

Access to productive life and employability by persons with disabilities

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Abstract: *The question of what persons with disabilities (PWDs) are capable of doing in their adult life, has remained a topical issue world over. This is so since some people erroneously believe that with a disability, one cannot operate efficiently in society. It is for this reason that PWDs have not been prepared enough for any productive future life. The truth being told, it is not enough and obviously misguided to see PWDs finishing school and entering the mainstream society 'empty handed', without any survival skill(s). Such a scenario will be like dumping these people in their communities. In order for PWDs not to find themselves seemingly 'dumped' into the mainstream society, empty handed, desperate, and with nothing to do, they need an education that equips them with survival skills, early enough, whilst they are still in their traditional school life. This author feels that vocational education curriculum, with a slant to practical subjects, is the way to go for PWDs. Such an education should be given to learners with disabilities with the same emphasis as it is given to the non-disabled. Vocational education, as Museva (1989) in Mavhunga (2002:306) asserts, is "...an effort by schools to include in their curriculum those practical subjects which are likely to generate among the students, some basic knowledge, skill and dispositions that might prepare them to think of becoming skilled workers or to enter other manual operations..." Such an education, therefore, capacitates an individual with skills to construct new knowledge and solve practical life problems, in order to live independently. The philosophy of independent living is to maximise opportunities for personal choices and growth, through self-help or survival engagements. In order for PWDs to acquire and/or develop these self-help life skills, they need to be exposed to an education curriculum, which has a transitional component into adulthood, where one's quality of life (QoL) will be measured. Without these life skills, PWDs have been known to exist in hostile social environments that do not enhance their independence. Since one of the goals of education is to prepare learners for independent adult responsibilities, the education curriculum should, therefore, have some technical inclination, which borders around the acquisition of daily living skills. To enhance survival engagements for independence, it may be reiterated that PWDs need an education curriculum with a strong vocational slant in order for them to be functional in the society they find themselves. Unless persons with disabilities are equipped and ultimately possess functional life or survival skills at an early stage of life, the majority of them would be found in streets begging.*

Key words: *Employment, Disability, Impairments, Heterogeneous population, Quality of Life (QoL), Vocational skills, Vocational education, Functional life skills, productive life engagements, productive life paths*

I. Introduction

Studies and experiential contact with PWDs show that societies have always restricted or denied this group of people of some of their much needed rights. With physical disabilities, these people have been segregated and deprived of their rights and services, which are supposed to be rightfully theirs. Violation of their rights is mirrored by how they have been denied unlimited access to services like: Equal access to justice, Relevant education, Employment and such related social services. While unemployment rate in the third world countries is generally high and a common feature in youths, it is even worse with PWDs. A number of factors are attributory to this segregatory scenario. The much known prevalent factors include: Lack of vocational skills, Lack of appropriate educational qualifications, Job recruitment policies, Employers' attitudes, Economic considerations, The status of PWDs, General fear of disabilities, Attitudes and behaviours shown by PWDs, etc. For the purpose of this position paper, the above shall be discussed as some of the factors that militate against development of productive life skills and access to employment by PWDs. An effort shall also be made to illuminate strategies that can be employed to increase their employability and productive life engagements.

II. Understanding the terms 'Disability' and 'Employment'

The scope of disability has been known to be quite wide, rendering it problematic to define. Chakuchichi, Mapepa and Mutasa (2010:9), however, define disability as, "...a term that denotes lack of ability to perform some functions...It implies a deprivation or loss of a needed competency." It may be noted that a disability imposes limitations to a certain extent on overall development, especially on skills development and content mastery area. The Disability 99 World Report states that a person can be disabled by physical, intellectual, neurological and/or sensory impairments. Part of the implication of this proposition may suggest that one is classified as having a disability if they have any form of impairment (The Correction on the Rights of Person with Disabilities, 2009:39). Diverse as they may be, persons with disabilities' need for independence is the same as the so called able-bodied. Such independence can

come through employment and other productive life engagements. The term employment is understood by Mutasa, Tafangombe, Kaputa and Kadada (2010) as a productive human activity that creates something of value, which can either be a service given or goods produced. Impressions emerging from the above seem to suggest that: (i) The term disability covers a wide range of impairments; hence PWDs are an incredibly heterogeneous population. (ii) Many as they are, these people also have a right to unlimited access to employment or such productive life engagements. Unless PWDs are equipped with life skills at an early stage of life, they will neither realise material well-being nor enjoy personal life fulfillment now and at adulthood.

III. Sustainability

While money-earning jobs are not the only engagements towards improved QoL in society, it is important to note that at least someone needs an occupation that comes with money or other rewards. This helps to sustain one in terms of: food, clothing, paying for health care and shelter, or such universal physiological human needs. Such needs improve one's QoL, irrespective of their behavioural, physiological or mental condition. One way to enhance QoL is by having some form of gainful employment or such a productive life engagement. If it be a form of employment, then one should enjoy the work on equal basis with others, including those engagements ordinarily known to be exclusive domains of the so called non-disabled. As concurring with Rule Number (vii:80) of The World Disability Report: Disability 99, Gwitimah and Kaputa (2007) say that states should recognize the principles that persons with disabilities must be empowered to exercise their human rights particularly in the field of employment. In both rural and urban areas, they must have equal opportunities for production and gainful employment in the labour market.

Even with such a lucrative mandate, as rooted in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the United Nations (UN) 1948, we still have PWDs being restricted from accessing employment. On this note, Gwitimah and Kaputa (2007:42) say, "Information shows that unemployment rates for people with disabilities are significantly higher than those for people without disabilities." To augment, Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFORD) (2004) states that unemployment is known to be high in Southern African countries, but even higher among PWDs. This remains so in cross-purpose with the dictates of the Human Rights oriented era we are currently in.

Adding to the above is a research by Maholtra (2001), referred to by Mutasa et al (2010:95), which reports that PWDs remain largely outside the workforce. Only 29% of people with disabilities of working age are employed in comparison to 80% of able bodied adults of ages 18 to 64 years. Such statistical information shows that gaining employment with companies or organisations can be quite a formidable challenge for PWDs. Below are some of the most common factors which militate against development of productive life skills and access to employment by persons with disabilities:

1 a). Lack of appropriate educational qualifications and/or vocational skills

Education is one of the fundamental human rights that have to be accorded to everyone, including those persons with disabilities. For that reason, schools have a mandate to offer the much needed knowledge and life time skills through their education curriculum. Durkheim (1961) in Mutasa et al (2010:64) says, "... education is the key to transmission of society's norms, values, attitudes, knowledge and skills." Citing Bower (1966), Kaputa, Sixpence, Mavundukure, et al (2010:4) augment by saying that the purpose of education is to assist children and youths to acquire life competence and enabling them to love work. Unfortunately, even with such high sounding positives, most PWDs are not given the opportunity to access even the basic education, for them to acquire the much needed qualification or to learn the skills needed to effectively contribute to the vocational world,...and even contest with the so called 'normal' people (Kaputa, 2010:74).

For lack of appropriate education and requisite industrial skills, a research study made by Tomblin and Haring (1999) cited in Kaputa et al, (2010:142), reveals that the majority of individuals with disabilities have encountered many challenges in getting employment. Since any job task is highly rated by actual performance, most persons with disabilities do not stand a chance on the job market. In the event of one with a disability getting a job, they remain under-employed, a scenario characterised by one being given a job that is lower than one's capabilities, like cleaning, manning grounds or such related despised jobs. There has been a general observation that the majority of the employees filling up such posts are minority workers and persons with disabilities.

Of late, it has been noted that the diversity of modern labour force requires educated and qualified people, in order to compete well on the global market. For lack of requisite educational qualifications and job skills, employment opportunities for PWDs remain very slim, no matter how much of other personal attributes one possesses as assets. Lack of formal education, therefore, makes one non-eligible for, say, trade testing in the relevant fields of skills, as observed by Mutasa, et al (2010). Even if one happens to go to school, the education curriculum they follow is not broad and varied enough to give one a choice of relevant subjects that would increase their employability. Ultimately, the certificate they acquire does not make one become eligible and proficient in the job market. Referring to the curriculum offered for PWDs, a certain Makwanya of Jairos Jiri Centre (Zimbabwe) was quoted by Mutasa et al (2010) as saying that the work covered by PWDs at secondary school was purely academic, with faith based subjects like Religious Education/Studies or Divinity that are not job market related.

Since education has a positive association with employment, it therefore, suggests that without going to school to attain formal education, PWDs miss out on the school efforts to exclusively expose them to both the

theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge, which should fine tune and align one along specific pathways in line with their talents, and develop in them skills for jobs they can effectively fill (Mutasa et al, 2010). For lack of an educational qualification and proper vocational skills, chances are that PWDs miss out on every employment opportunity.

b). Strategies to increase employability

Strategies to increase employability may be based on the notion that the more educated one is, the *better* their chances of getting employed. Smith's (1992) research findings, as quoted by Mutasa et al (2010), may help clarify the above view. Statistical findings of the research have it that every year of high school completed, increases one's lifetime wages by 8%. It goes without say, therefore, that PWDs' lack of employment shows that such challenges partly stem from lost school years. Because of their disabilities, these persons *may* remain permanently jobless and become ever dependent on their families and community members. Wright (1991), therefore, notes that the best way to vigorously oppose or combat prejudice is to provide PWDs with an education that equips them with skills which fine tune and align them along productive life paths and/or specific job-related pathways.

From The World Declaration on Education for All, attention may be drawn to Article 3 Item 5 p233, which explicitly cautions, "...steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education, to every category of disabled persons..., such should not be accorded as a favour, but a right." Instead of seeing PWDs as pitiful victims of circumstances, these people should access all services and facilities that are open and readily available to the rest of the other people, where their talents can be spotted. Shipman (1975), in Mutasa and Tafangombe (2010) sees this as a way to prepare them for adult life in work places such as factories, government offices, mass media and other establishments.

In this era of inclusion, PWDs have to attend regular schools and mainstream vocational training institutions in order to acquire the much needed skills for survival. This recommendation comes from the backdrop that 91% of PWDs have been known never attending any vocational training, as noted by the Southern Africa Federation of Disabled (SAFORD) (2004). It is in these training institutions where they will be exposed to activities that assist them to exercise punctuality, being cautious and not to miss work, being calculative not to make careless mistakes, and having good interpersonal habits. Depending with the nature and degree of the impairment, PWDs also need to be developed in technical skills, which relate to competence in accountancy, computer programming or such technical professions and/or engagements. Their curriculum should, therefore, prepare them for job competencies. The school curriculum should allow one to gradually move from dependency to independence levels. PWDs should be aligned to transitional services, a programme defined by Mutasa et al (2010:94) as, "Outcome oriented coordinated activities designed to move students with disabilities from school activities such as colleges, vocational training, integrated employment, supported employment, adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation." To augment, the above authorities say that people with disabilities need assistance in skills which enable them to cope in the working environment. To show the importance of preparing PWDs for job market, two federal enactments namely: PL 94-142 (1975) and PL 94-482 (1976), which mandate that PWDs be included in regular vocational institutions, may be referred to.

It is very sad to note that schools still fall short in terms of preparing learners with disabilities for work. Learners' time should not be wasted misdirecting their efforts in irrelevant subject combinations, which have very little or no significance in the labour market. On this note, Henslin (1998) cited in Mutasa et al (2010) notes that much of the material on which pupils with disabilities are examined, have very little direct connection with employers' expectations. On the same note, Chakuchichi et al (2010) observe that schools are full of learners whose achievement is not commensurate with their capabilities. Chin-Aleon (1988) says that the seed of adult life and success are sown during the early school life. For this reason, schools, as early as primary level, should engage career guidance teachers who should guide learners into choice of subjects, basing on their strengths.

Since poverty has also been attributed to termination of schools or training programmes before completion, PWDs need financial support services to avoid wastage in education. Such support will go a long way, especially that most of those who drop out are from poor families who cannot afford high fees to keep as well as maintain the child in school. Since educational achievement is a great challenge for PWDs, especially those with mental challenges, teachers, vocational therapists, career guidance and employment counsellors or any personnel in such related roles, should make thorough assessment of these children and equip them with self help skills which are in line with their strengths and capabilities. It has to be acknowledged that a lot of these persons with disabilities are both educable and trainable. For that reason, one has to be educated in order to attain status and recognition by the prospective employer(s).

2 a). Recruitment policies and employers' attitudes

While the World Summit on Social Development clearly articulates the need for equal opportunities of PWDs, as noted by Anscow (1997), there are still some discriminatory practices in the employment sector. Some job recruitment policies are found to be eliminative of PWDs. Certain types of interviews, which include trade testing, are found to be incompatible with the majority of PWDs. Activities that are characterised by sifting, sorting and/or grading individuals in terms of their aptitudes and capabilities, may not be friendly, especially to persons with some

mental challenges. In this respect, the recruitment becomes unfriendly with the majority of PWDs, who may lack the much needed educational background to reasonably compete.

Employers do not have the time and patience to accommodate individual differences in PWDs. Experiential contact with this group of people has shown that they are individuals, who can also compete well on the global market, especially if accorded the opportunity. Sadly, because of their disabilities, they are always perceived as not capable of matching the high technological advancement for rapid production in the job market, hence one reason for their unemployability. Apart from this, communication skills, especially the use of speech, are essential and critical for developing and maintaining social relationships and influencing ones' behaviour. Since speech has a normalisation value, every prospective employer would never want to engage unintelligible, partially intelligible or one with total lack of speech. Any employer will opt for an employee who is a proficient communicator (Anscow, 1997).

The above personal attributes have left PWDs, especially those with multiple disabilities, out of employment. A research done by Morris (1978) has shown that communication problems are rife in persons with multiple disabilities, and they range from mild to profound, with percentages of, say, 75% to 95% affecting persons with cerebral palsy (CP). Speech, as Kaputa et al (2010) put it, "...demands good auditory discrimination, extreme fine motor control or oral and respiratory structures and considerable cognitive development," of which *most* persons with multiple disabilities have deficits in. Although there are other alternatives to communication, than the use of speech, no employer has the time for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), as strategies to supplement speech deficits. For this reason, speech disordered persons will find it very difficult to penetrate the formal job market, where speech is essential and critical for social relationships in any business. Employers, therefore, stand accused of discriminating against PWDs on the grounds of unfair comparisons on levels of competence.

b). Strategies to increase employability: (Recruitment Policies forwarded)

Somewhere in this paper, it was raised that the diversity of the labour force requires educated and qualified people, in order to compete well on the global market. For that reason, as Mutasa and Tafangombe (2010) put it, people with disabilities also need to hold credentials that prove that they have been adequately trained for the job they want to undertake. Having qualifications, therefore, implies possessing the requisite skills needed to perform the task at hand. While PWDs should not be cry babies, who always want to rely on favours and exemptions on account of their disability, captains of industry should also reconsider their cut-off point, especially when the prospective employee has a disability. On this note, Mutasa and Tafangombe (2010) suggest that alongside the meritocratic principles, affirmative action in favour of persons with disabilities has also to be exercised. This denotes giving opportunities to the previously disadvantaged group of persons with disabilities. Job coaches and those who advocate for the welfare of PWDs should make employers appreciate and uphold this affirmative view.

On communication, employers have to be inducted in the use of total communication, an approach described by Werner (1988) as the use of different methods that work well for a person in a particular environment. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) can be a case in hand here, as one can use any or all these: gestures, sign language, finger spelling, drawing, reading, writing, speech reading and speech. Like in education where the federal government says that schools must provide transition services for all students with disabilities, as mandated in the PL 101- 476 of 1990, which will see availability of teacher-aides in schools, the same enactment should be applied in industries, where there should also be employee aides.

3a). Economic considerations

It is a given that all business enterprises are there to make a profit. For that reason, employers make every effort to guard jealously every cent that gets into the company. Any activity that pumps out money may not auger very well with employers. Since most of the infrastructure and facilities found in most places of employment are not disability friendly, PWDs are generally barred from these employment opportunities because of architectural barriers. If one with a disability is employed, it goes without say that the physical and infrastructural environments have to be least restrictive, as mandated to PL94-142. All forms of barriers in the job environment have to be appropriately adapted to enhance a most facilitative environment for one with a disability. While this is a requirement that entails expenses, the need for independence at a place of employment cannot be overemphasised. For economic reasons, many companies have been known turning down PWDs for fear of expenses attached to the much needed architectural adaptations and modifications. For a person with visual impairments, for example, prospective employers have concerns that the worker might need rails, special mobility equipment and a guide while performing his duties at the work place (Mapepa, 2002:80). Since supervisors may not be trained to manage special needs employees, who naturally require specially designed environmental structures, employers may develop fears that with forms of disabilities, the prospective employee may also need another specialist, whose duty would be to recommend and manage different types of environment desirable for such employees at a workplace.

While punctuality is one of the most important aspects of employability, it also has to be acknowledged that any form of a disability, naturally causes some functional inconveniences, yet business enterprises work with targets. For timely productivity, employers may become very reluctant to employ people they are not sure of their possibility of coming to work the following day, and on good time, due to their medical conditions.

b). Strategies to increase employability on economic consideration

It has been noted above that some companies will generally not employ PWDs for fear of expenses attached to architectural adaptations. Because of perceived costs that organisations may incur on employing PWDs, Governments and advocates for PWDs' welfare should use legislation to implement specific policies which mandate for architectural adaptations in the construction phase. Structural modifications, like ramps and/or rails, at entry points, should be put up during initial construction, so that whoever will use that structure will not bear the adaptation costs in the event of employing someone with a disability. Penalties should be granted for any company that may be found not heedful to this infrastructural requirement. There should be a policy governed by a specific piece of legislation that informs and guides on employing PWDs, as proffered by Knester (2005). For compliance, there should be punitive legislation to guard against discrimination of PWDs from being employed.

Since employers may find it difficult to make available all the supportive measures required by employees with disabilities, there should be incentive-legislative clauses in favour of those companies which employ persons with any form of a disability and/or anomaly. Such companies should enjoy a lucrative tax exemption percentage from the government for such an undertaking, or any form of subventionary measure. The government of Zimbabwe seems to be favourably addressing this matter, through the enactment of Disabled Persons Act of 1992, a legislative instrument that emphasises the need for equality of opportunities, in terms of access to every sphere of life.

Those persons with visual impairment (VI), for example, need good orientation and mobility programmes. For that reason, job coaches have to assist persons with VI to make use of street maps so that they may be able to travel independently and safely to and from their work stations. This is a form of employment support, as mandated by the federal government for transition services (SAFORD, 2004). This, according to Hallahan and Kauffman (1997:77), is "...a method of integrating people with disabilities, into competitive employment..." In a typical employment support, an employment specialist or job coach, has to recommend a job placement that makes one to independently function in the job. This is done by providing one with a disability on-site training, which is gradually reduced as the worker is able to function more independently on the job (Hallahan and Kauffman, 1997).

4a). Fear of the nature of a disability and the status of PWDs

The nature of impairment and status of PWDs have also caused restricted access to employment. By not fully understanding a form of a disability and how such may impact on job performance, some employers may remain skeptical about having one with a disability as part of the organisation's employees. Hallahan and Kauffman (1997) say that people tend to resist the strange because it does not fit into the structure of an expected life space. The more contagious a disability is believed to be, the more fear of personal attraction is aroused, because of stereotypic beliefs. Due to fear factor, lack of factual information and general understanding about disabilities and disabling conditioning, employers generally conclude that PWDs are a health and safety risk to the whole organisation (Sifilios, 1999), resulting in employers failing to employ.

The labour market has continually understood PWDs using the medical model perspective. Through the medical model, PWDs are always treated like they are diseased and are individuals impaired in every respect. Disabilities are equated to mulfunctional mind, rendering one to rejection and avoidance in social encounters including employment opportunities. The more physically mutilated a person is, the less attractive a person is believed to be, and the more they are viewed as unintelligent insensitive, uninteresting, unsociable, lacking in poise, the less likely they would be preferred on the job market (Mutasa and Tafangombe, 2010). Amputees can be a case in hand here, who may be seen as both mutilated and unattractive.

Due to stigmatisation, PWDs are accorded the lowest position in society, as may also be evidenced by them being offered the least job on the market, if ever they happen to have any of it. On this note, the above authorities have made an observation that people with disabilities are concentrated in the least desirable jobs, especially those with the lowest pay, and least likelihood of providing benefits. These people are more likely to be found in temporary, part time and/or self-employed jobs. In addition, they could be employed as contract workers or as on call, workers who are called when there is labour shortage. In other words PWDs' employment contracts depend on labour demands, which is characterised by a lot of job displacement, whenever one with a non disability opts for that particular job.

The above scenario could have been driven by the general belief that as soon as people with disabilities enter a certain profession, that profession loses its prestige (Knester, 2005). To pursue this point further, during a certain radio interview on 'People With Disabilities' Employment Opportunities', one prospective employer was quoted as making a symbolic statement that: "Employing someone with a disability equals a disabled business." For this reason, no employer would want to risk losing the glamour of his/her business by employing PWDs!

The above scenario seems to border around societal attitudes, noted by a certain Minister of Religion, Rev. M. Chigwinda, who was quoted by Mutasa and Tafangombe (2010) as saying that barriers of attitudes towards PWDs are more difficult to remove than those of the architectural nature. In a direct quote, the Minister was quoted as saying, "The greatest barrier that we find are not architectural, but barriers of the heart."

b). Strategies to increase employability on fear of the impairment

Prospective employers have to get as much information as possible about PWDs. They need good orientation in order to understand and accept different people and the nature of their disabilities. Employers need to understand that PWDs need support in order to prove their worthy to the job market. Advocates for the welfare for PWDs and job coaches have to make employers appreciate strengths and abilities in PWDs, instead of emphasising on their weaknesses and inabilities. Prospective employers should not hold fears and other uncouth feelings towards PWDs. Employment counsellors need to help dispel prejudices towards PWDs emanating from factors like ignorance or superstition.

5a). Attitudes and behaviours of PWDs

Self concepts which people hold are important factors that influence one's employability. This is because one earns respect and recognition if they portray confidence of self. Due to limitations placed upon them, by loss of something valued, PWDs may respond by exhibiting problems, characterised by lack of confidence and adjustment disorders (Mutasa and Tafangombe, 2010). For lack of confidence in themselves, PWDs will exhibit attitudes and behaviours which suggest occurrences of helplessness, depression, stress or any of such incidences fraught with negative portrayal of self. Potential employers end up doubting the general competence of one with a disability at work, thereby stifling their chances of being employed.

It is also important to note that the way PWDs are treated by society impacts either positively or negatively to one with a disability. On this note, Kaputa et al (2010) observe that obstacles presented by society can also contribute to the child's emotional instability. Since society generally holds negative attitudes towards disabilities, PWDs also end up holding negative attitudes towards members of their communities. Experiential contact with PWDs has also shown that these people can be hostile, showing very disordered or undesirable behaviour that may cause quite a stir at gatherings, including work places. Because of lack of proper education, a factor that teaches and encourages positive conformity to positive values, correct and acceptable behaviour, PWDs have been found to be generally awkward in areas of human interaction, as they can exhibit extreme antisocial personalities. With this writer is Harny (1978) cited in Kaputa et al (2010), who states that youths and children with VI, for example, face some problems with social interaction that is directly caused by their condition. Through observance of set rules, found in schools, education acts as an agent of socialisation, where one is made alert, beforehand, of the job market requirements, and how to function better, even in unfavorable societal environments. Unfortunately, with no education, one's quality of interaction becomes generally poor; a characteristic prospective employers may not take lightly.

Apart from high abilities and intelligence, work environments also require assets like personal appearance, motivation, manners and general acceptable personal qualities. PWDs have been known to be generally nurtured under hostile social environments, which may make their relational interaction a very difficult process. In the majority of cases, such people *may* portray a character that generally does not have so good interpersonal relationships. Because of the hostile social environments PWDs grow in, most of these persons show a somewhat detestable relational interaction... (this is through this author's personal experiences staying together with persons with different forms of disabilities). At times, those with hearing impairment (HI), like their VI counterparts, also exhibit some behaviour that is characterised by throwing temper tantrums, even with slightest provocation. They can show such behaviour wherever they are, even in public transport. This observation has been explained better by Winzer (1990) who, when commenting on those with VI, says that such persons have trouble in acquiring an adequate repertoire of interpersonal skills.

Since disorders related to mood and temperament can cause significant stir at a work place, prospective employers, like everyone else, will naturally find people with such social immaturity very undesirable at a work place. It goes without say, therefore, that anyone displaying such disordered personal attributes may find themselves almost always out of employment.

Lack of self esteem has also affected PWDs because they accept the image the rest of the world has for them and positively sit back in the name of self fulfillment prophecy. On this note, Mutasa and Tafangombe (2010) also made an observation that even with some form of education; PWDs have been known not to respond to employment advertisements, due to poor self concepts.

b). Strategies to increase employability on attitudes and behaviour

PWDs need to be socially counselled in order to develop personal qualities that employers may consider desirable. Through counselling, they should be taught that they should not always expect lenience to be exercised towards them on the grounds of disability (Mutasa and Tafangombe, 2010:84), but should expect to be given equal treatment, like that given to able bodied persons. If children with disabilities get an access to education, they will realise that schools have rules and observance of such rules teaches them conformity to positive values of acceptable behaviour. Through education, chances are high that such children gain experiences of behaviour expected in bigger structures of society, like work places, where they are expected to comply and not to be stiff-necked and arrogant.

Independent living is one of the indicators of the quality of living construct for PWDs. For persons with mental challenges, for example, a life skills curriculum is always more beneficial than an academic and exam oriented one. These children need to be oriented in dressing fashionably and groomed in general personal hygiene that is

expected of one going for work. They have to know and observe socially accepted customs of greetings and made to possess conversational skills, which show manners to deserving others.

PWDs also need to be molded towards self determination, an important aspect that combines knowledge, skills and beliefs which enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated and autonomous behaviour. An understanding of one's areas of strengths is essential, as it builds towards one's confidence, a quality employers always look for.

IV. Conclusion

This paper made an attempt to illuminate factors that militate against access to productive life and employability by PWDs. Suggestions were also forwarded as to how persons with disabilities can lead a productive life. This effort was made based on the realisation that one of the most significant challenges for PWDs has always been determining what they can do in adult life, after their traditional school life. With a form of a disability, these persons have not always been prepared enough for any such productive life, because of the belief that they are not able to operate efficiently in the mainstream society. Since there are a variety of rewards received from work related engagements, it is, therefore, misguided to see PWDs finishing school and entering the mainstream society desperate, without any survival skill(s). What ensured from the paper is that even with very lucrative UN mandates, unemployment of PWDs remains very high. Since education has a positive association with employment or productive life, lack of this much needed education has always resulted in PWDs failing to access employment or even gainfully engaging themselves. For lack of education, an important factor that has always been associated with socialisation and forming relationships, jobless individuals with disabilities have often lived in extremes of poverty and dependence. To those who happen to get the privilege of going to school, the curriculum offered in those schools does not prepare them for their personal survival skills, work engagement and/or the job market. One of reasons raised in this paper being that PWDs do not access a vocational type of education that can equip them with life skills. The recruitment policies in the job market have also been raised as another attribution factor that keeps PWDs out of employment. It has been raised in the paper that employers discriminate against PWDs on the grounds of unfair comparisons in terms of levels of competence. Most of the PWDs cannot match the rigors of sifting and sorting provided by the industry trade tests. Since the society still takes PWDs as sick, fear of the nature of impairment by employers has also emerged as another reason that restricts PWDs from employment. It has also been raised in the paper that some employers would rather not employ PWDs than risking their business by employing same. Personal attributes and behaviour exhibited by PWDs have also been known as contributory to them being sidelined by prospective employers. In varying degrees, PWDs have been known to be generally awkward in areas of human interaction, exhibiting extreme anti-social manners. For this reason, employers have also been known losing interest in such individuals, who do not respond to social overtures. Having raised the above as possible reasons for unemployability of PWDs, the paper also suggested strategies to be considered to increase their work engagement and employability.

V. Recommendations

Basing on the discussion and ideas raised in this paper, the following suggestions may be proffered as recommendations:

- Reality definers of the day have to provide PWDs with an education that equips them with skills that fine tune and align them along productive life paths and/or specific job-related pathways.
- Learners' time should not be wasted misdirecting their efforts in irrelevant subject combinations, which have very little or no significance in the labour market.
- Schools, as early as primary level, should engage career guidance teachers to guide learners into choice of subjects, based on one's strengths.
- PWDs have to access and enjoy a relevant curriculum with a vocational slant.
- People with disabilities also need to hold credentials that prove that they have been adequately trained for the job or engagement they want to undertake.
- Industries should also reconsider their cut-off point, especially when the prospective employee has a disability.
- Life or survival skills to be equipped early enough, during the child's traditional school life.
- PWDs have to be trained and attuned to become aligned with the demands and rigors of the labour market in order for them to satisfy their physiological and social needs.
- Structural modifications, like ramps and/or rails, at entry points, should be put up during initial construction of buildings, so that whoever will use that structure will not bear the adaptation costs in the event of employing someone with a disability.
- Since employers do not readily demonstrate high levels of acceptance of PWDs, job coaches and career counsellors have to educate these employers about disability issues.
- Prospective employers need good orientation in order to understand assets (strengths) possessed by PWDs, and not only focus on their weaknesses and/or incapacabilities.
- There should be punitive legislation to guard against discrimination of PWDs from being employed.

- There should be incentive-legislative clauses in favour of those companies which employ persons with any form of a disability and/or anomaly...(coming as subventions).
- PWDs need financial support services, at whatever educational level, to avoid wastage in education.
- PWDs need to be socially counselled in order to develop personal qualities also considered desirable by employers.
- PWDs are also expected to comply and not to be stiff-necked and arrogant, in whatever community they find themselves.
- PWDs should also be prepared to accept whom they are, what they are capable of doing and that which they are not capable of doing.
- Captains of industries should always remember that employing a person with a disability is not doing them a favour, but should be seen as according them their right.

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