



Sustainable Gender Based and Inclusive Human Resource Development among Persons with Disability. A Case of Machakos and Kakamega Counties in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In most African countries, it is exceedingly difficult to make the transition from youth to adulthood. Some people have attributed this to the hard economic times facing governments. Others have pointed it to the inadequate systems of education where as the rest blame it to poor planning. Statistics has it that most of the people after secondary level of education would wish to go to university. However, due to our filtering system, the smallest group makes it to this level. Those who don't achieve the marks required join training colleges. There is still a 3rd group, which is unfortunately the largest, who still do not attain the mark to warrant them a place to these training colleges. Technical institutes were created to cater for the 3rd group. The technical institutions train on different skills which an individual could get employment in the informal sector. While some choose to be self employed, others are employed by people who have established themselves with enterprises which specialize in that particular trade. Machakos and Kakamega counties have been blessed by hosting a number of universities and upgrading technical institutes to university colleges. However, technical institutes are scarce and cannot comfortably cater for the 3rd group for as indicated earlier; it is the largest in numbers. In this 3rd group, there is a particular category called persons with disabilities. There is a strong temptation to write off what is strongly referred to as "a lost generation". The question is, will we sit and watch as the so called "the lost generation" is written off? This paper seeks to show that the challenged have something to prove and given the opportunity they can assert themselves. An inclusive institute is what we are proposing. Inadequate educational system combined with the challenges of PWDs in job placement poses a challenge in acquiring financial security thereby hampering the transition from youth to adulthood. In the African setting, one is considered to be an adult when he/she is independent. This is not the case with persons with disabilities for in most cases they are considered as dependants. Some challenged youth gain technical training in the few special vocational training institutes but cannot compete with their peers. More often than not, their path is blocked because they are seen as liabilities. The idea of a sheltered workshop proposed in this paper seeks to address the informal sector for persons with disabilities. This will involve both vocational training on different skills together with placement and a full workshop where there will be immediate employment for individuals who graduate from the trainings. This initiative is aimed at improving job skills and awareness and possibly coming up with a show room where the finished products could be exhibited for the purpose of marketing. This project will focus on educating and socializing the people with special needs to play a role in the county's development and growth. The paper proposes a sustainable, gender based and inclusive human resource development initiative.

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Introduction

Over the years there have been unsuccessful attempts in Kenya to determine the disability status through census and studies by civil societies, NGO's and government. A multitude of studies have been shown to demonstrate a significant rate of disability among individuals living in poverty. Persons with disabilities were shown by a World Bank report to comprise 15 to 20% of the poorest individuals in the developing countries. Former World Bank president James Wolfensoh once stated that this connection reveals a link that should be broken. He stated that "people with disabilities in developing countries are over-

represented among the poorest people; they have been largely overlooked in the development agenda."

This study is therefore aimed at providing information on the status of technical training skills for persons with disability in Machakos and Kakamega County. The challenged have great potential and given the opportunity they can assert themselves. An inclusive institute is what we are proposing. Inadequate educational systems combined with the challenges of PWDs in job placement pose a serious challenge in acquiring financial security thereby hampering their transition from youth to adulthood. In the African setting, one is considered to be an

adult when he /she is independent. This is not the case with persons with disabilities, for in most cases they are considered as dependents. Some challenged youth gain technical training in the few special vocational training institutes but cannot compete with their peers. More often than not, their path is blocked because they are seen as liabilities.

The idea of a sheltered workshop seeks to address the informal sector for persons with disabilities. This will involve both vocational training on different skills together with placement and a full workshop where there will be immediate employment for individuals who graduate from the trainings. This initiative is aimed at improving job skills and awareness and possibly coming up with a show room where the finished products could be exhibited for the purpose of marketing.

This paper is focusing on educating and socializing the people with special needs to play a role in the county's development and growth. This institute will be managed by some of the professionals in technical skills, people who will provide an intellectual foundation. We need all stakeholders' support in order to bring justice among the people of Machakos and Kakamega Counties. The overriding theme of the project is to improve the PWDs with skills and jobs to make them independent in life.

Technical Training for Sustainable Development Among The Persons With Disability

Since majority of persons with disabilities don't make it to tertiary institutions or to institutions of higher learning, the sheltered workshop seeks to capture the energy and transform it to better use. Those who are cut out from the primary and secondary level will be taken up and trained in a skill through the vocational section. This will ensure that they are made useful in developing the County's economy.

Persons with disabilities are entitled to the same rights, benefits and opportunities as other members of the entire society. Pwd face particular challenges in education and training. Although Kenya has some inclusive education some Pwds are discriminated and isolated by the "able" community. Most of them are deprived of access to basic literacy and numeracy skills according to UWESCO (2009) education is a powerful tool in eradication of poverty therefore if the Pwd obtain the necessary quality training for production as self driven craftsmen, business and technical labour for the local and international market there will be a marked sustainable development among Pwds who are barred in work due to ignorance and discrimination caused by inability to compete on the basis of relevant skills and qualification with their peers. Once they are embraced and proper programmes strategized for them in an inclusive vocational training most of their basic needs will be met.

Learning technical skills like leather work, carpentry or even baking will demonstrate that indeed disabled people are just as able as their peers and this will reduce stigmatization in the society where Pwds are seen as beggars who cannot contribute positively to the development of the country.

The most important thing in life is not so much where we are coming from, nor where we stand today, but in which direction we are moving towards the future (a Pakistan proverb). The main thrust of this paper is also to propel the County governments of Machakos and Kakamega to take up their strategic position in provision of the necessary sheltered workshops and spur the process of inclusion, main streaming and provision of equal opportunities to all Kenyans and promote democratic principle. It is the responsibility of the county government to ensure that education and training for all citizens

despite their disability. This will enhance sustainable development and influence current global concern leading to achievement of millennium development goals aimed at eradication of poverty, disease and ignorance while conserving the environment for future prosperity.

The world concern is growing about the participation of persons with disabilities (Pwds) in national development. The concern is rooted in both humanitarian and human rights issues and the need to ensure that Pwds are empowered to take their rightful place in the society.

Inclusive Vocational Training Centre

This is a centre where persons with disabilities will be trained in different skills not found in the 8-4-4 system of education. These skills will ensure that they have enough expertise to participate in national development. The skills proposed are:

- a) Masonry
- b) Leather works
- c) Basketry and mat making
- d) Bead work
- e) Food production i.e. baking
- f) Knitting and garment making
- g) Carpentry
- h) Printing
- i) Clay works and pottery

These skills will be taught by professionals in the particular fields and trainees will be taken in at a subsidized fee to help sustain the project. The training will be divided into different departments where each skill will have a separate department and a small workshop for practice and learning.

Disability, Gender and Inclusive Technical /Vocational Training

In the African perception of technical skilled courses, they are regarded as courses for men therefore in most cases; the few women who are enrolled in these courses are seen as social misfits. It is even worse for a Pwd to be enrolled in technical institutions because the society views them as inferior and expect nothing productive out of them. Women culturally face a lot of stigma and discrimination more than men. Pwds may not be involved in decision making therefore decisions are dictated on their lives.

Through Acts of parliament the government established various institutions to give specialized services to persons with disabilities. Apart from government institutions, a number of non-governmental organizations have been supporting vocational technical training for Pwds of which only a few are inclusive. In Machakos County, there are only two vocational technical institutes for Pwds;

- 1) Machakos Technical Institute for the Blind (MTIB)
- 2) A.B.C –Deaf Community Training and Development Program

In Kakamega County we have only one Rosterman Rehabilitation and Training Centre

The first post independence education and manpower training inquiry, the Ominde commission of 1964 recognized the need for education and training in the disability sector. It recommended measures to address the government's role in the coordination and improvement of service quality and delivery strategies and transition.

Pwds must be involved in community development and for them to be active participants of the society; they need to be trained in technical skills because majority of them are academic dropouts due to poverty and lack of upgraded institutions to cater for disability needs. Employment is a very big challenge for the Pwds; many people turn them down due their state,

people see them as unable to do productive work in the society. It is also unfortunate that many Pwds continue to languish in homes as society frowns at them and their parents / guardians do not enroll them in the available institutions for any form of literacy.

Illiteracy is high and especially among women who are over protected and the most affected are those in rural areas due to poverty and fear of separating mother and child. Discrimination is accompanied by problems of sexuality. Those who have disabilities fear to get married. Some cultures may not allow men to get married to disabled women depicting them as burdensome. However, if these women are empowered through technical skills, they will become economically independent hence attract eligible men to approach them as marriage partners because they are no longer a burden.

Community social workers have a role to play in the society through advocating for Pwds rights and encouraging them to join vocational training institutes. The government should continue campaigning for their rights and implement all policies related to Pwds as well as increase and upgrade the existing technical /vocational training institute to integrate Pwds.

Challenges Facing Technical Vocational Training for Pwds in Kenya

- Most of the institutions are not upgraded, lack modern buildings and resource centres making the institutions less competitive.
- Few institutions for Pwds in Machakos County are only two while in Kakamega County only one.
- Lack of awareness. Pwds may not be aware of vocational training.
- The available inclusive institutions not adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Lack of training for instructors in sign language or Braille, so poor communication leads to mass failure.
- Tools are not designed for people with a certain disability.
- No available technical books designed for Pwds especially the visually impaired.
- Too many students to handle by the instructors yet each has his /her own unique problem.
- Emotionally disturbed due to stigma from early age.
- Low level of education so they fail in national common examinations.

Why sheltered workshops?

This paper proposes that a workshop, which will be commercial, be constructed where trainees will be taken in for apprenticeship practice or internship to start with and later employment. This workshop will house all departments and the products made will be highly competitive in the local, national as well as the international markets.

Mobility for persons with disabilities is energy draining and a hustle therefore this will be a welcome option. Also, in order to get better outcomes from individuals, enough rest should be given as well as protecting them from the vagaries of rain and shine.

Personal Development of the PWDS

An aspect that is severely deficient in most of our vocational training for PWDs is that of Personal Development. Personal development includes activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. The concept is not limited to self-help but includes formal and informal activities for developing others in roles such as teacher,

guide, counselor, manager, life coach or mentor. When personal development takes place in the context of institutions, it refers to the methods, programs, tools, techniques, and assessment systems that support human development at the individual level in organizations.¹

Personal development includes the following activities:

- improving self-awareness
- improving self-knowledge
- improving or learning new skills
- becoming a self-leader
- building or renewing identity/self-esteem
- developing strengths or talents
- improving wealth
- spiritual development
- identifying or improving potential
- building employability or human capital
- enhancing lifestyle or the quality of life
- improving health
- fulfilling aspirations
- initiating a life enterprise or personal autonomy
- defining and executing personal development plans
- improving social abilities

Personal development can also include developing other people. This may take place through roles such as those of a teacher or mentor, either through a personal competency (such as the skill of certain managers in developing the potential of employees) or a professional service (such as providing training, assessment or coaching).

Beyond improving oneself and developing others, personal development is a field of practice and research. As a field of practice it includes personal development methods, learning programs, assessment systems, tools and techniques. As a field of research, personal development topics increasingly appear in scientific journals, higher education reviews, management journals and business books.

Any sort of development—whether economic, political, biological, organizational or personal—requires a framework if one wishes to know whether change has actually occurred. In the case of personal development, an individual often functions as the primary judge of improvement, but validation of objective improvement requires assessment using standard criteria. Personal development frameworks may include goals or benchmarks that define the end-points, strategies or plans for reaching goals, measurement and assessment of progress, levels or stages that define milestones along a development path, and a feedback system to provide information on changes.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world - that is the myth of the atomic age - as in being able to remake ourselves.”

Perhaps the greatest story I have ever read of personal development for a Pwd was fulfilled in one Helen Keller, who was struck by an illness that left her both blind and deaf but she never gave up in life because she was not relegated as hopeless. In her own words she states, "If I, deaf, blind, find life rich and interesting, how much more can you gain by the use of your five senses!" She goes on to say, "We are never really happy until we try to brighten the lives of others. The chief handicap of the blind is not blindness, but the attitude of seeing people towards them."

Helen Adams Keller was born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, a small rural town in Northwest Alabama, USA. Helen was an excellent typist. She could use a standard

typewriter as well as a Braille writer. In fact, she was a better typist than her companions Anne Sullivan Macy and Polly Thomson. Helen Keller wrote to eight Presidents of the United States, and received letters from all of them—from Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 to Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. Helen loved animals, especially dogs. She owned a variety of dogs throughout her life. The first Akita dog in the United States was sent to Helen from Japan in 1938. Helen visited 39 countries around the world during her lifetime. Helen Keller was the first deaf and blind person to earn a college degree. She graduated from Radcliffe College, with honors, in 1904. Helen was friends with many famous people, including Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, the writer Mark Twain, and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Helen won an Oscar for the documentary about her life, "Helen Keller in Her Story."

If Helen was able to achieve all this almost one century ago, why should it be impossible for any Pwd today to achieve personal development when we boast of increased human rights awareness and the digital generation? Like my friend Kelly told me, "We all will face some disability in our lives as we age, so we don't need to discriminate against anyone with a disability!"

Conclusion

This paper therefore advocates for a skill development centre for training human resource. The sheltered workshop if established as a pilot program in the two counties will produce highly skilled and motivated manpower for the public and private sector. The Pwds will have well furnished departmental workshops, excellent lecture and conference rooms, modern information technology centre, sporting and recreational facilities which will unite Pwds with other non-disabled persons. This will foster full and effective participation and inclusion in the society; equality between men and women as a part of human diversities and humanity. Programmes that are interested in people's welfare and sustainability should be of necessity sought to accommodate the diversity of people's fundamental human needs in one way or another.

Recommendations

- Increased awareness on the plight of Pwds will ensure support from the community.
- Build appropriate infrastructure, increase vocational technical inclusive institutions.
- Ensure existing and proposed infrastructure is universally accessible and friendly.
- Government to monitor on implementation of the policies related to Pwds.
- Upgrade the available technical institution to admit Pwds.
- Fight Stigma, since socio-cultural and economic prejudice may keep Pwds from participating in community activities.

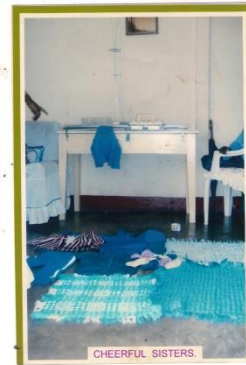
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Appendices: Photographs of Learners with Visual Impairments in Vocational Training (Cheerful Sisters)





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