

## Historical Perspectives of Disability and Special Education in Zambia

### ABSTRACT

Formal education for the disabled children and people particularly the blind and the deaf children and adults originated during the colonial period when experts in communication skills for this category of people arrived from Europe. Like formal education for the able bodied pupils, education for the disabled or differently abled pupils and students is associated with the early missionaries in the colonial period. The missionaries in particular brought special education for the blind and deaf pupils. In Zambia, the first school for children with special education needs was at Magwero community in 1903 in eastern province by missionaries with a very small number of three pupils (two from Malawi and one from Zambia). Parents of children with disabilities such as deafness and blindness did not see the need to educate these children who in most cases faced discrimination within their families and community at large. The advent of missionaries who came from countries where education was for all children with learning abilities was the beginning of education for children with hearing and sight disabilities. This education was not located in all provinces in the country and this meant that parents who wanted to send children to school had to send them to these few schools. Consequently, a lot of disabled children could not access education. Currently, there are so many schools for children with disabilities in different parts of the country run by government and other institutions such as the church and NGOs. With international conventions made on the rights of the child, the government has made great strides in providing education for all children regardless of any challenges they may be facing. However, accessing secondary and tertiary education remains a serious challenge for many due to the fact that the infrastructure is not sensitive to the needs of such challenged students. In other words, there are few students at tertiary level with disabilities because of issues to do with cost of education, discrimination against disabled children at family level and the nature of infrastructure where one has to be aided to classes and other facilities. A lot of policies and legislation has been done but what is still lacking is full implementation in terms of provision of facilities and services right in institutions to fully meet the needs of pupils and students with disabilities in all the different parts of the country.

**Key words:** Disability, Special Education, Zambia

### Introduction

While there is dearth of documented literature on the history of disability in Zambia, oral tradition, suggest that prior to the coming of Christianity and European colonization, the concept of disability

was often associated with negative societal perceptions. In many instances, disability was perceived as a deviation from societal expectations and was thus, associated with demons, evil spirits, witchcraft and a danger to humanity. The degree or extent of physical impairment affected the perceptions of society and the level of acceptance of the child by the community and family. Severely disabled children were treated with great negativity and negligence and at times associated with bad omen which led to isolation of such children. Children who were considered to be of normal intelligence and would grow and mingle with the rest were accepted and usually families and communities treated such with sympathy [1].

Infants born with physical and/or cognitive impairments, were not perceived as being fully human and it was believed that their presence could contaminate the social group, thus, having a disabled child brought shame on the family. Communal beliefs such as these justified the practice of infanticide in some cases where there was perceived severe disability or impairment through the abandonment of disabled children in the wilderness. This harsh treatment was not only restricted to children born with severe disabilities but it was extended to children who merely deviated from what society regarded as normal development. For example, in certain ethnic groupings such as the Bemba of Northern Zambia and the Ngoni of Eastern Zambia, a child whose first teeth cut on the upper jaw as opposed to the lower jaw (commonly referred to as bamachechetu or ifinkula in the Eastern and Northern part of Zambia respectively) was treated as an outcast as the child was believed to bring bad omen to the family and society in general. Such children were drowned or left in the bush to die. In Southern Province among the Gwembe Valley Tonga, Colson reported that *if a child cut an upper tooth first, it was destroyed as a bush creature and its body went back to the bush, even though by then it had become an individual to its mother and others around it* [2]. In some rural areas, anomalous births, other than twins were treated as belonging to the bush and were immediately disposed of in the bush [2].

However, the onset of European colonization and the introduction of Christianity changed society perceptions and attitudes towards the marginalized people in society such as persons with disabilities as they taught love and respect for humanity. And the spread of health centres with supporting services including weaning foods, as well as the Christian value placed on life as an end in itself, have led many to think that disabled infants are human from the moment of birth even though membership within the Christian community is officially conferred only by baptism. A Siameja elder talking of their former practice of disposing of unrecognised children said, “ *we would never do this now to anyone who had life(buumi)*’ [2]. This brought about humane treatment towards the disabled as the church emphasized on love and passion for one another. Although

Christianity may have led to greater compassion toward disabled Zambians the most significant changes came in the post World War 2 with the enactment of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR) in 1948 to which Zambia is a states party [1,2].

This human rights perspective emphasized equality and respect for human dignity and as such, disabled citizens of Zambia were afforded the same rights as other people of Zambia. Of particular relevance in the context of disability was the right to life and the non-discrimination clause. In 2015, the Zambian Parliament passed the Gender Equity and Equality Act no.22 which regards all citizens as equal human beings and prohibits all forms of discrimination against people. Zambia translated these provisions into constitutional guarantees such that any violation of these rights would lead to punitive measures. For instance, infanticide was criminalized and treated as murder and this attracted either a long jail sentence or death penalty. Human rights teachings also placed an obligation on states parties to develop and provide education, health and social services to all citizens of Zambia regardless of their abilities. Zambia has made strides in providing services to persons with disabilities and old practices of infanticide, banishment and isolating persons with disabilities which used to happen way before the coming of missionaries and introduction of formal education have been replaced by programs aimed at greater inclusion, mainstreaming and support through various legislative, public policy and institutional changes [1].

### 2.2.1. Classification of Disabilities in Zambia

Data on disabilities in Zambia is contained in the census reports of 1969, 1980, 1990 and 2000. CSO (Central Statistical Office) [3] suggests that statistics on disabilities are important for research, planning and policy implementation. Thus, when countries such as Zambia have data on disabilities, it can be used in addressing various barriers that people with disabilities face. Zambia has codified different categories of disabilities and has collected data pertaining to people with disabilities as part of the national census from as far back as 1969. Below is the table 1 showing the categories of disabilities overtime up to 2010 census.

Table 1 : categories of disabilities overtime up to 2010 census

1969	1980	1990	2000	2010
Visual disability	Visual disability	Visual impairment	Visual impairment/ Partially sighted	Visual impairment/ Partially sighted

Hearing disabilities	Hearing impairment	Hearing impairment	Hearing impairment/ Severe Hearing impairment	Hearing impairment/ Severe Hearing impairment
Physical disabilities	Physical disabilities	Physical disabilities	Physical disabilities	Physical disabilities
	Intellectual disabilities	Intellectual disabilities	Intellectual disabilities	Intellectual disabilities
Sick	Sick	Multiple disabilities	Mental illness	Mental illness
	Combination of two or more categories			Specific learning disability

Source: CSO [3]

The classification of disabilities in Zambia has evolved over the years. The categories are broadening to incorporate various disability groupings. This is an indication of the country's commitment to providing the needs of persons with disabilities.

### ***2.2.2. Proportion of People with Disabilities***

The census of 2010 revealed that in Zambia, about three percent of the total population of 13.4 million people were reported to have disabilities. 3% appears to be much lower than international standards of disability, for example in Canada data suggests that almost 16% of the population reports disability and the UN suggests **approximately 15% of the world's population is disabled.** **Zambia might have recorded a lower percentage** due to the lack of knowledge of disabilities, hence having difficult to profile who has disability. The census report indicates that there was a minimal increase of one percent from the previous census figures of 2000 [3].

Mubita [4] makes reference to a study done by the International Labour Organization [5] that projected the population of people with **disabilities in Zambia to be around 690,000 to one million or seven (7) to ten (10) percent of the total population.** And a report by CSO for 2014 shows that **there are more disabled people in rural (2.5 %) than urban areas (1.4%) in 2010 in Zambia.** At national level, there was a higher proportion of female household heads at 3.5% than male household heads at 3.3 % living with disabilities in Zambia in 2010 [5]. The difference in figures between ILO data and CSO is attributed to language and data collection methodology may have resulted in under reporting [6]. The population of people with disabilities is more concentrated in

rural areas than in urban areas, 81% of the adults with disabilities are involved in agriculture activities while 33.7% are students [7]. The disabled include pupils, students and those who are neither pupils nor students within urban or rural areas.

In terms of age structure, the population of persons with disabilities increases with age, while there is a significant reported number between the ages of 10-14 years (this is the school going age group) and then it begins to decline up to the age of 55-59 years. It is very likely that there are many children with disabilities below the age of 10 years as many of these young ones are not in school and many disabled children go unreported. The 2010 census attributed disabilities to a myriad of factors, which include: pre-natal factors, disease, injury, others and unknown causes. Disease accounts for 38.9 percent of disabling conditions, lack of quality pre-natal care 13.7 percent, injury 17.2 percent. Other causes such as stress, diabetes, substance abuse, lack of skilled birth attendants, poverty account for 9 percent while unknown causes stand at 20 percent [3].

### ***2.2.3. Special/Inclusive Education***

SEN (Special Education Needs) schools have been in existence for over 100 years in Zambia. Missionaries from Europe started the first school for children with SEN in 1903. The first School was in Eastern province at Magwero with five pupils (three Zambians and two Malawians with emphasis on reading and writing and religious education [8]. In 1969, the Zambian government, through its Ministry of Education, took over the responsibility of providing funding for the education of children with disabilities, and the system of education that was introduced was based on a segregated educational model wherein children with disabilities were taught in schools which were separate from the regular mainstream school system.

Most of the segregated schools were developed and operated by various missionaries, NGOs or they were privately funded with financial support from the government wherein the Ministry provided funding, grants and teachers to these schools. These special schools existed at Magwero in Eastern province and St. Mulumba in Southern province. In Lusaka province, there was no specific special education school except for Kabulonga, which was a boarding school. In Lusaka, Munali School of the deaf and blind was a boarding facilities for the blind. Other schools throughout Zambia included Ibenga secondary school operated by the Catholic Church, in Luanshya; in Luapula province, there was the Mambilima school for people with physical disabilities. In Northern Province, schools of the blind included: Mporokoso School founded in 1961 which is 185 kms from Kasama. In Western Province, Sefula Secondary School catered for the blind pupils too [8].

It must be noted however that greatest advancements in the provision of education for Zambian children with disabilities” were made in the early 1990s following the international thrust toward enhancing access to education for all, particularly disadvantaged groups, such as children with disabilities. The international commitment was renewed following the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child which Zambia ratified in 1991, and this was followed by the Jomtien World Summit on the declaration of Education For All in 1990 and later by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which gave impetus for the inclusion of learners with disabilities within mainstream education systems. At the Jomtien World summit for instance, countries were urged to have an expanded vision for meeting the basic learning needs of all especially the economically disadvantaged and disabled children through formal and community interventions [9].

However, due to lack of systematic assessment services across the country most SEN schools in Zambia rarely address the educational needs of children with intellectual impairments. The ultimate goal of the government is to ensure that children with special education needs are included in mainstream classrooms so that social inclusion can be fostered. Thus, in Zambia, inclusive education is perceived as an extension of special education programs, administered alongside the regular school system. Within the Zambian context, inclusive education is a broad concept and historically students with disabilities used to be segregated from the mainstream but in contrast, inclusive education now entails putting SEN students in regular schools and classes. Thus, inclusive education with its focus on mainstreaming children and youth with disabilities is considered a progressive change in Zambia and it is viewed as one of the ways for increasing participation and greater inclusion of children and youth with disabilities [10].

Table 2. *Percent Distribution of People with Disabilities, 5 years and Older by Type of Disability and Level of Education.*

Type of Disability	Total No.	Percentage				
		No Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Advanced Level	Higher Education
Visual	12,754	57	29.8	11	0.8	1.3
Partially sighted	74,882	39.6	40.7	15.6	2.2	1.8
Hearing	14,233	62.3	28.1	8.2	0.4	1.0

Severe Hearing	29,886	48.9	40.1	9.4	0.6	1.0
General mental illness	19,345	51	33	13.9	0.5	1.1
Mild Intellectual Disabilities.	8,341	40.2	41.7	16.0	0.6	1.5
Moderate Intellectual	12,810	53.6	34.9	10.1	0.4	1.1
Physical disabilities	94,085	39.4	42.8	15.5	1.1	1.2
Total	243,347	43.2	39.7	4.5	1.3	1.3

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The above table 2 shows that people with disabilities are represented at all levels of education in varying degrees. With primary education having the highest representation at 39.7% followed by secondary education with 4.5% while Advanced and Higher Education representation decline further to 1.3%. Further, the table shows that the majority of disabled people are in school. Those with physical disabilities are the majority in school at primary education level (42.8%) while the ones with mild intellectual disabilities and partially sighted are the majority (16%) at secondary education level. The partially sighted are the majority at Advanced Education level (2.2%) as well as at Higher Education level (1.8%). People with hearing disability are the majority among those with no education at 62.3%. The above data is old information but shows that at the time of data collection, there were a number of people with disability who were receiving education in different institutions in the country and the situation today could either be bad or better. However, it suffices to state that education is available to the disabled people too though progression to higher level was very insignificant as figures dropped the higher one went up on the academic ladder for different reasons such as financial difficulties, distance to institutions of learning, dropping out of school, discrimination against disabled children in homes or reluctance by some parents to educate disabled children and etc.

### **2.3. Legislation and Social Policies on Education and Disability in Zambia**

#### **2.3.1. Education Act- 2011**

The Education Act guides the development and operation of education in Zambia, it was enacted by the Parliament of Zambia in 1966. Over the years the Act has had major amendments since the time it was enacted. One of these amendments was School Regulation No. 118 of 1970 which states that every parent has a duty to ensure that a child is not only enrolled but attends school regularly. The Act of Parliament included all children, whether disabled or not disabled had to attend school. The lack of disability responsive school infrastructure and lack of disability responsive teachers in schools were major challenges despite the enactment of the law and these accounted for the low numbers of disabled children in schools. Further, the population of the disabled people at national level is small and this is reason for the small number of disabled children in schools [11].

Furthermore, the Education Act [11] was amended in 2011 and broadened the scope on special education provision. For instance, section 23 of the Act provides *inter alia*;

(1). The Minister shall, for purposes of ensuring equality of access to, participation and the benefit of educational institutions for learners with special education needs, promote interventions at all

levels of the educational institutions.

(2). Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the Minister shall, in collaboration with the Minister responsible for health, establish a decentralised system for the identification, diagnosis and assessment for the placement, of learners with special education needs in educational institutions.

(3). An educational institution shall, in determining the placement of learners with special education needs, take into account the rights and wishes of the learner or the parent.

(4). An educational institution shall adopt a policy of positive and affirmative action in relation to learners with special education needs.

(5). A learner with special education needs shall, to the greatest extent possible, be integrated into mainstream educational institutions.

(6). A learner with an exceptional degree of special education needs may, where need is established, be transferred from an inclusive education institution to a special education institution or from a special education institution to an inclusive education institution.

### **2.3.3. *The Persons with Disabilities Act- 1996***

The Persons with Disabilities Act [12] is an enabling Act of Parliament which provided for the establishment and functioning of the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD). The Disability Act empowers ZAPD to plan activities, develop programs and provide services. Secondly, it connects all institutions that are dealing with issues of disabilities. This has to do with common curricular and teaching methodology for pupils with common disabilities. It also entails having some common extra curricula activities such as sports. One of the objectives of ZAPD is to provide supplementary support to eligible persons with disabilities from primary to tertiary level to help them meet educational requirements through provision of learning materials, uniforms (for those at primary and secondary schools) and financial assistance.

Thirdly, ZAPD provides policy direction and advises government, in addition to registering and monitoring organizations and civil society in terms of disabilities. ZAPD is an umbrella Agency where all organizations for persons with disabilities are registered and their activities monitored to ensure that the intended objectives have been achieved. This includes the objective of providing equal access to education for disabled children. Disability has been mainstreamed in government ministries and the Agency ensures that Public and Private sectors including NGOs include disability issues in their programming. The government has appointed Disability Focal Point

Persons in all government line ministries and Government spending Agencies who coordinate disability issues. The Agency (ZAPD) monitors the mainstreaming of disability through the Disability Focal Point Persons. Mainstreaming of disability in line Ministries entails that disability has also been mainstreamed in the Ministry of General Education and Higher Education programmes and policies at all levels [13].

Fourthly, ZAPD is involved in economic empowerment and it also provides capacity building in terms of governance and human rights issues to persons with disabilities [4]. This is done through training on human rights and good governance for Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) and to build advocacy and resource mobilization skills within these organizations at national, provincial, district and community levels. The trainings in good governance and human rights are conducted at all levels by qualified staff of ZAPD. In the context of education, the human rights trainings cover the rights of the disabled children to education as human beings. Economic empowerment is intended to not only help the disabled find a livelihood but to also make it easy for them to send their children to school [13]. The ultimate goal of ZAPD is to ensure that there are remedial, preventive, supportive, and developmental services for persons with disabilities with a view of improving their quality of life. ZAPD is a quasi-independent institution and falls under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) for monitoring. The Disability Act advocates for the equality and effective participation of people with disabilities in all social activities and at all levels of society. This Act is in line with international instruments such as the UNCRC and CRPD [14].

#### **2.3.4. *Zambian Constitution -1996***

The constitution is the supreme law of Zambia and all other laws draw their validity from the constitution. The constitution of Zambia Article 23 (3) prohibits discrimination on the following grounds: gender, race, colour, ethnicity and disability. This provision carries a legal force, that promotes equality of persons with disabilities in relation to the general population and forms part of the Bill of Rights which is enforceable in the courts. Article 112 and 113 provides for just and fair distribution of social benefits such as education and health to meet the needs of people with disabilities. On the other hand, in principle these provisions are not enforceable in the courts of law as they are only listed as policy principles listed in Part IX of the Constitution, Directive Policy Principles. Notwithstanding this limitation the current draft Constitution offers a glimmer of hope as the rights of persons with disabilities have been incorporated into the Bill of Rights. There is also an attempt to include the Second Generation Rights (Social, Economic and Cultural Rights)

into the Bill of Rights and these rights will in all likelihood have significant benefits for people with disabilities as well [4].

### **2.3.2. The Education Policy- 1996**

Zambia has had three major educational developments since its independence. The first included the Educational Reforms of 1977, the second was Focus on Learning in 1992 and the third major education policy developed in recent decades is the Educating our Future of 1996. The Educational Reform (1977) emphasised education as an instrument for personal and national development while Focus on Learning stressed the mobilisation of resources for the development of Zambia's education system during the early years of independence [15]. Educating our Future on the other hand addresses the entire field of formal institutional education paying particular attention to democratisation, decentralisation and productivity, curriculum relevance and diversification, efficient and cost effective management, capacity building and revitalised partnerships [16].

The rights of children with disabilities have been given prominence in all the three policy documents. Following the international thrust towards inclusive education, the Zambian Education Policy of 1996 aims at providing equitable access to education for children with disabilities. According to the MoE [16] : "*the guiding principle for the education of exceptional children is that they should be integrated entirely//to the regular education programme.*" In striving for the realisation of this policy aspiration, supportive environments have been created such as curriculum adaptation and modification responsive to the needs of learners with disabilities have been given primacy. These efforts have enhanced access to education for children with disabilities at all levels of education. At the basic school level, enrolments levels for children with disabilities have increased from 23,209 (10,116 females and 13,093 males) in 2002 to 202,115 (91,842 females and 110,273 males) in 2009 [17].

### **2.3.5. National Policy on Disability**

The National Policy on Disability enacted in 2002 is based on principles of greater inclusion of people with disabilities within Zambian society. And to that end the legislation is aimed at bringing about greater change in areas of employment and educational opportunities. Within the same policy emphasis is also placed on mainstreaming gender and HIV/AIDS within the services provided to persons with disabilities. And for disability related policies to be effective grass roots organizations need to be involved in the implementation of policy and in the case of Zambia, it is the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities that is charged with the responsibility of coordinating service provision to persons with disability [18].

## 2.4. Institutional Frameworks

In terms of institutional frameworks, there are many organizations and Ministries dealing with the issues of people with disabilities in Zambia. These include; Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child (MCDMC) which is responsible for policy formulation and implementation of policy and programmes dealing with people with disabilities. The Ministry also runs the National Trust for the Disabled and the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the persons with disabilities. Social workers and social welfare officers under the ministry are responsible for educating people with disabilities about programs and services aimed at sensitizing the disabled so that they can come to terms with the realities of their living conditions. Suffice to mention that the social protection programmes in Zambia are generally weak due to inadequate resources. Similar to most independent post colonial countries throughout Africa, Zambia has developed many good policies for citizens such as people with disabilities who are unable to provide for themselves but the actual implementation of policies is very weak. Thus, although there are sound programmes on paper regarding social protection of persons with disabilities program delivery is hampered by limited funding. As a result, a significant number of persons with disabilities live in poverty, many live on the streets and they end up begging for money and food to make ends meet [14].

While the day to day lives of Zambian adults and children with disabilities is very harsh there are organizations interested in the welfare of these populations. One such organization is the Zambia Federation of the Disabled (ZAFOD) which is the main national agency attempting to address the needs of people with disabilities. It provides among other things small loans and training in business management, and advocates for the rights of people with disabilities. Under ZAFOD's auspices, there are many impairment specific organizations representing the interests of people with disabilities and these include;

*“National Association of Disabled Women; National Association of the Deaf; National Association of the Hearing Impaired; National Association of the Partially Sighted; National Association of Children with Learning Disabilities; Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities; Disability Initiatives Foundation; Disacare Wheelchair Centre; National Library and Cultural for the Blind; and Zambia Association on Employment for Persons with Disabilities”* [14].

All these organizations are dealing with the different needs of the disabled people in communities in the country. For instance, the national association of the hearing impaired focuses on the needs of the people with challenges in hearing; Association of parents of Children with Disabilities deals

with issues to do with disabled children or provides the needs for disabled children; National Library and Cultural for the Blind provides reading materials for the blind people through their library facilities, and etc. So each category of the disabled people is represented by an association to meet their needs in society [14, 19].

### **Society Attitudes**

Chilufya [20] stipulates that over the years there have been positive strides in changing societal perceptions towards persons with disabilities but negative attitudes continue to permeate Zambian society. For instance, some parents are hesitant to take their children to school. There are many reasons for this, among them include;

- Parents and the community think these children cannot learn, hence they do not take their children to school.
- Fear of victimization especially being ridiculed by school mates.
- Most parents struggle financially.
- Many parents have a negative attitude about the education of the children with disabilities and they do not encourage their children to go to school.
- Education of children with disabilities is considered a waste of time and money. Low participation in the labour market by persons with disabilities make communities believe that disabled individuals cannot contribute economically and they are viewed as not being able to contribute to the development of the country. According to the 2010 census only about 3 percent of persons with disabilities were in gainful employment. The lack of education and training contributes to higher levels of unemployment and as noted above and this leads to the development of an underclass of homeless beggars throughout Zambia in cities such as Lusaka, Kitwe and Ndola.
- Belief that children with disabilities cannot participate in extra curricula activities, hence, parents feel that their children cannot compete favourably with their peers so they (parents) would rather be with their children at home.

### **Challenges**

According to Chitiyo and Muwana [21] it is evident that despite the progressive educational legislation, government programs, government policies changes such as INSPRO (Inclusive

Schooling Programme) aimed to address issues of disability and provide training to pupils with disabilities; despite the efforts of nongovernment agencies, Zambia is not yet capable for all inclusive implementation of inclusive schooling on a comprehensive local scale let alone a national scale. When it really comes down to it, Zambia does not seem to have the structural framework at the local school level to make the necessary changes that are required. Problem areas include:

- Inadequate equipment for the assessment of students with disabilities especially those with intellectual disabilities.
- Quality of teachers, as much as teachers have been trained in special education, there has not been a programme to train teachers about specific disabilities.
- Classroom factors such as teacher-student ratio which remains high and large classroom size compromises the quality of education.

Further, although the education policy advocates for inclusive education, Zambia still operates on a parallel system wherein the need for inclusion is addressed on one hand and the promotion of segregated special education is advocated on the other. For specific populations of people with disabilities such as those with visual and hearing loss, there was an attempt to include these individuals in the regular school system but this program did not succeed as the educational support needs for these students were not adequately addressed. Also, while the country has continued to expand the categories of children with disabilities over the years, some groups such as children with autism are often misdiagnosed and they are not considered in the planning for new educational programs. Another challenge is that many children with specific learning disabilities go undetected because of the lack of adequate assessment and testing procedures for these children within the mainstream school system [20].

While inclusive education in Zambia was propagated on human rights principle of equity in the education system, one is inclined to think that the economic argument was the main springboard for the implementation. The argument here is that if it was on human rights perspective, the government would have provided all necessities for the successful inclusion but it was on economic perspective because it is cheaper to educate children regardless of their abilities at the same school [10].

## **Conclusion**

This paper has provided an overview on the historical and present state of salient knowledge in the field of disability and special education in Zambia. It must be stated that undertaking a

comprehensive evaluation of disability and special education in Zambia would be a colossal, but nonetheless, desirable task considering the plethora of oral information on the subject matter. The paper has demonstrated that perceptions change from one era to the next. Traditions and customs considered common, desirable or, at the very least, acceptable in one epoch may be deemed totally unacceptable in another because of new knowledge. Thus, Zambia, at least in terms of public policy, education policy and human rights legislation has moved from an era of rejection and segregation to principles of an inclusive society for people with disabilities; much more still needs to be done especially when it comes to changing perceptions towards persons with disabilities. It is the responsibility of all Zambians to build a society where children and youth with disabilities have greater access to public education, health care and social services. And it is hoped that the development and implementation of programs can contribute to greater social participation, a better quality of life, more opportunities for self determination. Simply put, actions need to replace words and ideologies; theoretical models need to be put into practice for greater implementation as it will contribute to greater social inclusion of people with disabilities.

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