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**WHITHER SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION? AN EXAMINATION OF THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION COURSE AT A
TERTIARY IN INSTITUTION IN MASVINGO, ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT

Emanating from the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into the Education and Training of (1999), it is now mandatory for every educational institution in Zimbabwe to teach special needs education. The researchers have noted that in most schools there are pupils learning with some disabilities. This study sought to make a follow up at one tertiary institution to check on the readiness and ability of the teachers on training to teach special needs education. It sought to establish whether the trained teachers will be in a position to teach the disadvantaged so that they will benefit fully. A case study methodology was adopted. Interviews were done with the two college administrators. Questionnaires were administered to five (5) lecturers and twenty (20) student teachers. Qualitative and quantitative paradigms were used in the study. The researchers sought permission from the Ministry of Education to carry out the study. Much as they learnt some basics of special needs they are failing to implement the Individualized Educational Plan for the benefit of the disabled children. It was revealed that most of the student teachers were not in a position to read the Braille or use the sign language. This shows that whilst efforts are being done to implement the recommendations from the Commission of inquiry, the teachers that are being produced are half-baked. The researchers recommended that the lecturers for the special needs education program ought to be highly qualified or they have to be role models. There is also need for the lecturers concerned to have some workshops to enable them to read Braille and use sign language proficiently. The tertiary institutions should have a recruitment policy encouraging candidates from the disabled community to be trained.

KEYWORDS: Individualised Educational Plan, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Braille, Sign Language, Special Needs Education

Background

The educational terrain is never even, more so in Zimbabwe, where there is the rural/ urban division among other problems besieging educational practice. The rural/urban division results in an uneven distribution of resources and teachers tend to prefer teaching in urban centres. Chronic teacher shortages in special education has had many special education professionals concerned about the ability of teacher training institutions to provide personnel capable of delivering quality education for all students with disabilities. This paper seeks to enhance specialised training of teachers and to ensure that their capacity to deliver special education in serving the increasing population of students with disabilities is achievable. Teacher education is coming under fire for its perceived inability to prepare teachers adequately for the realities of the classroom (Brownell, Ross, Colón, & McCallum 2003). The situation is further compounded for the disadvantaged learner who besides coping with ill-equipped teachers, has to cope with unfriendly infrastructure. There is an outcry from the disadvantaged students who claim that they are not getting enough support they need for their learning. As evidenced by the following example, there certainly are cultural issues of representation and ‘voice’ of the disadvantaged. As the lecturers were discussing some examination marks it emerged that some marks of the blind students were not forwarded because the papers were not transcribed. The researchers wondered why the examination papers only needed to be transcribed during the examination times yet during the course of the semester the same lecturer would have been dealing with the students without the transcription the papers being done by someone appointed by the institution. On noticing this anomaly, the researchers were prompted to carry out the study to establish the feasibility of the programme. Rather than opting for cultural assimilation which tend to move disabled students away from their original culture so they may acquire the skills needed to compete in the macro-culture, in contrast, the researchers prefer cultural pluralism as an approach that encourages disadvantaged students to retain their original culture to support educational success and make accommodations based upon students’ experience and backgrounds. Speaking about deaf people, emancipatory theorists indicate that deaf people share a sense of collective pride, a common language, a heritage (Ladd, 2003). (Spivak, 1990) notes that the emancipatory agenda makes use of strategic labelling as a means to discover and recover deaf histories of oppression, maltreatment, patronage, and discrimination by naming, from within a unified, political, essentialized space, the

hearing/seeing other. A postmodern emancipatory lens, highlights the hearing/seeing other's perspective as parochial, oppressive, and unbending (Davis, 2008). This study sought to extend the work of emancipatory theorists, with a review of the literature and discussion of the extent to which blind culture and deaf culture have been addressed in teacher preparation programmes. Furthermore, the resulting implications for service delivery to people with visual and hearing disabilities are presented.

Rationale of investigating whether special needs education is adequately being taught at a tertiary institution in Masvingo.

This study provides a rationale for infusing cultural perspectives and understandings of the visual and hearing impaired experiences into special needs education in teacher preparation programmes at a tertiary institution. Substantial evidence of well-established features of the blind and deaf communities that meet definitional criteria for special needs education literature is presented. The extent that blind and deaf cultures have been reflected in special needs education was addressed to validate the need for the incorporation of cultural perspectives of the blind and deaf experiences into teacher preparation programs. A conspicuous absence of discussion about the culture of blindness and deafness from the perspective of student teachers who are members of these communities necessitated this study. As earlier noted, the student with a disability has a double disadvantage. Besides the usual problems associated with provision of education, specialist teachers for special needs education are not readily available and these students often go through education without proper assistance. Their learning resources, which include hearing aids and Braille material, are also not easily available. This study was carried out because the researchers strongly agrees with Johnson and Neito, (2007a: 37) that “it is important to recognize that the national reform reports accept the premise that teacher education makes a difference and, therefore, view highly specified reforms in teacher education as the most appropriate path for improving programs.”

Research questions

The study among other things wanted to find out:

1. To what extent is the special needs education being taught in tertiary institutions?
2. How is cultural pluralism being promoted in tertiary institutions?

Research methodology

A qualitative research methodology was adopted. Qualitative research is defined as research devoted to developing of human systems like a teacher and his students (Sidhu 2003). It was used in this study for its flexibility enhanced systemic collection of data by involving the students with disabilities, their colleagues and their lecturers. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) assert that a qualitative paradigm encourage an in depth study and represent a true picture of a phenomenon under study. This enhanced the researchers to have a true picture of the appropriateness of the Special Needs Education in tertiary institutions. However, Trochim (2006) figures out that qualitative paradigm uses descriptive data in its reports rather than quantitative analysis. In this study a case study was used. Case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. According to Yin, (2009) a case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events. When the approach is addressed correctly, it becomes a viable methodology in identifying a problem and manipulates some intervention programmes. However, pit falls are encountered when generalizations are made. Thus, if the notion is valid for one institution therefore it applies to other institutions. This cannot be the case because the lecturers might portray different attitudes towards the students. In this case, this paradigm is used in trying to come to terms with an assessment of teacher training programme with regards to student teachers' multiculturalism and readiness to teach special needs education. The data collection techniques used are the questionnaires and the interview. The questionnaires were administered to the student teachers and their lecturers. The interviews were carried out on the administrators. Data was also sought through follow up unstructured interviews on the questionnaire respondents. The advantages of unstructured interviews are that questions and answers can be spontaneous (Bogdan and Bicklen 2004) Also an advantage could be the person being interviewed cannot have preconceived answers. However the disadvantage would be one might get stuck as what to ask next.

Theoretical framework

It was noted that there is self-affirmation of blind and deaf cultures as a valued human experience, especially when blind and deaf cultures are considered as shared cultural, social, and political phenomena (Chingombe, and Chitumba, 2013a). Many

members of the blind and deaf communities repudiate the deficit perspective that sees blindness and deafness as disabilities. The study sees the need for a cultural understanding of blind and deaf experiences. The tertiary institution in Masvingo, need to understand the shared personal and collective experiences from which multiple identities emerge. A major element of this collective and shared experience is the epistemological framing of the phenomena of blindness and deafness as undesirable defects and deficiencies. In response to many of these experiences, blindness and deaf cultures and identities have emerged predicated on values that accept, valorise, and celebrate disabilities as natural human condition and source of pride. Many in these communities have redefined the experience as an accepted and welcome experience if not because of, in spite of the struggles that characterize individual experiences. As noted by Linton (1998), there is substantial evidence that people with disabilities may lay a valid claim to a parallel history unique to their communities as well as shared values, experiences, patterns of behaviour, and common identities. Although substantial progress had been achieved by establishing teacher competencies specific to ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity, as noted by (Lane, 2005), concerns remain about whether the standards provide a framework for the development of cultural competence in special needs education. The question then is whose voices contribute to shaping the knowledge construction process for the visual and hearing impaired community? This question is central to the discussion of disability and diversity. The authors fully agree with Johnson and Neito, (2007a) that the perspective of authentic members of the 'blind/deaf-world' must be addressed in the narrative and definitions of who they are. This exploration of minority/majority, powerful/disempowered spaces of identities within the context of deaf/blind studies offers a radical naming and claiming of self: embracing what is good about blind/deaf studies and recognizing the very real possibility of their voices becoming lost, overwhelmed, entangled and muted even.

In order to amply investigate the issue of college readiness in assisting disadvantaged student teachers as well as equip them with skills to help disadvantaged pupils, the study borrowed heavily from Bandura's bobo doll experiment and critical theory which questions the status quo, as well as, recommend equality of opportunity to education. Critical theory is the use of reason in the pursuit of truth (Marcuse, 1998). Its goal is to critique as well as reform educational practice. By adopting critical theory, the study harnessed its tendency to analyse and evaluate information.

As critical theorists, we investigated the special needs education programme at a tertiary institution in Masvingo with the hope of laying bare its strengths as well as its weaknesses in assisting student teachers with disabilities, as well as equipping student teachers with skills to deal with pupils with disadvantages. Banduras bobo doll experiment highlights that children tend to imitate the modeled behaviour (Lahey, 2009). Thus; students are likely to exhibit mannerism from the significant others. Education systems recognize the responsibility for preparing teachers who value diversity, cultural competence, and proficiency to accommodate the substantial variance in students' experiences, backgrounds, languages, abilities, and belief systems. As noted by Linton (1998), the teachers who are produced by the education systems the world-over have to understand that although the dominant culture describes the atypical experience as deficit and loss, the disability community's narrative recounts it in more complex ways. She noted that the disability rights movement's position is critical of the domination of the medical definition, and she views it as a major stumbling block to the reinterpretation of disability, and sees disability as an identity marker. Disability identity, is maligned by the experience of being seen as something they are not, joined with the realization that what they are remains 'invisible'. The blind and deaf community view visual and hearing impairment as unique and collective cultural experiences and identities.

Promoting cultural pluralism in tertiary institutions

Multi-culturalism is the acceptance or promotion of multi ethnic cultures (Moore, 2001). There is a deaf culture, hearing culture and the blind culture. Schools are therefore considered to be socio-cultural systems whereby all the above cultures can share a common goal. Interpersonal relations are therefore inculcated in these institutions hence there is need to kick out segregation among these stakeholders. Knowledge can only be transferred to the subordinates in a definite manner. The teachers ought to share knowledge amongst the learners regardless of the culture to which they belong. Barton (1996) postulates that appropriate academic adjustments must be provided to college students to promote meaningful access to tertiary education. He further noted that there is need for equal opportunities and empowerment to enhance learning. MacLean and Gannon (1997) concurs with the Nziramasanga Commission (1999) for they stipulate that it is unlawful to exclude people with disabilities. This provokes the governments to offer reasonable support to

people with disabilities. Disability has been defined as a physical or mental improvement that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on one's ability to carry out normal day to day activities (Hallahan and Kauffman 1997). They further highlighted that most teachers cannot communicate effectively with the disadvantaged pupils. Under such circumstances one need to have assistance from the people around to enhance a smooth running of all the daily routines one has to do. Andrews, Leigh, and Weiner (2004) figured out that the progress of students with disabilities is solely affected by the attitude and willingness of the academic staff. Thus the lecturers are supposed to show their concern over the students with disabilities and be in a position to willingly support these students in all their endeavors.

Data analysis

(a)Lecturers' responses

Out of the five lectures interviewed two (40%) lectures indicated that they are teaching student teachers with disabilities. The other three (60%) indicated that they do not have students with any disabilities. This shows that there are very few students with disabilities at the institution' All the five lecturers (100%) have shown that they cannot read the Braille. This leaves the students at a disadvantage because the lecturers cannot independently mark their students' work. The lecturers are bound to hire someone who will transcribe the work for their students. This will lead to delayed feedback for the transcribers will take their own pace to transcribe. Chances are high that if an outsider is transcribing the work produced might be altered. Four lecturers (80%) indicated that they do not have any special training. Only one lecturer (20%) indicated that she has a Masters' degree in Special Needs Education. It is only that one lecturer who is in a position to read Braille. She further indicated that her knowledge of Braille is also very basic. Thus four out of five lecturers are not able to read the Braille. All the lecturers admitted that they cannot fully use the sign language. This shows that some lecturers who do not have adequate knowledge on how to deal with pupils with disabilities are manning classes with students with disabilities. As a result the chances are very high that they will end up producing half-baked students who will face a challenge when they are executing their duties. The fact that the lecturers do not have a special qualification creates a nightmarish situation, as it becomes indeed near impossible that they will produce proficient student teachers. However the lecturers indicated that they are not facing any

difficulties, since their disabled students are being assisted by their colleagues. The lecturers praised disadvantaged students for their performance which they indicated that it even surpassed that of those without disabilities. The lecturers also feel that the one hour given as extra time to the disadvantaged candidates during examination sessions seem to be inadequate. They also complained that all the examinations should be written in the morning for they are not comfortable with the afternoon sessions because they will delay going home considering the extra hour given. In response to the question which sought to find out whether the teachers were in a position to communicate efficiently with these disabled students, the lecturers have shown mixed sentiments. Three lecturers (60%) admitted that they cannot use sign language. As a result the students will not benefit directly from the lecturers. Two lecturers (40%) have shown that they have some basic knowledge of sign language. They revealed that they are in a position to sign the letters of the alphabet. This shows that there is no total communication between the lecturers and the students. These students are likely to miss out some of the points from the lecturer. In response to the question which sought to find out the challenges being faced by the lecturers in dealing with students with disabilities one of the lecturers (20%) indicated that the disadvantaged are not well accommodated by their fellow students. He also highlighted that the institutions seems not to adequately provide for their needs. The other respondent highlighted that there are no transcribers who are well trained. As a result, the work being transcribed does not match the quality of work expected at the higher institutions of learning. Lecturers also complained that they cannot use demonstration method for they feel that there is always need for a third person who acts as the students' eyes and ears. If these people are absent, there is a disadvantage on the part of the disabled students who solely dependent on them. The institution is obliged to pay the mediators but this seems not to be the case on the ground. All the five lecturers (100%) indicated that the resources were inadequate. There is need for the institutions to have perforated papers for Braille as well as special pens, tape recorders and powerful cochlear implants hearing aids. Due to this inadequacy the examination process is very cumbersome. For instance, after setting the normal examination paper, it is then sent to professional transcribers who transcribe it to Braille. The student will then answer using the perforated paper which will then be sent back to the transcribers. This will prolong the examination process since the transcribers will work at their own pace for they are not getting minimum

remuneration from the institution. Three lecturers (60%) noted that they are producing good teachers who can man their class on their own. Two lecturers (20%) have admitted that they are producing half-baked teachers for they felt they do not have all the necessities to enhance effective teaching. One of the respondents indicated that challenge is faced in assessing disadvantaged students' work especially the visual impaired. There is normally use of intermediaries. The disadvantaged students make use of colleagues when writing assignments, the facility which is not offered during the examination time. Thus, this reveals that the institution does not have adequate resources. For instance, there is need to have a disability resource centre equipped with all the resources needed by the students with disability. There is need to have lecturers who can act as role models. Most of the lecturers indicated that the teachers they are producing are acquiring knowledge which they feel that they can be in a position to assist pupils with disabilities when they are deployed in schools. However the researchers are of the view that the teachers being produced are half-baked. This is emanating from the point that the lecturers themselves are not fully assisting the students with disabilities. These lecturers are being viewed as blind men leading other blind men.

(b)Students' responses

Sixteen students (80%) indicated that they do not have any student with disabilities in their class. Four respondents (20%) have shown that they are learning with students with disabilities. All the students pointed out that they cannot read the Braille. Eighteen students (40%) revealed that they are not in a position to use sign language. The other two (10%) have shown that they can sign some letters of the alphabet. The students have shown that they are being offered special needs education as a compulsory course at their institution. Some students have complained that the lecturers concerned are not in a position to communicate fully with the students with the disabilities. They even reiterated that there is nothing they are benefiting from their lecturers in terms of signing or reading the Braille. Most students have indicated that they are facing some challenges when learning with students with some disabilities. They pointed out that they cannot communicate fully with the colleagues. They also highlighted that the students with disabilities tend to isolate themselves from the rest of the class. Students learning with the blind applauded the company of those students. However, they indicated that the blind seem not to benefit fully for they are facing a challenge of taking down the notes. They outlined that it seems the

lecturers are being fast when they are dictating notes. As a result the blind students are lagging behind in note taking. Some students indicated their joy of learning with such students for they are benefitting from them during the discussions. They pointed out that these students are very intelligent. One such blind student has her own tape recorder which she uses during the lecture. Students highlighted that they are benefitting from the playbacks where they indicated that they understand better by repeating the lectures with their colleagues. This blind student interviewed said that she feels disadvantaged for she feels like a fish out of water. She complained that most of the lecturers are impatient and tend to forget her existence in the class. She highlighted that during examination time the interpreter comes to interpret all the questions at one go and disappears. She felt that it is quite difficult for her to condense and grasp all the questions. At times she would want some clarity but there will not be anyone to assist her. As a result, this often leads to poor performance. The experience that the blind student teacher is narrating is both unjust and unfair. According to Martin Buber (cited in Chitumba, 2013) every human being is supposed to be treated as an end and not as a means. The blind student feels that she is often treated as an object and not as a subject. This contradicts Martin Buber's 'I - thou' relationship where every human being is treated as a subject of worthy. Instead, her treatment is in line with the despicable 'I – IT' relationship. These lecturers would benefit very much from multicultural pluralist education which promotes tolerance and respect for other world-views and experiences. The blind student teacher also complained that she does not have adequate resources. She feels she needs to have type writer or a voice recorder and the institution does not offer a helper to assist her. She even complained that the hostels are not user friendly for she faces a challenge to going upstairs where she stays.

(c) Administrators' responses

Data collected from the administrators show that some of the lecturers do possess proper qualifications to teach students with disabilities. However, the researchers found out that the so called specialists have limited knowledge on how to deal with the disabilities. The majority if not all lecturers have indicated that they cannot use sign language or read Braille. This shows that the administrators seem to follow the Nziramasanga Commission (1999)'s recommendation blindly. That is, they just want to fulfil the commission of inquiry requirement yet they are not supporting the disadvantaged fully. One administrator has shown that the resources are adequate yet

the other one pointed out that the resources are inadequate. In response to the question which sought to find out the challenges being faced there was an indication that they felt that these disadvantaged students are being side lined by the fellow students. From their observations they figured out students from the main culture seem not to fully accommodate their colleagues. They revealed that theoretically they are producing student teachers who can later on manage the classes of disadvantaged students on their own. In highlighting the challenges they face in incorporating students with disabilities at the institution they pointed out that some disadvantaged students do not have the required minimum qualifications for them to be to enrol. The other challenge highlighted is that of students failing to fully co-operate with the students with disabilities. During the examination time the administrators pointed out that the examination normally does not proceed as they wish. The transcribed papers are not sent on time leading to delays in processing the results for the entire institution. This concurs with the observation made by the researchers at their institution. The major challenge from an administrator's perspective is that the lecturers are reluctant to teach the students with disabilities. The lecturers feel that they need extra payment to motivate them to execute their duty meticulously. Some felt that these disabled students should have their own institutions where lecturers with same disabilities can assist their mates in the same culture. The other challenge is that there are no modules in Braille. The students are also quarantined during examination time which often affects their performance, for they will be separated from their colleagues during examination time yet during the term they will be learning together. Emancipatory theorists like (Ladd, 2003, Spivak, 1990) reject sidelining the minority. They argue that learning and living on their own makes it difficult to integrate in society at a later stage. The researchers also agree that instead of marginalising them, these social institutions especially educational institutions should be at the forefront of rehabilitating and integrating members from the minority cultures. In responses to the question which sought to find out whether the institutions offer workshops on issues pertaining to the handling of students with disabilities the administrators had different views. The other administrator indicated that they have not yet held any workshop but some proposal for future workshops are in the pipeline. The other one evasively indicated that he recalls having such workshops some time back. The researchers feel that it is critical and crucial that such workshops be held

urgently and regularly as they help improve teachers' cultural competency with respect to the blind and hearing impaired students.

Discussion of Findings

Mixed sentiments emanated from lecturers' responses. However the clearest signal is that, due to lack of qualification especially the ability to read Braille and to use sign language proficiently, provision of effective special needs education at this tertiary institution is being greatly undermined. This concurs with Hallahan and Kauffman's (1997) view that most teachers cannot communicate effectively with the disadvantaged students. The researchers strongly suspect that the same situation is likely to be obtaining at other tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe. Responses from student teachers as well as administrators, all seem to support the thesis that a lot still needs to be done in-order to ensure provision of adequate special needs education. The tentacles of the problem seem to reach even the special needs education made available to the training of trainers curriculum. Therefore in response to the question whether special needs education being taught in tertiary institutions, it is the contention of this paper that special needs education is not being carried out thoroughly as should be done. Any glaring deficiencies that are in the training of trainers course programme have a tendency of cropping up in subsequent training of teachers later on at tertiary institutions. This point necessitates the holding of in-service workshop for teachers as a matter of urgency. Only then will blind men stop leading other blind men.

The research has also been able to answer the question of how cultural pluralism is being promoted in tertiary institutions in order to integrate the disadvantaged students into teaching and learning programmes. Much as there are voices calling for the separation of the disabled students to learn on their own within their own separate specialised institutions, however, louder scholarly voices have also been heard advocating for early integration of disability culture into abled culture where eventually all students aspire to live harmoniously. What this research is advocating for is neither silencing, nor assimilation of disabled culture into abled culture. Rather it is the mainstreaming of the minority culture within the framework of the dominant culture. The researchers are for the peaceful co-existence of both cultures. This calls for attitude change on the part of those in the abled main culture. They need to grant those in the minority culture their space as well as listen to their voices when personal

experiences are being considered. In regard to the issue of resources this research has shown that most institutions are strongly affected by lack of resources. There is no resource centre for the disabled. The resource centre should be filled with, Braille materials like the special pen as well as perforated paper, voice recorders, typewriters as well as powerful digital hearing aids among other things. In-order to minimise the time delay in processing of examination materials as well as course work materials, each institution should employ one specialised lecturer who can read Braille as well as use sign language proficiently. The cry reverberating within the corridors of power is the issue of funding. This study recommends thinking out of the box that may entail approaching world institutions like UNICEF and UNESCO who often concern themselves with equalising the playing field within the educational framework. They can easily fund the establishment of one such a resource centre as well as help construct user-friendly infrastructure for the disabled students. Another finding of serious consideration relates to the question which concern the attitudes of cultural pluralism which need to be cultivated among and within student teachers, who need to be permissive of other cultures besides their own. The attitude of viewing the disadvantaged as deficient human beings who need to be rehabilitated have to be changed and replaced with attitudes of tolerance and understanding of existence of multi-cultures which can and must co-exist. The tertiary institutions have to recentre and mainstream disability studies. The training of disabled students of necessity enhances and promotes visibility of special needs education. It also ensures that the experiences of the disabled and their voices are given space in the narratives of the disabled by the disabled in special needs education programmes. The researchers are arguing that teacher training education especially special needs education, has not adequately included core elements of blind and deaf culture. Most teachers training institutions may be operating under the mistaken assumption that current teacher training models adequately prepare pre-service teachers to be competent and proficient in teaching special needs education, that entails understanding of blind and deaf culture. Our findings agree with what a previous study carried out in America earlier by Johnson and McIntosh (2009) who also found out that (a) there is sufficient evidence of the existence of both blind and deaf culture; (b) minimal attention has been paid to developing or understanding blind or deaf culture in special needs education in teacher training programmes; (c) there is a need to review, investigate, and advance cultural understandings and theories of disability consistent with

multicultural education perspectives of culture and their implications for educational policy, procedure, and practice; and (d) there is a critical need to expand and strengthen teacher preparation education programs to improve pre-service teachers' cultural competence with respect to blind and deaf cultures.

The paradox of deaf studies is that it is largely researched, and taught by hearing scholars, but from an historical deaf perspective, a hearing person is a member of the majority group of oppressors. There is, however, almost no debate about the tricky epistemological and ontological ground navigated by hearing people who work in deaf studies (Sutton-Spencer and West, 2011). The same is true for the visually impaired studies. There are scanty researches carried out by blind scholars and there are also few deaf and blind teachers. As observed by Sutton-Spencer and West (2011), the tangle in which we find ourselves (sighted and hearing researchers) as insider-outsider, knower-unknower, on the border, looking in and on, risks becoming a never-ending essentialist, epistemological, and ontological cul-de-sac. We agree totally with the two authors Sutton-Spencer and West (2011)'s view that 'a productive, (de)constructive exploration of the place of Hearing people within Deaf Studies has yet to occur. In a beautiful twist of fate, we find ourselves re-exploring identities, negotiations between and across Disabled and Abled worlds, noting the multiplicity of identities: sexual orientation, sensory perception, audiology, and so on. Our gaze turns away from theoretical constructions and toward expressions grounded in Disabled epistemology.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing from the findings the researchers propose an interrogation of the visual and hearing impaired identities in order to embrace and come to terms with their legacy of blindness and deafness. Educationists, (researchers included) have to embark on a deconstruction journey; of navigating and crossing the personal and political spaces of Disability culture, education, and community; of searching for their legitimate voice; of acknowledging and recognizing the alternative explorations they offer. Teachers of the disadvantaged pupils, trained at this tertiary institution have to be critically reflexive in their practice. Thus teachers urgently need to be in-serviced with regard to, (a) how to read Braille, (b) how to use Sign Language and (c) how to integrate and be integrated within the disabled and abled communities without a problem. There is need to maintain multicultural pluralism in institutions. Tertiary

institutions are also encouraged to have Affirmative Action policy that favours the enrolment of disabled student teachers. This will eventually enable the existence of the ideal situation where disabled students are recognised and offered training at most institutions. There is also need to employ disadvantaged lecturers who will act as role models and motivators. There is for holding of in-service workshop for lecturers/teachers as a matter of urgency. The researchers recommend peaceful co-existence of both cultures. There is need to have a resource centre for the disabled at every tertiary institution. The resource centre should be filled with, Braille materials like the special pen as well as perforated paper, voice recorders, typewriters as well as powerful digital hearing aids among other things. This study recommends thinking out of the box that may entail approaching world institutions like UNICEF and UNESCO who often concern themselves with equalising the playing field within the educational framework. They can easily fund the establishment of one such a resource centre as well as help construct user-friendly infrastructure for the disabled students.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued in this paper that there is clear need for an overhaul of the special needs education programme currently being offered at the tertiary institution in Masvingo. Most probably the same curriculum is being offered in all tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe. It is both inadequate in terms of shallow content as well as lack of physical resource materials necessary for the offering of an adequate special needs education. Further research need to be carried to establish the actual performance of such graduates though the findings are that they struggle to teach students with disabilities. In-order to minimise the time delay in processing of examination materials as well as course work materials, each institution should employ one specialised lecturer who can read Braille as well as use sign language proficiently.

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