

THE EMPLOYABILITY OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN MANZINI REGION OF ESWATINI

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the employability of people with visual impairment (PVI) in the Manzini region of Eswatini. The study was located within the interpretivist paradigm. It was qualitative in approach and took a phenomenological research design. Twelve participants were selected using convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Individual in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion were used to collect data that was thematically analysed. The results of the study indicates that PVI have low academic qualifications due to unconducive learning conditions that they face in school and lack of properly-equipped vocational training centres that can train visually impaired people. It was also revealed that their employability is further affected by negative attitude by possible employers, poor independent living and mobility skills. Consequently, PVI resort to begging on the streets to earn a living. The study concludes that establishing properly equipped schools, with post-school training facilities for PVI and hiring well trained personnel to teach them, would be mediatory strategies that could better the situation. Thus the study recommends that a special curriculum to cater for the PVI's unique needs be designed and be coupled with a disability scholarship fund to cater for their tuition and boarding fees so that they would access quality education and training which will increase their chances of employability in the labour market.

Keywords: People with Visual Impairment, disability, employability, Critical disability theory, phenomenology, diversity, inclusivity.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and setting

Research has shown that people with disabilities face a lot challenges in seeking and securing employment for themselves. This phenomenon is not only prevalent in developing countries, but also even in high income countries such as the Canada, the USA and the United Kingdom (Strindlund et al., 2019; Gottlieb, Myhill & Blanck, 2015). A study by Goertz et al., (2010)

found that the situation is worse for people with visual impairment as they have more difficulty in obtaining employment compared to those with other forms of disabilities. In Eswatini and other developing countries in Southern Africa, it is a common sight to see people with visual impairment begging for money in the streets and/or in bus ranks. Based on these observations and the available literature, one wonders why these are not in employment so that they can be self-reliant. It is against this backdrop therefore, that the researchers sought to investigate the employability of people with visual impairment in Manzini region of Eswatini.

Visual impairment occurs when an eye condition affects the visual system and its vision functions. Naipal and Rampersad (2018) defines it is a condition of reduced visual performance that cannot be remedied by refractive correction, surgery or medical methods. Whereas, Knight and Yorke (2003) define employability as a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to obtain and secure a job and be successful in his or her chosen career.

1.2 The global picture on the prevalence and employment of people with Visual Impairment

A survey by Varma et al. (2016) reported that in the United States of America (USA) and Canada about 14.62 million people had some form of visual impairment and is expected to double by 2050. In the USA about 33% of this population are between the ages 16 and 64 and were reported to be in the labour force, with 20% of them employed on a full-time basis. In Europe, the WHO (2019) reports an unemployment rate of over 75% for visually impaired people across Europe. This means that only 25% of this population is employed.

A study done by Onabolu et al. (2018) on rehabilitation and paid employment for blind people observed that the rate of paid employment for blind people in Nigeria was 27.3%. Similarly, Munemo and Tom (2013) report that the employment rate for people with visual impairment in Zimbabwe remain very low. In Zambia Kachanga and Imasiku (2012) found out that despite their education levels, most women with blindness were unemployed and discriminated against by people with 'normal vision' and by potential employers. It is within this context that the question of up-skilling people with visual impairment arises in order to improve their chances of employment and employability.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Employment is one of the basic ways for a person to be self-reliant and escape entrapment in poverty. It is an essential step in achieving a normal or good standard of living as it creates an opportunity for self-sufficiency, self-worth and most importantly personal dignity (Opoku et al., 2016). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is an effort to afford people living with disabilities full human rights, including the right to employment. Most UN members undertook to abide by the provisions of the UNCRPD and support related activities by way of putting in place domestic policies and pieces legislations to support it. The Kingdom of Eswatini is no exception. To conform to the UNCRPD, the Kingdom of Eswatini, put in place the Swaziland National Disability Policy in 2013 and later passed The Persons with Disabilities Act number 16 of 2018. A commitment to ensure the employment of people with disabilities is by extension, a commitment to raise their employability skills to competitive levels.

Despite these efforts made by the international community, reports from studies done in different countries indicate that securing employment for people with disabilities, inclusive of people with visual impairment, remain difficult (O' Day, 1999; McDonall & Tatch, 2021; Shaw et al., 2007; Gottlieb et al., 2015). A review of literature indicate that surprisingly, most of countries where very low employment rates for people with visual impairment are signatories of the UNCRPD and have domestic legislation and policies on same.

The researchers have also observed that in the main cities of Eswatini (Nhlangano, Manzini and Mbabane) people with disabilities, especially those with blindness and low vision sitting along busy walkways singing and or begging for alms. These observations, together with the with the available literature reviewed in this paper, give rise to the question of their employability. The researchers felt that it is important therefore to investigate the employability of people with visual impairment in Eswatini, and to get to understand their experiences in securing and maintaining employment.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the employability of people with vision impairment in the Manzini Region of Eswatini.

1.5 Objectives of the study

- To identify the skills sets and academic levels of people with visual impairment
- To describe the perceptions of employers on the employability of people with visual impairment.
- To describe experiences of people with vision impairment in seeking and maintaining employment.
- 1.5.4 To identify barriers faced by people with visual impairment in securing and maintaining employment.
- To suggest intervention strategies for improving the employability of people with visual impairment

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Frame (The Critical Disability Theory)

This study shall be informed by the Critical Disability Theory (CDT). The Critical Disability Theory is based on the claim that disability is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health; nor is it just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and power (-lessness), power over and power to. The theory centres disability as it compares the norms and values of liberalism with their actualization in the daily life of people with disabilities. The CDT is based on seven elements, namely: the social model of disability, valuing diversity, multidimensionality, the rights and voices of people with disabilities, language and transformative politics.

2.1.1 The Social Model of Disability

The CDT adopts the social model which is based on the principles that, disability is a social construct, and not the inevitable consequence of impairment. Secondly, disability is best characterised as a complex interrelationship between impairment, individual response to impairment and the social environment; third, the social disadvantage experienced by people with disability is caused by the physical, institutional and attitudinal environments which fail to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of 'normalcy'.

2.1.2 Valuing Diversity

A fundamental principle of liberalism is equality. Race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity are all differences to which liberalism has had to respond. The main challenge has always been the question of how to deal with an existing difference to achieve equality (Hosting, 2008); by ignoring it or by acting on it. With disability, differences should not just be dismissed as irrelevant, because that has the effect of rejection and marginalization of the person. Instead, a response which makes adjustments to eliminate the obstacle and enable the person to participate as an equal is required. For the CDT, being identified and identifying as a person with disability is central to understanding one's social position with its attendant opportunities and limitations.

2.1.3 Human Rights

CDT embraces legal rights as an indispensable tool to advance the equality claims of disabled people and to promote their full integration into all aspects of their society while at the same time valuing and welcoming the diversity that people with a disability bring to their communities.

2.1.4 Voice of people with disability

The CDT privileges the stories of people with a disability and gives them a platform to be heard. Able bodied people think about disability from their abled perspective. It is only by listening to and valuing the perspectives of those who are living with disabilities that the able bodied can begin to understand that even severe disability does not have to prevent a joyful and desired life.

2.1.5 Language

The words and images used to portray people with disabilities have a direct effect on social attitudes towards people with disabilities. Historically and even today, people with disability have been and are portrayed as deficient, pitiable, wicked or malign, dangerous or valueless (Hosting, 2008). The CDT examines how negative attitudes are revealed through a discourse of personal tragedy with disability rendering individuals powerless, vulnerable and dependent.

2.1.6 Transformative policy

The goal of the CDT is not only improving understanding and explanation but also theorisation in the pursuit of empowerment and substantive, not just formal, equality. CDT is also about power and 'who and what gets valued'. The policy response to the medical model of disability focuses on preventing and curing disability or providing support for those who do not respond

to medical model interventions. CDT provides the theoretical basis for different policy responses to disability. Those are policies of inclusion, equality and autonomy. Thus, the Critical Disability Theory is quite relevant to inform this study. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Swaziland National Disability Policy of 2013 and the Persons with Disabilities Act number 16 of 2018, just to mention a few, agree with the CDT.

2.2 A review of empirical studies

2.2.1 Vocational Skills and Education for People with Visual Impairments

Bell and Mino (2015) reported that in the USA about 72% of the population of people with visual impairments were trained braille and white-cane users. This enabled them to achieve higher education qualifications as they were more independent and less reliant on people with normal vision. In UK, Ravenscroft (2013) revealed that the educational attainment for people with visual impairment was only slightly lower than that of their normally sighted peers. Yet their employment rate showed a significant wide gap. Ravenscroft (2013) observed that the cause of low employment rates for PVI was mainly due to their low level of mobility and lack of independent living skills.

Studies done in the African continent, show a different picture on education and training for people with visual impairment and the blindness. In Nigeria, Wolff, Awujon and Kelly (2013) reported that PVI expressed frustration with the lack of training options. Wolff, Awujon and Kelly (2013) also noted the absence of pre-employment training available for PVI in Nigeria. Another study carried out in Ghana found that PVI were faced with limited access to higher education, vocational training and rehabilitation rights from their youth ages (Gyamfi (2020). Specialist institutions designed to accommodate PVI also found to be rare in developing countries such as Ghana and were only concentrated in urban areas. This leads to limited employment prospects for PVI as they lack skills to compete in an open-for-all labour market.

Munemo and Tom (2013) report that PVI in Zimbabwe do acquire the qualifications that are necessary for employment through integrated programmes. However, many remain beggars. The reason why they remain beggars is still veiled in obscurity. It is against this backdrop that this current study aims to investigate the employability of people with visual impairment, not only by analysing education levels and independent living/ mobility skills of the members of this population, but also examine intervention strategies to improve their employability.

Literature on vocational training and employment for people with visual impairment in Eswatini is scanty. A single-case study by Ferreira-Meyers and Pitikoe (2021) reveals that Visually Impaired students face challenges of access to education in institutions of higher learning. Adebayo and Ngwenya (2015) revealed that this was the case even in primary schools as they concluded that inclusive education remained only a reality on paper despite being guaranteed by the Eswatini Education Sector Policy of 2017. Reasons why people with Visual Impairment remain significantly unemployed in Eswatini remain unexplored.

2.2.2 Intervention strategies for improving employability of people with visual impairment

Willings (2019) proposed that career education for students with visual impairment needs to begin as early as possible, at elementary school and include self-awareness lessons, career exploration activities, job seeking skill instruction as well as job shadowing. Preston (2018) made a similar recommendation and revealed that all the graduates in this study used the skills that they gained from the special programmes that were offered at school on searching for and keeping employment. Bell and Mino (2015) suggested that there is need for the provision of the necessary (disability specific) accommodation across all the levels of education. For Gupta, Sukhai and Wittich, (2021) rigorous programmes were needed to assist PVI with job search, mentoring, job training, and workplace accommodation.

Bollier et al. (2021) pointed out that a significant step or intervention would be to work on shifting community attitudes towards people with visual impairment and their employment in important jobs. Munemo and Tom (2013) is in agreement with this as they also noted that the negative attitude and lack of information on the part of employers also limit the chances of participation in the labour market for PVI.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach and uses the phenomenological research design to investigate this issue. Data were collected from the Manzini and Matsapha municipal areas and surrounding areas where the informants resided. The target population for this study were people with visual impairment who have reached minimum legal employable age and employers who are within the study area. The study used a combination of snowball, convenience and purposive sampling techniques to select the participants. The sampling was continued until data saturation was reached which resulted in 12 participants, 4 of which were employers. Data were collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews and a focus group discussion. Five of the eight people with visual impairment participated in focus group discussion while the remaining three were interviewed individually. Resultant data were analysed using the thematic data analysis procedure.

For ethical considerations, the researchers explained the purpose of the research project to the participants in order to get them to voluntarily consent to taking part in the study. Consent forms were prepared, read and explained to the participants. The participants were requested to sign the consent forms before data collection exercise began. The consent forms for PVI were produced in braille and then signed using the traditional “ink and thump” method.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 The skills sets and academic levels of the people with visual impairment

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of people with visual impairment have low academic achievements and technical skills. All PVI participants reported that they had attended school only up to secondary school level, with some having sat for the external secondary school education examinations. They revealed that they obtained poor results and could not proceed for tertiary education. Consequently, they revealed that they have limited employability skill sets and qualifications from recognised training centres. A few reported to have undergone training on basic handicraft skills while others had been trained as telephone

operators. In this regard, two themes emerged from the data namely: low academic achievement and limited professional and skills training.

4.1.1 Low Academic Achievement in Secondary Education

Participants revealed that they had attended school and sat for secondary education examinations at a local “inclusive” school. However, they were only able to obtain low quality results and failed most of the subjects. The difficult learning conditions were cited as the reason for failure to pass secondary school education. Participants reported that the classroom set-up denied visually impaired students full access to the content that was delivered in class. Free movement in and out of class was also difficult. The following quotations constitute what some of the participants had to say about their academic achievements:

I failed my first sitting as I managed to pass only two subjects. School was not easy. Although our teachers always made sure that there were a few blind students in one class, it was still difficult because the lessons were integrated rather than inclusive. Whether we were able to access the content like the others, is something else (VI Participant A, In-Depth Individual Interview).

I dropped out of school in Form 3 after failing my Junior Certificate Examinations twice. I re-marked the second result as I suspected that there was something dodgy about my failure, but I still managed to pass Siswati and Religious Education only. Other subjects such as Mathematics and Science were challenging to learn as a blind person. Languages were accessible since we relied on hearing the teacher to pronounce and to get word spelling right (VI Participant F, Focus Group Discussion).

The study also shows that the poor performance of PVI in school was a result of several related inefficiencies which include lack of proper teaching, lack of appropriate learning resources and equipment, negative attitude of school authorities as well as lack of proper training on the part of teachers in dealing with students with visual impairment. When commenting on their experiences in school and academic achievement, one participant said:

School was a bit tough. We were put in the same classroom with children who can see. So as the others learnt, we would find that we needed a book, and it was never there. The normal students have books and they are using them. We do not have a braille version of the book. That book will be available, maybe two years later. At that point in time one is already in another class. That is why many of us failed external examinations in Forms 3 and Form 5 (VI Participant D, Focus Group Discussion).

4.1.2 Limited professional and skills training

It was revealed that there was very little offered in Eswatini in the form of post-secondary school training facilities that can fully accommodate PVI and offer a variety of courses intended for them. Participants reported that although the country has numerous tertiary institutions, there were very few, if any, that were ready to accept and train people with visual impairment on vocational skills or for professional training. However, some participants reported that they had handicraft skills that they acquired as part of their training on independent living skills. Such skills are obtainable at only one facility which is a Roman Catholic Church training

facility. This training facility equips visually impaired children with basic independent living, mobility and braille skills in preparation for formal school. It was reported that the facility has a department that also offers training on handicraft and other income generating activities. Some participants had undergone the handicraft skills training at this centre while others did not due to either lack of money to pay or lack of interest in handicrafts. The following quotation corroborates what some of the participants had to say:

When I finished Form 5, my father suggested that I try to get a handicraft skill since during those days it was very rare for a blind person to get employed by companies or government. So I continued at the skills department to learn how to make fence. So I have that certificate and can make fence, although I never really got to work with that skill to earn a living (VI Participant A, In-Depth Individual Interview).

The participants also revealed that other public vocational training centres were not ready to accommodate people with visual impairment in their institutions as they lack instructors who were trained to work with visually impaired candidates. This limited the options that PVI have in terms of artisanal and vocational skills. Participants also indicated that besides taking handicraft lessons, they had taken a course in switchboard operation. Some participants had the following to say when commenting on lack of options for training:

For me when I finished school... I had a chance to go to Pretoria in RSA to train for switchboard operation. At that time there was no place for that kind of training here. I think I was in the second group that got taken there for training. When I came back I struggled to land a job until I got lucky with a family owned hardware shop in Manzini (VI participant D, Focus group discussion).

I wanted to train as an auto electrical engineer when I finished school. So I thought I was going to enrol at one of the training centres in Manzini. But when I took my application there; they told me that they had never had a blind trainee before and they are not capacitated to handle PVI. So they could not take my application (VI participant G, Focus group discussion).

4.2 Intervention strategies to improve the employability of PVI

A discussions with the participants in this study indicated that generally, PVI lack education. This was found to be the case in terms of both high quality basic education as well as vocational skills and professional training which are need in the labour market. A deficiency in these matters directly leads to lack of employable skills and low competitiveness in the labour market. Participants suggested that the provision of high quality education for PVI was the key to improving their employability. It also emerged that more can be achieved by having laws and policies geared towards helping PVI to get employment. An aggressive implementation and monitoring strategy on the part of government would be the key to ensuring that regulated standards are adhered to by employers. Data analysis lead to two main themes namely increased access to education and training; and improvement in adherence to law and policy by all stake holders.

4.2.1 Increased access to education and training

Data revealed that the employability of PVI can be improved by increasing access to education. Participants pointed aspects in education in Eswatini that must be changed to allow a visually impaired learner to get meaningful education. Participants lamented the difficulties such as lack of accommodative facilities, poorly trained teachers, lack of learning materials that they face in school. These problems contribute to their failure to continue with education to levels high enough to secure employment. The following sub themes emerged from the main theme: establishment of genuine inclusive schools, early training on independent living and mobility skills and the establishment of vocational training centres for PVI.

4.2.1.1 Establishment of genuine inclusive schools

Participants revealed that the learning conditions in mainstream schools hampered their ability to acquire quality skills and knowledge. They pointed out several barriers to their learning which indicate that the lessons were not genuinely inclusive. Thus, this limits them to have equal access to quality education. It was found that establishing genuine inclusive schools for the visually impaired persons would be a starting point to ensuring that the PVI received meaningful and quality education. These should be schools that are well equipped and resourced with both material and human resources. Commenting on PVI's failure to satisfy advertised job requirements, a potential employer had this to say:

I think they need to get proper education early like all other children. As it is now I think all blind children can only be enrolled at St Joseph's. I don't know of any other school that is designed to teach them. Even the colleges should be ready to accept them for specific courses which they may desire. But these colleges should be well resourced. Otherwise we will continue to see them begging in town as a way of living (Participant I- Employer, In-Depth Individual Interview).

Equipping inclusive public schools with relevant resources to include PVI also emerged as a major theme from the participants. Participants lamented the lack of inclusion in schools which made them achieve poor results and hamper their chances of employment in future. The following represent what the potential employers had to say:

You see, the equipment needed to educate a blind child in school is very expensive. In places where these gadgets are available, you find that the VI can become virtually anything they aspire to be. But in our country there is not much to work with in that regard. They are simply put in the same classrooms as normal children... it is hoped that they learn as much as the others (VI Participant J- Employer, In-Depth Individual Interview).

I think our government needs to do more in terms of making schools able to work with children with disabilities, regardless of the form of disability. For me, the issue must not be simply sending a blind child to school, where they sit there as mere visitors. The schools must be well resourced to educate such children so that they can receive quality education like the normal ones (VI Participant D, Focus Group Discussion).

Another participant expressed the need for the establishment of special schools that focus on educating children with visual impairment. It was suggested that the Ministry of Education and Training needed to establish such a school and put in place all the necessary equipment, such

as braille, that a visually impaired child requires in order to learn. Moreover, the teachers' training colleges need to have programmes that equip teachers with all the skills that they need to deal with a learner with visual impairment.

We need to be given correct equipment right from school that will enable us to be competitive in class. The government can do as it has done for the deaf children. They have their own school and special teachers. The way we learn is very different from normally sighted people. We need more time and sometimes even extra special equipment like audio books and other things. So we need properly inclusive classes as opposed to the integrated ones that we use now. That would really help us to get high quality results which will get us into university (VI Participant B, In-Depth Individual Interview).

4.2.1.2 Early training on independent living and mobility skills

The findings of the study revealed that the employability of PVI can be enhanced by training children with visual impairment on independent living strategies early in their lives. Interviews with employers revealed that PVI are thought to be highly dependent on other people for movement. This limits their chances of employment. Early training on independent living would actually put them on an equal footing with job seekers who have sight. One participant suggested that this training would better be offered in a specialist institution beginning from pre-school years by properly trained instructors. The following quotations are testament to this issue:

Children with visual impairment must be trained very early on independent living skills and braille reading skills. This would help them learn more skills such as computer literacy very early. I discovered this when I started school that some of the things would have been easier for me had I started them at a young age. Children learn new skills faster. It all depends on the timing of exposure for the child (VI Participant G, Focus Group Discussion).

Even if you have a non-professional job for a VI person, their inability to operate or move at and within the work place freely without help from others becomes a problem. So maybe if they get rigorous training on independence and mobility skills quite early, it would be better. I believe young children learn new skills better and faster, and become better on these as they grow older (Participant J- Employer, In-Depth Individual Interview).

4.2.1.3 An establishment of vocational training centres for PVI

The findings of the study indicate that lack of wage employment is a reality for PVI in this country. Participants say that many people who have studied for professional jobs are unemployed. It is suggested that people with visual impairment should learn vocational skills and be given access to loans so that some can become self-employed. They propose that there must be a vocational training centre for PVI so that they can start their own businesses. The following quotations serve as testament to the discussion above:

You see, for me training is everything in this world. As we are sitting here now... how many of us can say they are qualified for a specific profession. Looking for work is tough even for the educated. It is even more so for someone who has no degree. So I think it would really help to build proper schools and colleges for blind people... and get properly trained teachers there. Then you will see blind people graduate and start looking for proper work (VI Participant E, Focus Group Discussion).

We need to polish whatever talent they have and turn it into employment. And there is a lot they can do, like playing music, making handicrafts and the like. We have seen big music stars in the USA and even closer home in RSA and Zimbabwe who are blind. I guess it is not just a matter of in-born talent. So having those training facilities here would help the blind people to have something to do to earn a living (Participant K-Employer, In-Depth Individual Interview).

4.2.2 Improve adherence to provisions of the law and policy

Participants indicated that they were aware that the country has a well-crafted legal instrument and policy that seek to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. They pointed out that the problem is the failure of authorities to implement and monitor the policy. Participants lamented the government's failure to take care of PVI's needs such as education and employment yet the policy provides for strategies to achieve that. The following interview extracts corroborate the issues raised above:

Well, I think there are laws that protect and promote the rights of people with disability in our country. I know that there is a Disability Act and a policy to support it. We have been told so many times about these and how they are meant to help us. As long as laws are not followed even by those who put them in place, things will always remain the same (VI Participant D, Focus Group Discussion).

If the government were honest about implementing everything they promise, we would be in a better position. The problem is that most of what you hear them say when speaking on international platforms is never done on the ground. Take for example the issue of disability grants which many of us have never seen yet we are told the law says we have to get them (VI Participant B, In-Depth Individual Interview).

Participants also indicated that the government could increase PVI's chances for employment by making it a requirement that each company should have a certain percentage of its staff filled by people with disabilities. This would serve to meet the requirement of the Employment Equity Act. This idea was revealed in the interviews with potential employers who pointed out that other countries for such companies which employ people with disabilities, they are exempted from tax. They call this a tax-relief scheme. The tax relief scheme becomes an incentive for those companies that adhere to such policy and in turn improve employment chances for people with disabilities. One participant said the following:

We hear that in some countries. It is the law that companies must employ a certain percentage of people living with disabilities and then pay less tax in return. Our government could adopt the same strategy and many businesses would give jobs to us

in exchange for the tax relief. And that could really help us (VI Participant A, In-Depth Individual Interview).

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

This study revealed that a majority of PVI have very low academic qualifications. The academic achievements for most of them at secondary school are level too low to warrant qualification for tertiary education due to several issues of lack of access. These include poor resources both human and material. It was revealed in the study that most teachers who teach in inclusive schools in Eswatini have little or no formal training in working with visually impaired learners. There were limited access to learning materials such as textbooks in braille format or audio books and it was also reported that the school authorities had negative attitude towards learners with visual impairment.

The results of the current study tally with those of Oliveira, Shimano and Pereira (2017) who reported that the low levels of educational attainment for PVI in Brazil were attributable to ill-equipped mainstream schools that were manned by underqualified staff with no training on teaching learners with visual impairment. Nhemachena, Kusangaya and Gwitira (2012) had similar findings in Mozambique where they found that the educational levels reached by PVI were very low owing to challenges such as untrained teachers in mainstream. The researchers in the current study note that the same challenges are faced by PVI in Eswatini which jeopardise their chances of competing for jobs in the labour market.

It also emerged in this study that people with visual impairment have limited access to post school training facilities. It was reported that most of the vocational training centres and colleges are not equipped for trainees with the unique needs such as those of PVI. As a result, even those who get a chance to enrol in some of the training centres are faced with challenges which lead to their failure to complete the graduate programme. Wolff, Awujon and Kelly (2013) made similar findings that participants highlighted their frustration with a serious lack of training options available to them in Nigeria.

It transpired from this study that the provision of proper education that is tailored for PVI would be a good starting point for improving their employability. Bell and Mino (2015) made similar recommendations in their study which reported that education and rehabilitation impact positively to employment outcomes for people with visual impairment. Their ability to read braille and move around independently and freely make them more likely to get employment than PVI who do not. This confirms the findings of Ravenscroft (2013) that poor independent living and mobility skills diminish a PVI's chances of employment.

It also emerged from this study that a curriculum that focusses on specific instructional needs of learners with blindness and low vision to go with the core curriculum that is done in all schools can be established. Munemo and Tom (2013) suggested that the employability of PVI may be improved by establishing a vocational curriculum that is responsive for their needs. Most of the time the mainstream school curriculum is developed to cater for the needs of people without disabilities. Consequently, efforts towards accommodating PVI fail because of the curriculum that is not responsive to their needs. The effectiveness of a disability tailored curriculum is confirmed by Preston (2018) who reported on the success of an Expanded Core curriculum that was designed to prepare learners with blindness for employment.

Effort should be made to make post-secondary school training facilities more inclusive. This can be achieved by providing the necessary assistive technology and adequately trained staff to all the existing vocational training facilities and universities in the country. Awujon and Kelly (2013) made similar observations when they argued that improving access to higher education through proper accommodation and assistive technology redresses the low employment rates of PVI. Maja et al. (2011) also agrees that the most telling intervention in dealing with unemployment of people with disabilities is to increase their enrolment in properly staffed and well equipped education institutions.

The Critical Disability Theory advocates for transformative policies as an important strategy for working towards socio-economic inclusion of people with disabilities (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Such policies give power to people with disabilities to claim back that which an impairment takes away so as to achieve not only formal but substantive equality in society as well. This means that the laws and policies that Eswatini has on disability are not enough as long as they remain on paper and not converted into reality through implementation and monitoring measures. Inclusion should not be limited to education only, but should also be extended to employment equity. Furthermore, it should also be extended to the home, polity, religion and social environment.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The study concludes that PVI have low academic, professional and technical qualifications. This is attributed to the challenges that PVI face when trying to access formal education. The main challenge stems to lack of inclusion in primary and secondary main stream schools which leads them to attend school in integrated classes.

6.2 The study concludes that turning all the mainstream schools into inclusive schools seem to be is more difficult to achieve than having a few well equipped inclusive schools in the country.

6.3 This study concludes that PVI lack both academic qualifications and vocational skills that are necessary for one to compete for employment in the labour market. Lack of education and relevant qualifications are the reason why most PVI rely on begging for alms as they are unemployable, especially for professional jobs.

6.4 It can also be concluded that potential employers do not want to employ PVI because a majority of them can not move from point A to point B independently. They always need assistance. By implication, it means the company has to employ two people instead of one.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Well-resourced inclusive schools should be established with the necessary equipment, provisions and human resource to cater for the special educational needs of such all the learners.

7.2 The study also recommends that the well-resourced inclusive schools should follow a specially designed curriculum that is tailor made to meet the needs of all the learners; the visually impaired learners included. This curriculum should include special training on independent living and mobility skills that the PVI may need when at work.

7.3 To further improve the employability of PVI, the study recommends that vocational training centres and professional training colleges should be equipped with the necessary technology and other infrastructure that may enable them to admit and train PVI.

7.4 It is also recommended that attention should be given to policy implementation and monitoring of adherence to the legal provisions on the employment of people with disabilities. Establishing a special body with the mandate of enforcing and refining these laws would go a long way in ensuring that these laws do not only exist on paper.

7.5 Teacher training colleges and universities in the country must design training programmes that will produce teachers with the required specialist skills for teaching learners with blindness and low vision.

7.6 Companies and organisations which employ a significant number of people with disability should enjoy the benefits of the tax-relief scheme for some time. This will encourage some companies to consider employing PVI and other forms of disability.

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