

Inclusive Education, Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Policy: Mainstreaming PWDs at Africa University in Zimbabwe

Chupicai Manuel, Pamela Machakanja** and Deliah Jeranyama****

1 Background

Rising global inequalities and marginalisation are proving difficult to solve using a single lens of analysis. And education as a possible panacea for dealing with these inequalities has not been accessed by all people in society. Such a skewed distribution, access and availability of education have caused marginalisation of certain segments of society based on gender, sexuality, race, disability and class. Thus, a call for rethinking inclusive education with the view of transforming the educational systems, processes, institutions and infrastructure that promote the rights of people with disabilities is paramount in the 21st century. However, the political economy of inclusive education and policies around which to achieve the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) are rather elusive and uncoordinated given the complexity and contested nature of the factors that surround the realisation and implementation of inclusive education in Zimbabwe. Historically, all education systems were established under the elitist models of development which discriminated against the minority based on power, sex, gender, disability, language, sexuality, race, class and geography among other factors. Zimbabwe's education system followed the same model under the colonial rule, and the post-colonial education system took a similar fashion despite significant changes and affirmative action the government adopted to bring on board those who were historically and systematically marginalised.

In view of this, the education system that Zimbabwe inherited had its fault lines and has limited inclusivity and the pedagogy that was not inclusive to those viewed as the 'other' in society such as PWDs. The infrastructure, teaching materials and educational facilities and many other amenities for special needs education remain inaccessible in many universities in Zimbabwe. In addition, the recognition of PWDs in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006 has not scored much in Zimbabwe due to a myriad of challenges including governance, as well as socio-economic difficulties facing the country for the past decade. Relevant to these is the spatial progress realised in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially the universal access to primary education, where greater emphasis was placed on access and less on equity and inclusivity. The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2015) through SDG Goal #4 now emphasise inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.¹ However, since 2000, despite remarkable progress on the goal in reaching 91 per cent in primary school enrolment rate in developing regions, access to quality higher education remains a challenges especially to students with disabilities. Given this background, many tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe remain unfriendly to PWDs and there are limited facilities and human resources to

* Human rights professional and researcher.

** Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor, Director, Research and Innovation, Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe.

*** Human rights professional and researcher.

¹ UN, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 (2015).
Sustainabledevelopment.un.org

expedite the provision of inclusive education. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the prospects, challenges and opportunities of inclusive education in institutions of higher learning with the aim of mainstreaming PWDs in the learning process and education outcomes and advance the rights of PWDs. This study is expected to establish and propose policy options to accelerate inclusive education in institutions of higher education in Zimbabwe through curriculum development and affirmative action.

2 Problem Statement

The historical trajectory of disability legislation in Zimbabwe can be traced back to 1992 when the Disabled Persons Act (DPA) (Chapter 17:01) was decreed becoming one of pioneer countries to give recognition to the plight of disabled persons. Persons with disabilities are protected under a number legislative laws including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Zimbabwe ratified on 23 September 2013 and which takes a human rights and people-centred based approaches to the conceptualisation of disability as part of “human diversity and humanity; equality of opportunity; accessibility; equality between men and women”,² and the Constitution of Zimbabwe section 83 (a–f), with sub-section (e) emphasizing provision of facilities for education and sub-section (f) focusing on the provision of state-funded education and training where needed.³ Thus, having embraced and internalized the international human rights practices and expectations in the Zimbabwe Constitution, all institutions are expected to mainstream PWDs in the educational system through policy formulation and institutional reforms. However, despite having this plethora of legislative laws, institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe seem to be lagging behind in embracing the concept of disability and PWDs from a human-rights based approach which calls for inclusive policy planning and mainstreaming PWDs in all their curricula activities as an expression of responding to and embracing inclusive education. Several scholars have concluded that inclusive education remains at the ‘pilot project’ stage across much of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).⁴ Of the 30 million young people who are out-of-school in SSA, it is estimated that one third are children with disabilities (CWDs).⁵ The literature indicates historical, cultural, material and other factors which pose barriers to the participation of CWDs and the realisation of inclusive education.

Africa University had small numbers of PWDs accessing higher education due to problems that span from colonial, historical and human attitudes as well as institutional weaknesses. This high level of apathy has resulted in seemingly high levels of unpreparedness to include disabled persons within many institutions of higher learning, as well as limited social infrastructure reforms which is evidenced by the nature of facilities, systems, physical and functional structures. Consequently, institutions of higher learning often panic and poorly handle such students or staff members living with various disabilities when they become part of the institution’s community. Institutions of

² Article 3 of the CRPD on general principles.

³ Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013.

⁴ C. J. Eleweke and M. Rodda, ‘The Challenge of Enhancing Inclusive Education in Developing Countries’, 6:2 *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (2002) pp. 113–126; L. Mariga, R. McConkey and H. Myezwa, *Inclusive Education in Low-Income Countries: A Resource Book for Teacher Educators, Parent Trainers and Community Development Workers* (Rondebosch, South Africa, 2014); M. Srivastava, A. de Boer and S. J. Pijl, ‘Inclusive Education in Developing Countries: A Closer Look at Its Implementation in The Last 10 Years’, 67:2 *Educational Review* (2015) pp. 179–195.

⁵ Mariga *et al.*, *ibid.*

higher learning are replete with practices that reinforce exclusion, one of the most common being the widely accepted but largely smoke-and-mirrors practice of psychological testing of students to determine eligibility for special needs funding and services which are non-existent most of the time.

3 Goal

The study at hand seeks to assess the processes, structures and policies of higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. The study will carry out an overall assessment of the accessibility of infrastructure by PWDs, the availability of human resources to handle PWDs, curriculum, amenities, policies and pedagogy at an institution of higher learning in Zimbabwe. This will be done to measure the levels of preparedness, ability and milestones in mainstreaming PWDs in higher education institutions. The study also seeks to examine the human rights implications of mainstreaming PWDs in higher education as a social justice responsive to the attainment of SDG Goal #4.

4 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives which were to:

1. Analyse the legal frameworks that provide for disability rights and inclusive education in Zimbabwe.
2. Assess the policies, structures, attitudes, environment and processes available to mainstream PWDs at selected institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe
3. Suggest strategies that can be adopted to promote inclusivity of persons with disabilities in institutions of higher learning and promote equality and equity in Zimbabwe

5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. In what ways does the disability legal framework provide for inclusive education in Zimbabwe?
2. What policies, structures, processes and institutions are available at Africa University which are inclusive of persons with disabilities?
3. What strategies can be adopted to promote inclusivity of persons with disabilities in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe?

6 Significance of Study

This study is worth conducting because:

- It will be a basis for education policy development vis-à-vis disability policy development at institutions of higher learning.
- It also informs curriculum review and possible teaching methodologies as a step towards alignment with human rights best practices.

- It advocates for human resources that are disability friendly (sensitive).
- It facilitates the achievement of equality and justice as called for by the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The protection and promotion of fundamental human rights needs to be reflected in the approach taken with persons with disabilities.
- It shall further influence inclusive education at all levels of formal education in Zimbabwe.

7 Assumptions of the study

The study is premised on the assumptions that:

- At every recruitment process, institutions of higher learning receive applications from PWDs.
- Institutions of higher learning have not been adequately prepared to receive PWDs as both students and staff.

8 Conceptual Framework

This study will dwell on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 and the various legal frameworks available in the Zimbabwe Constitution that seek to promote the rights of PWDs. Inclusive education falls under the human rights framework inasmuch as it also reflects good governance. A human rights based approach will be adopted as a theoretical framework in this study as well as participation as it is reflected in good governance indicators. The study will also draw scholarly debates on inclusive education in higher education from global and regional experiences, and compare them to the Zimbabwean context.

9 Conceptualising Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a contested multidimensional concept which can be seen as a process of strengthening the capacity of an education system to reach out to all learners. As a contested concept it is shrouded with the underlying practices and meanings varying from region to region. As highlighted by Deppeler, Loreman and Smith, “educational jurisdictions around the world have adopted the vocabulary of inclusive education and invested significant resources ... into making schools more inclusive ... however, exclusion remains a real and present danger.”⁶ UNESCO contends that it is “an overall principle that should guide all educational policies and practices, starting from the belief that education is a fundamental human right and the foundation for a more just society”.⁷ While this is a comprehensive definition, other views from global institutions such as the UNCRPD take inclusive education as a rights-based approach to education which appreciates diversity among learners and their unique educational needs. Inclusive education centres its efforts on learners who are vulnerable and prone to exclusion and marginalisation.

⁶ J. Deppeler, T. Loreman and R. Smith, ‘Teaching and Learning for All’, in J. Deppeler, T. Loreman, R. Smith and L. Florian (eds.), *Inclusive Pedagogy Across the Curriculum. International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* (Emerald Group Publishing, London) vol. 7, pp. 1–10.

⁷ *Assessing Inclusive Education in Practice in Namibia, Challenges and opportunities in leaving no child behind*, p. ii, <https://www.moe.gov.na/files/downloads/99e_InclusiveEducationImplementationReport.pdf>.

10 Inclusive Education: Global Legal Framework

International law recognises the rights of PWDs through the CRPD which is a global treaty that addresses disability. It recognised formally the globalisation of disability rights under the human rights movement in 2006.⁸ Historical evidence shows that disability was once approached from a social welfare and epidemiological perspective where it carried images of sick and needy persons and not impairment. Therefore, the CRPD's thrust is that of a human rights based approach where issues of social and economic justice are at the centre of disability rights, with inclusive education anchoring social justice and equity. PWDs are therefore entitled to their fundamental rights, and in the context of inclusive education issues of access, affordability and distribution of services in higher education are invaluable tools that will make Zimbabwe and other African states live to the billings of international disability rights. The CRPD has enshrined provisions that call for equality, and Article 1 clearly states that the purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.⁹ In addition, the CPRD through Article 24 requires state parties to recognise the right to education for disabled children, and imposes the obligation to make reasonable accommodations¹⁰. Therefore, state parties have the obligation to hold universities to account for discrimination against PWDs in higher education.

Another right enshrined in the CPRD is the right to accommodation which is a very important aspect of securing inclusive education. The CRPD requires 1) an immediate non-discrimination guarantee, and 2) imposes an obligation of progressive realisation with respect to providing collective accommodations so as to incrementally transform classrooms into inclusive learning environments. With respect to disability-based discrimination in education, the failure to make a reasonable and effective accommodation is an act of discrimination. In view of the above, it is important to draw from the General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 that the CRPD places emphasis on the role of governments in terms of providing inclusive education, across all levels of the education system, for all learners.¹¹ This entails a comprehensive analysis of disability issues, and it offers a human rights dimension, replacing the medical model with the social model of disability.¹² General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 has promoted the right to inclusive education for children with disabilities, stating that they should be able to be included in the general education system. Therefore, there are good grounds for progressive state parties, institutions and all stakeholders to respect and implement initiatives that will further entrench values of disability rights in line with the CRPD.

⁸ The CRPD was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007.

⁹ Under Article 1 of the CRPD, other forms of disability include mental, intellectual and sensory impairments.

¹⁰ Article 24 of the CRPD contains the first legal enshrinement of the right to inclusive education for people with disabilities.

¹¹ G. de Beco, 'The Right to Inclusive Education According to Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Background, Requirements and (Remaining) Questions', 32 *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* (2014) pp. 263–287.

¹² R. Kayess, and P. French, 'Out of the Darkness into Light? Introducing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', 8:1 *Human Rights Law Review* (2008) pp. 1-34.

11 African Protocol on Persons with Disabilities and Inclusive Education

The African Protocol on Persons with Disabilities recognises disability rights¹³. For example, Article 16 recognises the right to education. Article 16 states that:

1. Every person with a disability has the right to education.
2. States Parties shall ensure to persons with disabilities the right to education on an equal basis with others.
3. States Parties shall take, reasonable, appropriate and effective measures to ensure that inclusive quality education and skills training for persons with disabilities is realized fully, including by:
 - a) Ensuring that persons with disabilities can access free, quality and compulsory basic and secondary education;
 - b) Ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, including by ensuring the literacy of persons with disabilities above compulsory school age;
 - c) Ensuring reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided, and that persons with disabilities receive the support required to facilitate their effective education;
 - d) Providing reasonable, progressive and effective individualized support measures in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion;
 - e) Ensuring appropriate schooling choices are available to persons with disabilities who may prefer to learn in particular environments;
 - f) Ensuring that persons with disabilities learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community;
 - g) Ensuring that multi-disciplinary assessments are undertaken to determine appropriate reasonable accommodation and support measures for learners with disabilities, early intervention, regular assessments and certification for learners are undertaken regardless of their disabilities;
 - h) Ensuring educational institutions are equipped with the teaching aids, materials and equipment to support the education of students with disabilities and their specific needs;
 - i) Training education professionals, including persons with disabilities, on how to educate and interact with children with specific learning needs; and
 - j) Facilitating respect, recognition, promotion, preservation and development of sign languages.

In the spirit of the Article 16, there are good grounds for any progressive learning environment to craft policies that provide for an all-inclusive society and observe the rights of PWDs.

The African Protocol for PWDs further recognizes the right to education of PWDs through Article 15 that observes the issues of accessibility such as:

1. Every person with a disability has the right to barrier free access to the physical environment, transportation, information, including communications technologies and systems, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public. 2. States Parties shall take reasonable and progressive step measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right, and such measures shall, among others, apply to:
 - a) Rural and urban settings and shall take account of population diversities;
 - b) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces;
 - c) Information, communications, sign languages and tactile interpretation services, braille, audio and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.

Therefore, there are good grounds for institutions of higher learning to mainstream PWDs inasmuch as they are not bound by the law to implement disability rights. In any event, if these

¹³ African Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

institutions are found to discriminate PWDs, there can be litigation initiated by the person being discriminated using the available national laws.

12 Marrakesh Treaty and Inclusive Education

The Marrakesh Treaty is an international treaty adopted in 2013 by member states of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialised agency of the United Nations¹⁴. The full title is The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. It is the first copyright treaty with human rights principles at its core, with specific references to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The impetus of the Marrakesh Treaty is on its landmark provisions such as that it created an international legal framework that allows the making and distribution of accessible format copies for people with print disabilities, and the sharing of accessible books across national borders. Under the Marrakesh Treaty, people with print disabilities include those who are blind, those who have a visual impairment or a perceptual or reading disability and those who are unable to focus the eyes or to hold or manipulate a book. Thus, this Treaty is a giant step towards improving the right of PWDs in learning environments to have access to print literature by removing stringent copyright measures for PWDs. All libraries in the world have their obligations to provide for PWDs and ensure that the university is an all-inclusive learning environment for PWDs.

13 Research Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research method which assisted us to explore Africa University's preparedness, responsiveness and policies to PWDs and aggregate data on populations of PWDs in the University over a five-year period (2011 to 2016), level of inclusivity in the curriculum and described experiences, perceptions, prospects and challenges faced in the promotion of inclusive education.

14 Population

The population of the study was Africa University with an average student body of 2100 students for both conventional and continuing education. The population of this study was drawn from key position holders in the University. This study conducted key informant interviews mainly with the deans of three colleges namely the College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance, College of Social Sciences, Theology, Humanities and Education and the College of Health, Agriculture and Natural Sciences. In addition, the Director of Continuing Education Office, the library staff, warden, the Student Representative Council, the Student Affairs Department, the lecturers (mainly HODs) and the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor as well as the Registrar's offices were consulted during this study.

¹⁴ The Marrakesh Treaty is an international treaty adopted in 2013 by member states of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialised agency of the United Nations

15 Scope of the Study

The study focused on:

- Four forms of disabilities which are visual impairments, hearing impairment, speech dysfunctions and physical disabilities
- Infrastructure which is limited to systems and structures
- A private institution of higher learning
- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Human resources
- Culture of inclusivity
- Policy and governance
- Population of PWDs

16 Sample Size and Sampling Methods

A sample for this study comprised students, academic and support staff of the selected institution of higher learning. The targeted sample size was composed of four (enrolled or former) male and female students living with either visual impairments, hearing impairment, speech dysfunctions or any other physical disabilities from the institution. Sixteen key informants shall also be identified from among the transport departments, Student Representative Council, human resources offices, dean of students' offices, resource centres/libraries, sports departments, hostel wardens, registry departments and the ICT/web management departments. Both students and key informants were selected using purposive sampling.

17 Data Collection Methods

Data for this study was collected using semi-structured questionnaires and key informant interviews and observations. Students participated through questionnaires while key informant interviews were conducted with key informants from deans of colleges, librarian, ICT department, student body, Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor and other relevant officers. Observations were made around the halls of residence, dining halls/canteens, bathrooms/restrooms, classrooms, library facilities/resource centres, playgrounds and the common rooms. While observing, attention was given to available special facilities that are needed by PWDs.

18 Data analysis

Thematic data analysis was used to group responses and analyse data using a narrative approach. This allowed us to interpret how Africa University upholds the rights of PWDs, describe the perceptions of the University towards inclusive education and analyse the processes and initiative underway to improve inclusive education.

19 Ethical considerations

The nature of this study required strong observance of ethical issues. Since there was engagement of persons with disabilities, the wording of the questionnaires and interview questions were very

disability friendly and sensitive. Again, other critical issues such as consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation and withdrawal were observed.

20 Findings

20.1 Introduction

This study administered key informant interviews which constituted the bulk of the data which we analysed. The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Dean of Students, the registrar and lecturers among others were part of the sample which contributed to data sources.

20.2 Provisions of the Zimbabwe Disabled Persons Act and the 2013 Constitution

The Zimbabwe Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 17:01) was promulgated in 1992, making the Zimbabwe one of the first states to adopt a disability related legislation.¹⁵ Having taken this step, it would have been assumed that Zimbabwe would ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities when it came into force in 2007. The Convention places obligation on states to ensure that persons with disabilities realize their rights and fundamental freedoms without any form of discrimination. However, it took Zimbabwe more than five years to ratify the convention in September 2013.

This international instrument was domesticated through the Constitution of 2013, which recognises the rights of persons with both physical and mental disabilities. Section 22(2) of the Zimbabwe Constitution clearly indicate the state's obligation to, "*within the limits of the resources ... assist persons with physical or mental disabilities to achieve their full potential and to minimize the disadvantages faced by them*". The Constitution further prescribes in section 3 that all institutions and government agencies 'must':

- a) Develop programmes for the welfare of persons with physical or mental disabilities, especially work programmes consistent with their capabilities and acceptable to them or their legal representatives.
- b) Consider the specific requirements of persons with all forms of disability as one of the priorities in development plans
- c) Encourage the use and development of forms of communication suitable for persons with physical or mental disability

However, critical analysis of this constitutional commitment has revealed the implications of a claw back clause in section 22(2) which continues to dilute and undermine the rights of PWDs. Despite this, the Constitution remains a confirmation of how much the state is committed to promote and protect the rights of PWDs. Section 83 shows further dedication towards alleviation of the predicament faced by PWDs in Zimbabwe. This has demonstrated how much Zimbabwe has embraced the human rights based approach in a bid to internalise the framework into its legislation. Whilst this section is dedicated to ensure that the rights of PWDs are observed and respected, there seems to be no guarantee that the state shall fulfil the obligation since full realisation of the rights

¹⁵ P. Manatsa, 'Are Disability Laws in Zimbabwe Compatible with the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)?', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* (2015) pp. 25–34.

remains subject to availability of resources. In that regard, Mandipa submits that section 83 should have stated that the state has a duty to progressively realize the rights of PWDs.¹⁶

These shortcomings have failed to cover up for the gaps observed in the Disabled Persons Act which has also been criticised for inadequately addressing the human rights of PWDs. The major drawback of this Act is that it follows an outdated medical model of disability which locates disability within the person and views PWDs not as rights holders but as objects for clinical intervention.¹⁷ This has contributed to PWDs losing confidence in themselves as influential agents of positive change.

Having realised the implication of this shortfall, government ministries have made efforts to embrace human rights concepts so as to improve inclusiveness of PWDs in all programming. This has also seen the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education urging disability friendly pedagogy and infrastructure as a means towards achieving its goal to ensure that education is received by all who have the capacity despite physical makeup.

20.3 Disability-Friendly Policies and Infrastructure

Having been established 25 years ago, Africa University has no disability policy that is specifically designed to ensure inclusivity of both students and staff with disabilities. This is a gap that has been overlooked and thus continues to cause panic when a PWD shows up after being admitted on campus. An informal chat with one of the student alumnus with physical disability revealed the seemingly panic and discomfort expressed by both staff and students upon realising that the student was physically disabled.

This supposed confusion stands as a clear sign of unpreparedness to receive and render services to PWDs in general. To confirm this assumption, the study went further to assess the nature of buildings on campus to verify whether they were designed with PWDs in mind. Twelve buildings that are critical to students and staff were assessed to see how accessible they are to PWDs. All college buildings, the library, ICT building, one hall of residence (because the set-up of all hostels is the same), the student union building, chapel, dining hall and the administrative building were assessed.

20.4 Public Buildings Accessibility

Of the 12 buildings, none of them has a clearly designated parking space for disabled badge holders. All buildings have a designated parking space, including a space specifically set aside for students to park their vehicles. However, there is no building with a specifically set-aside parking space for PWDs. This could be understood that PWDs are not recognized as in need of some special need especially considering that they may not be able to withstand possible pressures in order to have equal access to some resources. Unavailability of a designated parking space further translates to PWDs having to walk a long distance from the parking area to the nearest building.

¹⁶ See E. Mandipa, 'New Constitution Disability Friendly', *Chronicle*, 30 January 2014, available at <<http://www.chronicle.co.zw/new-constitution-disability-friendly>>

¹⁷ E. Mandipa, 'A Critical Analysis of the Legal and Institutional Frameworks for the Realisation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Zimbabwe', *African Disability Rights Yearbook* (2013) pp. 81–96.

The assessment also found that the main entrances of some of the buildings are either flat levelled, ramped or have staircases. It was observed that only two of the 12 observed public buildings had both a ramp and a staircase, that is, the IPLG building and the chapel. Five buildings are flat-levelled, four have staircases (without ramps) and only one has a ramp (and no staircase) on the main entrance. Among the flat levelled buildings are the male and female hostels. This means wheelchair users and crutch and cane users cannot access the second floors of all halls of residence. As a measure, all students with such disabilities have always been allocated rooms that are on the ground floor; something which does not grant all students the same opportunity to enjoy the halls of residence in the same manner.

The same observation was made with the administration building in which critical offices are located. While the main entrance is flat-levelled, the ramp is available but located on the other side of the building. This means wheelchair and crutch and cane users can only access the second floor of the building using a separate entrance point. It was also observed that the engineering building is completely inaccessible to wheelchair users although it may be accessible to crutch and cane users but with some difficulties. An almost similar arrangement exists in the health science building in which one may access the ground floor through the main entrance but cannot access the second floor through the main entrance as there are no internal ramps. In this same building, a ramp is situated on the other side of the building, and it leads into the second floor such that if one wishes to get to the ground floor, they have to move outside the building and go through the flat-levelled main entrance.

Another critical public space that PWDs have no access to is the university dining hall. This is because the entrance has two staircases with an average of nine stairs in each staircase. There is no other way that can be used to reach the dining hall which is on the second floor.

It is also important to note that while some building entrances are easily accessible to PWDs, the distance travelled from the halls of residence to get to the entrance are long because they have to go around the University using the main route which is used by vehicles. This applies to the IPLG and health science buildings which are situated furthest from most of the buildings. The distance from the nearest hostel to these buildings can be approximated to 500 meters while one would need to travel an extra 100 meters if they are residing in the furthest hostel.

20.5 Public Buildings User-Friendliness

While some buildings are accessible the facilities are not disability-friendly. For example, while all classrooms are accessible to the blind, there are no braille printers and keyboards available, neither does the University have devices that use speech recognition and dictation software to cater for the blind. This implies that a blind student will have to rely on his/her aide to take notes and read to them afterwards. In the past, examinations for a student who was blind have been printed at the University, taken to the University of Zimbabwe for translation into braille format and then the student would write the exam. However, the University could not provide a machine for the student, and hence had to use his personal machine. Afterwards, the answer script would be taken back to the University of Zimbabwe for translation into word format to allow the examiners to assess the work. This kind of arrangement has not only been time-consuming but had financial

implications on the University. Further, the absence of personnel that is skilled in both word and braille text almost implies limited commitment towards the inclusive agenda.

The same has been true for all front desks around campus. The administration building is designed in a manner that a wheelchair user is not visible behind the counter. The same was observed in all offices on campus in which no wheelchair user friendly desk is available. This was also observed in the University library's book circulation points which do not allow someone sitting in wheelchair to access the attendant behind the desk because of the height of the desk. This would also imply that any person sitting in a wheelchair will need an aide. However, this challenge also stretches even in accessing the books on the open library stacks. All the book shelves are approximately two metres from the ground, allowing the library user to only access books that are shelved on the first two stacks. All those materials shelved on the rest of the stacks are not easily accessible to wheelchair users on campus. Further, the library has no personnel that carries the responsibility to offer both technical and physical support to PWDs on campus.

Another observation was that the University ICT and library facilities cannot offer adequate services to persons who are colour-blind. This finding was made upon observing the types of keyboards available in these two public areas. The University currently can provide the usual black and white coloured keyboards for all the public machines.

20.6 Doors and Door Handle Types

The research found that no single door across the University campus was automatic. All classroom, hostel and office doors are manual, requiring one to either push or pull. A wheelchair user student is therefore required to be in the company of someone in order to access the classroom or hostel room. This was even complicated in instances considering that doors open inwards.

20.7 Separate Internal Facilities for PWDs

The research established through observation that most of the University public buildings do have a few separate internal facilities for PWDs. All the buildings do have restrooms specifically set aside for PWDs. The library is the only public building that has an internal elevator which is capable of moving students with disabilities and staff up and down the library.

20.8 Support Services and Attitude Towards PWDs

It was established that some of the support service facilities are not accessible to PWDs particularly the visually impaired and wheelchair users. These include the fleet and facility services, which is responsible for providing transport to both staff and students, and laundry services.

With regard to the fleet and facility services, while the buses that ferry both students and staff are available, they are not accessible to wheelchair users, cane users as well as crutch users on campus. The entrance to the buses have a staircase, thereby limiting persons with specific disabilities. Further inquiries revealed that there is no wheelchair van available specifically designed for the transportation of wheelchair users. From past incidences, a wheelchair user is hand lifted by a colleague and the wheelchair is folded and placed in the bus. However, the buses have no space for ferrying the wheelchairs while the user is on board. An inquiry with a former female student who

used a wheelchair revealed that this kind of arrangement did not only bring discomfort to her when every other bus users had to stand aside so that she had to be lifted in and out of the bus but it made her feel that she had become more of a burden to her colleagues who had taken the responsibility to provide such kind of support to her.

The study also found out that the University has no human resources that have the capacity to communicate with persons with speech dysfunctions and hearing impairments. This is because none among the currently present staff members can communicate in sign language. This does not only affect students but even staff who may want to join the University community. The current situation is such that the University cannot provide a conducive working environment for someone who relies on sign language as the study revealed that there is no staff member with a qualification in sign language.

Although the support services are not adequately designed to include PWDs, there is a positive attitude towards PWDs from both staff and students. This has been evidenced by the nature and magnitude of assistance rendered to fellow students living with physical disabilities. The study further revealed that the attitude from administrative staff has also positively changed upon realising that PWDs only have special needs and are very cooperative. However, it was revealed that the state of preparedness often induces shock and results in fear of uncertainties on potential challenges which in many cases do not occur.

20.9 Pedagogy

Pedagogy is about how lecturers teach and how learners learn, and is a fundamental ingredient in any successful inclusive approach. Without effective pedagogy we have no operative method of education and, without purposeful and effective inclusive pedagogy, we have no basis for meaningful inclusion. Research evidence revealed that Africa University uses conventional methods of teaching and the style is rather for persons who are not disabled. Despite the existence of different patches of undocumented policy documents as enshrined in the mission and vision of Africa University which states inclusivity and equality, it is important to note that the preparedness of Africa University in transforming its pedagogy to meet the needs of PWDs is limited. An interview with the director of the Department of Continuing Education at Africa University indicated that the e-learning platform for example does not cater for the needs of those with hearing and visual impairments. He noted that the University has a deliberate effort to promote equality and this has been shown in other areas where gender equality was achieved as evidenced by the 51 to 49 per cent female-to-male ratios, respectively.

However, on disability, our teaching and mode of delivery with regards to e-learning and Moodle does not meet the needs of PWDs.¹⁸ In addition, an interview with one of the former students from Africa University who is now the director of the umbrella body of all disability organizations in Zimbabwe pointed out that the teaching methods and delivery system in the University is not disability friendly. He noted that he personally had challenges when he was a student at Africa University studying for a Master's in Public Policy and Governance where lecturers continued to

¹⁸ Key informant interview with the Distance Education Director at Africa University, 5 June 2017.

use PowerPoint presentations, and yet he was visually impaired.¹⁹ The former student shared an experience where he had a misunderstanding with the lecturer when the lecturer kept on using phrases such as “as you can see in the slide show” and he reminded the lecturer that he cannot see and appealed to him to explain. The lecturer felt disrespected and had a bad relationship with the student which in his view affected the learning process and co-learning. From the views shared by the former student, it reveals that the pedagogy at Africa University is not yet fine-tuned towards embracing PWDs and their special needs.

The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor which is responsible for all academic issues was approached to give its views on the pedagogy and PWDs at Africa University. The deputy vice chancellor first reiterated the strategic direction of the University as a world-class university and all-encompassing one that does not discriminate based on disability. The DVC further explained that as part of the curriculum development and academic programming the University has a Master’s in Human Rights, Peace and Development which is an anchor programme that entrenches disability rights issues.²⁰ Therefore, the DVC expressed that the environment is ready to promote equality and equity as evidenced by educational programmes in the University. Apart from academic programmes which exist in the University, there is also a deliberate effort to enrol students with disabilities and offer them scholarships which is one giant step towards inclusivity, equality and equity in higher education.²¹ However, the DVC also lamented the limited knowledge and skills gap in the University to propel a full-fledged inclusive education. There are gaps in the human resources, knowledge development and teaching techniques which suit students with disabilities and the technologies available may not fully support their needs. In addition, pedagogy is not only related to the lecturer’s delivery model and techniques to the students but also the medium through which students are able to co-learn with other students with disabilities as well as the lecturer learning from across all students despite their disability.

As a way of testing the preparedness and depth of understanding of pedagogy for persons with disabilities, we interviewed one lecturer who teaches in the Master in Public Policy and Governance. The Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance has enrolled students with disabilities in the last five years, and we were interested in hearing the experiences of the lecturer when he conducted his classes with students who had disabilities. Two of the students had physical disabilities and one was visually impaired. From the lecturer’s experience, it was easy to teach students with physical disabilities compared to the one with visual impairment. According to the lecturer, he used PowerPoint presentations and highlighted certain issues using pointers and that further discriminated the visually impaired student. In an effort to deal with the matter and cater for the student, the lecturer usually sent the student some PowerPoint presentations to be read from his computer. However, in his view teaching persons with different needs require special training as one can easily exclude them from the learning process.²²

¹⁹ In-depth interview with the late Mr. Tsarai Mungoni a former student in the Master in Public Policy and Governance and the former national director at NASCOH, 3 June 2017.

²⁰ Key informant interview with the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor which is responsible for all academic programming in the University, 1 June 2017.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² In-depth interview with a lecturer in the Master in Public Policy and Governance, 5 June 2017.

21 Strategies for Mainstreaming PWDs in Higher Education: Towards Equality and Equity in Zimbabwe

Having found out the realities associated with localising the provisions of the Disabled Persons Act and the Constitution, there are a number of strategies that the study recommends as a means towards promoting inclusivity of PWDs in Zimbabwe's institutions of higher learning with particular focus on Africa University. These strategies include but are not limited to:

- **Sensitisation trainings:** Drawing from the findings, there was evidence of academic registry department staff unpreparedness when the first PWDs were enrolled on campus in 2015. There is need to hold sensitisation trainings for both students and staff at institutions of higher learning to raise the level of preparedness so that there is no panic and confusion upon reception of either staff members or students living with physical disabilities. Africa University has been facilitating workshops in partnership with others on mainstreaming the rights of PWDs in higher education. This can be up scaled and more local trainings introduced with the view of ensuring increased awareness of disability rights.
- **Institutional Reform and Structuring:** Africa University needs a disability resource centre and disability desk which will champion development of policies and academic programmes as well as outreach with particular emphasis on pedagogy, extracurricular activities, infrastructure and other support mechanisms. This can be done in partnership with the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Director of Continuing Education, the registrar and Dean of Students who are there to oversee academic programming and the welfare of the students.
- **Basic training on sign language:** Having found out that there is lack of basic knowledge on sign language among University staff, the study recommends basic training for staff and students. This will not only be a sign of inclusivity but a mechanism for the domestication and implementation of the provisions of the Zimbabwe 2013 Constitution.
- **Infrastructure development:** All the buildings at Africa University must be accessible by persons with disabilities and the research established that very few buildings actually are accessible. Therefore, we recommend that the buildings be restructured to be accessible by PWDs. Furthermore, all new buildings must pass the test of disability friendliness at the planning stage.
- **Pedagogy review:** The research findings highlighted that inclusive pedagogy for PWDs draws attention to the idea that a single "one size fits all"²³ pedagogy is not helpful when trying to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners, and that attention needs to be paid to individuals as opposed to a purely theoretical class of learners in which no form of significant diversity exists. In this respect, institutions of higher education in Zimbabwe including Africa University need to take the issue of pedagogical review seriously. In recognition of this, pedagogies aimed at addressing the needs of all learners that minimise

²³ P. Mittler, *Overcoming Exclusion, Social Justice through Education* (Routledge, Abington, UK, 2012).

or eliminate the singling out of individuals for special teaching have been developed.²⁴ The most familiar of these approaches include: Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which is based on three principles that include: (a) multiple means of engagement, (b) multiple means of representation, and (c) multiple means of action and expression; Differentiated Instruction (DI) which refers to “pedagogical techniques used in the classroom to deliver the appropriately designed curriculum to a wide range of learners”;²⁵ and the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) popularised by Florian and Spratt,²⁶ whose goal is to promote the full participation of all students in the classroom by acknowledging individual differences as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning. Of significance, IPAA rejects deterministic views of ability and the idea that the presence of some children will impede the progress of other children, and teachers are encouraged to continually develop creative and novel ways of working with children with different abilities.

What these approaches have in common is that they are not prescriptive but are based on principles and strategies that the teacher must adopt and adapt to the situation. Pedagogical review also requires a critical lens which ensures that approaches that perpetuate segregation do not find their way in settings by focusing on inclusive teaching and learning. Such pedagogical approaches can be deconstructed through a process of critical discourse analysis whose central aim is to examine how different texts reproduce power and inequalities in society. Using critical analysis to examine inclusive pedagogy helps in finding answers to the following questions:

- a) What is being taken for granted in the pedagogical approach under consideration?
- b) What is missing from the approach?
- c) What assumptions and beliefs form the basis of any pedagogical approach?
- d) In what ways is the pedagogical approach influenced by the traditional classroom of teaching and learning?
- e) What are the roles of the teachers and learners?
- f) Does the approach adequately respect culture, religion and other areas of diversity and allow children to express their particular orientation?
- g) What impact might each approach have on the identity of the disabled learner?²⁷

It can be argued that asking these and similar questions with respect to inclusive pedagogy can assist educators to evaluate the merits and suitability of an approach with respect to their context and personal views. This can also be effective if done in collaboration with teaching colleagues so that the various issues can be explored from a range of viewpoints through dialogical process.

²⁴ C. Forlin *et al.*, *Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities: A Review of Best Evidence in Relation to Theory and Practice*, Report to the Australian Government Department of Education, Canberra, 2013.

²⁵ T. Loreman, J. M. Deppeler and D. H. Harvey, *Inclusive Education: Supporting Diversity in the Classroom* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2010).

²⁶ L. Florian and J. Spratt, ‘Enacting Inclusion: A Framework for Interrogating Inclusive Practice’, 28:2 *European Journal of Special Needs Education* (2013) pp. 199–135.

²⁷ Deppeler *et al.*, *supra* note 6.

- **Improve support services:** With regards to improving support services aimed at enhancing inclusive education this study can be informed by McGhie-Richmond and de Bruin²⁸ who highlighted the links between technology-assisted pedagogy and the IPPA through which the processes of multiple means of engagement, representation and action and expression can be mediated. McGhie-Richmond and de Bruin highlight the value of technology in mediating and supporting self-directed learning with research evidence that demonstrates that students use their various devices and web-based applications in very different and individualised ways and that the inherent flexibility in terms of the pacing, content and “on-demand” nature of web-based learning environments can result in a rich, personalized learning experiences.²⁹ As such, Africa University needs to come to realisation that digital technologies afford students opportunities to collaborate in conceptualising problems, designing solutions and co-constructing artefacts or narratives collaboratively with others as well as foster individual learning as part of broader inclusive education policy agenda.

22 Conclusion

The research findings revealed that inclusive pedagogy is about providing for meaningful participation of all learners where diversity is taken as a human rights issue and must be accounted for so as to ensure an elimination of learners on the margins. This then requires that Africa University takes serious the idea of developing a comprehensive policy on inclusive education with clear strategies for its operationalisation. The study explored some inclusive pedagogical approaches that may be useful and that have been shown to be adaptable regardless of context. The study showed that the underlying fundamentals of good teaching are the basis of inclusive education pedagogy. Hence all elements of what are currently acknowledged as being important to good teaching should be visible in each of the inclusive pedagogical models adopted by Africa University. Of significance, the study revealed that the adoption of inclusive pedagogy requires humility: a recognition that if a student is not learning it may be the teaching that is the problem rather than the learner.

Therefore, when lecturers reflect and come to these conclusions, they are in a better position to move forward and truly adopt inclusive ways of teaching which guarantee student success. From this premise, the decision to embrace inclusive education pedagogy can serve to relieve job-related stress for lecturers and enhance their feelings of self-efficacy along with improving job satisfaction. The negative impact on lecturers in terms of stress and workload has been one of the objections raised to the employment of some inclusive pedagogies, but whether or not one is sympathetic to this point of view, it must be acknowledged that the adoption of inclusive pedagogical approach does represent new ways of working for lecturers, and requires the adoption of different points of view. Finally, the study revealed how technology-assisted instruction provides students with a highly flexible, accessible and collaborative yet at the same time individualized model of delivery. Hence the need for more training for both students and staff to sensitise them about the importance of inclusive education as a human rights issue enshrined in the Zimbabwean Constitution. To achieve these digitalisation transformations Africa University should invest in restructuring its

²⁸ D. McGhie-Richmond and C. de Bruin, ‘Tablets, Tweets, and Taking Texts: The Role of Technology in Inclusive Pedagogy’, in Deppeler *et al.*, *supra* note 6, vol. 7, pp. 211–234.

²⁹ D. Sampson and P. Zervas, ‘Context-Aware Adaptive and Personalized Mobile Learning Systems’, in D. G. Sampson *et al.* (eds), *Ubiquitous and Mobile Learning in the Digital Age* (pp. 3–17) (Springer, New York, 2013).

infrastructural design of buildings and classroom equipment and furnishings to align with the educational trends and realities of making higher education highly flexible and accessible to all students paying special attention to students living with different forms of disabilities.