

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF PUPILS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

AT BECHEM DEMONSTRATION BASIC SCHOOL, BRONG

AHAFO



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AT BECHEM DEMONSTRATION BASIC SCHOOL, BRONG
AHAFO**



**A Dissertation in the Department of SPECIAL EDUCATION, Faculty of
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
University of Education, Winneba, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the MASTER OF EDUCATION
(Special Education) degree**

DECEMBER, 2013

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

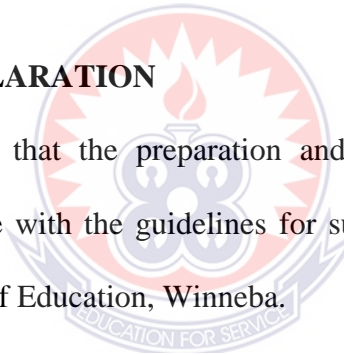
I, Charles Osei-Bonsu, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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



NAME OF SUPERVISOR: **DR. MARK ANTHONY OCLOO**

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Through this study, I have acquired a lot of positive experiences and I have learnt a lot of things from the field. The writing process has also been a development process for me. I therefore wish to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor, late Dr. Mark Anthony Ocloo for his constructive guidance and also for inspiring me throughout the planning and implementation of this dissertation. May God richly bless him.

This study would not have been successful without participation and cooperation of the head teacher, the teachers and pupils of Bechem Demonstration Basic Primary School, and for this I say thank you. I also want to thank my close friend Mr. Awini Adam for his impressive guidance and contributions throughout this work. The same thanks also go to my dear mother Madam Margaret Boadi for raising me up. I finally dedicate this work to my loving wife Priscilla Osei-Bonsu, my children Edward Osei-Bonsu, Kezia Osei-Bonsu, Nicholas Osei-Bonsu and Anna Osei-Bonsu. I thank you very much for your support and for waiting for me.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all persons with special needs, specifically pupils with visual impairments.



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ABSTRACT

The case study research design was used to guide the study. The sample size for the study was 21. Purposeful and random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. Observations and interviews were used to collect data for the study. The data were analyzed using frequency counts involving simple percentages presented on Microsoft excel worksheet and content analysis technique using themes and data from respondents. The results revealed that pupils with visual impairment showed rare social interaction relationships with peers without visual impairment both inside and outside of the classroom. Pupils with visual impairment were less preferred in mixed activities interactions with group peers without blindness. Pupils without visual impairment avoided participation in activities that were likely to result in social interaction and facilitate friendship that take place frequently with the pupils with visual impairment and as a result made them experienced greater levels of loneliness, isolation and inter-personal conflict. Pupils without blindness also demonstrated similar rare social inter-personal conflict with their peers with blindness. It was recommended that pupils with visually impaired, teachers, parents and other providers of care, need information on how to interpret behavioural cues and recognize the children's attempts to interact. Finally, it was recommended that social skills intervention should be implemented by teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Inclusive Education takes the Education for All (EFA) agenda forward by finding ways of enabling schools to serve all children in their communities as part of an inclusive education system. A premium is placed upon full participation by pupils with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil and educational rights. Inclusive schools no longer distinguish between general education and special education programmes; instead, the school is restructured so that all students learn together.

The 1983 World Programme of Action concerning pupils with disabilities states under Article 120 that all pupils with disabilities should be carried out as far as possible, within the general school system. A few years later, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child acknowledged the needs of children with disabilities, and stated that these children must be guaranteed “effective access to education in a manner conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration. The notion was further asserted by the 1990 World Declaration on the Education for All, by the 1993 Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and by the 1994 UNESCO meeting.

Learners with visual impairment experience great difficulty with social interaction skills, which exclude them from the rest of the mainstream setting. Hatlen (2004) suggested that social interaction skills are as important as learning to read. It often may be the case that learners with disabling conditions, particularly those who are more visible and significant, though included in the classroom, may remain outsiders (Anderson, 2006). It is important not to overlook the importance of social

interactions as a basis for learning. Interactions with others in the learners' environment provide a basis from which the learner learns to view the world.

According to Hatlen (2004), most learners who are blind or visually impaired in inclusive education settings are socially isolated. This means that they are not socially included, which indicates that they are lonely and poorly accepted by their peers without visual impairment. Thus they face great challenges when initiating and maintaining interactions with others. The above-mentioned social aspect is an important part of inclusion to consider, and with the development of a policy towards inclusion in Ghana still in the initial stage, very little is known about the social impacts of such initiatives on learners with special education needs and their mainstream peers. The aim of inclusion is to prepare all learners to become productive members of a democratic society and to be fully part of the community in which they live, not just physically, but also spiritually, emotionally, and socially (Vayrynen, 2008).

The question following from this discussion is whether the learners with visual impairment who have been physically placed in the mainstream school are socially included. Social inclusion can have many interpretations depending on context. It may relate to socio-economic issues or, as in the case of this project to the experiences of individual or groups of children in the day to day social and educational intercourse with peers, teachers and other staff. There are a number of national initiatives to support this.

Ghana has embraced inclusive education and has started with the project to include learners with visual impairment. However, since the introduction of Inclusive Education in Ghana, some regular schools at Bechem (Tano South District) and some schools in the country, in general, have opted and implemented it. An example of the

schools that have adopted is Bechem Demonstration Basic School of pupils with visual impairment. Their inclusion comes along with social challenges that may affect their participation in the school. Among some of the problems that seem to exist is that pupils with visual impairment often appear neglected, teased, and isolated by their regular class peers and their teachers. It is therefore against this background that the researcher sought to examine the level of social inclusion between pupils with and visual impairment at Bachem Demonstration Basic School.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The researcher, as a teacher in the school, has observed that pupils with visual impairment were often teased and ignored as compared to pupils without visual impairment that made them to be isolated, and loneliness. These have negative effect on not only their self-concept but also their school performance. Sometimes, the pupils with visual impairment appear to be more often teased and neglected by their sighted peers and teachers. Since these negative social set-backs can influence a child social and academic development, the researcher put himself in a certain perspective which demands in-depth investigation of the level of interaction between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairment at Bachem Demonstration Basic School.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the social inclusion between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers at Bechem Demonstration Basic School.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to address the following objectives:

- describe the patterns of friendship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers at Bechem Demonstration Basic School.
- examine the reasons that account for social inter-personal patterns of relationship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers at Bechem Demonstration Basic School.
- examine how the social skills of pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers influence their social inclusion at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What are the patterns of friendship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?
- What reasons account for social and inter-personal patterns of relationship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?
- How do social skills of pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers influence their social inclusion at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?

1.6 Significance of the Study

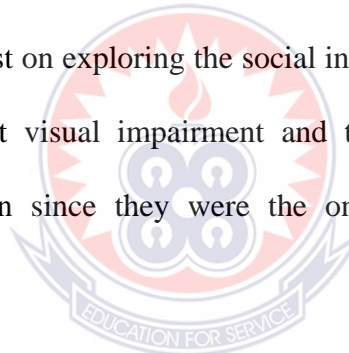
Findings from the study would reveal the patterns of friendship existing between pupils with and without visual impairment and the teachers in the school. This will inform teachers and others to encourage or promote positive patterns of relationship between pupils and teachers in the school.

The results from the study would reveal the reasons that account for socio-interpersonal patterns of relationship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers in the school. This will enable the teacher to adopt strategies that will counter such reasons or otherwise.

Finally, findings from the study will reveal how social skills of pupils with visual impairment influence their social inclusion in the school. This will enable teachers to enhance social skills.

1.7 Delimitation

Though there are many issues that affect the inclusion of pupils with visual impairment at the Bechem Demonstration Basic School, this study was however, limited to specific interest on exploring the social inclusion level existing between the pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers. The pupils with visual impairment were chosen since they were the only pupils in the school having disability.



1.8 Limitation

The study was conducted in one school and as such the findings may not be somewhat sufficient but necessary basis for generalization.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Social skills: Socially acceptable learned behaviours that enable a person to interact effectively with others and to avoid socially unacceptable responses (Microsoft Corporation, 2014). These include greetings and responses, good inter-personal relationship. Others include skills to identify and utilise resources in the community

such as knowledge of and use of such facilities like the post office, public dust bins, participating in communal labour etc.

Visually impaired: Significant functional loss of vision that cannot be corrected by medication ... Eye disorders which can lead to visual impairments can include retinal degeneration, albinism, cataracts, glaucoma, muscular problems that result in visual disturbances, corneal disorders, diabetic retinopathy, congenital disorders, and infection (Bialistock, 2005).

Social inclusion: Where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity (Hamil & Everington, 2002 in Swart, 2004).

Mainstreaming: Individuals with disabilities have a separate placement and enter the mainstream only for the activities that they can perform at the level needed to succeed (Renzaglia, Karvonen, Drasgow & Stoxen, 2003).

1.10 Organization of the Research Study

The research work has been divided into five chapters. Chapter 1: This chapter gives the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim, objectives, questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitation and review of key concepts of the study are provided. Chapter 2: A review of literature that pertains to the social inclusion of pupils with visually impaired learners in a mainstream school, related empirical studies, theoretical framework and summary of literature review. Chapter 3: The research methodology of the study is described, while the collection, analysis and verification of data related to the study are explained. Chapter 4: The chapter gives a presentation of the research findings and discussed in detail. Chapter 5: The summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviewed related literature of earlier studies conducted on social inclusion. The literature was reviewed from research articles, journals, periodicals, bulletins and books relating to social inclusion.

Under the conceptual framework, literature was organized under sub-themes drawn from the research questions. The sub-themes are:

- Patterns of friendship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers in inclusive classrooms.
- Reasons that account for social inter-personal patterns of relationship between pupils with or without visual impairment and teachers.
- Influence of social skills of pupils with blindness and their sighted peers and teachers in inclusive schools.
- Related empirical studies.
- Theoretical frame work of the study.
- Summary of literature review.

2.2 Patterns of Friendship between Pupils with and without Visual Impairment in Inclusive Classrooms

According to Valkenburg Schouten and Peter (2005), friendship is regarded as experiment with constructing and reconstructing individual social identity. Research by Pahl (2000), also states that also puts that friendship is a notoriously difficult concept to define. It is indicated in research by French (2007), that friendship varies across cultural, philosophical and historical perspectives. In considering the

ideas in the discussions of friendship particularly on pupils with visual impairment, Heslop (2005) explains that research has consistently shown people with blindness to be lonely and lacking in friendship. As Murray (2002) postulated, that geographical distance, lack of transport and absence of support to keep in touch are key factors in why sustaining friendships is difficult for people with blindness.

As Brandenburg (2004) puts, for pupils with and without visual impairment feel motivated, they need to be aware of the benefits of successful social interaction with those around them, especially those of a similar age. It is therefore important that students who have a visual impairment have as many opportunities as possible to engage in social interaction with their peers. Friendship, play an important role in this. Friends can support and affirm a sense of self. It is therefore not surprising that initiatives, such as school and environment, which attempt to create relationships of support, are increasingly being used to address social issues within the school setting (Scottish Executive, 2000). The discussion in this context of friendship has another consideration. Nakken and Pijl (2002) suggest that, for parents, a concern about promoting social relationships is often the first motive for sending students with special needs to regular schools.

Rosenblum (2000), writing about adolescents with visual impairments in the United States, observed that it is not uncommon for adolescents to have little or no contact with other age mates who have a visual impairment The isolation often felt by pupils with a visual impairment who attend mainstream schools can be ameliorated by teachers proactively bringing together age related groups, as discussed by Swart, (2004).

The Royal National Institute for Blind (2001), also highlighted bullying as an issue with three in five secondary pupils saying they had been bullied at some stage,

and with most instances of bullying taking place within the school setting (2001). Friendship can protect children from bullying to a certain degree, but this depends on the quality of the friendship and the characteristics of the friend. If the child's friend is an anxious child, this is likely to increase the risk of victimization, whereas if the child's friend sticks up for them then that reduces the risk of victimization (Dunn, 2004).

Cummins and Lau (2003) state that people with blindness consistently identify making friendships as among their most important concerns. This in line with what Landesman, Dwyer and Berkson (2004) say that there are no theoretical constructs or social behavior principles which would delineate the friendship patterns of people with blindness from those operating within the general population. This suggests that friendship is inactive.

For many years, educators have acknowledged of relationships and social interactions between young pupils with visual impairment and their peers. Concern has been expressed for the child who lacks the social competence needed to initiate and maintain satisfying, positive friendship (Roe, 2008). Generalizing this discussion to encompass a consideration of friendship in the context of disability, specifically blindness, Dunn (2004) views friendship as an important source of stimulation that impacts on both social and intellectual development. In her research she found that children with visual impairment have a different perception of a best friend to classmates with no vision problems. Russell (2003), further reports that pupils who participated in her study consistently emphasized two criteria for friends; those who did not make fun of their sighted that, pupils with visual impairment tend to struggle with the concept of best friends and did not view them in terms of frequent or routine

interaction. They were more uncertain than their sighted peers about the nature of friendship and their descriptions different.

Aristotle (2004) contends that no one would choose to live without friends. Creating an environment within which young people with visual impairment can interact meaningfully with others is pivotal to negating the poor self-concept and potential for social isolation which is often associated with being visually impaired. The discussion in this context of friendship has consideration. Several parents also felt it was important for their children to have friends and be able to socialize with peers both in and out of school. For those pupils who lived some distance away from their school, contact with school friends could be difficult (Pivik, McComas, & Flamme, 2002).

Rogers (2000) reported that young students with special needs engage in more cooperative play with typically developing peers than with classmates with special needs. The author noted that play observation only occur on one or two occasion during the school year. Heslop (2003) asserted that research has consistently shown people with blindness to be lonely and lack friends. She also cited Murray (2002), who argued in terms of geographical distance, lack of transport and absence of support to keep in touch and key factors in sustaining friendship difficult for people with blindness. According to Schmidt, and Cagran, (2008)) there is no agreed upon set of socially acknowledged criteria as to what makes a friend. Perhaps this is because even the very understanding of what friendship might be, varies across cultural, philosophical and historical perspective (French, 2007).

Friendships also create contexts in which basic social skills are acquired and extended (Dunn, 2004; Hartup, 2000). Friendships give children opportunities to care about and try to understand others and to respond to the feelings, needs and concerns

of their friends. In the early years, children experience more conflict with their friends than with peers who are not their friends. But conflict situations between friends are less hostile and friends seem more able to resolve them. Friends are more likely to use reasoning and take account of the other person's point of view or feelings.

As children become more interested in their social world, issues of 'me and you' become very important, and friendships are not only sustained and developed by shared intimacy and affection but also by shared animosity towards others (Dunn, 2004). Friendships give children opportunities to care about and try to understand others and to respond to the feelings, needs and concerns of their friends. Friendships are egalitarian; children have equal status and as those of friendships. We know, however, how much having friends contributes to children's quality of life, and how lack of friendships is a factor identified by children who feel socially excluded (Morris, 2001 cited in Buultjens & Stead, 2002).

2.2.1 Learners with visual impairments' perception of friendships

In addition, learners with visual impairment report greater levels of loneliness, isolation and interpersonal conflict at school. They rely less on peers for social support when dealing with an academic or interpersonal problem than learners without visual impairment (Heslop, 2003). Acceptance of adolescents with visual impairment by their peers without visual impairment is considered to be of primary importance to their successful integration in high school. Transition from elementary to high school is a major transition for learners with disabilities (Fisher, Pumpian, Sax, Martin, 1998).

Learners cannot really be counted as included if they do not acquire the skills they will need to participate in society and employment and/or if the skills gap between them and their peers grows too wide (Dyson, 2001). Socially competent

learners use successful strategies in dealing with conflict by avoiding events or subjects that will create it. Also, learners who are socially competent have access to a wider range of strategies to gain group entry. Successful strategies include: observing the non-verbal behaviour of the group; identifying the interests of the group; and establishing these interests as their own and behaving (non-verbally) like the group they want to be part of (Kekelis, 2004). The learner, who tries to gain entry to a group by asking direct questions or trying to direct the group's interests to those of their own, is using less successful strategies. In order to be socially competent, learners need to read situations and understand others' feelings, interests and points of view. Access to visual information is a strong advantage, as many of these behaviours are very subtle. Learners with limited vision may use other clues – such as tone of voice – to read other people's feelings, but there is a range of very subtle non-verbal behaviours and facial expressions which may be more difficult to access (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching, Eloff, 2005). Learners with disabilities are twice as likely as their peers to be bullied and most bullying takes place in settings that are not monitored by teachers (Dunn, 2004). Some factors that are often linked to learners being bullied are: being alone at playtime, having less than two good friends and Wright (in Konarska, 2005) emphasises the fact that, in the case of children with physical disability when the appearance and function of a learner's body influences his or her self-esteem, the acceptance by his peers without disability of his or her deformed body is essential to achieve self-acceptance. However, self-esteem is connected with the system of values that a learner has adopted. If the learner is able to find values that gives sense to life, then life becomes meaningful.

It is widely accepted that social-emotional development plays a crucial role in children's development, and for learners to develop and be successful in many

contexts, they require both social emotional and academic achievement. There is a forceful interaction between social-emotional and academic achievement. Improving social-emotional competences not only has a positive impact on interpersonal skills and the quality of interactions learners establish, but also on their academic achievement (Aviles, Anderson & Davila, 2006).

Friends can protect pupils with visual impairment from bullying to a certain degree, but this depends on the quality of the friendship and the characteristics of the friend. If the learner's friend is an anxious child, this is likely to increase the risk of victimization, whereas if the learner's friend sticks up for them, then that reduces the risk of victimisation (Dunn, 2004). In the case of learners with disabilities, it is necessary to include their experiences of social inclusion for their children, as the learner's opportunities and experiences are so bound up in their familial relationship (Clarke, 2006).

Learners with disabilities report greater levels of loneliness, isolation and interpersonal conflict at school. They rely less on peers for social support when dealing with an academic or interpersonal problem than learners without disabilities (Geisthardt & Munsch, 2005).

According to Antonak and Livneh (2000) full acceptance of learners with disabilities by learners without disabilities will not occur until subtle barriers can be eliminated. Antonak and Livneh agreed that one of the factors inherent in the subtle barrier is the attitudes of teachers, parents, peers and persons with disabilities themselves.

The attitudes of the general public, rehabilitation professionals and especially the "significant others" (parents, teachers, family and peers) towards an individual with a disability, become internalised within that individual (Shapiro,

2000). Schools are often responsible for the negative attitudes. They separate and label learners with disabilities, causing them to feel insignificant, worthless, and full of shame. As Shapiro (2000) stated, one's self-concept is both learned and changeable with each new experience.

Loretta (2009) stated in a workshop presented in Windhoek that schools should work with the people who wanted to gain knowledge about inclusion and leave the other people alone. She said the world should focus on the people who were willing to give inclusion a chance. Odom (2000), further explains that brief cooperative play with typical peer enhances friendship.

Learners cannot really be counted as included if they do not acquire the skills they will need to participate in society and employment and/or if the skills gap between them and their peers grows too wide (Dyson, 2001). Socially competent learners use successful strategies in dealing with conflict by avoiding events or subjects that will create it. They explain their perspective when they disagree with their peers and suggest other activities (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002) Learners who are socially competent have access to a wider range of strategies to gain group entry. Successful strategies include observing the non-verbal behaviour of the group; identifying the interests of the group; and establishing these interests as their own and behaving (non-verbally) like the group they want to be part of (Kekelis, 2004). The learner who tries to gain entry to a group by asking direct questions or trying to direct the group's interests to those of their own, is using less successful strategies. In order to be socially competent, learners need to read situations and understand others' feelings, interests and points of view. Access to visual information is a strong advantage, as many of these behaviours are very subtle. Learners with limited vision may use other clues— such as tone of voice — to read other people's feelings,

but there is a range of very subtle non-verbal behaviours and facial expressions which may be more difficult to access. Wright (in Konarska 2005) emphasises the fact that, in the case of physical disability when the appearance and function of a learner's body influence his or her self-esteem, the acceptance of his or her deformed body is essential to achieve self-acceptance. However, self-esteem is connected with the system of values that a learner has adopted. If the learner is able to find values that give sense to life, then life becomes sensible. It is widely accepted that social-emotional development plays a crucial role in children's development, and for learners to develop and be successful in many contexts, they require both social emotional and academic achievement. There is a forceful interaction between social-emotional and academic achievement. Improving social-emotional competences not only has a positive impact on interpersonal skills and the quality of interactions learners establish, but also on their academic achievement (Aviles, Anderson & Davila, 2006). Parents express the importance of friendships and belonging by at times compromising on academics to help their children become accepted and included (Engelbrecht, 2005).

Learners with disabilities are twice as likely as their peers to be bullied, and most bullying takes place in settings that are not monitored by teachers (Dunn, 2004). Some factors that are often linked to learners being bullied are: being alone at playtime, having less than two good friends and having extra help in school. Friendship can protect learners from bullying to a certain degree, but this depends on the quality of the friendship and the characteristics of the friend. If the learner's friend is an anxious child, this is likely to increase the risk of victimization, whilst if the learner's friend sticks up for them, then that reduces the risk of victimisation (Dunn, 2004). In the case of disabled learners it is necessary

to include their parents' experience of social inclusion for their children, as the learner's opportunities and experiences are so bound up in their familial relationship (Clarke, 2006).

2.2.2 Benefits of classroom social interactions and friendship

Stivers, Cropper, and Straus (2008) found that friendships will result from the classroom interactions and that these friendships will become future natural supports for the students into adulthood. When students with disabilities are in segregated classrooms, the number and types of friendships they can have are limited. However, just placing students within general education settings does not guarantee reciprocal social relationships. Research has found that, without the proper support, the benefits of social interactions and friendships are not ensured even in an inclusive classroom (Taylor, Peterson, McMurray-Schwarz, & Guillou, 2002). When included with proper supports, students with disabilities of all severities gain more meaningful friendships.

2.2.3 Visually impaired learners' perception of social inclusion

The perception of social inclusion is the learner's personal satisfaction with his/her situation with peers – whether he or she feels lonely, or expresses fulfilment in everyday school activities (Nyberg, Henricsson & Rydell, 2008). Voltz, Brazil and Ford (2001) postulated that accessing visual information is a significant advantage for developing social understanding and many learners with visual impairments (particularly those with a severe visual impairment) present difficulties in this area. Self-identity and the understanding of other people are often assumed to depend on vision. Young learners use visual behaviours like eye contact, gaze following and joint attention to set up and sustain social interaction and learn

about the behaviour and intentions of others. Rye (2007) stated that early visual behaviours and associated interactions appear to lay the foundation for developing emotionally secure attachments, developing social communication and language and achieving knowledge about self and others.

Learners with visual impairment experience obstruction to social encounters with other learners (Dale & Salt, 2008). Sacks, Lueck, Com and Erin (2003) remembered observing the isolation and emotional pain that many learner who are blind and visually impaired experienced in regular public school classrooms. These learners lacked social skills to start and carry on conversations, to play games effectively, and to join and feel part of a group.

Terpstra, and Tamura (2008), suggest that acquisition of competent social skills in a sighted environment is an ongoing process. These skills are not easily learned and must be fine-tuned throughout one's life. Although this is not true for all learners with visual impairment, it is important to recognise the challenge for many learners of acquiring the necessary skills to be socially competent in a complex environment. Learners with visual impairment experience challenges in school such as locating their friends on the playground (particularly when they are all wearing uniforms), or having to compete at the same level as other learners, despite lacking access to visual information to enable them to compare their own performance to that of their peers.

In addition, there is the challenge of trying to finish work on time to join in other activities, thus reducing the learner's opportunities to socialise or have a chat whilst waiting for the next activity (MacCuspie cited in Roe, 2008). More specific difficulties are in the domains of social interaction, language,

communication and behaviour. These include social avoidance, lack of social approach, rejection of social contact and social tactile defensiveness, anxiety during social overtures, poor communicative use of language and a weak response to communication by others (Dale & Salt, 2008). It is through interaction with others that humans learn and make sense of their world.

Again, Swart. (2005) says that learners with visual impairments relations with pupils without visual impairment are crucial to overcome some of the visual access limits they experience and to help them make associations and develop their understanding of the world. From the literature there are no easy answers on how to promote social interaction and friendships between visually impaired and pupils without visually impairment (Roe, 2008). The social experiences available through inclusion are thought to enable young learners with disabilities to be far more socially competent than their peers attending segregated special schools. Overall, mainstreaming is likely to benefit learners with disabilities (Dunn, 2004). Parents can, however, provide a facilitating atmosphere with opportunities for children to learn about themselves and others. Thus they can develop social skills, become socially competent and be socially included (Roe, 2008).

Also, to promote social interaction and inclusion, learners with visual impairments need to develop their awareness of themselves and a range of social skills through a variety of experiences. Opportunities to interact with others need to be embedded in everyday, whole-class activities and also need to be taken as and when they emerge (Roe, 2008).

2.3 Reasons that Account for Social Inter-personal Patterns of Relationship between Pupils with or without Visual Impairment in Inclusive School

Peer relations are considered as one of the most vital developmental outcomes as learners reach adolescence (Nyberg, Henricsson & Rydell, 2008). When children interact with a peer that is familiar to them, they present more co-operative play, more pretend play and more positive social interactions. For the example, Roe (2008), states that it is crucial to recognize that:

Each individual child is different and how they behave, play and develop interactions with others will depend on their own experiences, personality and understanding (p.149).

Studies have found that children who are visually impaired (that is, are blind or have low vision) do not display a full range of play behaviours and demonstrate compromised social interactions. Many attitude problems occur through human interaction in the school community. These include relations between teachers, relations between teachers and learners, between teachers and parents, and between learners themselves (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 2001).

Dupoux (2005) stated that teachers play one of the most important roles in implementing and successfully maintaining social inclusive education in schools. The reason for this is that they are in direct contact with the learners and interact closely with them on a daily basis. Lomofsky (2001) supported that teachers of learners with special educational needs have to be sensitive, not only to the particular needs of individual learners, but also to their own attitudes and feelings. Teachers need to develop a critical understanding of stereotypes and prejudices related to disability and reflect on how these have influenced their own attitudes.

In addition, they infrequently interacting with adult than with their sighted peers (Troster & Brambring, 2007). These limitations may be due to their inability to see how other children gain entry to play groups or sustain participation in group

interactions. Visually impaired student initiated and responded less frequently to interactions that were initiated by their classmates than did their sighted peers. Creating a social environment that values the positive acceptance of differences and support the cognitive, physical and social development of all students is a prerequisite for inclusion. Roe (2008) suggests that it is crucial to recognize that each individual child with blindness is different and how they behave, play and develop interactions with others will depend on their own experiences, personality and understanding.

A study by Royal National Institute for the Blind in (2001) found that the most important factors relating to what makes a good inclusive school all related to social inter-personal aspects of school life; a teacher who really listens and classmates who do not bully and tease. The role of classroom teachers is also highlighted by Swart (2005) who discusses the inclusion of children with learning disabilities and the role of the classroom teacher as orchestrating a positive social climate in the classroom by providing a model of acceptance, understanding and social support. However, many teachers may lack the skills, knowledge and confidence to take on this responsibility, for, as highlighted in the Royal National Institute for Blind report, there is the need for a better awareness and training for teachers in mainstream schools about the needs of blind and partially sighted pupils.

Another important area of social inclusion in the school is the playground. As one of the primary social spaces in school it is where many relationships are made (and lost), and for those who are blind or visually impaired negotiating this physical and social space can be very difficult. (Lewis & Collis, 1997) state that: “Positive peer relationships are crucial to feelings of belonging, self esteem, self confidence and general wellbeing; they are also complicated and complex” (p.83). Connections

between social skills, friendships and break-time activities have been shown to be linked in a number of ways (Pelligrini & Blatchford, 2000).

Moreover, The Royal National Institute for the Blind report found 29% of primary and 14% secondary pupils felt left out of break time activities (2001). Many schools with blind or visually impaired pupils have the extra support of auxiliary staff, but as many commentators and school staff are becoming aware, the social inclusion of individuals (in the classroom and in the playground) may be hampered by the very presence of these staff. As noted by Morris (2001), disabled children's experiences in both special and mainstream schools showed there were 'high levels of surveillance of disabled children by adults.'(p. 169). How then can schools promote both the academic and social inclusion of blind or visually impaired young people?

2.3.1 Social inclusion as a goal of inclusive education

According to Nyberg, Henricsson, and Rydell (2008), the basic didactic and psychological belief underlying inclusive education is that there is no difference between the educational needs of the learner with a disability and the other learners. They all have common goals, of which social inclusion is one (Rodney, 2003). Inclusive education, therefore, must be based on social education, which at the same time must be able to embrace both psychological and curricular aspects. In the inclusive school the social- psychological aspects are included as specific goals for the educational effort (Rodney, 2003).

Swart (2005), defines equality as inclusion and inequality as exclusion. Inclusion refers in its broadest sense to citizenship, to the social and political rights and obligations that all members of a society should have, not just formally, but as a certainty of their lives. It also refers to opportunities and to participation in community space. In a society where work remains central to self-esteem and

standard of living, access to work is a main content of opportunity. As Giddens makes it clear, the value of education is not simply in the access it gives to employment opportunities (Dyson, 2001).

Dyson (2001) spoke of a variety of inclusion that extends the unease with whether and where learners are educated to a concern with how fully they participate in educational processes. He mentions a notion of 'belonging' the sense that the school constitutes a community within which all learners participate.

Again, inclusive education often seems to fall short of establishing belonging in many classes. A few important issues for social inclusion must be addressed to fully understand its broadness, and that is why this study emphasises that learners should be seen as active, independent and competent subjects, not simply as subsumed within families as passive recipients of adult influence (Banks, Cogan, Deeley, Hill, Riddell, & Tisdall, 2001).

Also, Learners with disabilities are individuals who have their own diverse views and opinions and this is why listening to learners with disabilities is the only way the issue of their participation rights can become recognised (Curtin & Clarke, 2005). Llewellyn (2000) investigated the experiences of learners with physical disabilities in a mainstream school. The findings indicated that the school was not able to meet the psychological and social needs of the learners who participated in the study. Llewellyn concluded that, for these learners their mainstream education was discriminatory. Llewellyn's findings were supported by Hemmingson and Borell's (2001) study with learners with physical disabilities that found that the majority of the learners had experienced barriers to their participation in the classroom,

because of both the physical and the social environments. Honig and McCarron (2004) states that learners with disabilities placed in regular schools tended to be more socially rejected by peers, displayed more social isolation, placed more demands on teacher time, were less attentive and were more often the recipients of negative behaviour from the other able-bodied learners.

2.3.2 Social interaction context

Learners with visual impairment need opportunities to interact with a wide range of peers, including those with very good social and communication skills. All learners need to have opportunities to choose peers for some activities. It is important to provide these opportunities to learners with visual impairment, even if adults do not agree with their choice. It is necessary to understand why a child may choose a particular peer, and to extend their interests and opportunities to develop positive interaction and friendships (Roe, 2008).

2.4 Development of Social Skills of Pupils with Blindness and their Sighted Peers in Inclusive Classroom

Sacks, Kekelis and Gaylord-Ross (2003) were aware of the ‘paucity of research and practice’ in the area of developing social skills with blind and visually impaired students. As described by Chiba (1999), for many pupils with visual impairment, the development of appropriate social skills improves their chances of gaining social acceptance and succeeding in the inclusion.

The lack of ability to interpret non-verbal communication places visually impaired children at risk of developmental delays in social skills. In preschool and beyond, difficulties with non-verbal communication can lead to social isolation (Dunn, 2004). Children with visual impairment in nursery school have difficulty

interpreting other people's reactions, taking part in conversations, and expressing emotions. Researchers have found that children with visual impairment are less likely to explore, initiate spontaneous play, or imitate their caregiver's activities (Rosenblum, 2002). Many researchers have found that visually impaired children often have problems participating in free play with other children.

In contrast to their problems with free play, children with visual impairment tend to do well in structured play, such as playing games (Rosenblum, 2002). The author noted that free play can be chaotic and confusing whereas structured play is more ordered. The author added that early interventions in social and play skills usually involve a controlled environment with skill specific support and modelling. For the example, Skellenger and Hill (2000) reported that:

Adults can, however, provide a facilitating environment with opportunities for children to learn about themselves and others, to develop social skills (p. 26 (2); 152).

Buultjens and Stead (2002) asserted that a social context where the setting's practices reflect an understanding attitude that looks at the context characteristics and how it impacts on the children, rather than seeing children as having problems and difficulties, is likely to be conducive towards the development of effective inclusive practices. Raising awareness of adults across the school, and of the child's peers, needs to be part of the training provided.

2.5 Related Empirical Studies

On patterns of friendships development in inclusive schools reported that friendships are egalitarian; children have equal status and this gives them opportunities to explore and try behaviours in different ways to the interactions established with adults. When children play with familiar peers or their friends, they

present more complex play. Play constitutes a significant role in children's well-being, understanding of themselves and others, language development and conflict resolution. The shared narrative that children establish during play is crucial in helping children develop their understanding of the links between what people think or believe and how they act (Dunn, 2004). The author also stresses that it is not sufficient that these children simply interact with others; they must engage in social exchanges that maximize their social development.

Landsberg (2005) opined that the layout of a room can have an impact on the learner's opportunities to interact with others and to be as independent as possible. The author added that children need specific support in the classroom regarding the best seating, lighting and sound. Curtains in front of the windows can regulate the incoming light, and doors should be kept either open or closed, because they can be a potential safety hazard to the learners. The classroom should be managed according to the needs of learners with visual impairments (Landsberg, 2005).

According to Roe (2008), pupils with visual impairment need opportunities to interact with a wide range of peers, including those with very good social and communication skills. The author added that all learners need to have opportunities to choose peers for some activities. It is important to provide these opportunities to learners with visual impairment, even if adults do not agree with their choice. It is necessary to understand why a child may choose a particular peer, and to extend their interests and opportunities to develop positive interaction and friendships (Roe, 2008).

Furthermore, Perez-Pereira and Conti-Ramsden (1999) indicated that children with visual impairment may present with socio – cognitive difficulties. However, with the relevant experiences and a conducive learning environment, children with severe vision impairment are likely to overcome these potential difficulties. This is especially

true within the home environment, but as the child's environment becomes more complex, there are further challenges that children will need to overcome.

Again, advice from qualified teachers of children with visual impairment is crucial to plan effective provision for children with vision impairment, ensuring they have access to the curriculum and can take part in group activities. Collaborative working practices between the settings' professionals and the specialist teacher with appropriate opportunities to plan and review are needed. The focus of collaborative planning should not only be on how to ensure the child has access to the curriculum but also on how to support the child in the most inclusive way. Cooperative learning strategies can be used to promote self-esteem, social skills and positive interactions (D'Allura, 2002).

As part of everyday practice it is necessary to monitor friendships and social interaction, and to praise positive social interaction. This requires a good level of understanding and sensitivity from those supporting the learner. In a way, the teachers and parents play an important role in mediating situations to promote the learners participation and development, but often the most effective way of providing this support is in an indirect manner. The ability to stand back whilst occasionally supporting and extending the potential of an activity is an important skill for adults who know the learner well (Roe, 2008). Teachers and parents should support learners who are visually impaired and help them to accept their visual impairment (Landsberg, 2005).

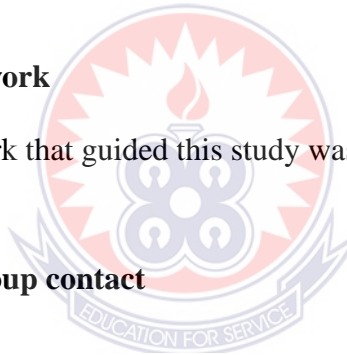
On development of social skills of pupils with blindness and their sighted peers, Newton and Wilson (2000) propose initiating a circle of friends as a way of building a community that recognises the central importance of relationships and community connections in all our lives, with an emphasis on the involvement of peers

and their relationships with the focus child. For blind and visually impaired pupils such a support network could prevent misunderstandings between individuals and groups, for as by Swart (2005) in interaction with their peers, the pupils with visual impairment have limited access to information about both their own levels of competence and that of their peers. However, it is also important that children and young people with a visual impairment have the opportunity to have contact and make friends with others with visual impairment is important that the pupils are provided adequate instruction and practice in the use of cognitive training approaches, implementation of this type of programme requires that teachers reward students for accurate evaluation of their own behaviours (Murray, 2002).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was theory of intergroup contact.

2.6.1 Theory of intergroup contact



The theoretical framework that guided this study was theory of intergroup contact. This study was framed upon Allport's (1954) Theory of Intergroup Contact. The theory predicts that social acceptance or rejection of (in this case) students with disabilities by peers without disabilities in the regular classrooms depends upon the classroom practices. There is a common belief that merely assembling diverse groups of people together facilitates acceptance of each other. However, Allport (1954) concluded that it is not so simple and that there is a formula for successful acceptance under specified conditions of contact. Allport stressed equal status within the situation where heterogeneous groups are in physical proximity to each other. Allport's formula continues to receive support across a variety of situations, groups and society (Kennedy, 2001).

Children in schools are influenced by the people with whom they associate throughout their day. The intergroup contact theory is influenced Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eloquent theoretical description of how interpersonal relationships form and change over time provides the beginning point for our consideration of how learning is impacted by the company we keep. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) noted that dyad development and the formation of friendship described how the activities in which and with whom children engage form the basis for the relationships they will establish. When children first enter into an activity, an observational dyad develops, which has a parallel quality in that children are responding to the task, listening to and observing each other, and intermittently imitating what they see. As a relationship develops, a joint activity dyad better characterizes what is occurring, with children not only playing in a similar manner but also carrying out different roles within the activities that compose their day. Lastly, Bronfenbrenner describes the primary dyad, in which there are relatively enduring affective qualities associated with how the

children perceive each other and in which Behavioural relationship now influences behaviour when the children are together and when they are apart. Research shows that ecological processes, reflecting how activities at any age can exert control over interpersonal behaviour within the evolution of acquaintanceships

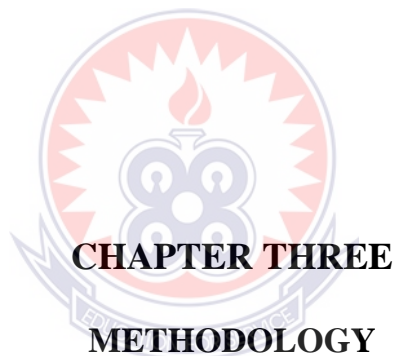
This study is guided by the intergroup contact theory to gain insight into the variables of pupils with visual impairment of social inclusion. The researcher used intergroup contact theory to pick out the variables of social inclusion on patterns of friendship, inter-personal interaction level, social support network and social skills of pupils. This study will help identify the pattern of friendship between pupils with and without visual impairment in inclusive schools in Ghana. Evidently, this type of regular social interaction is an essential determinant in successful inclusion of these pupils with visual impairment rather than their mere physical presence.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

Based on the literature review, the need for researching the social inclusion of learners with visual impairments in mainstream schools has become clear. The literature has highlighted the patterns of friendship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers, reasons that inform social inter-personal patterns of relationships of pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers, and the influence of social skills in social inclusion in inclusive education.

Social inclusion is a vital part of inclusion and that the physical presence of learners does not ensure their social inclusion. Research has reviewed that there is inadequate research on the level of interaction between pupils with and without visual impairment in inclusive classrooms in Ghana. As part of the social model of disability, there is a need for social change in which all social members – disabled and

non-disabled and teachers are to be involved. The focus of this study was to explore the levels of social interaction between pupils with and without visual impairment and perceptions of groups of pupils labelled blind to pupils without visual impairment. By listening to what the active learners with visual impairments have to say, we might make a big contribution to the future of social inclusion in Ghana.



3.1 Introduction

This research chapter describes the methods used to conduct the study. It includes the research design, population and the sample and sampling techniques, data collection procedures used. Also, validity and reliability issues, ethical consideration and data analysis procedures are discussed.

3.2 Research Design

Case study was used for the study. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) affirmed that case study investigates a single individual or a single discrete social unit such as a

family, club, social institution, community, or gaining in-depth study. Case study is a strategy for doing research that involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon with its real context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 2002) and involves an in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon. The case studies help to explain the subject's entire range of behaviour and the relationship of these behaviours to the subject's history environment. A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and meaning for those involved. This method will provide a rich and greater insight and comprehensive understanding (Maree, 2007) about the social experiences of learners with visual impairment who were placed at Bechem Demonstration Basic School which is an inclusive school. The purpose of a case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case (Norman, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This study will therefore seek to understand the unique experiences and attached meanings to social phenomena learners with visual impairment have in the inclusive school. This case study design assisted the researcher the chance to investigate the in-depth social interaction level of pupils with visual impairment at Bechem Demonstration Basic School.

3.3 Population

The population for the study consisted of all pupils and teachers of the Bechem Demonstration Basic School. The total population was about 210, but the target population consisted of 35 pupils and basic two teachers. Participants were selected because it was the only school which practice the inclusive education in the district.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for the study was 21. This included 4 pupils with visual impairment, 15 pupils without visual impairments in the classroom and 2 teachers. Among the total sample size of the study, 4 pupils with visual impairment were selected since records indicated that the 4 pupils had been fully assessed and certified by an ophthalmologist and ensured that they were the pupils with visual impairment at the classroom and also these participants fit the criteria of desirable participants for the researcher to gain insight about their perception of the social inclusion of visually impaired learners at Bechem Demonstration Basic School. 15 regular pupils in the classroom of which pupils with visual impairment were among were selected to assess their perceptions towards pupils with visual impairment as class members and two (2) class teachers who taught the pupils with visual impairment in the class.

Purposeful and random sampling techniques were used for the study. Creswell (2005) states that these sampling techniques help select people or sites that can best help to understand a phenomenon, provide useful information, learn about phenomenon and help develop detailed understanding. In these sampling the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of the typicality (Cohen, 2005). Since the aim of random sampling was to select participants to be sampled as part of the population of the research representative, random sampling technique was used in the selection of the regular pupils. The regular pupils were gathered and were asked to pick out a pencil among many pencils with inscription '1 or 2'; pupils who picked out '1' became part of the sample. Those participants fit the criteria of desirable participants for the researcher to gain insight about their perception of the social inclusion of visually impaired learners

at Bechem Demonstration Basic School. The individuals selected were commonly of those who have experienced related to the purpose of the study.

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

The tools for data collection composed of observations and interviews guide. These tools were appropriate for case study and offer a research the opportunity to gather pertinent data about the cases involved in the study.

3.5.1 Access and ethical considerations

According to Creswell (2005), seeking permission before accessing the school or site is a major consideration a researcher must take before interviewing participants or embarking on observation. This is often referred to as negotiating with the *gate keeper*. A *gate keeper*, according to Creswell (2005), is an individual who has an official or unofficial role at the site, and provides entrance to the site and also helps the researcher locates people as well as assists with the identification of places to study (Hamersley & Atkinson 1995, cited in Creswell 2005). Prior to the commencement of the study, the authorities of the school were informed, teachers and pupils to obtain appointments for the study. In the pre-visit, the researcher presented a letter containing the aim, purpose, the findings, their social consequences while living in the school and their lives in the society (see-Appendix A). The letter presented by the researcher explained why the site was selected, the guidelines for the study, how much time that is going to be spent during the study at the site and rationale for the study. To ensure anonymity, the researcher informed the participants for not write their names in the study.

The researcher further explained to the participants that the study that they were involving themselves in was voluntary and nothing could prevent them from not

involving themselves in the study. On the other hand, Reynolds (2004) affirmed that ethics refers to considerations taken to protect and respect the rights and welfare of participants and other parties associated with the activity. All parties involved including the rights of the respondents were carefully treated with care in every stage of the study. In the study, the following considerations to protect and promote the interest and the rights of the participants at the different stages were made.

In addition, a permission letter was written to the school seeking request from the class teacher and pupils of the school. The written letter assisted the researcher to obtain access to the school and also in the class, get the information from the staff, the pupils and permission from their parents (see-Appendix A).

Also, in order to ensure sanity, the researcher told the participants not to write their names to ensure anonymity and privacy of the participants. The researcher advised the participants that, since the study is a voluntarily, they can choose to participate or withdraw from any stage of the study if they choose to do so. The researcher informed the participants the purpose of the study which also explains how the findings would be reported and would be used after the study. In every session of the study, the researcher explained the study orally to the pupils and required that the informed consent letters be signed by participants.

In the data analysis, pseudonyms were used in the study by the researcher to represent the pupils' names. To avoid the use of the researcher's own findings and doubts the researcher explained exactly the same findings of the study.

3.5.2 Observations

In this study, the researcher acted as a participant observer. The degree to which participant observers are involved in their research is a decision that they must make. The level of participation includes: non participation, passive participation,

moderate participation, active participation and complete participation. It is the conviction of Woods (2000) that the primary method of ethnography is participant observation. Participant observation have two main purposes: engaging in appropriate activities and observing people, places and actions. These allow a researcher to experience the inside and outside interaction level among pupils with and without visual impairment and also assist in finding out about the types of social interactions exhibited by the pupils with visual impairment and their social interactions with teachers and their peers without visual impairment. In order to study the interaction patterns between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairment, the researcher became participant observer (inside view). In the (outside view) the researcher examined the pupils without visual impairment interactions and played his role as one of the pupils without visual impairment.

In this study, the researcher, special education teachers and regular teachers who teach in classroom where pupils with visual impairment are part were used as an observational guide to collect data and acted on a moderate level of participation.

3.5.2a Pre-observation conference

The pre-observation conference begins the process of collaboration. As in any research project, the collaborators have to discuss and agree upon the purpose of the investigation. A pre-observation conference allows participants to articulate ideas for improving items in an observation guide as well as identify the focus of the observation, determine the block of time for the observation, selection of observation method(s) (use of tape recorder or video tape) and indentify any special problems. Critical decisions were made by the researcher in the school during the pre-observation conference such decisions include:

1. When and where to observe

2. What features of the classroom to focus
3. What methods to use in collecting or record data
4. How to introduce the observers to the pupils
5. How the data will be analyzed and who will have access to the results of the study.

Each item in the observation guide was thoroughly discussed before in order to be certain whether the target behaviour has been specifically stated, whether the measurement system is adequate and whether or not sufficient sampling of the behaviour will be obtained with using the data collection procedure selected. The greater the role the observers play in making these decisions, the more valid the data collected will appear (Hoge, 2000).

3.5.2b Actual observation

Classroom and the general school environment were observed by the researcher. Observation days and times were selected because of the researcher's work scheduled and to the study site. The researcher, the teachers and pupils with visual impairment were observed the environment by moving around the school compound and sharing experiences on mobility.

Most of the observations took place on weekends and during working hours. The observation enabled the researcher to judge general classroom and playgroup evidence. Wragg (2002) stated that observation of participant's behaviour in classroom setting helped to capture differential response so as to verify indirect representation and affective orientation towards peers with disabilities. This allowed the researcher to find out the quality of interactions he has with the pupils. The classroom observations captured pupil's spontaneous expressive behaviour during

structured and unstructured activities. From observations blind children became aware of their own part in the group of children, and also that what they said or did had an impact on the other members of the group, but that there were seldom verbal exchanges of ideas between the blind child and the sighted children (Rye, 2007).

3.5.2c Post- observation conference

The post observation conference provided opportunities for both researcher and assistant to reflect on the interaction activities and for the researchers to share the data collected. The feedback focused on the strengths and potential areas for improvement and or attainment of the statements raised in the observational guide as discussed during the pre-observation conference. In response to the data, the researcher and the one assistant analyzed the results and agreed on what action to be taken after the observational data had been collected. To ensure accuracy in the observations, the researcher and the assistant reacted to the data to find out if the instrument used elicited the real picture of the interactional level of pupils with and without visual impairment. The researcher and the assistant joint work indicate the sort of questions posed and their corresponding answers in pre-observation conference.

3.5.3 Interviews with pupils

Interviews with four pupils with visual impairment and eight pupils without visual impairment in their participating classroom were conducted briefly in the three-week period during the study. All interviews with the 12 pupils who took part in this project were held in the school and all of the pupils had a record of needs. One interview was with three pupils together, one other interview was held in school. All the others were one-to-one. Every pupils, teachers and parents were asked to give

their consents for the interview, and they were asked for permission for the interview to be taped. The researcher interviewed 4 pupils with visual impairment (2 girls and 2 boys) and 8 pupils (5 boys and 3 girls) without visual impairments (see- Appendix D). The pupils with visual impairments received support from a special unit/centre located just besides their school. The researcher selected three pupils without visual impairments and interviewed them to find out the reason why they had less relationship with pupils with visual impairments.

The most important factors relating to what makes a good inclusive school relate to social inter-personal aspects of school life, and this is what mattered most to the pupils the researcher interviewed. The sessions of interview aimed at gathering a full spectrum of rich and deep understanding of the affective and evaluative meaning of the participants' perceptions that could not be accessed by the use of other research methods. The researcher conducted interviews during school hours in one of their classrooms. The semi-structured discussion format was intended to allow the young participants to engage in conversation and freely express their knowledge with blindness (Hancock, 2002).

The researcher provided detailed explanation as regard to protecting and guaranteeing their anonymity in the process of analyzing and reporting the data. The structure of the interviews included a set of pre-determined statements and questions to trigger discussions among the participants (see-Appendix D). Careful consideration was given by the researcher to the language use to ensure an active dialogue. By interviewing some of the pupils, the researcher had an opportunity to find out what promoted and inhibited the relationship and that helped to provide the researcher with the pupils' perspective of friendship within the inclusive environment. The interviews with the pupils with visual impairment were recorded by the use of audio tape.

3.5.4 Interview with classroom teacher

Interviews with the school classroom teacher took place after researcher had interviewed the pupils. Because of the wide range of responsibilities and experiences of the teacher interviewed, researcher used a topic schedule which would allow for particular experiences of working with a pupil, or general expertise regarding pupils with a visual impairment, to be fully discussed. Researcher questions included: responsibility for pupils with a visual impairment; resources and facilities available in the school; good practice to support social competency; and staff development issues. Researcher interviewed a wide range of staff (see- Appendix E). One TVI (teachers of the visually impaired) and four pupils without visual impairment were interviewed together. All other staffs were interviewed individually.

The researcher also interviewed with the one of classes teachers of the school. The interview was provided the perspective of the class teacher with respect to the friendship patterns in the classroom and the factors that influenced such relationships. The researcher conducted the interview at the conclusion of the observations in order to minimize any influence from the teacher's answers. Researcher asked for permission for the interview to be taped. The researcher used 40 minutes to complete the interview.

3.6 Validity

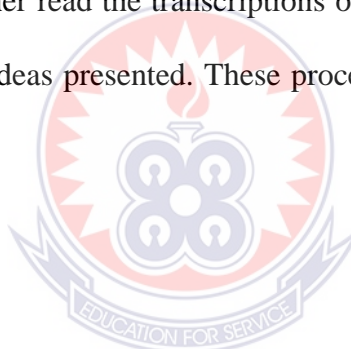
In order to ensure validity of data will be collected, the following procedures were thoroughly examined by the supervisor of the researcher and some lecturers in the Department of Special Education, UEW who were well grounded in item validation. All items in the guide were thoroughly discussed to ensure their appropriateness in measuring the desired behaviours. Some friends and pupils in the

Department of Special Education, UEW were consulted to review each item or statement in measuring the social behaviour depicted in each item.

Also, the use of data triangulation, which involved different people (teachers and students) being interviewed were used to enhance validity of the data. Finally, the interview schedules were reshaped by the supervisor and other lecturers and some friends before they were administered by the researcher.

3.7 Reliability

The transcriptions from the interviews were given back to the class teacher to cross-check the ideas presented. The teacher read through and made the necessary corrections. The researcher read the transcriptions of the pupils' interview to them to affirm or otherwise the ideas presented. These procedures enhanced the reliability of the data obtained.



3.8 Data Analysis

The researcher analysed materials by conducting a speculative analysis. Performing this step during analysis keeps the researcher's thoughts out of the data records and helps to connect the analysis to the discussion section. The observation and interview data were analyzed using frequency involving simple percentages and presented on Microsoft Excel sheet. Tables were used to aid easy and quick interpretation of the data. Content analysis technique using the themes mentioned above and data from respondents will be used to analyze the data from the interview.



DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis and discussion of findings of the study. It contains two (2) main sections; the first section deals with the data analysis and the second section presents the discussion of the findings.

4.2 Analysis of the Data

In this section, the data were analyzed to reflect on variable themes of social friendship network, social relation and social support of pupils with visual impairment

of social inclusion. These themes contain variables and were of social inclusion in inclusive school. In an attempt to find answer to the main research question, responses to each specific question were ranked. The questions were answered by using the opinions, experience and perceptions of pupils with blindness, the class teacher and pupils without visual impairment in the class.

4.2.1 Social friendship network (patterns of friendship between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairments)

Table (4.1) below highlights the level of social interactions that existed between pupils with visual impairments and their peers without visual impairment. Also, it measures the degree of relations and social integration with friends. The researcher used pseudonyms to represent the pupils involved in the study. What the researcher did was to ensure that he did not disclose identifiable information about participants and to try to protect the identity of research participants.

Pupils with visual impairment degree of social interactions with their peers without visual impairment (social friendship network).

Table 4.1: Level of performance on patterns of friendship between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairment

List of patterns of friendship	A	B	C	D	Mean	Sd
Maintain appropriate distances during interaction with peers	30%	60%	80%	40%	53%	0.22
Initiate actions which evoke appropriate responses	50%	70%	60%	80%	65%	0.13
Seek opportunities to help others	90%	80%	90%	70%	83%	0.10
Participating in typical activities	60%	90%	20%	30%	50%	0.32

with peers

Table 4.1 shows that pupils with visual impairment namely, A, B, C and D showed problems in maintaining appropriate distances during interaction with peers without visual impairment. A and D scored 30% and 40% respectively which were below average score. B obtained 60% whilst C also received 80% which showed a high score. Two of the four (4) pupils with visual impairment exhibited difficulties in maintaining appropriate distances during interaction with pupils without visual impairment in their class. However, their performance in the list of List of patterns of friendship record showed a little high performance by the pupils with a standard deviation of 0.22. It showed the variability of the social friendship performance of the pupils with blindness towards pupils without visual impairment in the class. On the part of the pupils with blindness initiate actions which evoke appropriate response, one of them – D scored 80% which showed a high scores whilst B made a progress of 70% score. A and C scored low mark of 50% and 60% respectively. A standard deviation of 0.13 score was showed. This clearly manifests their level of interactions, friendships and performance between the pupils.

In respect of seeking opportunities to help others, all the four (4) pupils with visual impairment made a high score. A scored 90%, B 80%, C 90% and D scored 70% which showed that the four (4) pupils have no difficulties in seeking opportunities to help others. The pupils responded positively in seeking to help others. A high standard deviation of 0.10 was recorded. This shows clearly on the pupils with visual impairment their level of varying performance with other pupils without visual impairment.

On the part of the pupils with blindness, participating in typical activities with peers, only B scored 90% which was a high score. A, C and D made low performance

of 60%, 20% and 30% respectively. There were variations in the performance of the four pupils with visual impairment. A high standard deviation of 0.32 was recorded and that showed how close their level of performance when it comes to participating in typical activities with peers without blindness.

The below transcriptions highlight the views of the teacher's of pupils with visual impairment in the classroom on the social friendship network.

The teacher A said:

Pupils with visual impairment are just as integrated as their peers without visual impairment in the classroom. Their disability seemed to be affecting their ability to build friendship with their peers without disabilities. Pupils with blindness are always on their own and they only mix with one another. They do not mix with the learners without visual impairment.

The teacher B also said:

Friendship patterns in the school were still that the blind went with the blind or with the learners with visual impairment and the sighted learners stayed with the sighted pupils. In the beginning it was tough for the pupils with visual impairment to cope with the pupils without visual impairment, and right now I can say that they are still not closed and they have no good relationship.

The transcription of the teacher's interview conducted explained and supported the quantitative data which was indicated earlier of pupils with visual impairment in their inclusion in the school.

In their class, pupils without visual impairment also supported the awareness of pupils with visual impairment and their social interaction.

One pupil without visual impairment said:

I feel that learners with visual impairment are present, but not socially included.

One Pupil further said:

We felt that our friendships were already present, since they have had the same class of pupils since the beginning of the year and had other classes with same pupils.

A Pupil with visual impairment said:

“We aren’t usually partners”

One pupil without visual impairment said:

“I don’t really talk to them a lot and when I do they usually go away”

The pupils without visual impairment have been sensitized on visual impairment in the school.

4.2.2 Social relation

The table (4:2) below highlights the degree of relations and social interactions level that existed between pupils with visual impairment and their peers without visual impairment.

Table 4.2: Capabilities of pupils with visual impairment in building social interpersonal patterns between pupils who are sighted and their teachers

List of Social Skills	A	B	C	D	Mean	S.D
Ability to initiate interactions	60%	40%	60%	90%	63%	0.21
Isolates themselves in a specific activities	30%	10%	40%	45%	31%	0.15

Ability to sustain friendship	20%	25%	30%	22%	24%	0.04
Ability to express interest towards peers in play activities	60%	40%	30%	20%	38%	0.17

Data from table 4.2 shows that, only D a pupil with visual impairment scored 90% in ability to initiate interactions which is high in the level of performance. A and C made 60% scored respectively which was a little above average score. B scored 40% exhibited difficulties to initiate interactions and made her become passive pupil instead of active learner. A little high standard deviation of 0.21 was recorded and showed how their varying level of performance during activities with their peers without blindness was. There were variations in their performance of the four pupils with visual impairment.

On the part of the pupils with visual impairment isolates themselves in a specific activities from pupils without visual impairment, all the four (4) pupils with visual impairment viz, A, B, C and D recorded below average score of 30%, 10%, 40% and 45% respectively. A low standard deviation of 0.15 indicates how close their level of performances in a specific activities and interacting with their peers without visual impairment. This clearly shows from the table that the four (4) pupils with blindness showed problems or difficulties when it comes to join peers in a specific activities with their degree of involvement in specific social activities.

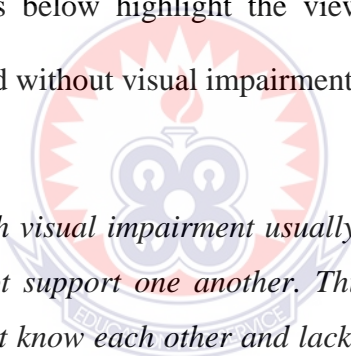
Again, in terms of pupils with visual impairment ability to sustain friendship with pupils without visual impairments and teachers, all the four (4) pupils namely, A 20%, B 25%, C 30% and D 22% recorded below average scores. Pupils exhibited difficulties in sustaining friendship seeking with peers without blindness and teachers. There was a little difference in the level of performance between the pupils. A low

standard deviation of 0.04 indicates how close their level of performance was in sustaining friendship of peers with blindness towards pupils without blindness and teachers.

Also, when it comes to the pupils with blindness express interest towards peers without blindness and teachers, all of them performed below average except A who scored 60%. B recorded 40%, C 30% and D 40%. Pupils with blindness exhibited difficulties in expressing interest. There were variations in the performance of the three pupils with visual impairment. A low standard deviation of 0.17 recorded. This shows their level of interactions and social friendship with peers without visual impairment and teachers.

The transcriptions below highlight the views of the teacher on the social relation of pupils with and without visual impairment in the classroom.

The teacher A said:



Pupils with visual impairment usually do not stay together and do not support one another. This is mainly, because they do not know each other and lack social inter-personal relationship and isolate themselves in specific activities.

The teacher B further said:

Learners with visual impairment are mostly on their own, or they do not group together. At times they will mix with their sighted peers. But it is very rare for these learners to have sight friends and to express interest towards peers in play activities.

The teacher again said:

Pupils with visual impairment keep themselves together, like during break time, they stay together. You will not see

sighted learner there sustaining friendship with the pupils with visual impairment.

The data gathered from the teacher's views showed the level of social relation of pupils with visual impairment with pupils without visual impairment.

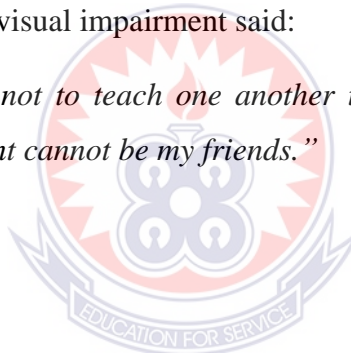
The transcriptions below show the views of pupils without visual impairment of their reactions during interaction with pupils with blindness. They share their contributions.

A peer without visual impairment said:

I never see a pupil with visual impairment outside the class. During break times they are always in their own and they only mix with one another. They do not mix with the learners without visual impairment.

Another student without visual impairment said:

“You get not to teach one another the pupils with visual impairment cannot be my friends.”



One pupil with visual impairment said:

I don't really feel socially included here at this school. Because I don't express interest towards pupils in activities. Pupils running and pushing one another here at this school and sometimes they dump into me.

4.2.3 Social support network

The table (4.3) below highlights the degree of social interactions level that existed between pupils with visual impairment and their peers without visual impairment. Pupils with visual impairment degree of social interactions with their peers without visual impairment (social support).

Table 4.3: Influence of social skills of pupils with visual impairments in social inclusion

Statement of Social Skills	A	B	C	D	Mean	S.D
Ability to initiate interaction	50%	40%	50%	10%	38%	0.19
Eager to share play materials	10%	20%	10%	10%	13%	0.05
Ability to build and sustain friendship	20%	40%	60%	20%	35%	0.19
Providing feedback during interactions	50%	16%	27%	40%	33%	0.15
Willing to participate in social activities	60%	23%	40%	30%	38%	0.16

Table 4.3 shows that 2 pupils with visual impairment namely A and C performed the same average scored of 50% and 50% respectively on the ability to intimate interaction. B recorded 40% whilst D also recorded 10%. They exhibited difficulties on sustaining intimate interactions. There were variations in their level of performance in interactions. A little low standard deviation of 0.19 recorded. This clearly manifests the low performance of all the four pupils with visual impairment inability to intimate interactions with peers without visual impairment.

Also, on the part of pupils with visual impairment eager to share play materials, all the four (4) pupils viz, A, B, C and D performed below average. They had difficulties sharing play materials. Recorded performance of 10%, 20%, 10% and 10% respectively were showed. A low standard deviation of 0.05 indicates how close their level of performance was in eager to share play materials with pupils with blindness.

Again, in ability to build and sustain friendship, three (3) pupils with visual impairment performed below average. A 20%, B 40% and D 20%. Except C who scored 60% which was above average. Pupils exhibited difficulties in building and sustaining friendship. A low standard deviation of 0.19 was recorded. There were variations in the performance of the four pupils with visual impairment. A, B and D levels of performance when it comes to building and sustaining friendships were below average. There was variability in their performance in building and sustaining friendship when it comes to interactions with pupils without visual impairment and the teachers.

Furthermore, the table showed that, when it comes to the pupils with visual impairment to provide feedback, all the three expressed difficulties except A who scored 50% which was an average performance. B, C and D scored 16%, 27% and 40% respectively. Their performance was below average. A low standard deviation of 0.15 indicates how close their level of performance was in pupils with blindness. There was low varying degree in their performance between pupils with and without visual impairment for providing feedback.

Finally, in terms of willing to participation of social activities, one pupil – A scored 60% which was above average whilst B, C and D recorded 23%, 40% and 30% scored performances respectively. All the three (3) pupils with visual impairment expressed difficulties in sustaining interactions. A low standard deviation of 0.16 was recorded which showed how the three (3) pupils degree or level of interaction with pupils without visual impairment were.

The below transcriptions highlight the views of the teacher on social support network of pupils with visual impairment in the classroom.

The teacher A said:

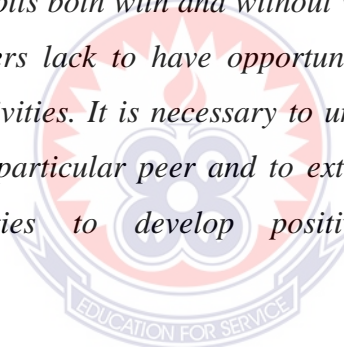
The pupils with visual impairment lack social support to start and intimate interaction, to play games effectively, and to join and feel part without visual impairment do direct them only where to sit and go.

The teacher B further said:

The acquisition of competence social support in a sighted environment is an ongoing process and these supports are not easily learned by the pupils with visual impairment must be fined-tuned throughout their lives so that they will be willing to participate in social activities.

The teacher C again said:

All the pupils both with and without visual Impairment and the teachers lack to have opportunities to participate in social activities. It is necessary to understand why a child choose a particular peer and to extend their interest and opportunities to develop positive interaction and friendship.



The teacher further acknowledged on the social support network on the part of the pupils with visual impairment as awkward by the other peers. He further said that, the functional content of relationships is awkward in social support network between pupils with and without visual impairment in the inclusive classroom. The functional measures of social support assess the functions that a relationship or network serve.

On the pupils without visual impairment, they react, to social support network with pupils with visual impairment in interaction.

One pupil without visual impairment said that:

They have no social interactions and sustaining friendship inside and but few outside of the classroom with the peers with visual impairment and teachers.

Another pupil without visual impairment also said that:

Sharing play materials and participating of social activities like storytelling, playing etc. are what I don't want to do with the pupils with visual impairment.

One pupil with visual impairment said:

I have the idea that we receive inadequate support. I can confidently say that, we satisfied with support.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

This section provides the discussion of the findings of the study. The section provides a discussion of the questions that originally drove the study. These questions that were raised to guide the study have been addressed. They include:

- What are the patterns of friendship between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairment at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?
- What reasons account for social inter-personal patterns of relationship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?
- How do social skills of pupils with blindness influence their social interaction at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?

4.3.1 Research question 1

What are the patterns of friendship between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairment at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?

The data from table 4.1 and the analysis show that, friendship patterns in the school were still that the blind went with the blind or with the learners with visual impairment and the sighted learners stayed with the sighted learners. They did not see one another as enemies, but they were not familiar with each other and chose to stay like this. For example, one pupil without visual impairment in an interview on social friendship network of pupils with visual impairment said pupils, without visual impairment, *“don’t really talk to pupils with blindness a lot and when they do they usually go away”*.

The class teacher in an interview on the social relation of pupils with blindness showed pupils without visual impairment that, it is very rare for these learners without visual impairment to have friends with learners with visual impairment. This is because these sighted peers have their nature of friendship and their description different. The observation of the data from the analysis on the social relation of pupils with visual impairment showed consistency of pupils with blindness to be lonely and lack in friends. Cooperative play and social conversation were considered of low demand on the part of pupils without visual impairment and because of that they could not make friends with the peers with blindness to sustain interaction.

Again, it is apparent that pupils with visual impairment have less preferred in mix activities interactions with group peers without disability. Pupils with blindness are always on their own and they only mix with one another. They do not mix with the learners without visual impairment. Pupils with visual impairment were in variation in intimated interaction which assesses social function that relationships serve. These pupils with visual impairment always left behind when working in groups, which were also noted during observations. Another observation was the pupils only dislike group work when they were paired with pupils they did not like, in

view of that influencing the pattern of friendships existing between them and their peers without disability (Roe, 2008). This study showed that the pupils without visual impairment have no access to and participate in activities that are likely to result in social interaction and facilitate friendship that take place frequently. Joining a group where members interact regularly, such as playing cards, is much more likely to result in the development of social friendship. Lack of these qualities which are unknown to the pupils with visual impairment, find it very difficult for the pupils without blindness to develop friendship and interaction with the pupils with visual impairment.

4.3.2 Research questions 2

What reasons account for social inter-personal patterns of relationship (social relation) between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?

Data from table 4.2 show clearly that pupils with visual impairment were not as capable as regular class peers in initiating and sustaining appropriate social inter-personal relationships in the classroom. For instance, the result of the social relation in the previous data analysis revealed that pupils with visual impairment did not join peers without visual impairment in a specific activity in the classroom. For example, 4% of pupils without visual impairment involved or joined peers with blindness in group reading and discussions in class, while 24% of pupils allowed pupils with visual impairment to join them in singing outside classroom. This showed that few pupils without blindness received their peers with blindness in peers' activities outside classroom instead of inside the classroom.

The teacher in his interview confirmed that:’ *“learners without visual impairment were mostly not mixed with their peers without blindness in their own*

classroom". The observations of social inter-personal relations between learners with visual impairment and their learners without visual impairment agree with the interview findings namely that the learners with visual impairment usually were not stuck together. The learners with blindness and learners without blindness could not express interest towards each other. On the days of observation the learners with blindness and without blindness and teachers were not sat together. The learners with visual impairment did not stay together and not mixed with one another. They had no conversations and had no fun. They were shy around one another. From the analysis, the researcher noticed that *"pupils who participated in group conversation and social play activities had an increased level of social relation"* as measured by the social relation performance. The pupils with visual impairment studied exhibited fairly diverse relationships, including pupils without visual impairment and teachers.

Observations of social, play and general feelings in group activities were not showed in the class during the free periods. Observations were made of all children so the researcher could readily identify each child in the group during the observation sessions. The previous section revealed low preference of pupils with visual impairment by their peers without blindness because of negative attitudes towards each other (rating of 20%, 25%, 30% and 22%) showed their relation and social interaction level in group activities.

4.3.3 Research question 3

How do social skills of pupils with blindness influence their social inclusion at Bechem Demonstration Basic School?

The data from table 4.3 and the analysis show that, the transcriptions from the teacher's interview on the social support network of pupils with blindness revealed

that, many pupils with visual impairment were not as capable as regular class peers initiating and sustaining appropriate social interaction. This was in line with what Rye (2007) said in his book that learning is a social event in which social skills plays an important role. For example, the teacher of pupils with and without the visual impairment said that, “the *pupils with visual impairment lack social skills to start and intimate interaction, to play games effectively, and to join and feel part with pupils without visual impairment do direct them only where to sit and go*”. The finding is consistent with Johnson (2001) found that students with learning disabilities lacking mutual understanding of two or more persons towards each other to share and interchange interests; or information by using different systems of social communication. Pupils with visual impairment failed to develop appropriate social skills because they had fewer friends and were rated significantly lower in social interaction status than their peers without visual impairment.

Also, it revealed from the analysis of data in the previous section that, the acquisition and maintenance of socially appropriate behaviour is mediated by vision for individuals with sight. Pupils with visual impairment however, are unable to acquire social skills and behaviours through incidental learning as sighted children typically do. For instance, from the data analysis in the previous section, A, B, C and D who are pupils with visual impairment have low preference in eager to share tasks with pupils without visual impairment. For example, all the four pupils scored low marks in their preferences (10%, 20%, 10% and 10% respectively marks). Low preference coupled with negative attitudes towards pupils with blindness adversely affected peers with blindness’ relationship with peers who did not manifest visual impairment.

Besides, the lack of ability to interpret non-verbal communication places pupils with visually impairment at risk of developmental delays in social skills. In preschool and beyond, difficulties with non-verbal communication can lead to social isolation (Dunn, 2004). This revelation explained that those few pupils without blindness, who even have acquired social skills; ill accepted peers with visual impairment, were neglected during social skills activities.

During the transcriptions of the teacher's interview on the social friendship network and social relation of pupils with visual impairment showed that pupils with visual impairment were ignored and socially isolated. The teacher in his interview further stated that pupils' visual impairment were ignored and isolated from peers in social activities. This was supported with Weisel (2001) suggestion that students with blindness had encountered negative perceptions held by their peers without disability, experienced isolation, and loneliness, and had failed to establish close relationships with their peers without disability. This was consistent with Jones and Chiba's (2002) view that students with blindness were ignored and or rejected by their classmates more than were other groups of students with disability.

Children with visual impairment in nursery school have difficulty interpreting other people's reactions, taking part in conversations, and expressing emotions (Dunn, 2004). Researchers have found that pupils with visual impairment are less likely to explore, initiate spontaneous play, or imitate their caregiver's activities (Rye, 2007). Many researchers have found that visually impaired children often have problems participating in free play with other children. While sighted children spend most of their time interacting with others, pupils with visual impairment spend about half their time in solitary play.

From the analysis of the data in the previous section, it showed clearly that pupils with visual impairment in the social friendship network and social relation in a comparison of means on each of the ratings focused children and typically developing children indicated that, as a group, focus children were rated as less likely to engage in social skill activities than typically developing children. This was revealed that visually impaired children often had problems participating in free play with other children. This finding also revealed that while sighted children spend most of their time interacting with others, children with blindness spend about half their time in solitary play. This was consistent with (Wragg, 2002) findings that students with visual impairment are also more interacting with adults than their peers without blindness.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides summary of major findings of the research, concluding remarks on the main findings, make recommendations and suggestions for further research. The aim of this study was to examine the social interaction between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairment in an inclusive classroom. Observations and interviews were the methods used to gather data for the

study. The focus of the study was patterns of friendship between pupils with and without visual impairment and teachers.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

The major findings are summed up as following:

On the patterns of friendship between pupils with and without pupils without visual impairment, and teachers, the study showed clearly that, pupils with visual impairment were not friends with their peers without visual impairment and teachers and their social interactions levels with them (peers) were very minimal. Again, the pupils with blindness were mostly on their own, or they grouped together. At times, they would mix with their sighted peers in their own class group. But it is very rare for these learners to have sighted friends.

In terms of the reasons that accounted for social inter-personal patterns of relationship between pupils with and without visual impairment, the study showed clearly that, pupils with visual impairment in the class did not display a full range of social skills and or play behaviours and that compromised their social inclusion.

On how social skills of pupils with blindness influenced their social inclusion in the inclusive classroom, the study revealed that pupils with visual impairment were unable to exhibit social skills and behaviours that could influence their social inclusion.

5.3 Conclusion

In the first place, it showed from the study that the patterns of friendship between pupils with and without visual impairment and their teachers were that of unfriendliness and their social interactions levels with them were very minimal. Again, the pupils with blindness were mostly on their own, or they grouped together.

This also affected their inter-personal relationships. They were sometimes teased and ignored from a lot of activities and because of that learners with visual impairment struggled to make friends with sighted peers. The study revealed that pupils with visual impairment were unable to exhibit social skills and behaviours that could influence their social inclusion.

5.4 Recommendations

The researcher makes the following recommendations based on the findings from the study:

- The development of social competence must be a priority for children who are visually impaired by teachers. Children's play behaviours and social interactions should be assessed, by teachers and a structured plan of social skills intervention should be provided by teachers.
- Professionals in the field must identify strategies that work and provide consistent, long-term support to children with visual impairments.
- It is important that social skills intervention be implemented by teachers as early as possible before atypical patterns develop.
- Teachers, parents and other providers of care, and peers need information on how to interpret behavioural cues and recognize the children's attempts to interact with their school peers.
- Provide visually impaired children with a repertoire of social skills that facilitate their entry into social groups and to prepare them to sustain interactions. These skills should be introduced by teachers in the early preschool years and as soon as new groups of children are established with a

continued emphasis on more developed entry skills as children become more closely acquainted.

- Professionals and educators must remain sensitive to the social challenges of children who are visually impaired in inclusive school.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Further research should be conducted to examine ways of maximising social inclusion for pupils without visual impairment in mainstream schools in inclusive classrooms.



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APPENDIX A



DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA (UEW)

July 17, 2013

The Head
Bechem Demonstration Basic School
Bechem, Brong Ahafo

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

I write to introduce to you Charles Osei-Bonsu an M.ED student at the Department of Special Education of the University of Education, Winneba.

He is currently working on his thesis: **“Social Inclusion of pupils with visual impairment at Bechem Demonstration Basic School, Brong Ahafo”**.

He would need your assistance to access data from your schools.

I should be grateful if you could give his the needed attention to enable him carry out his study.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,


SAMUEL K. HAYFORD (PhD)
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX B

University of Education, Winneba
Department of Special Education
P. O. Box 25,
Winneba-Central Region

20th November, 2013.

Dear Sir,

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

I am a student at the University of Education, Winneba pursuing a Master's degree course in Special Education. I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to you for your patient in connection with smooth data collection for my research of which your school participated and made it a reality. The focus of my research geared towards Social Inclusion of pupils with visual impairment at Bechem Demonstration Basic School.

I would therefore wish to thank the head teacher, teachers and all the pupils in the school who participated for their great effort they exhibited during my research in the school. I would never forget about all these efforts.

God bless you and I wish you a successful academic year.

Yours faithfully,

OSEI-BONSU CHARLES

APPENDIX C

**CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVING PUPILS WITH BLINDNESS' LEVEL
OF SOCIAL INTERACTION IN THE CLASSROOM**

No	Items	Yes	No
1	Maintain appropriate distances during interaction with peers		
2	Initiate actions which evoke appropriate responses		
3	Seek opportunities to help others		
4	Participating in typical activities with peers		
5	Leads in peer activities		
6	Joins peers in a specific activities		
7	Seeking behaviours of peers		
8	Express fun towards peers		
9	Ability to intimate interaction		
10	Eager to share tasks		
11	Offering advice and guidance		
12	Providing feedback		
13	Participation of social activities		

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PUPILS (SEMI-STRUCTURED SCHEDULES)

1. Are you lonely or you make friends with pupils with visual impairment at school?
2. Do you have a lot of blind friends? What prompted you to make friends with them?
3. Do you participate in the inter-personal activities in school? Would you like to?
4. Are you nervous around certain friends or teacher?



APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER (SEMI-STRUCTURED SCHEDULES)

1. How do you facilitate interaction between pupils with visual impairment and pupils without visual impairment in the class activities?
2. How can you describe pupils with visual impairment in relation to:
 - (a) social friendship in class activities
 - (b) social relation with others in the classroom
 - (c) social support during class-activities participation
3. What kind of support do you give to the visually impaired pupils in the classroom situation in relation to social activities?
4. Are you satisfied with the friendship support in the class?

