Engagement of Assistive Principles for the Work-Ability of People Living with Impairments

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Abstract

Many people with impairments live in abject poverty because they do not work. Factors that economically disable them include the presumption that they lack the general ability to work like others. Despite the mandate to treat everyone equally, many employers still avoid the extra liabilities and costs of assistive conditions. This situation coupled with other factors present persons with impairments as lower and incapable, in the scheme of economic participation. This research is a qualitative analysis of law, which considers how persons with impairments are often disabled from economic participation, and how laws on equality address their exclusion. The study identifies the contents of laws that promote the use of assistive technology, notwithstanding the controversies on the enforceability of socio-economic rights.

Keywords: Disability, Assistive Technology, Inclusive Development, Work-ability.

1. Introduction

According to World Bank (2020), unemployment rates among persons with disabilities are almost doubled that of the general population, due to social, technological, and physical barriers among others. Invariably, the above conditions contradict various Treaties and Agreements that promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. These include laws that emphasize the social

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Martinez R.M (2020) Social inclusion of persons with disabilities in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities, www.worldbank.org

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United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Adopted by the General Assembly of the UN on December 10, 1948, International Covenant on Economic and Social Cultural Rights 1966, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015.

economic freedom of persons and the connection between their rights and sustainable employment. The relationship between sustainable employment and human wellbeing has also been represented under the ILO decent work agenda³.

According to ILO people's economic welfare is not only dependent on the fact that they work. Their work should be decent.⁴ The ILO hence identifies indicators of decent work, and how legal frameworks should achieve economic growth⁵. Furthermore, Article 6 of the International Covenant on Socio-Cultural and Economic Right provides three conditions for achieving human capital development through the 'right to work'. They are, that state parties should:

- recognize the "right to work", which includes the right of everyone to live by jobs which they freely choose or accept
- ii. enable the full realization of the "right to work" by providing programs, policies and techniques that can achieve socioeconomic development⁶
- iii. Take appropriate steps to safeguard everyone's freedom and right to work.

As regards the above conditions, the conclusion is that, all human beings, regardless of their abilities or otherwise should have the freedom to do decent jobs, and this economic liberty should be protected. Also, where citizens' rights to decent work are enabled, individual welfare of persons and eventually, the overall socioeconomic development of their countries can be guaranteed. On the other hand, when agents of exclusion are not restricted, marginalised people tend to be poor. This explains why poverty as a condition permeates countries that lack adequate structures for enforcing the socio-economic rights of vulnerable persons. For example, where persons with impairment need to earn wages, but are unable to do so because there are no special facilities to aid them, they become poor. In the bid to tackle the impact of such marginalisation, the United

Decent work indicators: guidelines for producers and users of statistical and legal framework indicators: ILO manual: second version / International Labour Office. -Geneva: ILO, 2013

ILO Manual, 2013, www.ilo.org

These indicators emphasize the promotion of family-friendly employments; job opportunities; adequate earnings; productive work; decent work time; the abolition of exploitative jobs; stability and security of work; equal opportunities and treatment at work; with social security and representation. www.ohchr.org. retrieved on 20/5/2021

Nations SDG promotes human economic development through the eradication of all factors of exclusion. The UNSDG emphasize the vulnerable status of persons with impairment, especially how they are more exposed to poverty, illiteracy and discriminations. In addition, the SDG goal 4 and 8 are consequential on people's right to access facilities that develop their human capital. The agenda is that, where development programs are "disability sensitive", they tend to promote decent "work ability" for all.

In the above regard, this paper examines concepts, institutions and laws that protect persons with impairments and the ones that disable them. There is reference to existing work-aids structures for the enhancement of individuals' work-abilities. How efficient are laws that guarantee equal economic rights for persons living with disability? This study also explains how the earlier cited Article 6 of the ICESCR (1966) input obligations on states parties to provide assistive conditions that enable the economic status of persons with impairments.

2. Concept of Disability and Dimensions of Impairments

The Social theory on Disability as proffered in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s⁸ explains disability as a created problem, caused by social and environmental barriers. These social and environmental factors are the actual conditions that exclude people with impairments from participating in their society. The impact of these barriers can therefore be entirely distinguished from the impact of individual's impairments⁹. According to Hunt and Vic Finkelstein¹⁰,

"impairment is lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body; while disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities."

Kazou K.(2017) Analysing the Definition of Disability in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: is it really based on a 'Social Model' approach?, International Journal of Mental Health and Capacity Law 28

In Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS)' Fundamental Principles of Disability'1976.

https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030-goal

World Health Organization, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), endorsed in May 2001, Res. WHA 54.21 of the 54th World Health Assembly (WHO 2001).10 CRPD, Preamble, para(e).

According to DPI, the term impairment may be distinguished from the word disability as:

Impairment is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment.

While.

Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers. 11

DPI hence established no causal link between impairments and disability. Rather the institution posited that disability does not result from impairment but is rather created by the barriers against social participation. According to Bickenbach and others, disability is actually a more general condition that may be experienced even by individuals without impairments. Accordingly, medical prognosis on impairment is different from resulting disability from social or relational relations. 12

On another note, the World Health Organization presents disability in persons in three dimensions¹³:

- **Impairment** This involves an identifiable inaccuracy or lack in the typical presentation of a person's physiology, body structure or mental functioning. Examples of impairments include loss of a limb, loss of vision or memory loss.
- b. Activity limitation This relates to restrictions in the quantity and quality of output and actions per an individual. Examples include difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving.
- c. Participation restrictions which occur in normal daily activities. It bothers on a person's capacity to consciously work or engage in basic civil, social, cultural and economic activities.

categorization is similar to WHO's the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in 2001. The ICF provides a standard language for classifying body function and structure vis a vis activity/ participation levels. This description

11 Disabled Peoples' International (DPI), Proceedings of the First World Class Congress (Disabled Peoples' International 1982).

Jerome Bickenbach and others, 'Models of Disablement, Universalism and the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps' (1999) 48 Social Science & Medicine 1173, 1176.

¹³ www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability retrieved 13 may 2021

assesses levels of functions/activities that either help or create barriers for people to fully participate in society. By the ICF classification:

- a. **Activity** is the execution of a task or action by an individual.
- b. **Participation** is a person's involvement in a life situation.

A closer observation of the above categorizations reveals that while "Participation" may require some level of consciousness in manifestation of intentions, "Activities" can exist outside the performance consciousness. Hence, "activities" take place at a personal level, while participation involves engagement in life roles, such as employment, education, or relationships.

Table 1: Classification of Activity levels from Participation levels

Activities	Participation
Mobility (moving and	Learning and applying knowledge
maintaining body	Managing tasks and demands
positions, handling and	Managing self-care tasks
moving objects,	Managing self-care tasks
moving around in the	Managing domestic life
environment, moving	Establishing and managing
around using	interpersonal relationships and
transportation)	interactions
	Establishing and managing
	interpersonal relationships and
	interactions
	Engaging in major life areas
	(education, employment, managing
	money or finances)
	Engaging in community, social, and
	civic life

The level of activities from an individual determines their impairments. However, how such a person "participate" socioeconomic or cultural roles depends on the level of acceptance and assistance offered by the society. Work-aids- designs, techniques, programs and services are hence generally consisted in applicable Assistive policies. Assistive Technologies express the plans to understand, channel and navigate every individual's differences and impairments towards a goal. These technologies include the medical, social, legal and economic structures that can equitably recreate and

promote the ingenuity of persons with impairments. To channel the human capital of persons with impairments, extent of their disabilities is qualified by their levels of activities vis a vis their levels of participation. Preferring the ICF's categorization for this economic discourse, persons with impairments can present in four different conditions. If they are:

- Vegetative: cannot perform any activity and they equally lack the capacity to participate in economic tasks
- ii. Aid-able: cannot perform activities, but there are channels to make them participate in economic events especially with the aid of artificial intelligence
- iii. Disabled: Where the person can perform activities despite their impairment but they do not have the capacity to participate in economic roles
- iv. Abled: Where the level of impairments allows activities and there is corresponding capacity to participate in economic activities

Where a person with impairment has not being subjected to professional assessments, their participation in economies can only be presumed or forced. They do not possess definite channels to measure and maximize their potentials. In this regard, their abilities have not been identified and distinguished for peculiar purposes. According to the UNSDG 2030, 10.2, people only become empowered when their economic participation is enabled. Therefore, role of state parties is to;

"empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.."

Support systems are to decrease "activity" limitations, but promote "economic participation" in people with impairments. At various categories, there are other conditions that should be taken into consideration in defining the work capacity of a person with impairment. They include; 14

Experience: The previous knowledge or skill derived from active participation in events or activities;

¹⁴ Definition of work capacity at Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary

- ii. **Individual Knowledge**: previously derived from observations, experience, or instruction. That is the sum or range of what the individual has been perceived, discovered, or learnt over time.
- iii. **Personality**: The totality of qualities or traits, as of character or behavior, that is peculiar to that individual.

Particulars of assessments and conclusions on economic capacities are themes to be certified by experts. For example, the Australian government provides for the issuance of "Work Capacity Certificate". Work Capacity Certificate defines functions, and enables the active recovery for patients with work injuries by helping them to achieve the best health outcome. The procedure for procurement entails the description a person's functional abilities, and then certifies their capacity for duties that fit their functional abilities. These medical assessments of patient's functional abilities consider extents and limitation of disabilities to suggest suitable duties that can be safely performed by persons.

3. Work-Ability of Persons with Impairments

Employment is generally defined as the agreement between two parties, where work is paid for, and one party is the employer while the other is the employee. On the other hand, Self-employment is the state of working for oneself rather than an employer. In these forms of employment, work flows from the abilities of an employee to exert skills for sufficient compensation. International and domestic employment laws have therefore regulated issues on the types of work that people do in order to earn wages. Hence, the situation is that, employment is only possible where the potential worker has the capacity to perform (work)¹⁶. The concept *work-capacity or work-ability* has therefore been used to describe employer's expectations on the employee's economic worth.

By Article 6 of the ICSCER 1966, without discrimination, it is the role of state parties to enable full realization of the human capacity to work, by providing programs, policies and techniques that can achieve socio-economic development.¹⁷ Suguna *et al*,

Dakin, Stephen; Armstrong, J. Scott (1989). "Predicting job performance: A comparison of expert opinion and research findings" (PDF). International Journal of Forecasting. 5 (2):

This position for example informs the common law rules on the duty of the employee to work

www.ohchr.org. retrieved on 20/5/2021

defines work-capacity as the ability to perform real physical work. The work-ability of a person is hence determined by the result of his or her interaction with the work he does. This determines how good a worker is at present, in near future, and how he or she is able to exercise mental and health resources with respect to work demands.

According to Averianov et al (1993)¹⁹ work-ability correlates with a person's physiology. Constituents of "work-capacity" should

- i. Maximum possibilities (extreme boundary) of "the body to perform a specific activity"
- ii. Physiological cost of work or price that the body must pay for the opportunity to fulfil a specific activity
- iii. enabled capabilities, providing the exit from state of tranquillity at a necessary level for mobilization of functions.
- iv. physiological changes of the body which determines the reduction of capacities to given work and determines the period required for work activity.

In the above regard, a person with impairment is someone with a physical or mental condition that limits their movements, senses, or activities. Also, any form of inadequacy or impairments in typical physiology, would affect the capacity to work. By the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, ²⁰ disability is any condition of the body or mind, that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions). Disability hence relates to persons incapacities through: vision, movement, memory, remembering, reasoning, learning, communicating, hearing, mental health and social relationships.

To safeguard the economic freedom of persons with impairment, state parties are obliged to provide assistance. In furtherance of Article 6 of the ICSCER 1966, aids are to be constituted by programs, policies, techniques and tangible means that enable and

Estimation of work capacity and work ability among plantation workers in South India Indian J Occup Environ Med v.20(2); May-Aug 2016

In Manolescu Aurel & ors(2012), Work Capacity and Fatigue Relation in Employee's Activity, *Management: New Coordinates and Challenges*, 19th International Economic Conference-IECS 2012, at Sibiu Romania. Vol. REVISTA ECONOMICA, Supplement No. 2/2012.p 203 @ www.researchgate.net retrieved on 12th May 2021.

²⁰ www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability

attend to peculiarities. According to the Assistive Technology Industry Association,²¹, AT include any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. Assistive technology specially aid people who have difficulty speaking, typing, writing, remembering, pointing, seeing, hearing, learning, and walking, among other forms of impairments.

For economic purposes, such enablement is in forms of technologies that make persons with impairments perform work for income. Assistive technologies that are economic focused operate beyond the day to day survival of persons with impairments. They are interventions that provide easy, practical, technical and possible means for persons with impairment to earn social; economic powers. The goal of Economic related AT is to engage, train and promote the full realization of physical, mental, and physiological capacity to work for money.22 In this instance, available programs are to influence the unique strength of each person and success is defined in ways that meaningfully affect how individuals live experience. Assistive technology promotes inclusive development. They include laws and procedures that do not only assume that persons with impairments have equal capacity to earn wages. Rather, they are a comprehensive system that consciously allows equitable access to work aids. According ATIA, AT can be accessed through the interventions of 23 :

- a. **School systems** through general special education learning materials as well as technology specified in an Individualized Education Program.
- b. **Government programs** (Social Security, veteran's benefits, or state Medicaid agencies) where a doctor prescribes it as a necessary medical device.
- c. **Private health insurance** where a doctor prescribes it as a necessary medical or rehabilitative device.
- d. **Rehabilitation and job training programs**, whether funded by government or private agencies to help people get jobs.
- e. **Employers** through reasonable programs to enable an employee perform essential job tasks.

What is Assistive Technology? Retrieved from www.atia.org on 12th May 2021

What is Assistive Technology? Retrieved from www.atia.org on 12th May 2021

www.ohchr.org. retrieved on 20/5/2021

Other sources of funds in states or communities include private foundations, charities, and civic organizations. Specific AT is designed be a team of professionals and consultants trained to match particular assistive technologies to specific needs. An AT team may include family doctors, regular and special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, rehabilitation engineers, occupational therapists, and other specialists including consulting representatives from companies that manufacture assistive technology²⁴.

4. Work-Ability of Persons with Impairments under Nigerian Law

Sections 16(4) of the 1999 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, defines economic activities" to include activities directly concerned with the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. To participate in the economy, citizens should be capable of rendering services and supplying goods. Also, the 1999 Constitution recognizes certain rights that are fundamental to the existence of all its citizens, including persons with impairments. Except in circumstances provided by the Constitution, these rights are inalienable and cannot be deprived. Those primary rights that are incidental to economic freedom include the right to dignity; ²⁵ right to personal liberty;²⁶ right to family life;²⁷ right to freedom of thought, right to freedom of expression;²⁸ right to association;²⁹ right to freedom of movement;³⁰ and the freedom from discrimination.³¹ Specifically, section 42(2) of the Constitution, prohibits all forms of discrimination based on the circumstances of a person's birth or status among other conditions.

Although as at 2018, the National Population Commission³² estimated that no fewer than 19 million Nigerians are living with disabilities. The only express Constitutional reference to persons living with impairments is under chapter 2 of the Fundamental Objectives and Directives Principles of the Government's Policy. Sections 16(2d) of the Constitution provides;

²⁴ is Assistive Technology? Retrieved from www.atia.org on 12th May 2021

Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, Section 34.

Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, Section 35.

Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, Section 37.

²⁸ Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, section 39.

²⁹ Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, section 40

Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, section 41 Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, section 42.

³² Premiums Times, October 7, 2018, 19 Million Nigerians Living With Disability -Official, www.premiumtimesng.com, retrieved on 3rd July 2021

"suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens."

This socio-economic protection under the *Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy*, underscores views that the right to "decent work" are mostly regarded as $3^{\rm rd}$ generation rights under local laws.³³ The arguments are that, the constitution cannot ensure obligations that are unquantifiable or collective. As such Section 6(6c) of the 1999 constitution restricts the courts from issues as to whether any act or omission by any authority is in conformity with the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy.

Notwithstanding, other Nigerian Laws, regard persons living with impairments are as "persons with disability" or "disabled persons"34. Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and it's Optional Protocol in 2010. The receiving law is presently the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, which describes disability as a long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder full and effective participation in society on equal basis with others. The Act seeks integration of persons living with disability by guaranteeing their equal right to social welfare and development.³⁵ For example, there are provisions regarding; their free education up to secondary school level; at least one personnel trained to cater for them in all public schools; the availability and use Braille, sign language and other skills for communicating with them in education curricula. In addition, the Act provides for accessibility aids for disabled persons in, public buildings, roads and sidewalks, and public transportation via roads, airports, seaports and railways. The law also prohibits government agencies involved in issuing building permits from approving any building plans that do not make accessibility accommodations for disabled persons.

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See Jon Elster, Clearing and Strengthening the Channels of Constitution Making in Comparative Constitutional Design 28 (Tom Ginsburg ed., Cambridge Univ. Press 2012) (noting the issue of the economic viability of these types of provisions); Venter, Global Features Of Constitutional Law 102, Op. Cit. note 14

Sections 57 of the Discrimination against persons with disability (Prohibition Act) 2018

³⁵ Section 17,18,19,20,24, 21(2) of the Act

Specifically, on the rights of persons living with disability to employment, section 29 of the Act requires all employers of labour in public organization to as much as possible have person with disabilities constituting at least 5% of their employment. Persons with disabilities are guaranteed the right to work. The rule emphasizes the basis of Article 6 of the ISCER 1966, which is the obligation to provide opportunities for persons with impairments to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open³⁶. By sections 28(1)

A person with disability has the right to work on equal basis with others and this include the right to the opportunity to make a living by work truly chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open

Generally, contravention of the provisions of the law is heavily sanctioned through payments of fines and in circumstances imprisonment. Of which the victims are entitled with locus to institute civil action against defaulters³⁷.

Other laws, institutions and policies on persons living with impairment include; National Policy on Education 2016; National Policy on Special Needs Education in Nigeria and Implementation Guidelines, 2015; National Policy on Disabilities revised in 2018; National Health Policy, 2016; National Strategic Health Development Plan, 2018-2022; National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Nigeria 2017-2021. A prominent line through all these laws is the Call to include persons with impairment through equal treatments. According to the Nigerians with Disability Decree 1993;

Disabled persons shall... be guaranteed treatment as equals to other Nigerians for all purposes in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Accordingly, it shall be the duty and responsibility of organs of government and of all authorities and persons to adopt and promote policies that will ensure full integration of the disabled into the mainstream of the society.

³⁶ Section 28 of the Act

Section 22 of the Act

Furthermore, Nigerian Laws rely on medical opinion and certification of disabilities³⁸. By Sections 22(4) the Discrimination against Persons with Disability (Prohibitions) Act 2018, a person with permanent disability certificate is entitled to the provisions of the Act. On disabilities sustained in the course of employment, whether temporary or permanent, the Employee's Compensation Act 2010, a social security/welfare scheme, provides comprehensive compensation to workers. The report of injury or death must be in the form prescribed by the Board. This should include the name and address of the employee; time and place of the disease, injury or death; nature of the injury or alleged injury; name and address of any specialist or accredited medical practitioner who attended to the employee.³⁹ Compensation for an occupational disease is provided, so far there is sufficient medical or scientific evidence to justify such payment.(S. 6(5)).

The requirement for medical certification of disability is also as expressed in the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2019, which defines a person with disability as;

A person who has received a certificate of disability to have conditions which is expected to continue permanently or for a considerable length of time which can reasonably be expected to limit the persons functional ability substantially...

5. Conclusion

This paper has identified the basis for distinguishing persons as "impaired" or "disabled". Both terms although with different in meanings, are several times alternated in legal documents. Furthermore, in line with applicable treaties, especially the ICSECR 1966 and the UNCRPD 2007, the Nigerian 1999 Constitution's guarantee the economic rights of persons living with disability. However, the contradiction is that while the Disability Act penalizes economic discrimination against persons with disability, the 1999 Constitutions prohibit courts from entertaining issues on government's socio-economic objectives. Furthermore, a perusal of laws does not reveal any "state of the earth institution" that can channel ingenuities through assistive technologies. Instead, the Nigerian legal framework on disability reveals very tangible gaps

³⁸ Section 22

Section 22
Sections 5(5(1) of the Employees Compensation Act

away from contemporary link between Inclusive development and assistive technology.

This paper presented series of declarations that equates persons with impairment with persons who do not have impairments. However, the author posits that forceful and declarative or in fact punitive approaches cannot reduce existing discriminations against persons with disability. The government should also not engage approaches that depict a competition or struggle between persons with impairment and those who do not have impairments. Rather, in order to enable their equality in deed, disabled persons should have peculiar economic and services outlets that ensure their direct impact on the labor market. Such special consideration may be for example, through the creation of special production hubs in States, cities and schools.

Assistive Technology experts should be sponsored and recruited enough to monitor "Activity" versus "Participation" levels of persons from cradle to grave. Experts should be able to pre-empt and channel the work capacity of persons with impairment, as early as at the typical school entry age. This is with the aim of providing work aids that connect results of assessments to the type of jobs that persons with impairments can do. This means that the government should aspire to create special jobs for people living with impairments and technical jobs for experts in artificial intelligence and AT. Economic welfare programs should identify and subsidize means for the production of assistive technologies. In sophisticated measures, where disability certificates are issued, they should be accompanied with accurate information on the work- ability of the person. Thus, it has been stated that:

"a consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today's globalized economy, has a leveling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of all humanity. Attempts to resolve all problems through uniform regulations or technical interventions can lead to overlooking the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community..."40

The First, Pope Francis' encyclical Laudamos Si.

John Mathiason (2015), Promoting participation as a means to build inclusive societies, www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2015/sd-agenda2030