

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CHALLENGES FACING TRANSITIONAL VOCATIONAL PLACEMENT
AND TRAINING OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENETS AT
AKROPONG SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND IN THE AKUAPEM – NORTH
DISTRICT

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Bernard Ofei Tetteh

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Rev. K. Arko - Boham

ABSTRACT

The major objective of this study was to find out the challenges facing the transitional vocational placement and training of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the Blind in the Akuapem – North District of the Eastern Region. Descriptive research design was used for the study. One hundred and fifteen (115) students were selected using simple random sampling technique. All the forty- five (45) teachers of the school were purposively chosen and twenty (20) parents were accidentally selected.

The views of teacher respondents were sampled through the use of questionnaire while those for parents were obtained through interview. Views of students were sampled by the use of questionnaire and interview. Observation of equipment and or materials, activities performed by students, and classroom environment were also made by the researcher.

The major findings which adversely affect transitional vocational placement and training at Akropong School for the Blind were lack of teaching and learning materials, and lack of assessment of students for multiple handicapped conditions. Again, it was found out that, some teachers and some students look mean on students given vocational placement and also students were not giving on the job vocational training in the school.

Based on the findings, it was recommended that, teachers should liaise with parents to help provide teaching and learning materials to promote teaching and learning of vocational courses in at Akropong School for the Blind.

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DEDICATION

To my wife Gloria, and my children; Ishmael, Bernard Jnr., Esther, and
Babeth.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Events in history clearly showed that, handicapped persons, or persons with disabilities were badly treated. The negative attitude towards handicapped persons stemmed largely from beliefs and superstitions and, or cultural prejudices of society that considered disabled individuals as not worthy of living. Mawutor (1997) commented that the militarised states of ancient Greek city states for instance would never compromise infirmity and weakness.

Atta, Donani, Dovi, Essel, Gadagbui, Hayford, Ocloo, and Opong (2001) stated that:

Life during ancient times was basically a struggle for existence. It was more of a jungle life where only the fittest survived at the expense of the weakest. The handicapped, who because they were not offered any training and so could not contribute to the development of their societies, were seen as social misfits, and economic liabilities. As unwanted burdens, each society in that era devised schemes for containing the handicapped. Such schemes were basically harsh

treatment that mostly ended in the death of the
handicapped individual (p.40).

This could mean that, the ancient Greek probably believed in an all-round person with a sound mind, body, and soul, so that, any individual born with any deformity, be it physical or sensory was not given a place in society, to live as a human being.

Attah et al (2001) commented, it was seen as a “taboo” for any Greek to have a handicapped child and that all such handicapped individuals were sacrificed to appease the gods. This then presupposes that any child born with any disability or impairment of body functions was eliminated from the world of the living. The Spartans for example ruled that, all children with handicapping conditions were to be eliminated promptly either abandoned to die or sacrificed during festive occasions (Attah et al 2001).

The story of these inhuman treatments meted out to persons with disabilities was not that different in the case of the Athenians. The Athenians left such children to die in hostile weather, or actually killed them if they were adults. In like manner, the Romans initially applied similar harsh and cruel treatment to the disabled. Mark, Samuel, Wilson, Grace, Mawutor, Comfort, Alexander, and Joseph (2001), noted, Roman children who were found with defects, either physical or otherwise, were left at the base of statues to be devoured by wild dogs and beasts.

Disability or impairments which people suffer in life (that is, congenital disability or adventitious disability) are not limited to any group of people, or a particular continent in the world. As a result, in assessing the situation, in terms of treatment of handicapped children in African societies,

Mawutor (1997, p.1) submitted that, “in many African societies, such individuals were treated with a lot of contempt, maltreated and, in isolated cases, killed outright”. He further noted that, they were thrown into rivers, mutilated and even left in the open to die; in some cases, African societies of course worshipped the handicapped as divinities. For instance, among some Ewes and Fons, the hydrocephaly was thought to be a manifestation of “Tokosu” that is, a punishment from the gods for a wrong done and that maltreatment could result in another form of punishment and therefore were-over pampered.

The pre-Christian era was indeed marked by such attitudes as mentioned above, because persons with disabilities were not regarded as humans that deserved to be treated as “normal” human beings. They were not seen to have any feeling as the nondisabled in society. However, during the Christian and medieval times, society began to realize the influence of Christianity and missionary factor. Generally, Christianity symbolised hope, love, and care for one another irrespective of race, creed or religion, social standing, and developmental status. The evolution of Christianity has paved the way for a new dawn of life to persons with disability which hitherto was disheartening. Christianity and missionary work has appealed to the conscience of man and gradually, killing, persecution, and ostracisation began to give way to protection and compassion.

Mawutor (1997) submitted that, in line with this, there is new dawn of life to the disabled in society, asylums began to spring up to protect handicapped persons. Even though the protection and compassion for these individuals was not the best, to some extent, society saw reason to accept and

treat persons with disabilities or handicapped with some compassion. In the early days, the Christian churches did not only provide asylums for the handicapped but also monasteries to protect them from harsh treatment. With the passage of time, such provisions were modified into training facilities to help train them. The Christian churches increased their contributions towards the provision of facilities and opportunities for the handicapped. The essence of providing facilities to train the handicapped was to make individuals with handicapped conditions to be able to live an independent life rather than dependent life.

The contribution of the Christian churches and the activities of philanthropists marked the beginning of educating and training the disabled in society. Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1876) initiated the education of the blind and the visually impaired in the 1800's and established the Perkins Institute for the blind, and later turned it to the education of the mentally retarded and by 1848 established the first public institution for training mentally retarded children (Attah et al, 2001). They further submitted, in the 1700's Rousseau in France advocated vocational training for the handicapped to enable them live useful lives. This means then that, society has realized that, when the disabled were educated and, or trained, they would be able to support themselves and live meaningful lives, and contribute to the development of society as a whole.

Today, due to the efforts particularly of the United Nations and of Core groups all over the world and the initiative of some countries, disability including the blind and the visually impaired are no longer seen purely as a medical issue, neither is the focus on the social or welfare aspects of disability requiring a benevolent response, but disability issues are now considered to be

human right issues. The United States has been a front runner in the world in encouraging this shift in focus, and with Disability Act signed in July, 1990, America is a key example of civil rights legislation for disabled persons (Ocloo, 2000). This Act has been very effective in replacing the focus on disability issues from welfare to civil rights. These human right issues included the right to life, the right to education, the right to be trained in employable skills, and to be employed, the right to vote and be voted for, and the right of not being discriminated against in any human setting.

These examples in terms of the provision of fair treatment to the disabled were not short lived. As a result, different categories of individuals with handicapped conditions of which the blind are no exception are receiving education and training in the world over.

Ghana is one of the many countries in the world providing education for the handicapped in society. The education of the disabled in Ghana started with the education of the blind in 1936. In Ghana however, Ocloo (2000) commented that the blind were seen as liabilities in their families and their communities. This in effect meant that little or no provisions were made for their balanced development. He further said, prior to the provision of education for the handicapped and for that matter the blind, most of these unfortunate individuals were killed, over-protected, mis-diagnosed and under-educated such that they led a life that was segregated and debased. The neglect and the inhuman treatment were probably due to the fact that, society was ignorant about the potentials of disabled persons.

Formal education in Ghana was generally started by the missionaries and the first schools for the disables were established through the benevolence

of the missionaries. The Akropong School for the Blind and the visually impaired was the first to be established in Ghana in 1945. The Ghanaian populace, parents and guardians of blind persons have come to understand that disability is not inability and that the disabled can be trained, and educated. This understanding came as a result of the pioneering work of a Scottish missionary, Rev. Fredrick D Harker, a former tutor at the Presbyterian Training College, Akropong-Akuapem. He started the education of persons with visual impairment in his residence at the Presbyterian Training College in 1936, (Ocloo 2000, Gadagbui, 1998). The school was officially opened in 1945. The school is a boarding institution with a student population of 350. It is located in the Akuapem-North District of the Eastern Region. The aims of the school are not different from the ultimate aims of education provided for “normal” children in regular community schools in Ghana. This implies that, to educate or train persons with visual impairment in totality, any form of education provided to these individuals must be that which will not only focus on academic prowess or achievements but also other non-academic areas in order to make them live an independent life as possible to be able to contribute to self development and that of society as a whole. With this, underpinning aim, the school runs the same curriculum as is done in regular community schools.

Bill (1980) observed that, visually impaired students tend to do well academically; however, educators tend to overlook their needs beyond the academic arena. All handicapped adolescent students must be viewed first as persons, then as persons who are adolescents who have a handicap or a disability. If we do this, we may be able to provide a programme that is

interesting, applicable, and of maximal value and benefit. This presupposes that, the unique needs of individuals with visual impairment must be considered as individuals so that whatever education or training provided will be useful to them during their adult life.

Gaylord-Ross (1990) cited in Avoke and Avoke (2004) noted that vocational special education is primarily concerned with the efficient learning of a large number job-related skills. The major challenge is to make sure that skills learnt in training setting will transfer to a real work setting as well as be maintained after the student has graduated. The general aims of education and for those matter vocational courses are aimed solely at preparing for a job setting. This is not limited to “normal” individuals only but as well as persons with disabilities of which the visually impaired are no exception

Akropong Special School for the Blind has over the years provided vocational and or career education and training for blind individuals who could not do pure academic work to develop themselves for livelihood. Those who do the vocational education programme write the National Vocational and Training Institute (NVTI) examination and are awarded a proficiency certificate. The aspects of the vocational education offered by students in the school are basketry or basket weaving using cane and rope, doormat weaving using maize husk, and stool making; using wood and rope.

The vocational educational and training has made it possible for a number of past students to secure employment in some public sector workplaces and others too are in self-employment by weaving and selling doormats. Some are employed in rehabilitation centres to teach other disabled persons to acquire vocational skills, some in the Department of Social

Welfare, and others in Basic Schools to teach craft. However, in recent times, students who are placed in the Vocational Education Department of Akropong School for the Blind do not readily accept the vocational placement and training programme. Visually impaired students frown on vocational education placement such that, some develop truant behaviours like not attending classes and development of certain emotional disorders and throw tantrums. In some cases, students label teachers as wicked for giving them vocational education placement. More so, some parents on hearing that their wards had been placed in the vocational department come to the school, or call on the phone to register their displeasure about the vocational placement, and others even threaten to take their wards or children from the school. There are some who willingly accept the vocational placement and training but cannot do the weaving of basket and doormat properly to acquire the job skills.

Considering the present attitude of the blind and visually impaired students towards vocational placement and training at Akropong Special School for the Blind, it is empirical that something typically is lacking regarding vocational education in the school.

Statement of the Problem

Vocational evaluation is a key to the success of any vocational programme. Sarkees and Scott (1985) cited in Mawutor and Selete (2004) commented that, vocational education requires a comprehensive evaluation over a period of time in involving a multi-disciplinary team with the purpose of identifying individual characteristics, education, training and placement needs which provide educators with the basis of planning for an individual progress. This vocational evaluation will help to gather information as to the

relevant occupational requirement and the needs of the individual regarding vocational and or career education. Visually impaired students have the right to be provided with job - oriented skills in vocations which will put them in a proper perspective for gainful employment.

Academic work at Akropong School for the Blind is open to both partial and totally blind individuals and in much the same way, vocational placement and training is not based on race, creed, religion or social status. However, since the ultimate aim of providing education for persons with visual impairment is to make them live an independent life rather than dependent life, management and for that matter the staff deems it fit to give students who cannot do pure academic work, transitional vocational placement to have vocational training. Transitional vocational placement (TVP) is a specialized programme element under training for work at Akropong School for the Blind. The objective of TVP is to provide eligible blind individuals with vocational training and guidance that will contribute directly to their ability to obtain employment and maintain independence. This will help to equip them with the requisite employable skills for effective transition into the world of work. This has been the practice at Akropong School for the Blind, but presently, students' attitude toward vocational education has changed. They are unwilling to accept placement to train in vocations available in the school. Although, some of the products who trained in the vocations manage to secure some jobs, others are not able to secure jobs, and others too end up on the streets, asking for alms. A case in point is a TV3 7p.m. news telecast on 19th and 20th August, 2009 while covering a partially sighted woman and her two sons on a street in Accra. This blind woman completed vocational

training at Akropong School for the Blind in the year, 1999, but for some reasons, she is on the street at the mercy of the weather and surviving on the benevolence of passers-by.

The economic independence and social integration of the visually impaired should generally be achieved through their competitive and open employment. It certainly requires preparing them for appropriate employment through suitable training and exploring all avenues for employment. Even though, the visually impaired do receive vocational, and, or career education of all sort, it is not helping them secure jobs.

Majority of the students placed in the vocational class do not readily accept the vocational class, and even some of those who accept the vocational placement, are not able to perform the vocations available in the school. Parents who are seen as partners, and, or stakeholders in the education of the blind and visually impaired students have also developed a dislike for vocational placement for their children which hitherto was a compromising one.

Akropong School for the blind is to among other things help to prepare visually impaired students for independent life. One of the ways to do that was to provide transitional vocational training for students as and when it became necessary. The development of students dislike for vocational placement and training at Akropong School for the Blind will not help to promote vocational skills training among the visually impaired more especially for those who are not academically inclining for living independently in adulthood. The implication is that, the visually impaired will become liabilities rather than assets to society if their vocational skills training suffer setbacks and or

challenges. This study was therefore to investigate the challenges facing transitional vocational placement and training of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the blind in the Akuapem North District.

Purpose of the Study

The study was designed to find out:

1. Who is given vocational placement and training at Akropong School for the blind.
2. Provisions made by teachers for the vocational placement in the school.
3. Students interest in vocational placement and training.
4. Students' expectation with regards to vocational training at Akropong School for the blind.
5. How the visually impaired see themselves in the world of work.
6. Challenges students face in learning vocational courses in the school.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the study;

1. How are students selected for the vocational class at Akropong School for the blind?
2. How are students and parents prepared by teachers to ensure an effective vocational special education placement for students?
3. What challenges do blind students face in the performance of vocational activities in class during teaching and learning processes at Akropong School for the blind?
4. What reasons do students give for refusing vocational placement in the school?

5. How can vocational education benefit the blind and visually impaired after graduating from Akropong School for the blind?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will help the teachers of Akropong School for the Blind to ascertain some of the challenges facing vocational placement and training of students at Akropong School for the Blind in the provision of job-oriented skills. This in effect would enable the teachers of the school and for that matter the special education department of Ghana Education Service to consciously develop a more effective and comprehensive intervention programmes, to make vocational education for the blind and visually impaired interesting and market oriented to students in the world of work.

Again, it was to enable students as well as parents to better understand the prospects of vocational education in the life of the blind individual.

Delimitations of the Study

The education of persons with visual impairment is dependent mainly on Akropong School for the Blind, Akropong-Akuapem in the Eastern Region, and Wa School for the Blind in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

However, the study will be delimited to Akropong School for the Blind, and on the challenges of transitional vocational placement and training of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the Blind. The study also covered specialist teachers of the blind and parents of the blind students at Akropong School for the Blind.

Limitations of the Study

The inability of some students to read items in the brailled questionnaire and the interview guide created some difficulties since items

were read and explained to them before answering the questions. This could lead to distortion in the meaning of the statement as well as the response. Some parents were also hesitant in responding to interview questions.

Definition of Terms

Impairment: Describes a weakening of, or damage to the body function. It is usually used in place of disability.

Visual Impairment: it is a generic term indicating visual loss which includes the low vision/partially sighted, and the totally blind.

Visually Impaired: described anyone who has visual acuity so restricted that one is unable by reason of such restriction to perform any work for which eyesight is essential.

Disability: It refers to either a total or partial behaviour, mental, physical, or sensorial loss of functioning.

Handicap: It is reflecting the demands and limitations placed on an individual as a result of the disability.

Organization of the Study

The study was organized in five chapters. The chapter one covered areas such as; the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitations and definition of terms.

The chapter two dealt with the theoretical framework and review of related literature on the study. The chapter three, which is the methodology focused on the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, instruments, data collection procedure, and data analysis. The chapter five presented summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In his chapter, theoretical framework and related literature is reviewed under the following subheadings:-

1. Theoretical framework
2. The concept of special education
3. Education of individuals with visual impairment in Ghana
4. Vocational and career education for the visually impaired
5. Transitional vocational skill training
6. Transitional vocational training programme for the
handicapped
7. The role of parents and the family in vocational special
education.

Theoretical Framework

The theories of vocational development which were reviewed for this study were Donald Super's Developmental self-concept Theory of Vocational Behaviour and Holland's Theory of Vocational Behaviour of Ginzberg.

Super's Theory of Vocational Behaviour

Super defined vocational choice as the implementation of one's self-concept (Pietrofessa, Minor, Berstein, & Stanford, 1980). Super maintained that the way in which the self-concept of an individual is implemented

vocationally depends on the conditions external to the individual (Osipow, 1983). This means that there are environmental factors which tend to shape the vocational choice of an individual. Super's theory of vocational behavior has ten basic tenets:

1. That, people differ in their abilities, interest, and personalities.
2. That, because of these differences, each individual is qualified for many occupations.
3. That, each of these occupations required a characteristic pattern of abilities, interest, and personality traits with tolerance wide enough to allow a variety of individuals for each occupation.
4. Vocational preference changes with time and experience. However, self-concept tends to be fairly stable from late adolescent until late maturity which probably is 60 years and above.
5. Vocational development could be conveniently summed up in a series of life stages: The growth stage (0-14 years) covers the period of the development of self-concept. The child tries to acquaint himself with various roles by observation of parents and older adults and later through contact in school. Needs and fantasy dominate and interest and capacity emerge with the child's increasing social participation and reality testing (Osipow, 1983).

Exploration state which is between 15 years to 24 years is the period of adolescence and early adulthood. An individual chooses occupations tentatively and he explores these jobs through discussions with peers and significant adults. This is the stage that he makes important educational and

vocational decisions (Nweke, 1989). This is the period of identification with specific models, both the father or mother adults and this stimulates role-play which together facilitate the development of vocational self-concept (Osipow, 1983).

The establishment stage which falls within 25-45 years is the period an individual makes an effort to settle him/her self in the job he has chosen. At this stage, he changes position and not vocation (Osipow, 1983).

The maintenance stage (45-60 years) covers the period the worker concentrates on retaining his job and the position. His attitudes and behavior are similar to that at the establishment stage (Osipow, 1983, Nweke,1989).

The declining stage which is 65 years and above, signifies the declining and lessening of vocational activities (Osipow, 1989). There is decrease in physical and mental abilities until he eventually goes on retirement (Pietrofessa, Minor, Berstein, & Stanford, 1980).

The remaining five tenets of the theories continue as follows;

6. That the nature of career pattern is a product of one's parental socio- economic level and mental ability.
7. That, the vocational development through the life-stages is guided by maturation of ability, interest, reality-testing and self-concept.
8. That, the process of vocational development is essentially the implementation of one's self-concept.
9. That, the process of compromise between individual and social factors, between self-concept and reality is the issue of role-playing.

10. That, work satisfaction depends upon the extent to which the individual finds adequate outlets for his abilities, interest, personality traits and values. (Pietrofessa, Minor, Berstein, & Stanford, 1980: p.198; Nweke, 1989:pp.318-319; Bojuwoye, 1989:pp.102-103).

Considering Super's theory in relation to the junior high secondary school system, the most crucial stages are the exploratory and the establishment stages. At this stage, most of the students whether disabled or non-disabled are exploratory and are in the adolescence period. At this level, when students are mostly adolescent, their vocational decisions assume a more different dimension than at the middle age (Osipow, 1983). Adolescence is a period of exploratory rather than actual preparation or period of acquiring specific vocational skills. This exploration even continues after the formal schooling. Hence, "the vocational development of majority of people in the late adolescence has not reached the degree of maturity which allows them vocational commitment" (Shertzer & Linden, 1979: p.276).

In conclusion therefore, Super laid emphasis on one's self-concept in relation to vocational choice which undergoes changes as one moves through the life-stages. It then stands to reason that, one's vocational perception and for that matter the vocational behavior and choice at every developmental stage has its own peculiar characteristics. Individual differences exist when it comes to learning in that learners learn at different rates and performances in subject areas also show differences. This transcends even into the world of work as people do different types of work based on their individual knowledge and potential.

Ginzberg's Theory of Vocational Behaviour

The theory emphasizes the developmental nature of vocational choice. In all the life-stages, as provided by the theory, vocational choice correspondingly changes as the individual moves through the life-stages (Pietrofessa, Minor, Berstein, & Stanford, 1980). Ginzberg's theory provides three periods of the process of vocational development and these are:

1. The fantasy period (5-11 years): is the period of vocational development during which the child goes through the process of changing from "play orientation" to "work orientation" (Osipow, 1983:p. 194). At this stage, the child states clear vocational preferences and his play reflects what Ginzberg refers to as "function pleasure" and this function pleasure means the delight a child takes in activities for their intrinsic characteristics (Osipow, 1983: p.194).
2. The tentative period (11–18 years): consists of four stages and these are the interest stage, the capacity stage, the value stage, and the transition stage. The interest stage is the level where the activity the child engages in is influenced by the likes and dislike of that activity (Okoye, Adejumo, & Achebe, 1990). The capacity stage is the stage at which the child introduces the idea of ability into his vocational decisions (Osipow, 1983). The value stage is the stage at which the idea of service to the society emerges. He begins to consider the value which his chosen career has for him. The transition stage (17-18 years); is the stage the student begins to make immediate concrete, and realistic decision about his vocational future. Pietrofessa, Minor,

Berstein, & Stanford (1980) noted that, at this stage the student is looking for either work or higher education.

3. The realistic period (19-25 years); is also made up of three stages which are the exploration stage, the crystallization stage, and the specification stage.

The exploration stage is the stage where a student maintains vocational flexibility (Osipow, 1983). The student is now in college environment and he experiences much more freedom in his vocational decisions than before but he still has challenge of vocational indecision partly because the interest is still changing and partly because the reality of the situation does not require a specific vocational decision to be made. The major challenge for the student at this stage is the selection of a path to follow from among much other strongly held interest (Osipow, 1983). The crystallization stage is the stage the student is more or less deeply involved in a specific occupation. This is the time the student assesses the very many factors influencing the many occupational choices under consideration. Most students therefore reach the crystallization stage by the time they leave senior secondary school or college. However, not all student are able to reach the crystallization stage so early (Osipow, 1983). Some of the students think and act as if they have reached crystallized decisions. This stage is referred to as pseudo-crystallization stage (Osipow, 1983). The specification stage is the final career development and this is the stage the student, “weigh alternatives with respect to a field of specialization and to particular career objectives” (Nweke, 1983:p. 316). This is the stage where

student places emphasis on his choice of vocation to select a specific job (Osipow, 1983).

What stands out clearly in Ginzberg's theory is the fact that the implementation of vocational preference occurs as a result of the adolescent's increasing age where realistic choice emerges, increasing awareness of challenges on his path to preparing in an occupation, and increasing awareness of the need to shift his expectation in adjustment to the reality facing him in the developmental stages in life.

The above discussed vocational theories, presupposed that, providers of vocational education, or training to any group of people, should consciously address all factors (whether personal, environmental, or social, and, or cultural) which may positively or negatively affect the process of vocational placement and training.

The Concept of Special Education

Education can be said to be a programme of activities which are directed at helping to develop the human person.

Adentwi (2000; P.58) commented that:

Education does not take place in a vacuum. It occurs among people with all the psychological and social characteristics, who live in particular societies. For education to prove useful therefore, the special needs, interest, and purposes of the people and conditions in the specific society which they live must thoroughly be studied and appropriately addressed.

This presupposes that, there cannot be education without human beings and that it is human beings who are educated in the school system. In doing this, then means that, factors such as psychological and social characteristics of the individuals to be educated must be considered and this has to do with inherent factors which will make learning difficult for those to be educated as well as what they want to achieve in the end after going through the process of education.

Walker (1982) argues that all human beings are unique and must be given the type of education that enables them to polish and utilize their unique potentials. This assertion shows that education is not a preserve for any group of people but rather it is the right of individual human beings to receive education to help develop potentials and talents as a may be demonstrated by the person. It is for both the non-disabled and the disabled in society to receive education and it should help to fulfill their potential and not merely to serve the social obligation.

The non-disabled are educated through the regular community school system and the disabled get their education through the special school system hence special education is seen to supplement what is provided in the regular education system.

Special education has been defined by many educationists but the central idea remains the same simply because the definitions tend to describe the same programme which is used to educate a specific populace or group of children or persons. UNESCO (1983) cited in Ocloo et al (2000) defines special education as:

A form of education provided for those who are not achieving, or are unlikely to achieve through ordinary educational provision at the level of educational, social, and other attainments appropriate to their age, and which has the aim of furthering their progress towards these levels (Ocloo et al 2000, p.1).

What seem suggestible from the above definition is that, there are a group of individuals or persons who cannot or will not benefit from the ordinary school system should they enroll there for one reason or the other and will therefore need to be educated through the special school. Kelly and Vergason (1985) also define special education as a broad term covering programmes and service for exceptional children who deviate so far physically, mentally or emotionally from the normal that they require unique experiences, teaching techniques and materials in order to mainstream in regular classroom, and specialized classes and programmes when the problems are severe. This definition also suggests that special education is a programme of education earmark to cater for those individuals who for one reason or the other deviate negatively or positively from the norm and for that matter require special educational strategies to make education meaningful to them.

Mark, Samuel, Wilson, Grace, Mawutor, Comfort, Alexander and Joseph (2000) commented that:

Exceptional children who benefit from special educational provision are those who deviate positively or negatively from the norm such that they will need special assistance in order to learn. These children include the

gifted and the talented, children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, emotional disorders, behavior problems, the mentally challenged, or persons with intellectual disability; the learning disabled, and physically disabled, the cerebral palsied, and the speech impaired and children with severe developmental disorders and neurological disorders (p.1).

Any individual or a person who deviates from the norm of society either positively or negatively thus becomes a target of the services of special education to relieve such individuals of problems and obstructions to realize the full use of their capabilities.

Mark et al (2002) commented that special education takes a critical look at the child's unique learning needs and therefore the emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of the child. Special education has become an important part of education the world over in that series of research has shown that quite a number of children who are found to be incapable of learning under normal classroom setting are receiving education. They further submitted that special education emphasizes individual attention when it comes to teaching and learning. Ocloo (2000) maintains that early training is very important for every child with disability so that the impact of the disability is minimized. He further added that, this idea is what must be upheld by special educators while they educate parents on how to raise children of all forms of disabilities including children with learning difficulties. This means that special education aims at early identification of persons with disabilities so training can start early enough to help minimized the negative effect on the individual. It again

presupposes that special education without the involvement of parents of the disabled will be meaningless since it is a basic requirement for parents of persons with disabilities to have the confidence, knowledge, and understanding of exceptional conditions and how to manage them.

Special education also require the services of specialist teachers specifically trained in well defined pedagogical skills to enable them deliver to remediate learning difficulties resulting from a particular disability. The concept also covers the adaptation and modification of instructional material and environment (Mark et al 2002). These adaptation and modification are done to enable special needs children to be able to adjust to teaching and learning processes.

Bruce and Meggiti (2002) observed that children with disabilities do not need very expensive equipment, or instructional materials to play or learn with. Sass-Lehrer, De Garcia and Rovin (1983) however noted that instructional materials should not be chosen solely for their cultural significance but must also have educational value and be appropriate to the age of the individual. These writers are of the opinion that whatever instructional material that will be used should not be sophisticated and must be that which will aid the child to learn effectively and efficiently.

The modification of the environment makes the environment least restrictive to the child who is disabled, and can therefore interact meaningfully with the outside world. The provisions of special education further rely on other related services. The American public Law 94-142 defines related services as “transportation, and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist the handicapped child to benefit

from special education” (Federal Register, 1977, Section 121. 550). The related services include; transportation, speech pathology, Audiology, psychological service, physical therapy, recreation, counseling services, early identification, and parent counseling and training.

These related services are integral parts of the services of special education, in that, each related service is needed at a point in time so to help the disabled to maximize the educational programme set up for them. Huntze and Grosenick (1980) contended that when a service is not available within the catchment of the school, or the district, the child’s needs are generally not met and this will inhibit special educational provision.

In Ghana, most of these services are not provided in the area of special education because of lack of adequate funding from government and other stakeholders.

Education of Individuals with Visual Impairment in Ghana

Educationally, “visual impairment covers individuals whose vision is limited to such an extent that it may require educational modification and adaptation”, (Mawutor, 1997, p.50). Heward and Orlansky (1980) suggested that the educational explanation of visual impairment primarily considers the extent to which a child’s visual impairment affects learning and makes special methods or materials necessary to help them do effective learning.

Reynolds and Fletcher-Janzen (1990) commented that, the impact of visual impairment is felt on the social, emotional and physical as well as educational development of the child. The degree to which blindness or any form of visual impairment affects development depends on the type of visual loss, the severity of the loss, the age of onset of the impairment, intellectual

abilities, and environmental experiences. In reality, visual impairments place a lot of restrictions on the individuals almost in all facets of life. However, to make life meaningful for this group of persons, their needs are catered for in the field of special education. Special schools form an educational component of the special education services offered to disabled individuals in Ghana. These special schools were, or are established to cater for the unique learning needs of special needs children or exceptional children in society of which the blind and individuals with visual impairment are no exception. Formal education in Ghana was generally started by the missionaries and the first schools for the disabled were also established through the benevolence of missionaries. Ocloo (2000) noted that, blind and individuals with visual impairment were the first to receive education in Ghana. He further submitted that, the education of the visually impaired was started at Akropong in the Eastern Region in June 1936 by Mr. Fredrick D. Harker, a Scottish missionary at the Presbyterian Training College. The school was official opened on 6th August 1945 (Ocloo, 2000: Gadagbui, 1998). This school is the Akropong School for the Blind. The school has a Nursery, Primary and Junior High Secondary for academic work, religious and moral education and the vocational educational department. The second Special School for the blind to be established was the Wa School for the Blind. It was established in 1958, and located in the upper west Region of Ghana. Baah (1993) observed that, the courses offered in these schools are Mathematics, English Language, Social Studies, Integrated Science, French, Religious and Moral Education, Music and Dance, and Physical Education which are taught with modification and adaptation to suit their situation. These are basic schools with rehabilitation

departments. Education for the blind is dependent on Akropong School for the Blind and the Wa school for the Blind. The school curriculum is no different from those of the regular community schools except with modification and adaptation when it is necessary. The present Junior High secondary Programme allows blind individuals to do all subjects under the curriculum except carpentry, sewing, blacksmithing, and technical drawings (Ocloo, 2000, p.7).

Gadagbui (1998, p.52) in assessing the education of the blind noted that, “their education goes beyond the basic level of education and that they can proceed by way of integration into Senior Secondary Schools, and Tertiary institutions in the country”. The schools in which the blind can mainstream or integrate include; Okuapemman Secondary Akropong-Akuapem, Wenchi Secondary School Wenchi, N.J. Ahmadiyya Training College, Wa Presbyterian Training College, Akropong-Akuapem, and University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi and the University of Education, Winneba. The blind students have options to choose certain schools for their higher learning. These are integrated in that; both the visually impaired and regular students can attend. However, individuals with visual impairment have a limitation in choice of subjects. Subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Vocational and Technical subjects are no go areas for the visually impaired in higher learning in Ghana. Gearheart (1980) submitted that handicapped students should receive vocational education programming along with non-handicapped students in existing vocational programme components whenever feasible. This suggests that individuals with disability of which the visually impaired

are no exception should not be isolated in vocational courses, but can be given the choice to equal study vocational programmes of their choice in institutions where such vocational programmes are available and that it would not necessarily be schools designated for visually impaired, or any other disability.

Vocational Career Education for the Visually Impaired

Vocational Education and Training (VET), also called Career and Technical Education (CTE) prepares learners for jobs that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation. It is sometimes referred to as technical education, as the learner develops expertise in a particular group of techniques or technology (ERIC clearing House on Adult and Vocational Education Columbus OH).

For any individual to be employed and to work requires the acquisition of the pre-requisite knowledge and skills to make employment possible. Vocational education helps to provide individuals with job oriented skills in the area of interest of the person. This in effect presupposes that, individuals with or without disabilities must have some form of employable skills to enable them to access employment opportunities. Vocational education can be at the secondary and post secondary levels and can interact with the apprentice system. Imel (1990) observed that, until the end of the twentieth century, vocational education focused on specific trades such as automobile mechanic or welder, and was therefore associated with the activities of lower social classes. As a consequence, it attracted a level of stigma. It was also related to the age-old apprenticeship system of learning. He further observed that, as the labour market becomes more specialised and economics demand higher levels

of skills, government and businesses are increasingly investing in the future of vocational education through publicly funded training institution and, or organisations and subsidized apprenticeship, or traineeship initiatives for business.

Susan (1990) opines that, vocational education has diversified over the twentieth century and now exists in industries such as retail, tourism, information technology, funeral services and cosmetics, as well as in the traditional crafts and cottage industries. The study of vocational and career education and training prepares both the handicapped and the non-handicapped into the world of work.

However, if the vocation is ill-defined to provide the needed job-skills in the areas of the student's interest, security and maintaining jobs becomes a big challenge. Gaylord-Ross (1990) commented that, vocational special education for disabled persons is primarily concerned with the efficient learning of a large number of job oriented-skills. The major challenge is to make sure that skills learnt in training setting will transfer to a real work setting as well as maintaining the work after the student has graduated.

One of the most critical periods in the life of any young person whether handicapped or non-handicapped, is the transition from school to the world of employment and to life as an adult. Developing independence, exploring interest and pursuing employment or additional schooling are just some of challenges faced by youth's transition from school into adult life. For individual with disabilities, the transition into adulthood is compounded by complications related to their disabilities.

Two Federal laws support the transition from school to work for students with disabilities. These laws include “The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendment of 1997 (Public Law 105-17) which requires that an Individual Education Plan (IEP) addresses transition service needs for students with a disability beginning no later than age 14”. The law states further that “beginning at age 16 (or younger if determined appropriate by the Individual Education Plan team), the IEP will address transition services, including when appropriate information about interagency responsibilities which has to do with responsibilities of the school-age education and adult rehabilitation service systems.

The IEP should state which transition services the student needs, including instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other adult living objectives, and when appropriate it should include daily living skills and functional vocational training and evaluation. The rehabilitation Acts of 1973 also requires that, states enter into interagency agreement with education officials to provide transition services in the Individual Education Plan. (American Foundation for the blind).

These federal laws presupposed that, individuals with disabilities should at the end of their education be able to live an independent life rather than dependent one. The U.N convention of (1987) states among other things that persons with disability should be able to live independently and participate fully in aspects of life and also adults with disabilities should have access to general tertiary education, vocational training, and adult and lifelong learning (U.N convention on the right of persons with disabilities).

This means that, their unique needs with reference to the disability must come to play and that whatever education that is provided should be based on the interest of the individual. Again, the expertise knowledge of the multidisciplinary team should be employed to plan for the individual's total training and transition into adulthood.

Wolffe (1996) describes unique needs in five broad categories for students with visual impairment which include realistic feedback, high expectations, and opportunity to work, compensatory skills, and exposure to visual input. He further added that in order to appropriately focus on ongoing vocational and career education needs, students with visual impairments and their families must plan early, fostering appropriate attitudes, values, habits, and social relationship; providing occupational information and a variety of work experiences, and helping students acquire independent living skills are equally important components in school-to-work-transition programmes.

Dolores Carmen Polo Serrano and Agapito Gomez Garcia (1988) of Organizacion National de Ciegos Espanole/ National Organisation of Spanish blind, (O.N.C.E), Spain, submitted that, there are two types of curriculum which visually impaired students should acquire simultaneously and these are the ordinary curriculum and the specific curriculum. The ordinary curriculum is that which is relative to the professional profile as in any other students, for the purpose of acquiring a degree relative to academic matters. A series of core competencies must be worked upon within this curriculum, which is associated with conduct that is observed in that individual; mainly attitude type, and consequently transferable skills to new work situations.

The European Centre for the Development of vocational training (1995) CEDEFOP submitted that, the key competencies which are social, vocational as well as personal may cover such areas as;

1. Problems solving skills
2. Organizational skills on the job
3. Responsibility on the job
4. Teamwork and interpersonal relations
5. Autonomy
6. Capacity for taking initiatives on the job
7. Adaptability
8. Evaluating working conditions
9. Professional involvement and commitment
10. The incorporation of acquired knowledge

The specific curriculum requires some areas of additional learning. These are experiences and concepts that are learnt by chance or incidentally by students that do not have vision impairment, and which must be taught in a systematic and sequential manner to those visually impaired students.

CEDEFOP outlined that the specific curriculum shall cover the following abilities and competencies;

1. Functional or compensatory academic competencies
including forms of communication
2. Capacities for orientation and mobility.
3. Social interaction competencies.
4. Competencies for an independent life.
5. Career guidance that is specific to the type of handicap.

6. Use of technology adapted to the visually impaired.

From the above submission, providers of vocational and career training for visually impaired individuals notably teachers, parent/families, and other multisectorial team members should be able to consciously design and develop programmes of activities that will bring about total personality development which in turn contribute effectively to placing of the blind and visually impaired into the working world.

Wehman (1997) opines that employment represents a major element in the lives of people with or without handicaps. He added that what is most important for individuals with disabilities is to develop multiple employment choices that reflect the array of job opportunities available to nondisabled workers in the same community. This presupposes that, the disabled are not having a separate world of work from the nondisabled and that whatever job training to be given to the disabled should be that which will help them to complete favourably in the job-market. Hallahan and Kauffman (1994, p.372) maintained that:

What the disabled need most is not, as the professionals would have it, medical help or psychological counseling but admission to the main channels of daily life and citizenship, not custody and care but understanding and acceptance. Above all, what they need is not more government programmes or private charitable effort. Instead, they need jobs, opportunity, and full participation in society.

Disability is not inability. The ability of the disabled to perform in the mainstream world of work as individuals with some form of potentials will depend to a large extent on the kind of training they receive from school and society as a whole for their full integration. That is, the focus should not be on what the disabled cannot do but rather what they can do and then be assisted to do that which they can do and do better in all facets of life. Transitional planning is a student-centred, outcome-oriented process that facilitates the successful passage from school to community living and adult life.

Transitional Vocation Skills Training

Developing a transitional plan should be a part of every student's educational programme and it is particularly important for students with disability of which the visually impaired are not exempted. In the process of developing comprehensive transition programmes, Siegel, Avoke, Paul, Robert, and Graylord-Ross (1991) emphasised the need to solicit assistance from policy makers, educators, and parents in the design of any new school curriculum. They further added schools should also emphasize the inclusion of students with disabilities in all activities to create opportunities for the development of relationships, and vocational education and community based programmes to facilitate a holistic approach where all who matters in the training of the disabled must be involved.

Adentwi (2000, p.58) in a situation analysis of provision of education commented that:

Education does not take place in a vacuum. It occurs among people with all their psychological and social characteristics, who live in particular societies. For

education to prove useful therefore, the special needs interest and purposes of the people and the conditions in the specific society in which they live must be thoroughly studied and appropriately addressed. The provision of education be it academic or vocational require in one way or the other, both the concerns of beneficiaries and stakeholders for optimal co-operation from all. This means that, the input from teachers, career advisers, parents and families, policy makers and other stakeholders, and members of the society must all be considered in order to make an informed decision which will go a long way to meet the needs of the learner. It is important to remember that educational goals for students with visual impairments are essentially the same as those for all students. The goals include but not limited to:

1. Effective communication
2. Social competence
3. Employability
4. Personal independence.

In order to accomplish these goals, however, students with visual impairments require specific intervention and modification of their educational programmes. An appropriate assessment of these unique educational needs in all areas related to the disability, and instruction adapted to meet these needs is essential to ensure appropriate educational programming. American

Foundation for the Blind (2009) outlined that the unique educational needs created by visual impairment include:

1. Vision loss can result in delayed concept development which with effective intervention, severely impacts the students social, emotional, academic and vocational development.
2. Students with visual impairments often must learn through alternative mediums, using their senses.
3. Students with visual impairment often require individualized instruction since group instruction for learning specialised skills may not be provided in a meaningful manner.
4. Students with visual impairment are limited in acquiring information through incidental learning since they are often unaware of subtle activities in their environment.
5. Curriculum areas that require unique strategies or adaptations for students with visual impairment include: concept development, academic functioning, communication skills, social/emotional skills orientation and mobility, daily living skills, and utilization of low vision.

The absence of visual function in the life of an individual places a lot of restrictions on the individual regarding learning for survival in life. It is important then to identify the unique learning needs of students who are visually impaired and this will make for effective educational planning for

them. Weh, Kregel, and Bercus (1985) noted that, the model for school to work transition involves three stages, namely;

the secondary school curriculum, the transition planning process, and placement in meaningful employment. They further commented that, three characteristics are critical to secondary school programme. First, the curriculum must stress functional skills; that is students must learn vocational skills that they will actually need and use in local employment situations. Second school-based instructions must be carried out in integrated settings as much as possible. Students with disabilities must be given ample opportunities to learn the interpersonal skills necessary to work effectively with nondisabled workers and peers in integrated work sites. Third, community-based instruction should be given as early as about age 12 for students with severe disabilities and must be used for progressively extended periods as the student nears graduation. While on work sites in the community, students should receive direct instruction in areas such as specific job skills, ways to increase production rate, and transportation to and from employment sites (p.28).

Students should train and work in the community whenever possible. This is not only to expose them to the community and work expectations, but to be exposed to future employers and co-workers to their potentials as reliable employees. Development of career awareness and vocational skills should

begin in the elementary years for children with disabilities especially those with severe disabilities. This does not mean, of course that 6-years-old children must be placed on job sites for training. However, appropriate vocational objectives should be selected at each age level of the child's development, (Wehman, 1993).

Vocational and or career education include career development component in which individuals are exposed to a variety of occupations and are encouraged to develop work values; to explore their own interests, values, and aptitudes, to participate in various work experiences, and to make career decisions that are compatible with their characteristics and preferred life style. Walker (1982) also submitted that all human beings are unique and must be given the type of education that enables them to polish up and utilize their unique potentials and talents. Individuals with visual impairment are individuals who need economic independence and to achieve this, vocational and career education programme for them should take cognisance of their unique needs and potentials so to plan a meaningful vocational programme for them. This is done collaboratively by the multidisciplinary team of which parents are no exception.

Transition for any student with disability involves several key components such as; an appropriate school programme, formalized plans involving parents and the entire array of community agencies that are responsible for services, and multiple quality options for gainful employment, and meaningful post-school education and community living. Although, the goal of special education school system is to help students become productive members of society as adults, much is not being done to guide students with

disabilities into meaningful employment opportunities appropriate to their abilities in that they do not benefit from systematic transition from school-to-work. The individual with Disability Education Act (1990) is specific about the responsibility of the local education agency for transition planning.

Transitional Vocational Training Programme for the Handicapped

Vocationally oriented programmes for the handicapped require specific planning and extensive programme evaluation procedures. This is because of the known present disadvantages of these students, that is their handicap or disabilities have put them in the likelihood of missing some of the incidental pre-vocational learning so essential to a good vocational programme. This means that prevocational components must be planned at the Junior High School level whenever possible.

Bill (1980) indicated that vocational programmes can be planned in conjunction with existing training programmes, and student may participate in existing vocational programmes as their needs and individual abilities permit. This joint planning should be initiated for each student as the Individualised Education Programme is developed. He further commented that, the concept of the least restrictive environment applies in vocational programme planning as in all other parts of the school curriculum.

Transition from school to work is a process that focuses on the movement of students with disabilities from school into the world of work (Bullis, Bull, and Johnson, 1995). Facilitating a student's transition from a school programme to the work place requires movement through school instruction, planning for the transition process, and placement into meaningful community-integrated employment. Currently, special education and

vocational rehabilitation programmes are required by legislation to cooperatively plan for the transition of students with disabilities into the work environment. The type of work a person does, the amount of money he or she will earn, and career advancement opportunities directly affect how individuals look at themselves (Wehman, 1997). Wehman (1997) indicated that “career and job choices are difficult for everyone, but frequently students with disabilities have had little or no exposure to vocational options available within the community, thus making it very difficult to choose what type of job they want at graduation, or as a career” (p. 607).

This in effect suggests that individuals with disabilities of which the blind, and visually impaired are inclusive will need an exposure to the world of work during transitional programming to acquaint themselves to a variety of vocations in the job-market. Marsh, Gearheart and Gearheart (1978) observed that, transitional vocational programming can be grouped into two;

- i. Low-cost skill training
- ii. High-cost skill training.

The low-cost skill training programme comprises work experience, work study, on-the-job training, off-campus work experience, work stations, and co-operative programme working experience. This is somewhat more advanced than pre-vocational programming. Its purpose is to guide the student towards general employment orientation. Simulated work experiences are presented to permit students to understand the tasks and responsibilities associated with various types of work. Wehman (1997) in like manner opines that what is most important for individuals with disabilities is to develop multiple employment choices that reflect the array of job opportunities

available to non-disabled workers in the same community. Providing work experiences exposes students to the types of jobs and the support services that need to be developed for these jobs in order to make for crucial and effective transition plan for students with disabilities.

Work-study: this includes both on-campus and off-campus work stations (Marsh, Gearheart, & Gearheart, 1978). In on-campus programmes, the student after having studied for over 2 to 3 year period may work with custodians, cooks, or in the library, or any work setting available on-campus. In support of the work activities, classroom training is offered in line with specific work areas which probably would require a top-up in terms of training. In off-campus workstations, the student may work in a number of job situations under the supervision of actual employers. Part of the school day or week involves return to the classroom for training related to the student's experiences at the job station (Bill, 1980). This will in effect mean that some employees may retain a student as an employee after graduation based on performance.

On-the-job-training: This programme is based on the concept that essential skills may be directly taught to trainees at the job site rather than having students exposed to a variety of job stations or general working experiences (Bill, 1980). Training experiences in the community help students with disability determine job preferences and develop a work history. Bill (1980) submitted that this approach has been used with several handicapped students because the training assistance can learn the job, bring work samples back to the school, and initiate basic training after which the assistant may then take the student to the job, work alongside the student, and

eventually withdraw and provide less frequent supervision. If the student is able to meet the demands of the job and other - wise adjust, he or she may be formally employed.

Off-campus work station: This approach is also used for students with disability, where an industry or work site in the community provides work locations in the plant or office building where students are brought to work under the supervision of a coordinator employed by the school. Depending on the good performance exhibited by students and the nature of the work required by the host employers, the employer may employ students to work there indefinitely and draw a wage. This is an intermediate arrangement between a sheltered workshop and an actual competitive employment (Bill 1980).

Cooperative programme: This type of programme is suited for institutions that may need to secure services for their residential students because of prohibitive costs in establishing a programme on the institutional grounds. In this instance, the institution enters into an arrangement with a neighbouring school or vocational technical school so that students can be transported to the cooperating school for services that the disabled need in the skill training for the job-market (Bill, 1980).

The higher-cost skill training programme: This may be similar in most respects to other types of vocational training, but costs are increased by factors such as the involvement of teachers, counselors, aides, psychologists, transportation, work evaluators, training of parents, social workers, and the use of expensive equipment. From the above discussed vocational training programmes, it is suggestible that, the vocational training for individuals with

disabilities of which the blind, and, or visually impaired are not exempted cannot be done in isolation, that is in the school alone. This requires that any vocational training programme designed for the visually impaired should not only be in the school setting but must be linked with real work situation where students will be exposed to a variety of work experiences even before graduating from school. Avoke and Avoke (2004) commented that, students with disabilities desire the same as those without disabilities. They further added that, schools should incorporate vocational education and experiences beginning in the elementary grades and continuing to senior levels of vocational education, or career education and training. The paramount importance of daily living skills, work experiences, and vocational education programmes of students for life after school must include curriculum that is deeply fused with a robust vocational and career education system.

In Ghana, the provision of vocation and career education and training for the disabled mostly lack the school-cum-field work during training and this eventually affects their performance negatively in the world of work. Lehmann and Hartley (1991) argued that the acquisition of information leading to the student's placement in a vocational programme is an integral part of the vocational assessment process. To them, information about a student's interest, desires, and needs should be matched to appropriate instructions in the training phase. They were of the view that the final step in the assessment process is placement of students into competitive employment or post-secondary training. If the vocational assessment information is matched to appropriate instruction, all aspects of vocational programming should promote student's success. Vocational assessment should involve the

student's in actual work activities and be student centred. Bullis and Gaylord-Ross (1991) observed that vocational assessment should determine the student's knowledge and awareness of work, test performance in various controlled settings, and the student's behaviour in a real job placement. Sarkees and Scott (1995) commented that vocational assessment involves a multidisciplinary team and must be purported for identifying individual characteristics, education training and placement needs, which provide educators with the basis for planning a vocational programme for an individual. To this end, it is suggestible that, vocational programming for individuals with visual impairment must be preceded by vocational assessment which serves as guide for determining and strategising a vocational training programme which will go a long way to better equip students with the appropriate job-oriented skills.

The Role of Parents and the Family in Vocational Special Education

Parents are partners in the planning of education for their children. This means that, they are partners whose inputs in educational planning cannot be over underestimated. A major opportunity for parents' participation involves making decisions regarding the policies and curriculum directions of their children's schooling and education (Maxim, 1997). Hayford (1998) observed that school placement decisions are roles of parents taken jointly with professionals of which teachers are not exempted. Parents and other family members therefore should show interest in decision that would affect their children's education. They should also be involved in programmes designed for their visually impaired children.

Again, parents and other family members play the role of advocates to contribute to the education of their children. Parents search for ways to protect the interest and welfare of individuals with handicapped conditions including the blind and the visually impaired. That is, through advocacy role, parents are better able to gain or improve services for their children. These parents also provide information to new parents struggling to find help for their children with disabilities. In Ghana for instance, parents of children with disabilities made inputs to the disability bill. Hallahan and Kauffman (2003) observed that parents and other family members contribute to the education of their children through advocacy. This means that, through the advocacy work of parents of the disabled and policy makers will be able to formulate policies that would better cater for their special needs and for that matter their total development.

Counseling is another role played by parents in the education of their children with visual impairment. Parents in any case will have to accept the conditions of their children in terms of their strength and weaknesses. When this is done, parents will be able to interact with the children and discuss with them what the visually impaired student can train in as vocations for the job market. All parents and counselors in the sense deal with their children's changing feelings, emotions, and attitudes (Heward, 2003). He further suggested that in addition to all of the normal joys and pains of raising a child, parents of a child with disability must deal with the feelings the child has as a result of a particular handicapped condition. Through constant interactions with their disabled children, helps the children to accept their situation and take the challenge to develop their lots for independent living.

Mawutor and Selete (2004) observed that, more than anyone else, the family is the critical mass of people that can provide support to the transitional process. The family tends to be the only constant in a student's life. The family can serve the role as an advocate and a case manager through this process.

Families must ensure that career and vocational education programmes are accessible to their children whilst in school. Family members can serve as role models and may be able to help the school to locate community-based experiences and other supported employment activities in their community which the school can factor into its vocational programming. Parents and family contribution in the education of their children is vital as discussed but to achieve this means that, schools should consciously work with families and to develop a clear image of how students will function in the adult world

Summary of Literature Review

The theoretical review looked into some relevant theories of vocational behaviour such as Super's theory of vocational choice, which maintained that vocational choice has to do with putting into practice one's self-concept. Ginzberg's theory of vocational behaviour claimed that, vocational choice comes with increase in age.

Literature has further revealed that, individuals with disabilities and for that matter, the visually impaired can be educated or trained to live an independent life rather than dependent life from childhood through to adulthood. Vocational and, or career training is one of the many course areas in which the blind can be prepared in for economic independence and for that

matter independent living. To do this effectively and efficiently require the services of multidisciplinary team of which the blind student/pupil, teachers and parents are key players. Again, the unique needs of blind students such as the nature of impairment, interest, values, and potentials must be consciously considered in order to make meaningful educational planning for individuals with visual impairments. Literature again showed that different vocational training programmes can be put in place which must be community-based and that which exposes the students or trainees to a variety of vocational experiences linked with real life work situations. The importance of this is to enable the blind adult to acquaint himself/herself with what really pertains in the world of work. This means that, the vocational training programme for the visually impaired must be done in both the school and at the work place. From the review of literature, it is evident that at Akropong school for the blind, vocational skills training teachers did not take cognisance of the unique vocational skills training needs of the visually impaired which enhance effective and efficient vocational skills training for the blind and that, even though special vocational training is meant to prepare and equip the blind with the requisite vocational skills for the job – market, students at Akropong School for the Blind show great dislike for vocational placement and do not consider it as that which will prepare them for employment and independent living which hitherto was not the case. This seem to make vocational skills training in the school lose its value. It is therefore pertinent for a study into this behaviour and for that matter to delve into the challenges facing the transitional vocational placement and training of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the Blind.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The areas discussed under this chapter are research design, sample and sampling techniques, instrumentation, validity and reliability of instruments, procedure for data collection and analysis.

Research Design

The research design for this study was descriptive survey through which views were sought from respondents about transitional vocational placement and training at Akropong Special School for the Blind, Akropong-Akuapem. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) noted that using survey as a research design, allows the researcher to select a sample of interest and administer questionnaire, and, or conduct interview to collect information about a phenomena. These authors further acknowledged the fact that surveys are frequently used in educational research to describe attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and other forms of information because accurate information can be obtained from a large number of people with a small sample.

The descriptive survey was used for this study because it was convenient to administer instrument to respondents individually to collect data to describe a phenomena. The study did not involve any manipulation or control of variables. It helps to show responses to all possible questionnaire items. It can be used to explore relationship between two or more variables, and also provides leads in identifying needed changes.

However, results from a descriptive survey cannot be used as a definitive answer or to disprove a hypothesis, and also, the results are always open to question and to different interpretations.

Population

Wilson and Anthony (2001) observed that population is an entire group of individuals or objects having common observable characteristics and that each member can be identified as having those characteristics. Gorard (2001) opines that population is a group, usually of individuals from which a sample can be selected to generate results of a study.

Those to constitute the population of the study were pupils/students of the primary school, junior high school, rehabilitation, vocational students, and teachers of the school as well as parents of pupils/students of Akropong School for the Blind. The target population for the study was the upper primary school, junior high school, rehabilitation and the vocational class. This constitutes 168 students. The teacher population was 45.

The students/pupils, parents of the students, and the teachers of the school formed the population of the study because; each of the groups had a role to play to bring about effective provision of vocational education to persons with visual impairment.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study was 115 students out of 168. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) noted that, a population size of 160 takes a corresponding sample size of 113. However, the researcher added two (2) students to cater for the remaining eight students to make the sample 115 for the students. All the 45 teachers of the school were also used in the study. Krejcie and Morgan

(1970) observed that, a population size of 45 takes a corresponding sample size of 40. However, considering the exceptionalities in the management of persons with visual impairment, the researcher used all 45 teachers in the school. In all, 20 parents of the students were sampled for the study.

A sample is a sub – group of the target population that the researcher plans to study for the purpose of making a generalization about the target population (Creswell, 2005). Sample is a subset of a large identifiable group (Wilson & Anthony, 2001). The inclusion of the students in the sample is due to the fact that, the topic under directly concerns them because they are the beneficiaries. Teachers of the visually impaired were used in the study because they are directly involved in the placement and training of the visually impaired for independent living in life. The parents on the hand are partners in the provision of education for the blind, and also as custodians of the blind, whatever affects their wards whether positive or negative equally affects them.

Three sampling techniques were used to select respondents for the study: lottery sampling, census, and purposive sampling. Cohen and Manion (1995) described purposive sampling as handpicking the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of the judgment of their typicality or particularly knowledgeable about the issues under study. Agyedu, Donkor, & Obeng (1999) noted that purposive sampling is a procedure in which a researcher intentionally selects individuals and site to learn or understand the central phenomena. In this instance, the students, and teachers of Akropong School for the Blind are the focus to getting information on the challenges face in the

transitional vocational placement and training of persons with visual impairment at Akropong School for the Blind.

The researcher used the lottery sampling technique to select the students/pupils from the upper primary, JHS, the rehabilitation class, and the vocational class. In this, students did random picking of a **Yes**, or **No** card from a box. Those who picked yes were sampled for the study as respondents.

All 45 teachers of Akropong School for the Blind were purposively selected for the study. This technique was used to ensure all the teachers contribute information to study. Accidental sampling was used to select the parents of the students for the study. In accidental sampling "... all units for the study that the researcher comes into contact with during a certain period of time are considered" (Sarandakos, 1998, p.151). The accidental sampling technique was used because, the parents do not live within the school community and as such only those who came to the school during the time of the study were used. Twenty (20) parents were sampled for the study. The parents were selected because whatever goes on in their wards education directly affects them as parents/guardians (Wilson & Anthony, 2001).

Instruments

The following instruments were used for data collection. These were questionnaire, interview guide, and observation guide.

Questionnaire

This was designed for both teachers and students. The questionnaire items were developed on the research questions raised in the study. Koul (2001) described questionnaire as a device consisting of a series of questions dealing with some psychological, social and educational topics given to an

individual or a group of individuals with the objective of obtaining data with regards to some problems under investigation. Creswell (2005) explains that questionnaire as a form is used in a survey design that participants in the study complete and return. Questionnaire would therefore mean a mechanism through which researchers gather information by asking respondents series of questions on a topic been researched. It is widely used in educational research to obtain information about certain conditions and practices, and to probe into opinions and attitudes of an individual, or a group.

McMillan and Schumacher (1989) noted that, it is a common technique for collecting data in educational research, and most survey research. The questionnaire used was the Likert Scale type. It contained rating responses; strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) to given statements in the appropriate columns. The rating was numbered four (4) to one (1) in descending order. The questionnaire for teachers contained 56 items under headings; selection of students for vocational class, preparing students and parents for effective vocational placement, why would a student not accept vocational and the challenges students face in performing vocational activities. The questionnaire for students contained 27 items under the headings; selecting students for vocational class placement, why a student would not accept vocational class placement, challenges students face in performing of vocational class activities, and the benefits of vocational education to the blind. The Likert Rating Scale measures the strengths of agreement with clear statement which is often administered in the form of questionnaire used as gauge attitude or reactions (Delaney, 2004).

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guides were designed based on the research questions raised in the study. For the students, 25 interview guides were designed and for the parents, 20 interview guides were designed for them. Wellington (2000), explained semi-structured interviews as a flexible not completely pre-determined but more controlled device for collecting data wherein the interviewer (researcher) meets with and ask an individual or a group of people questions. The semi-structured interview guides were used to conduct interviews on parents/guardians of visually impaired and the students as well. The parents were selected conveniently. Cohen, Marion, and Morrison (2003), consider interview as a means of gathering information or data as in a survey.

The interview guide for the students covered such areas as; what the expectation of the blind in life is?, why would the blind not accept to learn a vocation in the school, the vocational courses offered in the school, difficulties the face in learning vocational subjects, and when they can be given vocational placement in the school.

The interview guide for the parents also in it, what teachers and parents can do together to provide effective vocational education to blind , parents reaction when their ward are given vocational placement, capabilities of their children, future expectation for their children, the problem students encounter in the learning of vocational courses, and some worksites where the blind can work in the community, and whether they will recommend vocational placement for their children at Akropong School for the Blind. All the interview guides contained open ended questions.

Observation Guide

Observation guide as an instrument for data collection was undertaken to observe certain activities and processes regarding vocational and career education at Akropong School for the Blind. Douglas (1976) cited in Radnor (2002) noted that, observation is an alternative source of data for enhancing triangulation against information gathered through other means such as questionnaire, or interview. The use of observation guide was to help the researcher to ascertain the realities about the nature of vocations being taught and the programming of the training of those placed into the vocational department of the school. Tuckman (1994) noted that observation refers to what is, that is, to what can be seen. The observation covered these areas: vocational teaching and learning materials, vocational activities, and participation by students, and the teaching and learning environment of the school. For the vocational facilities/teaching and learning materials, the variables available, not available, adequate, inadequate were used. For the vocational activities and class interaction, the variables very good, encouraging, discouraging, and very discouraging were used.

Pre-Testing of Instruments

The goal of any good researcher is to maintain measures that are valid and reliable. Validity is concerned with whether the research findings will be authentic (Creswell, 2005). Seidu (2006) noted that reliability of the research instrument is the consistency of the instrument providing the result. To ensure validity and reliability of the results of the research, questionnaire items and interview guide were given or shown to the supervisor (expert) of this research to vet for necessary correction. The items were also pre-tested at

the Cape Coast School for the Deaf which has a vocational department for training the hearing impaired and the visually impaired in the school. The pre-testing was done there because the blind students at Cape Coast School for the deaf have similar characteristics as those at Akropong School for the blind. 5 teachers and 10 students were selected purposively for the pre-testing of the instrument. The internal consistency of items in the questionnaires was determined by the use of Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the reliability test for the teacher questionnaire was .736, whereas the Cronbach's Alpha value for the reliability test for the students was .776

The semi-structured interview guide was pre-tested on 2 parents of visually impaired students at Cape Coast School for the deaf and blind. The interview guide covered such areas like: teachers and parents meeting regularly to discuss the provision of vocational education for the blind, Parents' reaction toward vocational placement for their ward in the school, the blind child begging on the street, courses which the blind can learn and practice in the world of work, the capabilities of the blind child, parents visiting their ward in the school, what parents want the blind child to be in future, employable skills the school should equipped the blind with, and the blind working in the community to earn a living.

Parents who could not read and write had interview guide questions read out to them and their responses written as they spoke. Literate parents read questions in the interview guide and wrote down their responses. There was observation of vocational teaching and learning materials, vocational activities, and participation of students, and the teaching and learning

environment of the above school to cross-check against responses from the questionnaire. One day was used for the pre-testing exercise.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher collected data by administering questionnaires to sighted and blind teachers of the school. The researcher read and explained items to students who could not read. The limitation here is that, there is the possibility of distortion of information from the teacher interviewer who read and explained the items to the student respondents and responses recorded by the interviewer. It was possible that recording was not accurately done. The items were Brailled for the student respondents and the teacher respondents.

Parents who were selected by accidental sampling were interviewed on one-to-one basis. The researcher explained to parents the reason for conducting the interview. The limitation here was that, there could be the possibility of distortion of information from the interviewer and as well from the interviewee. That is, items might not be explained well to parents, or the interviewer not written exactly the responses to the questions in the interview guide. The observation was done on students and teachers both in and outside the classroom. The materials were inspected by the researcher with the use of the observation guide, and class activities were observed during teaching and learning processes in the school and observations noted as per the observation guide. Data collection lasted for five days for the questionnaire, interview and observation.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and statistical methods were used to analyze data that was collected. This involved the use of percentages and frequency distribution

tables. The Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) computer software was used for the data analysis.

Responses from respondents to the questionnaire items were read and cross – checked to find out the common and divergent views in order to do proper categorization of responses according to the key themes in the research questions. For easy analysis of the questionnaire, the ratings strongly agree and agree were combined while strongly disagree and disagree were also combined. Best and Khan (1995) noted that, “if a Likert Scale is used, it may be possible to report responses in percentages by combining the two outside categories” (p.24).

Responses that emerged from the interview and appeared to be the dominant views in relation to the research questions were recorded systematically. Verbatim expressions of views from parents or guardians and students were used where necessary. Notes which were taken during the observation were either used to confirm or disconfirm findings which emerge from the questionnaire developed for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter dealt with the analysis of the data collected from responses of teacher respondents to the 56 questionnaire items administered to them and 27 item questionnaire administered to students/pupils respondents as well as interview conducted with student/pupil respondents and parent/guardian respondents whose children were in Akropong School for the Blind in the Akuapem-North District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. In the course of the analysis, each research question raised was first stated and the questionnaire items designed for each were used in the analysis. Furthermore, results of interviews with pupils or students, parents and guardian respondents, and personal observations made were also used in the discussion of the findings. In the presentation of the results, the four ratings; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree were shown in the tables, but in the discussion, strongly agree (SA) and agree (A) were fused together and disagree (D) and strongly disagree (A) were also put together for easy discussion. Each research question has two (2) tables answering it. That is, a table each for responses on questionnaires from teachers and students. The responses from the tables were presented first, followed by the discussions on the tables. The use of two tables for each research question was to help to

corroborate some of the views of the respondents especially the teachers and the students.

Research Question One

How are Students selected for the Vocational Class at Akropong

School for the Blind?

Table 1 and 2 were used to answer research question one. Table 1 presented responses of teachers on selection of students for the vocational class.

Table 1 above, was used to answer research question one. Finding out whether students/pupils would like to complete Junior High School (JHS) before they would opt for vocational training in the school. In response, 33 (73.3%) respondents agreed while 12 (26.7%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Concerning whether blind students would like to continue vocational training to a higher educational level, 29(64.4%) respondents agreed to the statement in item 16 and 16 (35.6%) disagreed with the statement.

Findings from the teachers showed that, some visually impaired students admitted in the school wished to complete Junior High School before enrolling into the vocational and career training programme in the school would also like to continue their vocational training to a higher educational level.

From the interview granted by students as to their expectation in life they expressed similar views as put forward by Wolffe (1990), who described the unique needs of the visually impaired into five include; realistic feedback, high expectations, and opportunity to work, compensation skills, and exposure to visual input.

Their comments were as follows:

Three of the students express the desire to learn to become lawyers in the future. Others did not mention any specific occupation, but express the desire to be able to get good work to do after school so that, they will be independent.

In like manner, an interview with some parents/ guardians as to the educational level they wanted their wards to reach in vocational training, these were their comments;

Eight parents expressed similar desire of their children to get to a level like a secondary school after completing JHS at Akropong School for the Blind.

Eleven other parents wish their children could be helped to learn a vocation at the senior high school and to university like their sighted counterparts.

These findings were in line with the observation of Imel (1990) that, vocational education can be at the secondary and post – secondary levels of education and visually impaired students can interact with their non – handicapped peers even in the apprenticeship system. He further noted that, as the labour market becomes more specialised and economies demand high levels of skills, governments and businesses are increasingly investing in the future of vocational education through publicly funded training institutions and, or organisations and subsidised apprenticeship or traineeship initiatives for business.

Concerning item 3 which was to find out if students train in vocations of their choice in the school, 19 (42.2%) teacher respondents agreed while 26 (57.8%) disagreed with the statement. Using item 4 to find out whether students only given vocational training on their own volition, 19 (42.2%) agreed with the statement whereas 26(57.8%) of the teacher respondents disagreed. Responding to item number 5 on individualised transitional

vocational planning for visually impaired students, 11 (24.4%) teacher respondents agreed while 34 (75.6%) disagreed with the statement.

These findings from the teachers revealed that, the teachers did not do individualised transitional vocational programme selection of students for the vocational class at Akropong School for the Blind. This finding did not conform to the American Foundation for the Blind (2009) which observed that, students with visual impairment often require individualised selection programmes and for that matter individualised instruction since group selection and instruction for learning specialised skills may not be provided in meaningful manner.

To find out if blind students could be trained in other vocational aspects apart from craft at Akropong Special School for the Blind, responses to item 6 indicated that 32 (71.1%) agreed while 13 (28.9%) disagreed with the statement. Finding out whether vocational experts were invited to help teachers of Akropong School for the Blind to screen students for the transitional vocational placement and to also share their expertise knowledge with students, none of the respondents agreed, instead, 45 (100%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Furthermore, findings had indicated that, teachers of the school believed that vocational education students could be trained in other vocations apart from craft. They also observed that, no expert assessment is done to determine which students could conveniently pursue vocational programmes in the school. These findings did not corroborate the views of Walker (1982) who submitted that, all human beings are unique and must be given the type of

education that enables them to polish up and utilised their unique potentials and talents.

Responding to item 8 which was on students been given the option to choose vocational placement in the school, 29 (57.8%) respondents agreed while 16(42.2%) teacher respondents disagreed with the statement. On the issue of students/pupils been given the chance to discuss their vocational class placement in the school, 25 (55.6%) respondents agreed and 20(44.4%) teacher respondents disagreed with item 9.

Again, from Table 1, it was found that, selection for the vocational class was also optional for students and students can discuss their vocational placement with the teachers. That is, students can opt to be selected to train in a vocation at Akropong School for the Blind. Bill (1980) indicated that, vocational programmes can be planned in conjunction with existing training programmes and a student may participate in existing vocational programmes as their needs and individual abilities permit.

Responding to question 10 of teachers ability able to design programmes which address vocational education needs of the blind, 20 (44.4%) of the respondents agreed and (25.66%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. To find out if talents of students are usually been identified by teachers in the school and developed accordingly with item 11, 21 (46.7%) respondents agreed and 24 (53.3%) disagreed with the statement. Finding out whether teachers in the school are able to identify different market-oriented vocations for students to train in, 19 (42.2%) respondents agreed while 26 (57.8%) disagreed with the statement.

Findings further suggested that, though students are selected for the vocation class, teachers are not able to design programmes to address the vocational needs of the blind though the teachers are able to identify the talents of students. These trends of findings did not corroborate the views of Wehman (1997), who indicated that what is most important for individuals with disabilities is to develop multiple employment choices that reflect the array of job opportunities available to non- disabled workers in the same community.

Table 2 was also used to answer research question one. It contained responses of students on the selection of visually students for the vocational class.

As shown in Table 2 above, responding to question 1 which was on the visually impaired learning vocational courses at higher levels of education, 73 (63.5%) student respondents agreed with the statement while 42 (36.5%) respondents disagreed. Table 2 showed that, majority of the students hold the view that, persons with visual impairment can learn vocational courses of their choice to a higher level such as SHS and tertiary institutions just like their non- visually impaired counterparts. The finding fell in line with Wolffe (1990), who described the unique needs of the visually impaired into five which include realistic feedback, high expectation, and opportunity to work, compensation skills, and exposure to visual input.

Touching on the need to provide career guidance and counselling to blind students in the school, 73(63.5%) student respondents agreed and 42(36.5%) respondents disagreed with questionnaire item 2. Furthermore, finding indicated that, the students wished they were given vocational career guidance and counselling before selection to enable them make appropriate vocational choice which is presently lacking.

Reacting to questionnaire item 3 in Table 2 which was to find out whether visually impaired students would want to be selected for vocational class only after completion of JHS and it should be optional, 78 (67.8%) student respondents agreed and 37 (32.2%) respondents disagreed with the statement. To find out if vocational placement should not be for only those who are not good academically at school for the Blind, responses to item 4 shown that 70 (60.9%) respondents agreed to the statement whereas 45(39.1%) respondents disagreed.

From Table 2, it has been established that, majority of the students at Akropong School for the Blind would want to complete JHS first before opting for vocational placement if it was necessary for them to do so, and that, the selection for the vocational class is not a preserve any group of students. These findings corroborate the findings from the teachers that, the visually impaired would like to complete JHS before opting for vocational placement at Akropong School for the Blind.

With regards to item 5 which was to find out whether the blind need to train in a variety of vocational courses which are marketable in the world of work, 93 (80.9%) student respondents agreed and 22 (19.1%) disagreed with the statement. The blind noted that, they need to train in variety of vocations in the school. In an interview with the students as to which vocational courses to be added to those that already exist in the school, the following course areas mentioned;

Cosmetics, leather work, catering, batik tie –dye, pomade making, soap making, dressing making, ceramics, snail rearing, mushroom farming, kente weaving, music, and crotchet work.

Similarly, parents/guardians of the visually impaired who were interviewed expressed the same view as the teachers and the students of the school. For example, majority of the parents mentioned vocations such as:

Computing, Kente weaving, music and dance, snail rearing, bead making, and catering.

One parent said:

“I know my daughter can sing so well, she should be trained in that.”

Another parent said:

“When school vacates and my son comes home, he is fond of trying to fix electrical gadgets which are no longer functioning. I think that is his talent.”

This parent further added:

“At times I ask myself, can this boy see and pretend not to see.”

Walker (1982) submitted that all human beings are unique and must be given the type of education that enables them to polish up and utilised their unique talents.

Concerning whether vocational placement for students at Akropong School for the Blind is based on student’s interest and choice, 94 (81.7 %) student respondents agreed with the statement whereas 21 (18.3%) disagreed. With question item 12 which was to find out whether there should be a variety of courses in the vocational department of Akropong School for the Blind, for the visually impaired to choose apart from craft, 93 (80.9%) of the student respondents agreed while 22(19.1%) respondents disagreed with the statement.

The students observed that, the vocational class placement should be based on choice and interest and that, the vocational department should incorporate different courses since they have different vocational interests. These findings corroborate teachers’ assertion; students should train in a variety of courses apart from craft.

Nweke (1989) opines that an individual chooses occupations tentatively as he explores these jobs through discussions with peers and significant adults. He further noted that, this is the stage the individual makes important educational and vocational decisions based on choice.

Finding out whether the blind need vocational skills training which would make them employable, 94(81.7%) student respondents agreed with questionnaire item 6 and 21 (18.3%) respondents disagreed.

From Table 2, the students believed that, they need a vocational skills training which will make them employable in society and not what they were experiencing. In answering research question 1, it was observed from table 1 and 2 that, no transitional vocational screening was done to select students who could perform vocational and also identify students with additional handicapped conditions, selection of students for the vocational class purely based on students academic non- performance, students were not allowed to complete JHS before been given vocational placement if it was necessary, the selection was also necessarily based on the interest of the students, and students were also given the chance to opt for vocational placement at Akropong School for the blind.

Kregel & Bercus (1985) noted among other things that the secondary school programme must stress functional skill; that is students must learn vocational skills they would actually need for employment situations and interpersonal skills necessary to work effectively with non- disabled workers and peers in integrated schools and work site.

Research Question Two

How are Students and Parents Prepared by Teachers to Ensure an Effective Vocational Special Education Placement of Students?

Table 3 above, was used to answer research question two. Question item 1 was used to find out if parents of the visually impaired are much concerned about their wards vocational educational placement. In the response, 20 (44.4%) of the teacher respondents agreed with the statement and 25 (55.6%) disagreed.

From table 3, it was found out that, parents of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the blind show little or no concern about their wards vocational education and training.

Finding out whether parents of the visually impaired in Akropong School for the Blind are given terminal reports on the academic achievement of their wards, 15 (33.3%) teacher respondents agreed with the statement of item number 2 while 30 (66.7%) teacher respondents disagreed. Subsequently, parents of the students in the school were also not given terminal report on their wards academic achievement in the school at the end of each term. This means parents have little or no idea about their wards performance in the school. These findings are inconsistent to the fact that parents were supposed to be active partners or stakeholders in the education of their children. Touching on whether teachers of Akropong School for the blind hold regular counselling sessions with parents on the need for vocational placement for their wards, 15(33.3%) teacher respondents agreed with the statement of item number 3, while 30(66.7%) teacher respondents disagreed.

Further findings revealed that, teachers did not have regular counselling sessions with parents on vocational placement of their wards in the school and this was a mismatch as far as special education is concerned. Parents are to be provided with vocational counselling as it pertains to their

children. These findings did not corroborate the views of Maxim (1997) who observed that, a major opportunity for parents' participation involves making decision regarding the policies and curriculum directions of their children's schooling and education. Hayford (1998) commented that, school placement decisions were roles of parents taken jointly with professionals of which teachers are not exempted.

Reacting to item 4 which was to find out if teachers organised regular career counselling and guidance sessions for students on vocational skills development in the school, 19 (42.2%) teacher respondents agreed with the statement and 26 (57.8%) respondents disagreed. Item number 5 indicated that 24 (53.3%) of the respondents agreed and 21 (46.2%) disagreed with the statement that, teachers help students who are not academically good in the mainstream to identify their talents and potentials. With item number 6, 17 (37.8%) of the respondents agreed and 28 (62.2%) of the teacher respondents disagreed with the statement that teachers actively involved parents whose children are in the vocational class in the progress of their children's education.

These findings showed that, teachers did not actively involved students and parents to get better understanding of vocational education and training. The indication is that, parents would not know much with regards to vocational training for their children.

Responding to item 7, which states educating any blind individual largely depends on the co-operation of students, parents and teachers, 39 (86.7) respondents agreed while 6 (13.3%) disagreed with the statement. In reference to item 8, which states parents visit their blind children in the school

to observe them perform vocational training activities, 11 (24.4%) respondents agreed but 34 (75.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement. In response to item 9 which states parents and students are given the placement options in the school and the criteria for the placement during admission of students into the school, 19 (42.2%) respondents agreed and 26 (57.8%) disagreed with the statement.

Findings from table 3 further revealed that, though educating the blind in vocations demanded co-operation between teachers, students, and parents, this was not the case at Akropong School for the blind. Parents did not visit their wards in school, and were also not given the criteria for vocational placement during admission by the teachers. An interview granted by some parents of the students in the school on what teachers and parents can do together to provide effective vocational education to the blind, majority of the parents express similar desire about teachers and parents to plan together for the training of the children.

Responses to item 10 showed, 12 (26.7%) teacher respondents agreed and 33 (73.3%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that teachers attend transitional planning meeting with parents. This showed that, teachers of the school did not attend transitional planning meeting with parents which was key to any effective vocational training. Mawutor & Selete (2004) observed that, more than anyone else; the family is the critical mass of people that can provide support to the transitional process. The family tends to be the only constant to the student's life. The family can serve the role as an advocate and case manager through this process.

In responding to the statement that, teachers take vocational skills students to worksites to learn on the job, none of the respondents agreed but all 45 (100%) teacher respondents disagreed with the statement. This finding indicated that, students were only trained in the school without exposing them to on- the – job training for pragmatic experience.

Concerning item 12, 11(24.4%) respondents agreed but 34 (75.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement that students are assessed for any additional handicapped before given a vocational class placement. This finding revealed that, though there should be assessment of students for additional handicapping conditions, teachers were not doing it.

Reacting to item 13, 7 (15.6%) teacher respondents agreed and 38 (84.4%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that, there is a regular in-service training course sessions for the vocational education teachers on how to prepare parents and students for effective vocational placement and training. This pre – supposed that, there was lack of in – service training for teachers to help update them on the modern ways of vocational education for the disabled.

In an interview granted by parents as to what would be their reactions if their wards were placed in the vocational department and cannot get any work to do after graduating from the school, a parent said: “I will be disturbed and say I have wasted money in taken my child to school”.

Three other parents express the desire to try to provide the child with something to do, especially if the child can practice was learnt in school. Table 3 has showed that, students and parents were not prepared by the teachers of Akropong School for the blind in any way special to help to better understand

the need for vocational training to visually impaired persons to ensure an effective vocational placement. The table indicated talents and potentials of students were not identified to determine what vocations they can learn effectively, parents and students were not given the placement options during the time of admission, students were not assessed for any multiple handicapping conditions in students, and there were no transitional meetings with parents of the students of Akropong school for the blind.

The American Foundation for the Blind (2009) observed that, visual loss can result in delayed concept development which without effective intervention, severely impacts the student's social, emotional, academic and vocational development.

**Research Question Three: What Challenges do Blind Students Face
in Performance of Vocational Activities in the School?**

Table 4 represented the responses of teacher respondents of Akropong School for the Blind on the challenges the blind face in the performance of vocational activities during teaching and learning processes in the school. The responses were used to answer research question three.

Expressing opinion that the visually impaired students are not able to continue with vocational education to higher levels especially those at Akropong School for the Blind, 34 (75.6%) teacher respondents agreed with the statement while 11 (24.4%) disagreed. Responses from teacher respondents in table 4 indicated that, visually impaired students not able to continue to higher levels in vocational training though they wished to go higher on the educational ladder in vocations they learn. This in effect does not create vocational interest in students making some of them to refuse vocational placement in the school. This did not corroborate the views of Imel (1990) that vocational education can be at the secondary and post- secondary levels of education and visually impaired students can interact with their non-handicapped peers even in the apprenticeship system. He further noted that, as the labour market becomes more specialised and economies demand high levels of skills, government and businesses are increasingly investing in the future of vocational education through publicly funded training institutions and , or organisations and subsidised apprenticeship or traineeship initiatives for businesses.

It was further indicated that, 25 (55.6%) teacher respondents agreed and 20 (44.4%) respondents disagreed with the statement that students have the notion they cannot conveniently practice transitional vocational skills learned at the school in the world of work. This finding from table 4 showed

that, students had the idea that, they cannot work with the vocational skills training they acquire from school for the blind since the training did not go beyond the basic education level.

This finding was inconsistent with the view of Avoke and Avoke (2004) who noted that, in the education of the disabled in society, schools should incorporate vocational education and experiences beginning in the elementary grades and continuing to senior levels of vocational education, or career education and training to provide for their employment.

With regard to item number 3 in table 4, 26 (57.8%) teacher respondents agreed whereas 19 (42.2%) respondents disagreed with the statement that student lack initiative, risk taking ability, self-awareness and self-confidence. This finding revealed limitations of pupils; such as lack of initiative, risk taking ability, self-awareness and self- confidence which students exhibited in the learning of vocational courses in the school.

Finding out about vocational training facilities that, the school lacks the training facilities, using item number 4, 34 (75.6%) teacher respondents agreed with the statement that, there is lack of vocational education and training facilities in the school and 11 (24.4%) respondents disagreed. Subsequently, majority of the teachers in the school observed that, the school lacked the appropriate vocational education and training facilities in the school hence this did not make some students to readily accept vocational placement.

Concerning students' ability to perform vocational activities, 31 (68.9%) teacher respondents agreed with item number 5 which has the statement, some students are not able to perform vocations presently offered in the school due to additional disabilities and 14 (31.1%) respondents disagreed.

Findings had further revealed that, students were not able to perform activities in vocations learned presently because of multiple disabilities such as stiffness of the fingers, hearing difficulty, and mental retardation which were limitations to effective vocational placement and learning.

Table 5 was also used to answer research question three. It contained responses of students on the challenges the students face in the performance of vocational activities in the school.

Table 5: Challenges students face in the performance of vocational activities in the school

Challenges faced by students in performing vocational activities	Response				
	SA	A	D	SD	Total
The blind have the problem of vocational indecision	30 26%	50 43.5%	15 13.3%	20 17.4%	115 100%
There is lack of job oriented training facilities in the school	42 36.5%	50 43.5%	14 12.2%	9 7.8%	115 100%
Some students have additional handicapping conditions	30 26%	40 34.4%	25 21.7%	20 17.4%	115 100%

Table 5 was also used to answer research question three. It contained students' responses as to the challenges they face in performing and learning vocational skills. From table 5, 80 (69.6%) student respondents agreed and 35 (30.4%) disagreed with the statement that the blind have the problem of vocational indecision. This finding indicated that, students have the difficulty in making the choice in a vocation to learn and even whether or not accept vocational placement in the school. This finding corroborated Ginzberg's

Theory of vocational behaviour which emphasised the developmental nature of vocational choice. In the life stages as provided in the theory, vocational choice correspondingly changes as the individual moves through the life-stages (Pietrofessa, Minor, Berstein, & Stanford, 1980).

In response to item 2, 92 (80%) student respondents agreed with the statement that, there is lack of job-oriented vocational training facilities in the school while 23 (20%) respondents disagreed. Furthermore, it was found that from table 5 that, there was lack of job – oriented vocational training facilities in the school. This in effect makes teaching and learning difficult for both teachers and students in the school. This finding from the students corroborated the views of the teacher respondents that there was lack of vocational skills training facilities at the vocational department of Akropong School for the Blind.

Similarly, students who were interviewed revealed some other challenges which the vocational education students faced at Akropong School for the Blind. In the response of students as to other challenges they face in learning vocations in the school, lack of funds to provide training facilities dominated the views expressed by the students. However, two students in like manner observed that, students are more than the teachers.

One other student noted that, “some of us cannot get concepts taught well and others too cannot manipulate the materials to perform the activities, for instance the weaving of basket”.

Findings from parents in an interview granted the researcher as to what they think are problems that the blind faced in the learning of a vocation in the

school, lack of tools and materials dominated views expressed by the parents interviewed.

The researcher's observation of tools and raw materials mostly used in the school for basketry work and wood work revealed the following findings; one each of the following obsolete and rusty tools were found in the vocational education department, round nosed plier, side cutter, small spring shears, large spring shears, straight bodkin, bent bodkin, rapping hammer, knife and Braille tape measure. For the raw materials, the observation revealed small quantities of the following: cane for weaving, sea-grass rope, nylon rope, corn husk, coconut fibre, and dye. Others were; stool frame, hand frame, setting needle, sand paper, synthetic clear varnish, thinner and carpenters glue.

The observation further revealed that, the vocational department of the school had four classrooms but there was inadequate tables and chairs for students' use. AFB (2009) commented that, students with visual impairment are limited in acquiring information through incidental learning since they are often unaware of subtle activities in their environment. This means that, learning materials are required to help the visually impaired to learn effectively. Bruce and Meggiti (2002) observed that, children with visual disabilities do not need very expensive equipment or instructional materials to learn.

Responding to item 3 which states that, some students have additional handicapping conditions which inhibit their performance of vocational activities, 70(60.9%) student respondents agreed while 45(39.1%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Additionally, from table 5 which contained responses of students, it was found that, some students had additional or

multiple handicapping conditions which inhibited their performance of vocational skills activities. This finding from the student respondents corroborated the views of the teacher respondents that some students could not perform vocational activities due to additional handicapped conditions.

In the interview with student respondents, a student interviewee remarked: “some of us have stiff fingers and they cannot weave with the fingers and others too have learning difficulties and the mind is low”. It was possible that, visual impairment may be accompanied by other handicapping conditions that make performing of vocational activities difficult and as such would not be interested in vocational skills training.

Regarding answers to research question three, findings were that, students lack initiative, risk –taking ability, self- awareness and self-confidence. There were lack of job-oriented vocational training facilities in the school, some students have additional handicapped conditions, there were more vocational students than vocational skills training teachers at Akropong School for the blind and some students have the problem of vocational indecision in the school.

Research Question Four

What Reasons Do Students Give for Refusing Vocational Placement at Akropong School for the Blind?

Table 6 and 7 were used to answer research question four. The tables contained responses of teachers and students on reasons why students refuse vocational placement in the school

As shown in table 6 above, 25 (55.6%) teacher respondents agreed and 20 (44.4%) respondents disagreed with the statement that, students at school for the Blind look mean on vocational training in the school. In responding to question item 2 which has the statement, some parents complain when their children are placed in vocational class in the school, 29 (64.4%) teacher respondents agreed while 16 (35.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Table 6 had shown that, students of Akropong School for the Blind looked mean upon vocational skills training in the school and that some parents or guardians complained when their children were given vocational class placement. This attitude of parents would rather make some students vehemently refused vocational placement in the school.

Concerning the statement that, the visually impaired do not have equal access to vocational education and training in Ghana as their non-visually impaired counterparts, 36 (80%) teacher respondents agreed whereas 9 (20%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Further finding from table 6 revealed that the visually impaired do not have equal access to vocational training in Ghana as their non-visually impaired counterparts.

Responding to item 4, 30 (66.7%) teacher respondents agreed but 15 (33.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement that vocational courses offered in the school currently were not market oriented. Another challenge which emerged from table 6 was that, vocational courses offered in the school currently were not market oriented to the blind and that vocational education students were not able to secure jobs after graduating from school. Adentwi (2002) in a situation analysis of provision of education commented that, for education to prove useful therefore, the special needs, interest, and purpose of

the people and the conditions in the specific society in which they live must be thoroughly studied and appropriately addressed.

Item 5 showed that, 17 (37.8%) teacher respondents agreed and 28 (62.2%) respondents disagreed to the statement that vocational students were able to secure jobs after graduating from school. Responses to item 6 which sought to find out whether the jobs the blind do after their vocational training provide a living wage indicated that, 19 (24.2%) respondents agreed and 26(57.8%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Teachers of Akropong school for the blind had noted that, vocational education students were not able to secure jobs and that the work done by some of them did not provide a living wage.

Item number 7 indicated that, 27(60%) teacher respondents agreed and 18(40%) respondents disagrees with the statement that some of the vocational courses offered in the school were not interesting to attract students. This finding indicated that, the vocational courses presently offered in the school were not interesting and not appealing to students. Wehman (1997) commented that employment represents a major element in the lives of people with or without handicaps.

Table 6 has further showed that, 24(53.3%) of the respondents agreed while 21 (46.7%) disagreed with the statement that, students were allowed to make and sell articles on their own for some money. Teachers of the school had noted that, vocational education students were given the chance to make and sell items to earn some money on their own.

Finding out if vocational training is a preserve for only those who are not academically good in the mainstream, 15 (33.3%) respondents agreed and

30 (66.7%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Concerning the statement which states, not all students were happy when placed in the vocational class in the school, 31 (68.9%) respondents agreed and 14 (31.1%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Additionally, finding from table 6 shown that, vocational placement and training should not be a preserve for only those who were not good in the mainstream and also not all students given vocational placement were happy even though the blind need to be trained in vocations for their employment. Finding out whether there was no need to train the blind in vocations for their employment, 45 (100%) disagreed with the statement none of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Responding to the statement that, some individuals with visual impairment end up on the street to ask for alms after graduating from the vocational class, 29 (64.4%) respondents agreed but 16(35.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement. On whether the blind must not work but rather depend on others for their livelihood, 2 (4.4%) teacher respondents agreed while 43 (95.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Findings from teachers of Akropong School for the blind had further indicated that, some blind students end up on the street to ask for alms after graduating from the vocational class. They however noted that, the blind must work to earn a living.

Walker (1982) observed that all human beings are unique and must be given the type of education that enables them to polish up and utilise their potential and talents. This means that implementers of the school curriculum should be able to place students in programmes which would help to develop

their talents and potentials to make them economically independent in adult life.

Table 7 was also used to answer research question four. It contained responses of students on reasons why students refuse vocational placement in the school.

Table 7 above, which constituted responses from student respondents were also used to answer research question four.

In response to item 1, which states, some of the under-performing students in the academic work are made to take placement in the craft department, 70 (60.9%) student respondents agreed and 45 (39.1%) disagreed with the statement. Majority of the students revealed that teachers force them to take vocational placement in the school.

Responses to item 2 indicated that, 67 (58.3%) student respondents agreed whereas 48 (41.7%) respondents disagreed with the statement that some of the guardians threatened to stop sponsoring their wards should they be given vocational placement. Parents opposing vocational placement for their wards would really not auger well for vocational placement and training in the school. About item 3 which states, my parents or guardians will not accept placing me in the vocational class. 70 (60.9%) student respondents agreed while 45 (39.1%) disagreed with the statement. Additionally, table 7 which contained responses from students revealed that, some of the parents threatened to stop sponsoring their wards should they be given vocational placement in the school. This finding corroborated what the teachers noted that, some parents or guardians threatened to stop taking care of their wards if they were given vocational placement.

Mawutor and Selete (2004) commented that, schools should consciously work with families and to develop a clear image of how students would function in the adult world.

Responding to item 4, response shown that, 92 (80%) student respondents agreed and 23 (20%) respondents disagreed with the statement

that, students placed in the vocational department were looked mean upon. Furthermore, it was found from the students that, students placed in the vocational department were looked mean upon. This finding corroborated the views of the teachers in the school.

In an interview granted by the students, the dominant grievance expressed by the students was that, students who were placed in the vocational class were teased by students in the mainstream learning to write Basic Education Certificate Examination. In addition, four other students similarly observed that, some teachers in the school insult students placed in the vocational class as block-headed and the only thing those in the craft department can learn was to weave basket and doormats.

With regard to item 5 which states, the blind in most cases are not able to practice vocations learned or secure jobs after graduating from school, 77 (67%) respondents agreed but 38 (33%) respondents disagreed with the statement.

Additionally, students noted that, they were not able to practise what they learned in the vocational department. This finding fell in line with the views of the teachers of the school. Hallahan and Kauffman (1994) noted among other things that the disabled need job opportunities and full participation in society. The ability of the visually impaired to perform in the mainstream world of work as individuals with some form of potentials will depend to a large extent on the kind of training they received from the school and society as a whole for their full integration and inclusion. The focus should not be on what the visually impaired cannot do but rather what they can do and be assisted to do it better for their full benefit.

Responses to item 6 indicated that, 93 (80.9%) student respondents agreed but 22 (19.1%) disagreed with the statement that, blind individuals who were able to go to Senior High School and to tertiary level academically had better chances of gaining employment than those who trained in vocations.

Additionally, it was found that, students believed that, blind individuals who were able to S.H.S and to tertiary level of education academically had better chances of gaining employment than those who trained in vocations. This believe of students was a precursor to students refusal to accept vocational placement in the school. Wolfe (1996) noted among other things that, the opportunity to work is a need to the impaired.

Finding out whether courses taught at the school help students to secure jobs, 28 (24.3%) student respondents agreed and 87 (75.7%) student respondents disagreed with the statement that courses taught in the vocational class do not lead to job security. In responding to item 8 which states, courses taught in the vocational department are not market-oriented, 88 (76.5%) student respondents agreed but 36 (31.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. These findings indicated that, students believed the courses taught did not provide them with any meaningful employment after graduating from school. The United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (1987) states among other things that persons with disabilities should be able to live independently and participate fully in aspects of life and also adults with disabilities should have access to general tertiary education, vocational training, and adult and lifelong learning.

Regarding reasons students give for refusing vocational placement, it was established that, some students in the mainstream and some teachers look

mean upon students who were given vocational class placement, some parents threatened to stop sponsoring their ward if they were given vocational placement in the school, the blind believe the visually impaired who were able to go to SHS through to tertiary levels had better chance of gaining employment and the work the blind do after vocational training did not provide a living wage.

Research Question five: How is Vocational Education Beneficial to the Blind and the Visually Impaired after Graduating from School for the Blind?

Tables 8 and 9 were used to answer research question five. The tables contained responses of teachers and students on the benefits of vocational education to the blind after graduating from school for the blind.

Table 8: Response of teachers on the benefits of vocational education to the blind

Benefits of vocational Training to the blind	Response				
	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Vocational training helps the blind make and sell articles for income	10	17	10	8	45
	22.2%	37.8%	22.2%	17.8%	100%
The blind contribute to economic development when they work.	10	17	10	8	45
	22.2%	37.8%	22.2%	17.8%	100%
Vocational training will help the blind to appropriate life.	20	19	4	2	45
	44.4%	42.2%	8.9%	4.4%	100%
Practising vocations learned improve social and economic status	10	19	11	5	45
	22.2%	42.2%	24.4%	11.1%	100%
The blind will stop begging on the street when they are employed	29	10	3	3	45
	64.4%	22.2%	6.7%	6.7%	100%

Table 8 above was used to answer research question five. Finding out whether training visually impaired students in vocational skills will help them

to make and sell articles to generate income. In response, 27 (60%) teacher respondents agreed while 18 (40%) respondents disagreed with the statement. concerning the issue that, when the blind were able to practise vocational skills learned, they will contribute to the development of the economy, 27(60%) teacher respondents agreed to the statement and 18(40%) respondents disagreed.

Table 8 found that, training the visually impaired in vocational skills could help them to make articles on their own to sell in order to generate income, and also contribute meaningfully to the development of the economy.

Responding to item 3 which was to find out whether vocational training will help the blind to appreciate life, 39 (86.6%) respondents agreed with the statement but 6 (13.3%) respondents disagreed. Responding to item 4 which states, when the blind are able to practice vocations learned, their social and economic status will improve, 29 (64.4%) teacher respondents agreed whereas 16 (35.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement. As to whether when the blind are gainfully employed, begging which has characterised the life of some of them will be reduced, or eradicated, 39(86.7%) respondents agreed but 6 (13.3%) teacher respondents disagreed with the statement.

Furthermore, it was found in table 8 that vocational skills training would help the blind to appreciate life. Wehman (1997) noted that employment represents a major element in the lives of people with or without handicaps. When the visually impaired were not able to secure jobs, they see life to be boring because their very existence will be dependent on others in society.

Again, table 8 revealed that, when the blind were to practice vocations learned, their social and economic status would improved and also, gaining full employment would help to reduce, or eradicate begging which has characterised the life of some of them in the Ghanaian society.

In an interview granted by some parents of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the Blind on the question, why would you not advice your blind child to go into begging? Majority of the parents expressed the view that begging is a disgraceful practice and the family will be seen as irresponsible in not helping them to train in a vocation.

Table 9 was also used to answer research question five. It presented responses of students on the benefits of vocational education to the blind.

Table 9: Response of students on how is vocational education beneficial to the blind

Benefits of vocational training to the blind	Response				
	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Vocational training develops in the	40	44	20	11	115
Blind self-confidence and self-reliance	34.8%	38.3%	17.4%	9.6%	100%
The blind will not beg on the street	40	54	12	9	115
When they are gainfully employed	34.8%	47%	10.4%	7.8%	100%
The social and economic status of	40	54	12	9	115
the blind will improve by practising learned vocation.	34.8%	47%	10.4%	7.8%	100%
Vocations practised by the blind	40	44	17	14	115
contribute to economic development.	34.4%	38.3%	14.8%	12.2%	100%

Table 9 above represented responses from student respondents on the benefit of vocational education to persons with visual impairment. It was used to answer research question five.

Responses from Table 9 indicated that, 84 (73%) of the student respondents agreed while 31 (27%) respondents disagreed with the statement that, learning a vocation would develop in the visually impaired self-confidence, self-reliance and personal adequacy. The blind believe that, if they learned skills in a vocation and were able to work, they would better appreciate life in totality. This finding corroborated the views of the teachers that, when the blind were able to work, they would appreciate life and contribute to the development of the economy of Ghana.

With regards to the statement as to whether or not when the blind are gainfully employed, begging which has characterised their life will be eradicated, 94 (81.7%) respondents agreed while 21 (18.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Further finding from table 9 was that, when the visually impaired were gainfully employed begging which had characterised the life of some of them would be eradicated and their social and economic status will also be improved.

Responding to item 3 which states, when the blind were able to practice a vocation learned, their social and economic status will be improved, 94 (81.7%) student respondents agreed but 21 (18.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. Regarding whether the learning and practising a vocation by the blind will contribute to the economic development of Ghana, 94 (81.7%) student respondents agreed and 21 (18.3%) student respondents disagreed with the statement. CEDEFOP noted among other things that,

persons with disabilities of which the blind were no exception need social interaction competencies for independent life. Hallahan and Kauffman (1994) maintained that what the disabled need most is not , as the professionals would have it, medical help or psychological counselling, but admission to the main channels of daily life and citizenship not custody and care but understanding and acceptance in society. As to the benefits the blind derived from vocational training, it was established that, the blind contribute to economic development when they were able to apply vocational skills learned, the social status of the blind change when they are gainfully employed, the blind will also appreciate life when they are able to apply vocations learned and vocational skills training prevent the blind from asking for alms on the street.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

The study investigated the challenges of transitional vocational placement and training of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the Blind in the Akuapem North District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study was a descriptive survey. Respondents included all 45 teachers of the school, 115 students and 25 parents/guardians of visually impaired students at the school. Questionnaires, interview schedules and observation guide were the instruments used for collecting data for this study. Teachers of the school responded to questionnaire items. The students responded to questionnaire items and interview schedule. Parents also responded to interview schedule. In addition, observations were carried out to cross check responses to the questionnaire and the interview.

The key findings of the study were:

1. No transitional vocational screening was done by teachers and experts in the field of special education to select students for the vocational class.
2. Teachers select students who were not academically good in the mainstream for the vocational class placement.
3. Students were given the chance to opt to train in a vocation at Akropong School for the blind.

4. Selection of students for the vocational class was not necessarily based on students' interest at Akropong School for the Blind.
5. Non performing students in the mainstream were not allowed to complete JHS before placing them in the vocational class even though they would want to complete JHS.
6. Talents and potentials of students were not identified to determine what vocation they can learn effectively.
7. Parents and students were not given the placement options during the time of admission.
8. Students were not assessed for of any additional handicapped condition before given vocational placement.
9. There were no transitional vocational training meetings with parents of the students of Akropong School for the Blind.
10. There was lack of job – oriented vocational training facilities.
11. Some students have additional handicapped conditions.
12. There were more vocational students than vocational skills training teachers at Akropong School for the Blind.
13. Some students had the problem of vocational indecision.
14. Some students and teachers look mean upon students placed in the vocational class.
15. Blind students believe the visually impaired who were able to go to SHS through to tertiary levels had better chances of gaining employment.
16. The work the blind do after vocational training did not provide a living wage.

17. The blind contribute to economic development when they are able to apply vocational skills learned.
18. The social status of the blind change when they are gainfully employed.
19. The blind will also appreciate life when they are able to apply vocations learned.
20. Vocational skills training for the blind will prevent the blind from asking for alms on the streets.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Screening which was to be part of the process of selecting students for the vocational class was not done by the teachers and transitional vocational experts to select students who can learn the vocations been taught at Akropong School for the Blind.
2. Students selected for the vocational class were mainly those who could not do pure academic work in the mainstream and were not also allowed to complete Junior High School.
3. Selection of students for the vocational class was necessarily not based on the interest of the student and it was done when it was observed that, a student is not performing well academically.
4. Students were not helped to identify their vocational talents and potentials as part of preparing them for the vocational placement at Akropong School for the Blind.

5. Students were not assessed for any additional handicapped condition as a precursor of preparing visually impaired students for the vocational class placement.
6. The teachers of Akropong School for the Blind did not organise transitional vocational placement meetings with parents which will mean parents would have little or no knowledge about the need to give students vocational placement if it became necessary.
7. There were lack of job - oriented vocational training facilities at Akropong School for the Blind.
8. Some students placed in the vocational class were having additional handicapping conditions which made it difficult for them to perform vocational activities in the vocational class.
9. The students lack self confidence and vocational indecision and therefore did not see the need for it.
10. Students refuse to vocational placement because some students and teachers at Akropong School for the Bind look mean on vocational training and students who were given vocational placement.
11. Some students refused to willingly accept vocational placement because their respective parents threaten never to take care of them if they were given vocational placement in the school.
12. The blind who were given vocational placement in the school did not accept it because they believe visually impaired individuals who go to SHS and to tertiary institutions had better chance of gaining employment and better livelihood as compared to those who learned vocations.

13. When the blind were able to practise vocations learned in the school, they will appreciate life and would not go asking for alms on the street and as well their social and economic status will change tremendously.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to help improved the provision of vocational skills training at Akropong School for the Blind to bring about quality and diversified vocational education for the visually impaired at Akropong School for the Blind:

1. The school authorities of Akropong School for the Blind should make conscious effort to organise periodic structured in-service training for the vocational education teachers in the school, to update them on current and pragmatic processes of vocation skills training for persons with visual impairment.
2. The Special Education Division in collaboration with Ghana Education Service should incorporate in their programmes for the visually impaired periodic and regular vocational education evaluation and or assessment to ascertain the true state of vocational education for the blind at Akropong School for the Blind. This would help to identify the challenges of special vocational education for the blind at Akropong School for the Blind and for that matter in Ghana and solve them accordingly.
3. The authorities of Akropong School for the Blind should consciously and regularly involve parents of the visually impaired in vocational planning decisions through periodic and regular career guidance and counselling and plan meetings with

parents. This will help parents understand the state of affairs of vocational education in the school and thereby contribute their quota in terms of encouraging their wards to take up vocational training and also help to provide materials which students would need to do effective learning.

4. Authorities of Akropong School for the Blind should have constant career guidance and counselling sessions for both students who are seen to be performing well academically in the mainstream and those who are not good in academic work. This would help all blind students at school for the Blind that, not all of them can do pure academic work in the school, and that some would have to learn vocational skills to make them employable in the world of work.
5. The Special Education Division in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service should ensure that visually impaired students are given the assistance by providing vocational skills training facilities and materials at all levels of vocational education to enable the visually impaired students to learn vocational skills subjects to a higher level to make them more employable in Ghana.
6. Teachers of Akropong School for the Blind should make conscious effort to design vocational programmes which would create variety or incorporate more learnable market oriented vocations in the curriculum. This would help to boost students' interest in vocational skills in the school.

7. Vocational skills training for the visually impaired should not only be in the school, but that students must as well be given on-the-job training. Doing this would help vocational skills students to learn essential skills relevant to employability. If the student is able to meet the demands of the job and otherwise adjust, he/she may be formally employed.
8. Authorities of Akropong School for the Blind should as part of the vocational training programme in the school, incorporate cooperative programme. That is enter into agreement with a neighbouring school or vocational technical school so that students can be transported to the cooperating school for services that the blind need in skill training for the job-market. This would help visually impaired vocational students to have access to facilities and materials which are not available at School for the Blind. It would also create the chance for the visually impaired to learn alongside their non-visually impaired counterparts.
9. The special Education Division of Ghana Education Service should try to identify vocational education subjects which are market-oriented and that the visually impaired can conveniently learn in the special school for the blind and apply in the world of work. For instance, courses such as snail rearing, mushroom farming, poultry, beads making, tie-dye making, soap making, catering, and many others could be considered.

Suggestion for Further Research

Notwithstanding the findings of this research, it is suggested that, a study be conducted on visual experience and socio-economic background of students' and how they affect the vocational interest and choice of visually impaired students at Akropong School for the blind and in Ghana as a whole.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR TEACHERS AT AKROPONG SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

Instruction: The following are the statements about transitional vocational placement and training for the visually impaired at Akropong School for the Blind. Show the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by a tick (✓) in the appropriate column.

Key: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), and SD (Strongly Disagree)

Selecting students for the vocational class at Akropong School for the Blind

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Students would like to complete JHS before training in a vocation				
2	Students would like to continue vocational training to higher levels				
3	Students trained in vocations of their choice in the school				
4	Students are given individualized vocational selection in the school				
5	Students are given vocational placement on their own volition				
6	Students could train in other vocational aspects apart from craft				
7	Vocational experts are invited to help screen students for vocational class				
8	Students are given the option to choose vocational placement				
9	Students discuss their vocations with the teachers of the school				

10	Teachers design programmes to meet vocational needs of the blind				
11	Vocational talents of students are identified and developed accordingly				
12	Teachers train students in different market – oriented vocations in the school				

Preparing parents' and students' for effective vocational placement of students.

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
13	Parents show concern for their wards vocational placement				
14	Parents received termly reports on their wards academic achievement				
15	Teachers hold vocational placement counseling sessions with parents				
16	There are regular career guidance and counseling for students in the school				
17	Teachers help students to identify their vocational talents				
18	Parents are actively involved in their wards progress at school				
19	Teachers and parents are to collaborate to educate the blind				
20	Parents and students are given the placement options during admission				
21	Teachers attend transitional planning meeting with parents				
22	Teachers take students out to work site to learn on the job				

23	Students are assessed for any additional handicapped conditions				
----	---	--	--	--	--

Challenges students face in performing vocational activities in the school

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
24	The blind are not able to continue vocational training to higher levels				
25	Blind students are not practice vocations learned				
26	Students lack initiative, risk taking ability, self-awareness and confidence				
27	The school lacks vocational training facilities				
28	Some students were not able to perform vocational activities due to additional handicaps				

Reasons why a student would not accept vocational placement

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
29	Students look mean on vocational training in the school				
30	Parents complain against their wards vocational placement				
31	The blind have little or no access to vocational training				
32	Students are not interested in vocational courses in the school				
33	Vocational students are able to secure jobs after the training				
34	The jobs the blind do after their				

	training provide a living wage				
35	Vocational training is for only those who are not academically good				
36	Some students are not happy when given vocational class placement				
37	Some students who trained in vocations beg for alms on the street				
38	The blind must rather depend on others for their livelihood				

Benefits of vocational education to the blind

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
39	Vocational training helps the blind make and sell article for income				
40	The blind contribute to economic development when they work				
41	Vocational training will help the blind to appropriate life				
42	Practicing vocations learned improve social and economic status				
43	The blind will stop begging for alms on the street when they are employed				

44. Which vocational courses do you suggest should be offered in the vocational department of school for the blind?

45. what are some of the additional handicapped conditions of the students in the school?.....

Appendix C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS/STUDENTS AT AKROPONG SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND ON TRANSITIONAL VOCATIONAL PLACEMENT

Instruction: The following are statements about vocational placement for the blind. Show the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by a tick (✓) in the appropriate column.

Rating key: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), and SD (Strongly Disagree).

Selection of students for the vocational class at Akropong School for the Blind.

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	The blind can learn vocations of choice to higher levels				
2	The blind need career guidance and counseling for vocational choice				
3	The blind to need to complete JHS before opting to learn a vocation				
4	The vocational placement is not preserve for any group of students				

5	The blind need marketable vocational courses				
6	Vocational placement should be based on interest and choice				
7	Blind students have vocational choice				
8	The blind should be given regular career guidance and counseling				
9	The blind need exposure to world of work during training				

Challenges students face in performing vocational activities in the school

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
10	The blind have the problem of vocational indecision				
11	There is lack of job oriented training facilities in the school				
12	Some students in the vocational class have additional handicaps				

Students' refusal of vocational placement at Akropong School for the Blind

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
13	Under-performing students are forced into the craft department				
14	Guardians threaten to stop paying fee for their wards in vocational class				
15	My parents will not accept vocational placement for me in the school				
16	Students placed in vocational class are looked mean upon				
17	The blind are not able to practice vocations learned				
18	The blind who go to SHS and tertiary levels can secure jobs on completion				
19	Courses taught in the vocational class do not help us to secure jobs				
20	Courses taught in the vocational class are not market – oriented				
21	The jobs the blind do after training in vocation does not provide living wage				

Benefits of vocational education to the blind

No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
22	Development of self- confidence and self- reliance				
23	The blind will not beg for alms on the street when gainfully employed				
24	The social and economic status of the blind will improved				
25	Vocations practiced by the blind contribute to economic development				

Appendix D

Semi – structured interview guide with parents

Which class is your child?

Question 1:

(a) If your child is given vocational education placement in the school, to which level would you want him/her to further the vocational education to?.....

.....
.....

(b) What do you suggest teachers and parents can do together to provide effective vocational education to the blind?.....

.....

(c) What will be your reaction when your child calls or comes home to tell you that he/she has been given vocational class/ placement in the school?

.....
.....
.....

(d) How will you feel when you see your blind child begging on the street?

.....
.....

(e) Suggest/mention some courses which the blind can learn and practice in the world of work?

.....
.....
.....

(f) Mention some of the capabilities of your blind child?

.....
.....
.....

Question2: What do you want your blind or visually impaired child to be in future?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Question 3:

What would be your reaction if your child cannot get any work to do after graduating from the vocational class/department?

.....
.....
.....

(b) Why would you not advise your blind child to go into begging?

.....
.....
.....
.....

(c) Which employable skills do you expect the school to equip your child with?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(d) Mention some of the worksites in society where the blind individual can be gainfully employed?.....

.....
.....

(f) Would you recommend vocational placement for your blind child?

YES [] NO []

(i) If YES, why?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(ii) If NO, why?

.....
.....
.....
.....

(g) What problems do you think the blind face in the learning of a vocation?

.....

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.....

.....

Appendix E

Semi- structured Interview guide with Students

Question 1. What are your expectations in life as a blind person?

.....
.....

Question 2. Why would you or not accept to learn a vocation in the school?

.....
.....

Question 3 (a) which other vocational subjects would you like to be added to those that already exist in the school?.....

.....
.....

(b) Why?.....

.....

Question 4.what difficulties do the blind face in learning vocational subjects in the school?

.....
.....

Question 5. (a) when do you suggest a student of school for the blind be given vocational placement in the school?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(b) Why?

.....

.....

(c) Why would a student given vocational placement in the school not

Willingly accept it?

.....

.....

.....

Appendix F

Observation Guide/Checklist for Vocational Education Facilities/Materials, Activities and the Teaching and Learning Environment

Key 1: Av(Available), NA(Not Available), Ad (Adequate), and

In ad (Inadequate). Tick (√) as appropriate.

Facilities/Vocational Training Materials	Av.	N.A	Ad.	Inad.
1. Classroom block				
2. Tables and chairs				
3. Brailled vocational education books				
4. Special Braille tape measure				
5. Round nose plier				
6. Side cutter				
7. Small spring shears				
8. Straight bodkin				
9. Bent bodkin				
10. Hammer				
11. Cutting knife				

12. Cane for weaving				
13. Sea grass rope				
14. Corn husk				
15. Coconut fibre				
16. Dye				
17. stool frame				
18. Hand frame				
19. Setting needle				
20. Sand paper				
21. Synthetic clear varnish				
22. Thinner and carpenter's glue				

Key 2: V. E (Very Encouraging), E (Encouraging), D (Discouraging) and V. D (Very Discouraging). Tick (✓) as appropriate.

Vocational activities/ class interaction	V.E	E	D	V.D
23. Class interaction				
24. Pupil centred activities				
25. Pupil – pupil relationship				

26. Teacher – pupil rapport				
27. Instruction in class by teachers to students				
28. Vocational programmes in the school				