

The education and employment of people with Visual Impairment in Cyprus

Presented by:
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ST BARNABAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

- Educational provision for children, young people and adults with visual impairment



St Barnabas School for the Blind

- Established in 1929 within the framework of philanthropy (Asylum for the Blind). It was the first special school in Cyprus and still is the only provision of its kind in the island.
- In 1957 the School becomes for the first time a «Public School» under colonial administration through the introduction of the 'St Barnabas School for the Blind' Law (Cap. 168)
- The school pioneered into the integration of students with VI in mainstream settings since 1955 (First instance of a student of the School being integrated into a mainstream secondary school). Integration was officially introduced in Cyprus in 1999 (Special Education Law)

- The School for the Blind is turning from a special school into a Resource and Rehabilitation Centre, having the main responsibility for the provision of education, services and information to individuals with VI of all ages all over Cyprus.
- The School for the Blind is a multi-dynamic centre providing a wide range of services.

The St Barnabas School for the Blind Services

- Nursery and Pre-Primary Education
- Primary Education
- A unit for children with multiple disabilities including visual impairment
- A telephony training department
- Audio recordings and transcriptions into Braille of teaching and other material
- An early intervention programme for children with VI and their families
- Support services for children with visual impairment attending mainstream educational settings
- Training programmes for adults as well as special individual programmes in special curriculum subjects

Support services for children with visual impairment attending mainstream educational settings

Students with visual impairment (VI) are educated in the mainstream schools of their neighbourhood and are supported by 'peripatetic' teachers of the School for the Blind. The organisation of the provision of support services for children with VI is undoubtedly a key factor for the success of their integration.

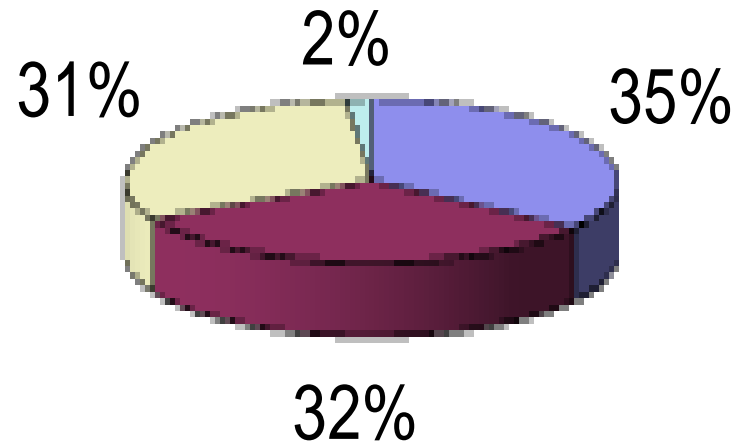
- Within the framework of this programme, services of educational, psychological and social support are provided to the children, their families and the school unit the child attends.
- Teachers from the School for the Blind visit the mainstream schools on a regular basis and work together with the teaching staff and other personnel of the school
- The role of the 'peripatetic' teachers is primarily consultative and assistive.

Training programmes in special curriculum subjects

- Training programmes for adults as well as special individual programmes in special curriculum subjects include:
 - Braille literacy and numeracy
 - Orientation and mobility training
 - Daily living skills training
 - IT and special electronic assistive equipments training

The employment of people with Visual Impairment in Cyprus

The employment of people with visual impairment in Cyprus in the work age group



■ employed

■ unemployed

■ disability pension

■ students

Types of employment among visually impaired people in Cyprus

1. Telephone switchboard operators:

- This is by far the the most popular occupation among the employed VI people in Cyprus as half of them are telephonists, mainly in the public sector
- The 1988 Blind Telephone Operators Act (N.17/1988) legitimizes the right of blind telephone operators who possess all the required qualifications to have priority whenever there are telephone operator vacancies in the public sector. It is in fact a reserved job for people with VI in Cyprus.

2. Teachers and administration officers in the public sector

- About 20% of employed persons with VI work as officers in the public administration, as well as teachers (especially in the humanities) in public schools
- A new law named 'Hiring People with Disabilities in the Greater Public Sector Law' (N. 146(I)/2009) introduced a hiring quota of 10% of disabled people in the public sector.
- Seven persons with VI were hired within the framework of the legislation since the introduction of this law

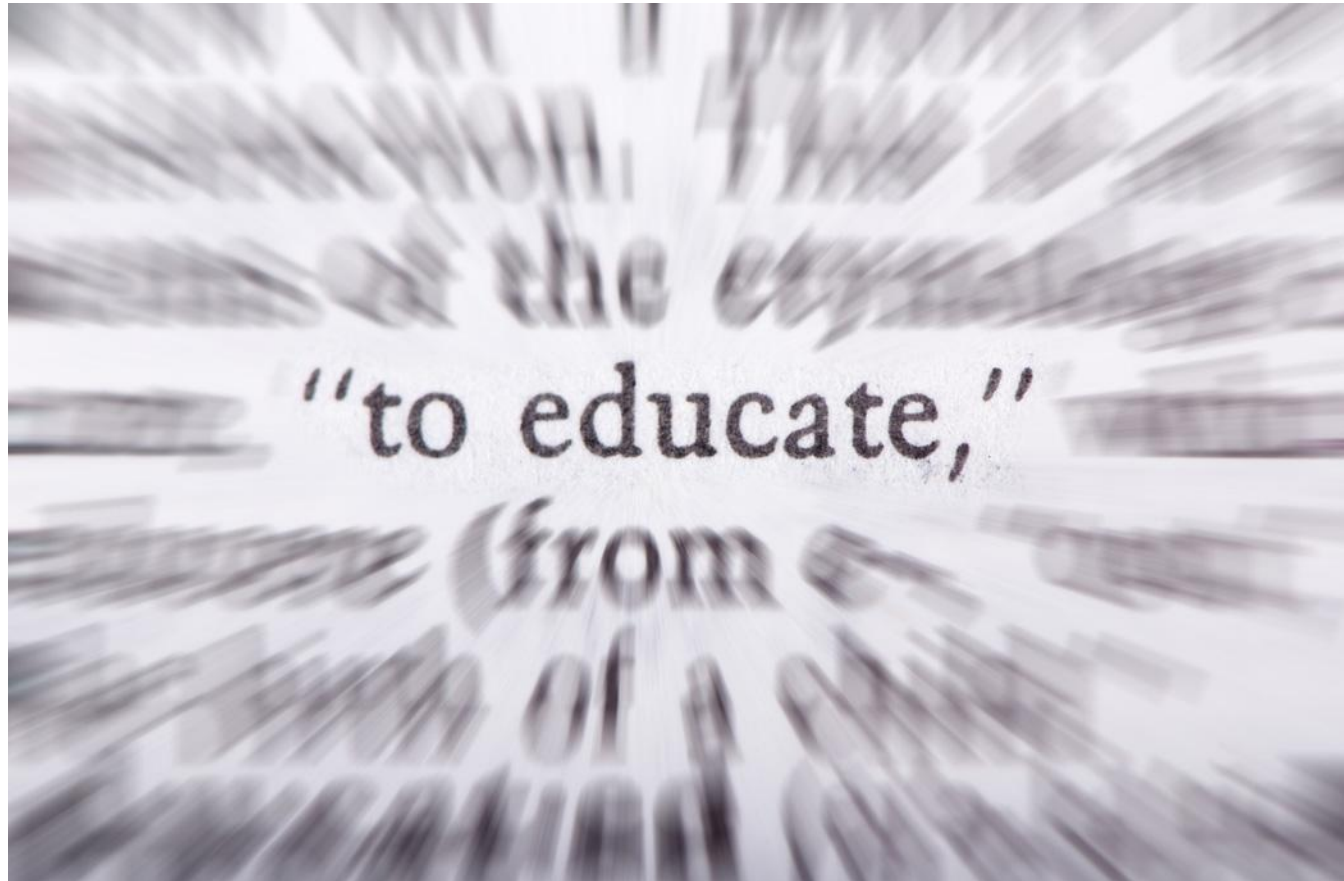
3. Other occupations

- About 30% of employed people with VI are employed in other jobs and sectors including:
- Sheltered workshops of (Straw basket weaving) run by the Pancyprian Organisation of the Blind
- Clerks and officers employed by the Pancyprian Organisation of the Blind
- Self employed (eg musicians)
- Clerks and workers in private sector

Conclusions

- People with VI remain at a significant disadvantage in the labour market
- The new legislation is expected to increase the employability rate of people with disabilities
- The degree of education and the level of qualification have, a clear impact on employability, types of jobs and on security of employment
- Education and training must be understood in the broad sense, starting from primary education and continuing through life-long learning

The answer to unemployment: Education



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