



Global Advanced Research Journal of Educational Research and Review (ISSN: 2315-5132) Vol. 2(2) pp. 031-040, February, 2013  
Available online <http://garj.org/garjerr/index.htm>  
Copyright © 2013 Global Advanced Research Journals

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Effectiveness of existing legislation in empowering people with disabilities

**Emmanuel Munemo and Tom Tom**

Programme Leader, Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, Department of Disability Studies and Special Needs Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Programme Leader, Faculty of Applied Social Sciences; Department of Development Studies, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Accepted 11 February, 2013

**The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of existing legislation in empowering people with disabilities. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. A population of males and females was used from among people with disabilities, support staff and caregivers. People with disabilities took part in the study. Caregivers and Support, staff were interviewed. Data collected was presented in the form of tables, bar graphs and pie charts. It was discovered that people with disabilities encountered challenges in being empowered. Financial and material resources were inadequate. It was also found out that negative attitudes were another hurdle to the empowerment of people with disabilities. The following recommendations were made: that people with disabilities should form advocacy groups to champion their cause. The government should increase funding to people with disabilities. Affirmative action was also needed. Employers should seek more information on what people with disabilities could do if they employed them.**

**Keywords:** Disability, legislation, empowerment, Act and constitution.

## INTRODUCTION

In Zimbabwe there are many people with disabilities. According to a Report on the -National Disability survey (1983) there were two hundred and seventy one thousand people with disabilities in various categories. The report further goes on to indicate that of this figure fifty four thousand nine hundred (54 900) were children of school going age. There being no other survey after this, the statistics of such persons must have gone up to alarming levels. The need for empowerment for this vulnerable group of our population cannot be overemphasized. Mavunduke and Themhani (2000) underscored the need for effective empowerment

programmes and strategies for people with disabilities. This empowerment can only be galvanized by comprehensive policy and legislative provisions. This study therefore sets out to determine the effectiveness of existing legislation in empowering people with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

## Background to the study

A stroll in the streets of urban centres in Zimbabwe reveals that there are many people with disabilities either begging or doing nothing at all. The same scenario applies in rural areas where people with disabilities are a source of pity and are idle most of the time. In a survey by the National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe

---

\*Corresponding author Email:  
[grantomt@gmail.com](mailto:grantomt@gmail.com)/[granchuwedi@yahoo.com](mailto:granchuwedi@yahoo.com)

(NCDPZ) (1992) it was revealed that the prevalence of unemployment among people with disabilities was too high. This is despite the fact that some of these people have relevant qualifications necessary for employment through inclusive programmes. Poverty is rife among this group of people.

The value of employment skills was clearly underscored by. The Further Education Unit Report (1989) when it indicated that work enables people with disabilities to contribute to economic development. The Report also demonstrated that work generates respect for others and can be a source of pride and self-satisfaction. In the face of such evidence, it was important to establish whether people with disabilities were being adequately and effectively empowered and if so to what extent this was being done through the existing legislation.

Policy and legislation are key elements in empowering people with disabilities Mavundukure and Themban (2000) argue that laws influence policy making as well as permitting society through various state organs to allocate resources to stakeholders equitably.

There are basically three pieces of legislation that are meant to empower people with disabilities in this country. These are the Constitution of Zimbabwe, The Education Act of 1987 with amendments of 1986 and 2006. The disabled Persons Act of 1992 is the third one.

Existing legislation appears not to be effectively cushioning people with disabilities as far as empowering them through various programmes is concerned. This may be because the legislative provisions are not comprehensive enough or that persons with disabilities are not taking advantage of the legislation.

Trends in the job market seem to suggest that people with disabilities need support from education and training to facilitate their opportunities for taking up available jobs. Mand (1978) says that vocational and technical skills at primary and secondary school levels instil responsibility with a clear vocational identity. The basic purpose of empowerment is to help individuals to aspire to set practical goals where opportunities for independence, personal satisfaction and social contribution are made possible. Di Michael (1978) and Adewoye (1996) argued that empowerment was not about aspiring to a theoretically ideal way of life but about reality of opportunities.

Zimbabwe became a member of the International Labour Organisation Convention (ILO) (1980) and it therefore adopted ILO resolutions. Nyathi (1984) expressed concern that despite this commitment Zimbabwe's approach to empowerment and employment issues of people with disabilities remained lukewarm.

It was important to find out whether there were effective empowerment programmes for people with disabilities. It was vital to establish to what extent these programmes were influenced by existing legislation. This was more important considering the economic hardships that

ordinary and vulnerable groups were going through in the country.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which existing legislation namely the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The Education Act and the Disabled Persons Act have empowered people with disabilities in Zimbabwe. The study also sought to find out whether people with disabilities themselves have taken advantage of available legislation in empowering themselves and to what extent this had been achieved.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The research sought to find out the empowerment programmes meant to assist people with disabilities.

It also sought to establish to what extent these programmes were effective.

The study also sought to identify the challenges bedeviling the empowerment of people with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

The study also sought to suggest strategies that could be used to address these problems.

### **Statement of the problem**

Has existing legislation been effective in empowering people with disabilities?

### **Research Questions**

Were people with disabilities in Zimbabwe being empowered in any way?

In which ways were the people with disabilities being empowered?

Has empowerment been effective in Zimbabwe?

What role has existing legislation played in the empowerment of people with disabilities in Zimbabwe?

Were people with disabilities taking advantage of any empowerment programmes.

What challenges had affected the empowerment of people with disabilities.

### **Significance of the study**

The study was expected to benefit the following constituencies.

Legislators: It would bring to the fore grey areas that needed to be addressed by way of comprehensive legislative provisions.

People with disabilities: It could be a starting point for the facilitation of dialogue on the real needs on empowerment between PWD, legislators and policy makers.

Curriculum Developers: There was need to include the concerns of people with disabilities in curriculum development.

Employers: These would benefit in that they will become aware of the empowerment needs of people with disabilities and try to include them in their training and education programmes e. g vocational skills programmes.

Society as a whole: Will benefit from an awareness of the empowerment needs of people with disabilities thereby influencing people's attitudes about people with disabilities.

Other organisations: A number of organisations of and for people with disabilities would benefit in that they will improve their training programmes with a view to accommodating the empowerment needs of those with disabilities.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Empowerment**

Empowerment is a broad term. According to Rodney (1972) it is a many sided process which at individual level entails increased skill and capacity, great freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well being. Cormack (1989) says it involved reduced inequalities, satisfactory incomes, adequate food and jobs. The essence of empowerment is to equip people with disabilities with daily survival and employment skills. The Further Education Unit (1989) called this an employability package. The package includes ability to relate to colleagues, motivation to work, responsibility towards a job, ability to understand and carry out instructions, acceptable hygiene and appearance, good social behaviour, ability to work with minimum supervision, reliability in time keeping, regular attendance, dependability and personal autonomy. In view of the above package people with disabilities face challenges that are over and above those faced by their counterparts who do not have disabilities. Mutamiswa and Chakuchichi (2004) identified some of these challenges as people with disabilities being less equipped than their able bodied counterparts in terms of skills. Those with disabilities tend to be less developed than their peers. There is therefore the need to overcome both internal and external barriers to empowerment. Chimedza and Sithole (2000) also indicated their worries on similar challenges.

Burck (1987:15) argues that "the success of empowerment depends on the development of society as a whole," He further went on to assert "To develop

disabled people in communities, we have to develop their communities; however community development should be covered from general resources and not from rehabilitation budgets." For an effective realization of empowerment of people with disabilities various stakeholders will have to come together. These include government, non-government organizations and other interested stakeholders. Effective evaluation of programmes and support systems can only take place when the approach is multidisciplinary in outlook.

For effective empowerment to take place, certain benefits must accrue to the person with disabilities, the family and community as a whole, Rodney (1972). The individual with disabilities should benefit through increased production, social participation and ability to make decisions. Empowerment programmes need to be complemented by comprehensive legislation. Such legislation should guarantee to people with disabilities certain rights. Chakuchichi and Magama (2001) identify the following rights: the right to education, the right to training and employment, and the right to health care and family life.

The United Nations Rules (1994) also indicate that states should promote the full participation of persons with disabilities including the right to personal integrity. The rules add that laws should not discriminate against persons with disabilities in any form.

### **Limitations Inherent in Existing Legislation**

#### **The Zimbabwe Constitution**

The constitution is the supreme law of any country. Zigomo-Nyatsanza (2000) says that no other law or provisions of a law which are contrary to or inconsistent with the constitution shall be of any force or effect. A closer look at the constitution of Zimbabwe which to date has been amended a record nineteen times since independence reveals that there is no specific reference anywhere of people with disabilities. The constitution refers to people with disabilities by implication for example on the right to life for which everyone including those with disabilities have a right to equal protection under the law.

On the land reform process, the Constitution does not even acknowledge or provide for positive discrimination for vulnerable groups like PWD in acquiring land which is an important state resource. Section 23 on more rights under the constitution indicates that Zimbabwean citizens have the right to live lives free from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, tribe, place of origin, or ethnic background. This section does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability, sex or even age. Zigomo – Nyatsanza (2000) also alluded to the fact that section 23 has no provision for affirmative action or positive discrimination in favour of vulnerable or disadvantaged

groups of society in particular those with disabilities.

It is therefore very clear that the supreme law of the country is consciously silent on empowerment issues concerning those with disabilities. This is regrettable considering that this should have been the first step towards empowering this vulnerable group. This has grossly disadvantaged people with disabilities. Zimbabwe is a signatory of International Labour Organisation statutes (ILO) recommendation 168 which says that “persons with disabilities should enjoy equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of access to, retention of and advancement in employment which corresponds to their own choice and takes account of their individual suitability for such employment” (1984:14). This undertaking is complemented by the United Nations Standard Rules on equality of opportunities for persons with disabilities Rule 7 (1994:25) which states that “states should recognise the principle that persons with disabilities must be empowered to exercise their human rights, particularly in the field of employment” Our constitution is in contempt of all these international provisions to which the country committed itself to abide by.

### **The Disabled Persons Act of 1992**

This Act was a result of many years of lobbying and agitation by those with disabilities. This act is a better attempt to provide for people with disabilities compared to the constitution. However the Act appears to be more obsessed with issues of the National Disability Board at the expense of more pressing issues of empowerment. The board is established in terms of Section 4 of the Act. Ten of the board members should come from organizations of people with disabilities, seven are ministerial appointees. Of the ten the Minister of Labour and Social Service has discretion to appoint those he feels represent people with disabilities best. Three quarters of the Board therefore owe their allegiance to the Minister and therefore government than to the actual intended beneficiaries i.e the persons with disabilities. This has a negative impact on effective decision making when it comes to issues pertaining to empowerment. Mavundukure and Themhani (2000) also confirmed similar concerns.

The mechanism of, impact consultation and level of participation by people with disabilities is not set out as envisaged by UN Standard Rules in Rule 2 (1994:18) which urges states to “ensure the provisions of effective medical care to persons with disabilities” Empowerment through access to employment skills determines people with disabilities ability to pay for health care services. Chakuchichi and Magama (2001) demonstrate that the reduction in the country’s health budget due first to structural adjustment and more recently the harsh economic conditions have put health care services

beyond the reach of many especially for those with disabilities. Basic health care services to the vulnerable groups have therefore become very elusive.

Due to the absence of effective empowerment programmes, people with disabilities are often not expected to do certain roles normally carried out by adults. This is because they lack the necessary skills to fill those roles such as parenting roles or contributing to the economic well being of their families and communities. It is regrettable that the society expects them to remain within the family and be dependable on other family members until death” ( Magama and Matambirofa 1995:25). Yet the right to family life is enshrined in the constitutions of all countries. Mberi and Makore-Rukuni (2002) highlighted similar challenges as being a stumbling block for those with disabilities.

The Disabled Persons Act (1992) also denies people with disabilities the right to training and employment. Chakuchichi and Magama (2001) argue that persons with disabilities are denied the right to training and employment due to misconceptions on their abilities and limitations. However the International Labour Organisation’s Recommendation 99 (1984:6) states that in Section 2 “vocational rehabilitation services should be made available to all disabled persons whatever the origin and nature of their disability and whatever their age, provided they can be prepared for and have reasonable prospects of security and retaining suitable employment” The Nziramasanga Commission (1999) indicated its concern about the limitations of the Disabled Persons Act. The Salamanca statement dwelt at length on such issues as well.

People with disabilities have traditionally been regarded as incapable of any meaningful productivity. They are relegated to dependents of the state and family in perpetuity and therefore unemployable. Such attitudes of society have been very retrogressive. Magama and Chakuchichi (2001) show that training is a function, which requires substantial amounts of resources both at family and national levels. It is therefore an investment in the future. As such the state must take a lead in legislating for how such resources can be mobilised and allocated to relevant stakeholders for the benefit of people with disabilities. Ironically the Disabled Persons Act has no such provisions. Training of persons with disabilities is therefore considered a waste of family and national resources.

This is the only Act that is meant to comprehensively deal with issues of disability, and yet it has all the flaws alluded to above. Empowerment is important especially when one considers that the child with a disability will one day become an adult and will require a job, a home and a family.

### **Employment and the Education Act (1987)**

The issue of educational empowerment of people with

disabilities is a critical one. It is a subject of various international conventions which in turn inform and form the basis of legislation for rights of people with disabilities in all countries which are signatories to the conventions.

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights states in Article 3 that for children with disabilities, assistance should have effective access to and receive education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment, fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his/her cultural, spiritual development. Member states of the United Nations are expected to adopt policies which adhere to the rights of disabled persons to equal educational opportunities with others.

Our own Education Act of 1987 does not seem to be adequately addressing provisions of some International Conventions to which we are signatories. Magama and Chakuchichi (2001) indicate that education is the key that unlocks a child's potential and empowers the child to exercise his or her rights as a citizen of a country. Section 10 Part (iii) of the Education Act (1987) refers to access to education in government primary or secondary schools only. This effectively leaves out private schools, and yet there are many learners with disabilities at private schools in Zimbabwe.

Another contentious section of The Education Act (1987) is Section 4 subsection 1 and 2 which indicate that "every child in Zimbabwe shall have the right to school education no child in Zimbabwe shall be refused admission to any school on the grounds of race, colour, religion, creed or place of origin." This clause does not cover learners with disabilities. Secondly many of them have been denied access to education due to discrimination on the basis of their disability. Many of them are not even attending school. Many of the so-called ordinary schools where they are supposed to be enrolled are ill equipped or have no equipment at all. They are turned away.

Special schools where facilities may be better are far away and learners with disability cannot afford the high fees. There are limited trained specialist teachers. Attitudes are negative in schools on the part of both teachers and other learners. Parents also resist inclusive education. ( Magama and Chakuchichi 2001). The Act merely refers to all children. Those with disabilities are not covered. What the Act does is to imply that "all" children also covers those with disabilities. Such an argument cannot withstand the essential elements of a legal argument in a court of law. The specific vocational skills that learners with disabilities should receive are nowhere to be found as well.

There is no obligation on the part of schools to ensure that their premises are accessible and comply with international conventions. Those with wheelchairs cannot access many school buildings like offices or ablution blocks. The state has no obligation towards providing for accessible schools with specialized facilities and devices

where necessary. There is no mention of to what extent the state will fund the education of persons with disabilities and who exactly to be covered. The grey areas are too many. Mavundukure and Thembanani (2000) also expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the Education Act. The Education Act (1987) is indeed a vague piece of legislation. A lot needs to be done to make it comply with reality on the ground. It does not in any way address the empowerment needs of people with disabilities. It is fraught with inconsistencies.

### **Strengths of existing legislation in addressing empowerment issues of people with disabilities**

In the 1980's and 1990's education of learners with disabilities developed radically through integration. This development can be attributed to government efforts. Many schools or provisions with a bias towards the education of people with disabilities were opened. Mutamiswa and Chakuchichi (2004) indicated that to show its commitment, the government appointed Education officers for different impairments for purposes of monitoring, evaluation and supervision. The Education officers work closely with the Schools Psychological Services personnel in all provinces. Specialist teachers were also trained at the United College of Education. Some teacher education institutions now have a component of special education. A number of universities also started offering degree programmes in special education. In service courses for regular teachers are also being held to equip teachers with skills in the education of people with disabilities. Some of the schools like Copota School for the blind, Murehwa and Waddilove High Schools offer various skills meant to empower their students with disabilities. This is commendable.

The Disabled Persons Act (1992) has its limitations, However to date it is one of the only pieces of legislation that has had some limited impact on the lives of those with disabilities on empowerment. A small number of persons with disabilities have been employed in various fields due to this legislation. Institutions such as Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre, M Hugo School and others are receiving some funding for training and employment needs of those with disabilities. Sheltered workshops have also been set up. Some of the institutions are providing invaluable pre-vocational skills to both primary and secondary school students. This is good for their empowerment.

### **Lessons to be drawn from other countries**

A number of lessons can be drawn from the experiences of other countries. The United States of America can be an example. The Americans with Disabilities Act (PL101-

407) of 1990 makes it mandatory for all federal contractors with contracts above particular monetary value to employ PWDs. Employers are also required by law to submit affirmative action plans for review to the contracting agency.

In the case of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (PL-3-112) of 1973. Marinel and Dell Otto (1984) show that employers were required by law to remove architectural barriers to persons with disabilities. The vocational Rehabilitation Act (1973) says that generalized statements of policy such as "jobs requiring eyesight" were discriminatory to the visually impaired. The onus was therefore on the employers to prove that they were not breaching provisions of the Act. James (1975) indicates that the Employment Standards Administration (ESA) of the department of Labour enforces the law. Penalties for non-compliance include court action by the state for breach of contract. The contractor is also barred from future government contracts.

In comprehensive and well-formulated laws, the risk of misinterpretation and wilful contravention is reduced. Zimbabwe badly needs such aggressive laws to fight unemployment and address empowerment issues.

In the United Kingdom, Howard and Orlansky (1992) indicate that medium sized and large employers are legally required to maintain on their pay roles a small percentage of employees with disabilities. The disabled Persons Employment Act (1994) is the legal instrument used to enforce this provision.

Nearer home in Tanzania in 1982, the government put in place The Disabled Persons Employment Act. According to the Herald of March, 12 1998 businesses with more than fifty employees were required by law to have two percent of their workforce to be people with disabilities.

### **Implementation and Adherence to laws**

Many laws with very good intentions have not been adhered to. In Zimbabwe the section of the Disabled Persons Act that deals with discrimination in employment i.e Section 9 has been violated the most. Despite the good qualifications these people may have employers take advantage of many loopholes. In a seminar paper in Marondera in 1994 Miss Silape (who is also disabled) proposed that fellow persons with disability should avoid indicating their disability on application forms. She argued that this would probably give people with disabilities an opportunity to be invited for interviews and prove their capabilities. Such an approach has its merits and demerits. It is very unfortunate that all these inconsistencies are taking place in the presence of the Disabled Persons Act. The Education Act on the other hand is the worst violated legislation.

In the Herald of March, 12, 1998, Alfred Mbogora reported that in Tanzania government leads the list of

employers who do not comply with its own legislation on employment issues. Government is supposed to lead by example so that the private sector can toe the line. In the same article Mbogora also quoted the Association of Tanzania Employers as having expressed reservations at the feasibility of the quota system of employment. It was highlighted that in Tanzania employment legislation probably came about partly as a result of enthusiasm surrounding the activities of the 1981 International Year of the Disabled. Stakeholders did not genuinely appreciate the real implications of some pronouncements, Mutamiswa and Chakuchichi (2004) indicated that in developing countries policies are normally driven by International declarations, while the economies are still too backward to support well meant educational reforms.

At a sub-regional workshop on Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation (1982) in Mbabane, Swaziland, delegates also expressed reservations on stringent laws like the quota system. They argued that it was not only unpopular with employees but worked against the interests of people with disabilities. The report added that during recession when economies become static, vulnerable groups would be the first to lose their jobs. Companies take advantage as they avert the system through retrenchment. In other cases when companies engage in heavy capital and machinery investment, most of the work previously done by human beings was taken over by use of machinery and vulnerable groups feel the pinch through job losses. The quota system will therefore be self-defeating as it militates against the persons with disability.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive survey design was employed for purposes of this study. Babbie (1997) argued that the descriptive survey is a method of research that describes what people see over and beyond.

This method was therefore chosen because it was appropriate in situations like this research where descriptive information was required. This made the research largely qualitative as well. Qualitative methods have been largely used to examine and understand the underlying issues to a number of phenomena about which very little may be known. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) The survey method is therefore the best when carrying out a survey since it gathers data from a relatively large number of respondents at a particular time. It is also cost effective and avails respondents an opportunity to reflect on their responses. .

### **Sample and sampling procedure**

The study targeted a population of people with

disabilities, care givers of people with disabilities and support staff of people with disabilities. Convenient sampling was used and it comprised of 30 people with disabilities, 10 care givers and 10 support staff members. The study focused on people with knowledge and first hand experiences of the issues under study. These were people who were willing to take part in the study. (Flick, Kardoff and Steink, 2004 )

### **Instruments**

Open- ended questionnaires were used as the main data collection instrument. Best and Khan (1993) indicated that questionnaires and surveys can be used to gather either quantitative and qualitative data. Open ended questionnaires provided respondents with an opportunity to clearly on a number of issues asked. ( Cohen and Manion 1994) Another advantage of open ended questionnaires was that they presented important and unpredictable insights into human behaviour (Burton, 2000). They also create an opportunity that offers respondents the freedom to provide different answers in a free atmosphere. Open ended questions therefore allow for detailed expression of respondents views (Sander and Stevenson, 1999) Qualitative information provided a much better understanding than aggregated statistical data.

### **Procedure**

Permission and consent to administer the questionnaires was sought from individuals who had been sampled first. The questionnaires were distributed to the sampled people with disabilities, care givers and support staff in the selected provinces. These were collected on an agreed date. This arrangement also gave respondents adequate time to respond to the questions in full.

### **Data analysis**

The data gathered was analysed making use of qualitative content analysis. Main themes were then generated from the data analysed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Effectiveness of empowerment of PWD**

On the effectiveness of empowerment of people with disabilities through existing legislation people with disabilities were being empowered through the provision of education from primary school to university. Many people with disabilities were living testimonies of how

they had been empowered through education. To date there are lawyers, teachers, switchboard operators, administrators and others. Many of them have surpassed the able-bodied at school and universities. Magama and Chakuchichi (2001) confirm that education is the key that unlocks a child's potential and empowers the child to exercise his or her rights as a citizen of a country. However a lot can still be done to strengthen this area. The Nziramasanga (1999) Commission report also alludes to the role of comprehensive legislation.

### **Land redistribution**

On land redistribution it was discovered that a number of people with disabilities had been empowered through getting farms, small plots or other pieces of land. Other forms of assistance were also advanced. However most of the people with disabilities bemoaned the fact that this support was inadequate considering that they had very limited resources. For support to be effective and guaranteed there was need for legislative back up. Regrettably this was not the position in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean constitution was silent on the issue. Zigomo- Nyatsanza (2000) in an audit report of the constitution also alluded to the fact that section 23 of our constitution was conspicuously silent on the provision of land to empower vulnerable groups like people with disabilities.

### **Legal guarantees**

On the issue of effective legal guarantees to deal with discrimination or lack of access to services, while the Education Act (1986) and the Disabled Persons Act (1992) were legal guarantees, the two left a lot of to be desired. Firstly they did not effectively cushion people with disabilities from the numerous problems of unemployment and underemployment. This emanated from the fact that they were not comprehensive enough. They needed to be strengthened and effectively enforced. Mavundukure and Themhani (2000) also raised a lot of concern about the effectiveness of these laws in their critique of the law. The Nziramasanga Commission Report (1999) also raised issues on the limitations of these laws.

### **Affirmative action**

On affirmative action, there was not much happening on the ground. Effective programmes such as the quarter system of employment. Subsidised educational costs and provision of assistive devices to students could be considered. Education and training could be redoubled so that it reaches many. Public perception of people with

disabilities leaves a lot to be desired. According to Chakuchichi and Magama (2001) persons with disabilities were denied the right to education, training and employment due to misconception about their abilities and limitations. This is in contravention of the International Labour Organisation's Recommendation 99; which states that "Vocational rehabilitation services should be made available to people with disabilities." Extreme caution needed to be exercised on the quarter system of employment since a sub-regional workshop on Disability (1982) expressed reservations on its effectiveness.

### **Accommodation**

On the question of accommodation it was revealed that people with disabilities needed to be assisted to secure accommodation or build their own houses. The cost of leasing, renting or building houses have increased to unprecedented proportions. The position has been aggravated for vulnerable groups like those with disabilities. The local authorities and central government needed to make this need a right for people with disabilities. The country may also be guided by international trends. However restraint must be followed as Mutamiswa and Chakuchichi (2004) warned that while developing countries policies could be driven by international declarations, their economies may be unable to sustain well-meant reforms.

### **Funding**

The issue of funding remains another thorny hurdle. Generally programmes for the empowerment of people with disabilities were grossly underfunded or not even funded. This has in turn tended to trigger poverty, begging and desperation on the part of people with disabilities. Effective and guaranteed funding can be realized through effective and comprehensive legislation. If we had good legislation in place, people with disabilities would be better off. Zimbabwe needed to take a leaf from countries like the United States of America. Marinell and Dell Otto (1984) indicated that in the USA funding was provided for by law. Mavundukire and Thembani (2000) also underscored the mutually beneficial relationship between funding and comprehensive legislation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations emanate from the study

### **Central Government**

- ❖ The government should improve funding for income generating projects, education and training and other activities.
- ❖ The government also needed to put in place effective affirmative action programmes to help ease the plight of people with disabilities.
- ❖ There is also need for an all-encompassing and comprehensive legislation to deal with the empowerment needs of people with disabilities.
- ❖ The government should consider tax concessions to employers who engage people with disabilities.
- ❖ A vocational curriculum responsive to the employment needs of people with disabilities needed to be developed as a matter of urgency.
- ❖ The government should also consider co-ordinating public campaigns to spread awareness about the needs of people with disabilities.

### **Employers of People with disabilities**

- ❖ Employers needed to seek more information on what people with disabilities were able to do at the work place.
- ❖ There was also need to consult experts on disability issues on the training programmes employers can be involved in.
- ❖ Employers should also visit other employers who already employ people with disabilities for firsthand experience of the abilities of the people.
- ❖ Employer organizations needed to be actively involved in drafting a vocational curriculum for people with disabilities.
- ❖ Employers can also assist in funding employment programmes of people with disabilities.

### **Tertiary Institutions**

- ❖ These should expand their training capacity to accommodate more people with disabilities.
- ❖ An audit of the skills that are user friendly to people with disabilities also needed to be carried out to establish training needs.
- ❖ Tertiary institutions should also ensure that there is adequate and well trained personnel to train those with disabilities.
- ❖ They should not shun people with disabilities but include them in their training programmes.
- ❖ These should also assist in sourcing assistive devices to help people with disabilities.
- ❖ They should assist in ensuring that affirmative



action programmes put in place were being adhered.

### People with disabilities

- ❖ They should form strong advocacy groups to engage government and other stakeholders in meaningful dialogue.
- ❖ They should avoid self-pitying attitudes and demand their rights aggressively.
- ❖ They should demonstrate what they could do so that society does not shun them unnecessarily.
- ❖ They should not abuse the loan facilities advanced to them but instead use them to their advantage so that they improve their standard of living.
- ❖ They should be willing to be co-ordinated in community leadership structures to prove what they can do.
- ❖ They should also take full advantage of affirmative action programmes in their communities.

### CONCLUSION

- ❖ The study revealed that negative attitudes from the public remained a major challenge to effective empowerment of people with disabilities. This could be addressed through aggressive public campaigns similar to the one on the HIV and AIDS education. More carefully planned exposure of people with disabilities could also assist in this regard.
- ❖ It was also discovered that gender had no significant role to play on how people with disabilities were empowered. This emanated from the fact that generally the problems of empowerment affecting people with disabilities were the same for both men and women. Poverty for example was rife. The lack of job skills was the same since only a few of them were gainfully employed despite good qualifications.
- ❖ The study also concluded that the question of whether one was highly or lowly educated was not a factor on how eventually one was empowered. This finding was mainly motivated by the fact that we have on the streets quite a good number of highly educated people with disabilities. They have their qualifications but the job market has remained elusive. Some employers fear the unknown. Another contributory factor to this anomaly could be the lack of information on the part of employers. People with disabilities want to prove a point and were therefore more likely to be at their work place more often. They were also not tempted to leave their work place unnecessary because opportunities may be limited or mobility may be difficult.
- ❖ It was also revealed that people with disabilities were benefiting from rehabilitation services in their communities. In the event of accidents people may lose ability and capacity to carry out certain skills, which one

used to do. New skills may need to be learnt. This may involve changing one's job completely. Counselling also needed to come in for people to accept their new position. A lot of patience and understanding may be called for on the part of rehabilitation experts and their clients.

- ❖ While a number of empowerment programmes were on the ground, their effectiveness remained elusive and therefore a pipe dream to many. A collective approach appears the answer to tackling most of the challenges experienced by people with disabilities.

### REFERENCES

- Best J and Khan JV (2000). *Research in Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bell V (1993). *Doing Your Project*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Borg WR and Gall MD (1989). *Educational Research*. New York; Longman.
- Chakuchichi DD and Magama LT (2001). *Educational Consideration For Students Who are Motor and Physically Challenged*. Harare: Zimbabwe Open University.
- Charles CM (1988). *Introduction to Educational Research*. New York: Longman.
- Chimedza R and Sithole CZ (2000). *Sociological Issues and Disability*. Harare: Zimbabwe Open University.
- David M and Sutton L (2004). *Social Research*. London Sage Publications.
- Further Education Unit (1989). *Enable to Work: Support into Employment for young people with Disabilities*. London: Further Education Unit.
- Gay, L.R. (1992). *Education Environment Measurement*. London: Charles E. Merrill.
- Gearheart BR, Weishahn NN, Gearheart CJ (1984). *The Exceptional Student in the Regular Classroom*. Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company.
- Goldensone RM (1978). *Disability and Rehabilitation*. London: McGraw Hill.
- Government of Zimbabwe. *Constitution of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Government Printers.
- Government of Zimbabwe. *The Disabled Persons Act (1992)*. Harare: Government Printers.
- Government of Zimbabwe: *The Education Act (1996)*. Harare; Government Printers.
- Hallahan D and Kauffman J (1982). *Exceptional Children: Introduction to Special Education*. Englewood Cliffs: N.J. Prentice Hall.
- International Labour Organisation (1984). *ILO Recommendations*. Geneva: I.L.O.
- Krueger RA (1988). *Focus Groups A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Leedy PD (1993). *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. New York: Macmillan.
- Mavhundukure G and Thembanani N (2000). *Comparative Special Needs Education*. Harare: ZOU
- Mounton and Marais AC (1990). *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of Social Sciences*. San Francisco: Mc Grawt.
- Miles J (2001). *Research methods and statistics*. Crucial Exeter
- Merinell RP and Dell Otto AE (1984). *Psychology and Social Impact of Physical Disability*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Munemo ET (1997). (Unpublished dissertation) *Problems of Unemployment of Visually Impaired Persons in Zimbabwe*. Harare University of Zimbabwe.
- Mutamiswa HB, Mapepa P and Sixpence F (2004). *Policy Issues and management of special needs Education*. Harare: Z.O.U.
- Nachmias FC and Nachimias D (1999). *Research Methods in Social Studies*. New York: St Martins Press.

- National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe (1992). *Report*. Harare: National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe.
- Nzirasanga Commission Report (1999). Harare: Government Printers.
- Nyathi J (1984) (Unpublished B.S.W Dissertation) *Employment Opportunities for Physical Disabled people in the Formal Sector*. Harare: UZ.
- Rodney (1981). *The East and Southern Africa Sub Regional Workshop on Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation*. Mbabane: Nov 8-19.
- Rehabilitation International Survey Report (1983). *Employment of people with Disabilities in the Current Economic Situation* March 1983.
- Seal C (1998). *Research, Society and culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Silape S (1994). (Seminar Paper) *How People With Disabilities can strive in the Labour market: Marondera*.
- United Nations Standards Rules (1994) New York UN.
- UNICEF (1981) Report: National Disability Survey, Harare.
- Vengesai, C (Ed) (1995). Introduction to Educational Research Methods. Module EA3DC 101 Harare ZOU.
- Zogomo-Nyatsanza (2000). Audit Report on disabled Persons Act of 1992. Harare USAID.