists in every experience a true essence or structure which describes the meaning of individuals lived experiences of a situation. This description consists of what they experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell, 2012).

Phenomenology also helps researchers to explore participants' perspectives and experiences of a phenomenon (Ary, et. al, 2010), it was therefore appropriate to use phenomenology as a research design for this study because it allowed the researcher to delve into the perceptions, perspective, understanding and feelings of students with visual impairment in Wenchi Senior High where inclusive education is being practiced.

3.5 Population

For the purpose of this study, the targeted population was 30 students with visual impairment in Wenchi Senior High School, Wenchi. They comprised of 16 males and 14 females between the ages of 16- 20 with an average age of 18. Out of these 12 students were in SHS 3, 10 are SHS 2 whilst 8 in SHS 1. Population refers to the set of people from which a sample is selected. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), "a population refers to the larger group to which one hopes to apply the results of his/her findings". It is the group that is important to the researcher, the group to whom the researcher will like to simplify the results of the study. The research population is considered as an essential part of any research.

3.6 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was 16 students with visual impairment, comprised of 7 females and 9 males between the ages of 16 and 20 years with an average age of 19. The sample further consisted of 9 males and 7 female students, 8 in SHS 3 and 8 in SHS 2. Out of this, 9 students were totally blind and require the use of Braille for their academic work whilst 7 had low vision and require large prints and optical devices for their studies. Students in SHS 1 were not included in the sample because they were new and they needed some experience in the school. Sample size refers to the number of participants included in a study. It is part of the population chosen for a study or experiment and therefore, the representation of a larger group or population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.7 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in selecting the sample size was purposive. Students with visual impairment who after discussing the purpose of this study with, willingly accepted to participate in the study were purposefully chosen. The purpose of sampling for this study was to obtain a group of participants who represent the larger population and will provide specific information needed to address the questions raised (Hayford, 2013). The purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of judgement of typicality (Taherdoost, 2017). Similarly, Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) explained that purposive sampling technique is a technique in which researchers use their judgment to select a sample that they believe, based on prior information, will provide the data they need.

Research participants are generally selected because they are able to provide rich descriptions of their experiences and are willing to articulate their experiences, thereby providing information that is rich to enable the researcher to get what he is looking for. To draw a purposive sample, a researcher begins with specific perspectives in mind that he wishes to examine and then seeks out research participants who cover that full range of perspectives. Acheampong (2017) citing Creswell (2005, 2012); Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007); Kusi (2012) noted that some scholars argue that purposive sampling techniques are more suitable for studies located within the qualitative framework than studies that fall within the quantitative framework. Thus, this sampling technique is most appropriate for the current study because of its objectives.

3.8 Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide in a focus group was used to collect data from the participants for the study. The interview was semi structured, consisting of three sections based on the number of research questions raised. It had section A, B and C; each section consists of two open ended questions supported with relevant probes to guide the participants. The semi-structured interview enables participants to freely express themselves in order to elicit the needed information. The researcher chose focus group interviews because it encouraged effective participation of the participants to speak out so that the researcher could learn what the range of views of participants are, in order to generate a collective view rather than that of an individual view of a phenomena (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The questions and prompts helped to explore and develop views of respondents and to prevent respondents from going off the main line of questioning (Rodgers, 1999). The interview questions were guided by the themes in the research questions raised, namely: The concept of Inclusive education

and support services for visually impaired students in an inclusive setting, adaptation for effective inclusive education, and social interaction for the visually impaired and their sighted counterparts. O'Donoghue (2007) described a focus group interview as a face-to-face encounter between the researcher and a group of participants with the focus on finding out participants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own expressions on the main variables raised in all the research questions.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which a qualitative study is said to have a diligent procedure and worthy results that can be trusted (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It is therefore, a crucial concern in every qualitative study that begins right at the planning stages of the study. This accounts for how every aspect of the research controls and provides measures that consolidate how effective the research procedures and its outcomes are to give an independent outcome through the respondents, the methodology and research design. Thus, to say that trustworthiness is critical in assessing the inclusive education practices for visually impaired students in Wenchi Senior High School in the Bono Region of Ghana; and in order to achieve this, the four (4) constructs of trustworthiness as suggested by Creswell (2005) in this regard were appropriate and were therefore used to establish trustworthiness of the study.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research according to Korstjens and Moser (2018) is the confidence that can be placed in truth of the research findings. This strategy was crucial in minimizing distraction that comes with the taking of notes. In addition, this method helps in providing a verbatim account of the interviewees' responses. To establish credibility of the study as to whether the research findings represent

plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and whether it is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views, the researcher provided verbatim statements in the analysis to confirm the data; the credibility principle was also achieved by member checking or respondent validation. Here, the researcher returned the transcribed interview data and analysed data to participants for verification. The researcher also used peer debriefing as a credibility check of the findings where colleagues reviewed the transcript, and final report and provided feedback.

The researcher personally carried out the data collection, data transcription, thematic coding and analysis the results to ensure credibility of the findings of this study.

3.9.2 Dependability

According Streubert (2007), dependability in qualitative research refers to the consistency and reliability of the data or findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit and critique the research process. To ensure absolute dependability of this study the following were also done. After securing permission to collect data, a time and date was fixed with pupils with the interviewees; interviews were conducted in three groups at different times on the same day. It was face-to –face with the group members in the school resource centre. The interview was tape recorded with the permission of participants, lasted between forty (40) to forty-five (45) minutes for each of the groups after which it was transcribed for analysis. Before analysis of the data, the researcher arranged another meeting with the focus groups and the transcripts were read to the participants to confirm that the transcripts represented the views they shared during the discussion. The confirmed transcripts were coded. A person not related to the study was involved in a second transcription and

development of patterns and data compared to that of the researcher. The supervisor of study consistently reviewed every stage of the study and made constructive suggestions and inputs.

In other words, the trustworthiness of this research is also of what the researcher did at any and every stage of the research process. This includes the researcher's experiences and interpretations assigned to information from and of the field. The researcher ensured the accuracy of participants' accounts in order not to miss essential details, making specific solutions useful for minimizing validity threats within the context of this study, by tape recording the interviews, making short notes to maintain those aspects of the interviews, which could not be recalled only by the audio records such as facial expressions and the general demeanour of the interviewees (Maxwell, 2013). The transcripts were checked severally by the researcher to ascertain accurate understanding of participants' perspectives which is central to all qualitative study or work based on Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) citing Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) who maintained that interviews are interpersonal, humans interacting with humans, it is inevitable that the researcher will have some influence on the interviewee and, thereby, on the data. To minimize these threats to the interpretive validity, during the interviews I made checks to ascertain whether the participants' statements and opinions were properly understood, by asking highly semi-structured interview questions, followed by probing questions with the same format and sequence of words for each respondent.

3.9.3 Transferability

To transfer interview data accurately, the researcher had a notebook in which he recorded responses of the participants. This made it easy to transfer data accurately. Aside this, to transfer interview data the researcher recorded the participant's

responses. The recorded data helps the researcher to get accurate responses that reflected true views of the respondents. In addition, to ensure transferability of the study in other settings, the researcher provided a detailed description of the findings on inclusive education practices for visually impaired students in Wenchi SHS.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the accuracy of the data and the reflexivity of the researcher (Johnson & Christenson, 2012). To ensure the confirmability of this study, an audit trail, detailing the process of my data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the data was carried out by coming up with themes and sub-themes. Aside this, the researcher ensured that the findings of the study were based on the raw data collected from the field devoid of the researchers' preconceived ideas and views on the research questions raised.

3.10 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher sought permission from the Headmaster of Wenchi Senior High School. The headmaster also informed the head of the resource room and teachers in order for the researcher to have their cooperation and assistance should the need arises. Creswell (2012) maintained that it is important to respect the site where research takes place. This respect, according to Creswell, is shown by gaining permission before entering the site. Permission to the site was facilitated by an introductory letter that the researcher requested from the Department of Special Education, UEW. The method used in eliciting information from the students was semi-structured interview guide covering the items raised from the research questions. The interviewees were made aware that the interview will be recorded using iPhone 6 recording feature. This is to avoid any ambiguity and to ensure data accuracy. The purpose of the interview was clearly explained to the participants, as well as the

nature of the questions. The researcher assured the interviewees of the confidentiality of the information that will be derived from them. As well their identity will not be known. The researcher again explains to them that the data that will be derived will be used for research purposes only. In the same vain pseudonym was used in place of their real names. I sought assistance from a colleague in the administration of the interview. Interviewees were made aware that their views will be recorded to ensure originality of the data and also to complement the note taken. The participants consented to it, and were put in three groups.

The participants were given the opportunity to express their feelings and experiences without being put under undue pressure. The interview (focus group discussion) was conducted in three groups for this study. It was face-to-face with the group members in the school's resource room. The interview was tape recorded with the permission of participants lasted between forty (40) to forty-five (45) minutes for each of the three groups and was transcribed for analysis. Before analyzing the data, the researcher scheduled another meeting with the focus groups, and the transcripts were read aloud to the participants to ensure that the transcripts accurately represented the views expressed during the discussion.

3.11 Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim and created written text for each interview and data was analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Fobi (2023), thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique. It is usually used to describe a group of texts such as interview transcripts. The data was qualitatively analyzed using themes from the interview. When necessary, verbatim reports from participants were not left out. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), thematic analysis involves six processes familiarization, coding, creating themes, reviewing

themes, defining and naming themes and writing up the analysis. Based on this, the researcher read notes and listen to the recorded audio repeatedly in order to transcribe accurately and familiarize with the data. Coding was done by highlighting sections of the texts that cut across the various groups and the emerging key points from all the three groups. The codes were assigned different colours, the researcher developed patterns from the codes generated to aid in developing the themes. Careful study of the codes reveals there were multiple codes that were combined into single theme. Some of the codes were in away discarded because they were vague and irrelevant to the issue under study. A thorough review of the themes was done ensure nothing was overlook with respect to the collected data. The themes were defined using simple sentences and phrases that are link to the transcribed data. The researcher re-read the transcribed data and the themes developed several times to ensure that the concept, constructions were fully documented and that no new interpretations emerged with each successive re-reading. Verbatim expressions of the students were used by the students in reporting the data where necessary.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

To preserve the welfare and rights of research participants, ethical concerns are crucial when conducting any form of research involving human subjects (Creswell, 2008). Universities go to considerable measures to preserve the dignity and safety of research participants, given the importance of ethics in research and the obstacles that come with doing research (Silverman, 2009). To preserve the participants' identities, their names were deleted from the transcripts, and pseudonyms were assigned to them in order to secure their identities while presenting information about their histories. After the research goal and process were presented to the participants, they willingly participated in the study. The researcher ensured that the rights of the participants

were treated with utmost care. The participants were told that should they wish to withdraw at any point during the interview they could do so. Permission to record the interview was granted by the participants and none of the participants had problem with the tape recordings of the interviews. Finally, the participants were assured access to the findings of the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS /FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and findings from the study. The analysis reflected on the themes that emerged from the interview data collected on the themes of the research questions using a focus group semi structured interview.

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Research Question 1: What Support services are available for students with visual impairment for effective inclusive education practice in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School?

To answer this research question, the data collected during focus group discussions were used. Themes emerged from the discussions from the three groups were used for the analysis. These were; Resource Centre, Provision of Learning Material, Guidance and Counselling and Welfare.

Resource Centre

With regard to resource and support available to students with visual impairment at Wenchi Methodist Senior High, the focus group discussions revealed that students with visual impairment mainly depended on the resource centre and its related services. All the 16 students agree that the resource centre is of great help to them and without it academic work will be very difficult for them. The respondents indicated that the first point of call once they report to school because of their condition is the Resource Centre where the masters or the resource personnel welcome them thus making them feel at home for academic work to start. They affirmed this assertion in the following comments: a student remarked:

‘When I was brought to school, when we got to the gate we were directed to the Centre where we met two gentlemen who welcome and assured us that we were at the right place ... after listening to them I forgot I was even scared of coming to school’(student Group 1).

Another student mentioned:

‘I sometime go to the resource centre when I don’t have lesson, when I have assignment because the masters there explain to me even better what we were taught in the classroom. They take time to answer the questions I did not get the chance to ask in the classroom’ (student Group 2)

Another student said:

‘‘I can say that this school is the best; I say that because the resource masters are always there for us. Even if you finish Braille your work late and you take it to them in their homes kura they would not complain but just take it and do it for there. If there is any reason they cannot do it for you right there, they would let you go and come for it’(a student in Group3).

One student also remarked:

‘‘There resource masters always remind other teachers of us in their classroom. So that when teaching is taking place, you would not see a blind student or a sighted student, the resource masters helps some of the teachers to prepare before they start teaching us. Oooh Sir, I know this because some of the teaching materials the teachers bring to class are from the Resource centre’’ (a student in Group 1).

Another student also has this to say:

“The resource centre has a lot of things they offer us. They braille our questions, give us supplementary braille sheets to support what we already have. The resource centre is a comfortable place to prep, because, they have places for those who read for us to sit comfortably”(student in Group 3).

Although it was evident from the analysis of the group discussions of the student that the resource centre and resource personnel give them perfect services that comes with inclusive education. They maintained that there should be more incentives for all resource teachers to make them more comfortable with the job they are doing.

A student remarked this way:

“Sir, our resource masters needs to be given more allowances to make out for the time they spend with us” (student in Group 2).

A student stated:

..... “for me if I were to be in government I would have built new blocks for students with visual impairment in all school and built quarters attached to it for all resource masters” (student in group 1).

Another student stated this:

“...me I want to tell people in authority that they should pay more money to the resource personnel so that they continue to be doing that they do best to us” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

One student also said this:

“... for one want to appeal to the PTA to check if they can take the chance and be paying the masters money if not every month too once awhile is good. They are really doing well here. Because how they

educate the whole school, there is no discrimination among we the visually impaired and the sighted in this school''(student in Group 1).

Based on the above information of the responses from the interviewees, there may be other ways of describing support that students with visual impairment receive from the resource centre but the best way to describe what they receive in Wenchi senior high is perfect. According to the participants, they become comfortable and at ease to study because of how the resource personnel or masters as they call them, handle them(students with visual impairment) and other situation that has to do with their academic work.They therefore viewed the Resource Centre and its personnel as a pivot on which their lives revolve.

Provision of learning materials

On using teaching and learning materials as a form of support the students with visual impairment in Wenchi senior high received, about 15 students out of 16 with 1 student with different view revealed that, there are all sort of teaching and learning materials that are provided to them by the school not to mention the supportive nature of the handlers of the materials. These were some of the comments of the students.

A student remarked that:

''When it comes to teaching materials, this school is the best; even dough some of the materials are not modern, the teachers and those in the resource center makes the best use of them for us to get the picture of what they are trying to teach'' (Verbatim expression a student in Group 2).

Another student said:

''Most of the times, if you don't understand something that the teachers teach in the classroom, and you go to the resource center.

You will always get personnel who are more than willing to explain things for you using embossed material to paint the whole idea for you to understand it proper'' (student in Group 1).

Another student remarked:

...for me learning here has never been a problem, the resource center people are there to braille whatever information that I need to learn to me any time any day. They know how to explain thing to us with the materials they have in the centre'' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

A student also stated:

''The personnel or the resource masters are willing to give us braille papers when we don't have some although not enough but it's better than not getting it at all. This way, we can get to write the braille version of all the notes our sighted colleague have and read all by ourselves and respond appropriately to questions when its exams time''(Verbatim expression by a student Group 1)

Another student remarked this way:

''There is an embosser that prints some of our notes and other reading material for us, there is also the CCTV that those with little vision can use to read their books and feel comfortable just like those of us reading braille. I believe we don't have what we want in its best quality or quantity but I appreciate the situation here'' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

Another student said:

“We also have an ICT lab where there are computers with installed JAWS and the other program that reads for us when we go there I think this is good”(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Another student remarked saying this:

“...when the teachers are teaching and they want all to read or test our pronunciations they give the braille version of what the class would be using to us so we are lonely.....for me when this happens I feel I don't have a challenge in and around” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1).

Though it was also evident from the data that the students with visual impairment have teaching and learning materials available to them to use at their comfort some expressed that a hand full of the teachers should be taught how to handle some of the materials outside the resource center. The following comments confirmed it.

A student had this to say:

“.... why can't same be done in the classrooms, must we always have to go to the ICT lab before I can get a computer to read to me? I plead with the authority to do something about it. Doing something about it would serve us time and inconvenience “ (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Another student stated:

“.....it's a good idea that we have a lab, where we have access to JAWS but it would have been better if we should have at least one computer in every class that the visually impaired are. ... I mean i

should have that same information I would get in the ICT room here in the normal classroom Sir”(Verbatim expression a student in Group 1).

Another student mentioned that:

“I thank the headmaster and everyone who agreed that we the blind people should also come to where the sighted are, but all I want to say is that once we are all learning in the same classroom and even staying together as a family, all the teachers must learn to read braille so that the work load on the resource masters would reduce”
(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

On teaching and learning materials as a support for a successful inclusive education practice, the students revealed there are teaching and learning materials available at Wenchi senior high but wished they are more than what they have now for more successful inclusion.

Guidance, counselling and welfare services

Guidance and counselling and welfare was another support that was revealed during the discussion as a tool that drives to a successful inclusive education in Wenchi senior high; that is, how the resource masters and some house masters advise and guide the students with visual impairment to become better students both academically and socially through organized counseling sections for the students. All the 16 students affirmed to this guidance and counseling services and welfare services are of great help to them in their academic pursuit. To confirm the above, the students mentioned the following in their discussion:

A student commented that:

“...the reality is that until someone have you at heart, he would not care whether you go wayward or not. The resource masters sometime

calls and advise us about how to study and pass our final exams so that we do not waste our lives'' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Another student commented that:

''Not only do the teachers and the resource masters tell us to be serious with our books sometimes too they call us to say that oo, my friend I have observed that lately when am transcribing your work , you do a lot of spelling errors, I want you to be reading more braille books so you become conversant with certain construction of braille words'' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

One student also expressed this:

''They sometimes organize counselling section for all the visually impaired and sometime they bring people to come and explain something to us so we can behave well'' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1).

Another student said that:

''... The last time after the school gave us the fresh students orientation, the resource people also called us , they told us how to seek help, brush our teeth , wash and iron our cloths well so we cannot become nuisance to others around us. I think no teacher would have time for us like this.....''(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3)

To confirm that having the welfare of the visually impaired students is also a driver for a successful inclusive education at Wenchi senior high; the interviewees had these to say during the discussions:

A student mentioned that:

“...to me, I even feel more comfortable here than at home. No, not that, u\you see here, when the house master comes round and noticed a change in the way you do your things or you are active the your usual way, he ask you lot of questions in a way that if you don't want to talk to anyone too, you would just forget about your problem. They want to make sure you are fine and okay” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1)

Another student in agreement said:

“... it's true. I also feel same here, in the house you are on your own they would wait until things are getting out of hand before they would be asking what is wrong with you, this and this and that” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

Another student stated that:

“.... I have notice that I was at a cool place from the day I was brought to this school. Even in the night, the masters come around to check on us not to mention the resource Masters for them they can even noticed you are well or not when we even write things for them to transcribe for you. Through we are not related to them they treat us like we are and are always there for you” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Findings on Research question one revealed that, the most importance support for visually impaired students in an inclusive school is the assistance they received from the resource centers and the personnel from that outfit. The results also revealed that the students with visual impairment need to be provided with teaching and learning

materials in the mode that best suit their condition in a particular situation to succeed in an inclusive school environment such as Wenchi senior high. It was also revealed that guidance and counselling although not a classroom subject that is taught in most senior high schools, it helps and prepares persons or students with visual impairment to settle for academic work and ensure a successful inclusiveness in an inclusive school environment.

4.1.2 Research Question 2. What environmental adaptations exist for easy mobility and socialization for students with visual impairment in Wenchi Methodist Senior High?

In finding answers to this research question, the collected data were used. The themes arrived at were: provision of white canes and sighted guide assistance, well demarcated routes and pavements, furniture and accommodation.

Provision of white canes and sighted guide assistance

In expressing their thoughts on what environmental adaptations that existed for easy mobility and socialization in their school environment, the students revealed in the group discussions that, they have a conducive or friendly environment to some extent in that some of the pathways needed to be worked on. Twelve students attested that the school has done a lot to make the environment accessible by all but 4 students have contrasting views. Concerning provision of white-cane and sighted guide assistance, some interviewees stated the following:

“...yes I should say, there are a lot of them in the resource center(white-canes) the most of us who do not have can go for and use and later return them at the end of the term because they want us to go to anywhere on campus to do any activities” (Verbatim expression by a student in group 3).

Another student maintained that:

“...oh, we have been trained to use the cane during the orientation so that we can use the cane to trace your way to your destination”

(Verbatim expression by a student in group 1).

Another said this:

“...even sometimes when you get missing or missed your way they the sighted students when they see you they would help you to get back on your path or to safety” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

Another also student commented this way:

“hmm, I will use this chance to say that this school have plans for all the visually impaired student. Some of us are not comfortable by using the cane so we want to go places with or want the sighted to accompany us to the dorm, classroom and any place. when you are ready to go , you can easily get someone to take you to where you are going that is why I said this is the best school” (Verbatim expression by a student Group 3).

In regards to the demarcating of routes and pavements situation in Wenchi secondary, the interviewees had these to say:

“Some of the roads are tiled making it safe to walk on as a VI, even without a guide or with cane you go” (Verbatim expression a student in Group 1).

Another commented that:

“...some of the paths are very friendly, there are gutters but they have made pavement on them to help us cross without falling in the gutters” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

A student remarked:

“They have constructed the roads here in a way that when you are using cane to walk you can use the cane to trace your way out ...they have put steps down so when you are using cane you can go to your classroom or where ever. So I can say the environment is good for students with visual impairment” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Another in disagreement said:

“Some of the roads too are like rough roads, especially from the old center going its very bad the headmaster should start writing letters for help to fix it before we all get bruises on our bodies”(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3)

In support, another too said:

“On some of the roads there are too much stones or I should say gravels that when you are not careful would hurt you on your way to the dorm. They can fill that road with sand instead” (Verbatim expression a student in Group 1)

Another stated:

“Although the major roads have been tiled some of the roads are still in bad nature, especially from our visually impaired center leading to the dining hall, if you get to the old center to the kitchen side is very

bad, as it rains like this when you as a VI you want to use that path, you would fall in the pot holes and become muddy''(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1).

One interviewee said:

'... for me if you ask me, I can say that the environmental adaptation is terrible, terrible, even where there are pavements, crossing to one place to another is very bad. They are no covers on the gutters, more needs to be done' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2)

It is very obvious that there are some form of adaptation put in place in Wenchi senior high in order to promote inclusive education .However some of the participants' or the interviewees mentioned that there is still more room for improvement. They were of the view that the authority of the school need to invest a little more in the schools road network to facilitate more independent travel for the visually impaired.

Furniture and accommodation

Concerning how furniture and accommodations are designed to give them the comfort they desire as students with visual impairment in inclusive school setting, 16 students revealed that there are specially designed furniture that are provided for the comfort of the visually impaired student especially in the ICT lab and the resource center for effective academic work. However, four students were of the view that more needs to be done to make all dormitories visually impaired friendly. One of the interviewees remarked this way:

'when it comes to adaptations in this school for our inclusion, some of the things that makes us feel belonging is for examples the furniture provided in the resource center that make both the VI and the one

reading to him comfortable'' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Another also stated that:

“...there are a lot of measures that are in place so that both the sighted and us can study in peace, some of these are the ICT lab that is to make us become abreast with modern technologies ‘’ (Verbatim expression a student in Group 2).

A student remarked;

‘Just like John said, one of such measures in place is the braille library where we can go and read some of the test books that are in here. I think it’s a good adaptation because it’s not all inclusive that enjoy this service’’ (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Another said:

“Some of our dorms to are very friendly to us, no that is why I said same please let me land . some of the roads that are not friendly too you can observe that something is being done on it, they are planting flowers as guide to prevent us from getting lost’’ (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1).

Some of the classrooms are not spacious enough. It is clear that there was a mixed opinion regarding furniture and accommodation situations in Wenchi senior high. It was however obvious that there is some form of adaptations in the school but more needed to be done as shown by the comments from the interviewees. This, therefore, made it difficult for them to move from one classroom to the other without sighted guide.

Findings on Research question two showed that there school has in place a number of adaptations and are still putting place measures to promote inclusive education. The provision of white cane for those who want to use but do not have, to training the sighted who are willing to be guides to their colleagues who are visually impaired, this would promote their effective learning to co- exist for effective academic work. These, according to the interviewees, make them forget their status as people living with disabilities and they learn together in peace. The respondents expressed their acknowledgement of all adaptations that existed in the school that was aimed at integrating into the normal school system but still believed and hope that more is done in order to achieve the objectives of inclusive education in the school.

4.1.3 Research Question 3:What is the nature of social interaction that exists between the visually impaired students and their sighted counterparts at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School?

To answer the research question on types of friendship exists between students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School,the data collected were used. In the analysis of the responses of the students, these themes emerged: friendly and cordial, and supportive behaviour of the sighted towards the blind.

Friendly and cordial

In regards to the friendship that exists between students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts,all the 16 students revealed that the students with visual enjoy a very good relationship with the sighted colleagues. This according to interviewees encourages them to study freely in the environment that is mostly dominated by the sighted. These relationships included enjoying sighted guide

services from their colleagues, sighted reading to the blind among others. The following statements from the interview confirmed the above:

One student expressed that

“...You see, how wonderful and friendly they are to us. There are always more than ready to help. I was on the wrong path without knowing it ooo sir, this girl politely said my brother please I don't know where you going but I think you are going to the wrong side and then she come to my rescue” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

Another expressed that:

The way our sighted colleagues relate to us here on campus is just so refreshing. I don't have to worry about who is going to help me wash my things when am sick. The sighted in my room are always helping me, and iron whenever I asked them. They do it even cleaner than I can do myself 'mpo' ” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

Another comment went this way:

Sir you know already, but since you want it from me I will tell you what is in my heart. On this campus there is no blind and there are no sighted people. We are all students of Wenchi senior high, we relate very well, there is nothing like discrimination not wanting you around. We are one family” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

Another also stated:

“We are happy to be among the sighted here. They treat us well. They escort us to anywhere on campus, even when they are doing something at that time they would tell you and rather beg you to let another

person go with you or leave whatever they are doing and take you where you want ” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1).

Another also mentioned that:

“ we are pleased with the way they treat us if I can score them 100 over 100. They take us just like we have no problem or we are okay just like them. They read for us to write and do assignments”

(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1).

Another student said:

“hahah for me, I said before that this is the best school and it still hasn't change at all. The sighted colleagues of ours are just wonderful. They do a lot of sacrifices for us. That makes us also try to help them when we get the chance. So it's fifty fifty matter” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3).

From the discussions, the students indicated that their relationship is very cordial with their colleagues to the extent that they see themselves as all students but not as blind or sighted people. They specifically indicated that they have no difficulty or reason not to stay in school because they feel welcome anywhere on campus.

Supportive behaviour of the sighted towards the blind

Concerning form of relationship that existed, the interviewees mentioned that they enjoying being in school; because of the supportive behaviour of the sighted towards them in Wenchi secondary, a behaviour they feel makes them go all out to study to become better persons in future. They also maintained if not for the inclusiveness that is being practiced in the school, they do not know how the story would have been.

These were some of the comments made by the students:

One student said :

“the way they behave towards us is very unique. You can ask anyone you meet on your and they just want to know if you are okay or you needed help or something. I relate too nicely with everyone one so they don’t change their way of behaving towards us. We are all humans’ beings you know” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 1).

Another stated this:

“I can say that because of the inclusive education that the school is practicing is the reason why we are enjoying this nice form of relationship with everyone here” (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3)

Another also stated:

“the sighted are good to us always. They read to us and do so many good things with us. I cannot imagine with without them here. See the do not discriminate against us, we live in peace. When you are sitting alone they would come and find out if all is fine, and would engage you in talking or sharing you problem”(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

Another student expressed this:

“When even teachers teach and want us to do group work, they make sure they pair us with the sighted how are ready to work with us, the spell words out and even explain the meaning to us .So the same way, when we are in class we do pay attention well so we can contribute

when you are put into groups with them.''(Verbatim expression by a student in Group 3)

One also said that:

''I only have very good relationship with the sighted. What I do enjoy is doing sport times; they involve us so we don't become idle or just sit there and be listening to them outing. They want us to also be part and take part because we are in an inclusive school'' (Verbatim expression by a student in Group 2).

It is deduced from the comments by the interviewees that, they were pleased with how they are treated and handle by people they associate with in school. Also, it could be deduced that the students with visual impairment were aware of the benefits of the system that the school is practicing and are happy about being part of it.

Concerning the behaviour of the sighted towards visually impaired students, it was revealed that some behaviours of sighted students promote inclusive education according to the comments from the participants, and makes them remain in school as well.

The analysis of the interviewee's comments indicated that the visually impaired students in Wenchi senior high were involved in every school activity including sporting activities. The finding for research question 3 indicated that the sighted students in Wenchi senior high have basic knowledge of living with the blind, hence their ability to promoting inclusiveness in the school.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discussed findings of the research at chapter four in relation to some of the literature reviewed in chapter two. The discussion sought to find out how the findings of this research contrasts or in agreement with other researches or literature reviewed in this work and the understanding the researcher wants to bring on board for readers to comprehend. The findings were discussed based on objectives of the study as in support services available for visually impaired students, nature of social interaction as well as environmental adaptation for effective practice of inclusive education in Wenchi Senior High School.

5.1 Discussion of Research Questions

The discussion focused on the research's major findings and inferences drawn from them in light of previous research findings. The research questions that were raised to guide the study guided the discussion. Data on all research questions was analyzed using thematic approach. The discussions are divided into three (3) strands based on the research questions that were posed to guide the study. They are as follows:

1. What support services are available for students with visual impairment for effective inclusive education practice in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School?
2. What environmental adaptations exist for easy mobility and socialization for students with visual impairment in the School?
3. What is the nature of social interaction that exists between the students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts at the School?

5.3 Support services available for students with visual impairment for effective inclusive education practice.

Regarding research question one (1) that focused on finding out how support services available for visually impaired students for effective inclusive education practice in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School revealed that the most important support for visually impaired students in an inclusive school is the assistance they received from the resource centers and the personnel from that outfit. These results is supported by Garguilo (2005), who indicates that, support services are offered to help individuals with special needs to benefit from the general school program or education. The result also confirmed Puri and Abraham (2004) who maintained that management of schools and teachers should make efforts to identify and attend to learners with special educational or learning needs. Which thus implies, that in teaching visually impaired students , learning resources should include; support staff (Brailist and Braille transcribers), regular and special teachers, not to mention provision of suitable furniture, classroom space and suitable teaching learning materials and time available. The current findings on support services available to students with visual impairment again confirmed their views that these support services are offered to students with visual impairment to, supplement the general academic curriculum that is being run in the inclusive schools not to mention Wenchi senior high. This is in line with Garguilo (2005), who contended that support services may involve physical assistance and further indicates that, support services are offered to help individuals with special needs to benefit from the general

In addition, the current study revealed that the students with visual impairment in Wenchi are provided with teaching and learning materials in the mode that best suit their condition in a particular situation to some extent to succeed in their inclusive

school environment. This is confirmed by Oakes and Saunders (2002), who stated that the shortage of teaching and learning materials had a negative impact on learners especially the disabled ones (in this case students with visual impairment at Wenchi senior high) with less knowledge about a subject. The current findings seem to indicate that even though the student were not provided with all the resources they need to meet their educational needs to its maximum, with the ones available to them, they succeed in their academics just as their sighted colleagues do.

However, these findings were inconsistent with the findings of Margaritoiu (2010) who maintained that teachers of inclusive school were ill prepared when they entered the professional arena, although they had sufficient subject knowledge. However, I bet to differ based on this current study, with the sense that, when there are available resources and resource rooms in every inclusive school, there would definitely be resource teachers to help others who Margaritoiu labelled as ill prepared to be on top of issues.

The current study again revealed that guidance and counseling although not a classroom subject that is taught in Wenchi Senior High just like most senior high schools helped and prepared persons or students with visual impairment to settle for academic work and thus also promotes a successful inclusiveness in Wenchi senior high. This is in consistency with Ocansey and Gyimah (2019) who study guidance and counselling for pupils with special educational need in Accra, Ghana: implications for inclusive education and came out that available school guidance services were encouraging. Their finding further averred the satisfaction of pupils with the staff's immense roles in providing them with relevant support services such as the guidance thus the pieces of advice and care they received from their teacher.

This is however in line with Csikszentmihalyi (1990) flow theory which deals with the intrinsic motivation that urges one to participate in an activity. This is to say that because the students with visual impairment receive some sorts of counselling and guidance from their resource masters, it increased their moral to go through the inclusive system with confidence.

5.4 Environment adaptations that exist for easy mobility and socialization

The results on research question two showed that the school has in place a number of adaptations in place and are still putting in place measures to promote inclusive education. Thus, provision of white cane for those who can or want to use but do not have. Training the sighted who are willing to be guides to their colleagues who are visually impaired; these result promotes the effective learning and co- existence for effective academic work .This is confirmed by Ackah and Fluckiger (2018), who maintained that, inclusive education (IE) allows both students with disability and those without disability to attend the same school, where resources are provided and adaptations made to the existing ones in schools to accommodate the individual needs of students with disability for better social relationships .

Even though some of the students have problem with some of the structures in the school environment, most of them said they are able to access some of buildings especially the classrooms, dining hall and dormitories. The only problem lies with the new buildings that are not disability friendly. Also, most of access routes are paved for easy mobility as well as socialization.

Again, the results indicated that these adaptations made the interviewees forget their status as students living with visual impairment and learn together in peace. Thus to say that adaptations that existed in the school was aimed at integrating the visually impaired into the normal school system thus the focus of inclusion.

This is however in line with the theory that supports this study that, the kind of inner feeling of satisfaction and joy a person gets is based on their interest and interaction with their immediate environment.

5.5 Nature of social of interaction that exists between students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts

Concerning research question three (3) that sought to reveal the relationship between the visually impaired and their sighted colleagues, the result showed that the interviewees were pleased with how they are treated and handle by people they associate with in school. According to the result, they averred that they (students with visual impairment) were aware of the benefits of the system that the school is practicing and are happy about being part of it. This according to them informed the school management team including the resource teachers on best practices in order to make them socially acceptable. This is confirmed by Awini (2015) who investigate the nature of social participation of pupils with visual impairments in school activities in selected regular basic schools in Ghana. His study revealed that the sighted peers of the pupils with visual impairments interacted with them, played regularly with them, had fun together, worked with them during group assignments, and were never treated harshly by their sighted peers. Awini conserved that, there was some fair level of social participation of students with visual impairments and blindness in activities in the schools. This means that when students with visual impairment are engaged effectively in the inclusive schools, they are able to participate and behave just like their sighted peers. Rockson (2014) who established that, students with visual impairment lacked the support and friendship of their sighted peers. She averred based on her study that students with visual impairments interacted and related more with their fellow peers with visual impairments than with their sighted peers.

Concerning the behaviour of the sighted towards visually impaired students, it came out that some behaviours of sighted students promote inclusive education, and makes students with visual impairment remain in school as well. The result again indicated that the visually impaired student in Wenchi senior high were involved in every school activity including sporting activities. This is in line with similar study conducted in the United States by George and Duquette (2006) who explored the psychosocial experiences of a student with low vision. The study results were that the psychosocial development of students with low vision might not always be compromised by limitations or perceptions of visual impairment and that these students may not, inevitably, have difficulty with peer relations. Which implies that, although the inclusive policy is a good deal, it cannot succeed without proper implementation and good will of stakeholders of the policy? Again, the above discussion is confirmed by Hurst, Wallace and Nixon (2013) who investigated students' perspectives of highly interactive and reflective classes using exit slips for data collection. The finding revealed that students perceive social interaction in inclusive environment that created a positive working space for them in terms of improved learning, knowledge of literacy not to mentioned critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

This also is supported by the theory; in that, the holistic experience that people feel when they act with total involvement allows them wishing to go extra miles no matter the situation or obstacle ahead of them.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations made on the findings from the study, which explored inclusive education practices for visually impaired students at Wenchi Methodist senior high school, Bono Region. Three research questions were formulated from the objectives to guide the study. Focus group discussions/ interviews were conducted on sixteen (16) students with visual impairment. Data from the interviews were analysed using themes that emerged from the responses of participants.

6.1 Summary

This thesis was set out to find out inclusive education practices for visually impaired students at Wenchi Methodist senior high school, Bono Region. It comprises five chapters. Chapter one served as the introduction to the study. It presented the background to the study as well as the statement of the problem. It also spelled out the purpose, objectives and the research questions of the study. The chapter again looked at the significant, limitation and delimitation of the study. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, the following questions were addressed:

1. What support services are available for students with visual impairment for effective inclusive education practice in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School?
2. What environmental adaptations exist for easy mobility and socialization for students with visual impairment in the School?
3. What is the nature of social interaction that exists between the students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts at the School?

The questions were in the preceding discussions in chapter five.

Chapter two (2) reviewed the literature and theoretical framework relevant to the study. It first presented the theory underpinning the study and its implications for the study. The study adopts the Csikszentmihalyi (1975) theory, 'the flow theory'. The flow theory deals with the intrinsic motivation that urges one to participate in an activity. The chapter further reviewed literature related and relevant to the study under the following stands:

4. The concept of Inclusive education and support services for students with visual impairment in an inclusive setting.
5. Adaptation for effective inclusive education.
6. Social interaction for students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts.

The Third Chapter presented the methodology of the research. It discussed the approach and design, the population size, the sample size and the techniques and the instrument used in this study. The chapter finally discussed data collection processes and analysis procedures used.

Chapter four and five presented discussions of results and findings from the study. Its analysis reflected on the themes that emerged from the interview data collected based on the themes of the research questions.

Finally, chapter six presented a summary of the thesis and its findings. It gave the conclusion and recommendations made on the findings from the research which explored inclusive education practices for students with visual impairment at Wenchi Methodist senior high school, Bono Region.

To achieve the aim of the study, three research questions were formulated from the objectives to guide the study. Focus group discussions/ interviews were conducted on sixteen (16) students with visual impairment. Data from the interviews were analysed using themes that emerged from the responses of the participants.

6.2 Summary of findings

6.2.1 Support services available for students with visual impairment for effective inclusive education practice

The study came out that, the students with visual impairment in Wenchi senior high receive assistance from the resource center and the personnel from that outfit. The finding again indicates that even though the student were not provided with all the resources they need to meet their educational needs to its maximum, with the ones available to them, they succeed in their academic work, just as their sighted colleagues do. According to the finding, guidance and counselling services offered to students with visual impairment to some extent in Wenchi Senior High which helped and prepared them to settle for academic work and thus promotes their successful inclusion in Wenchi Senior High.

6.2.2 Environment adaptations that exist for easy mobility and socialization

The results of the study indicated that, the school has in place a number of adaptations in place and are still putting in place measures to promote inclusive education.

6.2.3 Nature of social interaction that exists between students with visual impairment and their sighted counterparts

The finding reveals that there is a cordial relationship between students with visual impairment and the entire school community which support their retention and academic success. The results of the study discovered however that, the students have

to depend on their sighted colleagues sometimes which do not allow them to do some basic things that they can do on their own.

6.3 Conclusion

While there may be other factors that account for effective inclusion of students with visual impairment in inclusive schools, this study found that, the most important condition or inclusion practice is identifying and addressing student needs through assistance in an institutional form such as resource rooms and center, which according to the study ,provides supports or assistance to the students in the form or way that best suit their individual needs for them to succeed in their academic environment.

However, the study again revealed that proper environmental adaptations both in and outside the classroom bridge the divide between the students with visual impairment and obstacles created by their social status, beliefs and misconceptions on their condition.

In addition, the study has it that,developing positive relation with peers is of another great importance as it promotes equal status of all students and serves as a value in developing student's confidence to strive in any given environment.

Again,creating an environment within which students with visual impairment interact meaningfully with others (both blind and sighted)in Wenchi senior high is also responsible for positive inclusion of the visually impaired students in the school over the period according to the study's finding.

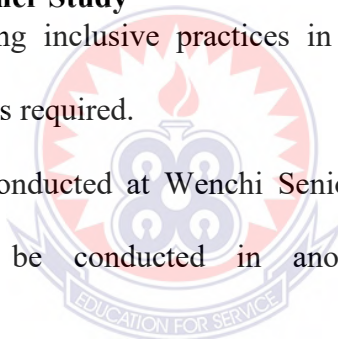
6.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, from the study, following recommendations are made:

1. The Ghana Education Service through the municipal education directorates should equip the Resource Rooms with the requisite support services to address student's academic and social needs.
2. Management of the school and the Parents Association should speed up with putting in place all the needed adaptations to maintain retention of students with visual impairment in the school.
3. Friendship is a voluntary and rewarding relationship. The management of the Schools should organize more regular-group counselling sessions for all students to overcome the difficulties and interpersonal tension that comes with friendship and to ensure peaceful coexistence.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Study

1. A study comparing inclusive practices in Wenchi senior high with other inclusive schools is required.
2. This study was conducted at Wenchi Senior High School; similar research therefore could be conducted in another inclusive school setting.



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APPENDIX A
Interview Guide for Visually Impaired Students

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

This semi structured group discussion /interview guide is to help explore inclusive education practices for visually impaired students in Wenchi Senior High School in the Bono Region of Ghana.

1. What Support services are available for visually impaired students for effective inclusive education practice in Wenchi Methodist Senior High?
 - a. Please can tell me some of the Support services are available for you as a student of Wenchi Methodist Senior High School?

Prompts

How do you get your assignment and class works ready for your teachers?

Who assists you in reading out the questions? And how easy or difficult is it for you?

Elaborate your answer further.

How do you get the needed help or assistance you required?

How easy or difficult is it for you getting you assignments done?

2. What environmental adaptations exists for easy mobility and socialization for visually impaired students in Wenchi Methodist Senior High ?.
 - a. Can you comment on environmental adaptations that exist for easy mobility and socialization for visually impaired students in Wenchi Methodist Senior High School?

Prompts

Has your mobility affected your involvement in cooperative activities and general movement in school?

How has it affected your academic performance? Explain.

Do you feel safe walking without a guide?

How would you describe the school compound in terms of mobility and orientation?

3. What is the nature of friendship existing between visually impaired students and their sighted counterparts at Wenchi Senior High School?

1. Please can you tell me the kind of friendship you have with sighted/visually impaired students at Wenchi Senior High School?

Prompts

What challenges do you face in the acquisition of social skills?

3. What types of friendship exists between the visually impaired students and their sighted counterparts at Wenchi Methodist Senior High?

a. How challenging is it for making and keeping friends?

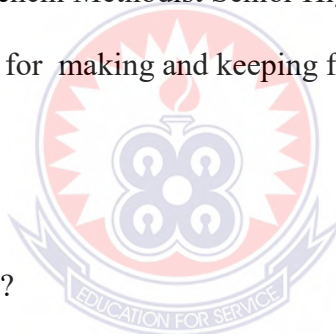
Prompts

How do you make friends?

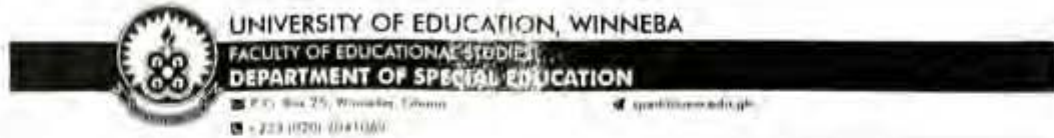
Who initiates it? And how easy or difficult is it for you?

Do feel at home working with the sighted?

Describe the process and elaborate your answer further.



APPENDIX B



11th May, 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR. MARTIN AGBEMEHIA


I write to introduce to you, **Mr. Martin Agbemehia** an M.Phil. Student of the Department of Special Education with index number 202114320.

He is currently working on his thesis on the topic: **"Inclusive Education Practices for Visually Impaired Students at Wenchi Methodist Senior High School Bono Region"**. He needs to conduct interviews in your school.

I should be grateful if you could give him the needed assistance to enable him collect the data.

Thank you for the consideration and assistance.

Yours faithfully,


DR. YAW NYADU OFFEI
(Ag. Head of Department)

