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An Exploration of the Inclusivity of Universities to People with Hearing Impairment in Zimbabwe

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Abstract:
The inclusion of people with hearing impairment was reported to vary from one university to another as evidenced by differences on the disability status section in the application forms. The qualitative approach based on the phenomenology design explored the inclusivity of Zimbabwean Universities to people with HI. Purposive sampling was employed to select two DPOs; four universities; four lecturers who had taught or had interest while snowballing was used to select three participants with HI in university training, six who had completed and eight prospective students for the two focus group discussions. Participants with HI were obtained through key informants. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were employed to collect data with the assistance of an experienced sign language interpreter. Prior to existing disability policies guiding provisions for people with HI, this study revealed that most Zimbabwean Universities had exclusive policies and practices as exemplified by ad hoc support services to deaf education. Thus most literature urged universities to move beyond simply meeting legislative requirements. Underpinned by the ubuntu and the transformative frameworks, the study justified how the philosophy could guide the universities' inclusion of people with HI in Zimbabwe. Findings were expected to influence admission, pedagogical policies and enhance deaf education.

Keywords: inclusivity, university, hearing impairment, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction
Inclusive education is currently a popular policy worldwide. In this focus, it brings together in one lecture room people who are d/Deaf and hearing people, regardless of their differences, with a view of maximising their potentials in an environment with relevant provisions. As follow up to this shift in admissions, the implementation of the internationalised philosophy of inclusion of students with HI has been uneven across the world and universities (Mitchell, 2010; World Declaration on Higher Education, 1998). In this study, the term hearing impairment (HI) includes people who are deaf and hard of hearing. This term, HI is widely used in this study even though controversies and debates by people who are deaf surround its use. Words such as 'learner', 'people' and 'students' are used interchangeably. This study is a preliminary study to the researcher's Doctor of Philosophy entitled, *"An exploration of Personal Experiences of People with Hearing Impairment in Accessing Higher Education in Zimbabwe.'* The Ubuntu philosophy guides this study. The study aimed to establish the extent to which Zimbabwean Universities were inclusive friendly to people with HI by answering the following research questions; (1) What are Zimbabwean Universities' inclusive practices to deaf education? (2) Are existing inclusive practices and policies promoting the inclusion of people with HI into Zimbabwean Universities? (3) How can Zimbabwean Universities make themselves inclusive friendly to people with HI? (4) What recommendations can be made to help increase inclusivity of people with HI in Zimbabwean Universities? The study mainly discusses how exclusionary pressures, policies and practices impacted on inclusion of people with HI at universities.

1.1. Background to the study
Hearing impairment is a sensory impairment with varied hearing losses which affects differently understanding of speech, conversational communication and further influences the mode of learning and teaching (Musonda 2013; Ravi 1996). Although some institutions of HE may argue against this view, the researcher read and observed that, worldwide people with HI were recognised as a vulnerable group to exclusion due to communication limitations created by hearing defects. Little care was put into the educational advancement of people with HI. It was however, the World War 11 victims who gave way to postsecondary opportunities to people with disabilities (PWDs) including people with HI (Vaux, 2009; Davis and Silverman 1978). It means, it conscientised societies not to consider people disabled during the world wars as helpless beings but as people with assets which could benefit the society at large. For example, after the *Chimurenga* war the Zimbabwean, Disabled Persons Act (DPA) 1992 which was amended in 1996 was enacted with war veterans in mind. The shift in thinking further gave birth to current participation of students with HI in universities. The study questions the inclusivity of universities to people with HI because an insignificant number was reported to be enrolled at Zimbabwean Universities (Chataika, 2010). The researcher has experiences in deaf education and is aware of some people with HI who have potential and prerequisites to enrol at Zimbabwean Universities but

were currently operating as street vendors. The researcher was surprised that some of the people with HI who had successfully completed their 'O' or 'A' Level education went to train at universities outside Zimbabwe. Some family members and peers blamed the Zimbabwean systems as the root cause for such moves. Does this imply that, Zimbabwe is under-skilled to meet the inclusion of students with HI in its universities? Or society is still biased towards external education as more superior than its own?

Universities were considered the backbone of development in a country because they guided countries through informed researches (World Declaration on Higher Education, 1998). In view of this, Riddell, Tinklin and Wilson (2005) posited that universities were designed to equip students with knowledge and skills needed for their future working lives. At the same time, they operated as sites for accumulation and distribution of social capital. Riddell *et al*. (2005) assert that universities were arbiters of social justice. In addition to this, day-to-day interactions and debates with colleagues on university deaf education seemingly placed the lack of access blame upon HI than any other cause. Despite all this, most Zimbabwean institutions claimed to be inclusive. Are they really inclusive to people with HI? All these observations and realities gave birth to this study.

Zimbabwe has numerous Acts and policies that have the potential to promote the inclusion of PWDs. Its equality codes include; the Education Act of 1987; the Disabled Persons Act (DPA) of 1992, revised in 1996 and further amended in 2006. According to Chataika (2010), it was the DPA which made Zimbabwe gain recognition as one of the few first countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with legislation on disability. Despite all that, university participation of people with HI was underrepresented (Bell 2013; Lang 2002). Why was Zimbabwe still lagging behind in deaf education inclusion despite its popularity and status in disability issues? Most policies were guiding visions without implementation guidelines and structures, thus some of them were considered by the researcher as unenforceable tools. These were possible contributing factors to the current fate of people with HI at Zimbabwean Universities. Agreeably, Brelje 1999 in Lang 2002 reported that, very few students with HI enrolled at universities in Egypt, El Salvador, Lebanon, Nepal, Greece, India, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia and Thailand, because they were considered incapable of successfully completing a university degree. Are they incapable? The living successful stories of educating people who were deaf using Sign Language and other necessary provisions were witnessed at Gallaudet University in United States of America (USA), Japan and Nordic countries. Most academics at Gallaudet University were deaf and holders of Masters Degrees and PhDs. This study credits Gallaudet University and other related universities for having produced degree graduates who were deaf. The event also perpetuated the education and culture of people with HI in even developed countries, such as, Zimbabwe. Additionally, Rochester Institute in USA also had critical programmes in developing the education of people with HI. These institutions were living arguments that show that people who were deaf were educable. It only takes political will and moral to create an enabling university environment for people with HI (Chataika, 2010). Thus, as observed by the researcher, it was the political will that seemed to be conspicuously absent in developing countries, such as, Zimbabwe. While laws and policies on education for all (EFA) were there, they seemed to be translated into slogans where the education of PWDs was concerned. As a result, PWDs were sometimes viewed as mere tax consumers with no role to contribute towards the socio-economic development of the country yet at Gallaudet University they were tax payers.

It is speculated that universities were mandated to give access to all including people with HI. Why then were people with HI excluded from university education? Other speculations suggested that, universities in Zimbabwe were at free will to enrol or not enrol PWDs. All these controversies and debates drove the researcher to identify from Zimbabwean Universities; exclusionary pressures, policies and practices that limited or blocked the inclusion of people with HI.

2. International Background to Inclusion

As evident by international and local goals, inclusion has worldwide become one of the most litigious issues in the field of education today despite debates about its implementation and benefits. As read and observed by the researcher, inclusion was currently an encouraged placement model for PWDs in most countries. A number of international human rights agreements contributed to the development of inclusion. They included; United Nations (UN) Convention on Rights of the Child, 1989; UN Declaration on Education for All (EFA) 1990; UN Standards Rules on Equalities of Opportunities for persons with disabilities, 1993; UNESCO's Salamanca Statement, 1994 and World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000. As noted by Kochung (2011) these international initiatives influenced structures and practices in inclusive education. Disability legislation was a recent area, thus, some countries tried to implement some of them while others refrained or feared to commit themselves. The idea that, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) which was passed in 1995, did not cover post secondary education until the development of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 could possibly be a contributing factor to the various described behaviours. However, the passage of this Act influenced amendments to Part 1V of the DDA. That influenced the participation of PWDs into universities in September 2002. The principles of ongoing international inclusive practices were enshrined in the first legal global instrument, the UNCRPD (2006) which also emphasised that States should ensure life-long learning and equal educational access. This legal framework has made great contributions to inclusive education. That has encouraged and is still encouraging many countries and institutions to take a more strategic approach to inclusion to promote educational participation of PWDs.

In view of above international developments, Zimbabwean educational integration increased in the 80's after Zimbabwe got independent. It opened opportunities to deaf education. It raised awareness to overcome stigma against PWDs (Riddell, *et al.*, 2005), including learner with HI. The shift aimed to change beliefs and value systems and generate organisational commitment to disability-inclusive policies and practices (Lorenzo, 2011).

2.1. Enhancing inclusion of people with HI

Widening access to higher education (HE) has become a top priority around the world (Riddell *et al.* 2005). As university education became a prerequisite to professional employment, the under-representation of students with HI studying at this level underlined a massive social injustice that still exists in today's education system (Chataika, 2010; Riddell *et al.* 2005). Thus, EHEA (2012) suggested that, improving the participation of PWDs entailed focusing on real needs and personal circumstances of certain groups, since these often constituted barriers to entry, participation and successful completion of university education. As a result, the field of audiology emerged to assist educationists. That action enhanced the access of people with HI into university education. While this opened doors to university education, it, on the other hand, made people with HI encounter multiple attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers which were not experienced before enacted participation (Chataika 2010). Thus, that made them more vulnerable than they initially were.

Most people with HI experienced low levels of academic achievements (Brett 2010; Riddell *et al.* 2005; Lang 2002). Recent studies on people with HI by Riddell *et al.* (2005) suggested that, low levels of achievement were mostly ongoing in developing countries. Regarding that, the degree of exclusion and suffering of people with HI depended on the societal acceptance of human diversity. With regards to that, the American Public Law 94-142 proposed that, the education system must meet the interests and goals of people with HI in the same manner it tried to meet those of hearing adolescents (Warnock 1978). However, the provision of Section 504 enhanced that by proposing that, universities should not discriminate in their recruitment, admission, educational process or treatment of PWDs. Thus, a child who was deaf had a priori to use Sign Language (SL) as a first language as the hearing child had a right to quality education. Therefore, there were no priori reasons to place a person with HI in a situation of therapy and medical treatment (Riggio and McLetchie 2001). This study intends to strengthen the voices of people with HI on their inclusion at universities. Agreeably, Lorenzo (2011) suggested that, giving voice to people with HI was a priority. Lorenzo (2011) further asserted that, bridging the silos that existed within the disability movement and related services had probabilities of promoting the inclusion of the marginalised voices.

2.2. Conceptual framework

Ubuntu and the transformative framework guided this inquiry. Ubuntu is a term derived from the Nguni. It means the quality of being human. African societies thrived on the solidarity principle of ubuntu (Mbigi and Maree 1995). That embraced the notion of group solidarity, the *unhu –munhu* humanness ideology which said; *"a man is a man through others."* So it ran through the veins of all African societies. It called on us to mirror our humanity for each other and promoted the *"do unto others as you would like them to do unto you"* spirit. Ubuntu can be seen and felt in the transformed spirit of willingness, participation, unquestioning cooperation, warmth, openness and personal dignity (William, 2013). Thus, all people with or without hearing deficits were entitled to unconditional respect, dignity, acceptance and care from the significant others. This philosophy entailed that respect for human beings must come first, before all other considerations. In support, William (2013) quotes Desmond Tutu, *"You might have much of the world's riches and you might hold a portion of authority but if you have no ubuntu you do not amount to much."*

This conceptual framework guides this study and encourages all who deal with matters of people with HI to treat them as equals. Agreeably, Kochung (2011, 145) notes that, in African societies the traditional education afforded education to every member despite one's age, ability and physical outlook. In essence, this was inclusive education. However, modern education systems came in with new systems without respecting or studying the existing African systems. Thus, in the name of providing quality education, the system created inequality by creating first class and second class citizens. Due to all that, universities ended up excluding PWDs (Kochung 2011). It was for these reasons that the ubuntu epistemology was expected to help Africans universities rediscover themselves through revisiting the goodness of the Africa culture where issues of equity and equality mattered (Rukuni 2007).

Often, the Western view missed this perspective because it did not realise that Africans were a people with a special history just like themselves. As Africans, our sense of being is fundamental amongst the African cultures (Motsi and Masango, 2012). The common practice within Zimbabwe was that, PWDs were passive and economically unproductive thus, they were considered a burden upon society (Lang and Charowa, 2007). However, the researcher proposed that, people with HI will not be a burden to society if ubuntu philosophy and inclusive education were applied. Gallaudet University as already proposed was a good example. The Western ideology preaches Human Rights and fundamental freedom as the birth rights of 'all' including Africans, but as already highlighted, they did so without understanding the African systems. Thus, Rukuni (2007) urges us to go back to our past to reclaim what is wholesome and best and use it to rebuild the African modernity.

Such a society needed a type of education which gave individuals personal interest in social relationships and control their habits of the mind in order to secure social change. Every African has the ubuntu qualities since it is inculcated in every African child from cradle (William 2013). Due to modernisation and globilisation, most Africans have despised these qualities. The study encourages collectivity to promote needs of people with HI and other disabilities.

Transformative theory is a process of effecting change in a frame of references (Mezirow 1997). Frame of references are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences and they shape and delimit perceptions. Applying ubuntu frame of references may transform universities through revisits and reflections. This study intends to transform universities through awareness. Ubuntu can cause institutional positive changes towards disability. Universities should seek collective advice on the education of people with HI where the dominating group treated the minority as equal partners in scrambling for HE.

3. Methodology

There being a dearth of knowledge in Zimbabwean Universities on inclusivity of people with HI, this study sought to explore the extent to which they were inclusive. That was solicited using the qualitative paradigm, which Smith (2003) described as a practical guide. Patton (1995) equally took it as an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness and context. The phenomenology design was employed to collect data. It was imperative to employ the qualitative approach based on the philosophical foundation of phenomenology to enable key informants, students with HI in universities, those who had completed university education, prospective students and lecturers who had taught or had interest to elicit their university experiences with people with HI. Purposive sampling was employed to select the universities and lecturers while snowballing was used to select participants with HI. Participants with HI were obtained through key informants (KIs) who were knowledgeable on their whereabouts.

To investigate the inclusivity of universities to people with HI, one needed to enter into their stream of consciousness and experience. As a result, the phenomenology design was employed. Miller and Salkind (2002) suggest that lived experiences that people with HI gave in this study should stir people's minds, heart, soul and by so doing give them new insights into themselves and those who read this study.

Four universities took part in the study. Two of these universities were purposely selected for their commitment to establishing DRCs. One was selected for being an ODL service provider and the fourth university, though newly established, was selected for its niche on disability issues. Four university lecturers (ULs), one from each university were purposively selected considering deaf education experiences or interest. Selection of people currently undergoing university education in Zimbabwe was very difficult since only three students with HI were enrolled for university education at different universities in Zimbabwe. These were automatically selected for the study. The students were from the counselling, politics and administration and business studies departments. Considering that HI was an invisible condition some with hard of hearing losses could possibly have completed their university education undetected. Six people with HI who had completed Zimbabwean University education and eight prospective university focus group (FG) students with HI were selected through snowballing. Two Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) also took part in the study to give voice to the responses of people with HI. As an ethical consideration, selected universities and participants with HI's informed consent were sought before engaging them in the study. An experienced SL interpreter was used to interpret the lived experiences of people with HI. Also the researcher had basic SL skills and that eased their acceptance by people with HI. All that added credibility, trustworthiness and validity to the study and its findings.

Findings were based on the four research questions, assumptions and issues arising from the study and related literature. Data was collected through triangulated approaches that used unstructured in-depth interview questions, focus group discussions, observations and document analysis. The questions were adjusted and improved as in-depth interview sessions took place. Data was analysed and coded into themes and patterns as in-depth interviews went on. The study finally produced a synopsis of the findings and a commentary about the trustfulness of the collected data. Despite all this, study findings had a possibility of being affected by researcher and SL interpreter bias where researcher's and the SL interpreter's presence possibly influenced participants to respond in their interests. Meeting the participants at scheduled places and times was at times overlooked by participants and I had to train myself to be patient and wait until they arrived. Besides these limitations, generalisations may not be drawn from a qualitative approach where the population sample was small and not representative enough. However, depending on use of data, generalisations may be made in this study because in-depth rich data was collected from participants in their context and it was verified through triangulation. Triangulation involved seeking accounts from three or more perspectives. It was the idea of employing multi-methods to a study. Besides that, any observed questionable body language or misunderstood responses were probed to make sure that, issues and concerns in the study were understood at the same wavelength with the participants' responses. Triangulation and data verification gave credibility to the study and it also increased the trustworthiness of the data.

The collected data was place into emerging themes as data was being collected. Thus, content analysis was used to analyse the collected data. As the obtained data was revised, it was coded into manually developed codes that assisted the researcher to put together related information. However, the emerging themes made sure that the research questions and focus of the study were addressed. Recommendations were also deduced from the collected data and related literature reviews.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section narrates the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to research questions, ubuntu philosophy and transformative theory.

4.1. Inclusive practices to people with HI

Lecturers participating in this study pointed out that universities were conscious of the need to include PWDs into their training programmes as evidenced by application forms with a section requiring one's disability status. University A's application form read, 'Disability if any specify. …' University B's application form on sub-section 4.1 asked, 'Do you have any disability? …Yes …No. If yes please indicate the nature of the disability below: blindness,…speech impairment,…cerebral palsy,…deafness, …others specify. 4.2 If your answer to 4.1 is yes what extra educational and environmental adaptations do you require?' University C's sub-section 2.18 had the following, 'Do you suffer from any physical or other disabilities for which special arrangements at university would be required? …Yes …No. If yes please give details.' University D's application form sections did not related to people with disabilities.

The status of disability section on these application forms does not reveal relevant information to university education or services for PWDs. Provision of the section was good awareness evidence to inclusive practices. It was counted a good gesture by this

study but, how the collected information was used was questioned by participants with HI as evident by narrative, 1 to 3 suggested that their registration forms did not reflect that they had some sensory impairment or hearing loss while KIs and FGDs though expressed suggested that, the space was too small for one to outline his/her disability and provisions; some universities were described as more concerned about medical conditions and their requirements rather than the status and needs created by the impairments. It only one narrator who pointed out that, the disability status section was positively used to allocate her free education but without necessary and needed provisions. This narrator described as an act as defeating the purpose of the offered free education. As suggested by the KIs, the researcher felt that, there was need to increase the disability status section to give room to participants to describe their disability and the preferred provisions. The researcher further felt that, universities needed training in deaf education so as to be to interpret the needs of learners with HI from the application forms.

4.2. Exclusionary practices
The ongoing institutional exclusion is an ethical problem as observed by the researcher. Indicators were that, though aware of inclusion, institutions tended to shift their responsibilities to others or blame the disability. This was against the principles of ubuntu. Through ubuntu philosophy, the study aimed to transform institutions into accessible centres for people with HI. Regarding that, lecturers from the ODL and the new university echoed, *"The information is put to use during exam periods where attempts are made to meet the needs of people with disabilities. It is also used to identify students with health challenges."* However, one narrator argued that, *"even during exam periods the invigilators ignored our presence when they used the PA systems and did not alert us what they were talking about unless we later on asked"*. This was subject to debate and controversy, but it showed a major problem in teaching a group with mixed disabilities yet it was considered a normal situation at universities. That is food for thought for you and me. All participants reported that, although their learning and participation in university education could have been enhanced by use of SL interpreters and note takers, all that was absent to enable them to equally participant as their hearing peers. Here, the researcher and the voice of participants with HI, which was supported by DPOs suggested that, there was need to engage SL interpreters in classes with students with HI. Thus, this study claimed that, the purpose of the disability status section was defeated when some were denied provisions or placement when they qualified. That was evident by narrator one who had more than 15 'A' Level points including first class passes in Chemistry and Biology but was denied placement in the Faculty of Medicine. As observed by the researcher, admissions officers needed to consult widely before they turned away applicants plus there was need for universities to establish more deaf-friendly courses and programmes.
On the other hand, lecturers from universities with DRC have expressed, *"The information is used as background to follow-up on students who underperform or behave strangely. We have quite adequate materials for people with VI but non for people with HI."* The study revealed that lecturers were ill-equipped to teach people with HI. Universities were biased towards people with VI but did not have provisions for people with HI. Students in training and those who had completed reported that the teaching styles were not user friendly because, *"Universities do not readily admit us. Lecturers did not recognise our existence and they told us to enrol at own risk." T*hese were more examples of exclusive practices. According to ULs who took part in this study, another commitment to inclusive practices included, *'...establishment of DRC's and student affairs departments although they lack provisions.'* The researcher acknowledged too, that, though a noble commitment, none of these centres had personnel with skills in deaf education. The ULs and DPOs further expressed that, Government was appreciated for officially recognising SL as one of the 16th languages but according to DPOs and some of the narrators that was not enough unless it was backed with implementation strategies.
The DPOs further applauded Zimbabwe for ratifying and signing the UNCRPD (2006) protocol but condemned the country's delays in domesticating both the mentioned SL issue and the convention. They pointed out that, Zimbabwe was good at drawing up excellent policies without implementation procedures. So they further pointed out that it was here where most issues of disability failed and ended up being lip-serviced. Thus the DPOs echoed, *"it is time Zimbabwe desists from non proactive actions."* The study revealed that, most universities were under-supported while the majority of front-desk personnel and lecturers were under-trained and inadequately capacitated to teach people with HI. Lacks of broad institutional frameworks on disability were possible contributors to the current university education fate of people with HI. If universities were run using ubuntu principles universities for all were likely to be developed and in turn support the goals of EFA. Thus, Riggio and McLetchie (2001) proposed that, although worldwide universities wished to provide high quality educational services for learners with HI they faced many challenges. As observed by the researcher, these challenges were due to the fact that, initially universities were established without people with HI in mind. Thus, in this study the majority of people with HI suggested that, *"we are not part of the universities' agendas and visions, thus we are unwelcome at their institutions."* It was because of some all the above highlighted exclusionary practices [though not exhaustive] that, Lorenzo, 2011; Riddell *et al.* 2005; Lang 2002 and Brelje 1999 considered people with HI as under-represented at universities. Regarding above mentioned issues, the researcher supported views of DPOs by proposing that universities needed to revisit their visions and mission statement so as to make inclusive goals.

4.3. Promotion of inclusion in Zimbabwean Universities
The document analysis of adverts showed that Zimbabwean University adverts did not extend their application invitations to PWDs. Some a minority of ULs felt that, doing so was discriminatory DPOs argued that it was proper because it made PWDs apply with an informed notion. It was also suggested that it made universities aware of the exact status of disabilities of enrolled students. To be more effective, inclusion should start with the adverts and application forms as already emphasised. This was missing in most university adverts and application forms. For example, information requested by University A only read, *'Disability if any specify ...'* while University B sought more details though still inadequate. In view of that the three learners in training reported, *'Adverts should tell more on what each university can do for people with HI to avoid blind applications.'*

However, Lecturers argued and differed on what should be put on the adverts and application forms. A few lecturers found the application forms not exclusive enough while the majority suggested that universities should indicate their capabilities towards specific disabilities. Regarding that, the researcher proposed that, adverts and application forms could include; Our classes have sign language interpreters; We cater for learning needs of people with various disabilities such as…..; All our staff members are skilled in deaf education. Or people with …disabilities are encouraged to apply if they meet our requirements.

All participants with HI found Zimbabwean University adverts and application forms too general and unfocused on disability issues. The FG participants echoed, *"Our colleges just enrol people who are deaf for the sake of it without provisions."* That was evident by the lack of clear disability policies both nationally and institutionally and lack of skilled manpower in deaf education. The FG participants further reported;

… with 6 'O's including English, Maths and Science, we would rather go for street vending rather than enrol at university. In the street we are not isolated as our friends currently studying at universities are. If the situation improves at Zimbabwean Universities we will enrol.

That showed the readiness of people with HI to learn in an inclusive environment. However, as long as standing exclusionary institutional attitudes remained, people with HI rather continued to rely on manual jobs. In-depth interviews with people in training and those who had completed revealed that, *"We were asked to enrol at own risk. Lecturers are unskilled and most teach while writing on the chalkboard or walking about and we are not benefiting. Classroom acoustics are very poor."* The study suggested that exclusionary practices were ongoing in Zimbabwean Universities as unfavourable and unfriendly teaching styles continued to be employed despite the facts that institutions had circulars and had been workshopped to shift from the traditional to the modern inclusive model.

4.4. Other Teaching Strategies
These were some of the indicators of exclusive practices. Learners with HI pointed that universities told them to enrol at their own risk. As observed by the researcher, that gave a lot of pressure to students with HI. Also institutions put little care to meet their needs as evidenced by unacousted classes and lack of forceful policies on disability issues. The same group expressed:

Universities with DRCs enrol people with visual impairment (VI) and physical impairment. They applaud self and claim to be disability inclusive at the expense of excluding people with HI. Universities are enrolling very few people with pre-lingual hearing impairments. Lack of sponsorship and high fees prevents us from enrolling at Zimbabwean Universities.'

That meant that people with HI were ready to do university training provided they got financial sponsorship and also received genuine provisions. Only one university had free education for PWDs. The findings showed that universities preferred people with very mild hearing loss. Prospective participants with HI expressed that, they were not prepared to attend free education institutions unless positive attitudes were developed.

One interviewee questioned, *"Are disability issues on the world agenda, if they are why is HI particularly under addressed in Zimbabwean Universities? For example, one university has HI specialists in the Educational Foundations but not connected to faculties or departments with students with HI."* Regarding that, the researchers proposed that the purpose of skilled manpower is defeated. Ignorance was pointed out by ULs and DPOs as the culprit to successful inclusion of people with HI in Zimbabwean Universities. Agreeably, Konza (2008, 42; Terry, Gordon and Crissie 2001) assert that, teachers did not think of themselves as discriminating against particular groups because having a student who was d/Deaf was a rare occurrence. The study findings urged Zimbabwean Universities to apply ubuntu to deaf inclusive education through availing skilled human services and relevant support services to promote equity and equality in attaining university qualifications. Sachs and Schreuer (2011) supportively assert that, inclusivity is not equated with the notion of belonging; it is rather enabling educational systems to engage hitherto marginalised and disaffected groups of students in the learning programmes. It was therefore more than just including a student.

A lecturer from the new university reported, *"We make use of equipment from our sister school for the deaf. With the assistance of the sister school, we have started SL training for all our staff members from the gate personnel to all lecturers."* As observed by the researcher, the new university was making attempts to come up with best inclusive practices. The findings so far revealed that, Zimbabwean Universities were partially inclusive to people with HI. Another sign of commitment to deaf education was the examinations draft policy. On the other hand, participants who had completed university education complained that some invigilators never observed the examination rules on disabilities. With regards to that, learners with HI who were in training and those who had completed degrees complained, *"Invigilators in most instances make announcements and adjustments to exam scripts without alerting us. Also sign language interpreters promised on university draft policies are never availed. These policies are regarded as drafts, when shall they be official policies?"*

The researcher observed that some universities did not use the information to make informed planning but others collected it for the sake of it or for shadow purposes such as, lip-services. Driven by the ubuntu philosophy, the Government needed to transform and reframe its inclusive frameworks to make Zimbabwean Universities accessible to people with HI.

4.5. Making universities inclusive to people HI
The study findings encouraged Zimbabwean Universities to identify their strengths and weaknesses in deaf education. They also emphasised the importance of consultations with the ministries, people with HI and lecturers. Both the focus group and the in-depth interview participants with HI suggested the following, *"Most of us are from very poor families where parents would pay for a Grade 1 child rather than pay for university education for a learner with HI."* Regarding that, FGDs suggested that, money used to run workshops that benefit the hearing should be used to give university education grants for people with HI. They further echoed, *"We appeal to the public to have genuine interests towards people who are deaf and not pretend at gain benefits."* The study further suggests that hearing focal persons should always share proceedings of meeting with DPOs who should further share

the obtained information with people who are deaf. To that, Study participants with HI suggested that, *"Government should give grants to prospective people with HI. Presidential Scholarships and other running scholarships should take on board people with HI."*

It implies that, disability issues should not remain closed within a student service arena but they must become part of the mainstream learning and teaching debate (Seale 2013; Adams and Brown 2006). In support Fuller *et al.* (2004, 2-3) note that, disability issues were now appearing not only in institutional teaching and learning but also more importantly in discussions at departmental and course levels. Thus, the researcher proposed that, the voices of PWDs needed to be considered in all university activities and learning. This view, together with the ubuntu philosophy were then, expected to enhance inclusive practices in university deaf education. The degree of exclusion and suffering of people with HI depended on societal acceptance of human diversity (Easterbrook 2002). In support to these views, learners in university training and those who had completed expressed the following:

We can work with minimal provisions at university level when inclusion is genuine. Firstly, institutional positive attitude change needs to be worked on. It is the lock to our inclusion. Attitude change should make Zimbabwean Universities realise that we are equal human beings but with missing hearing only.

The findings emphasise that people with HI have equal potentials to the hearing. It only needs positive attitude change to promote profitable inclusion. The FG participants reported:

We, people who are deaf are highly skilled in practical skill and we are making a living out of this. Hearing people have for long spoken about our inclusion but we have never seen the results of their ongoing meetings expect that they enjoy donor funded food at the meetings. There is need for proactive actions.

Though emotionally expressed, this was a pregnant statement. People with HI further suggested that, hearing people sort of saw them as inferior beings. Thus, one interviewee with HI commented, *'I can express myself in both sign language and written English but most hearing people cannot sign. So who is excluding who?'* That implied that, while the hearing world excluded people with HI, they in turn excluding the hearing people from the deaf world. It also implied that hearing people are not prepared to learn SL. The emphasis here was on recognising and recognising each individual's mode of communication.

However, the term inclusion has several definitions as well as political interpretations thus caution needed to be taken when applying it. Implementers were urged by this study to always make sure all members taking part in deaf education were aware of the implied inclusion. The findings in this study revealed lived revealed that, people with HI learnt under ad hoc support systems. Thus, Chataika (2010) posited that to promote inclusive practices in HE, Zimbabwe needed to enact mandatory policies. Such a move when embraced with the ubuntu philosophy was likely to enhance inclusive practices.

The first statement in this study, suggests that, people with HI were a vulnerable group due to communication limitations. People with HI argued against such views when they suggest that, it was the hearing world with communication defects because they, the HI, could communicate in SL and written English and understand English, the second language, while the hearing could not sign or interpret SL. Who then does not hear the other? Who then has excluded who? These were some of the sentiments of people with HI.

The study findings encouraged Zimbabwean Universities to go to the drawing board to discuss the utilisation of available resources. One can also deduce from the study findings that, universities or the government needed to acknowledge the efforts of people with HI who have successfully attained 'O' or 'A' levels by granting them grants to further their studies. The study also suggested that, it is time official university policies were developed rather than remain as drafts. Thus, the findings advocated for institutional and personal attitude change as the foundation to successful inclusive deaf education. The researcher observed that, while universities were autonomous, that did not make them free to limit the accessibility of people with HI in their programmes. The study emphasised that, universities inclusion practices should not be the basis of social injustice to people with HI but they minimise or put a stop to the reported multiple attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers. In support, Chataika (2010) and World Conference on Higher Education (1998) proffered that, until such a vigorous policy commitment was in place, university education was likely to continue to be inaccessible to PWDs.

Through gained education which was embraced with the ubuntu philosophy universities were expected to transform and allow deaf inclusive education to prevail in their institutions. As justified by Rukuni (2007, 26-145) universities should not re-invent a wheel but they should revisit their past, correct it and adapt it to prevailing inclusive practices to match African modernity and also go by the slogan, *"do unto others as you would like them to do unto you."* Thus, conclusively, findings revealed that, the inclusion of people with HI in Zimbabwean Universities was still offered as lip-service, that is, available in print but absent in action. Initially, the study assumed university lecturers to be skilled in teaching people with HI but the findings revealed that, most Zimbabwean University lecturers were under-skilled in deaf education. It was also indicated that, Zimbabwean Universities needed to be more serious in the way they addressed the admissions and learning of people with HI. Thus, Lorenzo (2011) and Commission for Social Development (2008) pointed out that, mainstreaming disability issues into local and national activities was not an optional strategy for the empowerment of PWDs, but it was rather a requirement. Zimbabwean authorities and universities, therefore, needed to start serious consultations on how universities could successfully include people with HI in their systems.

The study, therefore revealed that, participants with HI who had completed university education and those in training experienced exclusionary pressures during their university education. That was exemplified by turning down the applications of applicants who qualified; delayed replies and attitudes of staff members and unfriendly teaching styles. It was also noted that, unclear policies made universities get away with exclusive practices. The study, therefore, noted with concern the need for clear national policies from which institutions must be drawn. The philosophy of ubuntu encouraged universities to be open and avail selves for others. The narrated experiences and findings were hoped to give lessons to universities and transform them. Universities were therefore expected to revisit their systems with a view to implement meaningful inclusive practices and policies.

5. Conclusion

The study gave insights into how Zimbabwean Universities were managing deaf education to promote inclusion of people with HI. Each university's application form revealed variations on the disability status section. The study revealed that some university lecturers knew nothing or little about deaf education. Further, most lectures in the study could not interact with students with HI in their classes. Thus, the study concluded that lip-serviced inclusion and ad hoc support services were ongoing at Zimbabwean Universities. The study concludes that through the obtained lived experiences and education universities were expected to embed their transformation with ubuntu principles where inclusion of people with HI into universities followed the, *do unto people who are deaf as you would like them to do unto you*, policy. Exclusionary pressures, policies and practices to deaf university education were discussed with a view to create awareness and solutions to inclusion of people with HI. The study revealed that most universities exclude people with HI. However, few universities were found attempting to inclusive learners with HI. Thus, the study concluded that, Zimbabwean Universities were partially inclusive to deaf education.

6. Recommendations

The study findings; related literature review and risings recommended that:

- There is need for Zimbabwe to enact mandatory policies with clear implementation strategies and financial backing for each disability type
- Universities should draw from the national policy their official disability policies that clearly spell out provisions for each disability type
- There is need for the government to domesticate Sign Language learning policies for both people who are deaf and the hearing public for which Universities should develop their institutional Sign Language policies and implementation strategies
- It was also recommended that, the government should domesticate the principles of inclusion which were enshrined in the UNCRPD that it had recently ratified and signed its protocols
- Institutions should run short sign language courses for the public.
- Universities should equip all their staff with deaf education, culture, Sign Language and appropriate teaching styles.
- There is need for activists to advocate on institutional, environmental and personal attitudinal barriers to the inclusion of people with HI.
- Universities should stay prepared and ready to handle client diversity in their institutions.
- Universities should restructure adverts and application forms in order to be meaningful to people with HI.

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