



WWJMRD 2017; 3(9): 33-39

www.wwjmr.com

International Journal

Peer Reviewed Journal

Refereed Journal

Indexed Journal

UGC Approved Journal

Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25

e-ISSN: 2454-6615

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## The Role of Policy Makers in Job Creation for the Unemployed Persons with Disabilities in Africa

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### Abstract

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) have been noted to be marginalized and socially deprived as a result of unemployment. Opportunities to emerge from poverty are limited, due to lack of enabling legislation to promote skills development and employment opportunities, where such legislation is in place, there are weak implementation and enforcement measures. This study focuses on unemployment of PWDs in Africa. It undertakes a broad review of existing studies and policy frameworks on African youths and identifies the gaps, challenges and opportunities for harnessing their potentials. Therefore, the justification for this research is consistent with the need to source, analyze, discuss findings and proffer suggestions that policy-makers can use as a guideline to enforce already documented policies.

**Keywords:** Disabilities, employment, bias, policy-makers, Nigeria-Africa

### Introduction

There is limited data hindering the measurement of the wellbeing of African youths and this includes the persons with disabilities (PWDs). Available data suggests that the youth population is large and growing, and has high unemployment rate with its attendant consequences. An estimated 386 million persons in the world who are of working-age are disabled, (ILO, 2002) among these, 80 percent are unemployed PWDs. In a survey conducted in the U.S.A. in 2004, the report revealed that only about 35% of (PWDs) are gainfully employed; and in India a 5 to 6 percent of its population who are disabled have their employment needs unmet with a reserved 3 percent of government jobs (Lang, R. (2006) UN Enable-Factsheets on Person with Disabilities). In Africa, PWDs are the most economically irrelevant, they are politically sidelined, it can be said that they are the least regarded members of their societies. Yet this group is said to represent about a 10th per cent of the world's population, which is more than 650 million people, out of this 470 million are the non-working population. These include people with physical, sensory, intellectual and psycho-social disabilities (ILO, 2007). The UN in its statistics states that PWDs in developing countries who live below the poverty line are 82 percent. The report agrees with the ILO report that they are the most vulnerable and marginalized in these countries with an estimated 20 per cent of all people living on less than US\$ 1 worldwide (ILO, 2009). In Nigeria, there is a population of over One Hundred and Forty Million, and an estimated population of over Three Million as the population of the Persons with disabilities NPC (2006). There is need to include them in the economic mainstream of the nation. Unfortunately, the PWDs are usually not given elaborate consideration in National Development Plans and as such become the most vulnerable social group as evidenced by unacceptable low literacy level; high unemployment; and poor access to Development Support Network and Social Capital Adeniji, (2008). A Nigerian newspaper, the "Vanguard" in a recent publication of Tue 22nd Mar, 2016 - [www.hotnigerianjobs.com](http://www.hotnigerianjobs.com) and declared by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), stated that in the fourth quarter of 2015, the number of unemployed and underemployed persons in Nigeria surged to 22.45 million, that is about 9.1percent or 1.75 million, higher than 20.7 million recorded in the third quarter" In 2002, James Wolfenson, former President of the World Bank, stated that in Organizational

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Diversity and Human Resource Management, it is imperative to address disability issues if the UN Millennium Development Goal vision is to be actualized. In collaboration with Civil Society Institutions, the United Nations successfully negotiated a convention regarding disability rights, this convention which is first of its kind, is to be known and called convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It is an international human rights treaty with a mission to protect PWDs while ensuring that they enjoy full integration in society and benefit equally like the non-disabled persons (NDPs). The role of the CRPD is to monitor the implementation of these rights by member States and ensure that PWDs are not discriminated upon. This convention was ratified at the 61st Meeting of the UN in December, 2007. During this meeting, 53 African countries signed the Convention among other countries of the world. The CRPD became a legal bond holding signatory countries to account to ensure that effective implementable policy framework was developed; and also, that the rights and dignities of the PWDs are maintained (CRPD, 2006). This development is intended to facilitate the Social Inclusion of the PWDs within their respective countries in organizations (Barron & Amerena 2006). Unfortunately, many of these African signatories are yet to put machineries in place to see to the success of tenets of the treaty including Nigeria. Some do not prohibit discrimination of PWDs in their countries, others, despite the legal prohibitions still discriminate against this group in work and society. The resultant effect being that PWDs are left to cater for themselves and if employed, to the discretion of the management to decide their fate with discouraging results and social consequences.

There is therefore the need to ensure the socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities through proper planning (Hoogetveen, J. (2005). For example, the World Bank study in 2000 estimated that between 1.37 and 1.95 billion U.S dollars is lost in global GNP due to large number of unemployed disabled persons (Aroyoku, 2009). Investigation shows that there are a good number of persons with disability who are educationally qualified, skillful and capable yet deprived economically, socially and politically in the society (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013). Despite their challenges, evidence abound in recent years that there is ability in every disability. It has been proven in different ways that they can achieve and attain any desired goal in life that they set for themselves irrespective of their state of deformity. There are evidences to show for their determination to succeed and attain greater heights. The evidences of their performances have convinced the society that they are equal to every other non-disabled man or woman. Despite these evidences, there is still employment bias.

### **Understanding Disability?**

Persons with disabilities are humans irrespective of their physiological appearances. "It is disheartening to graduate top of your faculty, and naturally, expect to get a job the moment you're out of school. You witness people with lesser qualifications, being employed over you for the mere fact that you are disabled". This is the reality of what PWDs face daily, says Ruth Omopariola-Bolarinwa, a partially deaf who was best graduating student of Unilorin's Education faculty 2009. To better understand

PWDs and employment bias, one must first understand from where they are coming from: In 1975, in the UK, an organization known as Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS) claimed that it was the attitude of society which disables PWDs, stating that, disability is something imposed on their impairment by the society. Then, in 1983, Mike Oliver coined the phrase "social model of disability" about their ideological developments Oliver; Sapey (2006). Oliver focused on the distinction originally made between 'impairment' and 'disability' by the union. This distinction being the physical 'abnormality' of the individual, a situation that can be resolved medically, and the inability to access their societal rights due to restrictions which only the society can solve. The fundamental of social model must do with equality. Disability here refers to the restrictions caused by society when it does not give equivalent attention and accommodation to the needs of PWDs Goodley, D. (2001). The "social model" was extended and developed by academics and activists in Australia, the UK, US and other countries, and extended to include all PWDs, be it learning difficulty / learning disability, mentally challenged, emotional/ mental health or behavioural problems Goodley, D. (2001). This study is limited to the social model of disability. This model in relation to economics, states that persons can be disabled by lack of resources to meet their needs. It addresses issues like under-estimation of the potentials of people to contribute to society and add economic value to society, if given equal rights and equally suitable facilities and opportunities as others. Economic researches on companies that attempt to accommodate PWDs as part of their workforce suggest they are better workers Oliver, M. (1990). PWDs represent a big percentage of applicants, but are often unemployed due to society's lack of acknowledgement of their potentials. In Nigeria, hundreds of thousands of individuals are limited in their daily activities because of a physical or mental disability, yet participate actively in the search for jobs which they can hardly find. Though some disabilities are so severe that the person or persons cannot get a job or work in a company, however, many others are unable to get paid jobs for reasons unrelated to their condition, such as biased attitudes and workplaces that are physically inaccessible to PWDs. Thus, these individuals remain unemployed, resort to charity and alms giving or give up the job search. This kind of situation is unhealthy for PWDs, and more generally for society and the economy. PWDs have been excluded from their rights or benefits of job participation, which is a key component of social integration (Yeo, R. & Moore, K. (2003) and could deprive society of their quota and contribution to the economy. The reason for this exclusion of PWDs from active participation is a negative attitude and biased mind from non-disabled persons (Antonak, R.F., Livneh, H., & Yunker, H.E. 1988).

### **PWDs and Human Rights**

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson, made an eloquent speech that became the rationale behind contemporary use of Affirmative Action programs to achieve equal opportunity especially in field of employment (my emphasis). In his speech, he said, "one does not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say to him, you are free to compete with all the others" and still believe that one has

been completely fair to the person. Therefore, all classes of human rights will only function maximally when a person's source of livelihood is unhindered. There exists a live wire connection between human rights and employment opportunities. A right is an interest, the disregard of which is a wrong (Salmond). When rights are recognized and enforced by law, they are called 'perfect rights'; and those recognized but not enforceable are called imperfect rights. Under the constitution of nations, the rights which are recognized are often termed human rights (Mowoe (2008). Rights to employment and freedom from discrimination is specifically a form of human rights that is fundamental to the very existence of man (PWDs). The charter of United Nations in its preamble states its determination "to affirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large or small." It states also as a basic desire "to achieve international cooperation, in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" (United Nations. 1995). Work is a fundamental right. It is an important instrument in the actualizing of other human rights and is invariable in the formation of the human dignity. In a world of "survival of the fittest", work is the only thing that contributes at the same time to the survival of the PWDs and to that of his/her family, as far as work is freely declared, to his/her development and recognition within the community (Turnbull, R. Huerta, N. & Stowe, M. (2006). In a unanimous agreement during the CRPD in 2006, PWDs have the right to work equally with others. This includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living through an openly declared labour market and work environment. In Article 27 of the CRPD it is expected that States take adequate measures to safeguard and promote the

actualization of the right to work of PWDs, including prohibiting discrimination and bias in respect to issues related to employment, including conditions of hiring, continuance of employment, promotions, safe and healthy working conditions. Alongside this legislation, there was a concerted effort to improve the living experiences of PWDs. To address this issue, various levels of government in different countries have implemented numerous programs and policies to access employment for PWDs yet these policies are not implemented. While espoused as an ideal, its implementation has not necessarily delivered quality outcomes for all PWDs.

**Rights and Privileges of Persons with Disabilities in Some African Countries**

**Nigeria**

Section I states its main aim to be;

"To provide a clear and comprehensive legal protection and security for Nigerians with disability as well as establish standard for enforcement of the rights and privileges guaranteed under this decree and other laws applicable to the disabled in the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

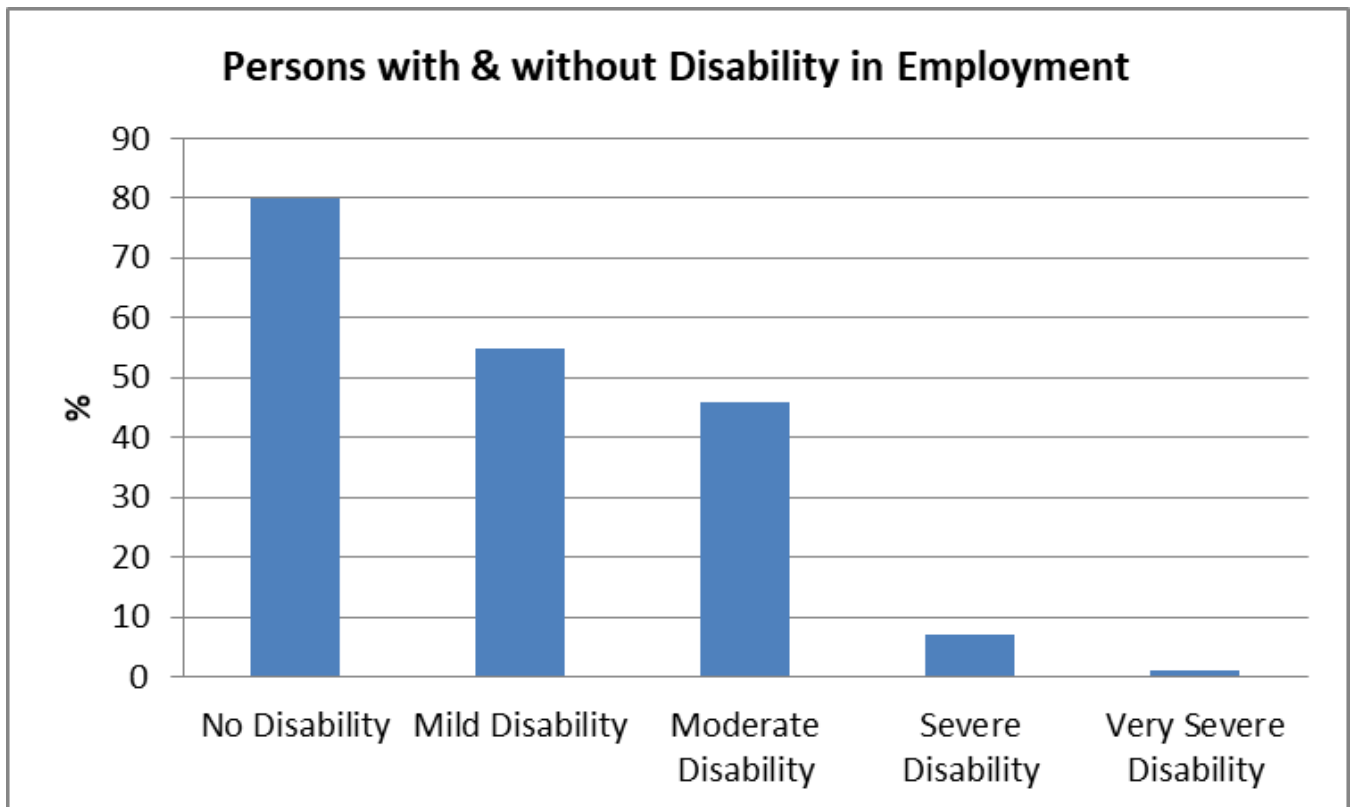
And among other policies in section 6, on vocational rehabilitation and employment, it states that;

Government shall take measures to promote the employment of the disabled;

All employers of labour shall reserve for the disabled not less than 10% of the work force.

At least 10% of all fund allocation to training and personal development shall be reserved by employers of labour for the disabled.

A disabled person shall not by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any disability or conditions by any employer. (*Nigerians with disability decree 1993, as relevant to this study*)



**Fig.1:** Employment in Western Nigeria for persons with & without Disability in 2009 (source: NBS)

**Table 1:** showing summary of job vacancies in Western Nigeria as at 2013 and the disparity in employment of PWDs as against NDPs (non-disabled persons). Note the total percentages showing bias in employment; of the 226,910 vacant positions, 1104 PWDs applied, only 0.5% was employed as against 99.5% of NDPs.

Job Declared	Vacancy	N0. Of Applicants		Level of Education employed SSCE Tertiary				Employed	
		PWDs	NDPs	PWDs	NDPs	PWDs	NDPs	PWDs	NDPs
Teaching	32,907	244	58,614	8	15,210	19	13,002	27	28,212
Receptionists	36,791	107	42,101	90	800	3	32,000	93	32,800
Secretary	38,900	66	45,015	-	-	67	38,934	66	38,934
Nursing	11,082	45	17,100	-	-	5	11,077	5	11,077
Accounting Officers	31,216	98	34,160	-	-	8	22,114	8	31,008
Managerial Posts	22,114	256	56,282	-	-	-	22,114	-	22,114
ICT analysts	53,900	288	72,181	176	13,091	6	40,600	194	53691
	226,910	1104	325,453					833(0.5%)	164,145(99.5%)
								164,978	

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, survey report 2013.

**GHANA**

Public employment centers  
 Promotion of employment of persons with disability  
 Provision of tools  
 Posting, transfer and redeployment of person with disability  
 Appropriate training for the unemployed person with disability  
 Rehabilitation Centers  
 Community based rehabilitation  
 (Persons with disability Act 2006, Act 715)  
 These policies are not implemented in the above countries under view.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

In South Africa, there exist legislation on employment equality which is not practiced, PWDs in South Africa remain unemployed as against NDPs. (Pitso, R; Maguban, K. (2014). Below is a table showing disparity in employment in all provinces with the male NDPs having the highest employment rate.  
 Percentage of disabled and non-disabled persons aged 15-65 years who were employed by province and sex.

Province	PWDs		Non-disabled persons		Employment Disparity	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Western Cape	28.7	22.7	57.2	42.4	28.5	19.7
Eastern Cape	9.6	8.0	25.3	18.0	15.7	10.0
Northern Cape	21.1	12.2	51.1	31.2	30.0	19.0
Free State	28.7	18.5	42.9	26.9	13.9	8.4
KwaZulu Natal	17.6	12.9	35.1	23.1	17.5	10.2
North West	22.9	11.6	43.0	22.5	20.1	10.9
Gauteng	20.9	24.2	53.2	37.9	32.3	13.7
Mpumalanga	29.3	9.5	45.5	24.0	16.2	14.5
Limpopo	17.9	12.8	30.2	17.2	12.3	4.4
South Africa	22.0	15.2	53.4	30.0	31.4	14.8

Source: STASSA, Prevalence of Disability in South Africa Report Pretoria: STATSSA, 2005, p. 22.

**Effort Made By Government/Policy Makers to Creating Employment in Africa**

In Nigeria, Advocacy efforts are being made to ensure that the Disability Bill before the National Assembly is enacted into law, so far, only Lagos state has been able to sign into Law, the Special Peoples’ Law (SPL) in 2011, thereby, making the state to be the first in Nigeria to promulgate a law specifically for PWDs (SPL, 2011). The law incorporates many of the obligations under CRPD and section 23(1) SPL, 2011.

Other efforts made in Nigeria and beyond include:  
*Entrepreneurship Education and Graduate Employability in Nigeria*

At a presentation at a workshop, G. T. U Chiaha and Ruben Amaechi Agu noted that in Nigeria the general unemployment situation is worsening and graduate unemployment equally deteriorating. As a result, policy makers are trying to promote entrepreneurship to improve employment. One approach was to introduce

Entrepreneurial Education (EEed) in the curriculum of Nigerian universities. Against this background, a survey was undertaken by the two authors to investigate whether EEed inculcated employability skills in students of Nigerian universities. A sample of 220 labour employers and 100 university graduates serving the National Youth Service Corps from the four regions of Nigeria were selected. The methodology used comprised a questionnaire, interviews and analysis of the EEed content in universities. Main results showed first that there was no significant difference between the employability skills required by employers in the public and private sectors and second, that the EEed did inculcate employability skills in students, which made the graduates who undertook the EEed programme much more employable than their counterparts who did not. Due to the skills acquired during this entrepreneurship program they could create jobs for themselves and employ others thereby reducing unemployment. If employed by other companies, they were the agents of change and development of the

company as they helped create more business opportunities. The authors therefore urged all Nigerian universities to adopt the EEd as a measure to build links with employers and to increase graduate employability.

#### *Increasing Employment Opportunities for Blind Graduates in Ghana*

Kwabena Adu Poku, who had served twelve years in the "Office of Students with Special Needs" at the University of Ghana witnessed that they had more difficulty finding temporary or permanent jobs for blind graduates than for the physically disabled. In 2012/13 there were 106 students with special needs at the University, of whom 26 were visually impaired, he decided to carry out a study to answer two specific questions: i) why were employers reluctant to hire blind graduates? ii) How could the employability of blind graduates be improved? He conducted a survey, using questionnaires, on a matched sample of fourteen (14) employers comprising seven company directors who had hired visually impaired graduates and seven others who did not have that experience. The feedback from those companies which had employed blind graduates showed that: the use of Braille at the workplace was noisy and distractive; most of the graduates had poor job-preparedness and did not have a positive attitude. There was additional cost to hiring them as they had to be assisted. They noted that there was already gross unemployment in the country and this affected the employment opportunities for blind graduates. Those who had not employed blind graduates expressed fears for the fragile health of the graduates and the potential risk for accidents and falls; and were unsure about their performance. Based on this, the following recommendations were made; that the use of archaic Braille equipment in offices should be stopped and touch typing devices be introduced; government should provide resources/incentives for employers to employ blind graduates; legislation should promote employment of graduates with disabilities (including the blind); and specific jobs should be created or reserved for blind graduates.

#### *Creating Opportunity for Graduate Employability in Cameroon through Entrepreneurship*

Here, Fomba Emmanuel Mbebeb, examined the impact of employment policy in higher education in Cameroon and looked at factors influencing graduates in the labour market. The study tested a model of antecedents and outcomes positioning strategies for entrepreneurship education as evidence of intent to an entrepreneurial career and self-employability. Processed data were collected from 739 graduates of the Bachelor-Masters-Doctorate (BMD) system of one Anglo-Saxon university and one French-dominated bilingual university. The results showed that entrepreneurship education, skills, attitudes, social norms and self-esteem were significant predictors of intent for an entrepreneurial career. It was also noted that the mean differences varied by gender, disciplinary orientation, language groups and professional experience but there were no significant differences between the two universities. Quantitative analysis of the data showed significant evidence of the impact of policies on the provisions relating to the employability of graduates. However, the qualitative analysis revealed gaps in policy formulation and implementation of the BMD system. Therefore, the author/presenter suggested strategies for a responsive

generation of nascent entrepreneurs and concluded with an analysis of policy and practical implications of the employability agenda.

Quality Education Delivery as means to Job Creation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Prof. Bamiro pointed out that across high youth unemployment, growing graduate unemployment and the emerging voice of young Arab people had brought the issue of employability to the forefront of the political agenda. Whilst in most developed economies, the employability agenda was well established, in the MENA and Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) regions, this agenda was far less developed. This was what led the British Council (BC) to adopt a regional approach to the problem of graduate employability, first in the MENA region and currently in SSA. He reported that the scoping studies of eight SSA countries - Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana - had highlighted, among others, the weak quality of curricula and materials being delivered that were often not related to employer needs, thus affecting graduate employability. This had led the BC to focus its research for the period 2011-2015 on how learning, teaching and research in universities were linked to employability and inclusive development. The research, which had started at the beginning of 2013, involved the UK, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana.

Source: Kwabena & Kimenyi, (2013) Africa Growth initiative Working Paper 9, | April 2013, Youth Policy and the Future of African Development.

#### **Why Have The Documented Policies Not Worked So Far?**

In Africa, generally, lack of a universal definition of "youth" (PWDs inclusive), makes measuring the unemployment problem difficult and the comparison of data across countries less reliable. There are no policies or programmes to enable PWDs gain full or even part time employment. Another reason might be that policymakers have had to confront inaccurate and inadequate information and data that will form the basis of effective planning. As reported in other studies (Asaju, K, S. Arome and S. Anyio (2014) and Iwayemi, 2014), employment data are very hard to obtain, even from established governmental agencies for socio-economic data. There are no unemployment registers, the few that are available are limited to urban areas, with few names as not all those searching for employment attempt to register. In the absence of such data, policymakers are made to rely on cross-sectional household surveys, which are prone to inconsistencies and errors. This inconsistency in data makes it difficult for policymakers to fully understand the intense nature of the employment challenge and make informed decisions on how to support PWDs in the labor market. The scarcity of data on informal employment and entrepreneurship in particular is a major obstacle, (Akande, T. 2014). To overcome these challenges, there is need for reliable, accurate and comparable data across countries and regions, creation of pro-jobs and pro-youth economic growth agendas, comprehensive policies that are integrated into national development plans, broad macroeconomic policies and the need to mainstream these policies (Briceño-Garmendia, Cecilia. 2010). Information on the development and implementation of these (youth) policies in Africa are hard to find, but there are evidences

suggesting that various countries are at different stages of the process (Kimenyi, Mwangi S. (1995). Effective policies require dealing with challenges facing PWDs to include; access to quality and relevant education, persistent unemployment, insurgencies and incidence of inflation and poverty, coupled with the fact that the costs of programs and sources for funding are not easily known; also, that governments may lack the capacity to undertake comprehensive monitoring and evaluative processes (Asaju et al, 2014). While in Nigeria, public policies directed at addressing unemployment of PWDs have encountered various obstacles including finance, the lack of good and steady administration, proper implementation of government policies and unqualified resource personnel handling the training programs ( Akande,T. 2014). In a report on the employment of PWDs in India based on recent data from the National Sample Survey (Mitra, & Sambamoorthi, (2006). The report shows that the employment rate of PWDs is relatively low compared to that of the all-India working age population, with great variations across gender, the urban/rural sectors and states.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The basis for legislation for persons with disabilities is justified in this paper. The justification arises from the need for equal opportunities and protection given to anyone in the society (American Printing House for the Blind (1987). Every society is guided on the principle of respect for one another, and liberty to have access to basic things of life like food, shelter and clothing (Cartwright, Cartwright & Ward, 1989). It is also justified that opportunities for PWDs have not been focused upon as it was spelt out in the Nigerian Decree of 1993 and the national policy on education 2004. Legislation for promotion of welfare for PWDs can be more formidable and effective, if Federal Government intervenes through respective agencies like the Ministry of Information and National Orientation Agency to create awareness. Symposia, seminars, public lectures, etc. should be carried out to sensitize and educate the public on issues relating to disabilities and persons living with disabilities. This awareness should be incorporated in the training of personnel and caregivers like, teachers, lawyers, architects, construction engineers, doctors, nurses, etc. (Antonak, & Livneh, 1995). The Nigerian Constitution should be amended to include disability rights specifically and these rights should be made justiciable. The fundamental human rights of the United Nations seek to recognize the inalienable rights of all members of the human family to be entitled to freedom, justice and fair play, and for peaceful living. Implementation of the provisions and policies made by various conventions across the world should be incorporated into the various countries constitutions. There should be a body responsible for evaluating and monitoring accessibility in all sectors of human endeavour for PWDs alike (Antonak, & Livneh, 1995), and a legal provision that mandates representatives of PWDs to participate in policy making and work with government institutions (Hooper & Umansk (2004). This will help cater for their needs, guarantee them access to public life utilities, equal treatment and freedom to participate in governance, thereby, enhancing government capability to enforce civil rights. In the education sector, entrepreneurship education is commendable and if embedded in the curricula, can improve employability, so

long as it is practical and not theoretical and this should not be confused with the introduction of vocational skills in some universities in Africa (Boateng, K. 2002). Universities should develop strategies to assist students with special needs and to empower them to find employment. However, the proposal to have specific jobs reserved for them may not be the right approach. The key recommendations include; harnessing the potentials of African youths (PWDs) to foster economic growth through open participation in job recruitment and develop strategies to improve their standard of living in general. Also, harnessing innovations, which have the potentials to increase skill formation, enhance productivity and create youth employment opportunities; while improving the investment climate by providing permanent electricity thereby, reducing the cost of doing business so as to create jobs. Amenities, to boost employment opportunities in the rural areas should be expanded; and finally, create institutional quality for individuals and organizations to be effective in responding to the needs of PWDs (Chingunta, F. (2002).

Government /policy makers though not silent or sleeping in their attempt to provide what is needful for youths and persons with disabilities, caution should be sounded on the tendency to exaggerate the mismatch between university training and industry needs since this could negatively influence policy. Higher education has a broader mission and should not be regarded as merely education for employment; the real causes of unemployment should be investigated first rather than closing departments because of unemployment. Markets are influencing universities but universities should also attempt to influence markets by providing quality higher education through adequate and balanced curricula and academic environment which in turn will address employability aspects (UNECA, 2011). There is disparity in Africa between what industry expects from university graduates and what universities produce. More attention should be paid to societal needs and produce graduates that are needed. The disconnection between government and university policies should also be addressed; Universities and governments need to collaborate to address graduate unemployment, taking into consideration the real human resource needs of those areas or cities when citing universities to avoid graduate redundancy.

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