A Critical Examination Of The Governance Of Open And Distance Learning (Odl) In Zimbabwean Universities In Preparing People Who Are D/Deaf For Sustainable Livelihoods.

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Abstract:

The expansion of interest in higher learning increased the number of learners and that equally resulted in an increased in the number of institutions but still high numbers of learners could not secure places especially those who were d/Deaf. That gave way to the development of various forms of Open and Distance learning (ODL) in Zimbabwe, such as, ODL institutions, block release and the opening of shadow centres in different cities and district centres. The essence of ODL was inclusive education. Approaches to the inclusive education were further influenced by many international, national and local legal frameworks. Inclusive education constituted a diversity of learners and the researcher questioned how well the system governed this diversity. Thus, using the qualitative approach the study examined the governance of ODL in Zimbabwean Universities in preparing people who are d/Deaf for sustainable livelihoods. The study participants included learners who were d/Deaf with ODL higher education learning experiences; Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) and personnel from universities that were practicing ODL. Point of saturation determined the sample size. The study findings revealed that, there were gaps in knowledge about the purpose of ODL institutions and there access by learners with hearing impairment [d/Deaf]. The study findings revealed that, universities' human services were under skilled in deaf education, thus the study recommended a teamwork approach in marketing and a change in practiced governance to one that catered for needs of learners who were d/Deaf and gave them opportunities and quality education which promoted their sustainable livelihoods.

1.0 Background of the Study and Related Literature Reviews

Universities are the moral fibre for sustainable development in a country because they are the hub of the educational systems. Through informed researches universities are generally known to

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give guidance to various sectors in a country. In this study the term higher education (HE) represents universities. Also the term deaf means the condition of varied hearing losses while the capitalised 'Deaf' means people with a similar condition but belonging to the Deaf Culture where Sign Language (SL) is mainly recognised as the means of communication. However, recently university education became and is still today a prerequisite to professional employment and a better life. That increased the scramble for HE by many people, which Kariwo (2007) equally acknowledged as rapid expansion in HE since 1995 as a response to the huge demand which increased since Zimbabwe got its independence in 1980. With regards to that, Kariwo (2007)'s study revealed that, despite the increase in university numbers, it estimated that, every year, Zimbabwe has an excess of 8, 000 prospective students who fail to secure a university place.

As observed by the researcher that further worsened the access status for people with disabilities (PWDs), who according to Borland and James (1999) HE was hardly committed to. All that, plus globalisation and out-stretched networks led to the expansion of education worldwide leading to the development of open and distance learning (ODL) institutions, such as Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) in Zimbabwe. This act was in anticipation to meet sustainable development in Zimbabwe and other SADC countries. ODL seemed the only way of meeting this growth and diversified participation of all people including PWDs, especially people who are d/Deaf who are the focus of this study. In principle educational governance is based on universal participation. However, authors, such as, Chataika (2010) and Riddell Tinklin and Wilson (2005) observed that, despite the international growth of knowledge on Education for All (EFA) and Human Rights calls, the education of people who are deaf remains under-represented in HE. Despite the fact that the concept of governance is to overcome educational inequalities, even today,

people who are d/Deaf are insignificantly represented in university education.

This study considers ODL to be a catalyst that could help extend the market of education to clientele, such as, people who are d/Deaf who have been not been previously served well by the conventional systems. Although ODL may be described as the bridge between the demand gaps and supply, the issue of poor university access for people who are d/Deaf still reigns today. All this, puts under question the governance of ODL for people who are d/Deaf in Zimbabwean Universities and/or elsewhere in SADC countries. A report study by Haudand and Allen (2009) on *Deaf People and Human Rights in Finland,* where out of 123 countries only 93 responded to a questionnaire, revealed that, in most countries, people who are d/Deaf's access to HE was very limited. The study further related that, some countries deny education access to people who are d/Deaf or equal citizenship on basis of d/Deafness alone. This is likely not to make them truly enjoy their basic Human Rights. Yet, The United Nations Convention Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006), which is the first legal global instrument exclusively underlines that, people who are d/Deaf are entitled on equal basis to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic needs, such as SL and Deaf Culture. Agreeably, in Zimbabwe everyone is entitled to educational rights and freedom as pronounced in the 1992 Persons with Disability Act (PDA) amended in 1996, which conforms that, nobody should be discriminated on bases of race, colour, sex, language, religion, disability or other status. This clearly spells out that everyone has a right to recognition as a person first despite his or her disability/condition. Is ODL education going by this bible or revelation in relation to access to university education for people who are d/Deaf?

In Zimbabwe, ZOU was mandated to offer ODL education; it is the major frame of reference in this study because of its visionary structures, even

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though other universities shall be mentioned here and there for their block release practices, which is another model of ODL. Thus, the population sample engaged more than one university. However, this study is developed from a number of preliminary studies related to my Doctor of Philosophy study entitled, *An Exploration of personal experiences of people with hearing impairment in accessing higher education in Zimbabwe*. According to the researcher, one factor which triggered this study was that, some prospective university learners who are d/Deaf preferred to be juice cards street vendors rather than advance in training or education. The study wonders the legacy such people shall leave for their children. Street conversations with them revealed that, it is a way of avoiding institutional and societal injustice and discrimination. Thus, the study investigated the governance of ODL universities with a view to come up with best practices in preparing people who are d/Deaf for sustainable livelihoods. The study sought information on whom and what was accountable for the insignificant participation of people who are deaf in HE with a view to improve their livelihoods.

Riddell *et al* (2005) posit that universities are designed to equip students with knowledge and skills needed for their future working lives. This does not exclude people with disabilities and even people who are d/Deaf who are the focus of this study. However, their recognition was influenced by various international, national and local policies. Education was a fundamental right for all as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to Peters (2004) The 1994 Salamanca Statement proclaimed that, every child had unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. It further asserts that, educational systems that took diversity into account were most effective means of creating communities that combated discriminatory attitudes. ODL came on board with the essence to include the excluded and the disadvantaged. Thus,

the Dakar Framework for Action adopted a World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 2000 which claimed basic education to every child by 2015. There were many other conventions but the currently most influential is the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which helps to increase public awareness on barriers faced by PWDs and aims to promote law and policy changes at various levels.

Influenced by the various conventions, Zimbabwe equally developed the 1987 Education Act and 1992 Disabled Persons Act (DPA) which was amended in 1996. It was this act which gave Zimbabwe popularity where it was recognised as one of the first few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with legislation on disability (Chataika, 2010). Although Mpofu (2000) criticised this Act by suggesting that it was enacted with disabled war veterans in mind, it marks the beginning of awareness rights of PWDs. The focus of all the highlighted conventions and many unmentioned others and even the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was on EFA although its implementation remained unclear. National policies on ODL were equally unclear and could be the possible reason for the unclear development of ODL versions that followed.

Knowledge is a chief currency for all people despite their outlook or conditions. At the same time, universities operate as sites for accumulation and distribution of social capital thus, access amplification of HE has become a top priority around the world. Chataika (2010) and Riddell *et al* (2005) assert that, the under-representation of students who are d/Deaf studying at this level underlines a massive social injustice that still exists in today's education system as already expressed in preceding paragraphs. Haudand and Allen (2009) suggest that, lack of recognition of SL, limited availability of interpreting services, lack of awareness and knowledge deprived the educational access of most people who are d/Deaf.

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According to Chataika (2010)'s study, the few PWDs who accessed HE were given ad hoc delivery services which were likely not to fully promote their sustainable livelihoods. Furthermore, Brett (2010); Haudand and Allen (2009); Borland and James (1999) explain the need for ODL university institutions to provide most needed provisions for successful learning of people who are d/Deaf.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Limited access to conventional universities to people who are d/Deaf is highly documented and literature supported (Lorenzo, 2011; Riddell *et al* (2005); Brelje (1999). ODL was then observed as the only open door to their access but the dearth of researches in the area triggered the development of this study. Universities are considered to be arbiters of social justice by Riddell et al (2005) but social injustice still reigns for most PWDs, specifically people who are d/Deaf. All these facts made the study question, *How sustainable is the governance of ODL in Zimbabwean Universities in preparing people who are d/Deaf for decent livelihoods?*

1.2 Aims and objectives

This study, though Zimbabwe based is expected to make all its readers, especially SADC, ODL institutions re-think and re-interpret their governance frameworks of ODL with people who are d/Deaf in mind. At the same time it intends to generate debates on how the governance of ODL could sustain the livelihoods of people who are d/Deaf for appreciable life-long developments in the SADC region and Zimbabwe in particular. The study, therefore, aims to apply the findings to SADC with a view to enhance ODL governance frameworks in managing the livelihood of people who are d/Deaf and to identify gaps in policies and implementation with a view to improve the accountability of universities in the education of people who are d/Deaf in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, guided by the human Right theory,

the study aims to conscientise people who are d/Deaf to realise their fundamental rights in university education. In addition, the study, lobbies for a change of mindsets to govern ODL frameworks of universities on deaf education. The study answers the following research questions: (1) What are the concepts and ideologies of ODL? (2) How are educational policies and practices promoting the sustainable governance of ODL in universities? (3) How can university ODL principles sustain the livelihoods of people who are d/Deaf? (4) What ODL governance systems can be put in place by Universities to sustain the livelihoods of people who are d/Deaf? (5) What can be done to enhance sustainable livelihoods of people with HI in Zimbabwe through the governance of open and distance university education?

2.0 Research design and methodology

The qualitative approach and the phenomenology design were used to collect data for the study. Phenomenology refers to the study of the appearance of things in experience (Hammersley, 2012). In other words, it is a detailed investigation of how people see or experience themselves and their world. The qualitative approach was used to collect data for the study to obtain data within the contexts of both participants who are deaf and institutions practicing ODL and/or block release. The institution's interest in disability studies and its mode of delivery were used as selection criteria. It was imperative to employ the qualitative approach based on the philosophical foundation of phenomenology to elicit rich and detailed data on how Zimbabwe's governance of ODL institutions could enable quality education to people who are d/Deaf to enable them to have sustainable livelihoods. The elicited data is expected where possible to be applicable to HE institutions in the SADC region too.

Purposive sampling was employed to select four participants who were deaf, one had completed a Masters programme through block release, two

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who were on their Graduate Diploma in Education block release after completing the Bachelor of Arts Degree and the fourth one was in ODL university training. Two of them expressed their experiences through narratives. To add to this, four representatives, one from each of the four universities automatically participated in the study as interviewees to argument responses from the participants who are d/Deaf. These four are presented in this study as lecturers. The four universities were selected because of their use of ODL as a delivery mode and disability interest. Participants who are deaf were included in the study to give their voice while lecturers were involved as key institutional authorities. Two directors, one from the umbrella board of people with disabilities, the National Association for Societies and Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) and the other from, Zimbabwe National Association of the deaf (ZIMNAD), described as Disabled People Organisations (DPOs) in this study, were automatically selected to participate in the study to give more voice to disability issues.

Permission to carry out the study was sought from the Ministry of HE. This permission was further used as a passport to seek the permission and consent of selected universities. The consent of all participants was sought through signing written documents that explained the objectives of the study. Plans of data collection were put in place, such as, semi-structured interview questions, interview venues and times. In-depth interviews, narratives, observations and document analysis were employed to collect data. The researcher studied the narratives, the interview responses, document and observations and drew emerging patterns and themes. Findings were discussed under these patterns and themes; institutional willingness; policy gaps and strengths; accountability of ODL philosophies on sustainable livelihoods of people who are d/Deaf; experiences of people who are d/Deaf and suggestions. These themes were discussed under the various research

questions. The study explained how the findings addressed the research questions. Recommendations and conclusions were then, drawn from the responses and experiences of the participants.

3.0 The Findings and Discussions

3.1 Ideologies and concepts of ODL

The study revealed that, participants who were deaf held varied ideologies and concepts about ODL. Furthermore, the findings described the concept ODL as: self-directed learning; home-based learning; flexible learning and self time tabled learning with the recognition of a learning institution or under the monitoring of a recognised institution. DPOs proposed that, ODL engaged learners in research learning, discovery learning; proved and informed learning while the lecturers who participated in the study felt that, it promoted research driven understanding of the curricula and taught matter. According to the researcher, all these ODL concepts promoted academic rigour and values of ODL.

The majority of lecturers who participated in this study felt that, governments should monitor issues of ODL because some traditional universities were losing their initial track of focus and these were described by the study findings as running away from their perceived operations. On the other hand, a few of them felt there was nothing wrong with that since they were ways of meeting the demands and expansion of lifelong learning in the country. In support, Training Tool Kit (1999) asserts that, the number of ODL institutions had recently proliferated in different parts of the world to meet the growing demand of lifelong learning as evidenced by the increase in number of institutions and learners. In line to that, the majority of lecturers felt that, government needed to approve some of the changes in niche of some institutions to make sure that issues of quality education were not compromised at the expense of personal interest and for the sake of it. The study

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therefore found that, there were many ways of organising ODL but as observed by the researcher, the providers should make sure that there systems promoted sustainable livelihoods of their learners.

3.2 How are educational policies and practices promoting the sustainable governance of ODL in universities in the education of learners who are d/Deaf?

The study participants who were d/Deaf proposed that, ODL had different versions and structures which they said they could not clearly define yet they existed. Furthermore, the majority of them felt that, lack of clear policies on how ODL could address the education of learners with disabilities compounded the lack of opportunities and availability of skilled human manpower in deaf education. These participants explained that, that also compounded the use of ad hoc services and even the quality of the obtained education. Thus, one participant narrated:

> *I was intelligent and learnt side by side the hearing peers but my understanding of the taught matter was comprised by biased mode of delivery towards oral language and the hearing. Thus, my theory and practices were mismatched and that affected my later life practices as compared to hearing counterparts. So I propose that, learners who are d/Deaf should be taught the same curricula but using deaf friendly teaching styles and Sign Language. ODL's aim should be to minimise learning barriers as much as possible.*

Though expressed differently, this was equally supported by DPOs and lecturers who suggested that, in Zimbabwe there were currently two different versions of ODL, such as, pure ODL institutions and dual institutions with both conventional and block release structures. In this study, block release is counted as another version

of ODL in the Zimbabwean systems of higher education. In view to the above, Kinyanjui (1998) describes three types of ODL interventions, (1) a proactive intervention where a government has an explicit distance education policy, (2) a reactive intervention where government has an implicit distance education policy and (3) a passive intervention where a government has no implicit distance education policy or otherwise but opts to let distance education follow market forces of supply and demand. This cautions governments to monitor the different styles of ODL and that institutions practicing ODL need to plan and have clear and known ODL policies.

In view to that, the majority of study participants who were deaf and DPOs felt that, while the essence of ODL was to include the excluded, they still felt that, the currently running ODL version still short changed the spirit of including the excluded. They further expressed that, reach out was poor and prerequisites bottle necked the beneficiaries and that did not benefit the majority of PWDs, especially learners who were d/Deaf who are the focus of this study. Furthermore, they proposed that, PWDs were not part of the agendas or dreams of the majority of ODL institutions. In view to that, DPOs and the majority of lecturers felt that, policies and practices of ODL institutions were vague and unclear on how their operations could promote sustainable governance of ODL in Zimbabwean Universities in the education of learners who are d/Deaf [PWDs]. Thus, the DPOs further proposed that, ODL institutions needed to go back to the drawing board to restructure their policies and structures in line to the CRPD treaty. The lecturers considered this study as an eye opener to the topic but also felt that government could enhance the situation through support; funding and taking a leading role in their job placement.

As observed by the researcher, that did not mean that ODL systems had contributed nothing to the disability field but the findings seem to communicate that, since the essence of

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establishing the systems was to meet EFA goals where independence of PWDs was one of the strategies, ODL should therefore fulfill its revelations. If ODL fails to influence the PWDs, such as, people who are d/Deaf's livelihoods to sustenance then, the system would have failed to realise both goals of international and national conventions of Education for All (EFA) and the UNCRPD and many others which paved their developments. The next question was what all that means to institutions of higher learning?

As observed by the researcher, institutions of higher learning probably need to use the instrumental policies and keep referring to them so as not to lose the focus of intent. In other words the philosophy of ODL is in essence inclusive education which is further the key strategy for EFA and the current shift to address human rights goals enshrined in the UNCRPD. The CRPD requires countries which committed themselves by ratifying and signing their protocols to periodically report to UN (United Nations) on their progress in enforcing and implementing this treaty (www.unesco-ci.org/ict-pwd/list-partners). Zimbabwe ratified and signed the protocol of this convention on 23 September 2013. This commitment means Zimbabwe's address of PWDs' issues should be embraced by human rights goals enshrined in the UNCRPD. In essence that should give guidance to disability issues and act as a monitoring instrument to keep checking how far as a state we are within the means or are deviating from the means. The main goal of the UNCRPD is to reaffirm that all people with different types of disabilities equally enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms as the non disabled society (www.unesco-ci.org/ict-pwd/list-partners). It is aware that, all that depends on imparting quality education which is further expected to change the livelihoods of PWDs to acquire sustainable independent living which should further influence production and development.

3.3 How can university ODL principles sustain the livelihoods of people who are d/Deaf?

One of the study participants who were d/Deaf felt that:

> *Marketing of ODL should not be left to the marketing department only but it should be the duty of everyone while professional marketing should involve the regional programme coordinators who are more knowledgeable about questions clients might have on the particular field of study. When the marketing department markets without support from other disciplines, some possible clients are likely to be left thirst and unanswered about some particular disciplines. I therefore propose the teamwork approach to marketing.*

The same sentiments were received from the DPOs; the majority of lecturers who took part in this study and another study participant who was d/Deaf who further proposed that:

> *The involvement of regional programmes coordinators in marketing may further help them to establish projects; activities and partnerships they could develop in collaboration with their regional communities. This would further act as a self-marketing approach as communities would feel the tangible existence, influences and capabilities of the ODL institution. That would in turn make the community feel supported and that the activities they are doing are in the right direction since they would be supported by institutions of higher learning.*

In support of above views, DPOs further suggested that, there is need for a spirit of trust to prevail between the clients and ODL institutions. It was also suggested that, for the principles of flexibility and cost-effectiveness to be noticed by clients, ODL institutions or block release systems

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should meet their promises that they tell clients during marketing and registration processes. Thus, mutual trust should be maintained to build up good relations, support and reputation. That way, the system is likely to self advertise itself. In support, De Beer (2010) proposes that, ODL through course design, administrative processes and learner support, ODL emphasises acquiring, creating and sharing knowledge by interacting asynchronously or synchronously without the constraints of space and time.

The study findings revealed that, the majority of the ODL systems were not well advertised to reach out the majority of the disadvantaged clientele's door steps as it purported thus, it was described as practicing less what it preached. They further pointed out that, reach out was only to the lucky population yet its major objective was to boost the quality and development of the disadvantaged population with a view to further boost social and economic development. That was hoped to likely make them play an active role in quality development where sustainable livelihoods are enhanced and independent living is enhanced too. As observed by the researcher, if the above suggestions are met principles of ODL which according to Msweli (2012) included learner centredness; appropriate material design; learner support; flexibility without the constraints of space and time. ODL graduates had possibilities of sustainable livelihoods where they could afford to fend for selves and their families. The call from the study findings is that, ODL institutions should plan their programmes with the PWDs in mind so that they equally benefit and contribute to the country's development and not resort to street begging and living as vagabonds.

3.4 What ODL governance systems can be put in place by Universities to sustain the livelihoods of people who are d/Deaf?

DPOs proposed that, ODL and block release institutions should make sure that they deliver the best and they also meet the learning needs of diversified learners. In other words, they should be accountable to later lived lives of their clients by making sure that quality education is given to all clients and that learning needs of learners who are d/Deaf are equally met. Participants who are d/Deaf also felt that, ODL and block release institutions should stay in contact with disadvantaged learners who will have gone through their education and should continue to make follow ups and the student's affairs departments should carry-out tracer studies on how their graduates who were d/Deaf are living and improving selves. It was further suggested that, such records and examples should be used to attract new learners to the programmes and also as models. That should again act as a self motivator.

The findings also revealed that, ODL and block release institutions should continuously revise the methods of clients reach out; revisit administrative approaches of ODL; revise their policies and also improve the various curricula of various disciplines within the means of clients and to also stay abreast of technological changes.

3.5 What can be done to enhance sustainable livelihoods of people with HI through the governance of open and distance university education?

The study findings revealed that, there was need for awareness campaigns and advocacy where educational and marketing policies are restructured. DPOs particularly stressed that, ODL institutions should be aware of the fact that, the same learners are their future programme marketers, so they should treat them well and make sure that the quality of education gives them sustainable livelihoods. The study participants proposed that, regional programme coordinators should go on the meet the people tour because they are well vested with what goes on in the various programmes. The question of, who should be at the fore front of marketing ODL was also emphasised by DOPs? As follow up to that, the findings further strongly stressed that, if the

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marketing team members are not familiar with various offered programmes their team should be composed of regional programme coordinators from the different disciplines. The need for government funding was expressed by the majority of the study participants as an essential issue in promoting the education and livelihoods of learners who are d/Deaf.

The majority of study participants who were d/Deaf pointed out that, ODL was appropriate because they remained in their context or environment that their conditions were used too. They further explained that the home comfort they were used to was not comprised and it was cost effective too. Thus, they studied in favourable conditions and studied what they wanted, when and where they wanted.

3.6 Summary of the Discussions

The study findings indicated that, while it is important to see ODL as a panacea that can address HE access rights for people who are d/Deaf caution must be taken to make sure that, they are included and not excluded in all matters about their education to promote their livelihoods. Interviews with d/Deaf participants and DPOs revealed that ODL principles needed to be rebranded to meet the needs of people who are d/Deaf. They sighted unfocused implementation and attitudinal factors as major problems to inclusion of people who are deaf in universities. They suggested further that, without a monitoring tool exclusion of people who are d/Deaf in universities may be there to stay. Lack of supportive visions, mission statements and policies were suggested to be the culprits to lack of access and provision for deaf education in ODL universities.

One narrative complained, 'how can you expect an institution to address your matters when you are not part of their vision or mission statement.' Agreeably, The Report of the California Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Advisory Task Force (1999) pointed out that, equality in education is always backed by legislation. Clear policies on ODL and people with disabilities were missing in the ideological philosophies of investigating ODL and block release institutions. Hence, this study noted with concern that, most of the studied universities neither had disability policies nor institutional inclusive education policies. Most universities had policy drafts which mainly addressed examination considerations for specific disability types. They further suggested that, they offered sustainable ODL education for people with disabilities yet they gave them parallel treatment with non-disabled counterparts. Thus, needs-based education was called for.

The study recommended that, university vision and mission statement should embrace inclusive education and; disability and inclusive policies should be developed plus advocacy for institutional and personal attitudinal changes should be carried out. A revisit and amendment of the DPA was called for. To conclude the study agreed that it is possible for Zimbabwean Universities to prepare people who are d/Deaf for sustainable livelihoods through good governance of ODL if highlighted gaps are addressed. The study's experiences are expected to cascade to all SADC countries. In principle the philosophy of educational governance should be based on universal participation of all people**.** It should overcome inequalities in educational access as already alluded.

ODL has a visionary for student centredness. As ODL institutions how do we balance the philosophy of disability with the philosophies of ODL? ODL institutions need to be conscious of learning needs. Are ODL ideologies accommodative to learners who are d/Deaf? Further gaps and debates may be carried on the study.

4.0 Conclusion

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The study revealed that, ODL institutions needed to design policies which included PWDs in their dreams and agendas and to also go to the drawing board to restructure their marketing and administration styles to make sure that they included PWDs in their systems. ODL institutions were encouraged to create equal opportunities for learners who were d/Deaf and also devote themselves to delivering quality education which enhanced sustainable livelihoods of learners with disabilities or who were d/Deaf who were the focus of this study. A teamwork approach and collaborative partnerships with various community organisations and disciplines were encouraged and counted essential for ODL institutions to make a remarkable high reach out to their clients. The study also encouraged ODL institutions to practice what they preached and to give quality services which should enhance self marketing and increase their reputation.

5.1 Recommendations

- There was need for ODL and block release institutions to be accountable through developing monitoring instruments that support the goals and strategies of the UNCRPD on the education and sustained livelihoods of learners who are d/Deaf in the SADC region/countries

- ODL institutions should include learners with disabilities in all their agendas and dreams and also make sure that they have skilled human manpower for the diversified learners

- There was need for ODL institutions to keep records of their successful graduates and use the records as self marketers of learners with disabilities

- The student affairs department was encouraged to carryout tracer studies on their ODL graduates to check and help them meet sustainable livelihoods and that

should be kept as archival references when different disciplines or programmes require the information or as models

- There was need for ODL institutions to maintain their reputation and mutual trust with clients through meeting their promises and also provide quality education

- ODL institutions should expand and improve their marketing modalities so as to reach every clientele's doorstep as they purport to practice and they could edify that through establishment partnerships with various communities

- ODL institutions should make sure that PWDs gain quality education and that they possess both quality practical and theoretical skills matching global competition

- ODL institutions should take a leading role in employment placement of their graduates with hearing impairment [and other disabilities] and give them continuous support to enhance their sustained livelihoods.

- The government should help ODL institutions meet the diversified needs of their learners through support and funding.

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