PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE FORMULATION OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT POLICIES IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF HARARE

BY

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Declaration

I Edmos Mtetwa declare that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. To this effect, two disability categories have been chosen namely visual impairment and albinism. These disability types have been chosen largely because voices from literature coupled with anecdotal evidence show that besides impairments, they are not subject to any chronic physiological or mental challenges likely to militate against the performance of life tasks considered normal in any civilized society. Using a qualitative methodology, the study was largely informed by a combination of in-depth interviews from twenty participants, two focus group discussions each with persons with visual impairments and albinism respectively, ethnographic information collected at workshops, seminars and symposia on disability as well as a detailed literature search of theses, dissertations, papers, reports and books on participation, disability, empowerment and policy formulation. Research findings revealed that persons with disabilities were not effectively represented in the national political and administrative structures of government. It was however acknowledged that in spite of their limited number, parliamentarians representing persons with disabilities were trying their level best to push forward the disability agenda. Research findings further showed that in societies where the political and economic participation of persons with disabilities is promoted such as the case of South Africa, the lives of persons with disabilities have tended to improve. The study further revealed that civil society organisations tended to exclude persons with disabilities both within their administrative and programmatic structures simply on account of negative social attitudes including perceived incapacity. As a result, persons with disabilities played a peripheral role in civil society organisations’ programme activities. There was a tendency for civil society organisations to leave disability matters to Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs). The study also revealed that disabled persons organisations experienced administrative, financial and technical challenges. The need to mainstream disability within mainstream organisations as is the case with gender was therefore emphasized. Similarly, the study unearthed numerous endogenous and exogenous barriers militating against the quest of persons with disabilities to participate in the political and economic life of the country. These include poor education, myths and misconceptions surrounding disability, political violence, low self-esteem and confidence as well as lack of unity and technical expertise within the disability movement. The study however revealed that persons with disabilities had the zeal and sense of agency to improve their situation. In view of these findings, recommendations were passed.
DEDICATION

To my late father Simon Makholiso, my Mother Mitiyavo, my children Arthur Sifiso, Charles Zwelinzima and Sehlule Kundai together with my wife Sunungurai.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is a result of numerous and selfless contributions from various individuals, groups and organisations. First and foremost, my thanks are due, without reservation to my supervisor Professor G. Zhou. His patience, well informed judgment and guidance throughout this work made my dream a reality. In addition, I would like to extend my heart-felt gratitude to my alternate supervisor Dr. W. Ruparanganda who worked tirelessly to make this dream achievable.

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Similarly, I would like to thank Maria Mahlangu for her splendid job in typing and preparing this thesis for printing. Without her perseverance, kindness and skillful editorial work, this work would not have gone this far.

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Edmos Mtetwa November 2015
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALF</td>
<td>A female with albinism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALM</td>
<td>A male with albinism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (UK)</td>
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<td>DPI</td>
<td>Disabled Persons International</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPO</td>
<td>Disabled Persons Organisation</td>
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<td>DPSA</td>
<td>Disabled Persons South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>FODPZ</td>
<td>Federation of Organisations of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICF</td>
<td>International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>Movement for Democratic Change</td>
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<td>NASCOH</td>
<td>National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWDs</td>
<td>persons with Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIM</td>
<td>Visual Impaired Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIF</td>
<td>Visual Impaired Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCRPD</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZANU PF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZCTU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZESN</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Elections Support Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZWLA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZHNGOF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. This has been necessitated by anecdotal evidence coming from both national and international sources indicating that disability and poverty are almost synonymous. In terms of the current development discourse, poverty and powerlessness are critical, with the plea to empower the historically marginalized groups by giving them space in the political and economic life of their communities becoming a political and civic crucible. As such, various actors and stakeholders including national governments, donor agencies as well as the corporate world have tended to coalesce over economic, social and political influence on the argument that citizen participation is citizen power.

Informed by these ideological parameters, this thesis examines the political and administrative representation of persons with disabilities. Further to that, the focus is shifted towards the role of the civil society agencies in influencing policies through lobbying and other forms of social, economic and political activities. In this regard, the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the affairs and activities of the civil society agencies becomes a key determining factor towards the degree to which their peculiar needs and aspiration find space in the policy making framework.

In order to understand the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies, one has to appreciate the factors that determine inclusion and exclusion. In this light, the underlying social, attitudinal and personal factors that
tend to make disability detestable are examined with a view to unearthing the limitations to social exclusion. Having articulated the key determinants to social exclusion and inclusion, the thesis finally tries to deal with issues of human agency. In this regard, an answer is sought concerning what persons with disabilities do for themselves to alter their circumstances. In an effort to consolidate the argument, the thesis blends the social exclusion approach with the social model of disability.

Applying these concepts, the current thesis posits that poverty and inequality are inextricably bound to power-laden economic and political structures because these determine the allocation of resources and opportunities in society. In a situation of social polarization, partisan alignment and de-alignment, persons with disabilities have been relegated to the periphery of the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. Their lack of political and economic power and influence has further dragged them into absolute poverty and social deprivation. Various efforts to improve their living standards have only been restricted to the provision of social assistance, relief aid in addition to a variety of other acts of charity.

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

It is worth mentioning from the onset that statistical evidence on the number of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe is a heavily contested area. While the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency, in its 2012 census report estimated Persons with disabilities to be about seven percent of the population, the estimates from the World Health organisation suggest that at least fifteen to twenty percent of the population in developing countries comprises persons with disabilities (World Health Organisation 2011). Using the latter, Zimbabwe with a population of thirteen million people has got over 2.6 million persons with disabilities (Mtetwa, 2013). The Zimbabwe
National Statistical Agency put the total population of Harare at about 3 million people. Using the World Health Organisation estimates, the City of Harare has got approximately 600 000 persons with disabilities. It is however not possible to disaggregate these figures to come up with the number of individuals per each disability category.

1.1.1. Conceptualising Disability

As Abberley (1999, 1) admonishes, “the first thing to do when talking about disability is to clarify your terms”. This, as further argued by Abberley, automatically throws one into the realm of theory.

In order to understand the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe, it is necessary that disability as a concept be understood. In that regard, disability scholarship has repeatedly and conveniently categorized society understanding of disability into several strands that have come to be referred to as models. While this chapter is intent on introducing these and other disability concepts in order to give the reader an insight into the explanations of disability, a detailed discussion of the models is found in the next chapter.

The current thesis contends that a discussion of disability terminology is necessary given the power of language to shape any discourse. As Soorenian (2011: 26) would argue, language is about power, politics, domination and control, and is sometimes used to justify oppression. In view of these negative connotations of language in the disability discourse, the current thesis employs the term persons with disabilities largely in conformity with the “people first” concept and the strand of the social model of disability as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (see Chapter Two). Terms such as ‘the disabled’, ‘disabled people’, ‘people living with disabilities’, ‘the blind’ and ‘the albinos’ are
systematically shunned simply on account of their derogatory, oppressive, demeaning and disempowering connotations. Instead, such terms as persons with visual impairments as well as persons with albinism have been consistently used throughout the thesis. However, the reader is likely to find such terms as disabled people, disabled persons, the blind, the albinos, people living with albinism and other terms being used specifically in reference to the need to avoid any literary distortions when it comes to quoting and acknowledging the views and perceptions of particular authors. In addition, it is worth drawing the reader’s attention to the fact that although impairment does not always amount to disability in social model theorizing, the term persons with disabilities has been employed largely on account of the participants’ understanding and interpretation of their lived experiences. Practically speaking, participants tend to attribute their experience not to particular impairments but to the general social, economic and political misfortunes brought forth by disability. In order not to distort this reality, the current thesis has elected to use persons with visual impairments, persons with albinism as well as persons with disabilities interchangeably.

Oliver (2004) adds his voice to this disability discourse by arguing that the influx of a plethora of models that seek to explain disability is now confusing instead of helping. He advances the view that in its simplest form, disability should be explained by the individual or personal tragedy (the medical model) or from the external or societal conditioning wherein the person with impairment is unnecessarily barred from functioning fully by the social impediments (the social model).

The present study therefore conceptualizes disability as envisaged in article one of the UNCRPD (2007). The UNCRPD describes persons with disabilities as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers
may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In concurrence, Yeo (2004: 3) asserts that “Disability is a complex system of social restrictions imposed on people with impairments resulting in a denial of rights and equal opportunities”. As Yeo would argue, “impairment is an individual’s condition that is, physical, sensory, intellectual or behavioural” (ibid: 3). It is within this theoretical paradigm that the current thesis endeavours to assess the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe and how they cope with any constraints.

In doing so, the study is in no way oblivious to the existence of other paradigms guiding disability policy and practice the world over. To this effect, it is here acknowledged that the proliferation of other models is a positive development in what has incidentally come to be known as disability studies. As a contemporary discipline, disability studies are continuously evolving. As a testimony to this evolution, the World Health Organization has within a period of twenty years come up with two somewhat different models namely the International Classification of Impairment, Disability, and Handicap (1980). This classification could not outlive its explanatory power for long since within two decades it eventually succumbed to the growing strength of emancipatory calls of the social model of disability. In response to such a clarion call for empowerment, freedom from charity and medical supremacy, the World Health Organisation subsequently revisited its individualized model to incorporate the role of society (the external environment) on imposing physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers on a person with impairment. What came out of such a revision was the International Classification of Disability, Functioning and Health or the Bio-psycho-social model of disability (World Health Organization, 2001). Although the bio-psycho-social model seems intent on bridging the gap between the medical model or what Oliver (1990) has referred to as the personal tragedy model
and the social model of disability (Oliver, 1983, 1990, 1996 and 2004, Barnes, 1991 and Drake, 1999); it is still widely perceived by some within the disability scholarship as a continuation of the medical model of disability (see Foley, 2009).

The medical model of disability tends to view persons with disabilities as having something wrong within themselves and therefore locates the problem in the afflicted person. In terms of the medical model, the nature of disability is essentially about physical, sensory, or intellectual deficits. As a result, the remedy for any disability is curative or rehabilitative.

The medical model of disability has endured a barrage of criticisms mainly from disabled academics who see it as the chief cause of poverty and negative attitudes towards persons with impairments. According to Zeitzer (2005) throughout the world, the community of persons with disabilities has fought for decades to retire or shun the medical model of disability that has so darkly coloured and limited the views of society regarding their capacities. It is not possible here to exhaustively discuss the medical model of disability as such an issue is reserved for the section on theoretical framework.

The social model of disability has its origins in the publication of the fundamental principles of disability by the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976 (Oliver, 2004; Chataika, 2007; Choruma, 2007; Munsaka, 2012 and Brown, 2013). Bailey (2004) spends a great deal of time giving the historical circumstances around which UPIAS was developing the social model. In this light, Bailey observes that UPIAS became an arena around which persons with physical impairment would gather to talk about their lived experiences. Although it was somehow a group of intellectuals with disabilities, the expectation was that any theorizing should come from a sound and practical interaction with disabled members of the community. To borrow Bailey’s (2004:141) words: “theory developed through a discussion
grounded in experience of disability. Combining experience with intellect, UPIAS came to define disability as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have [impairments] and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities (UPIAS 1976: 14). To borrow the words of Thomas: “Disability now resided in a nexus of social relationships connecting those socially identified as impaired and those deemed non-impaired or normal, relationships that worked to exclude and disadvantage the former while promoting the relative inclusion and privileging of the latter” (Thomas, 2004:33).

Although the social model of disability has its roots in the fundamental principles of UPIAS much credit goes to Oliver who, in his publication: “Social Work and Disabled People”, managed to consolidate it into a model. Contrary to a barrage of criticisms leveled against the social model by such scholars as Morris (1999), Shakespeare and Watson (2002) among others, Oliver, as the main proponent of the social model of disability did not intend to blame all challenges encountered by persons with disabilities on external factors but to provide an alternative explanation of the extent to which society contributes towards the problems encountered by people with impairments. In this light, Oliver himself has this to say regarding the social model of disability: “Firstly, it is an attempt to switch the focus away from the functional limitations of individuals with impairment on to the problems caused by disabling environments, barriers and cultures. Secondly, it refuses to see specific problems in isolation from the totality of disabling environments: hence the problem of unemployment does not just entail intervention in the social organization of work and the operation of the labour market but also in areas such as transport, education and culture. Thirdly, endorsement of the social model does not mean that individually based interventions in the lives of disabled people, whether they
be medically, rehabilitative, educational or employment based, are of no use or always counter-productive” (Oliver 2004: 21).

The social model of disability has since undergone several modifications by various scholars and disability practitioners who fused it with esoteric discourses to make it more relevant to current realities. This has seen the birth of what has come to be known as the human rights model of disability. This model is best described by Swepston (2006: 14) who postulates that when persons with disabilities are entitled to something, it then follows that somebody especially the state has an obligation to fulfill that right. Although in academic circles, the human rights model is seen as a successor to the social model of disability, it is here argued that these two models share a lot in common. This thesis therefore is premised around the social model of disability as shall be elaborated in chapter two. For the sake of the present section, let it suffice to conclude that poverty and social deprivation encountered by persons with disabilities is perceived as a structural interactive relationship between Zimbabwe’s non-disabled majority and their minority counterparts with impairments. The solution might as well be best found in Finkelstein’s suggestion that: “Disabled people must find ways of engaging in the class struggle where the historical direction of society is fought, won or lost” (Finkelstein 2001: 5).

Under the influence of the social model of disability, the current study has judiciously confined itself to two disability categories namely: visual impairment and albinism. The selection of such disability categories is largely informed by Roske’s (2006) observation that not all persons with disabilities would equally benefit from economic empowerment opportunities. Some, depending on the nature and severity of their impairment would ordinarily have to depend on welfare. Roske (2006) however argues that relegating all persons with disabilities to charity is a mere waste of resources as most of these can be self-reliant if given appropriate opportunities
to do so. Persons with albinism and those with visual impairment are typical examples of those people that are in need of empowerment and not charity or welfare benefits, hence their choice for the present study.

To understand the genesis of the social attitudes towards people with albinism and visual impairment, it is essential to understand the medical and social explanations of these conditions. In doing so, it is all the more necessary to bear in mind the fact that the two disability categories share a lot in common. Of prime importance is that they both result in loss of vision.

1.1.2. The social implications of albinism

According to Stensson (2008), albinism is an inherited condition affecting at least 1 in 4000 people in Africa. It is thought to be more common among ‘black’ Africans although it affects all human populations. In many African countries albinism is considered to be a disability and the social attitudes are characterized by lack of understanding, fear, and also of prejudice based on the appearance of albinism. Stensson observes that in South Africa the albinos are to some extent alienated, ostracized and not seen as normal human beings by other people in society. As Stensson (2008: 1) observes “there are beliefs surrounding albinos that they are borne as a punishment, that it is a curse giving birth to albinos and that albinos are immortal and that they in fact are spirits. This makes them kept down as anomalies in society”.

On account of the traditional beliefs concerning the supernatural status accorded to people with albinism in many parts of Africa, such a social group has in recent years witnessed ritual murders for different purposes. Different body parts are believed to serve different purposes in the world of charms such as: to bring luck to a business by placing a human skull in the foundation of new buildings; to secure big harvests body parts are buried on farms; to lure
customers hands are built into the entrances of shops; to cure strokes hands are burnt to ashes and mixed into a paste; to boost vitality, brains, political power and business, blood is used and to cure infertility and to create good luck, genitals, breasts and placentas are used; (with the genitalia of young boys and virgin girls being especially highly prized as ‘uncontaminated’ by and therefore more pure and potent”) (Stensson, 2008: 2). It is these socio-cultural perceptions of albinism that the thesis contends that such a social group is in danger of suffering social exclusion and marginalisation.

Another form of disability under scrutiny in this thesis is visual impairment. Visual impairment or blindness as per the common nomenclature is a condition characterized by loss of sight. This loss of sight is caused by various reasons. Such reasons are in themselves not the concern of this thesis. What is of prime concern here however, is the social implication of this condition. The primary question to anyone reading this thesis is whether this seemingly medical condition may attract ridicule. It is here observed that the condition is somehow associated with genetic inferiority and spiritual or diabolical transmission (Drake, 1999). In this light, an old Middle Eastern proverb says, “When you see a blind man, kick him. Why should you be kinder to him than God has been?” (Maurer, 1999, 15). This has been one of the unfortunate perceptions of blindness—that it is a curse from God. The negative perception is what has caused blind people to be discriminated against for centuries and looked upon as cursed beggars (Jernigan, 1999).

The myth and misconceptions surrounding blindness and albinism stand as key factors contributing towards their discrimination, both disability types are traditionally associated with supernatural powers at play in the life of the afflicted. Both disability types are perceived to be genetically transmitted. Anyone bearing such an ‘emblame’ is considered to possess supra-
human qualities. This removes such people from the ‘ordinary and normal’ range and category of humanity, thereby ascribing them some different social status from the ordinary human being. This classification therefore means that such persons cannot fully participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. They cannot ordinarily participate in the ‘normal life of mortal beings’. It is from such a viewpoint that this thesis contends that all facets of the policy formulation framework cannot accommodate them.

The major determining factor regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in major social vocations as the economic empowerment activities is therefore their perceived inabilities. This point of view is emphasized by Addlakha who asserts that “one of the major factors contributing to the segregation of disabled persons in medical institutions, special schools and sheltered employment is the almost universal and trans-historical association between disability and functional incapacity. That is why the first step towards ensuring equality of opportunity to persons with disabilities necessarily involves enhancing educational and employment opportunities in order to promote economic self-reliance (2012:4). The quest for access to education as a tool for economic and political empowerment is embraced by the disability movement in Zimbabwe. To that end, such organisations as the Zimbabwe National League of the Blind as well as the Jairos Jiri Association, spent a great deal of time and resources on educational sponsorship (For a discussion of education and disability in Zimbabwe, see chapter 6).

In pursuit of the thesis argument, the current discussion is predicated upon the belief that poverty and deprivation characteristic of disability are due largely to lack of economic and political power. Such an argument squarely takes the disability discourse towards the nation’s legislative and policy framework.
A brief synopsis of disability and legislation in Zimbabwe would reveal that disability under the Lancaster House Constitution was heavily subdued, only to feature in a somewhat muted form under Amendment 17 when it was defined as physical disability. This continued until 2013 when Zimbabwe adopted a new constitution. This new constitution for Zimbabwe has tended to be more disability friendly than the Lancaster House one (Mtetwa, 2011). The major reason being that persons with disabilities themselves pushed a disability agenda during the constitution making process (see Mtetwa, 2011 for a detailed analysis of disability and the constitution making process for Zimbabwe). Chief among the provisions of the constitution are that disability is now recognized as a priority area in all development and sign language is now recognized as one of the official languages of Zimbabwe. In addition, section 22 of the new constitution now directs the state and all its institutions to recognize the rights of Persons with disabilities to employment, participation in society as well as to a life full of dignity and meaning. Further to that, the new constitution, in section 120, allocates two seats in the house of senate to Persons with disabilities. Last but not least, the constitution guarantees Persons with disabilities among other rights, the right to state funded education. All these progressive provisions are key to the participation of Persons with disabilities in policy making. It is however, important to note that notwithstanding the progress made in the constitution, the document is still heavily predicated upon e medical and charity models (Mandipa 2013). This is mainly because both section 22 and 83 subjects the state interventions on disability to a resource conditionality which other groups such as children, women, the war veterans and the elderly who are mentioned in the constitution are not subjected to. Secondly, the mention of participation of disabled people in section 83 is restricted to family and recreational activities yet the truth, as this thesis attempts to show is that the poverty of Persons with disabilities occurs because they
are excluded from participating in political and economic spheres. (For a comprehensive coverage of the constitution of Zimbabwe’s treatment of disability inclusion, see Mtetwa 2013 and Mandipa 2013).

Another positive development is that Zimbabwe ratified the UNCRPD and its optional protocol on the twenty-third of September 2013. This convention has excellent provisions on disability and how states parties should ensure the inclusion of Persons with disabilities in all spheres of life. In relation to the current discussion, article 4 (3) calls upon states parties to involve Persons with disabilities in the formulation of policies on issues concerning them. Furthermore, the UNCRPD calls on states parties to ensure that all policies and legislations are in conformity with it. These legal developments were received with jubilation by the disability fraternity in the country but there is now some agitation because on the ground, these developments have not yet become fruitful to the common people. The plight of Persons with disabilities has not yet improved. Even though the national constitution looks more disability inclusive than before, this has not yet filtered down to the various statutes that still reflect the charity model of disability. A typical example is the Disabled Persons Act (DPA Chapter 17; 01 which does not seem to view Persons with disabilities as participants in political and economic activities. Furthermore, there still remain serious structural impediments to the participation of Persons with disabilities in policy making. For instance, although the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act provides for a representative of persons with disabilities on the National Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Board, the statute is being implemented in an environment in which persons with disabilities face difficulties in participating in the economic life of society due to a plethora of attitudinal and institutional constraints. To this effect, the national institutional and statutory infrastructure is designed such that wherever
disability is talked about, it is usually in relation to the provision of charity or welfare services rather than economic and political power (see chapter 4).

1.1.3. Disability and participation in national political and bureaucratic structures.

According to Cockery (1995), the process of policy formulation involves the identification of a policy issue, specification of policy objectives, the development of policy options, decision making, promulgation and implementation. Inevitably, the process of needs identification is a political process that requires adequate representation of all social groups (Wolf, 2002). These groups should include men, women, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Borrowing from the feminist theory and women’s movement, this thesis proffers three main arguments regarding access to political and economic power namely the justice argument, the experience argument as well as the interest argument (see United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009). In line with the justice argument, Persons with disabilities constitute about fifteen percent of the national population (World Health Organisation and World Bank, 2011). To this effect, justice demands that the sentiments, feelings and aspirations of such a social group be represented within the national political, economic and policy framework. When it comes to the experience argument, persons with disabilities experience life differently from their non-disabled counterparts. Feelings of discrimination, poverty, negative social attitudes as well as constricted economic and political opportunities need to be represented in discussions that result in policy formulation and implementation.

Last but not least, the interest argument holds that the interests of Persons with disabilities are different from those held by the generality of society. As a result, the
representation of persons with disabilities is needed in representative institutions to articulate and defend these interests.

In his discussion of the policy formulation process, Hill (1997) refers to actors and stakeholders. To him, Stakeholders only play a peripheral role due mainly to lack of a statutory mandate. Actors on the other hand wield formal and statutory mandate to formulate and implement policies. Bureaucrats in government or public servants as they are commonly known are crucial actors in the formulation and implementation of policies. Lipsky coined the term street level bureaucracy to refer to such officials. Such agencies as government departments (usually headed by directors), schools, the courts, parastatal agencies, planning commissions and other service departments constitute clear examples.

This study observes that the extent to which the government promotes the participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies can as well be measured against the extent it tries to infuse within its ranks, persons with disabilities. The importance of having persons with disabilities within the national bureaucracy is that what usually works is not the substance of the policy but the personal feelings and attitudes of those tasked with the duty to execute policy. Lipsky emphasizes that actors who work in these bureaucracies have a role to play; they are not merely cogs in an automatic transfer of policy-making to outcome in practice. Due to constraints on their time, and bureaucratic procedures at the local level, Lipsky argues that field-level workers may exercise considerable flexibility in implementing instructions.

In pursuit of this argument, it is here contended that the staff or bureaucrats responsible for the implementation of the indigenisation policies exercise their discretion by doing for some what they are unable to do for all (Lipsky, 1980: 151). (For an example of the negative effects of
lack of representation, see chapter 6 of this thesis). It is clear from this discussion that the process of trying to implement a policy can change it, a change that results purely from administrative factors rather than any political motivations or resistance to the policy.

Such bureaucratic discretion is more likely to result in some losers or casualties. The unfortunate losers are usually those who, due to one form of stigma or another are not usually attractive, appear to be risky and economically inactive hence, deserving nothing short of charity. Whether or not the presence of a single person with a disability on the National Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Board benefits the intended group, is largely dependent on the perceptions and attitudes of the street level bureaucrats who are tasked to implement the indigenization and Economic Empowerment policies on the ground. Unfortunately, persons with disabilities tend to carry the taint of partial personhood casting them with a dye of weakness, incapacity, incompetence, passivity, dependence and socio-economic futility (Addlakha, 2012:2).

It is therefore common for government officials to refer persons with disabilities to the Department of Social Welfare where they get charity or public assistance rather than giving them a niche in the economic empowerment programmes. This has the likely effect of perpetuating their dependence on the family, community and the state thereby forestalling their potential to economic liberation. In such a situation, the only salvation that persons with disabilities have is that of self representation. In addition to their representation at the apex of the economic empowerment framework, government needs to systematically fuse them within the civil service so that they protect the interests of their other fellows. As the situation stands, this is far from real.
According to the Country Assessment Report (2010), in 2008, women comprised only 19 percent of the parliamentarians, a number that is below the 2005 Zimbabwean government target of 30 percent. However, there are variations from one department to another. For instance, women comprise 67 percent of Public Service Commissioners, 29 percent of Supreme Court and High Court Judges, 41 percent of Magistrates, and 42 percent of Administrative Court Judges.

These statistics suggest that, persons with disabilities are not part of the administrative hierarchy of government. Given the power of public servants in modifying policies at the implementation level, lack of representation of persons with disabilities within the bureaucratic hierarchy could be a recipe for disaster.

Implied here is that, any discussion of policy formulation is not adequate if it fails to put into perspective the central role played by policy stakeholders. These stakeholders usually come in the form of business associations and cartels, trade unions as well as various interest groups broadly classified under the banner of civil society organisations. According to Scholte (2004), in practice the lines between civil society, the market and the public sector are blurred. As Scholte further observes, no definition is clear-cut. Nevertheless, in principle civil society is a distinct sphere where people seek to shape governance without the promise of commercial profit or official power. Put more succinctly, civil society comprises the collectivity of those social organizations that enjoy autonomy from the state (i.e. are not part of the state or creatures of it). According to Sibanda (1994), such organizations constitute a crucial part of the policy process since they provide information that is vital for the development of policies that are appropriate to the community the policy is meant to serve.

To this end, this thesis is mainly concerned with that sector of civil society groups that champions the economic and political participation of their membership. These include The
Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Union, Zimbabwe Indigenous business women organization, Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association, the Affirmative Action Group, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network as well as the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum among other groups. The above named civil society organizations can be better described as interest groups. They represent the interests of different constituencies including industrialists, workers, women, indigenous entrepreneurs as well as those struggling under the yoke of ultra-poverty and political oppression. The active involvement and participation of such a social group in the activities of these organizations is therefore a crucial indicator of inclusion in Zimbabwe’s economic empowerment discourse.

Such participation can as well be measured in a variety of ways. Looking at the structure of these organizations, their sensitivity to disability issues can be evidenced by the inclusion of Persons with disabilities within the organizational structures. Another way of gauging participation is through assessing their programme content. As advocates of various interest groups, the content of their advocacy must as well include a disability component if ever they are to be regarded as promoting the participation of such a social group. The active involvement of persons with disabilities in civil society activities is poised to guarantee them a stake in their efforts to fight extreme poverty. This is so because in any policy formulation process, problems are defined outside of government and governments must react to successful pressure group tactics. Furthermore, the civil society agencies especially pressure groups usually assist the government in policy formulation so that the end results of the policy process become relevant to the needs of the people the policy is intended for.
In trying to place persons with disabilities within the policy formulation discourse, sight should not be lost of the role of the disabled persons’ organizations (DPOs) whose principal objective is to champion the cause of persons with disabilities.

According to Mtetwa (2011), disabled persons organisations do experience extreme technical and financial challenges that militate against their efforts to advance the disability emancipation agenda. Such technical challenges could as well be traced back to the fact that disability has been an area of charity and not right (Ibid). Because of that, such organizations tend to be staffed with people (of good heart) rather than those with the requisite technical expertise in various areas (see chapter 5 for a comprehensive discussion of the disabled person’s organisations).

Given these deficiencies, this thesis contends that the only way to economically empower persons with disabilities is to look beyond the disability movement. Rather, the broad civil society organizations should strive towards mainstreaming disability in their advocacy work. This is likely to make disability issues more visible to policy makers.

Another core issue in this thesis is then what are persons with disabilities doing to keep themselves afloat in the middle of discrimination, marginalization and powerlessness? It is worth observing that in the middle of such factors, persons with disabilities are doing a lot to ameliorate their situation. It is however observed that there is a dearth of literature regarding the survival strategies of such a social group. Anecdotal evidence however has it that person with disabilities live through what can be termed invisible means. This thesis however does not seek to totalize the circumstances of all persons with disabilities. However, in the absence of positive discrimination at all levels of Zimbabwe’s social structure, those that manage to get influential positions in both the public and private sectors are the lucky ones.
Under these circumstances, persons with disabilities strive to economically empower themselves through various means. It is contended that persons with disabilities are making frantic efforts to remain afloat in spite of a somewhat prohibitive social environment. This amounts to what Maphosa (1998) referred to as cultural dissidents. According to Maphosa (1998), cultural dissidents are people who have the courage to breach and redefine their society’s norms and values in pursuit of their own interests. In the case under discussion, persons with disabilities as outsiders are coming up with various survival strategies to keep themselves afloat. Such strategies include petty trading, the formation of housing cooperatives as well as making attempts to enter the formal economy through chance, pity or right.

In the final analysis, this section has briefly interrogated the disability discourse wherein disability has been defined and conceptualized. A brief synopsis of disability paradigms or models was introduced. Armed with such a conceptual and paradigmatic arsenal, the discussion delved into the main theme of the current thesis. Critical issues undergirding this thesis relate to the implications of such a disability discourse and public perceptions on disability on the participation of such a social group in Zimbabwe’s political and economic life. A few indicators of inclusion and exclusion were proffered namely participation in government administrative structures as well as their involvement in other civil, political and economic programmes conducted by critical policy stakeholders.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the evolution of development cooperation policies and a growing awareness that persons with disabilities and their families are among the poorest of the poor in terms of income opportunities, the lives of most persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe is yet to improve. Most
government development and poverty reduction policies and programs still do not include persons with disabilities as targeted beneficiaries or participants. In addition, most international and national stakeholders including Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) have registered little success in their efforts to raise awareness and advocate for inclusive and participatory development. This has left persons with disabilities wallowing in absolute poverty, social exclusion and marginalization.

It is however worth acknowledging that the same concern has been raised by various scholars and researchers on disability including Yeo (2005), Choruma (2007), Lang and Charowa, (2007), Munsaka (2012), among others. Of central concern to the generality of disability scholars and researchers is the fact that the vast majority of Persons with disabilities remain among the poorest of the poor, deprived of the ability let alone the opportunity to fulfill their basic needs. In the same light, disability in Zimbabwe has become an obstacle to economic and political opportunities as well as to general upward social mobility. Disability affects the chances of attending school, getting a job and participating as an equal in society (Choruma, 2007: 12).

When it comes to employment as a form of empowerment in line with the national empowerment policy trajectory, Persons with disabilities are not accorded the same access to job opportunities as their non-disabled counterparts. Such a state of affairs prevails largely as a result of negative social attitudes to disability. For example, a study by Lee (1999) revealed that less than 1% of persons with disabilities were in formal employment. By 2002, only 2% of Persons with disabilities were employed in the public sector and overall less than 7% of Persons with disabilities are in employment (NASCOH, 2002).
Given that Zimbabwe’s economy is now heavily informalised, Persons with disabilities are finding it extremely difficult to penetrate the informal sector due mainly to attitudinal and institutional factors and barriers. For instance, Persons with disabilities find it extremely difficult to secure loans and other forms of credit (Lang and Charowa, 2007 and Munsaka, 2012). This is largely because mainstream financial institutions, including microfinance institutions perceive Persons with disabilities and their families as a high – credit risk, and therefore very reluctant to lend in such situations. Once again, this further compounds and reinforces the cycle of poverty and disability in developing economies. This in turn leads to ever more entrenched social exclusion (Lang and Charowa, 2007).

Furthermore, poverty among persons with disabilities is not only confined to economic or financial deprivation but cuts across various facets of life including voicelessness and powerlessness (Yeo, 2001; Mwendwa, 2008 and Munsaka, 2012). A tour of the streets of Harare is bound to provide compelling evidence to the effect that disability and poverty are largely synonymous in Zimbabwe. Sight of persons with visual impairments begging and shouting for help coupled with their other counterparts playing a cat and mouse chase with municipal police stand as a sure sign that to have impairment in Zimbabwe amounts to being stripped off one’s dignity and humanity altogether. To worsen the situation, anecdotal evidence would almost suggest that those within the corridors of political and economic power treat the situation as both normal and natural. Such complacency on the part of national political and economic leadership is apparently flying in the face of countless empirical evidence suggesting a skewed social and economic system bent on marginalizing persons with disabilities more than any other segment of Zimbabwean society.
As a sign of exclusion and marginalization, by 2013, Zimbabwe still had no disability portfolio in its cabinet, with only two members representing more than two million persons with disabilities in a ceremonial and less powerful house of senate. The same scenario obtaining in national cabinet and parliament seems to recur within the administrative structure of government, wherein statistics indicate that in spite of glaring evidence of the risks associated with lack of representation (see Pitkin, 1967, Philips, 1995 and O’brian, 2012), Zimbabwe has got no judge with a disability (see the above section). The same scenario obtaining within the judiciary goes for the executive wherein despite compelling evidence especially from the women’s movement that a bureaucracy that does not reflect the demographic characteristics of a community it serves is bereft of the necessary democratic and administrative benchmarks expected in a civilized modern society, disability is not represented among the top government officials including permanent secretaries, directors as well as within various state institutions including parastatals, schools, colleges and universities. All this lack of political and economic power has the cumulative effect of leaving persons with disabilities in poverty, social deprivation and marginality.

It is in the light of the above state of affairs that the current thesis sets out to interrogate the nexus between poverty and disability in Zimbabwe from a policy dimension. Judging from numerous attempts to ameliorate the situation through the provision of public and social assistance and other arms of charity from government and other cooperating partners, the thesis argues that poverty among persons with disabilities results from lack of economic and political power.
1.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims at examining the extent to which persons with disability participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. To this end, the study will:

1. Analyse the disability discourse in the light of the process of formulating economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe.
2. Establish the extent to which the government promotes the active participation of persons with disabilities at vital levels of the formulation of economic empowerment policies.
3. Examine the perceptions of key stakeholders with respect to the participation of persons with disabilities in the process of formulating economic empowerment policies.
4. Examine the factors influencing the participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies.
5. Examine the coping strategies employed by persons with disabilities within the context of economic and political exclusion.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How is the disability discourse understood by both actors and stakeholders involved in the policy formulation process?
2. What are the implications of such an understanding on the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the national political and economic processes?
3. To what extent are persons with disabilities involved in the formulation of economic empowerment policies?
4. What are the perceptions of key stakeholders with respect to including the disability agenda as part of the national policy discourse?

5. What copying strategies do persons with disabilities employ to remedy their economic situation?

1.5. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Central to this thesis is that persons with disabilities are overrepresented on all indicators of poverty and social deprivation in Zimbabwe. Various studies have been undertaken on disability and social deprivation. Chief among these studies include the National Disability Survey of 1982, the Poverty Assessment Study of 1995 and 2003 respectively, the SINTEF (Lobe Aid study on the living conditions of persons with activity limitations in Zimbabwe (2003), a study on People with disabilities in Zimbabwe by Choruma (2007), a scoping study on disability issues in Zimbabwe by the Department for International development (DFID UK) (2007), a study on disability and higher education in Zimbabwe by Chataika (2007) as well as a study on the inclusion of the disability agenda in development by Munsaka (2012) among others. All these and other studies on disability not mentioned here continued to finger poverty as the sole menace among persons with disability with many of them recommending increased spending on Public assistance, social protection programmes as well as general social welfare.

On a similar note, this thesis is largely motivated by the fact that persons with disability seem to be overrepresented among those population groups living in absolute poverty. A tour of the streets of Harare would usually reveal that persons with disabilities are largely poor and live a life without dignity, a life of begging, vending and sometimes harassment by municipal police.
In spite of the huge amount of financial resources poured by both government and other development partners to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities, the war on poverty seems to continue unabated. It is in the light of such an understanding that this study is persuaded to believe that lack of participation in the national political and economic empowerment framework serve to perpetuate poverty within this social group.

Furthermore, the field of disability and participation in national economic and political processes remains critically under-researched, with only two doctoral theses making inroads into the subject. Such studies include doctoral theses by Chataika and Munsaka in 2007 and 2012 respectively. Arguably, these studies carried an emancipatory and empowerment agenda on access to higher education and inclusion of the disability agenda in development structures respectively.

It is the contention of the current thesis that none among all these studies was practically and precisely able to attribute poverty to lack of economic and political power. Such is the gap that the current study seeks to fill. Using economic empowerment policies as an example, the study largely traces poverty among Persons with disabilities as nothing short of political and economic power. The politics of presence or what Pitkin (1967) famously referred to as the concept of representation stands as the guiding principle undergirding the thesis. The understanding being that the absence of Persons with disabilities in various political and governance structures including the cabinet, parliament, the top echelons of the bureaucracy as well as the civil society organisations that represent the platform of ideas and public opinion leaves such a social group without a voice when it comes to the formulation and implementation of economic empowerment policies.
Building on the strides gained by the women and the feminist movement, the study illustrates the need for political and economic power on the basis of two disability types namely visual impairment and albinism. The choice of these disability types is largely influenced by a plethora of studies on disability that revealed that such disability types do not confine the bearer to charity or social assistance. Given the right opportunities in life, such people can easily do without depending on the family or the state.

1.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has served to introduce the thesis, giving a conceptual familiarity to the reader on disability issues including models as well as their applicability to the political and economic environment of Zimbabwe. Further to that, the chapter has situated the plight of persons with disability within the general political and economic purview of Zimbabwe wherein it has been pointed out that disability is synonymous with poverty. The chapter labored to discuss how this relation between poverty and disability is linked to the political, administrative and civic structure of Zimbabwe wherein disability does not feature that much within all these structures. The chapter ended by observing that the best way to address the problem of extreme poverty among persons with disabilities is to grant them access to political and economic power. This is best realized if their interests and experiences find practical and moral expression in the national political, economic and bureaucratic structures.

1.7. ORGANISATION OF THESIS

Chapter One deals with introductory and background issues. These include a brief synopsis of the disability discourse. The chapter introduces scholarly and practice arguments about various
concepts and definitions of disability. In addition, the chapter briefly introduces the political and economic situation of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe together with the policy implications. The chapter goes on to articulate a statement of the problem. The statement of the problem is primarily premised upon the empirical and anecdotal evidence linking poverty to disability as well as the need for a paradigm shift from social protection to a more sustainable economic and political empowerment approach. The chapter proceeds to spell out the aims, objectives as well as research questions undergirding the study before concluding with a justification of the same.

Chapter Two reviews literature on disability marginalization and the importance of participating in national economic and political processes. Taking from chapter 1, the chapter further interrogates the disability discourse, giving an elaborate analysis of models of disability together with a nexus between the social model and the social exclusion approach. The chapter interrogates the concept of participation linking it to poverty and empowerment. A closer examination of case studies on disability and economic empowerment in various countries is then given.

Chapter Three interrogates the methodological underpinnings of the study. The chapter specifically examines the applicability of qualitative methodology such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and ethnographic studies. The chapter concludes by setting out the process used in the analysis and presentation of data as well as the ethical implications associated with disability research.

Chapter Four examines the extent of participation of persons with disabilities in political and administrative structures of government. Here, evidence is given to the effect that persons with disabilities are fully aware of the processes involved in the political processes of Zimbabwe
including the likely outcomes of lack of representation and participation within the national political and administrative ranks. The chapter reveals the difficulties encountered by Persons with disabilities in penetrating the corridors of political and administrative power.

Chapter Five examines the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in civil society organizations. The chapter examines the role played by stakeholders in the policy formulation process, setting out examples from various human rights and other stakeholders critical to the policy formulation trajectory. Of central importance is the critical role played by trade unions. Here the perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders towards the participation of persons with disabilities in their programmes is the central theme. The chapter ends with a discussion of the role of Disabled Persons Organisations in policy formulation.

Chapter Six provides an analysis of the factors that predispose persons with disabilities to social exclusion. Here, the issue of endogenous and exogenous barriers to participation is interrogated. The chapter is central to the participation of persons with disabilities in the economic empowerment policies of Zimbabwe. The discussion scrutinizes the disability discourse, situating it in the public realm.

Chapter Seven discusses the efforts made by persons with disabilities in addressing their own problems. The chapter demonstrates that persons with disabilities are doing all they can to improve their lives. Their activities in this regards include participating like others in society as well as engaging in informal sector economic activities.

Chapter Eight is a synthesis of the whole discussion. The chapter deals with issues of summary, conclusions and recommendations that have been arrived at on the basis of a combination of voices from literature, key informant interviews, ethnographic testimonies and
presentations as well as narratives from persons with disabilities collected through both focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. INTRODUCTION

Although Zimbabwe is generally comprised of poor people as per the 2003 Poverty Assessment Study Survey, the same survey reveals that persons with disabilities are over represented in that bracket. Poverty among persons with disabilities cannot therefore the simply explained in terms of disabling attitudes and social prejudices rather, they are rooted in structural inequalities and social processes. In this regard, it is here contended that the structural dimension of poverty and disability paves the way for an analysis of the participation of such a social group in various social, economic and political processes that, in interaction with each other produce empowerment. Pursuant to such an observation, it is here contended that Zimbabwe social structure promotes and perpetuates poverty among persons with disabilities. Failure to recognize the importance of disability as a crucial stratification dichotomy has meant that the legislative and executive arms of government are devoid of the need for representation and participation of such a social group (see chapter 4 for political participation and representation). The civil society has also taken a leaf from government and elected to relegate disability issues either to charity or to disabled people’s organizations which are technically and financially incapacitated to launch a formidable political challenge against the structurally pauperizing conditions.
2.1. POVERTY AND DISABILITY

The existence of a link between disability and poverty is a well-established phenomenon. This is so despite the fact that there are some among Persons with disabilities who, given the appropriate social and economic environment are able to wean themselves from conditions of poverty. In the same vein, the national economic empowerment drive should not lose sight of the fact that no poverty program can be effective if it ignores its poorest minority, and no disability program will be successful if it ignores the conditions faced by most persons with disabilities (World Bank, 2007).

The thesis contends that poverty among Persons with Disabilities is largely caused by lack of opportunities to participate in economic empowerment policies and programmes. According to the World Bank (2007), people with disabilities tend to be among the most socially and economically marginalized populations wherever they exist. As such, persons with disabilities are more likely to be poorer than their non-disabled peers, and people living in poverty are more likely to become disabled than those who are not (Elwan 1999; Yeo 2005). Most international aid agencies and scholars agree that poverty and disability are causally intertwined. Some of the main factors generating this relationship (in addition to the capacity limitations imposed by the impairments themselves) are the inappropriately limited expectations and self-reinforcing combinations of social and economic discrimination, inaccessible built environments and expensive, socially isolating, and counterproductive disability policies and institutions typically faced by persons with disabilities (Choruma, 2007). In most instances, persons with disabilities are often denied access to educational and employment opportunities, and are, therefore, commonly forced to depend on others in their families and communities for
assistance and economic support (Choruma, 2007; Coleridge, 2005; Lang and Charowa, 2007). Consequently, persons with disabilities, irrespective of their economic environments, tend to have a higher than average likelihood of living in poverty.

As Wairimu and Mwendwa (2008) observe, one in every five persons living in poverty has got a disability. Wairimu and Mwendwa (ibid) further give the example of Asia wherein of the four hundred million persons with disabilities, forty percent of them live in poverty. Elwin (1999) further suggests that at least Fifteen to Twenty percent of the poor in developing countries have a disability. It is from such a state of affairs that Yeo (2001) came to the conclusion that persons with disabilities are disproportionately poor and poor people are disproportionately disabled. Implicit in such a statistical fact is that such a social group is overwhelmingly poor as compared to other social groups. (See table 2.1 for statistical representation of disability, economic opportunity and poverty in Zimbabwe).

The present study is premised on the proposition that the problems of discrimination faced by persons with disabilities are socially constructed (Mtetwa, 2012). In this light, disability and its attendant low social, economic and political status is no way a result of divine proclamation or deserved but a direct consequence of social attitudes, myths and misconceptions proffered by the non-disabled majority (Abberley 1992, Drake, 1999, and Oliver 1990. These attitudes, stereotypes and misconceptions are given effect through institutional discrimination.

As the table below illustrates, society has nothing to offer to people at the bottom of the social structure. This assertion is made on the understanding that Zimbabwe’s social structure may be loosely depicted in terms of four distinct socio-economic and political classes. These are non-disabled men who usually occupy most positions of authority at the political and economic front which is in turn followed by non-disabled women, who, due to their socially ascribed
gender roles and position in society have to a greater extent managed to negotiate their way out of social disadvantage. The third class, though not homogeneous consists of persons with disabilities. This class has endured exclusion, marginalisation and sometimes ostracism primarily on the basis of their perceived social and economic inadequacies. This thesis is fully aware of the plight of women with disabilities as occupying the bottom step on the underclass ladder. The table below shows the poverty levels of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe.
Table 2.1

Proportion of disabled persons prevented from maintaining a significant economic activity or going to school, by sector and by poverty category, percent, Zimbabwe 2003

Preventing economic activity or attending school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>POVERTY CATEGORY</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>TOTAL PERCENT</th>
<th>TOTAL NO.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non poor</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non poor</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table is authenticated by Coleridge’s (2005) assertion that disability often creates and exacerbates poverty by increasing isolation and putting economic strains not only on the individual concerned but also on the family. Information presented in the above table is further corroborated by Choruma’s assertion that disability affects the chances of attending school, finding employment, and participating as equals in society. Choruma (2007:12) observes: “literacy levels of people with disabilities are generally lower than the rest of the population, while persons with disabilities are much less likely to be engaged in economic activity than the
rest of the population”. Choruma goes on to make an important observation that due to lower educational levels, coupled with the general negative attitudes persons with disabilities endure in Zimbabwean society, difficulties in obtaining employment affect persons with disabilities of all ages. In agreement, Coleridge (2005) contended that poverty is just but a symptom of a greater malaise, an intrinsically flawed materialism which fails to value the earth and its resources as well as all the people who live on it. Maintaining such a perspective, Coleridge came to the conclusion that disability provides the key to unlock the secrets of where the deeper values lay. Although Coleridge and Choruma largely place due emphasis on the need to empower persons with disabilities by giving them economic power, their assessment of poverty and disability is compromised by their belief that the whole exercise has got great financial implications. As a result, Coleridge emphasizes community based rehabilitation as an empowerment strategy. This type of academic and practical assessment of the situation of persons with disabilities simply serves to prove the point consistently made by disability scholars such as Oliver (1990), Shakespeare (1993) and Morris (2003) that in seeking to understand the feelings and situation of persons with disabilities, views from disabled scholars should receive much weight than those from non-disabled scholars. Nevertheless, this thesis derives benefits from some of the assertions and observations from non-disabled scholars.

In doing so, the thesis however takes a political angle, wherein, poverty among persons with disabilities is explained in terms of the powerlessness such a social group endures in a society whose political and economic framework takes no account of the needs of the minority groups (see chapter 4 and 6). In putting this argument across, it is worth of note that this study does not dream of a utopian epoch wherein political representation will automatically translate into the eradication of poverty. However, it is here contended that if persons with disabilities are
part of Zimbabwe’s legislative and executive organs, their views and needs are most likely to be reflected in economic empowerment policies.

In taking the political and economic dimension to disability emancipation, it is worth acknowledging the views of other disability practitioners in this area. To this effect, the issue of representation or voice in policy making is emphasized by Dube et al (2005) who observe that persons with disabilities generally endure low social status such that even when supported by empirical evidence of violations, their arguments are not given the credibility they should as coming from experts in disability rights. It is only when they hold the same politically powerful positions as the non-disabled persons that their expertise is considered and recognized (Dube et al, 2005). Although Dube et al engaged in a sound discussion of Zimbabwe’s disability and the policy formulation process, their discourse has tended to be extremely peripheral, laying emphasis only on international dimensions without pointing out the circumstances of Zimbabweans with disabilities. As the report suggests, the political circumstances of Zimbabwe had a great influence in the extent to which the political exclusion of such a social group could be discussed and analysed. From this presentation, it is clear that the issue of political participation of persons with disabilities will go a long way in granting them a voice within the education and other economic empowerment areas.

2.2. CONCEPTUALISING PARTICIPATION

The words such as participation and empowerment have tended to represent the new paradigm in the modern development discourse. These words were borne out of the need to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality especially among the vulnerable groups in society such as women (Amoah, 2014). Articulating the historical development of participation, Mansuri and Rao (2013:
trace the history of participation back to the religious tradition. To this effect such religious faiths as Hindu and Islam are said to foster the participation of their members.

The term participation has received much backing from the so-called development as humanness concept promoted by such international development agencies as the United Nations especially in the eighties. Echoing the same sentiment, one of the main advocates of participation, Erhard Berner, writing in 2010 emphatically asserts that participation, like empowerment, good governance and self help have become buzz words in the development debate and practice. As a concept, participation became the clarion call of many who believed that unless the beneficiaries themselves take an active role in their own affairs, whatever programmes may be conducted to help them, will not be sustainable.

Development therefore became a human right. The right to development became the bedrock upon which community programmes and projects are anchored. Participation became the vehicle through which development could be realized. Such terms as participatory development came to characterize development aid by most donor agencies. Contributing to the development and essence of participation as a central development tool, Gomez et al (2010: 1) keenly observes that “participation of local communities and civil society groups in intervention strategies is considered key in development practice. It has even reached a certain inviolable status since the development sector was criticized for carrying out top-down policies”. The rights based approach to development came to carry some political connotations spunning what came to be known as participatory democracy.

As a popular discourse on the development and human rights arena, participation his defined differently by different scholars and institutions. For instance, the World Bank Learning Group defined participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control
over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1995). Gaventa (2002:1) quoted in Munsaka (2012:122) contends that participation implies pathways through which poor "people exercise voice through new forms of deliberation, consultation and or mobilization designed to inform and to influence larger institutions and policies." Discussing participation with reference to vulnerable groups, Stiefel and Wolfe (1994:5) defined participation as “organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control.”

In this thesis, participation in policy making means the ability of citizens to partake in, get involved in and assume an active role in the political, civic, economic and social life of their communities. By empowerment, communities and people feel enabled to participate in the decision-making process and programmes to control and overcome their lack of power. So participation which refers to involving people is central to empowerment practice (Ledwith and Spingett, 2010). A very interesting study on participation comes from Arnstein (1969) who puts citizen participation as a categorical term for citizen power and calls for a redistribution of power to the citizens who were once excluded from the political and economic processes. Arnstein developed a “ladder of participation” to differentiate what is included in participation from what is not, arguing that the difference between empty ritual of participation and having the real power could affect the outcome of the process (Arnstein, 1969). Asserting that citizen participation is citizen power, Arnstein (1969) depicts participation as an eight-rung ladder, with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens’ decision making responsibility or power in determining a desired outcome. (For an illustration of the ladder of participation, see figure 2.1 below):
Sharing this reasoning, Berner (2010) put forward four main categories of participation namely: ritualistic participation, exploitative participation, exclusive participation as well as substitute participation. In keeping with the thrust of this thesis, these categories are adapted to depict the extent to which persons with disabilities are able to participate in the economic, social and political processes of Zimbabwe.

Ritualistic participation entails manipulation of the participation process wherein decision makers simply impose their will on persons with disabilities, giving the impression that by
soliciting for information from them, their decisions are taken seriously. Participation therefore becomes simply a ritual process undertaken without effective decision-making power.

Consultative meetings become mere rituals to legitimize preconceived plans and to manipulate rather than facilitate the process (Berner, 2010). The most illustrating example of a ritualistic process of participation of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe is the 2013 National Gender Policy. Although women with disabilities were consulted during the build up to the policy in question, they were surprised to discover that their views had been thrown by the way side when it came to the final policy document which carries no iota of their concerns and aspirations (Mtetwa, 2013).

Similarly, the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act (2007) requires that there be a person representing Persons with disabilities on the National Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Board. It is however here contended that having a representative on the National Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Board without meaningful representation in parliament, cabinet as well as the secretariat where policy implementation takes place amounts to nothing short of ritualistic participation and hence, a recipe for perpetual poverty and social marginalization (for the dangers of ritualistic participation, see chapter 6). Birtha (2013) draws a distinction between active and effective participation claiming that the latter is more preferable because not only does it guarantee that the voices of Persons with disabilities are heard but also that they are incorporated into the policies.

Exploitative participation on the other hand entails manipulating the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to win elections. The fact that persons with visual impairment cannot write and read printed inscriptions on the ballot paper has been used by various politicians to their own advantage. Under the guise of docile beneficiaries of the good will of the party that
brought national independence and therefore social protection programmes in the form of financial and material handouts to the less privileged in society, research has it that persons with visual impairments have been sheepishly led into the ballot booth and coerced to vote in favour of certain candidates contrary to their political preferences (see Chapter Four for a testimonial on manipulation and ritualistic participation).

Such a state of affairs was perpetuated by the Electoral Act which, until sometime in 2009 required that the presiding officer, in the presence of two police officers and another poling officer, assists the visually impaired voters to vote making their vote a public secret. Following the classic case of Simon Mvindi and others Versus the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe and others, in which five people with visual impairment challenged this kind of voting, the Supreme Court sitting as a constitutional court unanimously held that the government was supposed to ensure the secrecy of the ballot for such voters. However, as evidence that the system still wishes to hold on to that exploitative nature, the amended electoral act still insists that in the case of a blind voter, the presiding officer must be present to witness whether the assistant is voting according to the instruction of the voter with a visual impairment. Superficially, persons with visual impairment have the same right to vote like all the citizens of Zimbabwe. However, the secrecy of their vote is very likely to be exploited by the most powerful politicians. This makes their role in the making of policy through voting peripheral if not tokenistic. As a result, some participants interviewed as part of this thesis, especially those with visual impairment indicated that they were not even keen to participate in national electoral processes. (See Chapter Four for a discussion of participation in political processes).

Exclusive participation involves a situation whereby the views of the majority are represented by those of their leaders who act as key informants. To take the words of Berner
“In practice, development projects critically depend on key informants, politicians and community leaders who supposedly articulate everybody’s needs. Much of what is considered participatory is more a process whereby large numbers of people are represented by a relatively small number of participants. This is primarily about the organized interaction of leaders than members per se. Field research leading to this thesis revealed that persons with disabilities are represented by people they do not even know. Some participants even bemoaned a situation whereby their feelings and aspirations are presented to policy makers at both national and international platforms by non-disabled politicians and senior bureaucrats. A case in point mostly cited is the United Nations Conference that coincided with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 23 September 2013. Information from ethnographic studies revealed that none with a disability accompanied the president to New York for a conference on disability. (For more information, see a discussion in Chapter Four on the quest for self representation). Substitute participation refers to a situation whereby the views and grievances of the vulnerable and marginalized are represented by their organizations claiming to “know everything” about their concerns. Various disabled Persons Organisations and organisations which are into service provision in disability especially those led by non-disabled persons have been accused of posing as true spokespersons for the needs of persons with disabilities capable of forwarding their concerns and aspirations to government.

According to Cornwall (2011: 74), “incorporation rather than exclusion is the best form of control since frontal negation or attacks to those challenges to the dominant order often serve only to strengthen and legitimate the dissent in the eyes of society, co-option becomes the more attractive option for asserting control. Cornwall’s assertion could arguably be a reflection of the Zimbabwe’s political and administrative framework wherein representation, especially for
persons with disabilities is used as a way of “silencing the dissenting voices” of those who are likely to challenge exclusion in the eyes of society. (See a discussion in Chapter Five on disability mainstreaming by mainstream civil society organisations).

## 2.3. PARTICIPATION, POLICY FORMULATION AS IMPLEMENTATION: A NEXUS

A sound analysis of the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe will in no way be comprehensive without a discussion of the philosophical and empirical arguments surrounding what Philips (1995) calls the politics of representation. To this effect, the reader might have even discovered that the whole thesis argument is hinged on political and institutional representation as a model of participation when it comes to making fundamental political and economic decisions of a national scope. In a similar vein, participation is here conceived as representation within crucial national policy making structures including the legislature, the executive as well as the judiciary.

As shall be defined below, the writer is fully cognizant of a plurality of conceptual and theoretical metaphors surrounding representation in modern political discourse. For example, Fraser (1996) refers to a distinction between the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution as two distinct categories. The politics of redistribution, she charges, is more centered on the need to realign the economic structures of society in order to make them responsive to certain social groups, usually those previously marginalized on account of sex, ethnicity and disability. On the other hand, political recognition denotes the quest for any social group to be recognized as distinct from others and to be apportioned the requisite political and legal space and representation. The ardent proponents of political representation argue that it
encourages the dissemination of the sovereign’s presence and its transformation in an ongoing and regulated job of contesting existing policies and reconstructing legitimacy.

The current thesis therefore embraces political representation as put forward by Pitkin (1967) who defines representation as the process of acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them. The representative must act independently; his action must involve discretion and judgment; he must be one who acts. The representative must also be capable of independent action and judgment—and, despite the resulting potential for conflict between (them) about what is to be done, that conflict must normally take place or if it occurs an explanation must be possible in terms of the interest of the represented. Zimbabwe like most progressive countries has over the years embraced political representation through a parliamentary system.

The legislature in any democratic society is considered the most fundamental arm of the state in promoting democratic governance. Parliament in true democracies serves to secure the foundations of democracy by translating the will of the people into the law of land. At its core, the legislature is a mirror of society’s soul. The question is how to ensure that the composition of the legislature and the decisions it makes are a true reflection of the will of all people whom this body is designed to represent (Bainomugisha, 2006). This view is equally shared by Saward (2006) who argues that all interests must be protected and represented in an objective way. Although Saward’s presentation on political representation was inclined towards nature and the environment, his conceptualization of epistemological representation is of essence in this thesis. In Saward’s argument, representation can only be realized by the represented if the representative is perceived to be a true representing their interests. In the case of persons with disabilities, anyone claiming to represent disability interest in parliament and cabinet must truly belong to the disability fraternity and must have been chosen through a legitimate process by
persons with disabilities. Such is the process provided for in the current constitution regarding the two senators representing persons with disabilities in senate. However, as shall be clearer in chapter 4, this representation is below the threshold given the seeming powerlessness of the senate.

According to Shafritz (2005) decisions on the political arena are mostly influenced by individuals’ perceptions of a situation rather than by a rational concept of objective reality. As such, argues Shafritz (2005), policymakers bring two kinds of intelligence to bear on their thinking. First is their mental ability to cope with complicated problems. Second is the information they have on and the experience they have with the issue at hand. Both kinds of intelligence are then filtered through their ideological predispositions and personal biases before an attitude toward any given problem is set. The aspect of attitude towards a certain social phenomenon therefore takes centre stage in decision making. If decisions are based on perceptions, personal experiences and attitudes towards a social problem, then it follows that the policy outcomes themselves are skewed in favour of the dominant classes in society. The need for political representation by various social groups becomes the only point of convergence wherein views and perceptions from a multiplicity of groups are packaged into a balanced policy that reflects and respects physical and social differences. Since disability is a social construct born out of the negative attitudes and perceptions of the non-disabled majority towards the minority with impairments, lack of political voice is likely to result in policies that pay no attention to their concerns.

Once more, it is worth emphasizing that political decisions are seldom made on the objective merits of a case because a case only has merit in the eyes of a political decision maker if he or she is intelligent enough to see it and, equally important, was ideologically and
politically predisposed to support it (Shafritz, 2005). Political democracy depends not only on economic and social conditions but also on the design of political institutions. The bureaucratic agency, the legislative committee, and the appellate court are arenas for contending social forces, but they are also collections of standard operating procedures and structures that define and defend interests. They are political actors in their own right. (1984: 738).

2.4. THE ROLE OF BUREAUCRATS IN POLICY FORMULATION

Having articulated the conceptual debates surrounding participation and representation, this section interrogates the argument that a bureaucracy that is not representative of demographic and structural arrangements obtaining within a particular society is bereft of the necessary legitimacy to objectively implement the political decisions. This section therefore seeks to illuminate to the reader the central role played by bureaucrats in the formulation and implementation of any policy with a view to illustrating the implications of lack of representation. According to Hill and Hupe, 2002:5) “any public policy is subjectively defined by an observer as being such and is usually perceived as comprising a series of patterns of related decisions to which many circumstances and personal, group, and organizational influences have contributed”. Scholars in the field of policy formulation have tended to talk of a rational actor model of human behavior to explain and predict the workings of policy processes. Central to this study is the observation that policy can best be understood as a form of backward reasoning, flowing from individuals to organizations going back to policy making. (See Hill (1997), Hill and Hupe (2002), Hughes (2003) and Bacchi and Eveline (2010) for a detailed discussion of policy formulation and implementation). Policy implementation stands out as a key theme in any assessment of the extent to which certain social groups are included or excluded.
from the mainstream society. Hailing from what Philips (1995) has termed “the politics of presence”, it is here argued that persons with disabilities are not likely to benefit much from any policy unless and until their presence is clearly felt in Zimbabwe’s bureaucratic hierarchy. Lipsky’s street level bureaucracy and Hupe’s bureaucratic discretion stand out as key reasons why policy implementation becomes as important as formulation. Emphasizing the point of bureaucratic autonomy in policy implementation, prominent architects of implementation theory Pressman and Wildavsky (1984: xxi) contend that “We can work neither with a definition of policy that excludes any implementation nor one that includes all implementation. There must be a starting point. If no action is begun, implementation cannot take place. There must be also an end point. Implementation cannot succeed or fail without a goal against which to judge it.

Hill’s contention could roughly be traced back to Lipsky’s theory of street level bureaucracy. Lipsky postulates that policy making can take place as much at street level as it does through the conventionally accepted top-down approach (Lipsky, 1980: emphasis by the author). In this instance, the political functionaries provide objectives; the duty of the bureaucrats is to develop appropriate implementation frameworks (Hill and Hupe, 2002:5). Lipsky (1980: 3) defines street level bureaucracy as public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their duties, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work. In Lipsky’s theorizing, these actors are policy makers living with an environment over which they have no control.

Street-level bureaucrats see themselves as decision makers, whose decisions are based on normative choices, rather than as functionaries responding to rules, procedures or policies (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000). According to Wright (2003: 14) “the legal framework, policy context and organizational apparatus structure street level bureaucrats work and limit the
scope of their actions”. From this perspective, Wright posits that street level bureaucrats make policy in two senses: firstly, in their discretionary decision-making and through the collective effects of their individual actions. Lipsky talks of a practical dilemma confronting the street level bureaucrats, are required to provide flexible, responsive and caring service to meet individual needs, at the same time, they are bound by the impersonal and detached rules of the organizational bureaucracy within which they work (Wright 2003:15). This interwoven relationship between the definition of policy from the point of their formulation and the acts of implementing it has left scholars like Hill and Hupe (2002) with no option but to lay emphasis on a definition of policy that encompasses the active role played by bureaucrats. To this effect, Hill and Hupe (2002:4) put forward the view that “Though policy is to be distinguished from decision, it is less readily distinguishable from administration. Policy involves behavior as well as intentions, actions, as well as inaction”.

According to Wright (2003:1), policies cannot be understood in isolation from the means of their execution. The author further argues that, policy implementation is not simply a peripheral matter of technicality or practicality, but is central to understanding the constitution of what policies are and what they mean to people. The emphasis is, on how service delivery is accomplished and emerges in practice, through social interaction. Wright (2003:12) augments the argument advanced in this study that organizations are made up of individuals and social action takes place through interaction. Any attempt to deal with the processes of interaction will illuminate what is sometimes articulated as collective organizational action (ibid, emphasis by the author).

Lipsky (1980) also contributes to this discourse by arguing that street level bureaucrats have scope for discretion and decision-making in their role. Mostly their work is complex,
therefore rules, instructions and guidelines are not a satisfactory replacement for their discretion. Instead, on many occasions their job requires personal reactions which cannot be substituted by formats or "exercises" planned in advance. Their discretion is important in order to clarify a situation in a sensitive manner and weigh possible ways of action. Certain functions of their job will become difficult or impossible if their discretion is decreased. Their individual decisions and unique actions total the behavior of the bureaucratic organization where they work., it is therefore argued, public policy is not devised top-down by senior levels, it is implemented and executed bottom-up by the street level bureaucrats(Lipsky, 1980). Central to such an argument is that policy does not exist until the social actors who deliver and receive it bring it into being.

Having articulated the discretionary nature of bureaucracy, the question remains, what then should be done to bring about accountability to such an institution? The answer was provided by Page (1985) quoted in Hill and Hupe (2002) who argues that the ‘representative bureaucracy’ view that ‘a system is more democratic when the socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of top government officials resemble those of the nation as a whole. On this note, failure to guarantee representation of persons with disabilities within Zimbabwe’s bureaucratic apex simply means that their participation in the implementation of crucial policies is negligible. (See Chapter Six on participation in economic empowerment programmes such as land and mines for the dangers of lack of representation in bureaucratic structures).

As has been discussed in chapter one, disability is a detestable social condition associated with inferiority, negative social attitudes as well as stigma. In this light, for any policy to work for the marginalized groups, unless the source of stigma is removed in a miraculous way, efforts must be made to plant members of that group within strategic positions within the implementing agencies. Of paramount importance to Zimbabwe’s indigenization framework are the positions
of authority and influence in the ministries of Youth Development, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment as well as the ministry of Small and Medium enterprise Development among others. From a discussion in chapter one, the author has tried to make it apparently clear that due to social attitudes that are associated with disability in Zimbabwe, such a social group does not have any means either defector or dejurre to control the working of a bureaucracy.

2.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Having addressed the issues of participation, empowerment, disability and poverty within the context of the policy formulation discourse; this section endeavours to articulate the theoretical issues undergirding this study. The section positions the plight of persons with disabilities within a social constructivist framework wherein disability is viewed in a social context and not in a medical perspective. From this perspective, an attempt is made to adopt the social model of disability as the analytic tool of explaining the socio-economic and political context within which persons with disability live. To further buttress the above argument, efforts are made to blend the social model of disability with the social exclusion approach in a manner that produces a compendious assessment and explanation of the circumstances within which economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe are formulated.

2.5.1. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

The social constructivist theory posits that reality is socially constructed in the process of interaction. Central to this theoretical assumption, is the belief that human experience of the world is always mediated by the socially inherited meanings actors actively confer upon it (Weinberg, 2009: 285). Most social scientists summarise this theory by quoting Thomas’s
famous theorem that goes thus “if men defines situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (ibid). For the current thesis, disability represents society’s construction and image of its relationships with those deemed to be physically and pigmentally different. In other words, disability does not exist, outside precise social and cultural constructions. There is no attitude toward disability outside a series of societal references and constructions (Stiker, 2000: 14).

In the case at hand, the way disability is understood by the mainstream society as well as by persons with disabilities themselves is primarily a product of socially constructed subjective reality of what various impairments can and cannot do or achieve in particular social and economic environments. Implicitly, social behaviours including language use, social action, and worldly events generally, derive both their intelligibility and their value only from the socially constructed contexts within which they are observed. Emphasising this point, Weinberg (2009) contends that neither any segments of human behavior nor any other worldly events have intrinsic or unequivocal meaning. Their meanings are inserted and projected upon them by actors with any number of different practical interests in them.

In disability literature, the social constructivist theory culminates into what is commonly referred to as the social model of disability. As such, this thesis is largely informed by this model. However, in the process of elucidating on this model, it is important that the reader be introduced to other model against which the social model is compared. The next section therefore examines the models of disability.
2.5.1.0. MODELS OF DISABILITY

In order to understand disability and its effects on the levels of participation in the formulation and implementation of economic empowerment policies, it is important to understand the context within which disability itself is understood by society. Models help a lot in this exercise as they provide a framework within which various actors understand and deal with disability.

In common use of language, a model is a simple and sometimes simplistic representation that helps understand the more difficult properties of a real-life situation, and in some instances to explain or interpret a phenomenon. The most common types of model might be of the sort used by town planners or architects, or by civil engineers for instance, before they proceed to build a bridge. The purpose of such models is to help visualize the end product, or to test whether the bridge will fall down before it is built (Munsaka, 2012: 16). Models are commonly used in mathematics to solve specific problems. Models are also used in economics to determine the resource allocation matrices.

In a bid to provide an explanation of the reason why persons with disabilities face poverty, disability scholars came up with a plethora of models to disability. As discussed in chapter one, these models ordinarily include the medical model, the charity model, the social model, the political model as well as the human rights model. Notwithstanding the current bio-psycho-social model popularized by the World Health Organisation, this study observes that the medical or personal tragedy model and the social model are the extreme concepts constituting the bi-polar modeling within which disability is understood.
2.5.1.1. The medical model of disability

The medical model of disability attributes disability to the physiological or biological consequences of impairment. The remedy in this case becomes treatment and rehabilitation so as to normalize the abnormal person. As Jackson (1990: 22) observes, in both Shona and Ndebele culture, misfortunes, ill-health and disability are widely seen as having both a natural and supernatural cause. The supernatural cause is, usually witchcraft or vengeful spirits explain why misfortunes happen to a given person at a given time, and not to someone else or to the same person at different times. According to Chataika (2007) the medical model treats disability as a personal predicament. This model not only medicalises disability, but it also individualises and privatizes what is in fundamental respects a social and political problem (Oliver, 1990). The medical model assumes that disability is a medical condition that is inherent in the individual. As such, it is the disabled person’s functional ability that deviates from that of the normal human body (Edwards 2000).

Drake (1999) pursues the medical model of disability by retracing it back to the work of genetics, from this angle; disability is a result of genetic inferiority (Mtetwa, 2012). This so-called scientific model treats persons with disabilities as sub-normal, biologically inferior and different from the rest of society (Abbey, 2012). If the cause of disability is understood this way, then it is likely that society responds to it with stigma and humiliation. In pursuit of this argument, Abbay (2012) emphasizes that the problem with what he terms the individual or biomedical model of disability is that it treats disability simply as a malfunction of physiological, anatomical, or psychological malfunction of the body. It therefore tends to be too reductionist by viewing disability simply as a defect located in one’s body. The model considers disability to be a tragic consequence of illness, injury or impairment (Abbay, 2012).
In terms of the medical model, the suffering and pain that is always set to characterize the lives of those regarded as disabled reside in the body itself. From this understanding, society’s role becomes that of providing medical care. As Oliver (1990:20) observes, the sick person lives in a state of social suspension until he gets better or worse. Implicitly, persons with disabilities, from the medical model spend a lifetime in a similar suspended state. They exist in partial isolation from society as undefined and ambiguous people (ibid). In the words of Abbay (2012:49) “the problems and challenges these people face due to society’s attitudes, cultural beliefs and practices, and physical structures and institutions, including laws and policies, are seen as disadvantages they should confront as a consequence of their physical and/or mental impairments”.

This analysis brings us to what Talcott Parsons has come to refer to as the sick role. In his analysis of deviance in society, Parsons revealed that the sick role is associated with the exemption of the sick individual from other normal duties. Parsons talks of two predominant features of the sick role which are of importance to this thesis:

First, illness is a withdrawal into a dependent relationship. It implies that one is literally asking to be taken care of. Disability is normally used as the basis of legitimation of this claim (Parsons, 1951: 285). The sick role therefore depicts the passive avoidance of obligations and poverty dependence on others (ibid). The sick role entails the lifting of usually expected roles and obligations. This includes among others the suspension of domestic and employment on condition that professional help is sought out to remedy the situation.

The inclusion or exclusion of persons with disabilities in critical social undertakings as the public offices becomes problematic since sick people should be exempted from crucial social, political and economic responsibilities until they “recover”. Pity or charity usually
exercised through palliative or other forms of sympathetic care must take primacy over social inclusion. The sick role as defined by Talcott Parsons as applied to disability by various disability experts denotes temporality rather than permanency. It is expected that the sick person either recovers or dies. It is from such an understanding that society exempts the sick individual till any of the two eventualities comes to pass. This scenario makes the sick role concept difficult to examine and situate it in the circumstances of Persons with disabilities. This is so primarily because disability (especially visual impairment and albinism) is in no way a temporary state of affairs but a permanent state of being.

It is important to understand that medical practitioners have played a very crucial role in the lives of Persons with disabilities. For instance, it is an unobjectionable fact of life that advances in medicine, have gone a long way in ameliorating the lives of persons with disabilities. The fact that there are some persons with disabilities in great need of medical and rehabilitation services is not deniable. Such impairments as epilepsy and other mental challenges ordinarily require extra medical care as well as advancements in medical techniques. Pursuant to this line of thought, Oliver (1996) contends that some forms of disability would require constant medical care and attention. Such an acknowledgement however does not seek to condone the supremacy of the medical professionals to superintend over the social, economic and political rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities. More so, the current study observes that persons with albinism and visual impairment do not ordinarily fall within the category of those who must constantly receive medical attention in order to survive. Rather, their impairments produce physical, social as well as attitudinal barriers to social inclusion.
2.5.1.2. The charity model.

The charity model is perceived as an extension of the medical or personal tragedy models. In terms of this model, disability is viewed as a state of being attracting sympathy, pity and therefore warranting gifts and donations. According to Edmonds (2005), the charity model was the principal model until World war two. This is a philanthropic approach that provided aid as well as medical treatment and safe keeping. A common way of raising funds for disability projects was to portray persons with disability as in need of help, care and protection from the non-disabled people. This entrenched society’s view of persons with disabilities as dependent. To those described as being less fortunate and defective. In addition, persons with disabilities were portrayed as dangerous and weird, creating fear and unease towards them (Edmonds, 2005).

Such a state of affairs led to some persons with disabilities being hidden in institutions from the public for the good and protection of society. According to an Evaluation report compiled by the Zimbabwe National League of the Blind in 2010, in some parts of Zimbabwe, persons with disabilities were cut off from the rest of society, concealed in granaries and locked up in houses as they reposed as a source of stigma to their families. Invariably, this fostered the perception that persons with disabilities do not have the capacity to become equal members of society and to contribute economically and socially to the development of their communities. In this light, most persons with disabilities were institutionalized “for their own good” (Barnes and Mercer, 2003).

2.5.1.4. The religious model.

The religious model is also widely classified under the personal tragedy model or the moral model of disability (Osifuye and Higbee, 2014).
This model portrays disability as a curse from the gods (Drake, 1999; Osifuye and Higbee, 2014). This model has its roots in medieval Europe where persons with disabilities were often shunned or hidden from society because they were considered “out of favor with God or possessed by the devil” (Osifuye and Higbee, 2014). To this effect, disability in the religious tradition was associated with lack of faith, sinful acts on the part of parents or close relatives as well as infidelity on the part of the mother. This has led many within the disability scholarship to echo the famous saying that: “The priest asserted that only the devil within us prevents each and every one from immediately acquiring a perfect body” (Owen (1991) quoted in Drake 1999:11).

On the same note, Oliver (1990: 19) posits that in societies dominated by religious or magical ways of thinking, disability is likely to be perceived as punishment by the gods or individuals with disabilities might as well be seen as victims of witchcraft. In Zimbabwe, the National Disability survey of 1981 (which is the only comprehensive national study on disability to date) revealed that disability is still widely perceived as a result of witchcraft. (see Choruma, 2007, Lang and Charowa, 2007 for a detailed discussion of disability and witchcraft in Zimbabwe). As Jackson (1990) observes, the spiritual world is very much part of ordinary daily life of the Shona and even Ndebele people in Zimbabwe. Religion is therefore an integral, all pervading element of the Zimbabwean people’s way of living and acting. Amadlozi and Vadzimu (ancestral spirits) must be appeased and respected by rituals and customs. If these are broken, the spirits may withdraw their protection allowing vengeful spirits of wronged or murdered people (ngozi) to cause harm or punishing transgressors themselves (Jackson, 1990:122). Drake (1999) further contends that major religions reinforce the idea that disablement represents a deviation from some sort of non-disabled norm and that segregation, rehabilitation or cure is an appropriate response. In the absence of any formidable social protection policy framework from the state,
religious institutions supported the needy and destitute in society. Basic survival rather than empowerment was the priority in this context (Edmonds, 2005). Such was the state of affairs in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

2.5.1.5. The Social Model.

Hailing from such a social construction of disability, disability scholars who are themselves disabled decided to wage their own intellectual war against stigmatizing and pauperizing conditions created by the medicalisation of disability. Building on personal experiences rather than academic insights, the social model was the brain child of a small but influential group of British authors and disability activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Bill, 2004).

Drake (1999) gives a compendious history of the development of the social model of disability tracing it back to the development of the Union of the physically impaired against segregation (UPIAS). UPIAS viewed impairment as “lacking part or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body” (Drake, 1999:13). Disability, on the other hand was viewed as a restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization that takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excluding them from the mainstream of social activities. Unlike the medical or personal tragedy model, the social model put emphasis on the impact of society’s values and norms, the way in which it is organized, its architecture; its laws and institutions (Drake 1999). According to Munsaka, (2012:26), the social model of disability was developed with the notion of societal oppression at its heart. Representing resistance to the medical model, the social model represents an attempt to redress the power balance between persons with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts (ibid). While it does not deny the problem of disability, this model views disability not as a result
of impairment but as a direct consequence of failure of society to take account of the differing needs of persons with disabilities and remove the barriers they encounter.

Jackson (1990) also sheds light on the social model of disability by arguing that the social environment and not physical or mental impairments are the major source of handicap. The main advocates of the social model of disability include Vic Finkelstine, Michael Oliver among others.

According to Davis (1995), disability like normality is simply a part of historically constructed ideological discourse. As such, argues Davis, normality and disability carry no biological meanings which can be fixed upon the body itself; instead, they attain meaning through a process in which bodily traits are interpreted as linguistic signifiers within certain ideological contexts. The principles of the social model of disability are succinctly summarized by Colin Barnes in his 2011 paper on universal design as follows:

“First and foremost, a social model perspective does not deny the importance or value of appropriate individually based interventions, whether be medical, rehabilitative, and educational or employment based. Instead, it draws attention to their limitations in terms of furthering disabled people’s empowerment. Second, it is an attempt to shift attention away from the functional limitations of individuals onto the problems caused by disabling environments, barriers and cultures. In short, the social model of disability is a tool with which to provide insights into the disabling tendencies of contemporary society in order to generate policies and practices to facilitate their eradication” (Barnes, 2011: 62-63).

This argument is shared by Morris, “The social model of disability gives us the words to describe our inequality. It separates out (disabling barriers) from impairment (not being able to walk or see or having difficulty learning). The social model separates out disabling barriers from
impairments, it enables us to focus on exactly what it is which denies us our human and civil rights and what action needs to be taken”, (Morris 2000: 1-3). Oliver (1996, 32) categorically puts forth the idea behind the social model of disability by saying that: “it is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society’s failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organization”. Adding to Oliver’s voice, Priestly (1999) postulates that it is not the medical condition that denotes the disability of the individual but the way in which social structures operate to isolate and exclude persons with disabilities from full participation in society. The focus of the Social model is not the physical or cognitive limitations of persons with disabilities but on the failure of the environment to adjust to their unique needs and the negative social attitudes they face in everyday living (Munsaka, 2012:27). The model therefore is chiefly concerned with the barriers that exist within a social context which prevent persons with disabilities from achieving the same level of functioning as their non-disabled counterparts. In the same light, Finkelstein (2001:1) has it that: “it is society disabling us” and therefore, it is society itself that needs to be redesigned in order to improve the way it caters for the needs of disabled people”.

Adding to the debate but approaching the subject of disability empowerment from an employment rights dimension, Roeske (2002) contends that a disability is simply the social outcome of a physical or mental impairment. Roeske adds that impairment only becomes a handicap in the context of a given society, often because this society does not respect the needs and rights of its citizens living with impairment. Disability therefore, is not a natural, but a social fact. Moreover, it can be used to determine which physical and/or mental impairments should be allocated resources.
For this thesis, the crux of the matter is that our understanding of disability informs and directs our approach to policy making. The prime concern of the social model of disability lies in changing disabling conditions and environments to make society better for all humanity. From this perspective, the most appropriate strategy is to provide persons with disabilities with the power necessary to compel environmental changes in order to put an end disabling social conditions (Drake, 1999).

Pursuant to the views of literature here cited, the social model of disability is an instrument used by persons with disability to fight social exclusion. It advocates for full participation in the social, economic as well as the political life of persons with disabilities.

Hailing from the same theoretical position, Thomas (1982) makes the observation that there are major dimensions to social policy that are irreconcilable and these are humanitarian and economic factors. What the social model disputes is generally not the pain and special requirements placed upon a person due to his disability but the humanitarian interventions that come to replace economic and political rights to development.

Although the social model has somehow managed to stand the test of times and continues to provide inspiration, guidance and direction to most disability activists, it has gained criticism from both within and outside the scope of disability studies. The major weakness leveled against the social model is that it totalizes the feelings, situations, and experiences of all persons with disabilities, a thing vehemently denied by some Persons with disabilities themselves. In other words, the critics of the social model contend that merely focusing on the disabling impact of society results in the experiences of specific impairments being ignored dismissed or trivialized (Cobley, 2011). On the same point, Shakespear and Watson (2002) argue that some disability advocates have become extremists or fanatics of the social model. They have
adopted a strong version of the model that literally “blinds” them from the realities and experiences of the interface between disability and impairment. “Most activists concede that behind closed doors they talk about aches and pains and urinary tract infections, even while they deny any relevance of the body while they are out campaigning. Yet this inconsistency is surely wrong: if the rhetoric says one thing, while everyone behaves privately in a more complex way, then perhaps it is time to examine the rhetoric and speak more honestly” (2002: 6)

Furthermore, disability scholars go on to argue that the dichotomy drawn between disability and impairment could be too artificial and divorced from reality. The danger with such a reductionist tendency is that it might “stifle efforts towards the prevention of impairments if taken in the spirit of the UPIAS (1976) and Oliver (1983; 1990 and 1996). As also argued by Shakespear and Watson (2002,13), “If the social model argument was pushed to its logical extreme, we might not see impairment as something which we should make efforts to avoid”.

As Cobley, 2011) would acknowledge, Shakespeare and Watson are not contesting the view that society contributes immensely towards pauperizing Persons with disabilities. Rather, they simply object to the over emphasis of the role of society at the expense of the effects of impairments themselves. It is important to state that this thesis is concerned about two groups of people whose poverty is explicable more in terms of the barriers rather than the impairments.

2.5.2. Utility of the social exclusion concept

The concept of social exclusion is crucial in adding light to the analysis of the policy framework within which persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe operate. Poverty and social exclusion are frequently used synonymously in most cases. Resultantly, they are many assumptions on how the two phenomena interact (Flotten, 2006: 53). Some consider social exclusion and poverty to be
the same phenomenon, others see poverty as one form of social exclusion, yet others view social exclusion as a consequence of living in poverty (ibid).

Flotten (2006) considers social exclusion as different from poverty on the grounds that a person may be socially excluded although he is not poor. On the other hand, a person may be poor although he is not socially excluded. This study however does not agree with Flotten’s observation that poverty and social exclusion are at variance in crucial respects. This stems from the contention advanced in this thesis that social exclusion should be viewed in the light of the laid down principles of the social model of disability. As argued here, the poverty of persons with disabilities is analyzed and interpreted in terms of the social, cultural and political attitudes of the mainstream society that relegates it to the peripheries of society on the grounds of presumed inadequacies. Be it as it may, Flotten’s argument may have been influenced by the context within which social exclusion was discussed. From its formative perspective, social exclusion, as conceptualized in the French political thought was viewed or contextualized narrowly to focus on exclusion from the labor market or from receiving specific services. This narrow focus, which is antithetical to the teaching of the social model of disability, is here discarded for both conceptual and technical reasons. The concept is here adapted and not adopted to complement the dictates and assumption upon which the social model of disability is founded.

According to Munsaka (2012:29), social exclusion involves dynamic processes and complex cultural systems of being shut out of a society’s activities. In the mid-1990s the European Union conceptualised social exclusion as a process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live’ (Lade chi et al, 2003:257).
Flotten (2006:56) conceptualises social exclusion in terms of failure of one or more of the following four systems: “the democratic and legal system, which promotes civic integration, the labour market which promotes economic integration, the welfare system, promoting what may be called social integration, the family and community system, which promotes interpersonal integration” (Berghman, 1995:19 quoted in Flotten, 2006).

Silver presents the social exclusion approach in detail by dividing it into three main paradigms namely the solidarity, specialisation and monopoly paradigms. As Littlehood et al (2007: 10) observe, each of these paradigms attributes exclusion to a different cause and is grounded in a different political philosophy.

The solidarity paradigm emphasises social cohesion through group solidarity and cultural boundaries. Silver (1995) postulates that the solidarity paradigm explains the extent to which society is able to integrate and accommodate certain social groups. Such a paradigm is critical to the current thesis. From the solidarity paradigm, social order is conceived as external, moral and normative, rather than grounded in an individual, group or class interests (Littlehood et al, 2007: 11). From this perspective, a national consensus, collective conscience or general will tie the individual to the larger society through vertically interrelated mediating institutions (ibid). Integration is achieved by way of absorption into the dominant culture. Exclusion is inherent in the solidarity of locality, national and other cultural or primordial ties that delimit boundaries between groups.

Specialisation on the other hand is defined in terms of social order made up of networks of voluntary exchange between competing individuals in their own interests and motivations and consequent separation of social spheres (Silver 1995: 542). From this paradigm, social groups are voluntarily constituted by their members, and shifting alliances between them reflect their
various interests and wishes (ibid). Exclusion from this paradigm results from inadequate separation of social spheres, from the application of rules inappropriate to a given sphere, or from barriers to free movement and exchange between spheres (Littlehood et al, 2007:11). The specialisation paradigm though important in explaining some forms of exclusion is not of major importance to this thesis and therefore is not poised to receive a thorough scrutiny.

The monopoly paradigm is different from the two in a variety of ways. This paradigm assumes that exclusion arises from the interplay of class, status and political power and serves the interests of the included (Silver, 1995: 543). This paradigm poses that social entities delimited by class, status and political power enjoy a monopoly of scarce resources which gives them a shared interest and which they seek to preserve through processes of social closure, whereby others are kept out against their will (ibid).

Aside from the above paradigms of social exclusion, the current thesis recognises the splendid work of Rodgers. According to Rodgers (1995), social exclusion refers to any situation that inhibit a person from enjoying social rights without help, suffering from low self-esteem, inadequacy in one’s capacity to meet one’s obligations and the risk of long-term relegation to the ranks of those on social benefits and stigmatization. Rodgers pursues the argument that is persuasive to the depiction of the socio-economic position of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe. Rodgers emphasizes that society’s economy systematically marginalizes some and integrates others thereby distributing rewards in ways that both include and exclude. Social exclusion, just like the social model of disability accounts for how and why individuals and groups fail to have access to and benefit from the possibilities offered by their societies and economies.
Utilizing such an argument, social exclusion is here contextualized within the disability frame of reference. In this light, the economic possibilities offered by the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policies seem not to trickle down to a social group already marginalized by virtue of their perceived incapacity. Rodgers’ perspective of social exclusion, though useful to the arguments advanced here assumes a narrow focus. Rodgers merely talks of social exclusion emerging from the labour market, social services as well as from such social benefits as housing. This thesis takes the concept of social exclusion; the same way the social model discussed above has been conceptualized. It is here contended that the apparent exclusion in Zimbabwean society is the exclusion from political power. Exclusion of this sort is clearly manifest in Zimbabwe’s body politic that does not take into account persons with disabilities’ quest for self-representation in political processes in the country (see chapter four for the exclusion of Persons with disabilities in political and administrative institutions).

Pursuant to this perspective, voices from literature regarding the concept of social exclusion add to the argument advanced in the current thesis. This dimension makes it possible to juxtapose social exclusion and the social model of disability in an analysis of the marginal role played by persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe. The views of Hilary Silver (1995) are instructive. As Silver contends, many a times, people perceive their exclusion as a problem of the family or community as a whole and not as a problem limited to or confined to the individual. Such a position is in tandem with the architects of the social model of disability who observe that poverty among persons with disabilities is largely a result of the diverse social and political structures which encompasses the institutions through which power is exercised as well as specific cultural values which reflect and reproduce the balance of power between social groups.
thereby determining their social status. This status and institution in turn depends on the dominant paradigm of social integration that exists in given societies (Silver, 1995).

2.5.3 A CRITIQUE OF THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION APPROACH.

The current thesis observes that the social exclusion concept was not developed to explain the social challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Rather, the concept was primarily meant to give an account of the reasons why some people are generally more exposed to poverty than others in progressive and developed societies such as France and the European Community. In its current state, its explanatory potential in disability terms is therefore limited and general. As a result, the current study has elected to blend some of its core tenets such as the solidarity and monopoly paradigms with the social model of disability with a view to producing a theoretical explanation of the level of participation of such a social group on Zimbabwe’s policy arena.

It is here observed that there is some link between social exclusion and the social model of disability. The synergy squarely lies in the fact that both concepts describe social disadvantage. Furthermore, both concepts denote the likelihood of poverty and social deprivation. More so, both concepts suggest a structurally skewed social system that obstructs other social groups from equally participation in society and social institutions such as government, the economy and communal structures. From such an intellectual persuasion, disability is not only an individual destiny, but also the outcome of situations and decisions for which the persons with a disability is no more responsible than any other citizen, like bad sanitary and health conditions, war, disease outbreak and so forth (Rose 2002:6, emphasis by the author). The person with a disability carries the consequences of collective situations and
decisions. Society, in turn, has a special collective responsibility to eliminate the exclusions that turn impairment into a disability (ibid).

To the extent that this is not so, social exclusion and the social model of disability might as well not be juxtaposed. The central point that has driven the author to juxtapose these two concepts that have not ordinarily been used simultaneously is to be able to better explain the social disadvantage and poverty confronting persons with disabilities in a society such as Zimbabwe.

Although it is not the aim of this thesis to embark on a conceptual comparison between the social exclusion approach and the social model of disability, the argument put forth is that these two concepts go hand in glove. It is in the light of such a conviction that they are used together to explain social disadvantage, marginalization and institutional discrimination such a social group is facing.

In another way, the social model of disability, though criticized for its totalizing tendencies has had tremendous impact on the social and political landscape of disability activism in the world. The quest of this thesis to merge it with the social exclusion approach even though it is not in dispute, has not gained academic primacy. This is so largely as a result of the historical beginnings of the two theoretical postulates. Whereas the social model of disability emerged from disability activism and the quest for economic and political liberation, social exclusion came from the politics of resource distribution and the need to recognize the importance of social justice and equality in modern Europe. This thesis therefore merges the two for their strategic potential to explain the political and economic position of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe.
2.6. COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Having articulated the empowerment agenda regarding disability, this section takes a look at the inclusion of persons with disabilities in other countries.

2.6.1. Uganda

The Ugandian model of representation is quite distinct worldwide. In Uganda, not only are persons with disabilities entitled to parliamentary representation but they also decide as men and women with disabilities, who by region and type of disability should represent them. They are the only ones allowed to vote for their representatives. This persuaded Lang and Muranjira (2009) to conclude that Uganda is one of the countries with a comprehensive disability policy framework in Africa. The constitution of Uganda provides for affirmative action regarding persons with disabilities to address the previous imbalances.

In order to implement this constitutional provision, Uganda has reserved five seats in parliament for persons with disabilities (Lang and Muranjira, 2009: 8). In addition, over fifty thousand representatives of persons with disabilities have been put in place at district level and below to oversee the implementation and participation of persons with disabilities. This thesis does not outrightly believe representation translates to better service provision. It is however contended that representation provides fertile grounds for greater participation and empowerment. This line of thought is also echoed by a Ugandan woman with a disability interviewed by Zeitzer (2005) who indicated that “As the elected person to parliament on behalf of women with disabilities, she was supposed to immediately focus on issues of women with disabilities; however, she was not solely confined to the disability portfolio. She was also
supposed to focus on national issues while always being vigilant to ensure that disabled women were considered in these other issues” Zeitzer, 2005 unpaged).

While members of parliament with disabilities must respond to other pressing national issues, their role is clear. That is, to “watch out for and represent the interests of disabled Ugandans” (Zeitzer, 2005 unpaged). In order to give full effect to Article (32) of the constitution, an Equal Opportunities Commission Act was promulgated in 2008. The commission that was subsequently appointed in 2009 has one of the five members as a woman with a disability.

Disability issues in Uganda are overseen by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Under the leadership of this ministry, Uganda promulgated the National Policy on Disability in February 2006. The policy attributes disability to a combination of physical, sensory or psychological impairment with the social, attitudinal and environmental framework within which these operate. The main objective of the policy is that of "promoting equal opportunities and enhanced empowerment, participation and protection of rights of persons with disabilities irrespective of gender, age and type of disability" (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2006:1). In an effort to accomplish this objective, the National Policy on Disability endeavors to deal with barriers to social inclusion. It further recognizes the fact that disability is a cross-cutting issue requiring a multi-sectoral approach. Pursuant to this policy, the government of Uganda passed the Persons with Disabilities Act on 24 May 2006 as a way of operational sing the National Policy on Disability passed in the same year. This therefore demonstrates a spirited effort on the part of government to involve persons with disabilities in the governance of the country.
While the Uganda experience is quite inspiring, the quota system has attracted a lot of skepticism. For instance, Muriaas and Wang (2012) assert that the Ugandan quota system for various groups such as persons with disabilities serves to entrench the dominance of the incumbent party. It is further claimed that political representation in Uganda has not translated into the creation of broad social spaces for persons with disabilities. However, notwithstanding this criticism, it is generally admitted that the visibility of persons with disabilities in Uganda’s policy making bodies makes a difference for them which may even be felt in economic spheres.

2.6.2. Namibia

In Namibia, disability issues are handled under the Ministry of Health and Social Development. According to Lang (2008), Namibia has gone to the extent of infusing disability issues at the echelons of government by establishing a unit in the prime minister’s office to oversee the implementation of disability integration policies and programmes. To further its quest for social inclusion, the government of Namibia crafted a national disability policy (Government of Namibia, 1997). The policy provided fertile grounds upon which Namibia’s legislative and regulatory framework regarding disability issues is founded. In this light, the policy provides for the affirmative action regarding employment, education, including vocational training. This therefore signals the empowerment trajectory taken by the Namibian Government. A closer look at the policy in question would reveal that the social model of disability gained supremacy. The attendant legislation following from such a policy such as the Employment Act of 1998 speaks volumes about empowerment of the disabled. The participation of persons with disabilities in Namibia’s economic empowerment platform therefore is backed by a comprehensive legislative and policy framework anchored upon a responsive national
government. For instance, Namibia’s New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework is all inclusive and provides that priority must be given to the previously marginalized members in society. Based on the social model of disability, the New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework echoes the provisions of the Employment Act that stipulate or require all firms employing more than twenty five people to report on the employment of persons with disabilities.

2.6.3 Swaziland

Contrary to disability inclusion developments in Uganda and Namibia, the participation of persons with disabilities in Swaziland is still a challenge. Lang (2008) seems to attribute such a state of affairs to the traditional nature of the state which is a constitutional monarchy presided over by a king. Lang (2008) observes that disability in Swaziland, just like other parts of Africa is viewed as a curse and something abominable and evil. For example, the Swazi tradition has it that persons with disabilities cannot appear before the king (Lang, 2008:55). As a consequence, by 2006, out of about ten thousand six hundred persons with visual impairments, only three were employed (Lang, 2008:47).

2.6.4 Malawi

In Malawi, disability issues are coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development and people with disabilities. On the same note, Disability participation in the economic life of Malawi somehow mirrors that of most countries in southern Africa. As Lang (2008:65) observes, fifty eight percent of persons with disabilities were unemployed as compared to fifty three percent of non-disabled by 2008. This is so despite the fact that forty one percent of persons with disability
were confirmed to have had some employment or vocational qualifications making them employable than thirty nine percent of the non-disabled (ibid). To rectify the situation Malawi’s policy thrust seems to move towards the human rights approach to disability. Unlike Zimbabwe, it is here contended that Malawi has made some strides towards the empowerment of persons with disabilities. (See chapter 4, 5 and 6 on disability policies and programmes in Zimbabwe).

Of prime importance is the establishment of the Ministry of Social Development and Persons with disabilities whose main objectives are:

- To support the efforts of Government Ministries and Departments in the formulation of policies and programmes those effectively address issues and concerns of persons with disabilities;
- To assist Government Ministries and Departments as well as the civil society organisations in establishing and strengthening institutions aimed at implementing policies and programmes for the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities;
- To enhance the involvement of persons with disabilities in all planning and decision-making processes;
- To initiate programmes to support people with disabilities aimed at promoting their own socio- economic development and for the development of their communities;
- To recognize and support initiatives by persons with disabilities;
- To promote greater awareness at all levels of the Malawian society of the importance of inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities; and
- To coordinate, consult and co-operate with Government Ministries and Departments and other stakeholders on all matters pertaining to persons with disabilities” (Lang, 2008: 69).
In keeping with its above stated mandate, The Ministry of Social Development promulgated the National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2006). The purpose of the policy is to promote the rights of persons with disabilities by increasing their participation in society (Lang, 2008). The policy therefore is the consolidation of all national legislation that has a bearing on disability including the Malawian constitution and other enactments. The existence of this legislative and policy infrastructure enabled Malawi to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009 (Kotze, 2012).

2.6.5 South Africa

More than that of Malawi, South Africa’s disability and empowerment record is now at an advanced stage. To emphasize the centrality of representation in government as a participation tool, the African National Congress of South Africa intentionally recruited highly qualified individuals with disabilities in different areas by working with Disabled Persons Organisations. Such organizations would draw up a list of qualified individuals who would in turn be included on the party’s list. This process was meant to give persons with disabilities a voice in South African parliament. Using this strategy, South Africa managed to ensure that by 1999, ten individuals obtained seats in the South African parliament (Zeitzer, 2005). (see chapter 4 on parliamentary representation in South Africa for a detailed and latest update on the representation and participation of Persons with disabilities in South Africa). Such a state of affairs is in resonance with the central theme of this thesis that political power and representation constitute a major asset in the struggle for self emancipation. To echo the words of Zeitzer: “In this context, the intention is to right the previous wrongs by taking pains to ensure that just like other minorities, persons with disabilities are represented in the governance process and have
their views articulated by people who are seen as most competent on or best able to articulate the issues” (Zeitzer, 2005 unpaged).

At the policy implementation level, the government of South Africa in its White Paper on Public Service Transformation realized the need for affirmative action. Among other things, the WPTPS laid down the minimum affirmative action targets that the public service had to achieve (RSA 1995, 20). In an effort to ameliorate the plight of persons with disabilities, the policy stipulates that: “Within 10 years, persons with disabilities should comprise 2 % of the public service personnel”. Pursuant to the 1995 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, the South African government proceeded to promulgate yet another policy on affirmative action in the public service in 1998. With regard to disability this policy observed the need for righting the previous wrongs that had relegated disability issues to welfare and charity at the detriment of the advancement of such a social group. In the same spirit, the policy acknowledged that during apartheid, disability was treated as a social welfare problem. Negative attitudes, inaccessible and unsupportive working environments, and inadequate training and development continued to limit the recruitment of people with disabilities into the public service.

Having noted such impressive policies regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Uganda, Namibia, Malawi and South Africa, the present study would contend that these policies on their own might not do much to ameliorate the plight of persons with disabilities. This must be backed by the political will to implement them. Such an observation is echoed by Lang (2008) who states that:

“The existence of human rights-based policies and legislation regarding disability do not by themselves necessarily, by default, result in the genuine and effective social inclusion of disabled people within contemporary society. What is needed, in addition, is a strong
commitment by politicians to implement disability policy and practice based upon the
fundamental principles of human rights, combined with the development of effective
administrative infrastructures for such policies” (Lang, 2008:75).

From the above discussion, it can be noted that Uganda has got one of the best disability
friendly policies on the African continent. Countries such as Namibia, Malawi and South Africa
seem to follow the right path towards the empowerment of persons with disabilities in their
countries. At least in a big way, the most significant step taken by these countries is that
empowerment rather than charity is the panacea to addressing poverty among persons with
disabilities. Indeed, in doing so, some of those countries are still relegating disability to the
department of labour and social services. According to De Beco and Hoefmans (2012) this
practice is undesirable as it “compartmentalizes persons with disabilities in terms of their
perceived inadequacies”. Swaziland, on the other hand still has got a long way to go before a
comprehensive disability policy framework can be put in place. This has largely been attributed
to the cultural and traditional beliefs held by the Swazi monarchy that disability is an abominable
state of being.

2.7. RESEARCH GAPS

From the above discussion, a few gaps in literature have been observed:

1. Although literature on poverty and disability exists throughout the world, very little is
written on the participation of persons with disabilities in political and economic processes.
Despite the efforts made by such researchers as Coleridge (2005), Chataika (2007), Choruma
(2007), Coble (2012), and Munsaka (2012) among others, the need for an emancipatory
approach to disability studies still remains, especially in the African context. In this regard,
there remains a need to add a voice to disability literature on political and economic empowerment.

2. When it comes to the issue of theoretical approaches, the strength and continued relevance of the social model of disability in explaining the political and economic circumstances of persons with disabilities prevails in the midst of academic and empirical criticism. However, the social exclusion approach has not yet gained the much anticipated momentum in disability studies. In tune with the first objective of the current thesis, it remains critical that the social exclusion approach and the social model of disability receive intense academic and empirical scrutiny.

3. With regards to country experiences, it is worth observing that disability literature on policies and legislation remains backward. In this regard, it remains all the more critical to constantly update this literature and disseminates the same through the most accessible platforms such as the internet for other countries to look and learn. Given the above cited gaps in literature, it remains critical for the current thesis to contribute towards the emancipatory approach to disability.

2.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In summation, this chapter has dwelt a lot on the definitions of empowerment, giving a variety of perspectives from a variety of theorists and development practitioners. The social model of disability, coupled with the social exclusion approach help to explain the socio-economic and political situation of such a social group. The next chapter therefore discusses the methodology pursued to authenticate this intellectual discourse.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.0. INTRODUCTION
This chapter presents a critical descriptive analysis of the process of getting information required for this thesis. The chapter starts by paying attention to the research design employed and the justification for employing the chosen design. Following from the design issues are aspects of personal reflexivity, the target group and how selection of participants was conducted. The chapter goes on to chronicle the data collection process undertaken, giving an explanation of the data collection methods employed. Such methods included in-depth studies, narrative enquiry, focus-group discussions, multi-cited ethnography as well as documentary analysis. Issues of validity and reliability of research techniques are also scrutinized with a view to justifying their utility in describing the lived experiences of persons with disabilities.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN
By research design is meant a plan of collecting and analyzing evidence that will enable the researcher to answer whatever questions that he/she has posed (Flick, 2010). The design of an investigation therefore considers all aspects of the study, from data collection right through to data analysis and presentation of findings. Basically, research design is comprised the goals of the study, appropriate theoretical framework, concrete questions, the selection of empirical material, the methodological procedures and the temporal, material and personal resources available (Flick 2010:128).
This study has made use of the qualitative methodology. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. It properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit them (Berg 1989). It is premised upon the belief that the only way to fully comprehend reality is to approximate it (Guba 1990 quoted in Asaduzzaman, 2008: 73).

The decision to use the qualitative or interpretivist methodology stems from the fact that this methodology is strategically positioned when it comes to illuminating the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon, as described by the participants, through their perception of reality, their normative values as well as the meanings they assign to these social phenomena. In this respect, the study contends that disability, though partly a physiological condition rooted in impairment is largely a consequence of social interaction and interpretation of a physiological condition. As the proponents of the social model of disability have repeatedly accentuated, disability, like beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. More importantly, the qualitative methodology has been employed for this study for the following six reasons:

(i) It directly investigates personal and subjective experiences;

(ii) It incorporates meaningful stories and narratives in addition to measurable variables;

(iii) It allows for naturalistic observations and descriptions rather than the testing of general laws;

(iv) It is the best tool for diversity;

(v) It uses research participants as expert informants;

(vi) It allows for reflexivity or the explicit use of the researcher’s subjectivity and values. (See Asaduzzaman, 2008: 75).
It is therefore from such a theoretical persuasion that this study saw it fit to use the interpretivist methodology to determine the perceived inability of persons with impairment to compete in economic and political spheres of life as purported by Zimbabwe’s non-disabled majority. (See chapters 4 and 5). On the other hand, the study derived much understanding and wisdom from the subjective perception and interpretation of social exclusion as is felt and perceived by persons with albinism and visual impairment.

As Chataika (2007) recounts, qualitative methods are best suitable for studying the socio-economic and political experiences of persons with disabilities because qualitative research methods are known to be effective and appropriate if little or nothing is known about a situation. This is because they do not require a predictive statement and therefore seek answers to open questions. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:3). For Robson (2002), qualitative approaches show substantial flexibility in their research design, “typically anticipating that the design will emerge and develop during data collection” (Robson 2002:164). In contrast, quantitative methods heavily rely on pre-set or fixed positivistic designs (Brown, 2013). This led Robson (2002) to talk of flexible and fixed instead of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Merriam (2009) identifies four key advantages of conducting qualitative research:

(i) Focus on process, understanding and meaning

(ii) The researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis

(iii) The research as an inductive process and

(iv) The outcomes of the research as richly descriptive
Adding to the interpretivist discourse, Wazed (2012) quoting Burr (1995) suggests that the interpretivist or social constructionism has four components:

- it critiques taken-for-granted knowledge
- it links historical and cultural specificity
- knowledge and understanding are understood to be constructed through daily interactions
- understanding is seen as forming different kinds of social action (Wazed, 2012: 83).

For this reason, Wazed (2012) came to the conclusion that whereas the quantitative or positivistic methods are good at answering the “what” and “when” questions, the qualitative or interpretivist or social constructionist approaches are best suited to answering questions related to “why” and “how”. In other words, the prime purpose of interpretivist methodology is simply to understand how human beings perceive, interpret and make sense of their lived reality.

The overall purpose of qualitative research is therefore to achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, delineate the process of meaning-making and how they interpret their experiences. For Patton (2002), a qualitative research design is naturalistic in that observations take place in real world settings and people are interviewed with open-ended questions in places which are familiar and comfortable to them (Brown, 2013).

As Brown et al (2003:116) would argue, what is important in understanding human behavior is not what is objectively real but what people think is real. In other words, the forces at work in human affairs are not the same as gravitational forces or the forces at work in the movement of elementary particles. Brown et al sustain their support of the interpretivist methodology by citing the so-called Thomas’ Maxim that they summarize as: “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (ibid).
Pursuant to this epistemological discourse, the present thesis argues that persons with albinism and visual impairment are active recipients of a socially constructed reality regarding their inability to participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. For example, the major obstacle militating against the participation of persons with albinism in political activities in Zimbabwe is reported to be the fact that political meetings are conducted in open spaces where there is too much heat from the sun. (See Chapter Six on barriers to participation). Implicit in such a scenario is that such a social group faces environmental barriers not envisaged even by the non-disabled organizers who might as well be oblivious to their discriminatory actions on the ground. Since the central purpose of undertaking a study of this nature is to tape from the lived experiences of persons with disabilities from their own perspective, the qualitative methodology has been found to be helpful.

According to Kleinman and Seaman (2000: 234), experience can be conceived of as “a representation of “the inter-subjective felt flow of events, bodily processes, and life trajectory which always takes place within a social setting”. In her thesis on disability and HIV and AIDS in Kwazulu Natal, Hancock (2008) conceived of experience as “an outcome of cultural categories and social structures that interact with psycho-physiological processes in such a way that a personal social reality is constructed”. Hancock’s conceptualization of life experiences brings us to yet another crucial concept recurring in this thesis namely the concept of social reality. As per my contention at the beginning of this chapter, the most salient advantage of qualitative methodology is that it situates participants within the realm of social reality. That reality influences the way persons with disabilities respond to the generally held viewpoint about their place in an non-disabled society. Hancock views social reality as “a product of meaningful
social interaction as perceived from perspectives of those involved and not from the perspective of the observer” (ibid).

This study has therefore taken it upon itself to try and understand the life experiences of persons with albinism and those with visual impairment regarding their participation in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. It is worth observing that the use of qualitative methodology to uncover the inner experiences of persons with disabilities is a tried and tested endeavour. The same methodology was used in the study of disability identity by Weeber (2004) in the United States of America. Similarly, Katsui used the interpretivist methodology to study the creation and development of the disability movement in Central Asia. Katsui tapped on the rich experiences of persons with disabilities in leadership positions. Similarly, Brown (2013) utilized the same methodology in his study of a human rights approach to service delivery for children with intellectual disabilities in Ireland. Within the region, Hancock (2008) also used the qualitative methodology to study the inclusion of persons with disabilities in HIV and AIDS programmes in Kwazulu Natal South Africa. Closer home, Chataika (2007) made use of the qualitative methodology in her assessment of disability in higher education. Moving closer to the central theme of this thesis, Munsaka (2012) made use of the interpretivist methodology to unmusk the feelings and perceptions of persons with disabilities in as far as their participation in development in Binga were concerned.

In his study on the need to include persons with disabilities on the development agenda, Munsaka (2012: 135) notes that the concern of qualitative research is the development of knowledge created through the world of lived experiences from the point of view of the individuals being studied. Munsaka (2012) citing Kesby and Gwanzura-Ottemoller (2007) argues that a qualitative approach accommodates the reflective capacities of human beings within the
research methodology itself. In the same light, this study observes that knowledge within qualitative research is understood as situated and recognizes that those who suffer from exclusion and oppressed or denied opportunities for economic and political participation carry specifically revealing wisdom about history, structure and perception about the nature and context of their lived experiences (Munsaka, 2012: 135; emphasis by the author).

The above qualities of the qualitative methodology have influenced me to choose it as the best tool box containing the necessary tools with which to identify, analyse and interpret the perceptions and views on disability and social exclusion.

3.2. PERSONAL BIASES AND REFLEXIVITY

As I travel through this journey to knowledge seeking, I must put it categorically clear that my personal perceptions, beliefs, opinions and values about the experiences of persons with disabilities greatly influence my judgment and interpretation of the phenomena under investigation. As a person with a visual impairment, I share a lot with my research subjects, so much such that what I gathered, the way I gathered it including the very choice of the research topic comes from the very experience of economic and political marginalization. This state of affairs is not new to social science enquiry. To this end, if disability is viewed as a social construct, surely any research conducted within this topic would benefit from an examination of the research process and may well have to grapple with the relational and situational circumstances of knowledge production (Harvey, 2013: 90). Not as if to place disability studies and scholarship in the realm of idiosyncratic and common sense notion of realism devoid of any iota of scientific rigor, the present study is persuaded to believe that this is an exercise of political and economic significance. Like feminist research, (see Oakley, 1981), disability
research is squarely embedded within the realm of the need for self liberation and empowerment on the part of both participants and researchers (Morris 1991; Oliver, 1992, Priestley, 1998, Soorenian 2011, Brown 2013, Harvey 2013). Put in another way, disability research should not be seen as a set of technical objective procedures carried out by “experts” but part of the struggle by disabled people to challenge the oppression they currently experience in their lives (Oliver, 1992: 102).

For Willis (2007), qualitative research does not hide behind a finger when it comes to explicitly articulating one’s interests and biases in the study being undertaken. “Do not pretend to be objective when you are not” (Willis, 2007: 210). Note should be taken that research in the social sciences is a subjective activity and the researcher should make the readers aware of his biases (ibid). As Willis (2007: 220) would argue, the more one experiences the environment, the more he/she gets an opportunity to understand it.

All the more, it is appropriate to consider our own biographies and biases even as we seek to make claims about the lives of those we study (DeShong, 2013: 10). For Harvey, (2013), this amounts to what has been termed theorizing subjectivity. By this Harvey meant that researchers are encouraged to celebrate their own life experiences and acknowledge their impact upon knowledge production.

This study has been conducted by a person with a visual impairment. Without doubt, the personal experiences might in some way or the other have an effect on the study.

Using my own experience, it is worth acknowledging that the present thesis directly derives inspiration from the lived experiences of disability, poverty and marginality. The need to seek scientific and academic answers to these life events therefore stand as the driving force behind researching disability and participation in national political and economic processes. As
the reader might be aware, such a revelation stands in sharp contrast with the “traditional” ethos of scientific enquiry that separates knowledge from the personal and subjective feelings of the researcher.

In the first half of the twentieth century, objective epistemologies dominated social science research, asserting that objective meanings and truths exist independent of human consciousness (Rooney, 2005). Objectivist epistemologies are associated with realist ontologies which view reality as an external objective phenomenon, existing independently of human consciousness (Guba and Lincoln 2000). Central to the positivist school of thought is the capacity of science to produce objective knowledge. This intellectual position conceives of the purpose of research as that of unearthing objective truths (Crotty 1998). Essentially the researcher is viewed as an outsider, an independent observer, rigorously gathering data and reporting objectively on this data. The researcher's subjectivities are not allowed to impact on the research process simply because of the fervent belief that this would lead to a distorted, invalid picture of reality. Much quantitative research exemplifies the positivist model of validity. However some qualitative research also demonstrates these assumptions (Rooney, 2005: 3).

In recent decades however, new philosophical conceptions of reality knowledge and truth have taken root in social science research. The new ontological and epistemological conceptions have emerged to challenge the positivistic school of thought (Rooney, 2005). These include post-structuralism, post-modernism and constructivism. This new philosophical mind set posits that truths or meanings do not exist independently, but are created by the human mind on an individual/personal level. Instead of uncovering an objective truth, human beings create meanings out of their own interpretation of reality.
Once again, it is worth reiterating that this study is being conducted by a person with a visual impairment, a person experiencing a life of prejudice and discrimination within the Zimbabwean society. The very act of choosing this study is therefore primarily hinged upon personal experiences of the situation encountered by persons with disabilities.

All this raises grand questions of objectivity in the scientific interpretation of findings. Ultimately, the study is as much about understanding and interpreting my own experiences as much as those of participants. I unreservedly accept that I am far more intimately involved with both my topic of research and my participants than most researchers. However, I wish to argue that this provides the ideal terrain upon which to consider my position within the research. Although other researches may not be quite so personal to researchers, it is here argued that a meticulous and sophisticated interrogation of how researchers may affect the research outcomes is important in any study (see Harvey, 2013).

The critical epistemological question is whether an insider can adequately and objectively study the very social phenomena that characterizes his daily experiences and be able to “rise above the waters” of conflict of interest. This question has been exhaustively interrogated by several disability researchers who came to the conclusion that this is possible and practical (Soorenian, 2011). Responding to the same issue in feminist research, DeShong (2013) admits that it is now widely accepted that researchers bring their experiences and positionalities to bear on the research process. On the same note, Morris (1991) contends that disability research should include the subjective realities of individual disabled people, and that the denial of such experiences can collude in our own oppression. Acknowledging personal experience can therefore lead to a social model understanding of disability, fuelling opposition and commitment to challenge oppression (French & Swain, 2004; Priestley, 1998).
On the whole, it has not been practical to remain objective and aloof to the lived realities of poverty, economic and political jimcrow that constitute the life of Persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe, rather, as a researcher I have endeavored to simply minimize the impact of biases on the research process. The understanding being that interpretivists believe that scientists construct an image of reality based on their preferences and prejudices as well as their interaction with others” (Schutt, 2004: 75). It is here argued that the credibility of the present thesis does not lie in an impersonal and objective approach to the study of the lived realities of Persons with disabilities, rather, credibility is derived from the researcher’s ability to advance an empirically accurate description of the factual circumstances surrounding the action and an understanding of the norms and values operating in the social and political context to make the action ‘appropriate’ (Wazed, 2012). By making the research process transparent and honest, it is argued that readers can construct their own perspectives which are equally as valid as our own' (Cohen et al. 2000: 106).

Given the above epistemological quagmire, it is here contended that a meticulous and dexterous application of research methods make it possible for a researcher to be actively involved personally in the research process at the same time striking a balance between subjectivity and scientific interpretation of study findings. Using the triangulation of in-depth studies, focus group discussions, multi-sited ethnography as well as literature search, it is held that a comprehensive and scientific interpretation of findings has been done.

The reader is therefore encouraged to treat this work as a purely qualitative scientific study conducted in keeping with all the epistemological and ontological principles of social science research in mind.
3.3. STUDY LOCATION

Harare has been selected as a study site. This is mainly due to the fact that, Harare as a capital city tends to be a centre of convergence for persons with disabilities from all corners of the country, across the gender and disability divide as well as across disability classes. To this effect, the study was able to benefit from interviewing participants from almost all corners of the country such as Mashonaland, midlands, Masvingo, Manicaland and Matabeleland regions. All these people were found in the capital city. To the greatest extent possible, my choice of Harare could be credited for bringing together people of varied experiences and cultural orientation into the study. This state of affairs makes it possible for someone to somehow generalize individual experiences of participation, inclusion and exclusion of persons with disabilities in the political and economic life of Zimbabwe to the rest of the country. As a capital city, most service providers are headquartered in Harare.

Since the study was poised to benefit from the lived and hands-on experiences and practices of policy makers, Harare has turned to be strategic in this regard. For instance, Harare is home to Zimbabwe’s parliament as well as headquarters of all government ministries. In addition, Zimbabwe’s two main political parties namely; the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by the former prime minister of Zimbabwe (Morgan Richard Tsvangirai) are both housed in Harare. Further to that, Harare houses the head offices of most civil society organisations whose contribution to this study was great.

In addition, the study benefited from a series of workshops and seminars on disability conducted by Disabled Persons Organisations in Harare. These workshops became vital sources of information, especially from senior government officials whose policy position on disability
could otherwise have been difficult to get through ‘more formal and official channels’. Furthermore, Harare as the capital city of Zimbabwe gave the researcher the rare opportunity to ‘rub shoulders’ with the most influential figures within the disability movement. Ordinarily, it would have been extremely difficult to gain access to these sources of information due mainly to bureaucratic procedures as well as the adverse effects of disability politics. (see a section below on the effects of disability politics).

### 3.4. TARGET POPULATION

This study targeted persons with albinism and visual impairment both male and female in greater Harare aged between twenty and sixty five. This target population is informed in part by the observation made by Roske (2002: 5) that provided certain conditions, the majority of men and women with disabilities (especially those with albinism and visual impairment) want and can do productive work, instead of being a charity case or living on formal redistribution mechanisms (emphasis by the author).

Roske argues that whenever possible, the objective should be to reduce poverty of persons with disabilities by “unlocking their economic potential” and not by redistributive policies (op cit: 6). Given employment opportunities, equitable distribution of resources coupled with economic and political power, persons with albinism and visual impairment can equally contribute to the economic and political life of Zimbabwe. The age range has been influenced by the fact that those participants aged twenty and above have reached a stage where social exclusion and inclusion has become part of their daily lives. For those over sixty five, although they might have had vast experience in the subject at hand, the fact that they have reached the
age of retirement in terms of Zimbabwe’s labour laws exempts them from this study as participants.

3.5. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Since persons with disabilities live among the generality of the population, a snowball sampling technique was used in identifying participants for the study. This sampling technique, housed in the stable of qualitative methodology was seen to be the most feasible of all given that I did not have a definite and well defined sampling frame from which to select participants (see Wazed, 2012 for the utility of the snowballing technique). The snowball technique is sometimes referred to as chain referral sampling (Daymon and Holloway, 2011: 214). This technique helps researchers initially contact a few participants and then ask them whether they know of any potential participants with the same or similar characteristics that the researcher is looking for (Asaduzzaman, 2008).

This sampling technique is blamed for several principal shortcomings including the inability to generate generalisable information (Asaduzzaman, 2008; Wazed, 2012). It is however worth noting that generalization is not in every case the goal of a qualitative study (Patton, 2002; Flick, 2010).

In spite of this weakness, the snowballing technique has been hailed for its utility in enabling the researcher to collect data even from those populations with no sampling frame from which to derive an “objective scientific and proper “sample in conformity to the positivistic epistemological ethos. In addition, the technique is less costly given that the exact location of the would-be interviewee is known in advance (Patton, 2002).
The same technique was employed by Weeber (2004) in her selection of community disability leaders. Using the snowball technique, I would ask the participants I interview to direct me to others with similar disabilities. Usually, I would get several names known to the previous interviewer from which I would select the next participant on the basis of availability and suitability using the criteria below. For persons with albinism, my first point of call was Zimbabwe Albino Association which gave me a list of their members together with their contact details especially mobile phone numbers. I used these details to arrange for a focus group discussion on a Saturday in November 2013. The focus group was well attended with ten participants who gave me an insight into the lived experiences of persons whose disability was not only different from my own but whose social circumstances of social exclusion was in many crucial respects quite unfamiliar. For example, it was via focus group discussions that I got to understand that persons with albinism are sometimes rejected by other disabilities hence sitting on the age between the non-disabled society that shuns them on the grounds of skin color, perceived incapacities and genetic inferiorities and the other disabled community that feels that albinism should not be classified as a disability.

It was during the focus group discussion that I got to identify my prospective participants for in-depth interviews. Having created a rapport with focus group participants, I was given a list of names and contact details, this time including residential addresses of fellow colleagues known to the participants. I capitalized on that sense of trust to urge them to communicate my request to visit and interview their colleagues. This I did so that I would secure consent from the would-be interviewees who, in my opinion would be both skeptical and sometimes suspicious about the motives of a stranger who comes to ask sensitive issues like one’s political activities in a country and society where political affiliation is associated with negative retribution. On the
basis of the register or list that I created out of the information and directions given by focus group participants, I phoned each would-be participant, asking for permission to interview him/her explaining over the phone the nature of my study and subsequently getting a go ahead to visit and conduct the interview at the convenience of the interviewee.

As for participants with visual impairment, it became apparent that most of their organisations were not headquartered in Harare. I had initially thought that I would get a sampling frame from one of the main organisations namely; the Zimbabwe National League of the Blind headquartered in Bulawayo. Alternatively, I had thought of getting some links from yet another organisation namely; Zimbabwe Association of the Visually Handicapped (ZAVH) headquartered in Masvingo. All this did not work as I later discovered that their lists were based on either members who were no longer domiciled in Harare or members who were too busy reluctant to entertain me for personal and organizational reasons. For that reason, I used the links I had established whilst studying at the University of Zimbabwe to find some people I would interview. This partly explains why, despite the fact that I had created a criterion of active participation most of my interviewees are professional people. This however does not mean that only those with degrees or some tertiary qualifications ended up being selected for the interviews but in addition, the suitability of interviewees was partly from the disability fraternity. As Flick (2010) would argue, the most important determining factor when it comes to the choice of participants in qualitative sampling is their ability to respond to particular questions. Precisely, “the ideal candidates for qualitative interviews should have the necessary knowledge and experience of the issue or subject at their disposal for answering the questions in the interview. They should also have the capability to reflect and articulate, should have time to be asked and should be ready to participate in the study. If all these conditions are met, the person is most
likely to be integrated into the study” (Flick, 2010: 123). In light of these reasons, I heavily relied on the knowledge of the participants as to whom; in their opinion is known to be politically and economically active based on their life experiences with him with particular features and characteristics.

The nature of the current study requires that: One must have had some level of education that ordinarily would have enabled him/her, all things being equal to actively participate completely in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. Preferably, the selected individual should have attained a tertiary level of education.

In the event that the participant had no tertiary qualifications, the person would qualify as a respondent on condition that he is known by others to have the potential to actively participate in economic and political activities. Admittedly, these criteria are highly subjective and are likely to bring a lot of questions from the reader. However, I and the reader would agree that even in the absence of any impairment, not everyone is an active participant in the economic and political life of Zimbabwe and that education has come to represent the gateway through which people come to the political and civic arena.

3.6. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS
Disability is a cross-cutting issue of political, economic and social life (Mtetwa, 2011). To this end, any study that seeks to comprehend the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the national politics and economy would derive much benefit from experts in various fields. In this light, I endeavored to solicit the opinions of various institutions both in government and in the civil society organisations. I used the purposive sampling techniques to select key informants
on the basis of their perceived expertise in the area of empowerment, lobbying and related activities. Purposive sampling is what Ritchie et al (2003) refers to as criterion-based sampling. Using the purposive sampling technique, I managed to conduct fourteen key informant interviews with various stakeholders considered knowledgeable to disability and/or policy formulation in Zimbabwe. These included five civil society organizations that comprised one trade union, one organisation responsible for national elections and the voting process, one consortium of civil society organisations responsible for human rights, transitional justice and related issues, one organisation responsible for the economic empowerment of women through the provision of loans as well as one organisation responsible for the rights of women. In addition, information was also sought from three senior government officials. These officials were chosen primarily on account of their experience in handling disability matters on behalf of government. Further to that, the other three key informant interviews were held with leaders of Disabled Persons Organizations. These leaders were interviewed during various workshops, seminars and symposia on national disability issues. All this was then complemented with three ethnographic studies conducted during the course of the study. (See sections below for ethnographic studies).

It is however, worth of note that the process of securing an appointment with key informants especially with civil society organizations was not an easy one. The fact that disability is a cross-cutting issue has not yet taken root in Zimbabwe’s civil society organisations (see chapter 5 on the mainstreaming of disability within civil society programme activities). As a result, I was confronted with a plethora of questions and sometimes accusations from a variety of organisations who thought that I was investigating them with a view to identifying their
shortcomings thereby discrediting them as true advocates of the people. I recall very well one human rights organisation making frantic efforts to block my interview charging that they do not discriminate against any citizen on account of disability. As such, there was no need to discuss matters of disability and participation in civic activities with them. The agency therefore blocked my appointment with them, instead preferring to give me literature on their activities.

Other organisations however were prepared to accommodate me simply because the most influential person had a relative with a disability. Yet others simply entertained my request for mere professional reasons.

Besides the mainstream civil society organisations, I also benefited immensely from interviewing key representatives of three disabled persons organisations. It is worth noting however that there is nothing that is as difficult as gaining permission to interview disabled persons organisations, particularly if the interviewer himself has got a disability. The difficulty can be explained in part by the fact that disabled persons organisations in Zimbabwe see each other as competitors and sometimes as perennial opponents (See Chitiga, 2011 and Mtetwa, 2013 for a detailed analysis of DPOs).

There is a tendency for disabled person’s organisations to be membership based. To that end, I was first supposed to reveal my organizational affiliation before being granted permission to interview. I remember one incidence when I tried to make use of one social worker employed by a DPO to organize an appointment for me without success. I gave the social worker my letter of introduction from the University of Zimbabwe as well as a consent form to present to the founder and director to convince him that I needed to get information purely for academic purposes. On learning that I had a disability myself, which information for ethical reasons I had to reveal during my negotiations for permission to interview participants, the social worker was
out rightly told that the organization does not share information with anyone for whatever reason. The social worker was in turn warned against interacting with “strangers” and was advised to tell me not to come.

I however managed to secure permission to interview three representatives of DPOs who gave me important information about their perception about disability and participation in policy formulation in Zimbabwe.

It is nevertheless interesting to note that getting information from the three DPOs was facilitated by some close and informal links that I had established over the years. These relations had developed either because I knew influential persons working for those organizations personally from high school or college or that I had attended a workshop on disability with them where we forged some form of informal links and friendships. The same scenario obtained for government agencies. It was a struggle to secure an appointment with the Public Service Commission mainly due to bureaucratic red tap. With the other ministries and departments, procedural protocol meant that even if I knew someone, I would end up losing touch with the person because I would be referred from one office to another. I however got useful information from government agencies that form the basis of the first part of my discussion in the next chapter.

3.7. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

In keeping with the thrust of the qualitative methodology, I made use of in-depth interviews, narrative enquiry, focus group discussions, ethnographic studies as well as documentary review or content analysis as data collection methods or techniques.
3.7.1 In-depth Interviews

The study made use of in-depth interviews to solicit for information from twenty persons with disabilities regarding their participation in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. According to Willis (2007: 244), much of qualitative research involves forming questions and asking them. The result is often powerful stories that both inform and inspire. In order to gain a full insight into the personal and subjective experiences of persons with albinism and visual impairment regarding their inclusion in the economic and political life of Zimbabwean society, I employed in-depth interviews. As Marvasti (2004: 21) observes, in-depth interviews are grounded on the understanding that delving into the subject’s deeper self is poised to produce more authentic information. In other words, understanding the world view of the respondent being interviewed is a critical aspect of this data gathering technique. Using in-depth interviews enabled me to have an empathetic view of the subjective world view of persons with albinism and visual impairment. Empathy, as a way of understanding the internal perspective of the person helped me to gain an appreciation of the extent to which persons with disabilities participate at various levels of the national policy making framework.

As Johnson (2002: 106) would have it,

“In-depth interviews begin with common sense perceptions, explanations and understandings and some lived cultural experiences. They aim to explore the contextual boundaries of that experience or perception, to uncover what is usually hidden from ordinary view or reflection or to penetrate to more reflective understandings of the nature of that experience.”

By not limiting respondents to a given set of answers, in-depth interviewing has the potential to reveal multiple, and sometimes conflicting attitudes about a given topic. (Op cit: 55).
Implicitly, in-depth interviews are well suited to researching people’s lived experiences. The choice of this method is largely influenced by my theoretical inclinations discussed in the previous chapter. As shown in chapter two, the history of the social model of disability could largely be traced back to the social and political experiences of the members of the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976 (see Finkelstine, 1980; Oliver, 1990 and Drake, 1999). In the words of Pickering (2011:3) “experience is the ground on which researcher and researched come together in some way across the rifts and gulfs between their life histories”. It is the experiences of exclusion of persons with albinism and visual impairment in the economic and political life of Zimbabwe that led me to tape from the rich oasis of in-depth method as part of the qualitative design (see section 3.1 above for research design).

The above advantage of in-depth interviews persuaded me to make use of them in my exploration of the participation of persons with albinism and visual impairment in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. Just like other studies on disability and social exclusion, particularly in Africa, unstructured interviews have proved to be useful research tools in exploring the course of events in the lives of what Choruma (2007) refers to as “the forgotten tribe”. Bearing testimony to the utility of unstructured instruments in studying the life circumstances of Persons with disabilities in relation to their participation in HIV and AIDS programmes in Kwazulu Natal, Hancock (2008) confesses that:

“I decided against structured interviewing, as this type of interviewing allows very little or no flexibility. Approaching so many different people I expected to need a highly flexible instrument. Structured interviews would also have provided me with little scope to find out the notions, feelings or perceptions of the respondents that might not fit into the pre-ordained response categories. This was however necessary when I entered a field
with little or no previous research available. In addition to this I was also worried that the detachment and impersonal approach of structured interviews would prevent trust and rapport building between me and the participants. As part of my interviews inquired into highly personal and confidential information (e.g. rape and HIV status) I needed an instrument that would allow me to build a comfortable relationship with the respondent” (Hancock, 2008:54-55).

In the unstructured questions of in-depth interviews, subjects can place qualifying arguments to their responses. For example, in order to understand why persons with disabilities play a peripheral role in Zimbabwe’s parliament and cabinet, the hidden perceptions and individualized explanations about the political terrain can be revealed. In other words, whilst the negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities constitutes the major reason why their participation in the social and economic life of Zimbabwe, Reeve’s psychological effects of disability was also found to militate against the ability of such a group to participate in national political and economic activities. (For more information about the crippling effects of the psychological effects of disability, see Reeve, 2003).

Using in-depth interviews, I was able to dig deep into the lived experiences of persons with albinism. Such experiences include the fact that persons with albinism do not feature at most political and civic meetings because such meetings are usually conducted in the open, subjecting them to excessive heat from the sun. In keeping with the social model of disability discussed in the previous chapter, in-depth interviews were therefore instrumental in illuminating the environmental barriers inhibiting persons with albinism from taking an active role in the political and civic programmes conducted in their communities.
Making use of in-depth interviews, I managed to ask such questions as “could you tell me of any economic empowerment programmes that you know and whether or not you have participated and/or benefited in any way from these programmes. Such a question was reasonably refreshing and less tenuous than the most sensitive questions on political participation that followed. An in-depth introspection into the participant’s awareness of the economic empowerment policies and programmes and the extent to which they participate or benefit from them helped to answer the concern of this thesis that poverty among persons with disabilities is due mainly to lack of participation in national economic empowerment programmes. The answers that came from these questions were mainly inclined towards political participation. Participants with albinism would then say that they are ostracized from government programmes of economic empowerment because their late leader (Professor John Makumbe) belonged to the main opposition party (the Movement for Democratic Change). As a result nearly all persons with albinism came to be identified as Makumbes. This propensity on the part of the general public to totalize persons with albinism tended to expose them to similar life experiences of discrimination and rejection (see chapter four for a detailed discussion).

The other advantage of in-depth interviews is that they give the researcher a chance to probe further and get clarification over certain issues. For instance, on the verge of concluding a discussion with VIM3 who is visually impaired, it was suggested that the negative attitudes that society has about the abilities of the visually impaired could only be mitigated through a situation whereby one gets to see such people’s performance elsewhere. As argued by one participant:
When people see performance, their attitudes will tend to change. Ok, but you said that society rarely gives you a chance to show case your abilities. Yes. You know I believe that if you can’t get in through the door, make it through the window.

The ensuing discussion led us to venture into the most sacred topic in Zimbabwe, namely that of one’s political activities. Using my experience as a practicing social worker, I was able to penetrate the innermost part of participants’ political life and experiences without being denied critical information. I incidentally discovered that the social work principles of empathy, authenticity, genuineness and unconditional positive regard are very useful if ever one is to gain access to the most sensitive issues in one’s life. (For more information on interviewing in social work, see Kadushin (1990). Further to that, the casework principle of controlled emotional involvement was also handy as some of the experiences were so touching that one was tempted to sympathise rather than empathise with the participant thereby reducing the whole interview session into a counseling one. I however managed as a social worker to maintain objectivity at the same time giving participants a leeway to consult me later especially the next day concerning their personal issues over which I could be of help. To maintain objectivity but at the same time keeping trust, I would refer such participants to local service providers. The most prominent among such issues were those concerning the availability of the disability loan fund administered by the Department of Social Services. It emerged from our discussions that the programme was not widely publicized.
3.7.2. Narrative enquiry

Utilizing in-depth interviews, this study sought to get the narrative stories of the experiences of persons with disabilities. The study heavily relied on the narrative enquiry approach to try and understand the extent to which persons with albinism and visual impairment understand and interpret their situation. The question of human agency is also central to this study. To this effect, the study saw it fit to obtain, through personal stories, about the survival strategies employed by these people in the middle of social exclusion. According to Riessman and Speedy (2006), narrative enquiry in the human sciences is a twentieth century development. Narrative enquiry is a field with a realist, post-modern and constructivist orientation.

By definition, narrative enquiry involves a process of gathering information for the purposes of research through storytelling and narration (Chataika, 2003: 2). The rationale behind incorporating the narrative enquiry to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of persons with disabilities was informed primarily influenced by the strengths of this method. Such strengths include among others its utility to the exploration of relatively unknown, socially excluded social groups (Lincoln and Guba, 1995).

On the same note, Willis (2007: 295) contends that meaning exists only in context and that quantitative interviewing does not uncover preexisting truths. Instead, it is the social process that constructs meaning through social interaction. The narrative enquiry is an effort to represent in detail, the perspective of participants in the process or setting being studied (ibid). In line with the arguments advanced under theoretical framework above, persons with disabilities are socially excluded in Zimbabwe due mainly to the fact that the dominant model in use is the medical model of disability. Such a model, according to Oliver (1990) simply views a person with a disability as abnormal and in need of medical treatment so that he can be healed.
Using the narrative enquiry, the first questions on my interview schedule required that the participant chronicle his/her life history. This included, in the form of a story: “Could you please tell me about yourself”. This question required that the participant talk about his age, sex, disability type, family background, educational qualifications or level of attainment, professional or vocational activities as well as other sources of livelihood. All this information was given in the form of a story. Since social exclusion starts within one’s family where one may be over-protected, deprived of love and encouragement as well as accorded low status among other siblings, it was felt that this form of storytelling would cast some light onto the experiences of participants and how these might have contributed to their sense of being in later life.

Through a collection of narrative stories about the lives or survival strategies of the participants, I had to bring out a detailed articulation of the extent to which such a social group participates in the mainstream social and economic activities.

It is worth of note that narrative enquiry was also employed to gain an insight into the essence for which the civil society organizations I interviewed stood for. This helped me understand whether or not they should accommodate the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities in their programming.

In the form of a story, a representative of one influential women’s organization told me how her organization was formed. Her narrative went thus: “The trend was that when women go to court in whatever matters, they would face so many challenges. They did not know court process, they didn’t know their rights, they tended to just cry and not respond to pertinent legal issues. Those were some of the challenges women were facing. So the organization was formed by a group of female lawyers who wanted to just assist women periodically as and when they could. Over the years, we then developed into a vibrant organization whose major thrust is that
of providing assistance in the form of legal aid to women and children. But I think due to growth over the years, we have also evolved into an organization that deals with lobbying and advocacy work” (See Chapter Five for a detailed discussion).

From the above narrative, it is clear that disability was never part of the objectives for which the organization was founded. As the organization evolved over the years from just helping women in court to lobbying, it is axiomatically clear that disability is never part of their programming framework.

3.7.3. **Focus group discussions**

According to Flick (2010), a focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Generally a focus group discussion requires a set of skills commonly found in the domain of social work. These include empathy, genuineness, persuasion, flexibility, objectivity and being a good listener (Patton, 2002; Flick, 2010). By objectivity in focus group discussions is meant the researcher’s ability to respect differing opinion. In addition, the focus group discussion demands that the researcher pays due attention to all group members, encouraging the most reserved ones to speak their minds concerning the topic under discussion. Most importantly, the focus group discussion method was chosen for its ability to enable participants to provide checks and balances on each other thereby weeding out false or extreme views (Patton, 2002; Flick, 2010).

In order to gain an insight into the collective perceptions and normative values of persons with disabilities concerning their role and place in the policy formulation process as well as the perceived inclusionary and exclusionary factors, two focus group discussions were held with persons with disabilities within the two disability categories. A focus group guide was utilized
for this purpose. Having obtained permission from the Zimbabwe Albino Association, a focus group discussion was conducted with persons with albinism on a Saturday in November 2013 in the School of Social Work board room. The process of organizing a focus group discussion with persons with albinism was fairly easy as I heavily relied on the information and contacts given to me by the Zimbabwe Albino Association. Using these contacts, I phoned all members on the list provided, telling them first and foremost that I had been given their contacts by the Zimbabwe Albino Association because I had talked to them about my doctoral research. I first asked for their permission to participate in the study. I did not face any resistance from anyone.

Having arranged to meet on a Saturday, all participants turned up for the meeting. The discussion began on a low note with people trying to familiarize with each other. In total, the group was attended by ten participants. Although most participants belonged to the Zimbabwe Albino Association, it became clear that some members did not know each other. That somehow delayed the interview discussion as participants needed time to get accustomed to each other.

According to Finch and Lewis (2003: 71), the most prominent feature of focus groups is the spontaneity that arises from their stronger social context. In responding to each other, participants reveal more of their own frame of reference on the subject of study. The language they use, the emphasis they give and their general framework of understanding is more spontaneously on display. In this light, the focus group provided me with an opportunity to understand the jargon and other heuristics that persons with albinism commonly use when they converse among themselves. These heuristics enlightened me to the fact that persons with albinism were also a community unto themselves with their own independent shared identity and sense of being and belonging. In addition, the salient advantage of a focus group discussion is that it brings to the fore what people in their various groupings share in common. For example, it
emerged from the discussion that in some other quarters of society, persons with albinism belong to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change simply because the former leader of Zimbabwe Albino Association (the late professor John Makumbe) was an active member of that party. To quote from the discussion: “….the fact that the late Professor Makumbe had his political party, some of us are now being painted with the same brush despite the fact that as individuals we have our own political preferences”. From such a state of affairs, there is some shared identity as perceived by society. (For the concept of a disability community, see McCool, 2009).

Patton (2002) warns that, the critical disadvantage of a focus group discussion is that it is somehow difficult to take notes and moderate at the same time; I however did not encounter this problem simply because I used a digital voice recorder with the consent of participants to whose attention this arrangement was brought in advance.

With regards to persons with visual impairments, getting the participants together for a focus group discussion proved even more difficult than that for persons with albinism. Since the Zimbabwe National League of the Blind has got no offices in Harare, I had thought that arrangements for a focus group could be made with the organization’s Harare branch wherein interviews can then be conducted at their usual meeting places either in Epworth or Chitungwiza. Reality however later dawned on me that sometimes membership organizations are so loosely organized that coordination becomes a challenge. This forced me to abandon the initial arrangement preferring to pursue the snowball technique even to arrange a focus group discussion. Using such an approach, I used one visually impaired man that I had known at school to mobilize his colleagues for my study. Using that very fact of knowing each other from school made my entry into the life of this social group easy.
Having established a rapport with the former schoolmate (which practice is common and ideal in qualitative enquiry) (see Patton, 2002, Robin, 2002, Willis, 2007, Flick, 2010, Harvey, 2013 and DeShong, 2013), I was able to organize a focus group of persons with visual impairment at the same venue. Just like the case with the other group of persons with albinism, my data recording was facilitated by the use of a digital voice recorder.

On the whole, the main benefits of focus group discussions are that they are low cost, stimulate participants and support them in remembering events, they are rich in information, they can lead beyond the answers of a single participant. More importantly, what emerged from the focus group discussions was a wealth of experiences of discrimination across space and time. As Flick (2010) observed, a small number of individuals, brought together as a discussion or resource group, is more valuable many times over than any representative sample. Such a group, discussing collectively their spheres of life and probing on it as they meet one another’s disagreements, will do more to lift the veils covering the sphere of life than any other device ever known to any researcher (Flick, 2010: 195). It is these strengths of focus group discussions that led me to employ them in a bid to illuminate the lived experiences of persons with disabilities.

3.7.4. Ethnography

The word ethnography comes from a Greek word ‘ethnos’ that refers to ‘people’ or ‘cultural group’ (Patton, 2002:81). Ethnography is the study devoted to describing ways of life of human kind. In other words, this is a social scientific description of a people and the cultural basis of their people wood (ibid). According to Flick (2010: 222), ethnography has taken over in recent years from what was known as participant observation. The relationship between ethnography
and participant observation has even left some scholars straddling between the meanings of these two techniques, arguing that there is absolutely no standard definition of ethnography (O’reilly, 2012). The final convergence therefore is that the defining feature of ethnography is participant observation. Generally, both participant observation and ethnography stress the point that practices are only accessible through observation. More to this, interviews and narratives only make the accounts of practices accessible but not the practices themselves (Flick, 2010).

Some of the most outstanding features of participant observation as enunciated by Flick (2010) are:

- a special interest in human meaning and interaction as viewed from the perspective of people who are insiders or members of particular situations and settings;
- location in the everyday here and now situations of life as the foundation of enquiry and method;
- a form of theory and theorizing stressing interpretation and understanding of human existence;
- a logical process of enquiry that is flexible, open-ended, opportunistic, requiring a constant definition of what is problematic based on facts gathered in concrete settings of human existence;
- an in-depth, qualitative, case study approach in design;
- the performance of a participant role that entails establishing and maintaining relationships with natives in the field;
- the use of direct observation alongside with other methods of gathering information. (Jorgeonsen, 1989 quoted in Flick, 2010: 226).
In practical terms, ethnography simply entails following the participants wherever they undertake activities of daily life that constitute the fulcrum of the study. Ethnography involves extended observations of the group, usually through *participant observation*, in which the researcher is *immersed* in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants.

To be more specific, I used what has come to be referred to as multi-sited ethnography. The difference between the conventional ethnographic studies (as defined above) and multi-sited ethnographic studies lies in that the former tends to be confined to a single geographic location whereas the later “follows people wherever they go” (see Falzon, 2005). As Falzon (2005:9) argues, “if our object is mobile and/or spatially dispersed, being likewise surely becomes a form of participant observation”. The present study utilized multi-sited ethnography by tracking the interface among three main actors in the area under scrutiny namely; the government, mainstream non-governmental organisations including civil society organisations as well as persons with disabilities themselves together with their Disabled Persons Organisations. This exercise literally followed what Clifford (1992) described fieldwork as travel practice.

I collected relevant information on disability, government policy, and inclusionary and exclusionary activities of critical stakeholders on the policy formulation arena as well as the operations of the disability movement. As a person with a visual impairment, access to various workshops, symposia and seminars on disability was readily granted. My expertise in various facets of disability policy and programming as well as my experience as a social worker in government facilitated my inclusion. I therefore enjoyed the insider advantage in accessing even information not readily accessible to the generality of researchers. Contributing to the insider/outsider debate, McCool (2009) makes an observation that colleagues welcome the
opportunity to air problems and to have their situation analyzed by someone who understood the practical day to day realities of their lives. My position therefore as a person with a visual impairment was useful because I am used to the social and political environment in which such a social group live. My inclinations and limitations influence the way I conceptualize, understand, and analyze research problems. As an insider myself, it is inevitable that my research raises questions of subjectivity as does all qualitative research (See section 3.2 above on personal biases and reflexivity).

Be that as it may, the major advantage derived from all ethnographic studies is that as an insider, the researcher does not need to negotiate their position with the subjects thereby saving prolonged periods of time with them within an artificially created situation (McCool, 2009). The same method was used by Hancock (2008) when she studied disability and HIV and AIDS in Kwazulu Natal. Hancock had to get involved in the daily activities of persons with disabilities, especially in instances where they interacted with a health facility. She gives a convincing argument for her research method saying that:

This gave me a good inside into their living, working and schooling reality and also enabled me to create a personal and comfortable atmosphere for my interview partners. I also collected data through participating in these workshops or in the daily running of a clinic or day care centre. I often had to take down the information from these institutions as memory protocols, as much insight was given to me through informal meetings, break discussions or presentations that could not be taped as these had not been planned (Hancock, 2008: 54).
Hancock’s experience with ethnographic studies made me believe that being a member of my research discourse made it possible for me to approach my subjects as an insider thereby accessing some information that could not ordinarily be splashed out to unfamiliar and foreign investigators.

The main part of my research was therefore conducted while I was participating in people’s lives; sharing experiences with them (also see Patton (2002), Willis (2007), Hancock (2008), Flick (2010). I consider my acceptance in the community of persons with disabilities and the privileges associated with gathering information from colleagues and acquaintances as more strategic and enriching rather than simply “pitching a tent in the village” only to stand out as a stranger with suspect or ulterior motives.

From such a vantage point, I was able to observe as a member as well as influencing discussions by asking those questions that were of material substance to my thesis. Using my position as a person with a visual impairment, looking for information among my fellow comrades, I was entrusted with certain information considered sacred within the disability fraternity. Such information relates to disability and marriage which issue was heavily thrashed during the two focus group discussions with both disability groups. The experience of qualitative research is about trying to become like the participants we try to observe and what they share. That feeling which McCool (2009) calls “communities” and group identity. In that group exists a sense of belonging and oneness, and the sharing of life experiences. The feeling of a community helped me a lot when it came to a discussion of disabled persons’ organisations and their role in the emancipation of their constituency. Using the same advantage, I was able to share experiences of the internal disability politics by persons with albinism who indicated that even other persons with disabilities are reluctant to treat them as disabled. One participant
became emotional when he narrated the ordeal he suffered when he tried to import a car using the rebate that is normally granted by government to persons with disabilities. The participant recounted that he had to seek the intervention of a senator representing persons with disabilities in parliament who in turn had problems accepting that he had a disability.

Using multi-sited ethnography, I collected vital information from more than five workshops and symposia on disability. These were organized primarily by umbrella bodies of disabled persons organisations as part of their routine work of social and political engagement. One such a workshop was organized by an umbrella body representing more than 53 disability service organisations with political parties. The workshop was primarily a lobbying exercise meant to implore politicians to consider persons with disabilities as both suitable candidates for political office and as a fertile constituency worth their attention. I was able to interact with various top politicians, especially from the ruling party, The Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). The ensuing discussion on disability and mainstreaming within the political and economic framework of Zimbabwe coupled with side discussions conducted during breaks provided crucial information for chapters four and six of this study.

Another important source of ethnographic information was the 2014 National Disability Expo organized by the office of the presidential advisor on disability. This has now become an annual event where all players in the field of disability spend a week showcasing their goods and services including research works on disability. I snatched this rare opportunity to interact and get crucial information on economic participation contained in Chapter Six of the study. In addition to informal discussions held by myself and exhibitors, I benefited immensely from paper presentations on disability from both government and other persons tasked to give their opinion and experiences on working with persons with disabilities.
The other source of information was a symposium on disability and mainstreaming in government conducted by the same umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities. I was invited to participate as an expert and advisor on matters of disability in the country. The main thrust of such a symposium was to enable the disability fraternity to appreciate what the government was doing in the area of disability, to create a platform for persons with disabilities to air their grievances to government on specific policy issues as well as to enable government to appreciate the workings of the disability movement in the country. This symposium provided crucial information on government position concerning disability and participation in the political and economic life of Zimbabwe. The presentations and subsequent probes emanating from them form part of chapter four and six on the government position on disability.

Another key source of information was the African Continental Round table on disability organized and convened by Zimbabwe in September 2014. This week long workshop was attended by disability organisations from across the African continent. Various members of parliament and government ministers whose portfolio had something to do with disability were also in attendance. This was the most important source of information on the participation of persons with disabilities in the political and economic life of their communities across the African continent. Experiences were shared by participants from as far as Mali, Madagascar, Senegal, and South Africa, among other countries. The round table supplied most of the information for chapter four on political representation, participation in parliament by persons with disabilities as well as cutting age personal and country specific experiences concerning the subject of participation. I was fortunate to be part of the local organizing committee that put together all the logistics that enabled the smooth flow of the continental event. Rich experiences were obtained even from Zimbabwe’s senior government officials who, by virtue of their
national responsibilities and national commitments were obliged to be part of the local organizing committee. Using my relationship creating techniques amassed during the years of social work practice with clients, I was able to interact with these officials who in turn selflessly and unreservedly volunteered crucial information concerning their departments with regards to disability. The bulk of that information is spread across the chapters on findings.

Proceedings from these and other seminars, symposia and workshops on disability were captured using an Olympus digital voice recorder (VN-713PC). To avoid bias, the recordings were given to an assistant who was not part of all the proceedings to transcribe using a computer. This experience, utilized together with the need for triangulation of both data and methods brought more credibility to the study. McCool (2009) warns us of the disadvantages with ethnographic studies.

3.7.5. **Documentary or content analysis**

In order to validate the arguments discussed in this study, content analysis of publications, various pieces of legislation and other policies was employed. Using documentary evidence, I was able to tape from various experiences of various researchers on disabilities particularly in Zimbabwe. Before an interrogation of relevant literature on disability in Zimbabwe, I took some time to examine in detail the literature on public policy, political participation as well as economic empowerment. From the literature on public policy, I got information relating to theories of policy formulation. This formed the basis of this thesis. The point of departure is that although this thesis is on disability and, the policy formulation process is of prime as the participation of this social group therein is the foundation upon which the thesis is anchored.
Pursuant to this, various publications on the policy formulation process, including textbooks, journal papers and other working papers available were reviewed. Furthermore, to gain an understanding of Zimbabwe’s economic empowerment policy formulation trajectory, use was made of parliamentary debates, government reports, conference papers as well as journal articles and textbooks on the subject of Zimbabwe’s political processes as well as economic empowerment history and debate. With permission from relevant authorities, reports from the Public Service Commission regarding the employment or membership status were also utilized. In addition, to gain a full view of the theoretical explanations of disability issues, use was also made of various papers, books and other documents on disability theory and practice. Last but not least, use was also made of other people’s theses and dissertations on disability, economic empowerment and policy formulation papers.

3.8. DATA ANALYSIS

In keeping with the thrust of qualitative research, data was analysed as they were collected. That is, I first grouped my participants into two groups namely; persons with albinism and those with visual impairment. I was careful to interview one group first before going onto the other in order to keep myself in form and perspective. After data were collected, I started the process of transcribing them by merely listening to the conversation I had recorded using a digital voice recorder while writing that conversation using a computer. I went through seven interviews this way until I started doubting my objectivity in conducting the transcription of my own conversation. I discovered that the transcription of one’s own interviews tended to lead to biases. There is the temptation of leaving out some information on the understanding that it is less important. I therefore had to ask someone else to verify my transcription with a view to adding
anything that I had taken for granted and excluded. The rest of the interviews were then transcribed by research assistants hired for that purpose to increase objectivity. I would however proof-read the transcripts before printing and filing them. I realized that although data could be well handled as soft copies, computers were hardly dependable. Due to the possibility of a viral attack, I would simply lose all the data I had struggled to collect. I therefore had to print the transcripts and keep them as a spiral bound copy. A further security measure entailed writing the soft copies of the data transcripts onto a compact disc to ensure that I would not lose my soft copies.

After the transcription process, I then had to go through all transcripts, just checking for any technical errors that would threaten the reliability of my data. Using my objectives, I arranged the data in line with the following themes:

(i) The general national disability discourse including society’s perceptions, beliefs and attitudes about disability as expressed in the extent to which persons with visual impairment and those with albinism are allowed space in the formulation of economic empowerment policies.

(ii) Participation and/or representation of Persons with albinism and visual impairment in the political and administrative structures of government. This theme simply assessed the presence of persons with disabilities in influential positions that matter when it comes to the formulation of policy. These included among others parliamentary positions, cabinet posts, and senior posts within the national administrative structures such as: the permanent secretaries of government ministries, principal directors, directors and deputy directors of government.
(iii) The third theme consisted of an assessment of the extent to which disability is mainstreamed into civil society organisations’ programme activities. This entailed an examination of the programmatic orientation of the organisations, the departments found within these organisations as well as whether or not they involve persons with disabilities.

(iv) The next theme concerned itself with the barriers to participation. This theme was divided into two namely endogenous and exogenous barriers to participation.

(v) Last but not least, the fifth theme concerned itself with the copying or survival strategies of persons with disabilities in the midst of social, economic and political exclusion. This involved an examination of the sources of livelihood of such a social group.

Following the creation of these themes, data were grouped in a manner that any statement in the interview referring to each of these themes was put together to form a coherent story. In practice, this involved reading each interview transcript, picking any narrative or comment that fits into a particular theme and then copying as well as pasting the same on a relevant thematic area. Initially, this copying and pasting exercise was done randomly without regard to whether a coherent story emerges out of the resulting data set.

The next stage entailed realigning all the statements to come up with a draft story.

Admittedly, this was a demanding task, especially given that no software was used to grade or categorise raw data. However, the exercise was found to be extremely useful as it enabled me to familiarize with all my collected data. This made my discussion more informed than could have been had I relied simply on the use of software for the grading and packaging of data. To this effect, although modern thinking in qualitative research advocates for the use of various data analysis software such as invivo and others, experience taught me that this somehow
alienates the researcher from the sentiments, feelings, and emotions of participants. Reading and sifting through every word of the raw data remains the best way for a researcher using the naturalistic enquiry to internalize, appreciate and comprehend the findings.

3.9. Ensuring credibility and dependability of information

Credibility and dependability of information are critical aspects of any scientific enquiry. Generally, in quantitative methodology, this is usually referred to as validity and reliability of information. Since the reader might generally be familiar with validity and reliability, the current thesis shall employ both these terms interchangeably.

Any academic study should never lose sight of validity and reliability as these are key issues in enhancing the credibility of any piece of work. Patton (2002) states that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned with when designing a study, analysing results, and judging the quality of the study. In order to position the aspect of reliability and validity into this thesis, it is essential to define the two concepts as given by various qualitative researchers. While the terms Reliability and Validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms Credibility, Neutrality or Conformability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability are to be the essential criteria for quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To be more specific with the term reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 300) use “dependability”, in qualitative research which closely corresponds to the notion of “reliability” in quantitative research. They further emphasize “inquiry audit” (page 317) as one measure which might enhance the dependability of qualitative research. This can be used to examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (Hoepfl, 1997). According to Willis (2007),
validity and reliability in qualitative research is best achieved through the triangulation technique (for more on triangulation, see Tashakkori and Tedlie, 1998). Willis (2007) contends that there are several types of triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves confirmation across three different data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and life histories (page 219). The rationale of this method is that the flaws of one method are usually the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies (Denzin, 1970 quoted in Willis, 2007). Willis (2007) cautions us about the use of the term “triangulation” in interpretivist methodology. His argument stems from the fact that using one method, such as interviewing may be far more convincing to readers than a poorly done study using three data collection methods.

Consistency and dependability of the study findings and discussion was therefore enhanced via the use of various methods of data collection. These included in-depth studies, narrative enquiry, focus group discussions as well as ethnographic studies. For certain, no study methodology is beyond reproach. To this end, it is up to the reader to determine the extent to which this study passes the test of Credibility, Neutrality or Confirmability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability.

3.10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
1. As an under-researched field in Zimbabwe, there was a dearth of literature to consult on disability. As a result, some literature came from the researcher’s contribution to disability studies published in various reports and journals.

2. They were various logistical challenges that included difficulties in getting clearance from government to access some information on their disability policies and programmes. This
also applied to civil society organisations including the Disabled Persons Organisations. The researcher had to capitalize on various social networks to gain access to relevant officials (see section on ethnography above).

### 3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

For a study of this magnitude, ethical issues abound. These have a bearing on the rights of the participants including any other persons or organisations that volunteer their information.

#### 3.11.1. Informed Consent.

Central to the case for ethically sound research is the principle that research participants are able to consent freely to their involvement (Munsaka, 2012: 173). This minimises disruptions to the lives of participants, upholds their human rights, dignity and autonomy. In addition, it also helps to build the trust that is essential between researcher and participants (Bulmer, 2008).

The researcher solicited for the informed consent for all participants before interviewing them. This took the form of explaining during the course of booking an appointment. The intentions of the researcher and that participation were indeed voluntary. Emphasis was also laid on informed consent during the interview where a detailed explanation of the intentions and uses of findings was further clarified to all participants. Because consent is not a once off obligation, as argued by Henn et al (2006) and Social Research Association (2003), the researcher continually confirmed participants ‘willingness to participate and reminded them of their right to withdraw from the research process at any stage for any reason. With respect to key informants, the research tool was even sent in advance via email with a preamble articulating informed consent and voluntary participation.
3.11.2. Confidentiality.

Confidentiality is one of the fundamental pillars of any research process. Participants were given the assurance that information provided in interviews was treated confidentially and shared only with the academic supervisors (Munsaka, 2012). Closely linked to confidentiality is the concept of anonymity. Henn et al (2006) define anonymity as making sure that those who participate in the research remain nameless and unidentifiable. This implies an active attempt by a researcher to remove from the research records any identifying features of the research participants (Munsaka, 2012: 176). Researchers commonly use pseudonyms and disguised locations to prevent research participants from being individually identifiable (Bryman, 2004; Christians, 2005). However, these may not eliminate entirely the possibility of identification (Bryman, 2001). In an attempt to uphold confidentiality, numbers were assigned to participants. For example, instead of saying Peter is a man with visual impairment; a code was assigned such as (VIM1) meaning visually impaired male and first participant. The numbers were assigned in alphabetical order of the actual names and surnames of the participants. The same applied to persons with albinism. Confidentiality demanded that numbers instead of names be used. To this effect, such codes as (ALF1) were used to denote the first female participant with albinism.

When it came to key informants, care was taken not to reveal the name of the actual interviewee as well as his/her organisation. Instead, in extreme situations, the area of operation was used in the narratives. For example, ‘a prominent organisation working in the area of human rights’ or ‘a prominent trade union’ or ‘a prominent organisation of women lawyers’. As stated above, confidentiality and anonymity are difficult to guarantee in really situations. The researcher however tried to conceal the identities of participants.
3.12. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the research path traveled in the process of gathering data for this thesis. The chapter began by discussing the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research. Here, attention has been paid to the suitability and merits of applying this methodology. Chief among these merits were that of flexibility, the ability to interpret the feelings, perceptions and life experiences of the participants. Guided by the philosophical orientation of the qualitative or interpretivist methodology, the chapter went on to discuss issues of personal biases and reflexivity. Here the main objective was to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that the thesis does not in any way claim objectivity. Instead personal biases and perception resulting from the fact that I am part and parcel of the disability fraternity are likely to colour my assessment and interpretation of the situation were illuminated. Thereafter, targeting, participant selection as well as the data collection techniques or methods were discussed. The main methods used were in-depth interviews, focus group discussions as well as multi-sited ethnography. Given the complexity of research as a search for reality, it became necessary that matters of credibility and dependability of information be attended to. Last but not least, issues of ethics in qualitative research were discussed.
CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NATIONAL POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the first and second objective of the thesis, namely the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the national political and administrative processes. The need for persons with disabilities to actively participate in national political and administrative structures remains the central argument for this thesis. The argument is that unless and until persons with disabilities actively take part in the political processes that inform public policy, all efforts directed towards the social and economic emancipation of this social group will be futile. In saying this, it is important that I do not blow my own trumpet as the only researcher to advocate for the active political participation of persons with disabilities as doing so will simply portray a narrow and uninformed analysis of disability research. In his thesis on the participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes in Ethiopia, Belete (2011) sums up the need for political participation as the best way to influence public policy. He posits that the right to political participation is not only a right unto itself but rather a basic tool in the realizing of other rights. As a result, if there are opportunities for persons with disabilities to succeed in the political tournament, there will be a tendency to incorporating other concerns of these people as one of the principal agendas in the national policies and programs (Belete, 2011: 6).
4.1. THE NEED FOR PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN STATE INSTITUTIONS.

Participation in policy formulation is seen through the process of equal share of posts in various arms and institutions of the state. This form of representation and active participation in all facets of the state institutions has become a launch pad upon which such marginalized groups as women have centered their advocacy for equality in society. The understanding even from various academic submissions being that poverty is powerlessness. (See Narayan et al (2000), Green (2012), Mansuri and Rao (2013) for the nexus between poverty and powerlessness.

In the same vein, some scholars such as Littlewood et al (2007) have not only attributed poverty to lack of power and representation in various social, political and economic institutions of society but to social exclusion. (See Chapter Two for a discussion of social exclusion). The nexus between poverty and social exclusion has led Littlewood et al (2007) to conclude that social exclusion manifests itself in lack of participation in political and civic activities of society. It is however worth observing that the above authors conceived of participation and social inclusion and empowerment with reference to women, the poor and other minority groups without specific reference to the plight of Persons with disabilities. To this end, this thesis serves as an attempt to bring issues of political and administrative representation into the disability discourse. This line of argument is pursued with the intention of signaling a departure from treating disability as a function of charity towards that of political and economic empowerment as a panacea to poverty and deprivation characteristic of the lives of Persons with disabilities (see chapter 2 for the nexus between poverty and disability). In the modern liberal scheme of things, participation in state institutions signifies full citizenship. To quote the words of the vice chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe, Professor L.M. Nyagura in his address to the 2014
Disability Expo, “one does not become a lesser human or a lesser citizen because he has got a disability”. Emphasizing the link between poverty, citizenship and social exclusion, Roche (1992) did not miss his words when he said that;

Poverty is antithetical to full citizenship… Poverty represents a strategically important limit for the concept of social citizenship. Beyond this limit in some respects people are not full and participating members of society, and also they are not full citizens. Beyond this limit people are politically and civically as well as socially ‘excluded’, they are ‘second-class citizens’ or less (Roche, 1992, 55).

Further to the social exclusion approach to representation lies what Winter (2003: 5) calls the principal agent interface. In the case at hand, the principal (usually the cabinet and parliament) may promulgate a specific policy covering every citizen including those with disabilities. Yet the bureaucrats may exercise their own discretion based on their cultural, attitudinal and practical orientation decide not to extend some benefits to those less represented in society. In view of the principal/agent interface as well as the implications that this is likely to have given the stigma attached to disability, all participants interviewed were of the view that Persons with disabilities are likely to get nothing from most government policies unless they are represented at the level of implementation. Even the discussions held by key informants revealed that the representation of persons with disabilities especially in government departments was stiffly resisted by the non-disabled officials and even cabinet ministers who feel that such a social group is not thankful for the spirit of “goodwill” extended to them by a benevolent government.

At a workshop conducted by one of the umbrella organizations for persons with disabilities in which I was in attendance, one government minister did not miss his words when
persons with disabilities asked for equal representation and promotion within the national bureaucracy when he remarked thus, “I do not understand what difference your presence will make at the echelons of power. How many persons with disabilities have since passed through our education system since independence? How do you want to be included? How many teachers with disabilities are employed by government? The problem with some of you is that you do not understand how dangerous and difficult it is for a disabled person to be promoted and perform novel and intricate duties not commensurate with his capacities. Even the department to which he is assigned is likely to face some challenges. His own work and life will be challenging too. You must just be thankful for what government has managed to do for you”.

Despite the stiff resistance from politicians and members of the mainstream civil society organizations to afford equality of opportunities and fair representation to persons with disabilities, there was consensus among all participants and disabled persons organizations that political representation and participation in public life remains the panacea to poverty reduction and economic emancipation for a social group for which charity has not worked for too long. Registering his claim for political representation at various levels of government, ALM 1 suggested that a policy must be put in place stipulating that in each and every government department there must be at least one person representing persons with disability. His plea stems from the belief that, persons with disabilities, and those with albinism in particular were excluded from participating in both civic and political activities due to false perceptions and discrimination by those involved in the governance of these organizations.

To emphasize his point, ALM 1 called for the full implementation of some of the provisions of the new constitution especially those related to employment, equality of opportunity as well as education so as to level the playing field. In apparent reference to section
(22) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, he went on to suggest that government must harmonise all statutes and policies that are not in line with the new constitution especially those likely to constrict the opportunities and living standards for persons with disabilities. Section (22) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe articulates the rights of Persons with disabilities to employment, a life with dignity and respect. The general feeling of participants however is that this constitutional provision has not yet found expression within the current statutes and policies, much to the disadvantage of Persons with disabilities. Emphasizing this observation, ALM 5 felt that persons with disabilities were deliberately shut out of the critical institutions governing policy formulation and implementation in the country simply on account of their perceived uselessness. Throughout the interview, ALM 5 labored to prove the contention that the mainstream society was stifling the efforts of persons with disabilities to participate in critical national economic and political processes. He viewed empowerment of persons with disabilities as a critical step towards enabling persons with disability to have a stake within the national institutions responsible for policy formulation and implementation. “Since we are a marginalized group I think there must be affirmative action when it comes to accessing certain economic benefits such as the Youth Fund established under the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act (chapter 14;33)”. Such affirmative action is likely to contribute a lot towards the economic emancipation of persons with disabilities.

Similarly, it was the feeling of all participants that the national Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Programme, though it had a representative with a disability at its national board level was not as all that helpful because it did not adopt affirmative action in the processing of fund applications. Participants bemoan the absence of a disabled bureaucrat representative at the level where proposals or applications for the youth fund are finally
adjudicated as a key barrier to their graduating out of poverty. VIM4’s observation was motivated by the understanding that the need for representation and affirmative action stems from that Persons with Disabilities are more likely than other social groups to encounter negative social attitudes from bureaucrats. In a famous report entitled “voices of the poor”, Narayan et al (1999) put emphasis on the potential danger posed by the state apparatus when it comes to serving the needs of those in extreme poverty. To this effect, they did not miss their words when they argued that “Clearly the way the state is organized often exacerbates existing social tensions and cleavages, leading to greater inequality between the rich and the poor” (Narayan et al 1999: 211). Page (1985) quoted in Hill and Hupe (2002) adds a voice to this argument by emphasizing that a bureaucratic system is more democratic when the socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of top government officials resemble those of the nation as a whole. Failure to guarantee representation of persons with disabilities within Zimbabwe’s bureaucratic structures of government suggests that their participation in the implementation of crucial policies is negligible. Of critical importance to Zimbabwe’s indigenization and economic empowerment policy framework are the positions of authority and influence in the ministries of Youth Development, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment as well as the ministry of Small and Medium enterprise Development, among others. In the absence of a representative with disabilities at the service delivery point, bureaucratic discretion is likely to tilt the fortunes of such a social group away from achieving the goals of the empowerment fund, said VIM5. In concurrence, ALM 5 remarked thus: “All we are saying is that if we have a representative there, it will then be possible for us to advance any issue affecting our membership. It might be a complaint or a proposal”. ALM 5 ended his discussion by asserting that there was need for people living with albinism to craft ways of fitting themselves by all possible means in all
political and bureaucratic institutions. Persons with disabilities, he argued, should put up a collective effort and dare to challenge these institutions to make sure that they create a place for at least one or two persons with disabilities, in the departments especially those with albinism as a way of equal representation.

Echoing the same sentiment, VIM4 bemoaned the absence of disability on the political agenda as reflected by political messages conveyed by different parties at rallies and other gatherings:

We sometimes attend political meetings but I feel that they do not help us that much because whatever message will be spread has got nothing to do with disability. Whether or not they are policies or programmes on disability, the politicians that we have are non-disabled. As a result, they do not even bother to articulate any disability friendly policies thinking that such policies are not important to the crowds. There is therefore need for political parties to infuse at all levels persons with disabilities. We need a ministry for persons with disabilities that would better handle our issues. I therefore feel that there should be a policy mandating disability representation at all institutions. Disability should not have a representative only at the top but at every service delivery terminal, a disability desk is required if ever such a social group is to be assured of quality service delivery from government officials. Otherwise, the current scenario is designed such that you get to an officer who does not know disability at all and you do not even get the required services.

On a similar note, the need for a disability desk or disability focal point in every ministry was emphasized by one leader of an umbrella organisation for DPOs during a continental
consultative workshop. Presenting a paper on the state of disability inclusion in Zimbabwe, the
disability leader said that:

YOUR HONOUR, my organisation has come to firmly believe that one of the strategies
for mainstreaming disability is for government to establish a disability desk in every
ministry including parastatals. The disability desk will serve as a consultation focal point
for the formulation and implementation of disability inclusive policies and strategies. We
therefore call upon the government to consider this approach in the context of Zim Asset
when it comes to empowering persons with disabilities. In addition we propose that a
parliamentary committee on disability mainstreaming be taken into account in policy
formulation strategies.

In terms of section (3.8.4) of the ZIMASSET economic blueprint, the government of Zimbabwe
endeavors to “avail and increase economic opportunities for women, youths and the physically
challenged, (a misnomer for persons with disabilities), in communities in conformity with the
Indigenisation, Empowerment and Employment Creation thrust” (for more information on
ZIMASSET and national targets. See Table 4.1 below:
### Table 4.1: Social Services and Poverty Eradication Cluster Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Key Result Areas</th>
<th>Cluster Outcomes</th>
<th>Cluster Outputs</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Lead Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
<td>- Improved gender equality and equity.</td>
<td>- 1 958 ward level gender based violence awareness campaigns conducted; - Communities aware of gender based violence effects. - Women’s group funded under the Women Development Fund; - Women groups linked to markets through exhibitions, fairs and expos; - 50% of decision making positions held by women; Women accessing micro credit; -Women participating in all levels of decision making; -Women participating in social, economic and political sectors.</td>
<td>- Increase community awareness on rights, gender based violence responsive laws, mechanisms and services; - Increase the number of women groups benefiting from the women’s development Fund; Mobilize resources; - set up a quota system for women in decision making; - Capacity building of elected women MPs and Councillors; - Mainstream Gender in policy formulation implementation, monitoring and evaluation; - strengthen or establish mechanisms for women to effectively participate and benefit from various empowerment programmes; - Implement sector gender policies and programmes</td>
<td>Ministry responsible for Women Affairs and Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Still on Zim-ASSET, Mateta and Kuchera (2014) bemoaned the conceptualization of disability in the ZIMASSET document. They argued that the use of the terms “physically challenged” was not only a negation of the manifesto which had been used by the ruling party for the 2013 elections. Rather, it is also indicative of the persistence of the medical model of disability where the government refuses to admit that it is the environment which is challenged rather than people with impairments. With this in mind, it is inconceivable how persons with disabilities would meaningfully participate as citizens with equal rights and duties. The Zim Asset policy is an eloquent testimony of a product which comes out without the participation of a marginalized group such as persons with disabilities. A member of the national disability board also registered his displeasure with the way disability was handled in that national economic empowerment blueprint. During the same workshop, the board member remarked thus:

Honourable Ministers, we thank the government of Zimbabwe for the Zimbabwe agenda for sustainable socio economic transformation at Zim Asset blue print which seeks to turn around the economy of the country. Whilst there is talk of availing opportunities for women, youths, and the physically challenged, the mention of disability in the document is look warm and gloss over as it is not as explicit as it does when it comes to issues of gender. For example, under gender in the Zim Asset., there are specified courses of action like women groups shall be funded under women development fund. There shall be 50% gender representation in all decision making positions, women shall have access to micro credit schemes, there shall be capacity building for women councilors and MPs. Lack of such precise and tangible benefits for persons with disabilities under the Zim Asset is a pointer towards the trivial attention government accords such a group. Our feeling is that if similar specifics could be articulated for persons with disabilities, it will
go a long way in maintaining and empowering this social group. As the situation stands, now, the charity model seems to hold sway in government perception of disability. The implications of such a policy are that we, disabled people merely receive handouts. However, the modern perspective is to empower disabled people and make them participate in the development programs to be self-reliant. Disabled people need quality education, quality shelter, and employment and also aspired to be business persons and contribute to the social and economic development of their country hence the need to mainstream disability across all sectors covered by the Zim ASSET.

The need for self-representation at the political and administrative levels of government features prominently throughout this thesis; with most if not all participants attributing lack of economic empowerment of persons with disabilities to an exclusionary society in which persons with disabilities are shut out of the political space. Emphasizing the same point, VIM 3 indicated that “even if you try and engage those politicians on disability issues during campaigns, their understanding of disability is practically shallow. They would always think that every disabled person is a beggar”. In concurrence with VIM 3, ALF 2 contended that there must always be someone with a disability at all levels of government if ever such a social group is to get out of poverty. “People in government, no matter how good policies there may be on disability will never treat us seriously until and unless there is one of us implementing those policies”, she said.

ALM 1, out of frustration ended up alleging that the national parliament and even cabinet is not as all that useful to persons with disabilities. He contended that “so far there is no one with albinism in the parliament of Zimbabwe; John Makumbe was the only one who had managed to rise to a position of prominence due to his resilient character”.

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The study revealed that persons with disabilities are realizing the disadvantages of lack of presence on the policy formulation arena and are hoping to grab any presenting opportunity for self-representation if chances arise. For instance, ALF 3 indicated that she would like to be a senator representing persons with disabilities, those with albinism in particular. She said that this would assist them with sunscreen lotions, better educational opportunities as well as providing them with role models. As if to undermine the need for collective effort on the part of various disabilities, she even intimated that she would like to cultivate a sense of belonging and confidence to children with albinism by coming up with an organization specifically to house and look after such people rather than to just mix them with the rest of other disabilities.

On the contrary, ALM 4 singled out lack of the requisite educational qualifications as a barrier to participation. He therefore called upon relevant agencies to ensure that persons with albinism receive adequate education. (See Chapter Six for a discussion of disability and education in Zimbabwe). To some like VIM4, even if Persons with disabilities get the appropriate educational qualifications, they still are likely to face stiff resistance when it comes to being at par with the non-disabled in society. To this end, he observed that the quest for representation within political parties should be treated with caution because the assumption that persons with disabilities should just battle it out with others on the political arena should be discouraged given the prevailing cultural misgivings held by Zimbabweans. He therefore suggested a quota system given to women as the panacea if ever persons with disabilities are to attain some semblance of equality with their non-disabled counterparts.

On the same note, my attendance at the workshop convened by one umbrella organization for persons with disabilities gave me the opportunity to listen to a presentation from government
on the issue of bureaucratic representation and many other issues. Government’s presentation on the commitment to facilitate bureaucratic representation for persons with disabilities is contained in the box below:

**BOX 4.1. Government’s Presentation on Bureaucratic Representation in the Education Sector.**

I would like to encourage more persons with disabilities to take up teaching as a profession because this provides positive role models for our learners with disabilities. It also enables them fight attitude change within society. In fact we subscribe to a principle of bureaucratic representation. We have talked about issues of political representation where we emphasized the need for more senators as well as other members of parliament specifically representing people with disabilities. We however need to deal with the issue of bureaucratic representation so that our bureaucracy and our civil service reflect the same diversity that is represented in our wider society. So if we are saying 10% of our people are people who live with disabilities of various kinds the same representation should be reflected in a civil service of a country so that there is empathy. In addition, we need to ensure that there is adequate representation at the level of technocracy as well as at the level of bureaucracy. So we need to push for bureaucratic representation for bureaucratic democracy ladies and gentlemen. Our nation will be doomed if we do not embrace an inclusive approach to development. The issue of equity and inclusiveness is a central tenet in our new constitution.

However, it is not only the constitutional obligation that should force us to act on issues of inclusiveness. Inclusiveness in my opinion is a strategic and pragmatic choice that we should make as a country. It is a matter of full and vast national choice of development. I therefore cannot imagine a situation where we as a nation ignore 10% of our population in the national development and policy discourse. Companies and indeed nations that embrace inclusiveness tend to be better off in terms of harnessing the full potential of their citizens. As an example, the inclusion of women in top and influential positions on national commissions and committees within both the private and public sectors brings with it new values especially values of empathy, motherhood and nurturing spirit which previously were lost to these organizations. It is for the same reason that I suggest that the inclusion of people with disabilities in all organizations at all levels will lead to an enrichment of those organizations in terms of values such as better focus, commitment to excellence, efficiency and commitment to effectiveness. It is therefore not an act of charity to include people with disabilities. It is really a strategic and pragmatic organizational move towards an inclusive and sustainable national development trajectory.

From the above narratives and discussions, the issue of bureaucratic representation as an important precursor to national development is emphasized. Although there is consensus on the need for political and bureaucratic representation from all participants, there are stuck contradictions when it comes to government policy on the issue as reflected in the first remark.
that vehemently opposed the promotion of Persons with disabilities to higher ranks in government and the views proffered by the second government official on the same issue. Such contradictions might as well reflect three issues: firstly, it reflects lack of a coherent policy on affirmative action for persons with disabilities on the part of government. Such a policy void therefore tends to leave government officials with no uniform answer to questions of political and bureaucratic representation whenever government position is solicited by Persons with disabilities during meetings, conferences and symposia on disability and inclusion. What is left in the absence of a coherent policy on affirmative action automatically becomes a series of idiosyncratic pronouncements on the part of individual officials based primarily on their perceptions of what is socially desirable. This view is shared by Connelly (2002: 7) who posits that policy is sometimes driven by the goals of the actors, who are motivated by their values and interests and informed by their understanding of the world.

Secondly, it could be deduced from these differing opinions that personal attitudes and perceptions on disability tend to guide the behavior of those in positions of authority in the absence of a comprehensive national policy framework. Unfortunately, such discretionary tendencies have characterized policy formulation and implementation in Zimbabwe. To this effect, Persons with disabilities during interviews have poignantly cited these inconsistencies as stumbling blocks towards their economic empowerment. (See chapter 6 for a detailed analysis). Arguably, these attitudes become a function of culture and social background or upbringing.

As Hays (1994) would argue, Culture is a social, durable, layered pattern of cognitive and normative systems that are at once material and ideal, objective and subjective, embodied in artifacts and embedded in behavior, passed about in interaction, internalized in personalities, and externalized in institutions. As a product of his own society, the first official responded to the
quest for inclusion by Persons with disabilities in terms of his own attitudes towards disability which he probably acquired as part of socialization. On the other hand, the second official responded to the same issue on the basis of what he felt was appropriate in line with his liberal perspective when it comes to the participation of Persons with disabilities in national policies and programmes.

Last but not least, such discrepancies could as well be traced back to the academic backgrounds of the two officials. My enquiries revealed that the first official had a background in media, communication and information technology whereas the later was a scholar in public policy. Although this analysis can never be conclusive in the absence of an exhaustive search for the relationship between a person’s academic or professional background and the tendency to be exclusionary in character, anecdotal evidence as reflected in this presentation seems to point towards the tendency to exclude in those lacking a theoretical appreciation of the dangers posed by bureaucratic discretion. Central to this thesis is that Persons with disabilities are not represented in Zimbabwe’s bureaucracy and political structures. This amounts to lack of participation in policy formulation as lack of representation amounts to lack of a voice. To quote from Plotke (1997), quoted in Castiglione and Warren (2013: 157), “the opposite of representation is not participation. The opposite of representation is exclusion. …. Representation is not an unfortunate compromise between an ideal of direct democracy and messy modern realities. Representation is crucial in constituting democratic practices”.

This thesis contends that the best way to read the government’s stance on a particular issue as inclusion of Persons with disabilities is through the analysis of its policies. To this effect, a closer look at such policies as the Zimbabwe National Policy for the Indigenisation of the Economy as read with the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act would suggest that
government’s viewpoint is that disability is less of an economic and political issue than it is a philanthropic one. Following from this mind set, the subsequent policies espousing the national indigenization and economic empowerment agenda such as the National Employment Policy (2009), the Short-term Emergency Recovery Plan (2009), the Medium Term Plan (2011) as well as the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation (2013) would mirror the dearth of inclusion and participation of Persons with disabilities.

Be that as it may, the bottom line is that in keeping with the methodology employed for this thesis, Persons with disabilities communicated their personal feelings and experiences as felt and perceived by them. These experiences revealed that no matter how good a policy might be on paper, if any social group carries any form of stigma in society, such a stigma is likely to spill over to the way bureaucrats are likely to respond towards it. This brings us to Michael Lipsky’s “street level bureaucrats” who tend to advance their own interpretation of policy contrary to the intentions of their principals. Bureaucratic discretion has received detailed and overwhelming discussion from such scholars as Dye (1996), Sabatier (2007), as well as Meier and Krause (1999). According to Meier and Krause (1999: 3-4) representative bureaucracy as a concept contends that a bureaucracy representative of the general public in demographic terms is likely to produce policies generally in accord with public preferences.

Implicit in the theory of bureaucratic representation is the fact that bureaucrats as humans tend to formulate and implement public policy under the influence of specific group with particular social, cultural, political, ethnic and ideological leanings. The argument put forward by such scholars as Meier and Krause (1999) goes thus; “organizations reflect imperfect social compromises that arise in bargaining among individuals and groups. Specifically, the organizational design, structure, and operation are not randomly determined but reflect an
equilibrium agreement among actors and stakeholders behaving in a purposeful manner page 4). There seems to be an acknowledgement on the part of both persons with disabilities themselves as well as the government representative to the effect that the situation on the ground is not desirable and must change for the better. Emphasizing the importance of representation as a prerequisite of a sustainable and viable national development strategy, the senior government official and politician even gave the analogy of the drive towards gender parity in all national institutions in both the public and private sectors (see box 4.1 above).

From a policy dimension, the sentiments from the DPO leader seem to suggest that lack of representation has resulted in the exclusion of such a social group in the content of certain empowerment policies as the Zim Asset economic blueprint.

4.2. THE BENEFITS OF REPRESENTATION

To ensure the active participation of persons with disabilities in the national political and bureaucratic structures, ALM 5 contended that it is vital for government to ensure that at all levels of the state, disability representation exists. He emphasized that national political and administrative institutions should systematically include persons with disabilities at critical points within their leadership portfolios to increase visibility. “You are noticed because you have a senior position but then there are times when you don’t have a senior position and no one notices you”. The sentiment proffered by ALM4 amount to what Fraser (1996) has come to refer to as the politics of recognition. Adding to ALM 4’s quest for self representation, ALM 3 said that, in government, there is need to have representatives who defend people with albinism from negative discrimination. Asked whether having a person with a disability holding a top post in critical institutions in the country would help, ALM 4 indicated that; “I think it helps much, it
depends with the person who is going to take that position. The fear we have however is that some people may secure influential positions and then use them to pursue selfish ends rather than looking at his constituency. It is very helpful if one of us goes on to take a higher position, we will give him support, however the person concerned should be selfless so that he/she is able to remember those left behind and not to go native as is always the case”.

Implicit in these remarks is that persons with disabilities just like anyone else in society treat the concept of representation with some reservations given the propensity of representatives to break ties with those they represent. The fear is that sometimes, representation may not amount to positive outcomes. The entire issue revolves around the nature and character of the individual representative. If he/she becomes selfish, then the cause of persons with disabilities is jeopardized.

In Pitkin’s typology of representation, the above discussion pits descriptive versus substantive representation. The arguments submitted by participants seem to point towards the desirability of substantive as opposed to descriptive representation. For Pitkin (1967), descriptive representation simply means having members of a certain social group occupying influential posts in government. On the other hand, substantive representation entails the extent to which representatives of a certain social group actually define and defend the vested interests of their colleagues. Although this phenomenon was crafted largely in feminist political thought, its relevance to the current discussion is immense. (See chapter 2 for a discussion of the concept of representation).

Contrary to the findings by Cobley (2011) in relation to representation of PWDs in Kenya where government ministers expressed skepticism and reservations about meeting the quarter
apportioned to PWDs in employment on account of lack of skills and qualifications, results from this thesis seem to reveal the opposite. (See Chapter 6 on readiness to participate).

4.3. PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION.

Participation in the political structures is one way in which marginalized groups can hope to gain some degree of control over resources or even change social structures (Connely, 2002). Contributing to the representation debate, VIM 2 pointed out that:

Where there is a greater representation it is easier to raise alarm about the importance of persons with disabilities. As things stand right now there are only two senators representing persons with disabilities in parliament. That’s an insignificant number those people really am afraid will just enjoy the benefits of being senators but when it comes to substantive issues of political and economic power. Given the nature of politics in this country where there is so much bullying in those parliament sessions, two people really am afraid can be bullied out of their agenda.

Adding to the same debate, VIM5 observed that;

Really I think there has to be a change of representation, increase the number of representatives, increase awareness campaigns on the need for representation to the generality of society. I think that could somehow assist in bringing the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of persons with disabilities to the lime light.

In addition to these voices, the need for parliamentary representation received immense emphasis from prominent disability activists whose views on the issue were captured during workshops that the researcher attended as part of the ethnographic studies. During the Continental Disability
Round Table held at the crown Plaza hotel as from 23-25 September 2014 in which the researcher was in attendance, a plethora of views were forwarded on this issue. Voicing a concern over the way the government of Zimbabwe handles the issue of political representation when it comes to disability, a chairperson of one umbrella organisation of Persons with disabilities had this to say:

“The Zimbabwe constitution signed into law in May 2013 provides for the election of two people to the senate to represent Persons with disabilities. To that effect, on 2 August 2013, as part of the general election process, Mr Nyamayavo Mashavakure and Mrs Annah Shiri were elected through an Electoral College system to represent Persons with disabilities in the senate. However persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe have some reservations in the way the Electoral College was constituted. The Inclusion of disabilities service organizations as part of the Electoral College could easily result in the now discredited neo medical model where non-disabled people speak on behalf of persons with disabilities. To that end, my organisation is highly expectant that its concerns will be taken into account in the composition of the Electoral College to be reviewed on time for the next general elections in 2018. My organisation also hopes that future constitutional reviews will take into consideration the demographic realities of Zimbabwe and use these as the basis for disability representation in both houses of parliament.

Contributing to the disability and representation debate, the two senators representing Persons with disabilities in the Zimbabwean parliament talked of some successes in their lobbying for
disability issues within parliament. They however talked about several challenges impeding their work. See Box 4.2 below:

**BOX 4.2. Experiences of two senators representing Persons with disabilities in Zimbabwean parliament.**

> First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the provisions in the new constitution and the political will that has allowed us to have self representation in the senate. This is a very critical development for us as persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe. As representatives of persons with disabilities, we have managed to lobby for the mainstreaming and inclusion of persons with disabilities in thematic committees on millennium development goals (MDGs) as well as on gender and community development. In the MDGs thematic area, we have witnessed the DPOs being invited to give oral evidence on the pertinent issues for persons with disabilities and their recommendations were taken seriously. We also managed to convince the ministry of women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development to include a section on disability in the National Gender Policy. The committee was also pleased to be informed that the ministry was working on a revised national gender policy. DPOs were also consulted through the umbrella body which is the Federation of Disabled Persons Organisations in Zimbabwe.

We have moved a number of motions in pursuit of the aspirations of Persons with disabilities. Chief amongst these motions is the need for a policy on special needs education in the country to guide the education of Persons with disabilities as a vehicle of empowerment. I am glad to note that we have received a lot of support from other senators. This made it easier for the house to adopt our motions. It is our hope that the ministers responsible are going to take time to go through some of those motions and see what they can do with the issues raised. I understand that before the motion is closed, the ministers are supposed to respond to it. More importantly, it is my hope that our DPOs can help us by identifying the pieces of legislation that could be candidates for lobbying.

> There is need to have programmes on awareness campaigns on the new constitution of Zimbabwe and the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. The DPOs are also urged to raise awareness on disability issues to the MPs from both the national assembly and the senate so that disability is mainstreamed at all levels of governance.

The above presentation from the senator reveals that in spite of the challenges inherent in disability politics, self representation makes a difference. As the box below would attest, members of the senate with disabilities do face considerable technical challenges in their discharge of duty.
BOX 4.3. Experiences and Challenges Faced by Senators Representing Persons with Disabilities.

My experience so far one year down the line is that as an MP with a disability you tend to become a public relations equivalent if not a symbol of public education or awareness campaign in parliament. This is normally so because other fellow MPs tend to generally say “are you only going to be talking about disability issues alone in parliament?” They forget that when we came to this world, disability was just but one aspect of our lives. Otherwise the rest of the needs and services that everybody else requires apply equally to a person with disability. One of the disadvantages is that we were newly elected to this parliament chamber the two of us. There was nobody else with a disability to walk us through some of the aspects of parliamentary work. Malinga had gone, Rona Moyo had gone. In the late 90s these other MPs were somehow advantaged because their political parties tended to leave some member of parliament who would then walk the new MPs through the business of how to operate in parliament. You tend to find that you have initial teething problems. These problems relate to issues like trying to craft a motion, trying to beat a motion, trying to push a motion through the parliament administration to the chairman. If we had serving MPs who had been there before, they would share ideas. We could know what to do, what to say, at what stage and how to say it. We also realized that when Malinga left, there were certain things that were agreed upon between him and the parliament to try and accommodate members with disabilities. Mr Malinga informed us that there were certain amendments to parliamentary protocol and regulations which had been made to allow members with disabilities to navigate through parliamentary physical, procedural and bureaucratic barriers that we were not aware of. To make matters worse, the parliament administration staff never told us that there were any adjustments that they had come to agreement with Malinga. We were really disadvantaged because you are really new in the business of parliament yet, the parliament administration has been there for years if not decades. They know everything in and out and yet you are not aware of anything yourself as a member. In that case, even if you have the potential, their system is somehow limiting if you are not familiar with it.

Further to that, as representatives of persons with disabilities we do have challenges in carrying out our mandate. These challenges result mainly from budgetary constraints or resource availability. We do not have offices as members of the senate. We are also not entitled to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). The constituency development fund as well as constituency offices are supposed to be given to the 210 members of the National Assembly. By the way, the Zimbabwe national Assembly has got 270 MPs. However, the 210 are those who are specifically linked to named constituencies while the other 60 are from the women’s quarter. This implies that even MPs who are in the women’s quota are not entitled to constituency offices as well as constituency development fund.

The same thing applies to the senate. As it stands, the situation obtaining is that as representatives of Persons with disabilities, we don’t have a constituency. I however am advancing the argument that disability is a constituency. We have been arguing about that for the time that we have been in parliament. I however understand that even the two hundred and ten members of parliament who are entitled to that constituency development facility have not yet received anything. I understand that the government intends to first of all pass some kind of legislation to facilitate the operation of the constituency development fund that has still not happened.

As a visually impaired member of parliament, one of the challenges I faced related to how I was going to access literature from parliament. Brail was the first option but parliament
complained about the cost involved. We then reached a compromise that they would rather provide me with parliamentary proceedings and other literature as soft copies via email. They have been doing that without fail.

The other challenge that we tend to face is that our constituency is very big. The expectation is that I must visit them all but with only one vehicle, if I try to cover the whole country, I think in one month the vehicle would clock more than sixty thousand kilometers. In two years, it is likely to be a complete right off. So I do sparingly and selectively visit the constituency. By the way we are only two senators representing the disability constituency. This simply means that there is a lot of work to be done. So this work really needs a lot of resources such as vehicles, time and funds.

On another note, my feeling is that it is critical that parliamentarians representing Persons with disabilities be able to network and to communicate with each other even across the whole continent. That can help us a lot because we can get opportunities to share experiences and help improve our ways of doing business. Gatherings of this nature are rare but important because this is where we meet person to person with parliamentarians from other countries and discuss or exchange notes.

This is critical given that some of the challenges that we think are peculiar to us may as well have been experienced by other parliamentarians in other countries. As such, there could be best practices regarding how to circumvent these challenges. I feel that there is need for continuous networking between most of the parliamentarians with disabilities on the continent and even beyond. if they are there in Europe even if they are there in Asia or in America, I think it’s a very brilliant idea. I hope that someone might make resources available to facilitate such a noble process. Actually, when we sit in senate, other senators would always bring motions based on the African parliamentary forum, the African parliamentary union, and of course there are no disabled people there as far as I heard. So we might as well consider coming up with some kind of forums like these. These for an are likely to be instrumental in enabling members of parliament with disabilities to interact and share ideas as well as experiences.

Source: Ethnographic information (September 2014).

From the above narrative, representation without sound technical and logistical backing might as well amount to nothing. Senators representing Persons with disabilities seem to suffer from technical and logistical challenges that hinder their mandate.

Unfortunately, the current thesis seems to be breaking the ice in the area of representation, political participation and disability especially in developing countries. Even in countries where disability representation is extremely elaborate such as Uganda, South Africa and Kenya, little if anything in the form of studies on the available technical capacity of representatives has been made. Nevertheless, experience from gender activists and scholars in women’s empowerment and political participation is instructive. In this light, sentiments and
observations from Karam and Lovenduski (2005), that women’s organisations continuously supported their “parliamentary ambassadors” could as well work for disability representatives in parliament.

As suggested in the remarks by disability senators above, a number of strategies are envisaged to translate the dream of a vibrant, forceful and formidable disability representation into reality. (See O’Brien’s thesis on women numeric and substantive representation in European parliaments for a comparative analysis).

First and foremost, to take the suggestion of Karam and Lovenduski (2005) the senators implored the DPOs to provide material, technical and moral support to their representatives in parliament. The second position is to call upon international inter and non-governmental agencies such as the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum, the United Nations agencies to provide the required training and capacity to disability representatives, there is need for lobbying given the tendency prevailing in these agencies to somehow “shrug off” disability as a political issue on their agenda. In the absence of such institutional support, the last suggestion (see box 4.3 above) for a union of regional disability parliamentarians is a step towards the right direction.

From these results, it is the contention of this thesis that it is not enough to have Persons with disabilities in parliament (descriptive representation according to Pitkin (1967), but the quality of that representation should be considered paramount. This is (substantive representation). Otherwise the current scenario simply depicts passive, ritualistic if not tokenistic forms of participation. (See Chapter Two).

It could be better to tape from the experiences of other countries where disability representation started earlier. The researcher was fortunate to attend the Continental Round
Table where various participants from around the continent spent close to a week sharing ideas and experiences on various issues affecting Persons with disabilities. This forum became an invaluable source of data for the current thesis because the researcher was able to gain access to numerous presentations and discussions on disability, political, economic empowerment as well as programming styles and techniques. As the box below would suggest, some countries still experience difficulties when it comes to political participation. For example, the example from Madagascar illustrates that although parliamentary representation is quite ideal in furthering the political and economic aspirations of Persons with disabilities, the continued sense of stigma, discrimination and despair serve to discourage Persons with disabilities from actively seeking political and economic power.

**BOX 4.4. Experiences of political participation in Madagascar.**

_I would like to explain that the situation for persons with disabilities in Madagascar in becoming members of parliament is difficult. Yes we are eager to become MPs. If we are to look at the situation in South Africa for example I understand them very well. When they say that the only viable way is to form a close relationship with a political party. However, if you address persons with disabilities in Madagascar telling them to partner or join a political party and negotiate their way into parliament, they will simply tell you what is important is to put food on the table. Struggling with our disability, struggling with our mainstreaming and with our organisations we don’t have enough money for political party activities. We don’t have enough time to devote to political party activities. The other argument is that we have a feeling that political parties become very suspicious about us because people will use the disability as an excuse for not voting for the party in question._

**SOURCE: Ethnographic presentation of the Continental Round table (September 2014).**

The above scenario obtaining in Madagascar is somewhat analogous to that of Zimbabwe before 2013. Significantly however, the above presentation demonstrates feelings of uselessness and despair characteristic of people experiencing failure and intense discrimination. This amounts to what Reeve (2004) preferred to term the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability. The psycho-emotional dimension to disability largely popularized by such scholars as Shakespeare (1994; Thomas, 1999 and Reeve, 2004) is a reaction to the shortcomings of the
social model of disability that fails to account for the experiential and cultural effects of
disability. The current thesis however is not intent on mounting a detailed analysis of the psycho-
emotional dimension of disability in theoretical terms. Its place in this thesis however stems from
its utility in its explanatory power when it comes to accounting for why Persons with disabilities
lose hope and surrender to fate.

The situation in Madagascar however provides critical lessons for the disability
movement in Zimbabwe. First and foremost, the need to push hard and defy all odds pays
 dividends in the struggle towards disability emancipation. To this effect, the spirited efforts made
by Persons with disabilities to ‘smuggle’ their issues into the new constitution in the middle of
outright exclusion even during the constitution making process speaks volumes about the
dangers of surrendering to fate. (For a detailed analysis of disability and the constitution making
process for Zimbabwe, see Mtetwa (2011). Secondly, although Persons with disabilities in
Zimbabwe have made strides on the political front as evidenced by the two senatorial seats
awarded to them in the wake of the 2013 constitution, on the economic front, the psycho-
emotional dimensions of disability still prevail, with most of them finding it hopeless to fight
their way to the top. (see chapter six for a discussion of economic participation).

Contrary to the situation in Madagascar and Zimbabwe, the South African model is party
based. Testimonies from Persons with Disabilities from there confirm that the system is working.
As a result, the current thesis sought to closely examine this system with a view to incorporating
these into the disability representation framework of Zimbabwe. As summarized in box 4.5, the
South African model targets political parties as centres of power rather than depending on the
mercy or sympathy of government to willingly donate seats to Persons with disabilities as part of
affirmative action.
BOX 4.5. Experiences of South African Members of parliament with disabilities.

The political system in South Africa is proportional representation which is party based. So parties prepare a list of who should go to parliament. Everybody else who is interested should form themselves into a power or interest group and then negotiate with any party of their choice for inclusion on their list of party representatives to parliament. In view of such a process, the Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) saw that the African National Congress (ANC) was a more strategic partner. That was the party that Persons with disabilities chose to convince. Since then, there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of members of parliament representing Persons with disabilities seconded through DPSA. This is how more and more disabled persons came to join ANC in parliament. We nurtured this through our various skills of advocacy to such an extent where we almost reached five percent of the total membership in parliament. This remained so until the 2014 elections when there were some losses on the part of ANC in parliament. This inevitably resulted in the decrease in numbers of MPs from the disability fraternity. However, even then, they are still about fifteen to twenty members of parliament as we speak.

Our experience however is that we are sometimes caught up between the two bosses namely; you’re DPOs, your own conscious as an activist as well as the party line. The party line becomes more important because that’s where you are functional every day. The technique of lobbying for disability mainstreaming comes in there. The strength of being a politician among politicians as well as the disability activist becomes really critical. In trying to convince the entire party to agree on your position.

SOURCE: Ethnographic presentation on the continental round table (September, 2014).

Drawing from the above narratives put forward by different parliamentarians on disability and political representation, it is here argued that the South African model appears to be more sustainable in the long run. This is not only on the basis of a quota system guaranteed by the party in question but also by virtue of it being able to mould disability activists into sound, robust and strong politicians who are able to manage competing demands of both their constituencies and party policies. This thesis however did not mount a detailed search of the policy outcomes of the South African model but a cursory analysis of the South African Disability policies and programmes would somewhat point towards the success of such a model as compared to the Zimbabwean one. Be that as it may, the central argument of the current thesis is that the poverty, social deprivation and vulnerability of Persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe is largely a result of lack of economic and political power rather than perceived personal incapacities borne out of various impairments.
The above testimonies have somehow authenticated this argument notwithstanding the intricacies surrounding the policy outcomes of what O’Brien prefers to call numeric representation versus policy outcomes (2012: 3). Nevertheless, as Pitkin (1967: 89) would observe, there is sometimes no direct correlation between the identities of representatives and their behavior. This is so particularly with reference to the South African model where party loyalty tends to take precedence over constituency loyalty.

Narratives however point towards the fact that the presence of two senators has got some effects on policy outcomes as depicted by the revision of the national Gender policy to include women with disabilities.

4.3. PARTICIPATION AND SELF REPRESENTATION WITHIN GOVERNMENTAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

As highlighted earlier in this thesis, persons with disabilities are hardly represented in governmental institutions and national administrative structures. This together with negative societal attitudes makes it difficult for them to benefit from any national economic empowerment initiative. Mention has already been made of the representation of persons with disabilities on the National Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Board. However, it is here argued that this does not translate to any tangible benefits because of problems associated with bureaucratic discretion, especially by those tasked to process fund applications. (see chapter 6 for a discussion of the national indigenization fund and associated challenges). Testimonies from all participants indicated that this form of tokenistic participation does not mean much simply because at the policy implementation level, there is no person with a disability to ensure that the indigenisation policy benefits persons with disabilities. Further to that, there is a similar arrangement with the
Zimbabwe Youth Council where there are two representatives of persons with disabilities. Interestingly, one is a person with a visual impairment and another is a person with albinism. However, the programming of the Zimbabwe youth council has not reflected this representation because there is no one at the secretariat with a disability said VIM5. Interestingly, in the Kurera Ukondla fund set up by government together with other development partners to extend loan facilities to youths in the country, youths with disabilities have a representative. As a result of that representation, at policy level, at least five percent of the fund is supposed to benefit persons with disabilities. However, to date, less than one percent has reached persons with disabilities said one representative of Disabled Persons Organisations. This is largely attributed to lack of a disability representation at the implementation level where loans are advertised, assessed and disbursed.

This and other examples given by participants together with key figures within the disability movement point to the need for self representation as a precursor to economic and political empowerment. Persons with Disabilities therefore see several advantages in having a disability desk in these mainstream institutions. As put forward by VIM5, Persons with disabilities see various advantages in having some representation in various structures of government. VIM5 remarked that:

If persons with disabilities become part of government, the major difference which that has is that first and foremost, it is likely that the standard of living of persons with disabilities will rise when society is better able to accommodate and cater for less privileged members of society. Secondly, inclusion facilitates better prioritization of government policies, programmes as well as finances. It will be easy for government to come up with a comprehensive poverty alleviation programme for persons with
disability. This representation is poised to make a marked improvement to the lives of persons with disabilities. As the situation stands, some national institutions tend to manipulate persons with disabilities in pursuit of selfish ends rather than empowering the disabled poor living in rural areas”. In public policy theorizing, literature has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of the values held by bureaucrats and the impact that these values have on both political control and public policy outputs (see Meier and Krause, 1999).

On the same note, ALM 1 saw lack of representation especially within the structures of government as the chief cause of poverty and unemployment characteristic of the lives of persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe. In that regard, he observed that in spite of the existence of glaring examples of tax reduction policies on firms that employ persons with disabilities the world over, the government of Zimbabwe has not bothered at any point since independence to promulgate such policies. He said that if persons with disabilities are given senior posts in the civil service they would promote the propagation of policies that discourage the exclusion of persons with disabilities from activities that are concerned with national development.

Adding a voice to the representation debate, ALM 3 said that having a senior bureaucrat with a disability such as a permanent secretary is likely to instill a sense of hope to the younger generation that persons with disabilities have the capacity to assume leadership roles in society thereby shaping a better perception of themselves as useful and productive members of society. Such a viewpoint was equally shared by ALF 3 who contended that the issue of having role models is extremely important if persons with albinism are to rise to the occasion and ward off discrimination. She gave an example of the fact that most children with albinism aspire to
become teachers and nurses as the ceiling for persons with albinism. ALF 2 proceeded to assert that placing persons with albinism at strategic positions in society helps boost confidence in others and provides them with role models. The need for role models was given great emphasis by participants, especially those with albinism. Even during focus group discussions, the achievements of the late professor Makumbe kept on shaping the political participation discourse within the group.

Taking the representation debate to another level, submissions from participants revealed that sound and well informed policies usually come from felt rather than perceived needs. In other words, it takes a slave to understand and interpret the feelings of a slave. It takes an unfortunate man to interpret the feelings of his unfortunate brother. Emphasizing this point with particular reference to educational policy, ALF3 gave as an example the importance of having a representative with albinism at the echelons of the bureaucracy for the ministry of education. “I think that if there is a person with albinism within the ministry of education, it would be easy for the examination body to understand that such a social group needs special treatment during the examination. Such special considerations include extra time and a question paper with a bigger font because as persons with albinism, we do have a short sight. Such challenges can only be understood by people experiencing the same situation. Failure to recognize the special needs of Persons with Albinism during examinations have resulted in many such people being disadvantaged and failing to harness their academic potential”.

In pursuit of the same argument, ALF3 further contended that the failure of children with albinism to achieve academically starts well before the examination itself. She contended that the practice of hot sitting common to most rural and urban schools was a great disadvantage to children with albinism who cannot withstand excessive heat from the sun. In the absence of a
representative within the ministry of education, let alone in parliament, none is there to advocate for a policy protecting such children against being subjected to hot sitting. Even when it comes to school uniform, none in this country has ever raised the issue that children with albinism need protective clothing including appropriate school uniform. In effect, this simply shows a lack of voice for such a social group in the policy making arena”. (For a discussion of education and disability see chapter 6 below). These findings are in sync with the contention put forward by Sen (1999) who posits that political participation is more important to the fight against poverty.

In the same spirit, the above sentiments tend to substantiate the sweeping claims advanced by the proponents of the social model of disability who believe that disability in an ablest society is like being black in a white’s only society. As Flood (2005) would argue, “The social model was and still is a statement of disabled people’s exclusion from full participation in a society where the non-disabled majority view impairment as different, inferior, and something most certainly, to be eliminated” (page, 181). Implicit in the above presentations is that contrary to conventional wisdom, persons with disabilities trace their fate back to lack of political, civic and economic power. As Winter (2003) would have it, public policies are nothing but pieces of paper until they are delivered to their target groups. Writing from a liberal perspective, Fraser (1996) spent a great deal of effort trying to untangle the often convoluted and mixed concepts of the politics of distribution and that of recognition. In the above scenario, disability seems likely to benefit from both concepts. Sentiments related to the need for a representative who would be able to articulate concerns of persons with albinism when it comes to their special requirements such as special examination papers, uniforms as well as special school calendar would squarely fit under the politics of redistribution according to Fraser’s theorizing. This is because the absence of these environmental adjustments results in persons with albinism becoming a social
class in Marxist terms. That is, a class characterized by low employment opportunities caused by low educational attainment.

On the other hand, the sentiments around representation for role models as well as the inadequacy of parliamentary representation would squarely belong to the politics of recognition wherein, disability like gender deserves peculiar treatment in society. (For a comprehensive discussion of the politics of recognition and that of redistribution, see Fraser (1996). Whilst this thesis does not seek to mount an exhaustive exegesis of the politics of recognition and distribution, let it suffice to say that the above results are indicative of the fact that persons with visual impairment and albinism perceive their poverty as lack of political and economic power.

Furthermore, the above narratives and concerns are indicative of an opposition to the long held belief that persons with disabilities have got nothing to do with political and economic power but are good for charity. Just like women, the voices of persons with disabilities seem to grow louder and louder, of course with immense opposition and resistance from the non-disabled counterparts such as senior government officials who vehemently discouraged such a social group from settling for equality with others in society. This state of affairs is akin to what Philips (2002:14) has come to refer to as the “politics of difference”. According to Philips theorizing, the politics of difference stresses the importance of recognizing rather than obliterating the varied differences that all societies have in terms of disability, sex, class and race. This she says is because of the fact that recognizing people’s differential identities has come to be regarded as the necessary ingredient of human well-being. The main argument here is that there is development and progress as well as pride in diversity. Such is the clarion call advanced by the above narratives regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in national institutions of economic and political power.
4.5. PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES

The praxis of participation in political activities is extremely complex even to political parties themselves. It is not as all that easy to judge why people necessarily belong to one political party or another. Less still, it is not easy to explain the motive behind lack of participation by other members of society. Political parties have gone a long way in luring supporters to their formations through various ways. They craft manifestos that promise the electorate various benefits once they are voted into office. It is at that level that there is a dearth of inclusion for persons with disabilities. For instance, the 2013 national elections can as well serve as a clear example of the importance of political parties. To that end, a closer look at the manifestos of the three main political parties would confirm that lack of a voice within these parties results in some form of exclusion at the policy level. Of the two MDC formations, only the Ncube led MDC captured disability albeit from a charity perspective. The party in question simply referred to persons with disabilities as subjects of welfare programs. The Tsvangirai led MDC was totally silent on disability.

On the contrary, the Zanu PF’s manifesto was quite human-rights oriented in its approach to disability. The party promised to include persons with disabilities in all spheres of life. In terms of the ZANU PF manifesto, this inclusion was to spread to the social, economic and political life of society. As the ruling party, the ZANU PF manifesto has found expression in the main policy document driving national economic and political programmes till 2018. This is the Zimbabwe Agenda for Socio-economic Transformation discussed at the beginning of this chapter. It is therefore safe to argue that promises made during the manifestos remain a critical determinant of political or partisan participation even for persons with disabilities.
It is from such an understanding that ALF 3 submitted that she participates in political activities with the hope that issues peculiar to persons with albinism might be addressed. She remarked thus “I vote for the betterment of my life. I vote mainly for such promises as a better future. Such promises include the prospect of getting employment for persons with albinism as well as the provision of education and sun screen lotions”.

Submissions from participants revealed that political participation is determined by various variables. However, more often than not, disability, poverty and the promise of change in life circumstances became paramount in participants. However, it remained unclear as to whether the benefits of political participation through the electoral process are beneficial to members of the public. The current thesis did not seek to interrogate or venture into the theoretical jungle of electocratic politics. Nevertheless, what emerged from the literature is that sometimes the electorate might not directly influence the decisions of the people they elect. As Coleman would have it, rather than reflecting the stable demands of the public, the function of political representatives is to arouse and subdue the desires and expectations of the represented (Coleman, 2011: 39). Following from this view, although Persons with disabilities participate in political processes through voting like any other citizen in Zimbabwe, testimonies indicated that they are merely reaping thorns as virtually none advances their concerns in parliament and government. In practice, even the two senators representing Persons with disabilities in parliament are too few to be able to put disability on the political and economic map of Zimbabwe no matter how hard they may try to do so.

Without seeking to dissuade Persons with disabilities from generally participating in the voting processes like their non-disabled counterparts, the above testimonies are an indication that in the absence of a sound affirmative action, Persons with disabilities should not expect their
peculiar demands to be championed by the non-disabled representatives. In saying this, it is all the more important that sight should not be lost that in the general scheme of things, Persons with disabilities are first and foremost human, with the same needs and aspirations as their non-disabled counterparts. Such services as good roads, clean water, security of both person and property as well as citizenship rights are common to all. To this extent, participating in national elections with the hope of advancing a disability agenda remains a subdued undertaking at least in the foreseeable future.

4.5. WHAT WOULD SELF-REPRESENTATION BRING FOR PWDS?

In line with the second objective of this thesis, the study sought to understand the difference persons with disabilities would make if they manage to get influential positions in government. This question was readily answered by participants in line with their clarion call of “nothing for us without us”. Adding his voice to this slogan, ALM 4 pointed out that if people with albinism are given senior posts in the civil service, without bias, they will help in upholding and protecting the rights of their fellow colleagues. He also added that this would help in changing and reshaping the structures that are not responsive to the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities.” If persons with disabilities occupy influential positions in government, they are likely to help address negative discrimination faced by this social group within most government ministries and departments”. Expressing the same vision, VIM 3 pointed out that “my vision if I happen to lend myself a political post, I would like to work in a portfolio that is so influential that everybody in government understands and respects the policies and programmes for persons with disabilities in the country.
According to the views of one representative of a disabled person’s organization, poverty stifles the ability of persons with disabilities to mount a formidable force to fight and challenge exclusion. He argued thus; lack of a sustainable social protection policy for persons with disabilities is an advantage to the government because it keeps such a social group busy with bread and butter issues and in the process diverting their attention from demanding their rights. This view finds resonance in most sentiments expressed by participants throughout this thesis that instead of discussing substantive issues of rights and entitlements, persons with disabilities, especially the less educated ones concentrate their efforts on simple and peripheral “bread and butter” issues. Such peripheral issues include the provision of food, clothes, sunscreen lotion, and employment as well as a good lifestyle at the expense of political and economic power. This was symptomatic of the submissions put forward by ALM 3 when he was asked about his contribution to the policy formulation process if he lends himself a position at the top echelons of government. ALM 3 said that if he manages to grab the opportunity to participate in the formulation of policies, his vision was that of addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities. He gave an example of sourcing resources such as sunscreens for people with albinism given that most of them are underprivileged. By the same token, ALM 5’s vision was to elevate the living standards of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Drawing from the above submissions, Persons with Disabilities felt that they needed self-representation mainly for two reasons, namely; experience and interest. When it comes to experience, the argument is that Persons with disabilities experience life differently from either non-disabled men or women and as such only they can adequately and sufficiently articulate these experiences and inform inclusive public policies. For example, the provision of sunscreen lotion as well as special educational facilities such as special uniforms for persons with albinism
as voiced by ALM3 are better experienced only by that very social group and it is only fair and essential if they represent those experiences in the formulation of public policy.

On the interest argument, the above results point towards the fact that Persons with disabilities harbour different social, political and economic interests to their non-disabled counterparts. To this effect, Persons with disabilities’ interests must be represented in all political and economic institutions. The sentiments from ALM4 and VIM3 above speak to this argument. Although these arguments have been advanced specially by women’s groups (see United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, 2005), they equally apply to Persons with disabilities despite the fact that the disability movement in the country is failing to precisely articulate these issues. (See chapter 5 for an analysis of DPOs).

For the current thesis, the above sentiments point to the fact that Persons with disabilities are not active participants in the formulation of policies. As a result, they feel left out or excluded. This accounts for their social and economic status in society characterized by poverty, powerlessness and a sense of despair.

4.7. MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROCESSES.

Notwithstanding that most participants have had an opportunity to ‘participate like others’, testimonies gathered suggest that their participation carried a hidden agenda. (See Chapter Seven on the act of participating just like others in society). Sentiments even from ethnographic testimonies were that the appearance of persons with disabilities at public meetings is just a window dressing exercise by both government and civil society agencies who wanted to portray a good picture of them. Such a state of affairs is very prevalent as remarked by VIF 1 who said
that; “Ndongoramba ndichingotenga macard emisangano ndichingouya ndichingovapa mari tichingozi tinavo ava imember yedu kubva kare tinoda kuti vambotaura nezvevanhu vakaremara. Iwe wotofunga kuti tirikutaura tirikuenda somewhere it’s just a talk hapana kwazvinoenda”. Saka vaMtetwa ka, ahaa azviiti kuti titi zvonzi hando tonodya mango moenda kunodya mango Vane makumbo vokwira vachidya varimumuti. Vasina makumbo vosara pasi. I party yanatsuro nagudo iyaiya. Ehe inonzi huyai kuparty, zvonzi hii kuneparty yanatsuro nagudo heyi endeyi kuparty anagudo vonwa hwahwa hwavo varimumuti tsuro aripasi. The English translation of this runs thus: The thing with politics is that we have tried to involve ourselves at some political platforms in our personal individual capacities. This however seems not to be working since we have not been able to rise up the political ladder. I have been a member of a prominent political party, buying membership cards and being paraded to talk about disability at their platforms but the whole thing does not go far. They simply say that we have the disabled persons among us, let us listen to what they say and you say things that end there. I have since stopped buying party cards altogether. As per my previous example of the hare and baboon story (see chapter 7), you are invited to a party or to eat some mangoes from a tall tree yet you do not have legs. Those with legs start fistng while you helplessly look on from below. The baboons will keep on shouting ‘this type of beer is of good taste, the food is just too nice and the venue is so comfortable’. Yet the hare is just down there watching helplessly”. Such a state of affairs led such scholars as Amoah (2007: 57) to come to the conclusion that participation is just but a ‘trojen horse’ because the poor are thus manipulated through delusional power ceding mechanisms.
Echoing the same sentiment, ALM 4 observed that, in most cases political parties tend to show concern for persons with disabilities during the election time because they will be interested in winning the polls. When all things are equal they do not even bother about giving them assistance or taking their concerns into consideration. In utilizing the forms of participation discussed in chapter 2, this state of affairs is akin to exploitative and manipulative participation. Exploitative participation simply entails manipulating the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to win elections. Testimonies from participants during a focus group discussion with the visually impaired indicated that the powerful politicians are fond of taking advantage of the fact that such a social group cannot read the ballot paper to coerce them to cast votes only in their favour. The fact that persons with visual impairment cannot write and read printed inscriptions on the ballot paper has been used by various politicians to their own advantage. Under the guise of docile beneficiaries of the good will of the party that brought national independence and therefore social protection programmes in the form of financial and material handouts to the less privileged in society, research has it that persons with visual impairments have been sheepishly led into the ballot booth and coerced to vote in favour of certain candidates contrary to their political preferences (see chapter 2 for a discussion of manipulation and ritualistic participation).

In line with the above submission, the manipulation of voters with visual impairments was also recorded in one constituency in Manicaland province. The Zimbabwe Elections Support Network reported thus: “Voters needing assistance were not allowed to select a person of their choice to help them. The presiding officer and two police officers assisted those needing help but they would look at the ballot papers and audibly shout the voters' choices” (ZESN, 2013: 66). The same was reported in Mashonaland central where in some polling stations all people that had
accompanied visually impaired and other voters in need of assistance were only allowed to assist them up to the voters roll inspection desk. When getting into the booth the voter had to go with the Presiding officer, 2 polling officers and 1 police officer. At yet another polling station, eighteen voters were assisted by the same three men from the community, four were assisted by people of their own choice, and three were assisted while the presiding officer was watching (ZESN, 2013: 66-67).

Even though concern has been raised largely by opposition political parties as well as by civil society organisations about the increasing numbers of people who are assisted to vote sometimes under the guise of faked visual impairment, these concerns still run short of protecting the dignity and worthy of Persons with disabilities.

The above narratives are indicative of the fact that the political participation of Persons with disabilities is hindered by structural rather than personal attributes. Testimonies from VIM1, VIF1, ALM1, ALM3, and ALM4 are indicative of the long held belief taken by the social model of disability that society is structurally skewed in favour of the non-disabled people. Once again, in consonance with this thesis the state of being when we look at the economic and political status of persons with disabilities is largely structural. Dissecting the structural theory as it relates to human agency, Hays (1994) perceives of a structure as something outside the individual, thus:

If social structure transcends individuals, it in some manner conditions or determines their thoughts and actions in accordance with its pattern. Pure structural determinism, then, would mean that theoretically we could understand societies and history solely by reference to the pattern of social structure and without consideration of the specific
interests and activities of the people within it; people would be considered as mere robots, programmed to conform to a structured pattern.

The utility of structural determinism to the analysis of the participation of Persons with disabilities in the political and economic life of society dates back to the pioneers of the social model of disability who, after a thorough scrutiny of the continued poverty and deprivation encountered by Persons with disabilities ended up concluding that impairment is, to a larger degree not to blame for the circumstances within which those with impairments find themselves in. rather, the way society is structured that is, its institutions, attitudes and environments are to blame for a life of poverty, exclusion as well as low socio-economic and political advantage that has come to characterize disability, especially in developing countries such as Zimbabwe.

Of paramount significance is that Persons with disabilities are ready to take public offices once the opportunities become available. This stems out of the realization that political and bureaucratic representation helps in communicating the peculiar needs and interests of such a social group.

Furthermore, the above submissions would suggest that although persons with disabilities may feel included, their participation is normally passive and ceremonial rather than active and meaningful. Matland talks of gate keepers at a party level whose decision concerning who among those eligible for contesting would actually be forwarded as candidates by the party. In the above scenario, the plight of VF1 and ALM1 both of whom aspire for a political office is stifled by political gate keepers who either want to use disability as a bate to lure the electorate on account of profound inclusivity (ALM4) or as a tokenistic gesture to save face (VIF1).
From the above narratives, it is clear that persons with disabilities feel that whatever level of participation there is, the bottom line is that their involvement is merely tokenistic if not ceremonial. In accordance with the spirit of this thesis, passive participation is not only reflected in the peripheral or ceremonial roles and positions that Persons with disabilities assume within political parties (see testimonies from VIM1, VIF1 and ALF2), but the same passivity finds its way in various economic empowerment policies. Submissions from the disability representatives (see the testimony and table 4.1 above) concerning the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) are a case in point. Sentiments were that there is nothing on disability within that policy document except a mere mention of the word disability. Taking the above narratives together with various national policies into account, this thesis tends to agree with the contention advanced by Hickey and Mohan (2005) that participatory approaches have often failed to achieve meaningful social change, largely due to a failure to engage with issues of power and politics.

The above findings have slightly stood in sharp contrast with those of Munsaka (2012) in that gender was not a stumbling block towards the participation of all participants in political structures. However, the question of culture and attitudes has been found here as well as by Munsaka to be detrimental to participation. Munsaka lays emphasis on this arguing that: “the cultural and structural barriers represent not merely obstacles to meaningful participation in development processes, but also obstacles to the recognition of disabled people as active citizens of Zimbabwe with civil, social and political rights” (page 289).
4.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

In summary, this chapter sought to answer the first two objectives of the study. This has been done by assessing the extent to which Persons with disabilities are included in national political and economic structures such as the cabinet, parliament as well as the top echelons of bureaucracy. Political parties and voting processes have also been briefly examined. Attention has also been paid to the representation of persons with disabilities within the bureaucracy of government.

From the submissions given by participants, there was general agreement that persons with disabilities were less included in state institutions. However, Persons with disabilities have shown their interest to effectively contribute their expertise to all national policies.

The discussion has also noted some policy gaps that are a clear sign of the absence of persons with albinism such as their continued subjection to hot sitting in most schools as well as lack of a special uniform designed to protect them from the sun.

On the other hand, those with visual impairments have put forth their concerns that stand as obstacles when it comes to their participation in public life. Although they have a representative at senate, the challenges of parliamentary maneuvering stand as stuck obstacles when it comes to the effectiveness of such a representation. Evidence from ethnographic studies has also given the government’s view when it comes to the social inclusion of Persons with disabilities in the political and administrative arms of the state. The net effect of all the above impediments is that Persons with disabilities have been relegated to the peripheries of the national policy making discourse. When everything has been said and done, the main thesis of
this study finds resonance with the above results. The point that has been unequivocally pronounced is that poverty and social deprivation that has become characteristic of disability in Zimbabwe is largely caused by lack of political and economic power rather than personal deficiencies borne out of impairments. This therefore vindicates the social model of disability.

The next chapter shifts the discussion slightly towards the participation of persons with disabilities in civil society activities.
CHAPTER FIVE
PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

5.0. INTRODUCTION
This chapter continues to interrogate the disability discourse by situating it within the context of the perceptions, beliefs and programmatic inclinations of policy stakeholders broadly classified as the civil society. In doing so, the chapter deals with the third objective of this thesis.

While the previous chapter has underscored the need for participation in political and administrative institutions, the extent to which any group in society participates in the formulation of policies can equally be gauged by their inclusion and involvement on the arena of sentiments, ideas and social values propagated by the civil society organizations. The term civil society denotes a wide range of stakeholders that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to exhaust them. For purposes of this chapter therefore, emphasis is placed on participation of persons with disabilities in three broad categories of organisations fitting within the ambit of the civil society. These are, human rights non-governmental organisations, trade unions and organisations of as well as for persons with disabilities. The chapter therefore, attempts to articulate the extent to which Zimbabwean civil society organizations incorporate disability in their lobbying programmes. Results from participants as well as from key informants from various civil society organisations are presented. In line with the thrust of the current thesis, key informant interviews were held mainly with human rights organisations and trade unions as these were perceived to be instrumental not only in kindling public participation but also function as reservoirs of
information on policy issues. In line with the dictates of the narrative enquiry set out in Chapter Three, perceptions, opinions and feelings of Persons with disabilities are coherently presented.

Last but not least, the chapter deals with the ‘hot’ issue in national disability politics, that is, the political and operational fundamentals of organisations promoting the rights and advancing the interests of persons with disabilities. An attempt is made to interrogate their functions, the extent to which they are able to effectively perform them as well as the challenges that lie in their path. The chapter ends with an analysis of what can be done to encourage collaboration between DPOs and mainstream civil society organisations.

5.1. KEY ISSUES ON THE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN MAINSTREAM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

It is important to take note in this section that there are various issues which are instructive to understand when one looks at the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream civil society organisations. Of course, as observed in earlier chapters, the participation of persons with disabilities remains very low as compared to that of the non-disabled counterparts. As this section shall highlight, the issue of negative societal attitudes continues to feature prominently as an impediment to the participation of persons with disabilities in civil society organisations. Interestingly, even other human rights and gender organisations seem to develop cold feet when it comes to disability issues. This is because of the perceived incapacity of persons with disabilities as well as the belief stemming from the medical model that disability is a specialist area which only experts should venture into. In view of the fact that disability has been
compartmentalized to the so-called specialists, it is important that persons with disabilities should be seen to be actively participating in mainstream civil society organisations.

5.1.1. Ignorance or negative social attitudes?

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, process knowledge is a key determinant to participation. To that end, for anyone to participate in civil society activities, he/she must have some knowledge as to the functions and roles of those agencies. As a result, this section sought as the initial stage to assess whether or not persons with disabilities appreciate the roles played by civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of national policies and programmes. Discussions with participants revealed that they are fully conversant with the roles and functions of civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of national policies.

Findings however reveal that civil society agencies simply reflect the society from which they hail. Negative attitudes towards disability are therefore manifest in the activities of these agencies. For example, a discussion with one such agency revealed that disability was not a priority when it comes to the national human rights discourse. The key informant indicated that “we discriminate against persons with disabilities simply because we fear the unknown. They are certain types of disability that people can easily put up with but there are others that we cannot”. Following from the argument advanced in Chapter Two; implicit in the above narrative from the key informant is the primacy of the personal tragedy model of disability. Tradition has it that persons with disabilities used to be portrayed as dangerous and weird, creating fear and unease towards them (Edmonds, 2005).
With this in mind, the key informant ended by saying that such perceptions and attitudes are carried on to the policy formulation arena because the policy makers are also a product of the very same society that is stigmatizing, that is not understanding, that is not paying attention to issues to do with disability. The persistence of such attitudes in modern day Zimbabwe led ALM5 and VIF1 to suggest that the nation is in dire need of awareness campaigns and programmes on disability. Such revelations from civil society organisations persuaded ALF2 to believe that some members of society seem to be afraid to associate with persons with albinism mainly due to scarcity of knowledge surrounding albinism as a condition.

Interestingly, negative attitudes know no boundaries. To this end, VIF4 observed that the charity model of disability reigns supreme in most mainstream civil society organizations to such an extent that they are not privy to the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of such a group. The organizations even do not have persons with disabilities in their structures like gender officers. Their appreciation of disability issues is therefore narrow and even absent in most instances.

If one manages to penetrate these organizations and gets a senior post, maybe his advocacy from there might make an impact. Otherwise, the whole civil society in Zimbabwe does not seem to be accommodative except for disabled person’s organizations themselves. Even if we tell them anything they just treat us as objects of charity good for nothing short of pity. “vanongofunga kuti chirema hachina zvachinoziva changangomirira kuchengetwa chete. Saka tichachichengeta. Chinofanira kungopema chete chiremazvapera”. Its English version runs thus: A disabled person has got no role in advocacy and other activities of civil society organizations. He must be ‘kept or fed’ he must just wait for charity and charity we shall provide him. This sentiment was echoed by one key informant who observed that:
Disability was an abomination in Zimbabwean society. As such, if a woman gives birth to a child that is disabled; she faces a certain level of discrimination. She is blamed; she becomes the major scapegoat over this ‘misfortune’. Kumusha kwedu hakuna zvakadaro

The English translation of this runs thus: There is nothing like this in our family. There is a lot that goes on and she is basically blamed. I can confirm that society has not yet come to terms with disability. As products of the very same society, leaders of most organisations still shun disability. The problem is fear of the unknown. “Tinotya zvatisingazivi” The English translation of this runs thus: We fear the unknown. We fear that with which we are not familiar. In my view, what we lack is expertise and we tend to think we can’t deal with it”.

In full concurrence, VIM 1 observed that; “I did not see any help from mainstream organizations particularly to persons with disabilities. Be that as it may, I think something can be done especially if people were to sit down and say what is there who can fit where who can get what and then allowing representation of a certain section of society”. The same view was shared by VIM 5 who believed that the way to go is for civil society organisations to employ Persons with disabilities on the basis of merit. He said that “If we were to look at most of these NGOs we may find very few if they are there at all that employ persons with disabilities. I am talking about employing People who qualify not that one should be there because one has a disability. Otherwise you may look at DPI and NASCO. It’s like we are saying these are their places right, but what about the mainstream civil society where everybody must belong”?

Adding his voice to the issues of negative attitudes towards disability as the chief cause of negative discrimination, one key informant from a prominent trade union identified two main reasons for discrimination. He said that “there is an aspect of cost involved especially on the part
of employers, or the capitalist. The prime motive of all capitalists is to maximize profit by whatever means necessary”. The trade unionist gave an example of his offices located on the ninth floor. He said; “a typical example is this building. If we are to ask the owner to adjust this building to facilitate access by persons with mobility challenges, the answer is likely to be that it is expensive. This is so in spite of the fact that tenants paying rent every month. The same even obtains when private firms are asked to purchase assistive devices and technologies for their employees with disabilities. In most instances, this request is likely to be turned down simply on account of the fact that it eats into their profits. The whole disability discourse within the private sector tends to revolve around attitude and availability of resources. I believe it is a matter of attitude. If the public changes its attitudes and be a right thinking people, And have in their mind the view that a human being is a human being besides his disability, such a social group is likely to enjoy political and economic inclusion”.

On a positive note, VIF 4 observed that due to donor demands arising out of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Zimbabwe’s ratification of the same on 23 September 2013, some human rights organizations are now beginning to conduct workshops involving persons with disabilities. She however attributed this change of heart to intensive lobbying on the part of persons with disabilities themselves. She narrated that; “After intensive lobbying, now we can see that some organizations are now conducting disability oriented workshops. However, their structures have none with a disability. More so, each time they conduct those workshops, they are not even sensitive to the needs of the blind as they use PowerPoint without even providing Braille material. This also applies to the deaf who are not even provided sign language services”. Such gaps in disability friendly programming were
explained by ALM 4 as a sign of forced inclusion conducted without a comprehensive needs assessment.

Be that as it may, this submission simply indicates lack of a coherent disability agenda on the part of civil society organisations in spite of the critical role they play in informing public policy. In agreement with this observation, ALM 4 narrated that; “In my opinion, some civil society organizations are now trying their level best to factor in disability in their programmes. However, I think they have not been able to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the felt needs that go with the peculiarities of disability. As such, most of their programming is not based on empirical facts on the ground”.

Echoing the same sentiment, VIF 1 made an observation that such programming deficiencies are mainly due to the fact that the mainstream civil society organizations do not want to employ persons with disabilities for reasons best known to them. “All those we know having been employed in the private sector are suffering because their assistants are not being paid at all. The reason is that employers argue that it is too costly to employ a person with a visual impairment because he/she would in turn need an assistant. It is therefore not economic to pay two people for a job that could equally be performed by a single person. Another reason advanced is that in most cases, People in civil society organizations usually work under pressure. So the thinking is that since someone must read literature for us, we might not be efficient. What they do not know is that we can work under pressure because we are used to being read for. Being visually impaired forces us to have a sharp memory. We cannot afford to read a document over and over. We have compensatory senses. We do not easily forget like they do”.

The place of employment in the promotion and preservation of the dignity and worth of every human being is beyond doubt. Other than being a source of poverty and social deprivation,
the failure by CSOs to employ Persons with disabilities on account of perceived incapacities not only books these people a permanent seat on the train of poverty but also serves to alienate them from the policy formulation processes. As accounts from the above participants show, disability is to some even in civil society organisations a badge of inferiority and yet to others a financial liability. Such a finding is in line with observations put forth by such scholars as Genesi (1997) who blames society for seeing a disability before looking at the potential of the individual job seeker. According to Genesi, (2007) “When disability is seen as the largest component of a person, much of what is unique and “human” about him or her will be obscured. When needs and deficits are what we see, we only see what that person cannot do” (page 339).

Implicit in the above narratives is that the participation of Persons with disabilities in civil society activities is minimal. Interestingly, all key informants never raised the physical defects found among Persons with disabilities. The submissions from key informants seem to point towards the fact that disability is a hair-raising state of being that not everyone in society is expected to cope with. This squarely validates the contention advanced by the social model of disability that disability is a restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization that takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excluding them from the mainstream of social activities (Drake, 1999, 13).

The above findings also show that Persons with disabilities themselves felt that civil society organisations exclude them in various ways. Among these ways was the failure to employ Persons with disabilities. Secondly and presumably as a result of the first scenario, civil society programmes are not sensitive to the peculiar needs of Persons with Disabilities especially the provision of materials or literature in Braille for the visually impaired participants.
Given the central role played by civil society organisations on the policy formulation arena, the above results are indicative of the fact that the participation of Persons with disabilities is severely curtailed.

The above discussion has revealed that Persons with disabilities are fully aware of the mandate and functions of civil society organisations. On the other hand, members of civil society organisations themselves admit that they exclude Persons with disabilities in their programmes and activities mainly on account of negative attitudes. These attitudes stem largely from cultural misgivings that portray disability as either an abominable state of being whose bearer is cast with a dye of inferiority or simply as an area that requires specialist attention and expertise not readily available within these organisations.

In line with what has come to be referred to as the politics of presence, (see Philips (1995). The other challenge hindering the participation of Persons with disabilities was that these organisations were reluctant to employ professionals with disabilities. Even if donors place disability programming as a prerequisite for funding, agencies still proceed to formulate and implement disability related programmes on the basis of misinformation. This has resulted in these programmes falling far short of the inclusive character permissible in disability rights programming.

5.1.2. Perceived Lack of Capacity and Importance.

Given that persons with disabilities have realized the importance of civil society organizations in policy formulation, the question asked is why then are there not actively involved in civic activities? This question was readily answered by participants in a number of ways. Most importantly, participants cited perceived lack of capacity as an obstacle to participation. To this
effect, VIM 2 traced lack of a disability agenda on the platform of mainstream civil society back to negative attitudes and perceptions held by society especially in developing countries. “The problem that we have in developing countries is that there is a long held belief and perception that it is difficult to link disability with issues of politics, policy making and the economy. So it has always been a difficult issue for politicians, bureaucrats and other stakeholders in the policy formulation process to see the relevance of persons with disabilities when it comes to “critical national issues”. Therefore that means disabled persons organizations are not relevant on issues relating to policy formulation” said VIM 2. So with that kind of scenario the platform has always been none existent to allow disabled persons or their organizations to play an active role in policy formulation, adds VIM 1.

Similarly, one key informant observed that “we have tended to believe that when society makes persons with disability occupy peripheral positions within it, the fault lies with persons with disabilities themselves”. The observation was that some of the members of civil society organizations seem to have preconceived ideas such as the fact that, people with albinism are “delicate”. They think people with albinism are not fit enough to carry out assignments conducted under harsh environments. Thus, some people do not understand and appreciate the abilities and capabilities of people with disabilities. In pursuit of the negative attitudes argument, ALM 3 observed that Persons with disabilities are segregated against in both the civic and political programme activities on account of the nature of their disability. He testified that generally, society has a general tendency to look down upon people with albinism thinking that such people do not have the capacity to contribute anything meaningful to society. Basically, society does not understand that people with albinism are talented. Weighing in on the same
issue, ALM5 argued that persons with disabilities are excluded from political and civic activities due to wrong perceptions held by society towards their disability.

Testimonies from a key informant point to the fact that disability is still a scaring state of being. I think there has not been awareness. There are certain forms that people can easily identify and live with, but disability is quite a broad phenomenon. There are a lot of types or forms of disability. So a lot is actually at stake. People get to understand if someone is mentally challenged, what it means, how we relate to them. This awareness starts to erode the stigma that is attached to disability. Echoing the same sentiment, another key informant from a prominent trade union traced the negative discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in civil society activities back to the family where such people are not accorded their rights. “Starting from our home, we are not clean. The way we treat people with disabilities is such that we tend to undermine and sometimes humiliate them. We try to hide them from the public life saying to them “no, you cannot go to school, you cannot do this. We do it for you”. We need to change society’s attitude towards people with disability. We need also to educate society that a human being is a human being. I may call myself an able bodied person today but I do not know what the future holds for me. Anything can happen to anyone at any time. as we are talking right now, some people are getting injured at work. Once you are injured you are also disabled. Maybe you are going home, you can have a car accident and that’s it. And you fall in the same group. In addition, it is just like what happens on the streets when a pedestrian is moving and the motorist ignores, but the moment you park your car, you become a pedestrian and from there, anything can befall you. We think that we live forever in the same state we are today, forgetting that anything be it a disease, an accident can happen on anybody at any time. We need to put protective measures wherever to ensure that people are not disadvantaged.”
Judging from the above remark put forward by a prominent women’s rights organization as well as a prominent trade unionist, it is axiomatically clear that participation of persons with disabilities in civil society activities in Zimbabwe is very peripheral mainly due to attitudinal problems. Implicit in such a state of affairs therefore is that lack of a disability focus on the part of most of our national policies is mainly due to the closure of supply lines of policy formulation information. Following the same argument, another key informant dealing with election monitoring, observing and civic education suggested that their work on disability was limited. They tried to mainstream disability through involving one umbrella organization for DPOs but they felt that their efforts were far from adequate. During a discussion with a senior official of that organization, it was observed that disability mainstreaming was not always the solution to curb exclusion. Instead targeting was recommended. Admitting failure on the part of the organization, the official remarked that:

“I think in terms of mainstreaming disability in all our programs, we have made some progress but we are not yet there to be honest. I must say that in the work that we have done, disability itself has been treated using a blanket approach without paying attention to the various needs each disability poses. And somehow in our work, we have work with people who are visually impaired and people with physically impairments. So even then, I realized that they are different levels of participation for people with different disabilities.

Personally, I do not believe some can be mainstreamed. I believe that there is need for targeted approaches. It is important to note that mainstreaming is what everyone says they are doing but they do nothing at all about it. As an organization, we have intentionally made sure that our programs target people with disabilities but we do that through our membership. For
your own information, NASCOH is our member; it helps us regarding issues of targeting communities, on areas of focus, and on the specific disability related requirements”.

In concurrence with the above view, VIF 1 contended that Civil society organizations and rights groups Sentiments on disability mainstreaming have been aired and aired to a point that nowadays if you happen to attend any gathering of civil society organizations, those people are now so schooled on disability rights and aspirations that they can even speak on your behalf. Members of civil society organizations appear so disability literate that whatever you might say at such meetings concerning disability, there is no Zimbabwean that does not know”.

However, speaking and doing are two different things. What matters is not knowledge but action. Because actions speak louder than words, we remain with the impression that lack of action is largely informed by negative attitudes and perceptions concerning disability rather than ignorance.

Still on mainstreaming, submissions from some key informants placed emphasis on the fact that Persons with disabilities should just benefit like any other ordinary citizen. This is however so despite the fact that such organisations give preferential treatment to other social groups such as women and children. Giving the position of his organisation on the subject of disability and inclusion in mainstream civil society programme activities in the country, one key informant bluntly said thus; “Our area of focus is too critical to the generality of Zimbabwean populace. More so, when one talks about human rights and transitional justice, I opine that human rights violations affect persons with disability more than the rest of society. However, that is not our concern. We have confined ourselves to the vulnerability of women and children rather than on disability. This is so for two main reasons. First and foremost, disability does not feature in the literature on human rights and transitional justice. It therefore makes sense to leave
it in pursuit of dominant social groups such as women and children. Secondly, women cannot run away each time there is political violence. They rather choose to stay behind looking after children. Conversely, my reading of disability literature and media campaigns on disability revealed that persons with disabilities said that they are equal to everyone else in society. As such, one would assume that they need no preferential treatment. We have therefore left disability programming to disabled persons organizations. However we remain open minded. We are even more than ready to attend to certain issues at the invitation of disabled persons organizations. If they invite us to clarify certain laws, we do so without any reservations. To the best of my knowledge, in the current constitution we have specialized senators and MPs who focus or represent people with disabilities”.

The fact that disability is not put into consideration by civil society organizations in their programming was even emphasized by yet another key informant who blamed these organizations “including hers” for turning their back and literally shutting out persons with disabilities. The Key informant however gave a few reasons for such a state of affairs. (for a full discussion, see Box 5.1 below). First of all, she believes that unlike gender issues that are championed from three fronts that is, from women’s organizations, government as well as the mainstream civil society organizations including service organizations, disability issues are primarily left to disabled persons organizations. Secondly, disability is left out of ignorance. People just cannot think about it. It is something possessing remote existence in the minds of many in society.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Researcher:</strong></th>
<th>So what should civil society organizations do really to ameliorate the situation of persons with disabilities?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key informant:</strong></td>
<td>[I think civil society organizations should be educated on disability to begin with. Most organizations including those operating under the burner of civil society tend to forget that persons with disability have rights because they have not taken them aboard in their work. They are not able to work with them].</td>
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<td><strong>Researcher:</strong></td>
<td>What could be the reason?</td>
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<td><strong>Key informant:</strong></td>
<td>[People simply forget to care about it. The problem does not affect you. Infect disability issues belong to disabled persons organizations like NASCOH and not to us. They have put disability in a SILO].</td>
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<td><strong>Researcher:</strong></td>
<td>So it’s not part of the mainstream?</td>
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<td><strong>Key informant:</strong></td>
<td>[No disability was put in a SILO; it belongs to NASCOH, to this and that DPO and not part of the mainstream. Because of that even civil society organizations in their programs do not think about disability. Even if you go to some workshops, there is no sign language interpreter for persons with hearing impairments, you go to a workshop and the venue is full of steps and is not accessible to anyone on a wheelchair].</td>
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<td><strong>Researcher:</strong></td>
<td>faced with such kind of a scenario, as somebody working for a large human rights and elections oriented organization, what do you think you should improve on in future?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key informant:</strong></td>
<td>[I think as an organization, we need to be more targeted in our approach to such an extent that when we are conducting our programming. We need to think about disability each time we conduct our programs at community level, we need to think how people with disabilities are going to attend, because they have special needs. We need to take those special needs into account. I think it is our inconsideration that denies participation].</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Tinonoita maavenue arikure, tinonyora like poster tonamira. You need it in Braille, isu tarinamira panotice board yepaMupandawana. Hatina kumbofunga kuti pane mumwe munhu kunze uko asingaone anofanirwa kuuya kuworkshop iyoyo. Asi poster redu rinokwanisa here kuti iye ariverenge”?</td>
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The above testimony reveals that persons with disabilities are not participating in civil society organizations mainly due to a plethora of reasons. Chief among these is failure by such organizations to come up with inclusive programmes conducted in inclusive and accessible environments. This vindicates the arguments proffered by the proponents of the social model of disability that single out environmental discrimination as a key obstacle towards the participation and inclusion of persons with impairments in society rather than their actual impairments.
Giving a classic example of the nature of negative attitudes and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in civil society activities, VIM 1 recalls attending a political symposium organized by one human rights organization. He was surprised to discover that there was no literature in Braille and all presentations were conducted using PowerPoint in spite of his lack of sight. Confronted with such a predicament, VIM 1 boldly complained that; “My feeling is that although this is a human rights forum, it is not inclusive at all. Why is it that there is no literature in Braille? This shows that you have no concern for persons with disabilities. At least you should have brailed 10 handouts and then had 20 people come then you could be excused for having tried something. The answer that I got was that this is not your forum, so go to your groups. Braille literature is given to disability groups. That actually pained me. I then asked one government minister that what do you mean by going to my group”? Who told you that I have a group”? He said no we gave your groups. Then I said no don’t speak of my group when you don’t know who I am and where I come from. What about if I don’t have any group? Is everyone entitled to having a group do you have a group yourself? He then covered up the error by alleging that they are trying their level best to include us.

Once again, persons with disabilities are viewed as a collective entity with similar needs, views and feelings. To cap it all, VIM 2 asserted that; we are not even recognized and afforded the required attention due to discrimination endemic within the mainstream civil society organizations.

This acknowledgement by both key informants and participants simply demonstrate that the participation of Persons with disabilities in civil society activities is greatly subdued. As per the remarks of VIF 1, most organisations are just not keen to champion the cause of Persons with disabilities for no apparent reason. In her study on disability mainstreaming in international
development, Marshal (2012: 53) observed that both international and local civil society organisations are not interested in disability issues in their work. However, contrary to Marshall’s observations that the freeze on disability within the programmes of most international, bilateral and local civil society and development organisation is slowly waning, the above results are indicative of the fact that the problem in Zimbabwe is actually continuing unabated. As evidenced by remarks from VIF 4 that the advent of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has brought forth some gestures of inclusive programming on the part of civil society organisations in Zimbabwe, such inclusive programming is in most cases riddled with exclusionary outcomes and processes as attested by testimonies above. These exclusionary practices include failure to hire Persons with disabilities as employees in those organisations, failure to tailor make workshops to the peculiar needs of various disabilities such as providing materials in Braille for those with visual impairments.

Ultimately, the above findings paint a glaring dent on the human rights record of civil society organisations in Zimbabwe. If the role of civil society is to protect the most vulnerable members of society by providing a voice for them then, the extent to which CSOs in Zimbabwe are executing that mandate remains compromised by their lack of inclusive approaches to programming. As put forward by Masi (2006) institutions have a role to play when it comes to the formulation and implementation of disability friendly policies. “Harmful attitudes that limit and restrict are institutionalised in policies and services and so maintain the historic disadvantage –that disabled people have faced” (Massie, 2006 quoted in National Disability Authority, 2008: 26).

Furthermore, the above narratives are suggestive of the fact that the participation of Persons with disabilities in civil society activities is extremely limited. Three main reasons seem
to emerge from the submissions namely; that disability as a phenomenon is viewed as a badge of inferiority by members of civil society groups. This finding confirms several discoveries from disability scholars that include Thomas (1982, 2002, and 2004), Chataika (2007), Munsaka (2012) as well as Hancock (2009). The sentiment that some disabilities are extremely difficult to put up with is a clear sign that in the absence of a sound and mandatory representation, the sentiments, views and aspirations of Persons with disabilities are not likely to occupy centre stage in civic engagements. Given the central role civil society organisations play in the formulation and even implementation of policy in Zimbabwe, such a state of affairs implies that the aspirations of Persons with disabilities to participate in the formulation of national policies remains severely subdued.

This state of affairs is smartly summed up by Lang (2000). In his analysis of the role of non-governmental organisations and disability, Lang makes an observation that in most poor communities, where everybody is struggling for survival, disability is not usually seen as a priority in development, except by disabled people and their families. In particular, it is rare for mainstream development planners to consider the impact of their plans on disabled people or to include disabled people specifically in their programmes” (page: 25).

Second, apart from negative attitudes, disability is just not an issue deserving public attention. There is therefore nothing to ride home about in as far as civil society organisations are concerned. It is not a “marketable and current issue”. (See section below).

These findings are in sync with those from Munsaka (2012) whose interviewees cited stigma and discrimination as the main stumbling block towards disability and inclusion in development programmes in Binga district of Zimbabwe. Summerising his findings on the implications of discrimination, Munsaka postulated thus: “The impact of family and wider public
attitudes, reinforced by those in positions of professional power, including teachers, social workers and other government officers, further limited disabled people’s opportunities to develop and enhance their capabilities (page 289).

To remedy the situation, it was remarked that strong disability awareness campaigns must constantly be championed to enlighten society that disability does not mean inability. It was further observed that civic society organizations must be in a position to identify talents from among persons with disabilities rather than looking down upon them. Discussions further revealed that persons with disabilities should be given space in most programme activities of mainstream civil society organizations so as to facilitate their active participation in the political and economic empowerment programmes and policies. Further submissions revealed that Persons with disabilities aspire towards a society free from all forms of discrimination and prejudice against some people simply on account of their perceived incapacities.

On the whole, the above findings simply point to the fact that Persons with disabilities are not fully accommodated by civil society organisations. Interestingly, the fact that knowledge does not necessarily translate to behavior has received due emphasis, especially by managers of mainstream civil society organisations who, in spite of their vast knowledge of the impediments faced by Persons with disabilities still acknowledge that their organisations still have got little if any disability friendly programmes. Disability mainstreaming has also been seen as an ineffective intervention since the concept is often abused by many organisations that leave out pertinent disability issues under the guise of mainstreaming. The results confirm the findings of the Office on the status of disabled persons (South Africa) (2000). In a study of disability inclusive policies in eighteen government departments of the South African government, the Office on the status of disabled Person in South Africa noted that some departments which
claimed to mainstream disability in their policies were actually excluding them. This led to some to advocate for disability issues to be handled at three levels namely: mainstreaming or integration, targeting and inclusion.

Targeting simply entails directly tailoring programmes specifically for Persons with disabilities and their peculiar needs and requirements. The immediate example is the programme once rolled out by one umbrella DPO towards the 2013 national elections wherein efforts were made to ensure that all polling stations were disability friendly.

Inclusion on the other hand aims at taking into consideration the peculiar needs and potential of all diverse population groups within a single planning and action framework. The disability component is included in all aspects and stages of an activity as a central component. It requires adaptation of mainstream facilities and services so that they can adequately serve both persons with disabilities and non-disabled people. It also implies full and effective involvement of persons with disabilities as equal partners in the planning and running of all programmes. In the case at hand, disability inclusion would entail designing a programme with persons with disabilities in mind. This includes holding public meetings at sheltered places to accommodate persons with albinism whose skin is very sensitive and susceptible to the sun as well as providing information or literature in Braille for those with visual impairments.

Another interesting dimension evident from the above results is the aspect of tailoring programmes to the needs of specific disabilities. The tendency to totalize the experiences of Persons with disabilities has been discouraged by many disability scholars as providing fertile grounds for exclusion. (For the dangers of totalisation in disability, see Lukes, 1973; Oliver, 1990; Drake, 1999; Shakespear and Watson, 2002 and Oliver, 2004). Results however seem to depict that the “internalization and monopolisation” of disability by Persons with disabilities
themselves has got a great influence on their assessment and interpretation of exclusion. In other words, a person with visual impairment portrays his/her experiences not as caused by visual impairment in particular but to his/her disability. Disability to him/her translates to visual impairment. It is because of this personalization of disability that this thesis has elected to present these experiences as they are portrayed by the bearers.

5.1.3. Disability is a Special and Unique Area for Mainstream Organisations.

Discussions with key informants revealed that disability is treated as a specialist area whose expertise is not readily available to mainstream civil society activities. Asked why it is difficult to mainstream disability in the same way gender has been treated in civil society activities, no satisfactory answer was given except that disability remains an area not common and therefore a reserve of specialist treatment. One key informant dealing with women’s rights said to me; “we feel that even if we talk of women with disability and the law, it still remains too broad an advocacy portfolio that we have neglected”. The above remarks are indicative of the extent to which lack of experience and expertise in disability can lead to the exclusion of such a group. These findings are in sync with those from the National disability authority (2004). Presenting results of the literature search on attitudes towards disability, Hannon (2008) on behalf of the National Disability Authority discovered that negative attitudes towards disability were equally higher among persons and institutions with no experience of interacting with Persons with disabilities than those with constant interface with them.

This seems not palatable to most participants who feel that their needs and aspirations are relegated to the peripheries under the guise of special area requiring specialist attention and expertise. VIM 1 even said that this has even resulted in many persons with visual impairment in
particular not able to attend school. He indicated that; “recently I came across this issue whereby Zim Sec has an instrument which requires heads to give a notice that they have a person with visual impairment who wants to write at their school. This requirement is kept in place despite the fact that a closer look at the registration form, details of one’s disability and special examination requirements are already captured. This makes people with visual impairment have difficulties because at the end you will have to run around. I am trying to imagine somebody in Harare having to go to Kapota or to Waddilove to register to write an examination”.

Given the challenges associated with visual impairment that include poverty and sometimes limited mobility, such institutional mechanisms potentially scuttle any prospects such people may have to pursue some education thereby limiting their opportunities of participation in economic and political life of society. (For a discussion of education and disability, see Chapter Six below).

The view that disability is a special area in terms of programming requiring specialist human and material resources not readily available to mainstream agencies received immense emphasis, especially from key informants. These key informants proffered this as the main reason why disability does not always feature in most civil society programme activities. This led one key informant to suggest that civil society organisations should forge partnerships with specialist DPOs. “I think the first thing to do is to partner with DPOs to actually ensure that we start having mileage and mainstream disability within the legal arena to ensure access to justice among other issues. However, I also think we need to ask ourselves as mainstream civil society organizations to say to what extend have we ensured there is capacity strengthening among these DPOs. I think that is unchartered terrain because the level we are at the moment is just saying that we have so many disabled persons in attendance. There was a time when people
thought that gender representation was just a matter of ensuring that there were women in a meeting. We head count, they were five and that’s it. Now it is moving beyond the attendants to say what is the impact of women being in certain spaces and how to broaden their impact” I did not realise that because since we focus primarily on women and children, we have come to realize that issues to do with disabilities are issues that Zimbabwean society has not adequately attended to.

Admittedly, the above submissions from key figures within the mainstream civil society organisations point towards lack of participation by Persons with disabilities mainly due to the perception that disability is a specialist area. By implication, disability becomes an abnormal state of being. The rights, lifestyles and aspirations of Persons with disabilities are therefore divorced from those of the mainstream society to such an extent that they are not readily accessible to ‘normal’ human beings. Taking Akaheimo’s (2009) discourse on disability and personhood, the above submissions cast doubts on the actual personhood of Persons with disabilities. In an attempt to explain the social exclusion of Persons with disabilities, Akaheimo (2009) labored to understand the difference between a human being and a person. To that effect, He observed thus: “in everyday language, the word ‘person’ is used more or less identically with human’ in its meaning. The psychological concepts of personhood are premised on the belief that being a person entails possessing some psychological capacities that only persons have. As a result this then distinguishes persons from non-persons (Akaheimo, 2009: 79). In terms of what could be ordinarily referred to as the status concepts of personhood, being a person entails the possession of some fundamental kind or kinds of moral status that non-persons do not have (Akaheimo, 2009). On the same note, if the mainstream society, let alone the advocates of political and economic participation of all the citizens continue to hesitate whether or not to
embrace disability on account of it being a special area then, it remains to be seen whether or not their definition and perception of personhood includes this group or not. Being special in the sense of deserving a separate advocacy or human rights platform from the rest of society denotes gross inadequacies on the part of Persons with disabilities. Viewed in this light by mainstream civil society organisations, their participation in programmatic activities of these organisations remains all the more difficult.

5.1.4. Disability Not a Marketable Advocacy Issue to Donnors.

Despite the fact that there is now emphasis on disability as a key priority area for development internationally, results indicated that the feeling of many Civil Society Organizations is that disability is not a ground for making attractive and fundable proposals for presentation to donors. In an environment of stiff competition for scarce financial resources, the mainstream organisations find it expedient not to plunge themselves into some financial doldrums by pursuing only those aspects of advocacy that are likely to yield no dividends. To this effect, some of the Key informants confessed that disability is not a marketable issue to donors. It is however worth noting that the process of gathering data that this researcher embarked on triggered interest in some members of civil society organizations that disability is something worth their attempt. One key informant was quick to point out that; “Although our focus is primarily on women and children, we have come to realize that disability is an issue that Zimbabwean society had not meaningfully unpacked. There are a lot of needs and misconceptions attached to issues of disability”.

The above narratives point towards the continued lack of participation of Persons with disabilities in civil society activities. These findings resonate with the observation of the National
Disability Authority (2008) that particular social constructions of disability portray people with disabilities as ‘others’. This ‘otherisation’ of disability poses a serious threat to the participation of such a social group, especially if it finds expression even among those institutions tasked with the duty of acting as a voice of the most vulnerable in society.

Despite some positive promises to look into the area of disability by other civil society organisations, sentiments from other human rights organisations were that disability is not a marketable human rights issue. One key informant even said that “even in literature on human rights and transitional justice, disability does not feature at all. The implication is therefore that it is not a human rights and justice issue. Instead, our organisation only recognizes and fund raises for women and children. Those are the groups most affected by political unrest.”

As some disability scholars would have it, the above sentiments squarely represent the continued relevance and explanatory power of the social model of disability or what some have termed the social construction of disability. The social construction of disability represents a basis from which barriers to inclusion of people with disabilities are created (Devine, 1997 citing Olkin et al, 1994). As a result of the social construction of disability, people with disabilities experience decreased expectations by people without disabilities and limited inclusion in society (Devine, 1997). In line with the current thesis, such a state of affairs leaves Persons with disabilities shut out of the national policy formulation and empowerment trajectory leaving them wallowing in poverty.

5.1.5. The invisibility of persons with disabilities

The invisibility of persons with disabilities in the broad human rights and development agenda is a matter of international concern. It is because of such an undesirable state of affairs that the
United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with disabilities came into being. This invisibility has been perpetuated by the emphasis on the notion of formal as opposed to substantive equality (Quinn and Degener 2002). Due to being subjected to marginalization and social exclusion for a long time, persons with disabilities are hardly visible as a formidable group to champion their rights and interests. Views and sentiments from the mainstream civil society organizations point towards the fact that persons with disabilities are not visible. They are not making enough effort on their own like women to claim their rights. One such key informant working for a human rights organization even contends that “we would rather consider the plight of women than the disabled because the disabled are not known in society especially in general human rights law”.

Another key informant specializing in cooperative banking and credit schemes for women indicated that their organization has got no disability programme. She attested that their entry point in communities is through traditional leaders. Thereafter, they always make use of the most alert and vocal members of the community as key members. She says that due to “our culture” the disabled are usually left out of our programmes because communities do not think they are economically active and important. As a result, they are just left out and people don’t even know that they are there. She however lamented the exclusion of persons with disabilities saying that they should never be left out. “I can just say they shouldn’t be left out they should also be initiative. They approach the relevant ministries or relevant institutions they should lobby for them to be heard. We know that they exist but they should come out themselves and make people aware that they also need those services and they are also doing something productive such as running projects including poultry projects. They also need to be considered
at par with any other normal Zimbabwean”. From this sentiment, disability depicts abnormality. So the general feeling is that they may not be really doing enough to be so visible.

5.1.6. Emerging Issues.

The fact that disability is not put into consideration by civil society organizations in their programming was even emphasized by key informants who blame these organizations for turning their back and literally shutting out persons with disabilities. A few reasons have been advanced by both key informants and participants about the continued prevalence of such a state of affairs. First of all, it has been observed that unlike gender issues that are championed from three fronts namely; from women’s organizations, government as well as the mainstream civil society organizations including service organizations, disability issues are primarily left to disabled persons organizations. Secondly, disability is left out of ignorance. People just cannot think about it. It is something possessing remote existence in the minds of many in society.

Submissions from participants have also revealed that like political parties and government bureaucracy, civil society organisations are far from being responsive, let alone sensitive to the peculiar institutional and environmental needs of Persons with disabilities.

5.2. PARTICIPATION IN TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES.

The central role of trade unions in the formulation of economic empowerment policies should in no way be underestimated. To this effect, the involvement of Persons with disabilities in trade union programme activities as well as their assimilation into the trade union structures tends to speak volumes about the likely impact they have on the policy arena. Giving his views about the participation of Persons with disabilities in trade union activities, an official representing one of
the biggest trade unions in the country was quick to recognize the need to take disability rights seriously and accused government for not doing enough to protect workers with disabilities against discrimination. During our discussion, the official pointed out that on the international based standards such as the ILO the rights of workers with disabilities are guaranteed. The duty of all trade unions is to urge government to ensure that those people are treated just like any other worker. The ILO convention prohibits employers from discriminating workers on account of their disability, said the trade unionist adding that the government of Zimbabwe is a signatory to that convention.

“By putting its signature on the convention, government has accepted that it will follow all of its principles and obligations But the challenge is that we have not seen it in practice”, he said.

The trade unionist promised that his organization would commission a study to assess the treatment given to workers with disabilities in Zimbabwe. He cited the example of his offices that are located on the ninth floor. “The good example is here, that we have only the stairs, the lift is not working, and you have to climb up to 9th floor, that is if you are non-disabled, what of those who are not able? The ways our work places have been designed do not accommodate certain disabilities and it’s really an issue that we have to carry out a study and ensure that those work places are modified to accommodate people with disabilities”. Participants indicated that they are full members of their own trade unions by virtue of their employment status. A closer look at such membership however points to the power of advocacy on the part of a disabled member.

Evidently, the two main teachers’ unions have of late created post for their members with disabilities within their structures. Giving his testimony to that effect, VIM 1 indicated that; “the
Zimbabwe Teachers Association has got one disabled member who is actually based at their head office. The same applies to the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) which has got a visually impaired member in the management committee. PTUZ is in the process of ensuring that at each level there is a person with a disability”.

VIM 1 was however quick to mention that the current state of affairs obtaining at these Teachers Unions was a result of intense lobbying on the part of teachers with disabilities. He cited an example that in 2012, all the visually impaired teachers registered their own teachers union that would represent their peculiar needs and aspirations. The organization known as Zimbabwe Visually Impaired Teachers Union was formed long back but was finally registered with the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in 2012. This, added VIF 3, has gone a long way in articulating the grievances of visually impaired teachers. The salient example of its achievement to date is the rehabilitation of teachers who lose their sight whilst in service. A few examples were cited during the interview just to show that such needs would be extremely difficult to deal with in mainstream unions.

The above findings are indicative of the inherent gap between the needs of teachers with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts. Whilst the two main teachers unions have of late become more disability inclusive within their structures, this has not taken away the need to found a separate union to represent the specific needs of such a group. This is somewhat paradoxical in practice. What it means is that teachers with visual impairments now belong to two unions.

This simply reflects the problems associated with the so called “participating like others” concept. This scenario however places disability as a social category in two fronts namely the universal and the particular. At a universal level, Persons with disabilities are human beings,
with economic, social and political needs similar to those of other social collectivities including teachers, lawyers, women and others. These needs include the need for collective bargaining where numbers count.

Over and above all these needs, Persons with disabilities have particular needs that come as a result of the peculiar needs of their varied impairments. In the above instance, needs peculiar to visually impaired teachers such as the need for rehabilitation and assistance at work could not be realized in a broad-based and non-specialist union. Hence the need to form an organisation specifically targeting to meet these needs. Although the act of assuming membership of mainstream teachers unions represents participation and inclusion, Persons with disabilities suffer from false consciousness. Worst of all some participants have even accused this false sense of consciousness for the failures recorded in disability advocacy.

Furthermore, the above submissions have got dire implications on the participation of Persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. Although the trade unionist attributes the discrimination of Persons with disabilities to the government’s failure to comply with international conventions, his own organisation is not doing much to represent the needs and aspirations of workers with disabilities. Further to that, the human rights defenders who feel that disability is not an issue when it comes to human rights and social justice implies that even in their advocacy for a free and democratic society, disability does not feature.
5.3. ORGANISATIONS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

In a discussion of participation of Persons with disabilities in civil society activities, it is important to take a detailed account of the efforts made by Persons with disabilities themselves through their organisations to grab a niche in the policy formulation and advocacy platform. This is in keeping with Article 4 (3) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which calls upon states parties to involve persons with disabilities through their representative organisations in the policy formulation and implementation. It is important from the onset to understand that in disability, there are two types of organisations, namely, organisations of and organisations for persons with disabilities. The former are normally viewed as service providers, possessing expert and specialist practitioners in issues related to disability. The latter which are also often called disabled people’s organisations (DPOs), are run and controlled by persons with disabilities themselves and are normally membership based. These organisations would normally concern themselves with advocacy and lobbying. However, of late, this distinction is becoming blurred because organisations of persons with disabilities have also become vocal in advocacy while some organisations of have also embarked on tangible service provision. Suffice it to say however that in disability politics, emphasis is put on DPOs as a vehicle for self-representation. Not surprisingly therefore, this thesis shall give more emphasis on DPOs, fully cognizant that the lack of unity between the organisations of and organisations for has sometimes come with serious costs to an ordinary person with a disability who is likely to be further excluded from participation in policy making.
5.3.1. Benefits of DPOs

Given that persons with disabilities have been and continue to be marginalized, it would be very difficult to achieve much through individual efforts. This is not to trivialize very remarkable successes which have come through efforts of individual persons with disabilities without the input of DPOs but which have eventually made a significant mark in disability development. It is a known truth that if communities, civic society and governments work together with DPOs, there is a likelihood of an improvement of conditions for more people. Internationally, the DPOs have been instrumental in a lot of developments including the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. According to Tromel (2009), more than eighty percent of the text in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came from the input of the DPOs. This was in keeping with the ‘nothing for us without us’ slogan which characterized the feeling of persons with disabilities during the negotiation of the treaty. Here in Zimbabwe, DPOs have also been able to push for reform in a few areas. For example, the Zimbabwe National League of the Blind managed to lobby for the setting up of the national Braille Press. Although it is now a white elephant, the idea of the press was noble. DPOs also managed to put pressure on the government for the enactment of the Disabled Persons Act (chapter 17; 01) in 1992 thereby making Zimbabwe one of the first countries in Africa to enact a disability legislation. Unfortunately, the steam was lost in the process and the act did not really help many people with disabilities and at the time of writing it is now antiquated.

The present study also showed that some persons with disabilities derived benefits from the work of the DPOs. For example, one visually impaired female teacher unpacked the benefits she derives from being a member of one teachers union formed specifically to represent teachers with visual impairments. Issues successfully handled by DPOs relate to assistants that are given
to us by government to help us marking and reading at work. This was a result of serious advocacy on the part of these organizations. Our only union as teachers with visual impairments is the Zimbabwe Visually Impaired Teachers Union. It assisted me. I was assisted by being socialized into the teaching profession. It is also a platform where we meet and share work-related problems as well as general life-challenges. We also help each other find possible solutions to those problems.

The organization helps especially if someone goes blind at work. As members, we visit that teacher, make assessment and determine whether he can be sent for rehabilitation. If there is need for rehabilitation, we facilitate the process. We talk to the employer so that the person is not forced to resign from work but is just rehabilitated and resumes duty in a new form. We have even done that to someone who had lost sight while he was heading a certain school. The gentleman is now back at work and is now an active member of our organization”.

By the same token, VIF 2 confirmed that belonging to DPOs provides solace and relief to the challenges of life. She gave an example of a group of persons with disabilities formed on ‘whats up’ (a mobile phone messaging platform for exchanging ideas). She testified that; “on whatsapp there is a group of persons with disabilities called a disability rights chat group. On the disabilities chat group, we discuss a lot of issues on disability rights and share problems of life”.

Not as if to take away the role of charitable organisations in alleviating the lives of Persons with disabilities in the country, the above testimonies reveal the central role and potential that lies in Persons with Disabilities to represent and emancipate themselves. This role of organisations of Persons with disabilities in influencing public policy was also observed by Morris (2011). in apparent reference to DPO influence in shaping British social policy, Morris confessed that the power of DPOs to communicate policy strategies that resonate with both the conservative and
labour governments was strength not to be taken away from the disability movement. Like the British disability movement referred to by Morris, the above submissions are indicative of the astute abilities and determination by Persons with disabilities to refute the allegation that impairment on its own can mean disability. With the appropriate rehabilitation interventions, a person with impairment can function in varied professional vocations.

VIM 4 remarked that: Disabled Persons Organizations are counted as stakeholders in the formulation of policies. They are included in conferences for instance when the nation engaged in the process of writing a home grown constitution. There were so many conferences that were held and disabled persons organizations were so happy that they were involved in the discussions.

The above findings pit disability movement in a complex situation. In other words, although the DPOs have weaknesses, there is some acknowledgement that they often manage to represent Persons with disabilities on various national issues. Confronted with such a vexing conundrum, the question that comes to mind when considering the core tenets of the current thesis is whether or not the disability movement enables the participation of Persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies?

Responding to this question, VIM1 contended that DPOs are not effective when it comes to performing their role in the policy formulation process, adding that:

The role of disabled person’s organizations in policy formulation should be that of conscientising national institutions and other civil society organizations to mainstream disability in their policies, programmes and activities. They are meant to play that role to assimilate disability issues into the main stream. Regrettably this role has been marginal.
The process of mainstreaming disability in various national policies be it in the economy, politics, infrastructural designs or gender issues, the views of DPOs have never been solicited by both government and other civil society organizations in the mainstream. Presumably, this is due to the fact that the nexus between disabled persons’ organization and the economy has traditionally been regarded as marginal.” In concurrence, VIM5 believed that DPOs played a marginal or peripheral role when it comes to matters of national importance. He argued that:

Truly speaking I think the role that most disabled person’s organizations have played has been restricted to acts of charity that include the sourcing of funds for disabled persons. Helping them find wheelchairs, crutches, white canes and sometimes school fees. Otherwise when it comes to the more important duty of policy formulation their role has been very minimal. What immediately comes to mind is that the Disabled Persons Act of 1992 was a mere toothless dog. Arguably, most of the provisions of the act have not been implemented. Talk of the national disability board and all its functions; they haven’t been fulfilled as yet. That makes one conclude that when it comes to issues of policy formulation the role of the organizations representing persons with disabilities is next to nothing. I think they do not contribute much to policy making in the country in the sense that they have accepted to be treated as agents of charity. The moment one says we are going to give you, it means that you are not going to be given enough.

Giving a contrary view, one disability leader indicated that the disability movement was actively influencing the formulation of a national disability policy to guide disability mainstreaming in the country. He said that:
Your honour, we are currently engaged in reviewing the draft national disability policy which we hope will become a legal document soon. To all intents and purpose, this is a sound and progressive policy that seeks to situate disability within the context of a rights-based approach. Ultimately, we hope that when it becomes law this policy will be implemented in all government departments. We are confident that the strategies and mechanisms that will emerge from this conference will complement the existing policies and strategies in mainstreaming disability in government departments.

5.3.2 Challenges faced by the Disability Movement in Influencing National Policy.

5.3.2.1 Disabled Persons Organizations suffer from technical weaknesses.

Submission from participants pointed to the fact that most disabled person’s organizations are not well managed. They were formed out of emotions and feelings of discrimination from society. However, their leadership has tended to lose the critical democratic ideals that foster good governance and transparency. Putting her argument across, VIF 1 contended that; “most of our DPOs are linked to certain personalities. They are readily identifiable with certain patrons who have incidentally turned them into their own milking cows. As a result, one can tell that if you talk of organization (a) you are simply talking of the person (b) and so forth. It is worth observing that even well-funded national and international conferences and workshops are attended by leaders and no other ordinary members. These organizations have therefore been heavily patronized such that they are no longer serving the interest of the people for which they are formed. They make splendid efforts sometimes to champion the cause of persons with disabilities but the major problem is that they remain one man’s band. They make a lot of noise on disability issues but one would immediately ask the question “where is the membership?” In
response, one is led to Oliver (2004). Oliver confirmed that this scenario is common given that Persons with disabilities are over represented among the unemployed (Oliver, 2004). The persistence of poverty and unemployment has stifled progress within the disability movement, with varied sentiments pointing towards the adverse effects of the same on disability leadership. In the opening remarks of his book “from poverty to power”, Green (2012) quoted George Bernard Shaw (1907, iv) as having remarked thus: “The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty”.

According to a study by Eide and Lobe (2003) on disability living standards in Zimbabwe, only twelve percent of Persons with disabilities got a disability grant by 2003. With the raging economic situation, it is likely that the situation has deteriorated. Due to low employment prospects, submissions from participants revealed that leaders of most DPOs jealously guard against their posts. In pursuit of the same argument, VIM 1 castigated selfish leaders bent on self-aggrandizement at the expense of their constituency. He felt that most of these organizations have gone off track as they have digressed from their legitimate mandate leaving their general membership wallowing in poverty. His observation went thus; “I think there is also this cancer in the country that once a person gets to the top, he tends to push the ladder away so as to maintain and protect their positions. I think this is where we lose it. Where you have people who play the role of representation when in actual fact that person is a job seeker”.

In an attempt to provide an explanation to such a state of affairs, one disability activist described this state of affairs as the founder syndrome. “The effect of the early founder’s syndrome is that the founders are so impervious to new ideas or descending voices. Even if anyone brings across new ideas, they would want to block him as much as possible. They don’t want to let power go. Even if the constitution stipulates that there be election for leadership
renewal at prescribed times, early founders would make sure that they frustrate the whole process. They literally personalize the organization. Because of that early founder’s syndrome. At the end of his term of office, a disabled leader is rich and satisfied.

The issue of job seeking therefore finds expression in the higher levels of poverty characterizing the lives of Persons with disabilities, especially in resource poor societies such as Zimbabwe. Emphasizing the link between poverty and disability, Oliver (2004) even acknowledges that poverty and disability are almost synonymous, with most individuals lacking food and drink. As a consequence of this, any attempt to try to move disability politics exclusively into the realm of representation is both flawed and over ambitious when so many Persons with disabilities continue to experience life threatening material deprivation (Oliver, 2004).

Oliver’s submission was corroborated by various participants for this study who even blame the government for scuttling any pressure from the disability movement by keeping Persons with disabilities under pauperizing conditions. On this extreme end of the analysis, a disability activist attributed the challenges faced by the disability movement to poverty. He went on to attribute the poverty to state sponsored poverty and deprivation. In his view, “the disability movement is crippled by the state whose social protection programmes are residual, remedial and grossly inadequate. This forces persons with disabilities to beg for food in various ways. Some would get into the streets and ask for help, some would go vending and yet others would found organizations all in an attempt to eke a living. It is symptomatic of marginalization because if people are marginalized the little they get they fight among themselves. This is typical of the situation obtaining within the disability movement. Poverty is playing its part with each one
fighting hard to access scarce resources. Persons with disabilities are among the poorest of the poor so the little opportunity available people are likely to joke for a share”.

In concurrence, VIM 5 gave an analogy of “survival of the fittest” game found among street children. “It is like if you take half a loaf to street children. They start fighting among themselves over it with each one striving to make it all his own. The truth of the matter is that you cannot talk about democratizing organizations to a person that sees them as a source of livelihood rather than an instrument of fighting poverty and marginalization among persons with disabilities”.

Buttressing the above argument, VIF 1 emphasized the fact that people fight for scarce resources as individuals and not as a group. As such, persons with disabilities must be treated as individuals with varied needs and economic expectations. VIF 1 contended thus, “Each time we talk about disability, let us take persons with disabilities as individuals. And then let primary needs be met. Once we are able to individualize and recognize that each individual needs some form of livelihood, some have got degrees and some do not. We will then come to appreciate that such associations are individual owned and run for the sake of livelihood. This is my mine, this is my own land and this is my own factory. In the absence of these things, involvement in governance become extremely difficult because the moment I will go there Mr Mtetwa, I will go there because am hungry and when am going there because am hungry the first thing that I will do is try and see where I can grab something to eat. Even if I lobby and get something, I can eat even everything including that which has been given to others I claim to represent because I am hungry but fortunate. This is where the thrust must be. A disabled person be satisfied and fed. Let him get a mine, land, a factory and other basics then we can start talking about governance. For as long as we do not address the structural causes of poverty among
Persons with disabilities it will be very difficult to come up with a formidable disability movement in Zimbabwe.

5.3.2.2. **Lack of Policy Capacity**

Lack of policy capacity was cited as another obstacle militating against the participation of Persons with disabilities in the formulation of public policy. The submissions revolve around the fact that many “founders” of these organisations were less educated and lack the capacity to articulate the demands and policy aspirations of their constituency from an expert and informed position. Practically speaking, the major problem with the early founder syndrome in the disability movement is that usually those founders are less educated. The founders are not appropriately qualified so that they are able to take up the challenge required to put the group interest ahead of individual interest” said ALF 5. Lack of education becomes an obstacle when it comes to their capacity to contribute to the formulation of policy because they lack the capacity to analyse policy and recommend appropriate policy options.

Lack of policy capacity is further exacerbated by the inability of leaders of the disability movement to forge coalitions with the mainstream civil society and other stakeholders to challenge institutional and attitudinal barriers to the participation of Persons with disabilities in the economic and political life of Zimbabwe. Technically speaking, policy advocacy entails what Sabatier and Weible (2007) prefer to call advocacy coalitions. In terms of this framework, the central belief is that policy making is structured in part by the networks among critical policy participants. The main assumption of the Advocacy Coalition framework is that in order to have any prospects of success, the disability movement must seek allies, share resources and develop complementary strategies with their counterparts within the mainstream civil society.
The issue of inadequate policy capacity is critical to the participation of Persons with disabilities when it comes to policy formulation. Usually, most DPOs are founded by “people of good heart”. These are usually less educated but highly innovative and charismatic. Their advocacy orientation tends to be emotionally rather than factually oriented asserted VIF 3.

Lack of policy capacity was also observed by various mainstream organisations who have unfortunately resorted to leaving DPOs out instead of capacity building them. As Lang and Charowa (2007) put it; “many national and international organisations largely ignore DPOs primarily because they do not consider that DPOs had the sufficient capacity to make a significant contribution to programme design, implementation and evaluation” (Lang and Charowa, 2007: 26).

The above submission strongly portrays poverty and inequality as the major causes of the paralysis of a vibrant disability movement. Poverty is therefore “the social evil” that mutates and evolves in the lives of Persons with disabilities. These adverse effects of poverty have led Green (2012) to assert that this social evil draws not just on those who positively contribute to keeping people down, but also on all the people who are ready to tolerate the thoroughly unacceptable predicaments of millions of fellow human beings. The nature of this evil does not relate principally, even primarily, to the diagnosis of specific evil-doers. We have to see how the actions and inactions of a great many persons together lead to this social evil, and how a change of our priorities – our policies, our institutions, our individual and joint actions – can help to eliminate the atrocity of poverty (page xiii). The sentiment presented above relating to DPOs alienating their membership is in no way peculiar to Zimbabwe. Findings by Lang and Murangira (2009) in Uganda seem to point towards a general propensity for the generality of membership of DPOs to feel left out and sometimes rejected by their organisations.
Practically speaking, views from a variety of workshops and conferences that the researcher attended as part of data collection for this thesis, the sentiments from participants pointed towards the general propensity of the leadership of the disability movement to self aggrandise. In concurrence with the sentiments on poverty and unemployment articulated above, anecdotal evidence gathered during conversations with Persons with disabilities indicated that poverty and social deprivation is at the centre of the demise of a strong and vibrant disability movement in Zimbabwe. Like Green’s conceptualisation (see above), this thesis finds it unfair and unproductive for the disability fraternity to “submit and give in” to a well-orchestrated fate couched by government through countervailing and retrogressive social protection policies that keep Persons with disabilities in perpetual poverty. Instead, the argument put forth is that it takes men and women of courage to “brave the weather” of poverty, discrimination and inequality to put the cause of disability emancipation on the national agenda. Therefore, the behaviour of the leaders and founders of DPOs who thrive on “eating on behalf of others” should in no way be countenanced. Instead, it must be condemned in the strongest of terms.

5.3.2.3. Lack of unity of purpose and direction.

Related to the founder syndrome discussed above is the aspect of fragmentation. In its simplest form, fragmentation entails lack of a common ground and unity of purpose within the disability movement. Precisely, fragmentation and disunity was said to be caused mainly by poverty and limited employment opportunities on the part of Persons with disabilities who jealously guard their “territory”. VIM 5 was so seized by the issue of fragmentation to such an extent that he even attributed it to lack of sound and sustainable social protection programmes in the country. He said that the absence of a comprehensive social protection framework has even retarded
progress within these agencies which have incidentally become the milking cows of their founders and leaders.

Although participants viewed DPOs as a useful platform for airing their views and as their mouthpiece concerning disability rights, there are some who believe that lack of unity is a major stumbling block. The contention put forward by such participants is that Persons with disabilities discriminate each other according to disability type. Participants even lamented the fragmentation prevailing among DPOs as one of the main reasons why government cannot take disability issues with the degree of urgency and seriousness they deserve. This however is not peculiar to Zimbabwe. In His study on the effectiveness of economic empowerment programmes for Persons with disabilities in Kenya and India, Cobley (2012) makes the observation that: “because many disability organisations focus on particular impairment types or specific issues, there is a lack of inclusiveness and team work in addressing the issues which affect disabled people, which is hindering the development of the disability sector in the country” (page 173). The same observation was made by Deal (2006) who contended that there is great animosity between organisations of and those for persons with disabilities. Deal attributes this to mistrust and suspicion. The current thesis found overwhelming evidence to corroborate Deal’s presentation. In the case of Zimbabwe, there are two umbrella organisations competing for space when it comes to the coordination of the disability movement. These are the Federation of Disabled Persons Organisations in Zimbabwe as well as the National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH). FODPZ represents organisations of persons with disabilities. Technically this entails those organisations formed and run by persons with disabilities. In line with the social model of disability, the views from these organisations
command popular support from the generality of the disability fraternity hence they must receive policy priority over those championed by organisations for persons with disabilities.

On the other end of the spectrum lies NASCOH which belongs to the stable of those organisations for persons with disabilities (Chitiga, 2011). During focus group discussions and ethnographic studies conducted as part of data collection processes, it was clear that animosity did exist between the two umbrella organisations. Paradoxically, the line between the two organisations was blurred, especially at the level of umbrella organisations where membership of both groups tended to alternate. For instance, the umbrella board of organisations for persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe is NASCOH whilst that for organisations of persons with disabilities is the FODPZ. Surprisingly, the two organisations are presided by the same disability leaders. However the major difference is that Persons with disabilities have tended to believe that those organisations championing the cause of Persons with disabilities “from the terraces” are mainly gold diggers bent on benefiting from the institutional, social and physical barriers erected on their path by an ablest society.

In spite of all that, inter-organizational interaction between and among members was discouraged, with workers threatened with dismissals for simply inviting “wrong” people for disability workshops. The discussions held by the researcher with leaders of these organisations simply revealed that the bone of contention was stiff competition for scarce donor funds.

One disability activist lamented such a state of affairs arguing that fragmentation had literally stifled progress within the disability movement. (see box 5.2 below for a discussion on fragmentation within the disability movement).
Although fragmentation was raised as a setback by several participants, it is here argued that the main cause is that disability itself by its very nature is the true manifestation of human diversity. As Lukes (1973) would argue, a person with visual impairment cannot adequately speak on behalf of someone with physical impairment. This diversity in disability types and varied needs makes it difficult for DPOs to find common ground.

The current thesis however observed that there was gain in unity of purpose. To this effect, effort must be made to minimize the differences and work towards common goals if these organisations are to present a formidable force to government in the fight against social exclusion and marginalization. Once again, this call is shared by others within the disability scholarship like Deal (2006). Deal believes that much can be gained by working together,
without compromising one’s own principles. “If minority groups can work in unison, such coalitions based on the demand for social change can be much more powerful than working in silos. Each minority group, whilst respecting the uniqueness of their agenda, can gain greater influence by finding those areas of commonality (Deal, 2006: 453).

From the above submissions, DPOs challenges are in no way divorced from the plight of Persons with disabilities in general. To this end, lack of a coherent and solid disability movement in Zimbabwe has been attributed to the social model of disability. Submissions from VIM 5 and VIF 1 pointed a finger at the government for stifling the development of a robust and viable disability movement due mainly to its reluctance to promote and champion the economic and social policies meant to ameliorate the economic status of such a social group. Equally important to note is a comparison between the disability movements in Zimbabwe and South Africa, (see chapter 4 for the effectiveness of the disability movement in South Africa).

5.3.2.4: Misrepresentation of disability by The Able-bodied Persons within the Disability movement

Besides setbacks caused by poverty, the founder syndrome or lack of a democratic space as well as lack of unity or fragmentation being key obstacles in the development of a robust disability movement in Zimbabwe, some external factors were identified by participants. Most prominent among these factors was the fact that the non-disabled persons tended to patronize and misrepresent disability as a charity issue. Of prime concern was the exclusionary nature of the administrative styles employed by the non-disabled patrons of organisations for persons with disabilities. Sentiments from participants were that disability has always been a source of employment for the non-disabled persons who ride on the charity model of disability. Adding his
voice to this observation, VIM 5 pointed out that the field of disability was full of gold diggers.” Perhaps I can give a scenario whereby we have people working for charitable organizations. They speak of disability not being inability but if their daughter or son may want to marry a person with disability that’s when you begin to see their true colors, washaya here mwanangu? (what is wrong with you? Have you literally failed to get the rightful marriage partner?)

Oliver (2004) observed that large international donor agencies were usually reluctant to fund DPOs. As a result, large charities claiming to champion the cause of Persons with disabilities are the ones that are well funded. Buttressing the same viewpoint, ALF 1 believed that the organisations claiming to represent persons with disabilities were extremely hypocritical. They were not prepared to employ persons with disabilities. They instead compare your physical appearance against that of an able-bodied person.

Contributing to this debate, participants of a focus group held by the visually impaired persons indicated that in some organisations led by able-bodied persons, the disability agenda was literally shelved. This is because these able-bodied leaders are merely gold diggers who thrive on using disability as bait for attracting donations. As a result these DPOs tend to involve some members passively just for window dressing purposes. They usually identify an educated disabled person, invite him to present on a topical issue during a workshop, pay him peanuts, compile a report to donors and get all the credit to themselves.”

Emphasising on the attitudes of the non-disabled patrons of various charities, ALF 5 gave an example of her previous place of employment. She recounted what she described in Marxist terminology as exploitation of man by man. As illustrated in box 5.3 below, ALF 5 testified that disability was not an acceptable state of being even by those claiming to promote disability rights.
BOX 5.3 Attitudes of the Able-bodied Leaders of Disabled Persons Organisations Towards Disability.

“I worked for a DPO that works in a range of disability programmes that included income generating projects, disability rights advocacy and education. During a fund raising venture, the DPO was forced to employ a person with a disability as a condition from the donor. In compliance, a person with a spinal bifida who uses a catheter was hired. During the interview, he was asked whether given his disability, he would be able to handle pressure of work.

After hiring him, he worked for three years. After that his contract was never renewed. Instead, a digital camera was bought for him as a send away gift. He became the only one whose contract was not renewed. Instead, all other programmes within the organisation that had come to a close had to be fund raised for in order to retain the officers. Some able-bodied core workers who used to share an office with him even voiced their discomfort indicating that he was a “least preferred core worker”. To them, he was more of a burden than an expert in his own right”.

From this experience, I discovered that the able-bodied leaders are not at all sincere when it comes to disability and inclusion. Rather, they only want contact with a person with a disability as a recipient of their services than as their core worker. This could be due to the fact that the able-bodied leaders see the majority of Persons with disabilities as mere recipients of charity”.

Submissions from ALF 5 indicate the exploitative lives led by persons with disabilities. Implicit in this view is the fact that Persons with disabilities are good for nothing short of charity (Mtetwa, 2012). Alternatively, Persons with disabilities assume what has been referred by Talcott Parsons (1951) as the sick role. It is therefore here contended that the above presentation depict the relationship between Persons with disabilities and the able-bodied people in charge of DPOs as extremely clientilistic and skewed in favour of the later. Such a relationship finds theoretical and philosophical grounding in medical sociology, especially from Parson’s concept of a sick role.

According to Parsons, the onset of illness prevents the individual sufferer from performing important social and economic roles. These roles include paid employment and parental duties. (See Chapter Two for Parsons’ sick role and its implications on disability and participation in public and social life). Parsons (1951, 435) conceives that the assumption of a sick role has got some motive behind it, thus:
The motivation to withdraw from social roles and to be cared for as a sick person is, according to Parsons, countered by the medical practitioner. Where a person’s ill health requires a relinquishing of normal social roles, he or she is expected to visit a doctor and this encounter involves a reciprocal set of obligations and privileges. The incapacitated person is offered a niche, termed ‘the sick role’; where usual expectations are lifted and he or she is permitted time off to recover. The sick role offers the privilege of bed rest and the suspension of domestic and employment duties, on condition that professional help is sought out and full cooperation is ceded to the physician. In return, the physician is reciprocally obliged to act in the patient’s best interests and to offer technically competent care in an objective fashion.

As has been discussed by VIF 4 in relation to the reluctance of mainstream civil society organisations to employ Persons with disabilities, the feeling that ‘our duty is to look after these ‘infirm’, ‘incapacitated’ and ‘sick’ people seems to hold even within those DPOs run by the able-bodied. In disability studies nomenclature, this amounts to the medicalisation of disability. Submissions from participants indicated that the non-disabled patrons of these organisations have elevated themselves well above their disabled counterparts, thereby reducing them to mere patients who need care and treatment rather than as equals and compatriots. Such findings are therefore in concurrence with Oliver’s conceptualization of the medical model of disability and the negative implications that are bound once society adopts it in its dealings with disability. Oliver (1990: 6) laments the fact that the medicalisation of disability has taken power away from Persons with disabilities and given it to medical practitioners. In his words:
This medicalisation of disability has given doctors power and left disabled people powerless. The social model is not an attempt to take power away from doctors and give it to disabled people, but a prescription for sharing power.

In the light of the above findings, it is clear that Persons with disabilities are displeased with the manner in which they are treated by the able-bodied people in charge of DPOs. It is also clear that the medicalisation of disability is deeply embedded in the behavior of most professionals to such an extent that one participant had to sum it up thus: “when an able-bodied professional sees me, two things immediately come to mind. It’s either he sees money or burden”.

This thesis contends that the attitudes portrayed by the able-bodied patrons of DPOs is just but synonymous with the treatment given to organisations formed and run by Persons with disabilities by both national and international mainstream organisations including donor organisations. The same was also observed by Lang and Charowa (2007) in their study of disability issues in Zimbabwe. This observation led them to recommend that; “there needed to be greater dialogue between NGOs and DPOs, in order that each could further understand the other's role and perspectives. In other words, it is felt that NGOs need to change their mindset regarding disabled people. Rather than perceiving them as objects of pity and patronage, they should be seen as equal partners within the development process, thereby using their skills and experience accordingly (Lang and Charowa, 2007: 27).

5.3.3. Emerging issues.

The above discussion has revealed that DPOs are very crucial in the disability development agenda. In the context of Zimbabwe, such organisations could be instrumental in the creation of inclusive policies and programs. However, it has also been identified that these organisations
have got their fair share of weaknesses in their capacity to champion the participation of their membership in the formulation of appropriate policies. Chief among these setbacks are issues to do with poor governance, lack of sound and appropriate educational qualifications on the part of their leaders, fragmentation as well as the founder syndrome. Further to that, some external factors were noted that militated against the capacity of DPOs to adequately discharge their duty of standing for the interests of their members when it comes to matters of politics and policy. These include lack of a robust and dependable social protection framework to cushion persons with disabilities against absolute poverty and social deprivation thereby reducing them to mere beggars of low social and economic status. Another factor is the paternalistic tendency of the able-bodied persons running organisations for disabled persons. These were said to be treating Persons with disabilities as recipients of charity rather than their equals both at work and in society thereby perpetuating the very social vices that these organisations are meant to eradicate.

In spite of all these setbacks, it was widely acknowledged that DPOs have a stake when it comes to fighting for the rights of their members. A few examples have been given chief among them being the splendid work performed by a teachers union for the visually impaired that advocates for the rehabilitation and reinstatement of any teacher who loses sight at work. The exercise of coming up with a national disability policy currently underway is another example of the potential that DPOs have on the policy arena. In view of the weaknesses pointed out above, the need for unity of purpose among DPOs was duly emphasized by both participants and even by voices from literature. The belief being that there is strength in unity and that the disability fraternity should find common ground.
5.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the sentiments, narratives and observations of research participants regarding the participation of Persons with disabilities in civil society activities. The understanding was that the civil society organisations constitute an indispensable arm of the national policy formulation trajectory. The discussion has shed light on the attitudes, perception and behavior of mainstream civil society organisations.

The implications of such attitudes and perceptions for Persons with disabilities in the programme activities of these agencies have been discussed. Evidence presented indicates that persons with disabilities are systematically excluded from the programme activities of mainstream organizations. This exclusion renders their participation in public and civic life insignificant and peripheral.

Confronted with this predicament, the chapter revealed that Persons with disabilities were even getting a raw deal from the disability movement that is riddled with gross limitations. On the whole, DPOs especially those of Persons with disabilities are bedeviled by a plethora of setbacks that militate against their quest to beam disability issues on the national policy agenda.

The above shortcomings have got dire implications for the participation of Persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe.
CHAPTER SIX

BARRIERS TO THE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN POLICY FORMULATION

6.0. INTRODUCTION

Having examined the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in civil society activities, this chapter now seeks to explore the factors that predispose this social group to social exclusion. In line with the fourth objective of this thesis, a very important question to ask is really what factors are at play within society or within persons with disabilities themselves that lead to social exclusion and marginalization?

Literature on disability tends to conveniently put such factors or barriers to participation into three broad but interconnected categories namely institutional, attitudinal and environmental. For the current study however, an attempt has been made to follow this classification of these factors. However, the simplest taxonomy that the reader is likely to deduce from his/her own interpretation of presented findings is that of endogenous and exogenous factors. By exogenous factors or barriers is meant those institutional, attitudinal and environmental setbacks militating against the participation of persons with disabilities in the political, economic and social life of society. At the other end of the spectrum are the endogenous factors that constitute part of the internal weaknesses of Persons with disabilities themselves. These include a sense of worthlessness, lowered self-esteem and lack of initiative on the part of Persons with disabilities themselves. This dichotomy is itself far from perfect given that worthlessness, lowered self-esteem and lack of initiative is usually explained by various disability scholars as a product of continued social isolation, psychological and emotional feelings brought forth by a highly impervious and discriminatory ablest society. In the midst of
all this web of interlocking and interconnected barriers to participation, the reader is encouraged not to hunt for a concise and clear-cut examination of the endogenous and exogenous debate but to just treat these simply as collective and interlocking barriers.

Furthermore, the chapter seeks to address this question relying on the personal narratives and experiences of Persons with disabilities themselves gathered during individualized interviews with them, interactions with groups of Persons with disabilities during workshops as well as evidence from other scholarly studies on disability and social exclusion.

6.1. ROLE OF EDUCATION

The current thesis understands that education remains a central pillar to the participation of any social group in national political and economic processes. To that effect, this section discusses the extent to which Zimbabwe’s education system enables the participation of Persons with disabilities in policy formulation.

A SINTEF study conducted in 2003 (Lobe and Eide, 2003) indicated that 32% of people with disabilities in Zimbabwe have had no schooling (36% had some primary schooling, and 32% had some education beyond primary level). This state of affairs has the likely effect of stifling the efforts of such a social group to penetrate the ‘impervious’ curtains of the national political and economic hierarchies. According to Corbleyy (2012) education is a central pillar in the empowerment of persons with disabilities. To this effect, children who are excluded from educational opportunities inevitably become an economic burden to society and to their families.
6.1.1 Poor Educational Institutions and Facilities.

Sentiments from participants indicated that persons with disabilities were generally disadvantaged because the schools offering special education were poorly resourced. This is so in relation to both material and human resources. “People speak of inclusive education but then nothing shows that the educational sector is ready for inclusive education” said vim 1. Mafa (2012) makes an interesting observation that although inclusion in the education sector has been actively considered since 1994, there is still a lot of skepticism and ambivalence by stakeholders regarding its implementation.

On a similar note, VIF 2 blamed the state of schools that teach persons with visual impairment for being a cake, backward and fostering the traditional disability culture of shallow mindedness, dependence and lack of initiative within the pupils. The example given was Kapota School for the blind in Zimuto area Masvingo province. VIF 2 said that; “someone has to intervene especially in the schools of persons with disabilities. Sadly, most schools with people with disabilities are not so classy like any other normal school. The schools are of lower or inferior standard and reputation. For example, if you take someone who has been to Prince Edward and someone who has been to Kopota you find that their reasoning capacity differs. take me I have been to Queen Elizabeth and Dominican Convent and you compare me with someone who attended school at Kopota or Waddilove you will notice that there is a great difference.

Personally, I have dated people educated at various institutions. Before you ask them anything, you can immediately tell that this one comes from a poor mission school. Their reasoning capacity will be far less than my own. The end result is that they appear miserable and useless. This is because government does not accord them the necessary status”. If the argument
proffered by Littlewood et al (2007) is anything to go by, then VIF 2’s understanding is that the government treats persons with disabilities as an underclass. In Silver’s (1995) paradigms of social exclusion (see section on theoretical framework) the concept of discrimination and underclass features most in the monopoly paradigm of the social exclusion approach. For VIF 2, schools for children with disability should therefore be given the necessary attention just like any other ‘ordinary’ school if ever these children are to benefit from education.

In concurrence, VIM1 blamed the government for adopting a laissez faire policy when it comes to the education of children with disabilities. Emphasizing his point, he recounted that; “when you speak of inclusive education and school heads are not aware it means to say the secretariat has not done its part. Policy makers should even ask themselves what is it that is required of a school to accommodate someone with a disability especially visual impairment. Recently I came across this issue whereby ZIMSEC has an instrument which requires heads to give a notice that they have a person with visual impairment who wants to write at their school. Yet the registration form captures the type of disability of the candidate and whether or not a special question paper (Braille or large print) is required. One therefore wonders why the school should give prior notice yet the registration form is clear regarding the type of paper required by a candidate. This presents a challenge for persons with visual impairment who might be required to take their examinations at such special schools as Kapota or to Waddilove even if the person stays in Harare. This discourages persons with visual impairment from supplementing or repeating failed subjects thereby keeping them out of the education system”, said VIM 1.

On the part of government, children with visual impairment can only benefit from the special facilities obtainable at a special school. Such schools, usually founded and run by missionaries are located far apart. This validates VIM1’s observation that this is likely to act as
an obstacle when it comes to the need for visually impaired persons to supplement failed subjects.

The above discussion pits special against inclusive forms of education. Persons with disabilities themselves indicated that inclusive education is the way to go, given that it does not seek to remove and alienate the child from his/her family and community. Special education on the other hand was criticized for just representing the opposite. According to Maher (2007), the philosophy of inclusive education entails making schools and learning environments accommodative of all learners in spite of their differential abilities. In other words, inclusive education does not seek to suppress or deny the existence or shortcomings associated with specific impairments. Rather, it is meant to accommodate all the specific and peculiar needs of learners thereby tailoring the deliverables and examinations to these needs. With this in mind, notwithstanding the importance of special schools (most of them integrated anywhere) in the education of children with disabilities, the current thesis contends that learners with visual impairments and albinism do not need to endure the rigorous effort to sit for their examinations at special schools. Rather, as per the sentiments put forward by VIM1, the examination authorities must only make sure that the specific examination needs of each candidate are captured and appropriate examination material delivered to any examination centre in the country. As the situation of those learners with visual impairment is concerned, the emphasis seems to be placed on special needs rather than inclusive education. As Maher (2007) would argue, special education is likely to breed discrimination given its emphasis on the specialist teacher as the prime fountain of wisdom when it comes to the treatment and education of learners with disabilities. In consonance with this, the term special education was castigated by participants who attended the Zimbabwe Disability Forum at the University of Zimbabwe. This
monthly forum usually meets to discuss various disability concerns in the country. It comprises of participants from various backgrounds. The participants at the forum felt that the word special was derogatory and should not be used in the education of learners with disabilities at all. They argued that:

When something is called special, there are two different specials. The first, you are special, the first lady you are special isn’t it? And then there is this other special. To say you are too special to be normal. So you should stay away from ‘normal children’. To keep you away from them they try to say you are special, with your special teacher, special education and your special curriculum. What is so special about educating a human being? Article 24 in UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities lays emphasis on the right to education in inclusive settings. May I ask you once more, what is so special about educating a human being? Everybody has got a basic right to education. So there is nothing special about it. But we have diverse ways of transmitting education to any individual. We are just doing what we are supposed to be doing anyway, education. As persons with disabilities, we are not very special, isn’t it? We are simply aligning ourselves to Article 24 of the UNCRPD.

Article 24 of the UNCRPD provides that learners with disabilities be afforded the right to education in inclusive settings (see chapter 2). Sentiments from focus group discussion with visually impaired participants show that such bureaucratic requirements make access to education for persons with visual impairment a big challenge. More so, it became crystally clear from the focus group discussion that education was the solution for this social group to economically empower itself. Without education, such persons cannot undertake some common
vocations such as being drivers, conductors, porters and security guards, vocations of which remain the only option for the less educated in Zimbabwe. What remains as an option is begging on the streets and in buses. For those who manage to hold on to the educational path, confessions indicated that they go through an uphill task that even results in exhaustion.

For example, just becoming a teacher holding a bachelor of education degree comes with immense practical challenges that are peculiar to disability. Firstly, the nexus between disability and poverty constricts opportunities mainly due to lack of school fees. Participants indicated that even if their families were not very poor, they were not given priority when it comes to resources for education. During a focus group discussion with persons with visual impairment, one participant confessed that after his ordinary level results were out, the school withheld them due to some arrears. When his mother was making frantic efforts to sell a goat in the village to settle the debt, one of the villagers confronted her saying that she was wasting resources on a hopeless case. Secondly, participants indicated that virtually all schools and universities in the country do not have literature in Braille. The time that the person with visual impairment spends (three to four years at college) are physically and emotionally draining. Due to fatigue, one would easily try to be content with whatever level of education reached for as long as it has resulted in him getting some employment. This has got some implications later in life when it comes to promotion at work. As a result, this contributes to the lower positions occupied by the visually impaired within the bureaucracy.

This finding is however in consonance with those made by Cobley (2021). Cobley discovered that the education of Persons with disabilities in Kenya was riddled with physical and social barriers. These barriers included lack of educational materials as well as the general social attitudes of players including parents of children with disabilities themselves who felt that
education was difficult for them. By the same token, Copley then made the observation that lack of appropriate educational qualifications was a stumbling block towards the economic emancipation of Persons with disabilities in Kenya.

6.1.2. Attitude of teachers towards learners with disabilities.

Teachers as members of the mainstream society have tended to approach disability with mixed attitudes and perceptions. Testimonies from participants revealed that negative attitudes towards persons with both visual impairment and albinism remain a critical constraint to the educational achievement of these people. Giving his views during the in-depth interview, ALM 2 testified that the teachers at school failed to understand his academic challenges since he was the only pupil with albinism. ALM 2’s major challenge was failure to read from the chalk board due to short sight resulting from albinism. In spite of this, teachers would aggravate his situation by allocating him a back sit in class. To worsen the situation, he would be punished almost on a daily basis for his poor performance in school. This continued for several years until one day when an eye doctor passed by the school and explained to the teachers that, he was partially sighted and needed exceptional attention. Besides such a medical explanation, some teachers continued to denigrate him by verbally expressing their discomfort in interfacing with a child with albinism thus:

One lady teacher did not really like me. She was harsh to me and she sometimes commented badly about my condition. Some teachers were irritable especially if I did not see well on the board. One pregnant teacher was rude and insensitive to me. Sometimes I would even see her spitting on her breast each time she saw me.
In addition to the challenge relating to short sight, another participant indicated that teachers were scared of her physical appearance (albinism) to such an extent that they were always reluctant to associate with her. ALF 1’s parents had to phone the school as a way of impressing upon the staff that given the right environment, ALF 1 was a child just like other children and that her skin color was in no way contagious. Her parents impressed upon the school that she was short sighted and as a result was not able to read on the chalk board. To cap it all, ALF 3 gave a typical example of the experiences those persons with albinism face at school. (See box 6.1 below for an elaborate narrative).

**BOX 6.1 ALF3 SCHOOL EXPERIENCES**

*It is worth of note that albinism is strongly associated with short sight. I faced problems at school because teachers did not recognize my problem of sight. As a result, teachers would simply walk in, write notes on the chalk board and instruct the class to copy the notes. Due to stigma, I was too shy to move to the front of the classroom, lest I attract the attention of fellow classmates and face further ridicule. I would therefore sacrifice my schooling in order to preserve my dignity as a person. Although my mother was a hard worker, she only managed to provide us with good clothes but not with text books. It became extremely difficult for me to ask for textbooks from other classmates for fear of humiliation. As a result, I performed badly at secondary level. Even from the start, I missed a lot of basic concepts at form one because I could not see when the teacher was illustrating mathematical examples on the chalk board. Sometimes I even would not attend classes.*

This scenario, though still prevalent in neighboring countries, South Africa has tried to ensure that the disabling learning environment is mitigated for the benefit of children with albinism. South Africa has few special schools that provide individualized educational programmes for the blind and partially blind learners, the majority of whom are learners with oculocutaneous albinism, (Lund & Geiger 2002). Since these schools were mainly designed for learners with poor eye sight, they are specially adapted to reduce glare, with shutters on the windows at one side, and a covered walkway at the other. Rooms are equipped with mobile black boards on wheels
which can be moved around to the best position at different times of the day. During lessons, these learners are allowed to walk up to the board to read. All these measures help to reduce the poor vision and extreme sensitivity to sunlight. The schools also encourage and support positive attitude towards albinism, and enhance the learner’s self-image and self-worth (Lund & Gaigher, 2002)

There is however a strong debate surrounding special schools with many even within the disability fraternity believing that this is a form of social isolation and ostracism not desirable in society. People like Mafa (2012) would pose a strong rejection to segregated schooling of persons with disabilities on account of the fact that such a scenario runs contrary to inclusive education and social integration. Nevertheless, research has it that special schools tend to provide conducive learning environment for learners with disabilities.

Findings from Khanye (2012) revealed that learners with albinism experience “warm treatment” from the teachers in the special school. Unlike teachers in the mainstream schools, those in the special school understand their condition. These results concur with the findings by Lund and Gaigher (2002), where special schools were rated high by participants with albinism. These schools were preferred because special adaptations were made to the classrooms, and the teachers were aware of the participants’ visual impairment. A special school is preferred because it encourages and supports positive attitudes towards disability.

It is however not the purpose of the current study to interrogate the advantages and disadvantages of special schools versus integrated ones for the simple reason that the study area does not have special schools for the disabilities in question. However, the point from participants is that disability is a phenomenon that many in society are still finding hard to accommodate and live with.
Implicit in the above narratives is the fact that persons with albinism face a plethora of challenges in their bid to get some education for economic empowerment. The first challenge relates to their shortsightedness, a condition not familiar to most people in society including teachers. Secondly, their skin color was a dye of discomfort to both teachers and other pupils resulting in social ostracism. All this had the net effect of reduced school performance. This thesis contends that persons with albinism are generally poor because they are not able to find a niche in the policy formulation process. The problems faced by this group in accessing some education therefore serve to keep them out of the political, economic and civic life of society thereby cementing the vicious circle of poverty.

On the same note, contributions from persons with visual impairment indicated that there is generally a belief that pupils with visual impairments cannot study natural sciences such as mathematics, physics, biology, agriculture and chemistry. Worse still, testimonies from participants point to the fact that teachers are usually not experienced in illustrating graphs, diagrams and other illustrations to a child who cannot see from the chalk board. Sentiments from focus group discussions with persons with visual impairments revolved around the fact that teachers, especially at secondary school would automatically discourage them from attending mathematics lessons. In extreme circumstances, one focus group participant confessed that teachers would show their displeasure at a visually impaired pupil by simply writing and illustrating mathematics on the chalk board in silence much to the disadvantage of visually impaired pupils. This was also buttressed by a seasoned Braillist in charge of a well-known Braille centre who indicated that none in the history of Zimbabwe’s education has ever requested mathematics books in Braille, especially at advanced level. As a result, he said, the centre did not even bother itself acquiring the requisite skills to Braille mathematics books for tertiary levels.
This has tended to restrict their vocations to arts. One participant boldly pointed out that if one goes to most local colleges and universities, most if not all visually impaired students are enrolled in faculties of arts, law and social studies. As a result, most of them tend to become teachers with limited opportunities of rising to the top. Obviously, the net effect of such a scenario is that none is able to assume position of economic policy making and other related areas of social and economic importance. This finding serves to confirm the results on disability and education presented by Kearney (2009). Although Kearney’s study tended to generalize across all disability types, he managed to conclude that teachers posed as one of the main obstacles towards the education and empowerment of children with disabilities due mainly to negative attitudes. as per the sentiments of ALM2 and ALF3, the New Zealand study by Kearney (2009) also revealed that teachers were sometimes fearful of children with disabilities.

Laying emphasis on the need to provide Persons with disabilities with education, a participant at the Zimbabwe Disability Forum workshop indicated that the vicious circle of poverty among Persons with disabilities was largely caused by the social and physical environments within the education system that do not foster the education of such a social group. “What we are simply saying is that disability has a powerful human rights thrust. It is often associated with social exclusion and is increasingly responsible for poverty. When we create an educational barrier, Persons with disabilities will not come to universities. If they don’t come to university, it means they will not be employed. If they are not employed, they go to the streets and beg. More often than not, we start saying, hey these disabled what are they doing on the streets? And yet we have created a vicious circle of poverty to push them onto the streets because they cannot build their carriers”.
The above scenario where participants register their displeasure at the apportionment of Persons with disabilities to certain academic vocations and not to others was also voiced by MacCool (2009) in his study of disability and higher education in New Zealand. Using a narrative form of data presentation to depict real life situations of his participants, MacCool pointed to a situation where one participant had to quarrel with the dean of social sciences who had tried to refuse him entry into the psychology examination simply because he was visually impaired and could therefore not understand and articulate scientific issues. MaCcool however was quick to point out that this ended in the 1970s when the government of New Zealand enacted anti-discrimination laws. Implicit in such observations is that in keeping with the tenets of the social model of disability, a barrier free educational system is a panacea to poverty and social deprivation among Persons with disabilities.

Responding to sentiments such as those raised above, but, at a different forum altogether, a senior government official and politician assured persons with disabilities at a workshop where the researcher was in attendance that the situation was somehow under control. He gave government effort in rectifying the anomalies such as those raised above. The senior government official chronicled the efforts of government in ameliorating the situation. (see box 6.2 for a narrative).
BOX 6.2 Government Contribution towards the Education of Children with Disabilities

We have programmes that specifically address issues related to disabilities. We have what we call the education development fund that some of you remember very well as the Educational Trust Fund during the inclusive government. In the year 2012 it was this fund that we used to provide teaching and learning materials such as books and other materials. We recently gave out some science kits to our schools to assist learners with disabilities through this fund. You will be happy to know that on the 13th of February 2014 using the same funds we have made available to 374 resource schools throughout the country and also to 1333 special schools in the country. We have made available resources and materials directed specifically for students and pupils with disabilities that include 440 mattresses, 248 white canes, 120 mirrors for pupils with low vision, 120 carpets, 122 cabinets as well as 372 talking calculators for the visually impaired. In line with our emphasis on inclusive education, 312 magnifying glasses, 100 walking frames, 50 wheel chairs and other assistive devices have been delivered to appropriate schools.

Let me also say the ministry through its education technology centre has started a process to resuscitate the Braille printing press. In spite of the current resource limitation we have started a process to resuscitate it. We have also resuscitated the brail authority and its 51st meeting will be on Friday, I mean this Friday. We have made it as highly representative as possible. In addition, we are doing a curriculum review which will emphasize some of the technical subjects that you have asked for. We however need your unwavering support as much as possible so that we are able to keep the needs of this constituency in mind in all our plans. I say that if we continue to work together we will manage to address some of the issues that affect pupils as well as teachers that live with disability.

I want to end up by saying that our failure to provide you with the necessary equipment and facilities is not a function of willful discrimination on the part of government but a result of the limited nature of the resources that we have as a government.

Because of time I have not addressed issues of a teacher capacity development. I also wanted you to know that since 2012 we have taken a deliberate approach to include teachers especially those with visual impairments. We are also concerned about the development and promotion of teachers with disabilities. We have started a process of ensuring that we have headmasters with visual impairment. The example that can readily come to mind is that we now have one or two in Masvingo as well as in Matabeleland North. We have also started a process of continuous engagement of teachers with disabilities through their organizations so that we can make life better for our citizens with disabilities. As a ministry, we strongly believe that disability is not inability. We know of vast talents resident in our citizens with disabilities. Thank you ladies and gentleman.

SOURCE: A symposium on disability and inclusion.

Responding to the above presentation, one participant responded to the government presentation on education by calling upon the ministry to closely monitor the conditions under which children with various disabilities learn in the country. The participant cited a situation where pupils with
visual impairments travel long distances to school even in those areas near game parks thereby getting exposed to dangerous wild animals.

From the above presentation, it is clear from both government and persons with disabilities that educational opportunities for persons with disabilities are limited. On the part of persons with disabilities, the feeling was that government was not doing enough to provide appropriate learning facilities including modern infrastructure and technology to facilitate learning. In addition, there was a feeling that some of the problems faced by children with albinism and visual impairments were a function of negative attitudes endured by them from teachers. On the part of government, all attempts are being made to ensure that the situation gets under control.

The centrality of education to the political and economic participation of Persons with disabilities was also emphasized by Chataika (2007) and Munsaka (2012) in their analysis of disability and education as well as social inclusion in national development processes respectively. For the purposes of the current thesis, education is inevitably the vehicle through which persons with disabilities, just like all citizens of Zimbabwe can strategically position themselves to gain political and economic power. As such, lack of adequate educational infrastructure would only serve to further alienate this already vulnerable social group from climbing up the economic and political ladder.

Employing the social model of disability, inadequate educational facilities including schools and Braille materials become the instruments used by the mainstream society to isolate and exclude persons with visual impairment. This tended to militate against their efforts to actively participate in major political, administrative and economic undertakings wherein educational qualifications were a prerequisite. In South Africa, Maher (2007, Mazola, (2009) and
others undertook studies in the education of Persons with disabilities and came up with the conclusions that Persons with disabilities face numerous challenges when it comes to acquiring some education. The end result therefore is poverty, lack of participation in public life as well as impaired capacity for self representation at various levels of the policy formulation process. Yeo (2005, DFID 2000, Choruma, 2007 and Lang, 2007) have driven the point home that disability and poverty are highly synonymous for various reasons. (see chapter 2 for a discussion of poverty and disability from various scholars). For the purposes of the current thesis, it is worth emphasizing that education is the gateway to success. As such, if Persons with disabilities have problems with accessing proper education their prospects of actively participating in the formulation and implementation of public policy is greatly compromised leaving them in abject and eternal poverty.

6.1.3. Emerging issues

In summary, this section has presented findings on the challenges faced by Persons with disabilities in accessing education. This has been done on the understanding that education remains a critical vehicle through which all citizens can best participate in the political and economic processes and activities of their country. The above presentation has shown how Zimbabwe’s educational system lingers between special and inclusive education. More so, it has been axiomatic that teachers as products of their own societies stood as barriers to inclusive education. This is so given their inherent social attitudes, myths and misconceptions about disability. Examples from other countries like South Africa and New Zealand have somehow shown that the education of Persons with disabilities even in the so-called developed countries has passed through a myriad of challenges. These challenges, like those found in Zimbabwe are
simply premised not on impairment but on societal attitudes. Unlike the situation in Zimbabwe, examples from two countries show that the education of Persons with disabilities is steadily improving (see chapter 2). Interestingly, the results show that even government does acknowledge the material needs of learners with disabilities and is doing its best to ameliorate the challenges besetting them.

In keeping with this thesis, results clearly show that in the absence of an inclusive educational system, the participation of Persons with disabilities in the formulation of public policies in Zimbabwe will remain just but a pipe dream.

6.2. Effects of negative attitude on the participation of persons with disabilities

Given the negative effects of attitudes towards disability by mainstream society, this section discusses the effects of negative attitudes on the participation of Persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. The section discusses the prevailing negative social attitudes towards disability and the effects these have on their participation in the formulation of policies.

6.2.1. Negative perceptions on Disability.

The word ‘disability’ conjures up images that are of a kind that a few would consider enviable (Drake, 1999:1). Discussions with participants, especially from focus group and key informant interviews indicated that there is a general belief that disability is contagious. As a result, many participants, especially those with albinism had problems accessing public places simply because their appearance was likely to raise alarm and panic from the public that felt such a physical condition could be transmitted to them in one way or the other. ALF 3 indicated that People still believe that if one associates or shares a seat with a person with albinism that person is more
likely to give birth to a child with albinism. This makes albinism scary and a source of fear and ridicule for many in society.

It is however vital to always keep in mind the fact that the myths and misconceptions surrounding albinism are in no way peculiar to Zimbabwean society (see chapter 1). Writing about the misconceptions about albinism in South African Society, Stensson (2008: 1) observes that “there are beliefs surrounding albinos that they are borne as a punishment, that it is a curse giving birth to albinos and that albinos are immortal and that they in fact are spirits. This makes them kept down as anomalies in society”. In Stensson’s view, persons with albinism as a group seem to be alienated in society. This social ostracism could be explained by lack of knowledge and that myths are created around persons with albinism.

Interestingly, one participant during focus group discussions had to say that he would leave gatherings each time people were having meals to give way to some people so that they enjoy the meals without any disturbances. I attend most gatherings but where I give way is when people start having their meals. This is because I do not want to interfere with people’s meals. You know as a human being, you do not want to deprive people of their freedom and comfort. As a Christian, I have respect for humanity. So I am very careful not to disturb other people because we will be all hungry. Everybody must be able to take his food the best way he wants to enjoy it free from any disturbances.

“We are at a function tanenzara tese handiti ka the next person arikuda kudya pamwe tirikuno geza maoko tirikupukutisa jira one mumwe munhu anogona kungo fila kuti ha andikapukutise jira rapukutiswa nemkuru uyu so what do I do eeh ndogona kungo avoid kupukutisa jira racho”. Literal meaning; just imagine we are at a function, we are all hungry and we need to eat. We wash our hands but it so happens that there is a single hand towel. Someone
might as well feel uncomfortable in sharing the towel with me so I just avoid using it in
anticipation of such occurrences.

This point was emphasized by yet another focus group participant who added thus; what
he is saying Mr Mtetwa is that As much as he knows his own rights, some people also have
righs to personal space. One will also be guarding against some ugly incidences that normally
frustrate. For example, most people do not want to share utensils with a person with albinism for
their own personal reasons. It is usually your family members that are prepared to share utensils
with you. In a family home, even if you are the only person with albinism there is usually no
problem. “When I am at home with my wife and children, we can kiss, hug, bath and share
everything together. The situation might be a bit different even when you come into contact with
your siblings. Family members are different from a situation where you attend a public meeting
where some people were never expecting a creature like you would be present. Just seeing you
around their food is sometimes overwhelming if not perplexing. Let us take a simple example of
the day a white person visited a black community. He struggled to convince that community that
he is a human being. The community does not just accept a stranger at face value but the process
is somewhat gradual and you do not have to flood the person. What people must know is that
albinism is just scary. Sometimes you greet somebody by way of a handshake and you can tell
that the person is extremely uncomfortable with the handshake. The perceptions remain that
persons with albinism are not human. Their presence is not a good company to some people.

On the same note, one visually impaired participant narrated his experience during an in-
depth interview: one day I was just shopping in town with my brother. It so happened that we got
into a shop owned by an Indian business man. The shop entrance had some corrugations so for
me not to fall; my brother had to hold me by hand as we walked into the shop. On seeing us, the
business man simply told us to wait whilst he dashed somewhere at the back of the shop only to come back with a five cent coin and handed it over to me saying; “sorry, I do not have any money with me today. Be blessed”. His understanding was that persons with visual impairments were poor. They only get into shops as beggars and not customers.

It is here contended that such a state of affairs is bound to set this social group aside as special in society. in other words, the above testimonies give life to stereotypes that are most likely to result in social exclusion, ostracism and marginalization. This amounts to what Oliver (1990) refers to as the personal tragedy model of disability which treats disability as both tragic and deficient (Smith, 2009). In addition, such attitudinal beliefs provide fertile grounds for the mainstream society to exclude persons with disabilities from social, economic and political policies and programmes.

Employing a psychological meaning to the above experiences encountered by persons with disabilities, these experiences literally dehumanize this social group. Someone is a person in practice only if other people recognize him as such, and act with respect, love and/or contributive valuing (Ikaheimo, 2009).

According to Ikaheimo, Interpersonal attitudes and relationships form the foundation of social life. It is not enough for a person’s well-being and sense of worth to have certain basic rights, that is, to be included in social life institutionally. People need to be recognized as significant, individual subjects with their own characteristics, preferences and so on, in order to be persons both socially and psychologically. If one is overlooked by others as a person, one’s psychological development and sense of personhood are compromised. Such psychological sense of worthlessness and feeling of inadequacy severely curtails a person’s ability and confidence to participate in the mainstream activities of social life.
Conversely, the above narratives would paint a picture that discrimination is sometimes internalized by persons with albinism who define themselves as useless and a public nuisance thereby accepting their socially ascribed position in society as “normal” and acceptable. The danger with such a mindset is that if something is acceptable as normal, no efforts are likely to be made to ameliorate it. In other words, some forms of discrimination are acceptable in the world and perspective of persons with albinism, especially that their presence presents a public nuisance and a source of fear and discomfort to others. According to Swain et al (2003), ‘for many disabled people, the tragedy view of disability is in itself disabling. It denies the experience of disabling society, their enjoyment of life, and even their identity as well as self-awareness as disabled people’ (2003: 71). This state of affairs amounts to what Reeve (2006: 96) has come to refer to as the psycho-emotional dimension of disability. The realization that one is a menace to society breeds a sense of despair, a feeling of worthlessness and deserved inferiority. The situation is further aggravated when the excluded treats his exclusion as a right worth respecting and abiding by rather than challenging it. This ‘self-fulfilling Prophecy’ is likely to stifle the quest for persons with albinism to actively participate in public life.

On the whole, the above discussion simply reflects experiences encountered by persons with albinism and visual impairment as they interact with the mainstream society. In line with the present thesis, one can gauge the likely response such a social group is likely to get if they try to participate in any mainstream activity such as politics. Once more, the above narratives serve to cement the central pillar upon which the current thesis is anchored. That is, given such a state of affairs in the lives of persons with disabilities, their participation in the economic empowerment framework of Zimbabwe might as well be challenging. Given the negative
attitudes discussed above, it is here argued that such a social group is in danger of suffering social exclusion and marginalisation.

Even though the consequences of these attitudes are likely to differ depending on the policy and legal framework in place to cushion vulnerable groups against the effects of exclusion, it is worth emphasizing that such cultural beliefs are in no way peculiar to Zimbabwe. Hancock (2008) observed such beliefs and attitudes in the Zulu culture in South Africa. Quoting Ntuli (2004) Hancock (2008:32) pointed out that “blind children in rural areas of South Africa are often kept hidden inside. People try either to protect them or are ashamed, as they believe that the blindness is a curse. Their interpretation of disability leads to a logical and rational reaction, in this case exclusion” (Hancock, 2008: 32).

Basically, the above narratives are indicative of the fact that disability is still a cause for concern to society. There is still a gulf between persons with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts. This gulf manifests itself when it comes to participation in public life.

6.2.2. Disability as a badge of Inferiority to the Bearer.

Results from in-depth interviews and ethnographic studies showed that persons with visual impairment and those with albinism are generally viewed as minors by persons manning various service terminals. Giving his testimony, VIM 3 indicated that each time he got into a bus with a sighted person; the sighted person is frequently asked two questions. The first one being whether or not ‘this blind man’ has got money for bus fare. Secondly, he is asked about the destination including whether if unaccompanied there is someone waiting for him. These questions do not usually apply to every passenger.
On the same point, ALF 4 confirmed society tends to believe that if one has got albinism, he automatically becomes incompetent and fails to represent himself. As a result, if you approach any office seeking assistance, you are frequently asked such questions as: “who is there to represent and speak for you”. Even if you go to the hospital in the company of a black person, the tendency is that nurses would even ask the black person about what you want as if you cannot speak for yourself.

Giving an interpretation of scenarios of a similar nature, Reeve (2006: 100) quoting Hughes 1999 argued that people with visible impairments usually experience being stared at by others. Reeve argued that this action is not a value-neutral event, but is an act of invalidation based on public narratives of ‘normality, truth, beauty and perfection”. Disability from the above narratives becomes a badge of inferiority, a licence of one’s perpetual dependency on others even for the basic and menial life tasks such as accessing public facilities including buses and hospitals. Implicitly, a person with a disability is reduced to a minor whose ability to access rights and services is subject to the discretion of the non-disabled “majors” who must provide advocacy, representation and even basic links with the outside world.

Relatedly, Interviews with key informants revealed that disability was not something that the mainstream society could easily choose to associate with. One key informant from a human rights group was bold enough to tell the researcher that given the green light, he would prefer to concentrate on women empowerment programmes than to ‘trade in muddy terrains’ of disability mainstreaming. His argument was that unlike women, persons with disabilities were now used to their situation. The key informant stated that 'in all honesty, disability represents a badge of inferiority. Remember, persons with disabilities used to be concealed in granaries and other places away from the public.”
Talking about disability as a disgraceful social phenomenon, ALF 1 narrated how her brother used to keep her in the house most of the time fearing that she could spoil the family image. ALF 1 confessed that her brother would keep her indoors all the time. She said that this was extremely stressful as she was an extrovert and had the zeal to play with others. Initially, she used to think that her brother was over protecting her. With the passage of time, she eventually came to realize that the reason why her brother would not allow her to mix and mingle with other children of her age from within their community was that, the brother was shy to be identified as having a sister with albinism.

To add to her misery, her brother’s wife did not like to use the cups and plates once used by a person with albinism. She would make sure that those utensils are not mixed with others in the kitchen to avoid contamination. When she reached the stage of marriage, her in laws failed to accept her as their daughter in-law arguing that their son deserved better things in life than marrying a wife with albinism. ALF 1 testified that the resentment even started well before marriage when her boyfriend’s parents learned that their son intended to marry a person with albinism. “They would occasionally could me accusingly saying that I was abusing and even rapping their son. As a result, we were not able to follow all the traditional formalities required in an African marriage. I had to elope to my boyfriend as a way of securing a marriage. I was met with intense resentment but I persevered. I would even entice my in-laws by buying them some groceries thinking that their hearts would turn towards me. However, all was in vein as the resentment continued unabated.

On the part of my own parents, they found it difficult to accept lobola (bride price) from my husband saying that he had burdened himself by taking me as a wife”. This is however not
peculiar to Zimbabwe. Katsui (2005) found that as soon as a woman gets impairment, she becomes an object and not a human being with dignity.

Sharing the same experience, ALM 5 indicated that the surrounding community treated him as a totally different species altogether from the rest and that he did not deserve to live within that community. As a result of such negative attitudes, his parents lost their closest friends after his birth. He indicated that this was exacerbated by the fact that he developed severe wounds from excessive sun burns caused by lack of sunscreen lotion.

Adding her experiences of social stigma and discrimination, ALF 3 did not miss her words when she described her life as a child living with albinism. (For a complete narration, see box 6.3 below).

**BOX 6.3. ALF 3’S LIFE EXPERIENCES WITH NEGATIVE ATTITUDES.**

“I used to stay in a military compound because my father was a flight lieutenant. There, even a seven year old child would choose not to associate with me simply because she would apparently notice the differences in skin color. Because of age, I liked outdoor activities very much. So due to sun burn, I would develop skin cancer and sews. Unlike these days, sunscreen lotions were hard to get since very few donors would come forward with them. This made me a laughing stock by both other children and even neighbors who felt that I was not presentable.

At school, I faced a plethora of challenges due to my skin condition. My class mates would shun associating with me due to myths surrounding the transmission of albinism. They would say that if one associates with a person with albinism, she was likely to give birth to a child with the condition. The myths would even alleged that if a pregnant woman shares utensils such as cups and plates with a person with albinism, she was likely to give birth to an albino child. Some people even believed that a woman would have a child with albinism if she sees an individual with the condition during pregnancy and does not spit between her breasts.

To date, people still believe that, touching a person with albinism would bring bad luck, sickness or even death. Another common remark was that persons with albinism were not allowed to live but tradition dictated that they be killed as soon as they are borne. One of many other beliefs about people with albinism is that they do not die but simply disappear or “vanish” in elephant grass along river banks “when the time is ripe”. In most cases if a person with albinism died at home, he/she was not given a proper burial as it was believed that the individual did not take a proper route to go to the gods. So the result was that let those with albinism play alone. This would affect me very much psychologically and socially. I would only talk to my mother and sisters if I face any life challenges.

To complement her sister’s argument, ALF 2 added that myths surrounding albinism propagated by mainstream society add to their misery. People say numerous allegations about albinism suggesting that we are not their equal partners. For example, my sister is married to a black husband and gave birth to two black children. The sentiments from the community is that how could this happen? She has got neither right nor ability to look after black children.

**SOURCE: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS.**
From the above presentation, cultural representations of albinism tend to reinforce the prejudices firmly held by society. The myths and misconceptions concerning disability are still firmly rooted in Zimbabwean society to such an extent that having a family member with albinism sends shivers down the spines of many in society. Not only that, the fear of genetic transmission of albinism practically sets this social group aside as social outcasts and least preferred relatives, playmates, and even in-laws.

Alternatively, the power of language to communicate cultural values and norms should in no way be underestimated. The likening of persons with albinism to monkies in the Ndebele language serves to portray the cultural understanding of the meaning of such a physical trait that defies what Takala (2009, 125) has come to refer to as the “golden-standard” of a good looking, attractive, physically fit, human being whose appearance represents humanity as original as God created it.

This state of affairs led Shakespeare (1994) to conclude that the social model of disability is somehow inadequate when it comes to providing a platform upon which Persons with disabilities can communicate personal and cultural experience. Persuaded by the inherent shortcomings of the social model of disability in explaining personal rather than structural experiences, Thomas (1999) sought an extension of the definition of disability from a social model perspective. According to Thomas, (1999, 60), “Disability is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psych emotional wellbeing”.

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6.2.2 Roles and social expectations.

Discussions with participants via in-depth interviews revealed that the other challenge catalyzing the exclusion of persons with disabilities from economic and political life of society is that social expectations dictate that their activities be restricted to charity. To this effect, their role on the policy formulation arena would represent a deviation from the norm. Giving her narrative on the quest to participate in various sectors of the economy, VIF 1 testified thus: when we demanded our share of the land during the fast track land distribution programme, some government officials objected to our request on account of the fact that none would till the land for us since we are blind. They argued that we would not even see the fields even if we get them. I remember the other official saying to us “munda unowuwona here unorimirwa nani unogona kusakura here”. (can she till the land? Who shall till the land for you, are you able to weed and tender the field?)

As a group of women with visual impairment, we formed a consortium in order to grab a niche in the mining ventures in line with government’s encouragement for indigenous Zimbabweans to venture into small scale mining. Having put everything together including the required funds, our bid was shot down simply on account of disability. The argument was that “how do you want to undertake the mining business. It is too risky especially for you because you cannot see. How are you going to see the gold from your mine? Workers will steal from you. Even us who can see are losing a lot of gold to thieves. The best you can do is to partner us rather than doing it alone”.

From the above narratives, disability as a state of being is riddled with improper associations. Taking the views of Vehmas and Makala (2009), “disability cannot be explained and understood simply in terms of people’s impairment. it is not individuals and their alleged
incapacities that explain the limited opportunities of people with impairments; society is partly to blame as well” (page 42).

Contrary to the provisions of the national indigenization policies that seek to open up business opportunities to all indigenous Zimbabweans, experiences from VIM1 point towards the impervious nature of the world of business especially to persons with disabilities. In other words, in theory, the National Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act of (2007) as well as the National Policy on the Indigenisation of the Economy (1998) openly allow and even include persons with disabilities in the economic affairs of the country. To cement that sort of active participation, there is a representative of persons with disabilities on the National Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Board. Be that as it may, conditions on the ground speak another language. The language of social exclusion, economic marginalization and ostracism anchored upon the philosophy of perceived lack of capacity. Such a state of affairs has led VIM 1 to echo the sentiment that probably inclusion by implication is not inclusion at all. VIM 1 indicated that: “when it comes to indigenization people speak of equitable distribution of resources. The question that immediately comes to mind is how equitable is it? What do they mean? I am reminded of Alexander Kanengoni’s Echoing silence, wherein he speaks of indigenization and affirmative action for a dozen people”.

Taping from the rich explanatory rigor found in the social model of disability, the above testimonies together with their discussion point to the fact that persons with disabilities suffer exclusion and oppression simply on account of their disabilities. Women with disabilities, having identified a niche within the various national economic sectors were literally shut out and deprived of the glaring opportunity simply because bureaucrats responsible for land distribution and the approval of mining permits defined disability through the lenses of the medical model.
According to Lang (2009) the medical model squarely places the problem of disability on the person with impairment. Lang’s argument goes thus; “Such a perspective presupposes that disability resides within the individual, and that it is reducible to the analysis of impairment. The attainment of “able-bodedness” is considered as the legitimate criterion by which to measure “normality”. The medical model thus projects non-disabled people as “better” or “superior” than those who have a disability. The model also assumes that disabled people are biologically and psychologically inferior to those who are non-disabled, and by implication, do not have the competence to make decisions for themselves” (Lang, 2009:2). Using this model, the above narratives can thus be explained in terms of the perceived incapacities of women with disabilities to determine their own destiny mainly due to their lack of sight. Their impairment gives birth to biological and psychological inferiority that culminates in their failure to supervise their own employees both in the mining or farming ventures. The only panacea is to either benefit from charity or to solicit for salvation through forging business partnerships with the non-disabled people. This state of affairs has left Persons with disabilities out of various economic empowerment programmes in the country thereby perpetuating poverty and social deprivation.

Furthermore, testimonies from VIF1 and VIM1 give a vivid depiction of the linkage that exists between the social model of disability and the social exclusion approach. (See chapter 2 for a discussion of the relationship between the two concepts). Employing the explanatory powers of these two concepts, the above narratives tend to corroborate the tenets of the social model of disability that poverty among persons with disabilities is largely a result of the diverse social and political structures which encompasses the institutions through which power is exercised. Similarly, poverty also resides in the specific cultural values which reflect and reproduce the balance of power between social groups thereby determining their social status.
This status and institution in turn depends on the dominant paradigm of social integration that exists in given societies (Silver, 1995). For Rodgers (1995), society’s economy systematically marginalizes some and integrates others thereby distributing rewards in ways that both include and exclude.

Using the above narratives, social exclusion is here contextualized within the disability frame of reference. In this light, the economic possibilities offered by the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policies seem not to trickle down to a social group already marginalized by virtue of their perceived incapacity. Lack of collateral security as well as the negative attitudes of bureaucrats serves to perpetuate social exclusion.

Furthermore, lack of information regarding the availability of loans was cited by participants as an obstacle when it comes to claiming the right to economic participation. Presenting his own experiences regarding information deficits, VIM 1 remarked thus: I visited the offices several times to know meaningful discussion other than that one should come there. What I discovered is that if one appears knowledgeable and inquisitive he is generally treated with skepticism and isolated altogether. So participation becomes a challenge because the whole arrangement is not at all that clear. My assumption was that funding under the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment policy might be available, but for persons with disabilities, I think much needs to be done to publicize it. In my opinion, this could be done through the organisations that represent persons with disabilities. I think those things must be well articulated and even through the department of Social Services and other departments that are key stakeholders charged with disability portfolios in the country.

Adding his voice to the information deficit debate, VIM 3 bemoaned lack of Braille as a key restriction especially to persons with visual impairments. He contended thus: When it comes
to recognition and participation in national policies and programmes, we are entirely technically left out because from the onset Braille is not given due recognition and attention by government. In other words, Government does not make any attempts to disseminate any news or information in Braille. This means then we are technically eliminated from the information super highway. In the absence of Braille which is our means of communication, we automatically lag behind in national developments.

The above narratives seem to point towards the fact that the economic challenges faced by persons with disabilities are entirely outside of their impairment. Lack of an accommodative environment at the service delivery terminal could as well be traced back to what Philips has referred to as “the politics of presence”. (See Philips (1995, 2002). To this effect, lack of conducive environment in relation to collateral security could be a sign of what the Department for International development termed the vicious circle of disability and poverty. In keeping with the current thesis, persons with albinism and visual impairments can survive outside social protection programmes from government. Studies from Munsaka (2012) Corbly (2012) as well as Roske (2003) point to the fact that government can in fact serve a lot of financial resources simply by creating an enabling environment within which such individuals can participate in the formal and non-formal economic activities. On the same point, Katsui (2005) labored to bring forth the argument that government could as well serve a lot of resources by directly empowering Persons with disabilities, especially those who can work and in turn pay taxes thereby contributing directly to the national fiscus. In keeping with the current thesis, the above narratives make it axiomatically clear that poverty among Persons with disabilities especially those with visual impairments and albinism results not simply from their impairment or incapacities as individuals but from the prevailing attitudes of relevant financial institutions,
government bureaucrats as well as from laws that are skewed in favour of the non-disabled persons. Without generalizing these results to all disability types, Such a state of affairs directly vindicates the chorus of the social model of disability that “it is society that disables us by its laws, attitudes and institutions that do not take account of those with differential abilities” (Mtetwa, 2013). This point has always been raised by scholars in their attempt to ward off the fierce criticism leveled against the totalizing tendencies of the social model of disability.

6.2.3. The medical model promoting social disadvantage.

Tracing poverty to the medical model of disability, participants at the Zimbabwe Disability Forum tried to dissect and condemn the social attitudes towards Persons with disabilities propagated by the medical model as the chief cause of negative discrimination. “The medical model of disability is the traditional understanding or interpretation of disability. From the medical model it is believed that a person with disability is sick. A person does not need to take medication because he has got a visual impairment. In most instances, many people in society tend to think that if a person has got impairment it means automatically he/she is sick. Like anyone else in his community, a person with impairment can suffer from a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI).

Just like anyone within his/her community, if infected, a person with visual impairment is bound to visit the hospital or clinic for medical attention. However, the likelihood is that once at the hospital, such a person is greeted with questions associated with his/her impairment. It is therefore not surprising to be greeted with such questions as; “what is wrong with your eyes today”? This is because your impairment is, in their thinking associated with all that must afflict him/her and that such a person has got no sexual life at all.
The major focus is to cure and to improve that individual. Basically, the intention is not to listen and attend to whatever has brought the person to the medical facility but to deal with perceived and apparent physical and/or sensory disfigurements considered abnormal in an ablest society.

These attitudes are not confined to hospitals and clinics. Testimonies from the Disability Forum even allege that even the church as an institution tends to aggravate rather than mitigate the prejudice and discrimination against Persons with disabilities. “No wonder why Persons with disabilities no longer want to go to church. The major reason is that “mappositori akangovaoona anototi basa redu ramuka. Zvedu zvaita. Apa ndipo paninoratidza samba ramwari nokuporesa chirema ichi. Literal meaning: if members of the apostolic sects see a person with impairment, they get delighted saying that our duty to heal the sick and cure the lame has finally come. We must really demonstrate God’s presence here by curing this person.

As further remarked by the participant:

“So all the arrows will be pointing at the person. They are house- bound. They cannot do this, they cannot walk. They cannot talk; they cannot do this and that. They need help in order to lead a normal life just like the non-disabled in society. They say that we want to be healed hence our attendance at churches. Society does not appreciate that we do not attend church because we want to be healed. There is no appreciation of the fact that in spite of our disabilities, we also have a religious and spiritual life just like any other member of society.”

The above narrative has got dire implications on the participation of Persons with disabilities in mainstream political and economic policies and programmes. In effect, if disability is perceived
as a unique and sacred state of being even at religious gatherings, the same people cannot
suddenly recognize and assimilate Persons with disabilities in mainstream political and economic
activities. As such, Zimbabwe’s economic policies tend to systematically leave out Persons with
disabilities. The example of such policies includes the Zimbabwe Agenda For Sustainable Socio-

6.2.5. POVERTY AS A BARRIER TO PARTICIPATION

The nexus of poverty and disability has been heavily emphasized by various authorities among
repeated discussions on the issues of poverty and disability in most societies including
Zimbabwe, participants in all methods namely; ethnographical discussions, focus group
interviews as well as in-depth interviews raised poverty as a perennial challenge. During a focus
group discussion with persons with albinism, it was revealed that the majority of persons with
albinism had a poor background; hence. Consequently, they did not have collateral security
needed to participate in the economic empowerment programmes.

Submissions from participants interviewed for this study revolved around the fact that
Banks demand collateral security each time one tries to borrow some money for capital projects.
Failure to get the required collateral security was cited as the major set back towards the
participation of persons with albinism in mainstream economic activities. In view of the stringent
measures put in place by banks, government put in place some funds under the National
Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Board. Even for this fund, ALM 1 indicated that he
failed to participate in the national economic empowerment programmes as a result of the
discrimination that he encountered from those bureaucrats responsible for the implementation of economic empowerment policies and programmes. Focus group discussions however revealed that persons with disabilities were not benefiting much from the present economic empowerment programmes mainly due to their disability. As depicted in box 6.5 below, Persons with disabilities find it difficult to penetrate the national economy, with a flair of bureaucratic attitudes as well as the need for collateral security not only as a stark hindering against their participation in economic empowerment activities but their disability stands in the way of any effort they can make to participate.

**BOX 6.5. Participation of Persons With Disabilities In Economic Empowerment Programmes**

First of all we visited the offices of the ministry of small and medium enterprises development who asked for collateral security from us. They asked us to give either fridge or a car or even a piece of land. We told them that we people with disabilities are poor and at present we do not have anything. Worst of all, we are not working so it is difficult for us to bring that collateral security that you want. The final answer that we got was that if you do not have that collateral security then you do not qualify for assistance. If I approach someone asking for 2000 dollars and I declare my car or refrigerator as collateral security. The implication is that I already have the money or at least the capacity to generate it unaided. Even if you are not given that $2000 you have means of getting that money. So if you are empowering someone and then you expect something from him that means you are not empowering at all because honestly that particular person is able to empower himself even without your assistance. You cannot empower those already empowered because those with collateral security are already empowered. If you want to empower people, you must obviously look for someone who has nothing at hand. Get to that person, ask him to provide a business idea and assist him to develop it. Promote, nurture and then fund that idea and then ask the person to pay back later.

**Source: Focus Group Discussions with Persons with Albinism**

Besides lack of collateral security, participants illuminated that even the most fortunate ones who manage to get some form of collateral security still face challenges from family members who are always reluctant to guarantee their loans for fear of non-payment. It is the contention of the current thesis that the grand objective of the National Policy on the Indigenisation of the
Economy was to remove the bottle necks that kept the black majority out of mainstream economic activities. To that end, Lack of collateral security has always been the obstacle that traditionally barred black indigenous Zimbabweans from competing with the whites in the national economy. After independence, Africans were officially positioned to write themselves as the subject of the indigene narrative. While the new political elite envisioned Zimbabwe as a non-racial society, it was also a black nation, and black advancement was necessary to redress historical imbalances (Fisher, 2010:136). Steps to broaden black participation in the national economy included deregulation of the financial sector, making capital easier on easier terms, privatizing parastatals and warehousing the shares of indigenous investors, removing legislation that inhibited the entry of entrepreneurs into the formal and informal economies, sourcing donor funds for disbursement to indigenous companies and convincing multi-nationals and large companies to allocate discounted shares to indigenous Zimbabweans. There was therefore an agreement among both scholars and politicians in Zimbabwe that economic empowerment of the black majority needed facilitating procedures in order to overcome past discrimination.

Broadly speaking, indigenisation was aimed at bringing economic justice between races; at democratising the economic system and at creating favourable economic conditions and the promotion of basic human rights; such as the right to development, the right to employment, the right to own productive and non-productive property and the right to an adequate living standard (Zimbabwe government policy framework for the indigenisation of the economy, 1998:3). For such rights to be realised, all Zimbabwean people must have equal opportunities and unhindered access to resources and skills (ibid). The Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policy therefore was, in many crucial respects a road map towards economic and political justice, designed to ‘right the wrongs’ of Zimbabwe’s social and political past.
Even the definition of ‘indigenization’ itself speaks of disadvantage. To quote from the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act (chapter 14:33): ‘indigenisation’ means a deliberate involvement of indigenous Zimbabweans in the economic activities of the country, to which hitherto they had no access, so as to ensure the equitable ownership of the nation’s resources”

Further to that, the national indigenization policies have an empowerment thrust. By empowerment is meant ‘empowerment’ means the creation of an environment which enhances the performance of the economic activities of indigenous Zimbabweans into which they would have been introduced or involved through indigenization.

By the same token, it was generally accepted that economic empowerment of the black majority needed facilitating procedures in order to overcome past discrimination (Fisher, 2010). In light of the above submissions from participants, the current thesis makes the case that whilst the colonial regimes disadvantaged every black indigenous Zimbabwean; persons with disabilities, due to the inherent cultural attitudes suffered a double tragedy. First and foremost, disability constitutes a social class. This does not imply that all persons with disabilities are a homogeneous lot. The societal attitudes towards persons with albinism and visual impairment, make them a social group identifiable with stigma.

The question for the current thesis is whether by asking for collateral security from Persons with disabilities who are doubly-disadvantaged by both their race and disability the government is creating an enabling environment for this social group to participate in the national economy.
6.3. BARRIERS TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.

6.3.1. Political Violence

Political violence has come to characterize Zimbabwe’s political activity. This led some researchers such as Reeler (2009) to refer to political violence in Zimbabwe as a wave of “subliminal terror”. Continuing his analysis of the torture and other forms of political violence that punctuated Zimbabwe’s political landscape, especially in the 21st century, Reeler did not miss his words when he pointed towards the subsequent effect of violence as disability. He asserted thus: “Survivors who had experienced Impact torture were more likely to report physical symptoms, which would seem to reflect both physical disability and chronic pain” (Reeler, 2009:9).

It is from this state of affairs that Political violence has been reported as one of the major factors militating against the participation of persons with disabilities in the politics of the country. Results from focus group discussions reveal that persons with disabilities avoided political meetings for fear of sustaining “multiple disabilities” emanating from a violent and restive situation triggered by a complex wave of political contestation characteristic of Zimbabwean political processes.

VIM 4 revealed that he even shunned the voting process itself on account of political violence. “I wanted to vote but I was not sure of who should I vote for due to insecurity surrounding my vote which is a public secret. As a pastor who is known in the area I was not sure of my safety because I am well known in the community. As a result, I thought that it was prudent not to vote. I am particular about my security because of the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe. If you recall back in 2008 Zimbabwe witnessed a wave of political violence that took some of our relatives to heaven unexpectedly”.

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Although ALM 2 had indicated that his participation in politics was restricted by religious beliefs, further probing in turn revealed that fear of violence was another obstacle. He indicated that, the idea not to enter into politics was also a personal choice as a result of the fact that, political activities are associated with violent behaviors and negative consequences such as death. Fear of political violence has also led VIF 4 who is partially sighted to restrict her political participation to voting on a voting day. She however was too scared to attend any political meeting due to the violent nature of Zimbabwe’s political activities. To emphasize her point, she even reiterated that, “Kunovota yes kukanzi nhasi izuva rekuvota. Piano ndopatinongo yenda kwete kumisangano iya misangano inoitwa. Handisati ndamboyenda ini. Munoziva misangano yemunomu ine chokuita nemhirizhonga. Saka iwe nekusazowona kuti uyu ndiyani uyu ndiyani awuzogone kuvadzvenga unogona kungopondwa. Vamwe vanowona zvavo vanobva vava nyzenga. Sekumusha kwedu kunopiswa dzimba uku. Unowana dzimba dzapiswa, haa kwedu ndokutori nehondo chaiyo. Kumasi Central its either you are ZANU PF or not or if you are not amah haufaniri kutozviratidza unotopisirwa imba”. Literal meaning: due to lack of sight, she felt extremely vulnerable since she unlike other sighted counterparts cannot see impending danger and take refuge on time. She recounted that ZANU PF was a violent party. As such, belonging to other political parties was nothing short of a recipe for disaster especially in Mashonaland central province her home area. She confirmed that some villagers even lost their properties including houses that were literally burned down by ZANU PF functionaries. The environment was therefore too risky for a blind female to participate in politics. “Although policies are made by politicians, I would not want to participate in the dangerous policy making process”.

Similarly, Political violence also discouraged ALM 5 from participating in political activities. “I live in the high density suburb of Chitungwiza. During political rallies people
usually listen to their leaders, they sometimes sing and dance. During that singing and dancing political opponents tend to be attracted to the venue. In the case of ZANU PF, hitmen can be deployed on the crowds. Those with sight can see impending danger and run for dear life leaving you alone. Once you are left, you are the one who is on cross fire because they actually deal with you decisively. As a result of such an impending danger to my already fractured life, really I do not wish to be a political activist.

The above narratives point towards the fact that both disability categories are discouraged from participating in national political processes and activities due to the violent nature of Zimbabwe’s political landscape. Security concerns therefore remain a major obstacle towards the participation of Persons with disabilities in national political activities. To this effect, Participants reminded the researcher of the 2008 violent campaign as the major stumbling block against their participation in political and partisan programmes.

Literature on Zimbabwe’s political contestation serves to cement the above fears of incurring multiple disabilities. The very fact that chronic survivors of political violence are more likely to suffer subsequent psychological disorders, permanent physical and neurological injuries stand as a stark reminder that Persons with disabilities should back off and concentrate their efforts and time on perfecting their other survival strategies. Persons with disabilities interviewed therefore saw it fit to avoid active partisan political participation that would throw them into jeopardy and further condemn them to a life of considerable misery (Reeler, 2009:9, emphasis added). Looked at with the lenses of the social model of disability, political violence could be a structural and deliberate attempt by the dominant group “the non-disabled” to silence and further marginalize the disabled minority.
Arguments from the mainstream society revolve around the fact that the primary obstacle hindering Persons with disabilities when it comes to participating in national political processes is their impairment, especially lack of sight. Pursuant to this line of thought, fear of political violence becomes a litmus test for the social model of disability. In effect, lack of sight rather than anything else stifles the ability of participants to “brave the weather” and participate like others hence the most pronounced argument that Persons with disabilities are not well suited for outdoor activities like politics but for charity (see chapter 4). In response, the current thesis argues that it is the political environment that renders persons with impairments redundant and dependent simply on the ground that their physical state does not allow them space in a physically demanding political contest. To this, the current thesis adds that it is still the political environment that shuts out persons with certain impairments from competing with others in their communities for political power on the basis of equality rather than the personal defects borne out of impairments.

6.3.2. Political Gatherings.

Persons with albinism face difficulties in attending political and civic gatherings mainly because most of those gatherings are conducted at open spaces subjecting them to excessive heat from the sun. Due to lack of melamine or skin pigmentation, exposure to sun or excessive heat damages the skin for persons with albinism. Sentiments from almost all participants with albinism indicated that they found it difficult to attend political and related meetings simply because they were held at open spaces exposing them to sunburn.

Echoing the same sentiment, ALF 2 indicated that “I would want to but because mainly political parties hold their meetings at open spaces where there is too much sun so I would rather
not attend lest I develop skin cancer”. The same remark was advanced by ALM 2 who said that “I don’t just like attending meetings because most of these political meetings conducted are mostly held under the scorching sun.

The same scenario was found to be obtaining even when it comes to civil society programmes. As ALM5 bluntly put it; “I am finding it difficult to partake in the activities of civil society organizations because their meetings are held in the open thereby dangerously exposing me to sunburn. This has become a major hindrance to such an extent that I have told myself that whatever is done there I am not part and parcel of it.

The above narratives are indicative of the dangers associated with lack of presence at important points within political and civic leadership. Conducting meetings in the open defying the call for persons with albinism not to do so remains a sure physical barrier hindering such a social group from participating in both civic and political programmes. The implication of the absence of persons with albinism at such critical meetings is likely to be dire. Automatically, none will be there to air their views, especially when important issues of a social, economic and political nature are discussed. It therefore becomes all the more important to substantiate the argument advanced by the social model of disability that it is the physical barriers (external environmental factors) rather than the personal weaknesses that marginalize persons with impairments.

6.3.3. Political Space for Grassroots Participation

Results indicated that despite the fact that disability was a recipe for exclusion in the political arena; participants indicated that generally, there is little space for grassroots participation in Zimbabwe’s political playing field. In line with the above scenario,
The points of concern were that since Zimbabwe is a unitary state, grassroots participation has always been a challenge to the general populace, what more to those already marginalized members of society?

Expressing his opinion on the same issue, VIM 4 lamented the situation whereby elected officials dessert the electorate joining the elite at the expense of grassroots. This he says leaves the grassroots people out of touch with the political developments of their community. We want a situation where those who represent us stay among us so that they accurately communicate our felt needs to the relevant institutions of government. The general tendency in Zimbabwe is that when a councilor is elected, he ceases to be part of the grass roots and joins the bourgeoisie.

6.5. **SOCIETY TENDS TO TOTALISE AND PUT ALL DISABLED PERSONS UNDER A SINGLE BRACKET.**

Discussions with participants indicated that persons with disabilities are put in a social class or category. They are treated as a composite unit and not as a heterogeneous group. Any behavioral traits exhibited by one tend to be associated with all persons. The results however reveal that society categorises these people in terms of their individual disabilities. As per the testimonies and sentiments below, persons with visual impairments are usually seen as beggars and people of low education and status in society. on the other hand, at a political level, persons with albinism are seen as belonging to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change simply because one of their famous activists (the late professor John Makumbe) was an outspoken and ardent critique of the ruling ZANU PF party as well as an influential member of the MDC party. Such a categorization has even had psychological effects on some of these people who are now viewing each other simply as blood brothers.
During an in-depth interview discussion, ALM 2 revealed that persons with albinism were generally regarded as belonging to the Movement for Democratic change (MDC) party because the late professor Makumbe belonged to the party. He said that this form of stereotype even negatively affected those individuals who belonged to other political parties. Worst of all, this state of affairs adversely affected even those like him who prefer political neutrality on account of religious beliefs.

On another note, participants during in-depth interviews bemoaned the tendency by the mainstream society to treat them as a single individual. To that end, VIM 1 attributed such a state of affairs to general social relations between persons with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts. He contended thus: this mindset starts in social discussions. I am well known for disagreeing whenever somebody says I have met your colleague up or down the street. I usually ask the person concerned: do you know me? Do you know my friends? What makes you say one of your friends? If you are really sure that Mtetwa is my friend, fair and fine, just say I met Mtetwa your friend not I met one of you. In the majority of cases, you don’t even know the person and you don’t know me. Just say I saw Moyo or I saw Mtetwa. I think this is where we also should win these battles.

Expressing his disapproval of the totalizing tendencies from members of the public, VIM 3 lamented the practice of treating all persons with visual impairments as beggars in need of free services. He complained thus: When I get into a kombi the conductor asks whether this one has got money to pay. This frustrates me a lot because these people once they see you they will have seen a beggar. Just because when one person who is disabled is seen begging they think that everybody does that. That’s the perception of the general public towards us.
The tendency to totalize persons with disabilities has also come to sink deeply into the minds of persons with disabilities themselves who now view each other as part of a separate disability family or community. They now view themselves as people with a salient and distinct identity from the rest of society. To this effect, one visually impaired woman remarked that “even if they give us our own piece of land to share among ourselves. They must just give us housing stands through affirmative action where we can stay as a disability community, helping each other, encouraging each other and economically promoting each other in various ways”.

The same sentiment was echoed by one woman with albinism who even indicated that she does not want to marry a person with albinism because it will be like she is marrying her own brother., “I would like to get married to a black person obvious because marrying someone with albinism it like am marrying my brother if you understand It’s like am marrying someone I know already. Ah it’s not cool. I would rather marry a black man. No it’s not that it’s about the skin. In fact, There is nothing wrong it’s like they are all my brothers if I see one in the street I would rather greet him as a brother”.

This mind set is however not peculiar to Zimbabwe. In her research on the disability movement in Asia, Hisayo Katsui makes an observation that persons with disabilities tend to be put in a single category and yet they are different individuals with different characteristics as well as social, physical and economic circumstances. Katsui (2005) emphasizes this point by making an observation that this heterogeneity can be analysed in terms of environmental and social characteristics. The environmental aspects of difference are determined by family attitudes, geographical location, the social groupings to which they belong as well as the general life chances open to each individual. At the same time, individual characteristics also make their lives different even if they live in a similar environment. Disabled people are not only disabled
or impaired but also women, children, mothers, husbands, the middle-aged, passive or active in nature etc. Thus, disability should not be separated from the rest of the changing and/or permanent characteristics that make up their lives. Disabled people are first of all human beings who have got many different characteristics and positive aspects in life in addition to impairment and disability at a different time, place or occasion in their lives (Katsui, 2005:2).

6.6. DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT.
According to Leymat (2011) work and employment are defining features of human existence. It is a means of sustaining life and of meeting human needs. For persons with disabilities, work represents not only independence and self-reliance (both of which are essential ingredients of human dignity), but a measure of social identity and inclusion. In addition, the place of work in the life of any individual in modern societies forms a perfect indicator of one’s inclusion or exclusion in the life of that particular society. It is from such an understanding that the current thesis sought to dissect this issue in greater detail. As a consequence, the current thesis saw it fit to understand the extent to which persons with disabilities participate on the labour market.

6.6.1. Deficiencies Associated with Disability.
Sentiments from participants revealed that persons with disabilities are generally viewed as sub-humans with low intellectual, social, political and technical capacities and potential as compared with their non-disabled counterparts. To this effect, submissions from participants reveal that even some non-disabled people that seem to be disability friendly would not want to associate with persons with disabilities as their workmates or employees. (See Box 6.6 below for a discussion of disability and employment).
BOX 6.6 DISABILITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF EMPLOYMENT

They are almost 98% of companies in Zimbabwe that do not have any disabled worker. More so, for a person with a disability to get employment in any company, he/she must get a full backing from someone very influential there. I am employed in the banking sector myself but the circumstances surrounding my employment are quite weird. My sponsors who literally brought me up after the death of my parents had to talk to an influential manager of the bank I now work for. I was called for the interview, I passed then after some discussions and persuasions the chief executive accepted me. Initially I had been called for interviews in four banks but wherever I was not personally known, none bothered even to send me a letter of regret.

At my workplace, I am a switchboard operator. My bosses truly still recognize my competences. For instance, in 2002 I was crowned telephonist of the year. Though when other vacancies come out, they don’t recognize me. What they say is that they don’t want to give a person with visual impairment a position of trust and decision making power.

Emphasizing the same point, VIF 3 lamented lack of promotion at work simply on account of disability that she said is prevalent in Zimbabwe. She said, “You find that most of us are very educated but it’s very rare to find disabled persons occupying and senior post. Various reasons are advanced including that if you get that post there is a lot of work that you will not be able to cope with. Another reason is that you cannot write given that Braille is not a universal mode of communication. So the problem starts at school level where we are out rightly pronounced incapable. This teacher cannot be a chair lady, a head of department or a senior teacher because she would not be able to compile and maintain the required records.

On another note, We have a situation where a headmaster of a certain school lost his sight and was forced to resign from employment for a year. It was only after our organisation intervened that the headmaster was reinstated and was given the same school.

Researcher: And is he thankful?

VIF3: Very indeed, and he is very active member in our group. He is now one of the secretaries in our organisation.

The other example of outright discrimination at work is that of a teacher who graduated from one of the famous universities in Zimbabwe. “The teacher has recently lost her sight and is now at home unemployed. The husband is saying that she cannot work because she is blind. Another reason advanced is that she is now extremely dependent that the husband fears that she would not be able to cope once she is deployed far away from the family. Although she has the opportunity to return to her previous station, her husband says that pupils will never understand her now that she is blind. The other reason is that blindness is a source of shame and ridicule.

Source: In-depth Interviews with VIM 2 and VIM 3.

As a badge of inferiority, disability is a state of being largely disliked by many even at work. This observation does corroborate the findings from Munsaka (2012). In his thesis on the extent to which the disability agenda features in development processes and leadership structures in Zimbabwe’s Binga district, Munsaka (2012: 192) observed that disability is a curse and that it remains a taboo for such a person to take a leadership post. Quoting a local government official that he interviewed as a key informant for his doctoral thesis, Munsaka said thus: “The issue of disability has got some cultural and social connotations, you see. I think from history disabled
people have been said to be people who are cursed, you see. So people will usually be reluctant to be led by someone who they think that, this person was cursed, you see” (page 192).

The above sentiments and narratives simply indicate that disability is still not an acceptable state of being. Even families find it difficult to cope with it mainly due to the need for self-preservation and the fear to lose dignity and worthy. The plight of the school head that had been rendered incapable and jobless simply due to loss of sight before being reinstated after undergoing rehabilitation simply confirms the fact that disability is far from inability. In other words, contrary to conventional wisdom, loss of sight in the real and practical sense is not a deterrent against the ability of the incumbent to head a school. Flying on the face of such a stark reality however, the shackles of myths, misconceptions and negative attitudes concerning disability still stand in the way of yet another woman whose loss of sight has done nothing short of stifling her effort and ambition to work like others. As per the contention of this thesis, such a state of affairs constricts their prospects of participating in public life.

6.4.2. A Disabled Employee scares away customers.

Results from in-depth interviews indicated that Persons with disabilities found it difficult to secure employment simply on account of the impact their presence is likely to have on the employer’s business fortunes. To that end, albinism as a condition was a recipe for disaster when it comes to looking for a job especially as a shop keeper. The argument was that customers would not feel free to be served by a person with albinism. Consequently, they were likely to shun the shop. The argument was that albinism is scary, unfamiliar and detestable to many people. “I remember one day we went for an interview in one shop that needed to employ two shop assistants. We were only two but my colleague was black. We were simply advised to wait
for a call but to my surprise, my friend was called and I was not. I asked the friend what had really happened and she told me that management felt that you were not a suitable candidate as hiring you would have a negative effect on their business as it was likely to trigger customer flight” narrated ALF 2.

Management’s thinking was that a person with albinism had no skin. Unlike a white person, a person with albinism has got no skin, she added. Implicit in this argument is that persons with disabilities find themselves out of employment not merely because of what their impairments restricts them from doing, but simply because they are cast in a dye of inferiority. In other terms, the above testimony reveals that in all intents and purposes, disability is a state of abnormality in a normal Zimbabwean society. No matter what people might say about social inclusion, integration, mainstreaming and other issues, in the competitive world of business, people will tend to evoke their cultural perceptions about disability.

Due to the theoretical orientation of this thesis, it is here argued that contrary to Herrnstein and Murray (1994) claim, poverty is largely a result of the various institutional, environmental and attitudinal barriers faced by Persons with disabilities in their daily pursuits of a better and independent life. This view is even shared by various scholars who treat poverty and inequality as human rights issues.

In refuting the above theoretical claims, (see chapter 2 for a comprehensive discussion of poverty theories and the implication of these on disability and empowerment), Royce (2009) observes that the role of social condition in shaping intelligence has been grossly overlooked. In concurrence with the core tenets of the social model of disability that blames society and not the individual for the social and economic circumstances that one finds himself in, Royce contends that there is a web of causes of poverty that even militate against the poor’s efforts to
deal with it. To quote Royce, “Poor children are raised in poor families, and they often live in poor housing, reside in poor neighborhoods, and attend poor schools; they suffer disproportionately from nutritionally inadequate diets and from poor mental and physical health. Moreover, such children experience prejudice and discrimination, residential segregation, and social isolation. Children born into poverty face multiple and cumulative disadvantages. If their IQ scores were not lower than average, it would be nothing short of miraculous” (Royce, 2009:37).

This thesis while admitting that there is a dearth of information concerning the genetic influence of poverty among families of Persons with disabilities is predicated upon the belief that negative social attitudes, social exclusion and inequalities are the main causes of poverty among Persons with disabilities. Although not making any mention of disability in his critical analysis of the inheritability and genetic basis of poverty, Royce’s observations resonate with the suppositions of the social model of disability that it is the educational, political and economic situation that Persons with disabilities find themselves into that lead them to begging and other forms of survival considered inferior by mainstream society.

6.4.3. Emerging issues.

The above testimonies are indicative of the positive relationship between disability and lack of employment opportunities. Disability has been cited as the chief cause of low prospects of promotion at work. In line with the current thesis, lack of economic and political power is the chief cause of poverty among persons with disabilities. This is particularly so for those with visual impairments and albinism who have the potential for self-reliance given the appropriate platform for active participation in the national economy. In pursuit of the central theme of this
thesis, the greater the social barriers Persons with disabilities encounter as they try to negotiate through various institutions of the economy, the more the constraints to participation encountered.

This fact was also buttressed by Flotten (2006). In his study of poverty and social exclusion in Estonia and Norway, Flotten (2006) discovered that disability indeed contributed towards the low standards of living in society. The only difference between Flotten and the current study was that his was an analysis of the workings of the poverty and social exclusion in the welfare state and that his was a generalized conclusion across disability types.

6.5. **ENDOGENOUS FACTORS.**

Having interrogated the exogenous factors militating against the participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe, this section is intent on illuminating those internal or personal shortcomings that restrict Persons with disabilities when it comes to participating in the political and economic life of Zimbabwean society.

6.5.1. **Lack of Action Knowledge as a Barrier to Political Participation**

The importance of knowledge to participation is critical for any social group. This led some to coin the adage ‘knowledge is power’. For persons with disabilities to fully participate in political and administrative structures, they must possess adequate knowledge about the points of entry as well as other procedural issues. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines knowledge as ‘facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical and practical understanding of a subject’ (Pearsall and Hanks, 2003: 967). The adage that goes thus: knowledge is power is
important when we talk of participation in public life. Lack of knowledge has always been blamed for lack of action in crucial facets of life. Persons with disabilities are not an exception to the rule.

Findings revealed that persons with disabilities could not participate in political activities mainly due to lack of knowledge.

Confirming such a state of affairs, VIM1 asserted that: “One might know about economic empowerment policies and programmes but how to be part and parcel of these programmes and policies still remains a grey area for most of us. For instance, one might know that there is ZIMASSET or any other policy from government but the entry points to participation remain covert to some of us. So the issue is lack of knowledge wherein persons with disabilities do not know where to start from, how to participate, and what to do to participate if ever one must participate.

**Researcher:** Pursuant to that do you ever bother to participate actively or otherwise in any activity or programme of a political nature?

**Participant:** I would have wanted to participate in any other policy formulation process but as I indicated lack of knowledge regarding entry points to participation has always militated against us as persons with disabilities. “As a citizen you would always want to be involved because you believe that through participation you can also identify with whatever outcome comes. So it has always been my hope and aspiration to participate but now how when and where have always remained perennial challenges”, said VIM 1.

On the same note, ALF 4 professed ignorance regarding the procedures or avenues through which she as a person with albinism could use to participate in various national political and
economic programme activities designed to empower citizens. The same could be said about ALM5 who indicated that he knew the roles of various players in the formulation of policies but was not privy to the entry points he could use. This lack of knowledge led ALM 4 to call for both the government and civil society agencies to update people living with albinism so that they remain in touch with current developments.

The above discussion pits knowledge as an important precursor to participation. A comprehensive analysis of various types of knowledge is discussed by Trevithick (2008). Of much interest to the current discussion is Trevithick’s partitioning of knowledge into knowing what and how. Although Trevithick’s discussion of knowledge was confined to the social work profession, her conceptualization could as well be adapted to explain the participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. To that effect, the above narratives would suggest that persons with disabilities suffer from lack of knowledge on how to participate in various policy programme activities. As the ensuing discussion shows, Persons with disabilities have some knowledge of the ‘what’ part of knowledge according to Trevithick’s theorizing. This type of knowledge is referred to by different names by different scholars, with Sheppard et al, (2001) calling it process knowledge whilst Eraut (1994) and Osmond (2005) call it professional knowledge and action knowledge respectively. For the current thesis, this is the most important type of knowledge given its centrality in enabling those with it to actively participate in various political and economic engagements of a policy nature.

Although lack of knowledge regarding corridors to participation seems to militate against most Persons with disabilities’ quest to partake in the national policy formulation discourse,
paradoxically, Persons with disabilities understood the roles of various players especially politicians and bureaucrats when it comes to the formulation of policy. To this effect, in spite of his failure to participate in the various programmes of government, ALM 5 was conversant with the roles played by various actors and stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of policies as well as the dangers surrounding lack of representation within the various national political and bureaucratic structures. He confirmed that, political parties were responsible for policy formulation and supervision of bureaucrats. On the other hand, members of parliament in addition to their legislative role find themselves directly responsible though in a somewhat informal way for the implementation of development programmes. In his view, the senior government officials are primarily responsible for the implementation of the formulated policies.

Recognizing the central role played by bureaucrats in policy formulation through implementation, VIM 1 singled out the permanent secretary as the most influential person in any ministry. To buttress his point, VIM 1 recounted that “I am reminded of the former permanent secretary in the ministry of education sometime back in the 80s. He would actually tell you that I am the CEO and the minister is just but a political figure. He may tell you what he wants to do for you at a rally but then as long as I do not agree, nothing will happen”. Qualifying his point, he gave an example of a minister who visited one district and promised a certain school some building materials. On the strength of such a ministerial promise, the school authorities began soliciting for some quotations and presented them to the permanent secretary who in turn dismissed the whole process saying that he had no such plans and funds within the ministry. “This is where the problem is, if one is to look at what is going on today, ministers often speak of what they intend to do for the general public but many a times, these remain mere empty speeches bent on scoring political mileage than realistic and achievable promises. The
permanent secretary holds the keys to any government financial commitment and without his input, political promises remain a vanity” said VIM 1.

This view was not shared by ALM 4 who believed that sometimes, politicians may overlap from playing a supervisory to an implementation role. He gave the example of the National Indigenization and Economic Empowerment policy that almost came to be synonymous with minister Kasukuwere during the tenure of the inclusive government.

Like ALM 4, VIM 4 tended to differ with VIM 1 for ignoring the central role played by politicians through political parties in policy formulation and implementation. “According to my understanding, all government policies and programmes are championed by the ruling party. At present, Zimbabwe’s policy formulation trajectory is designed such that the policies are deliberated and conceived by the ZANU PF party, are transmitted to government through parliament before they finally come to bureaucrats for implementation”. In agreement, ALM4 contended that political parties play a pivotal role in the policy formulation process given their propensity to turn their party manifestos into economic, social and political policies and programmes. My view is that the duty of members of parliament is only to ratify what political parties have come up with, especially in the current situation whereby, The majority of members of parliament that we have are the same people that we see again in the politburo of ZANU PF. This reduces the role of parliament to merely that of rubber stamping party decisions. In line with this submission, section 3.2 of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation (ZIMASSET 2013-2018) clearly stipulated that:

“The interventions identified for implementation in this Plan are mainly informed by the ZANU PF Central Committee Report to the 13th National Peoples Conference of 2012 which gave birth to the ZANU PF Manifesto, His Excellency the President’s speeches at
the occasion of his inauguration and the Official Opening of the First Session of the 8th Parliament of Zimbabwe, National Development Priorities and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the new Constitution”.

This close link between political parties, parliament and cabinet has led ALF 4 to believe that the political parties had the propensity to formulate the policies based on their political agenda whilst Ministers focus on the implementation of such policies as would enable them to gain political mileage. Senior government officials give life to these somewhat divergent agendas when they finally direct the implementation of policies. This relationship has led him to treat government senior officials as the backbone of the policy formulation process. Such a political/administrative dichotomy leaves the duty of various ministries through their bureaucratic technocrats as that of executing policies. Ministries do that through the permanent secretary who is the head of ministry. The permanent secretary in turn makes use of a pool of various technical lieutenants who direct different branches of the ministries.

In spite of their differences regarding the policy formulation trajectory, VIM 1, ALM 4, ALM 1, ALF 4 and VIM 4 seem to share the sentiment that if persons with disabilities are not represented at all the above levels, then their views are not likely to see the light of day. VIM 1 charges that the moment such influential bureaucrats become discriminatory then everything goes wrong. Once we have a permanent secretary with an open mind I think things will go well with people with disabilities, says VIM1.
The above discussion is indicative of the fact that although persons with disabilities possess some informal knowledge about what variables are involved for a policy to be formulated and implemented, they still suffer from lack of process or action knowledge regarding how to fit themselves onto the policy formulation processes. Arguably, this knowledge gap could partly account for why Persons with disabilities are less represented within national political structures. Nevertheless, most participants were fully aware of the important roles played by political parties, members of parliament, government ministers as well as senior bureaucrats when it comes to influencing policy. There was general agreement that lack of representation within these structures and institutions could be just but a recipe for disaster when it comes to the dreams of persons with disabilities to play an active role in the national economic and political life of Zimbabwe.

Further to that, knowledge cannot be taken off the shelf and applied in ways that are relevant and effective without considerable interpretation, engagement and transformation. According to Sheppard and Ryan, (2003: 157) the concept of process knowledge ‘focuses on the processes by which judgments are made. Lack of such knowledge is likely to compromise the impetus needed by Persons with disabilities to actively partake in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. From this standpoint, professional knowledge is not useful until it has been put into action—‘unless and until it has been used for a professional purpose’ (Trevithick, 2008: 16).

In line with the foundation upon which this thesis is grounded, lack of participation could largely be traced back to the structural issues wherein political parties, ministers as well as bureaucrats constitute centres of power. Lack of representation within these power structures was
understood by participants as posing a danger to the aspirations of Persons with disabilities in their quest to fight poverty.

6.7.2. Sense of Lack of Self Esteem and Self Worthy

Disability is usually accompanied by a sense of uselessness, worthlessness, social and psychological inferiority and resignation to fate. Just as many disability scholars observed a sense of psychological inferiority (see Reeve, 2004 and Katsui, 2005), the current study equally discovered that a sense of self-pity, inferiority and low self-esteem cause mainly by the vicissitudes of a life of rejection, ridicule, and humiliation also help keep Persons with disabilities at bay when it comes to their participation in public and social life.

Lack of self-esteem was cited by participants as one of the main reasons why persons with disabilities live in poverty. VIM 1 attributed poverty and social exclusion to lack of the zeal on the part of persons with disabilities to liberate themselves. He therefore called for what he referred to as the liberation of the mind, “I think first of all People with disabilities should be liberated mentally. More often when I listen to programmes on the radio people want to be called special people to which am actually opposed. Actually visual impairment is just a functional limitation and nothing else. When we look at that limitation it can also be overcome especially we look at how technology has come into play. Quite a number of machinery can be utilized to make persons with disabilities more independent than ever before”.

Further to that, lower levels of educational attainment for persons with disabilities were cited as yet another reason behind lowered self-esteem. The ultimate result of low educational levels is usually reduced capacity to fight for one’s rights.
In view of such a state of affairs, government and other cooperating partners were urged to provide adequate educational opportunities to persons with disabilities so that they become assertive and resolute especially when it comes to those matters that affect them.

Without having to wait for government and other partners to take the lead, ALF1 revealed that she has taken it upon herself to cultivate and foster a sense of positive self-concept especially to persons with albinism at the same time encouraging them to keep on pressing for their recognition in society. Lack of self-esteem and confidence was cited by many participants. However, some participants believed that such was the result of continued social and economic exclusion rather than innate personal inadequacies.

In line with the social model of disability, participants placed the blame squarely on society and its institutions and values rather than on the personal weaknesses of Persons with disabilities themselves. The idea that the sense of social marginalization and humiliation breeds a sense of worthlessness is however not peculiar to this study. Such disability scholars as Moris (1991) have put much emphasis on the issue. In her own analysis, Moris came to the conclusion that: “It is not only physical limitations that restrict us to our homes and those whom we know. It is common knowledge that each entry into the public world will be dominated by stares, by condescension, by pity and by hostility” (Morris 1991: 25).

No matter what the reason might be, the bottom line remains that both persons with albinism and those with visual impairment suffer from low self-esteem. They even felt that they were not fit enough for self liberation and empowerment.

Giving her contribution to the discussion, one key informant suggested that low self-esteem tended to breed a sense of apathy and self resignation. The key informant revealed that there was general sense of apathy induced by lack of self-worthy. “I think the very first thing to
do is to educate people with disabilities on the importance of policy. Policy is something that affects us on a day to day basis, yet we feel this is simply the business of members of parliament. It is there, it is not with us, but the effects of that policy we feel them every day. And it’s not even for people with disabilities only but even the non-disabled. Generally speaking, people do not worry about how policy affects them. As a result, each time opportunities come for them to participate they may not participate in the way they should. So there is need for education on the importance of participation in policy making.

The question that should occupy every citizen is how does policy affect me on a day to day basis? Today we are being affected for instance by the policy of blending fuel. It’s affecting us so much, yet it was promulgated whilst many citizens were looking on appearing unconcerned about it, but now here I am as a consumer I am now feeling its negative impact. The whole issue therefore is about educating the masses to remain vigilant when it comes to matters of governance and policy. A citizen should never be fooled to believe that any piece of policy will never affect him.

Another issue is also about creating avenues for the public to participate in national decision making processes. The policy makers need to create opportunities for participation and not simply think that because they were voted into parliament they can run short over our lives and do whatever they want. There is need for creation of opportunities for participation. If policy affects our daily lives there must be consensus on their implementation and on their adaption.

Having found the same phenomenon in her study of DPOs activities in Central Asia, Katsui (2005) concluded that Persons with disabilities end up internalizing the medical model of disability in their minds. This she said was due to the fact that disability tended to result in a
person getting financially, socially and physically dependent on others. By their very nature, albinism and visual impairments are chronic conditions. Consequently, the bearers find it difficult to achieve self-sufficiency, especially under the economic and political conditions prevailing in Zimbabwe. They felt that they are abnormal and useless. (For a discussion of disability and low self esteem, see Katsui, 2005: 84).

6.5.3 Dependency Syndrome.

Having traced their exclusion to the social, political, economic and attitudinal environment that was not disability friendly, participants also blamed their counterparts for not doing enough to change their situation. The argument was that some persons with disabilities cherish a life of dependence and perpetual begging without bothering to fend for themselves through hard work. The spirit of dependence, laziness and lack of agency received tremendous emphasis from participants. It is however worth noting that such a submission only came from those participants who hold some professional qualifications and in formal employment. However, the extent to which this lack of agency was emphasized deserves academic scrutiny. The thinking was that persons with disabilities should not be crybabies but should rise to the occasion. This calls for self-motivation and astute initiative rather than laziness. Giving his view on this issue, VIM 1 said that: it begins with us it begins with you. Whatever changes could be made, be it legal amendments or institutional restructuring, as long as Persons with disabilities in their individual capacity have that perception of being less important or a sense of uselessness and irrelevant all those efforts will come to nothing. There has to be change in the perceptions of Persons with disabilities themselves who must be confident that they can make an impact on the policy formulation arena. Weighing in on the same issue, VIM 1 called for mental liberation for persons
with disabilities to fight poverty and perceived uselessness. He noted that: I think there is that mental liberation whereby we should believe in doing things for ourselves I think that’s the first point. People with disabilities should be liberated mentally. More often when I listen to programmes on the radio, people want to be called special people. Actually visual impairment it’s just a functional limitation and nothing else. When we look at that limitation it can also be overcome especially we look at how technology has come into play quite a number of things can be solved and make people with disabilities more independent than ever before. If you want to be an MP, go for it, lose or win. One should not be apologetic for doing so”. The submission from VIM 1 is simply directed at those Persons with disabilities who foster a spirit of dependence and worthlessness.

According to Harvey and Lind (2005) dependency is associated with a sense of shame and defeat. When it comes to the quest for social inclusion and participation in the political and economic life of society, the sense of shame and defeat are likely recipes for surrendering to fate. Alternatively, the spirit of dependence could be fostered by society’s habit of giving aid or alms to persons with disabilities on the understanding that their physical, economic and social position is miserable, tormenting, and deplorable and thus a sense of moral duty dictates that they be helped. As Munsaka (2012) observed, begging dehumanizes, humiliates and indignifies a person.

Adding her voice, VIF 2 has got a word of caution to all people that believe that only persons with disabilities are poor and spend most of their time begging on the streets. She made the observation that: even the non-disabled people can be poor and can beg but they are usually not noticed that they are begging. On the other hand when someone is disabled and begging, he/she tries all the best to make people sympathise with him.
It is normal to find a beggar shouting that: “please help, I don’t have anything and I can’t do anything “even if we know that there are some people who are disabled who go to South Africa get their things in bulk and come and sale. But then there are some people who possess an idle mind. If you look at me there is some time of the month when things are not going on well. Moments when I get broke but pay day is next week on Wednesday. Then I don’t have bus fare things like that but really at home food is there. I have got my own electric gadgets, I do my own things. Some people think that if they go and sit on the street in the end they get money. Once such people get money they misuse it then that’s when you find them drinking like fish. My assessment is that there is a lot of dependence syndrome among those people who live on begging. I understand one DPO based in Harare tried to take people from the streets and give them something to do but well in no time the same people were found on the streets again.

On the other hand some beg not out of their own free will but because of exogenous socio-economic circumstances beyond their control. My opinion is that those ones need some assistance to improve their situation. If within this group they are some that could benefit from going back to school, let opportunities and resources be availed to them so that they can fully realize their potential in life. To those not academically gifted, they would want capital to start income generating projects. Alternatively, such people require assistance in starting up a business which they are assisted to run until they stand on their own. This is only possible if these people undergo some training. Because you can’t give someone money who is used to begging and then you just give them $2000.00 in their hands. Obviously they are likely to squander the money before going back to the streets for begging. The above narratives pit disability against the long held tradition of the poor as victims of their own shortcomings. (See Herrnstein and Murray 1994, Spicker 2011, Popple and Leininger, 1999, Royce, 2009). Royce
(2009) quotes Herrnstein and Murray (1994) as believing that poverty is a sign of low intelligence and the inheritance of inferior genes. Inherited cognitive abilities exert a causal influence on economic status. In other words, low intelligence leads to poverty. Using this way of thinking, begging could be attributed to low intelligence and inferior genetic configuration. Submissions from VIF2 that even if some Persons with disabilities are helped to start income generating projects they squander the money and revert back to their ‘begging profession’ has, in some social circles been proffered as the chief cause of poverty among Persons with disabilities. Proponents of such a theoretical position argue that there is a positive relationship between poverty and disability, with poor families more likely to have children with disabilities than rich ones. Alternatively, the attitude presented by participants could as well be explained by the cultural traits borne out of the process of experiencing disability. Such a mindset would suppose that disability, like ethnicity is a way of life of the bearer. A life condition characterized by behavioural traits that could squarely amount to a culture. From this contention, begging becomes a result of lack of motivation.

6.7.4. Religion as a Barrier to Participation.

As has been indicated above, persons with disabilities have the same characteristics as all members of society in which they live. To that end, religion was cited during the interviews as an important determinant of not participating in political activities such as party membership and even voting. For instance, ALM 2 indicated that, he was not participating in the political activities due to what he identified as his own Christian values. As a member of the Jehovah’s Witness sect, he believed that participation in political and partisan activities is widely treated as both earthly and heathen’s a result he shuns them on account of church doctrine. to strengthen
his argument, he made a revelation that after the death of the founder and eminent leader of an organisation for persons with albinism, he was even fingered out as a possible successor but he turned down that offer simply on account of his church doctrine. He further asserted that, was it not because of religious reasons, he had the potential and privilege bestowed upon him by his personality, temperament and educational credentials to assume political and civic leadership positions. However, he turned down all these opportunities simply on account of his religious conviction.

On a similar note, VIM 4 a local pastor believed that taking part in any activity of a partisan political nature was likely to antagonize his congregants. He further contended that “it would be difficult because of my vocation. There are some restrictions because in my church People belong to different parties. The moment I show that I am partisan, then it means I am bound to lose focus of other social groups, or else I might cause divisions among congregants”. Basically results indicate that religious conviction only affects three out of the twenty participants. On probing further, it would appear that these participants still want to participate in other facets of social and economic life. The implication is therefore that religion has got a negligible role in averting the participation of persons with disabilities in political activities.

6.7.5. Individual efforts by persons with disabilities.

In line with the above perception that a sense of dependence and lack of agency has come to characterize the lives of Persons with disabilities, there was a feeling that such a social group was not doing enough to ameliorate their plight. Such a sentiment was echoed by both participants and key informants who opined that a lot should come from the affected social
group that should first of all organize itself and galvanise for support from the mainstream society.

The call for persons with disabilities to fight for their rights received immense emphasis during the course of the study from both key informants and participants themselves. Such a call stems from the teachings of the late educationist, development icon and statesman Julius Kambarage Nyerere who says that it takes personal effort to participate and gain self-pride and dignity in one’s community. Nyerere’s famous observation goes thus: People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible to build a man’s (sic) house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create himself by his own actions. He develops himself by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing, and why; by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his own full participation as an equal in the life of the community he lives in (Nyerere, 1973:60).

Echoing Nyerere’s sentiment, ALM 4 declared that: in this era for every person with disability to acquire better services or to be included in the economic empowerment policies there is need for them to have a resilient and decisive character. Once more, the bio-genetic and cultural perspectives of poverty are gaining emphasis here, with some of the participants blaming victims of poverty for the state in which they find themselves in. Contributing to the poverty as personal inadequacy debate, ALM 4 made the observation that failure to challenge the systems tended to result in people with albinism lacking required recognition in critical institutions charged with national development. Implicitly, Persons with disabilities were not doing enough in mobilizing themselves to fight institutional discrimination. (See Chapter Five on the shortcomings of the disability movement in Zimbabwe).
In concurrence, VIM 1 urged persons with disabilities to be assertive and show confidence in themselves. He believed that each time a person gets wind of any national gathering or symposium, he must attend and bring to the fore the plight of Persons with disabilities. As articulated in box 6.7 below, the thinking behind such expressions by participants was that the plight of Persons with disabilities did not receive the required national attention mainly because their experiences were not beamed on the arena of public opinion.

**BOX 6.7 Force your Way Through and You Shall be Heard.**

You don’t have to wait for an NGO to come and tell you that disability is not inability. In fact the mere realization that you have the same thinking capacity with any non-disabled person should just make you realize that you can be equally useful in society. To get yourself to that position where you are able to participate you must be there. When people are discussing and you are there speak out. Speak out. If you do so, you shall find that some People may begin to say but there is sense in what this guy is saying and you find everyone saying let him explain. If you articulate your position firmly and intelligibly, you are definitely likely to have people on your side. So people must speak for themselves. They must find ways of getting involved.

Source: in-depth interviews of participants

The above submissions are nothing short of advocating the urgent need for Persons with disabilities to play their part in addressing their economic and political challenges rather than waiting for others to “give them political and economic power on a silver plate”. This is akin to what Finkelstein (2001) called for. According to Finkelstein, “disabled people must find ways of engaging in the class struggle where the historical direction of society is fought, won or lost” (Finkelstein 2001: 5).

Participants during in-depth interviews emphasized that once an opportunity is availed, one must utilize it to the best of his abilities. The prominent example given was that of teachers with albinism and visual impairment in the mainstream. Submissions emphasized that such teachers must try everything they can to demonstrate their utmost abilities, especially to the
students that they teach. Such students are then likely to become their ambassadors in the mainstream society.

This is akin to the long contested belief that to approximate the normal in society, Persons with disabilities must strive to shoulder an extra load to surpass ordinary expectations. As portrayed in box 6.8 below, the burden is upon Persons with disabilities to prove their worth before getting a licence to participate in mainstream social, political and economic activities.

**BOX 6.8 SET AN EXAMPLE**

What is important here is that persons with disabilities who get an opportunity to show case their aptitude in mainstream society must dexterously discharge their duties for the community to build confidence in them. One maybe lecturing at the university one teaching at a mainstream school. By so doing, a message will be spread within the mainstream society that there really is nothing different. These people are our equals. People who have been to those institutions of learning are most likely to leave them with liberated minds having witnessed people who are ordinarily despised proving themselves beyond doubt. By so doing, certain steps are being taken and the writing will be on the wall. For instance, today if I were to say I want to be an MP I will have a number of my former students saying he deserves because we have seen him doing something. Then parents will say yes we saw him at this school doing this to the children. I remember when I started teaching there was a meeting at the school. One man stood up and said “I heard that there is a blind teacher here. How does he teach and relate to our children? As the head of the school, why did you allow that to happen? You should have immediately notified us as parents and we could have helped you raise a complaint to government”. So the headmaster was quite shocked and said “I cannot speak for the teacher concerned, He is here, let him speak for himself”.

I stood up and said that I need to hear from you parents. You are in charge of your own children at home. I cannot evaluate myself on this issue. What do they tell you about my performance”? Before I even set down parents were even raising their objection to the matter saying “what are you saying? Do you want to tell us that you do not stay with your child? Our children tell us that” kamwana aka kanogona basa kupfuura mazidhara ese akagara kumashure uko”. Literally meaning: this small boy is a better teacher as compared to those old men seated at the back”.

Source: in-depth interviews with participants

Once again, the above testimony demonstrates the difficulties faced by Persons with disabilities in their quest to fight exclusion. Hard work becomes an essential ingredient for the fight against social, economic and even political exclusion. The same observation was made by Choruma
(2007) that the life of a worker with a disability is extremely hard given that he needs to make up for the perceived inadequacies by sacrificing his leisure and rest.

Implicit in VIM 1’s narration is that experience is the best teacher. Some would say that the taste of the pudding is in the eating. In the final analysis, participants agree that there is need for persons with disabilities to fight exclusion by demonstrating in person that they were capable and meaningful members of society.

6.7. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

The role of the family in fostering inclusion is crucial. Participants noted that since a family is a society in miniature, it is an important source of inclusion and exclusion. Not only does the family help in building a resilient character that would enable a person with a disability to confront discrimination in later life, but through the allocation of roles and responsibilities assumed by other ordinary children, it could act as a window through which the community can see and learn the techniques of including a child with a disability. As an agent of primary socialization, the family should therefore play a critical role in molding a child with a disability into a useful, productive and constructive member of his family and community. Initially, a person should be immensely involved in family meetings and decision making sessions, said VIM 3. Adding his voice to the need for visibility starting from family affairs, VIM 1 provided a compendious narration of social inclusion.

As narrated in box 6.9 below, the family as a primary agent of socialization is said to contribute immensely to the moulding of character for Persons with disabilities from childhood. A sense of responsibility to one’s family and community should be nurtured early enough to foster a sense of assertiveness in later life.
## BOX 6.9. LET INCLUSION START IN THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.

I think first of all let it start in our families whereby I play my role as a member of the family. Where I do not agree, I should be convinced. Because I am playing my part as a member of the family, you will find that when there is a misunderstanding or dispute between two families, the family members must be able to readily enlist the mediation services of an expert even if he has got a disability. Because of such a family status and responsibilities, my village begins to know Dumi can do it because we have seen him doing it. We have seen him doing it and then if I want to be an MP let it not start at campaigning level but Let it starts at village level. What is it that I can do for my village? Just visit that nearby primary or secondary school, get there and just say how are you getting guys? How are you doing? Are you meeting any challenges? I don’t know whether you have ever used this book. I am leaving you with this book. Please try and see how it can help your students. Already I am making a step inwards. The problem is one just wants to appear from nowhere. All of a sudden one surfaces saying; “I want to be your representative in parliament yet the community does not know you.”

Source: in-depth interviews from participants

VIM 1’s presentation is appealing to persons with disabilities to be agents of change by actively participating in social activities at a micro level in order to gain entry into the macro level social, economic and political system.

In the midst of exclusion, there is a tendency for the marginalized groups to form a cocoon around themselves thereby barring any outsider from interfering with their lives. (See chapter 5 of a study by Colin Barnes 1985 for a detailed analysis of the copying strategies employed by Persons with disabilities).

A discussion with visually impaired participants revealed that there is need to extend an olive branch to members of the mainstream society in anticipation that it would reciprocate. Emphasizing the same point, VIM 1 calmly said; “let’s be like showers which soften the soil. Let’s not be like the storm which makes the ground harder. Let’s be partners in everything. Let’s accept our colleagues but let’s not allow them to patronize us. Let’s work with them, especially those who are on our side. Let’s walk with them. Let not them pull us or push us.
They must be our companions. Let’s walk side by side but let’s meet on some kind of an equal foot. Let’s prove who we are. Let’s knock at the doors. Let’s try to get through the window if they do not allow us through the door and let’s speak for ourselves.

Implicit in the above remarks is that in the midst of exclusion, Persons with disabilities might want to carve numerous approaches to enable themselves to gain entry into the mainstream society. Compromise and reciprocity become one of such strategies. Although this viewpoint was not widely emphasized by persons with albinism, their quest for inclusion was readily expressed; especially when some of them pointed out that they try hard to get married to “black people” and to “participate just like others”. The tone however is suggestive of the need to meet on equal terms. That is, a situation where the non-disabled do not impose their values and perceptions on Persons with disabilities but a compromise be struck.

6.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

This chapter has tried to address the first and fourth objectives of the thesis that sought to understand the disability discourse as well as the factors leading to lack of participation in the political, social and economic life of Zimbabwean society. To this effect, a number of exogenous and endogenous factors have been put forward. These include poor education as well as limited educational opportunities that in turn forestall employability and the quest for upward social mobility, negative attitudes on the part of bureaucrats that stifle the ambitions of Persons with disabilities to participate in economic empowerment programmes such as the Indigenisation fund as well as general lack of collateral security due to the vicious circle of poverty and disability. In addition, society’s treatment of Persons with disabilities as lesser beings whose presence at public gatherings brings discomfort have tended to jeopardize the chances of Persons
with disabilities when it comes to their quest to participate in the formulation of economic empowerment policies. In addition, political violence, inaccessibility of venues for political and civic gatherings as well as the general lack of space for grassroots to fully partake in the political life of the country have been cited as critical barriers when it comes to the political and economic empowerment of Persons with disabilities.

With respect to formal employment as a key determining factor of participation in national economic activities, the chapter has shown that Persons with disabilities experience immense challenges. These challenges are encountered first and foremost by those Persons with disabilities trying to enter the labour market. They are often viewed with suspicion simply on account of their disability. The perceptions of employers were cited as those related to treating Persons with disabilities as lacking the required skills and aptitude for a highly competitive labour market. The other perception cited was that employing a person with albinism in particular might result in customer flight. Secondly, the chapter has indicated that persons that sustain injuries or any form of impairment whilst at work have had problems retaining their jobs simply due to perceived lack of capacity.

Further to that, other factors at play were endogenous. These included the fact that Persons with disabilities have low self-esteem, they enjoy a life of begging and drinking at the expense of hard work and that they tend to form a cocoon around themselves making inclusion and participation in mainstream society difficult.

Confronted with these endogenous and exogenous barriers, participants came up with alternate coping strategies. These include working extra hard to demonstrate that disability is not inability, extending an olive branch to members of the mainstream society so that the later can
reciprocate as well as desisting from surrendering to fate in the wake of practical realities of an uneven political and economic playing field.
CHAPTER SEVEN
COPING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

7.0. INTRODUCTION
The preceding chapters have shown how persons with disabilities were treated within national political parties, government bureaucracy and civil society organisations. Chapter 6 has labored to link these forms of discrimination to institutional, environmental and attitudinal or simply endogenous and exogenous barriers erected by the mainstream society. This chapter looks at what persons with disabilities are doing for themselves to fight or counter discrimination as well as basically to stay alive.

For certain, persons with disabilities are not just on-lookers in sight of social exclusion and constricted economic and political opportunities. They are found all over the spheres of life trying to include them (see chapter 4, 5 and 6 for self inclusion). This chapter discusses the survival strategies employed by Persons with disabilities to stay afloat. Such strategies include vending, educating themselves to gain entry into formal employment, help from concerned friends and relatives, cross border trade, marriage as well as obtaining help from the national social security programmes. In all these means of survival, the participants testified during interviews that it is not easy to get empowered if one has got a disability. From the submissions made by VIM4, “empowering a disabled person is just but a battle. As a result, I would like to say to the disabled persons, let us not be cowards. Rather, let us always be militant. In this generation, if we are militant we pave way for others who are coming after us.”
Implicit in the above statement is that Persons with disabilities perceive their success in life as not obtainable on a silver plate but via a spirited struggle. (See chapter 6). In addition, in the absence of a comprehensive national disability policy in the country, Persons with disabilities saw their struggles not only as part of a long quest of survival but as posterity.

Although Persons with disabilities suffer from structural and attitudinal exclusion (see sections above) their response to exclusion was varied, with some resisting the place allotted them by the mainstream society preferring to venture into mainstream business activities. As Hays (1994) puts it, people are not mere automatons. Habitually following a precise and all-encompassing pattern dictated by social structure. In this sense, agency always implies that an array of alternative forms of behavior is possible, and that people make (conscious or unconscious) choices among those alternatives (Hays, 1994).

7.1. ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.

According to Finkelstine “disabled people must find ways of engaging in the class struggle where the historical direction of society is fought, won or lost (Finkelstein 2001: 5). The results revealed that although persons with disabilities suffer exclusion, there are some who feel that they have the capacity to participate like others in society and its institutions. Although the number is negligible. In this regard ALM 1 is one such a person. Although he has albinism, he confirms that he was once involved in political activities as a ZANU PF youth member. It is however worth noting that the reasons for joining ZANU PF, though superficially had nothing to do with his condition in actual fact a closer scrutiny revealed that disability was central to his decision. Just like any other person of his age, social class and time, ALM 1 joined ZANU PF purely for economic reasons. In other words, he wanted to get employment and other economic
opportunities only open to members of the same party. By joining the ZANU PF youth, ALM 1 also intended to break the stigma associated with disability by showing society that he was able to do what others were doing. This he hoped would culminate in inclusion by normalization. By this is meant a situation where disability would eventually cease to be a noticeable stigmatizing condition.

Further to that, ALM 1 indicated that another of his prime motives in joining his party of choice was to open the door for the inclusion of persons with albinism intending to battle it out on the political arena. He therefore wanted to stand out as a role model for all those like him who wanted to participate in political activities to benchmark their success against his political carrier. For similar reasons, Alm4 confessed that, he was a member of the ZANU PF party carrying out campaigns during the 2008 elections. On a different note, he indicated that the youth in his home constituency even persuaded him to join the party simply for the purposes of creating a good and positive image of the party as an inclusive and revolutionary party whose membership cuts across the social divide including disability. It was envisaged that this would lure many people who would view the party as an epitome of equality where all people are equal.

Like ALM 1, ALF 1 indicated that she joined ZANU PF purely for economic reasons. She wanted such benefits as the right to operate a flea market to which almost aspirants were entitled primarily by virtue of their party affiliation rather than merit. In this regards, ALF 1 confirms that she was given the opportunity to own a flea market by the ZANU PF party. She clung on to ZANU PF membership simply because she felt that that was the only way she could secure and defend her flea market against repossession by party functionaries.

At the back of her mind, ALF 1 however was never a sincere supporter of ZANU PF. Instead, her role model was the late professor John Macomb whose stern opposition to the ruling
ZANU PF stood as a source of inspiration to persons with albinism like ALF 1. In this light, she indicated that John Makumbe encouraged her to attend several political gatherings. For instance, she was involved in the MDC campaigns to win the polls in 2013. However, she suffered a lot of criticisms from her relatives for choosing that political path. Although her husband expressed no reservations about her political activities, he would always remark that if anything happens to their house in the wake of ZANU PF violence, she would be squarely responsible for the family fate.

Once more, ALF 1’s motive to actively participate in the activities of the Movement for Democratic Change were that she had been promised a good life following the party’s discovery of talent in persons with albinism as a result of the activities of the late professor John Macomb. She said the MDC party had promised to assist them with sunscreen lotions and residential as well as commercial stands after the death of Professor John Makumbe who used to cater for them; she said that MDC as a political party was sympathizing with them thus; she became interested in joining the party. Nevertheless, ALF 1 said that, the promises were only discovered to be in vain. Only one person with albinism benefited from the campaigns.

Interestingly, unlike the above participants, ALF 4 indicated that her call for political duty in 2008 was largely influenced by membership of a family that was politically active. As a result, she actively involved herself in various political activities conducted by ZANU PF especially in 2008 when she worked as an assistant for those not able to read and write. The motivating factor behind her participation in party politics was largely the family wherein some members of her family held positions in ZANU PF. Once again, the influence of the family thoughts and beliefs on Persons with disabilities, just like on any member is recurrent in this thesis. (See chapter 6 for the role of the family). This finding serves to confirm the argument
advanced by the proponents of the social model of disability that disability does not on its own amount to inability. Given appropriate recognition and place within the family life, ALF4 is able to perpetuate the family legacy. Her partisan alignment depicts the family identity.

Whilst exclusion seems to be dominant in the lives of persons with disabilities when it comes to participation in public life, there are some who are managing to break barriers and participate just like others in the mainstream society. Some do that at the haste of their relatives who hold influential positions in some organizations. Yet some strive to penetrate the iron curtains of negative social attitudes by forcing their way. On the other hand, results show that Persons with disabilities are independent human beings, capable of forming a political opinion and live by it. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Persons with disabilities have got a sound political and ideological orientation that forms part of an independent political and social identity. To this effect, ALF 3 indicates that she participates in political activities just like other people, voting for a leader of her choice in order to increase the number of votes. She confesses that her leader of choice makes a difference in leadership and has made Zimbabwe different from other countries. What guides ALF3 is not her disability per-se, but her ideological persuasion as an independent and sovereign individual citizen. Hammering on the centrality of citizenship to the lives of Persons with disabilities, Drake succinctly points out that to be a citizen is to be able to take part in decisions that create and recreate the contours of society and to be able to participate in crucial political and economic activities (Drake, 1999).

Furthermore, Persons with disabilities participate as professionals in various activities of a political and civic nature. To this effect, ALF1, VIF1, VIF4 and VIM1 are cases in point. As their testimonies show, given a level playing field, Persons with disabilities are capable of contributing immensely to the national political and economic discourse. As a lawyer by
profession, VIF4 feels that she is mandated to participate just like other citizens in policy formulation. To this effect, she boldly pointed out that her contribution towards the water policy was sound and well informed. This she said was because she was able to conduct a study on challenges brought forth by the inadequacies of the water policies before getting an opportunity as a professional to present her findings to a forum organized by policy makers. The same applies to VIF1 who, in her capacity as a civil servant occasionally works as a polling officer or even observer during elections. As an activist in disability and gender issues in her own right, she frequently attends workshops at a national level on politics, disability and elections. She however lamented that her efforts were not yielding any tangible results. Her presence did not amount to anything in terms of attaining a higher post. She said thus:

Like I disclose to you I was active in ZANU-PF because it looked like having policies that foster the participation of persons with disabilities. It was also a question of political wisdom that would be applied wherein the party was strategically positioned in terms of both ideology and stability. It looked like it was an established structure looked like it was the inevitable. The party had assured Persons with disabilities that kutorine zvinhu zviri clear zvinonzi kunenzvimbo six dzenyu kunoku dzamunogona kunopinda even at branch level even at cell level even at district level and whatever level uterine maplaces ari reserved for people with disabilities. You think maybe it’s a fair play field kuti when you get there wozowona kuti aha ipart yanaturo nagudo. Tese tirikuparty asi pane varikunwa doro varimumuti vasingagoni kukwira mumuti yaa, munongonzwa kunhuwa kwedoro chete makagara pasi. Then it’s just screaming kuti tipeiwo doro apo varimudenga! varimudenga vachiti hii doro rirkufirer. Muchi screamer mese varikunze
VIF 1 said that she joined ZANU PF because of its promises of including persons with disabilities within its structures, right from the cell through to the politburo. She however became disgruntled when she discovered that despite being assured that each structure had six posts reserved for persons with disabilities, active participation was not forthcoming. In trying to explain the nature of exclusionary politics prevailing within ZANU PF, she gave an example of the skewed and unequal relationship of the hare and baboon as depicted in the traditional folk tale. She said that the hare is invited to a party by baboons only to get there and find that the party is being held on tree top. Because the hare cannot climb a tree, baboons would enjoy some beer while the hare is looking on from below. One baboon would shout that “come on, let us enjoy, the beer tastes nice” much to the chagrin of the hare.

On a similar note, ALM 4 indicated that, his disability did not play any part in his choice to participate in the activities of ZANU PF but he just selected the party on the basis of sound principles of politics displayed by the party in question. He said that although he is very much interested in politics, the problem is that those in the party did not give him adequate opportunity to show case his abilities. Once more, although ALM 4’s disability did not inform his choice of political participation, his albinism stands out as a source of stigma stifling his chances of actively rising through party ranks just like his fellow comrades.

As an intellectual, VIM 1 is greatly involved in political and civic activities. He is a regular political commentator for a local radio station as well as on some local tabloids using pseudonyms. He prefers to add his voice on most political and policy issues in his capacity as an enlightened citizen. Pursuant to this goal, he testified that “recently I attended a workshop
organized by ZESN where people were having introspection into the elections. I strongly feel it’s a way of showing that persons with disabilities are simply not there to be fed with information. My feeling is that persons with disabilities should be proactive. They should take initiative and participate in all political and policy related activities. My belief is that when you give your opinion you are saying “look we are equally important”. In short one will be saying am part and parcel of this country so whatever happens I must be there. It is also a way of telling people that well I am as good as you are. If ever there is any weakness on my part it is not as a result of the impairment it is due to my personal and intellectual attributes”. When I take part I will also be looking at this society in general. In other words, at what point does society begin to accept me as their equal? Does society still believe that persons with disabilities should restrict their activities to charity or philanthropy?

VIM 1 recounts that even though he tries his level best to participate in civic and political activities just like any other enlightened member of society, some political parties view him as a deviant if not avaricious citizen who is not at all content with all that the party of liberation has done for him. He remarks that; “I remember one time I had a confrontation with some ZANU-Pf activists who urged me not to take part in politics. Their argument was that “You people should not take part in politics”. My question to them was; what do you mean when you say you people? I am not people but I am just one individual. I have a right to be where I want to be.

Their argument was that when you decide to take part in politics, you must not be in the opposition because you people must always appreciate that the government of ZANU PF is doing a lot for you”. But I argued with them saying “actually the government is father to everyone where ever you go whether you are in the opposition or just neutral”. The act of participating just likes others or self inclusion is in no way peculiar to political parties, it also
spills over to civil society activities. As discussed in chapter 5, Zimbabwe’s civil society organisations have not yet come to a stage where they consider disability as a human rights issue deserving their policy and programmatic attention. In light of this state of affairs, Persons with disabilities have tended to employ self inclusion as the most appropriate copying strategy to mitigate the impact of systematic exclusion.

VIF 2 is one such example of those who are managing to break barriers and participating like others in the mainstream society. She recounted that; “I did not check whether organizations such as child line, Musasa Project and others have got a disability programme or not but I have attended their meetings at the invitation of my sister. It is not that I needed help as such but I just attended their meetings so as to listen and learn. It’s not that I went there when I was in crisis but I just went there at the invitation of my sister. More so, I have always been attending some HIV and AIDS workshops. I have been invited to and attended some support groups”. VIF 2 however was quick to point out that their talk during the meetings had nothing to do with disability. This, she said points to the fact that disability is not at all understood in these organizations. To emphasize her point, VIF 2 observed that; “I have never heard them talking about disability. It’s just that at some HIV and AIDS groups, they just talk about living positively”.

On the same point, VIF 1 confessed that her personal attributes and skills as an educated woman present her with opportunities to participate in mainstream activities just like her fellow non-disabled colleagues. Referring to her area of specialization, VIF 1 confidently said that; “I am an activist in the area of gender, HIV and women’s rights. So I consult, attend workshops and sometimes I am even consulted on those issues”.

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As a pastor, VIM 4 indicated that he is an active member of local HIV and AIDS structures within his community. “As a local pastor, I am a committee member of the District AIDS Committee”. He said. By the same token, ALM 2 said that he was not feeling excluded from participating in the civic and political activities since he was educationally empowered. Implicit in ALM 2 and others’ sentiments is that there is a strong relationship between education and empowerment or participation in mainstream social and economic activities. The nexus between one’s educational attainment and social inclusion or participation is however not peculiar to this study. Catsup (2005) also discovered that the most educated Persons with disabilities would sometimes almost resent the disability label, counting themselves among the non-disabled due to their ability to lead free and comfortable lives. Although this state of affairs is perceived as illusory by some within and outside the disability fraternity who argue that such people enjoy a sense of false consciousness, it vindicates the long held belief by proponents of the social model of disability who fervently believe that disability is just but a social construct (see Oliver, 1990, Barnes, 1991, Morris, 1991 Drake, 1999 and Munsaka, 2012). As the central analytic pillar of this thesis, the central tenet of the social model is that, irrespective of the political, economic and religious character of the society in which they live, persons with disabilities are subject to oppression and negative social attitudes that inevitably undermine their person-hood and status of full citizenship (Finkelstine, 1980). Because disability, especially visual impairment and albinism largely results from limited opportunities for social and economic participation, education tends to somewhat remove or at least mitigate the severity of such limitations. Education therefore becomes an instrument of self liberation and emancipation.

From the above narratives, it is axiomatically clear that Persons with disabilities are not mere passive spectators on the political and civic arena but are trying their level best to be part
and parcel of the mainstream society. Contrary to public attitudes that tend to shut out Persons with disabilities from the national policy discourse, Persons with disabilities are able to show gross internal political efficacy. Internal political efficacy is defined by Nabatshi (2007) as the extent to which an individual people feel they can competently participate in politics. Reflecting diversity in commonality as per the criticism leveled against the totalizing tendencies of the social model of disability, the above narratives reveal that Persons with disabilities join political parties for various reasons. Some for a genuine pursuit of a political career (VIM1, VIF1, ALM2 and ALM3) others are led by role models (ALF1, ALF3 and ALF4) yet others for reasons of economic and political power.

Following from the previous discussion on political representation (see chapter 4), the above narratives paint a dent on the meritocratic nature of Zimbabwean politics, pointing towards the tendency to relegate the less powerful members of society to tokenistic if not ritualistic forms of participation. The act of “participating just like others” seems to leave a lot of variables to chance. VIF1’s allegory of the hare and baboon party is indicative of the tenacity of culture and tradition when it comes to elevating “comrades and fellow countrymen and women” to positions of power and influence in the party hierarchy.

With this in mind, the South African Model where Persons with disabilities are literally seconded to the parties via the disability movement seems the way to go. Even then, party discipline and loyalty is likely to dictate the course of events, tilting the pendulum in favour of party leaders who are in most cases non-disabled. (See O’Brien, 2012: 19 for the influence of political party leaders on marginalized groups).
7.2. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AWARENESS.

Faced with such a state of affairs, some persons with disabilities were of the opinion that for their voice or plea for participation and inclusion to be heard, there was need to raise their plight via awareness campaigns. The belief was that exclusion from civil society activities was mainly caused by society’s lack of awareness regarding the potential and plight of persons with disabilities. This sentiment finds resonance and the submissions made by key informants from the mainstream organizations who contended that they never thought disability was a human right, political or economic issue.

Concerning participation in civil society activities, ALM 1 indicated that his duty was that of fighting against injustice towards persons with albinism. He furthered his sense of agency by visiting local schools educating them on the best way to handle children with albinism. He took this decision after realizing that such children were getting a raw deal out of the education system. The issue of hot sitting, inappropriate school uniform as well as the general ignorance on the part of teachers that albinism was associated with impaired vision put together serve to constrict the educational and careers of such a social group thereby scuttling their potential to participate in national economic and political engagements. In support of such an initiative, ALM2 called upon all persons with disabilities in general and those with albinism in particular not to wait for anybody to invite them. Rather they should stand on their feet and challenge the exclusionary political, social and economic infrastructure put in place by an ablest society. Giving their contribution to the struggle for inclusion, ALM2 and VIM3 indicated that they challenged all forms of prejudice against persons with disabilities. This they did by ensuring that their image was protected each time negative remarks were passed about them by general members of society. According to these two participants, such behavior as name calling and
other forms of demeaning and dehumanizing remarks characteristic of the daily life of a person with a disability only served to discourage this social group from asserting themselves as people of dignity and worth in society.

Putting a lid on the same issue, VIM2 and VIF5 contended that in order for persons with disabilities to participate in political parties and in civil society programme activities called for a collective effort to be deployed towards educating the disability constituency on how to claim their rights.

Basically, participants felt that in most cases lack of participation was mainly caused by lack of knowledge and confidence. To this effect, participants therefore called upon the most enlightened members of the disability fraternity to educate and conscientise their counterparts even through workshops and other in-house training sessions. In the absence of financial and material resources to conduct trainings, the two participants advocated for informal and unstructured ways of educating others about the importance of claiming their rights in the midst of political, economic and civic discrimination. This was mainly because education represented a critical pillar of political and economic participation.

The above narratives reveal that persons with disabilities tried hard to participate in political or partisan activities just like other members found in the mainstream society. A deeper analysis of these narratives however would reveal that besides issues of ideology, personal and economic interests seemed to play a bigger role in influencing political leanings. A closer look at the narratives indicated that although Persons with disabilities wanted to “participate like others in society” their presence in political parties and organisations was always viewed with contempt primarily on account of the long held prejudicial beliefs about disability. According to Abrams, 2010: 1) prejudice entails “a negative evaluation of a social group or an individual that is
significantly based on the individual’s group membership”. In terms of the above narratives, the prejudices stemmed from the general perceptions held by members of political parties as well as civil society organisations that Persons with disabilities were politically impotent. Whenever they participated in political activities, they were expected to work to preserve the status quo. In other words, they were normally expected to sing from the hymn of charity and reciprocity rather than taking a political stance as independent and sovereign individuals.

In line with the current thesis, the above narratives proved that given the conducive political environment, Persons with disabilities are capable members of society, their zeal and determination to brave the weather of ‘jimcrown, negative attitudes’ and perceived uselessness showed a great deal of agency that surpassed the expectations of the supporters of the personal tragedy model of disability. Instead, such agency provides a strong impetus to the social model fanatics who see their absence from within the corridors of political and economic power as machinations of the non-disabled majority intent on scuttling progress for those considered different from the mainstream.

7.3. PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN BUSINESS AND OTHER ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES.

In spite of the numerous testimonies that Persons with disabilities encountered some challenges when they tried to participate in economic empowerment programmes (see chapter6) some Persons with disabilities managed to put up a fight to get into the world of business and participate just like others. As the narratives below reveal, Persons with disabilities survived by putting up a vigorous effort to gain a stake in the world of both formal and informal economic
activities. Business ventures characterized the life of such people as ALM2 who indicated that he operated a grocery shop in order to improve his standard of living.

In addition to being a teacher, VIF3 operated a grocery shop to augment her meager salary. “My salary is not enough. I run a grocery shop at my rural area with the assistance of my relatives. Even then, I am not satisfied with the profits since I do not have enough capital to inject into the business. I have heard about a loan scheme run by the government through a certain bank but I did not even bother to borrow money given that the interests charged were too high considering my business potential.”

Unlike VIF3, VIF1 did not have a permanent shop. She however depended on buying and selling her products using any platform including other people’s shops. In her words;

“I get myself involved in whatever is happening at the moment. I go by the wave. One should not be surprised to find me into buying and selling here, you can find me into baking cakes you can find me into buying and selling cross boarder whatever is happening. I therefore do not have a specific line of business”.

Although she had no specialized line of business, VIF1 testified her active participation in business activities, especially in buying and selling. Another interesting dimension to VIF1’s business ventures was that she relied on information about business potential from within her community. As Coble (2011) observed, VIF1’s business ventures are entirely dependent upon the availability of local information. As a teacher, her literacy gave her an age over other fellow persons with disabilities. As per the testimony below, she goes by the wave.

If people flock to South Africa, Tanzania, China or even to Zambia to buy commodities for sale back home I do so as well. If people go into banking I follow suit. For instance, in 2008
during the height of Zimbabwe’s economic doldrums, I would simply cross the border into Mozambique and buy groceries bring them to some few friends who had shops at our local shopping centre. This is how I survived the harsh economic conditions prevailing at that time.

As we speak, the common business venture is that women are going to Tanzania to buy clothes. I also go there. On Friday I am going to China to procure medical equipment that is being used by many people to make money these days.

Cross boarder trading constitutes yet another source of livelihood for Persons with disabilities. To this end, the interview conducted by the researcher with ALM2 revealed that like ALM1 and ALM2 above, ALF2 thrives on buying and selling commodities, especially clothes that she buys mainly from South Africa. Unlike her other colleagues, she usually relies on complex social networks to sell her wares to the public. She is able to first of all create demand by advertising her supplies to vendors, employees of various agencies as well as residents of her neighborhood. As a result, ALF2 even regarded cross boarder trading as too menial a job so much such that she was even ashamed of disclosing that vocation to the researcher. The conversation went thus: Researcher: what really are you doing for a living?

**ALF2:** So right now am doing this and that

**Researcher:** Like what

**ALF2:** Like going to South Africa buying things come back to Zimbabwe and selling them

**Researcher:** What do you normally bring from South Africa?

**ALF:** Clothes mainly clothes. I buy clothes, bring them into the country and sell them.

**Researcher:** Is this what you do for a living?
ALF2: Yes, I am even able to pay my own school fees. My mother occasionally chips in here and there but in most instances, I am self reliant. Ya its like I have nothing to do at the moment.

I have tried to make frantic efforts to access a loan from government programmes but to no avail.

The challenge related to lack of government support toward the self-help projects embarked upon by Persons with disabilities has received immense emphasis as a sure barrier towards their self reliance. Like ALF2, VIF1 also laments lack of government support toward her quest to embark on some productive business venture saying that this has reduced her business activities simply to buying and selling. Giving her contribution on this issue, VIF1 said that my understanding of economic empowerment is that one cannot strictly rely on buying and selling only but on producing goods and services. To this effect, I have tried my level best to secure myself a loan and some kind of a place to operate from but it would seem as if doors are closed for me to enter into any form of production. The only productive activity I am able to undertake is baking of cakes and knitting winter jesses and gloves on demand. Like VIF1, VIF2 is anxiously waiting for a day when doors will be opened for people like her to gain access to loans mainly from government. She would like to venture into some small business; her income from work is too inadequate for that. She however has got a positive business mind. “It’s only that my income does not suffice. I want to get myself involved into buying and selling. To be more specific, if my financial position improves, I would like to trade mainly in Alovera products”. As a sign of hope, she thinks that if she gets a loan from work as was promised, she definitely would embark on some business venture to cushion herself against poverty.
Summarizing the plight of Persons with disabilities when it comes to economic empowerment, VIFI contended that the most desirable situation for me is that a person should have some piece of land to operate from. A person needs her own mine or any tangible productive entity to stay afloat. This predicament however is not peculiar to me. She said. She indicated that as a gender and disability activist, she was saddened by the fact that women with disabilities were finding it hard to penetrate the world of business. More so, persons with disabilities I have worked with are extremely poor that they even have got no access to a mere residential stand, let alone a house simply because they just do not have money. Once again, this corroborates the assertions made about disability by the proponents of the social model.

According to Davis (1995) disability just like normality is just a part of historically constructed ideological discourse. As such, argues Davis, normality and disability carry no biological meanings which can be fixed upon the body itself; instead, they attain meaning through a process in which bodily traits are interpreted as linguistic signifiers within certain ideological contexts.

In spite of the above sentiments, Persons with disabilities were not by-standers in the midst of economic adversity. Rather, they were active agents who embarked on various self sustained business ventures to keep themselves afloat. As per the discussion that follows, they strive to get a niche in both formal and informal economic activities.

7.3.1. Street vending.

For those who found it difficult to embark on more advanced and taxing business ventures like cross boarder trading or running grocery shops, street vending became another survival strategy. Street vending has come to represent an important vocation for most Zimbabwean who, due to
the prevailing economic downturn has not been able to find formal employment. This was the case with Persons with disabilities who, even if formally employed engaged themselves in street vending in order to augment their incomes. One participant who worked as a teacher testified thus: “Dzimwe ndedzekungomhanya-mhanya zvinongoitwa unongonzwa kuti kuno kurikuitwa zvakati, unogona kuti haungaseneri ukapinda here, unenge uchingoona kuti zvirisei-sei? Panongoita kutengesa –tenga zvinana airtime zvinganyanye kunetsa ehe. Unogona kumbozvipindira uchingoita zvukutengesa tengesa, unotoda zvinhu uchitengesa. yaangatendeka kuti ndiyoyo? Translated to English as:

One just responds to the market tide of the time. Mostly, buying and selling becomes the major activities. I sell whatever seems lucrative including air-time. Unlike VIM3 who used vending as a means to supplement his meager monthly salary that he received as a high school teacher, ALM1 and ALM3 treated vending as the primary source of income. To this effect, ALM1 and ALM 3 emphasized that vending was their only source of livelihood. Their places of work were the streets of Harare. Their line of commodities was varied, largely affected by forces of supply and demand. Their usual commodities were pirated DVDs, tomatoes, books and stationary among others.

Both ALM1 and ALM3 complained of the treatment they got from the police. They complained that municipal police continually harassed them by confiscating their wares. From the above findings, vending was largely undertaken by those people not in formal employment. In a collapsing economy like that of Zimbabwe however, vending has become a source of livelihood even for those in formal employment whose incomes are not enough to sustain them. This finding is in consonance with study conducted by Moyo (2009). Moyo found out that in
Zimbabwe, vending had become an ingrained survival strategy in the middle of gross unemployment.

On the whole, the above narratives simply demonstrate the innate abilities in Persons with disabilities to fend for themselves. Such innate business abilities within Persons with disabilities persuaded one of the pioneer black philanthropists Jairos Jiri to believe that given the necessary skills and startup capital, Persons with disabilities are able to pull themselves out of poverty (Munsaka, 2012, emphasis by the author). In an interview with the Bantu Mirror, Mr. Jiri pointed out that: “if only they (disabled people) got something on which to make a start, they are prepared to help themselves” (The Bantu Mirror, 8 August, 1953, cited by Devlieger, 1995:43).

Although Jairos Jiri’s approach has been widely criticized by some within the disability fraternity as an epitome of the personal tragedy model of disability, (see Devlieger, 1995, Chataika, 2007 and Munsaka, 2012), the current thesis believes that the nation cannot take away the emancipatory nature of his educational and vocational training ventures. As Munsaka would have it, the work of Jairos Jiri signaled the value of individual agency. This individual agency has seen Persons with disabilities defying all odds to penetrate the crevices of the somewhat impervious iron curtains of political and economic institutions and environments and sometimes emerging victorious in the end. As the following discussion reveals, Jairos Jiri’s contribution to the quest for self reliance by Persons with disabilities remains indelible on the national political and economic script.

7.3.2 Formal employment.

Most participants interviewed are in formal employment. The typical example is that of ALM1 who got a job as an occupational therapist at a local Hospital. His source of living therefore is a
salary from his job as an occupational therapist. The same applies to VIM2 who is a civil servant. His source of livelihood is largely a salary. Confirming the same, he said thus: “I guess the bulk of my livelihood comes from my salary. To be precise, almost all of it comes from my salary”. For VIF2, her main source of livelihood comes from her job as a telephonist at a local bank. “I got employed at a local bank in 2002 as a switchboard operator. That is my only source of livelihood. I cannot practically say I am poor, given that I am able to buy some things for myself. I have my own electrical gadgets; I am able to buy some food. I may be broke like anybody else especially towards the end of the month but I consider myself lucky to have this job”. Unlike VIF1, VIM1, though a teacher does not stay at the school but owns a house. “I completed my degree in 1985 from the university. Thereafter, I was employed as a teacher, a position I hold till now. I cannot say I am very poor if I compare myself with my fellow disabled colleagues who live a life of street begging. I am fortunate in life given that I have a car.” Unlike VIF2 who works for a local bank, VIF3 is a civil servant who survives mainly on her salary. For VIF5, the only source of livelihood is income that she gets from her employment as a civil servant. “

VIF5 take pride in her occupation as a civil servant. Like VIM1 above, she considers herself very lucky to have had some education which has earned her a professional qualification. Comparing herself to other women with disabilities who are both unemployed and unmarried, she sees her situation as rather fortunate. She narrates thus: “the only advantage with some of us is that we often get some income in the form of a salary. We are not like other colleagues of ours who languish in poverty. Even if we are married, our spouses do respect us because of our income earning capacity. But the majority of our disabled colleagues do not participate in most economic activities as they live a life of begging.” VIF5 has no other source of income except
her salary and that of her husband. Interestingly, she values marriage so much as both a source of social status and a buffer against the vagaries of poverty and squalor endemic in the lives of women with disabilities. In addition, she derives satisfaction from the fact that her professional status and income earning capacity serve to elevate her to the level of an equal in marriage.

On the contrary, VIF1 is a teacher at a local school. She however supplements her meager salary with some income generating projects (see testimonies on business ventures above). To cut on transport and other costs, she is accommodated within the school premises where she neither pays rent nor transport. Unlike VIF5, VIF1 is single but is always complaining about constricted opportunities mainly caused by disability.

Just like VIF1, VIM3 is a teacher at a rural school. The researcher caught up with him at a local university where he had come to further his studies. During the course of the interview, he told the researcher that his main source of livelihood is a salary. He however complements his salary by engaging himself in informal trading. As a result, he boasts of having his own good rural home, livestock plus a car. In terms of poverty and deprivation, he considers himself fortunate.

The above narratives draw on three major themes central to the analysis of the lives of persons with disabilities. These are social status, economic wellbeing as well as the comfort derived from having a job. When it comes to social status, VIF5 and VIM3 seem to quickly mention marriage, a comfortable family life and equality within that marriage. In addition, VIM1, VIM3 and VIF5 consider themselves less poor in comparison to their fellow disabled counterparts. The ownership of a car and a home constitute symbols of a satisfying social status. Virtually all the above narratives point towards a better social status in comparison with other
disabled persons. This simply shows an appreciation of the vicious circle of poverty and disability (see Yeo, 2005 for a detailed analysis between poverty and disability).

Secondly, this social status comes along with economic well-being. The symbols of economic well-being are mainly a reliable income source coming through a salary, ownership of property such as a car as well as a descent home. Last but not least, the comfort of holding onto a reliable job seems to constitute yet another source of gratification for the above participants. Reference is always made to the fact that “we are far much better than most of our colleagues who live a life of begging”. This finding runs in sharp contrast to the proposition advanced in chapter 2 and 6 that poverty among Persons with disabilities is mainly caused by laziness and lack of initiative. Contrary to “the bell curve” idea popularized by Herrnstein and Murray (1994), persons with disabilities are active agents who strive for the best in life in the middle of various constraints.

7.3.3. Help from friends and relatives

To a limited extent, Persons with disabilities depend on family and relatives for upkeep. This comes in the form of being accommodated at a family house or even getting direct funding or support from concerned family members.

For VIF2, the family house is her only source of accommodation. Although she is formerly employed, she feels that chances of getting her own house in Harare are too slim given her lowly paid job. “I stay in a family house. The house has got two wings. I stay in one of the wings whilst my other brother and his family occupy the other wing. The fact of the matter is that when my father’s brother passed away, my father proceeded to inherit the wife. So upon taking over the wife he had two children with this woman. So I am staying with one of them. He
has just completed his ordinary level. Apparently, he did not do that well as he only managed to pass four subjects. I however did not make him hopeless. Instead, I told him that there is hope, you can as well pass those subjects that you had failed”. VIF2 therefore gets emotional support from paternal relatives. The relationship is however reciprocal as she also ploughs something back to her family in terms of funds. Unlike VIF2, ALM3 heavily relies on his family members for financial and material support. This however brings no comfort to his life hence He realizes that this state of affairs is far from sustainable. As a result, his wish is to go back to school so that he gets a secure job as a means of self-reliance. Unfortunately, lack of a reliable income source makes his thoughts difficult to translate into tangible action. He is therefore caught up in a vicious circle of poverty with no immediate solution in sight.

Without education and other opportunities in life, ALM3 admits that he is just but a family dependent. He however wishes to further his education resources permitting so that he can as well graduate from the yoke of poverty and perpetual dependency.

ALM3’s situation is also synonymous with that of ALM1 who heavily relies on the financial and material support from his brothers. “I am now living on the assistance from my elder brother. My brother was trying his level best to cater for my needs. I however am concerned that some of my relatives are not paying attention to my needs”. On the other hand, VIM4 as a pastor lives on alms given by his congregants. “As a pastor, I get some allowances in the form of groceries or cash from my congregants.”

From the above narratives, the need for economic and social space and independence is paramount among Persons with disabilities. Resources permitting; VIF2 would like to have her own house. The same applies to ALM2 and ALM3 who heavily rely on family members for survival. Interestingly, these two gentlemen feel that the only way out of this situation is to get
educated. For VIM4, a life of alms and gifts seems perennial, although he wishes to do the best for himself. Once again, the need for empowerment for persons with disabilities is paramount.

7.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

The chapter sought to lay bare some crucial facts about the inherent abilities of Persons with disabilities to actively participate in various economic undertakings. At a political level, it has been shown how Persons with disabilities try to force their way through the net by “participating like others”. Although this has its own challenges, it has been shown that at least the individual sense of agency is there to guide and direct this group towards self determination.

On the economic front, the quest for survival amidst gross inequality and a skewed economic environment is pushing Persons with disabilities to stand firm and face up to the challenges of life. Employing the “normal” and generally acceptable means of survival, Persons with disabilities were able to identify business opportunities to their advantage. Like everyone else, some operated grocery shops, some were actively involved in cross-border trade and yet others lived a life of vending on the streets of Harare. In general, the chapter has shown that some of them were in formal employment. Interestingly, except for a few individuals, most of these were employed as civil servants. Borrowing from the social model of disability, narratives clearly show that the work ethic does exist even among Persons with disabilities, with many even wishing to attain high educational qualifications that would earn them descent jobs.
CHAPTER EIGHT
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 INTRODUCTION
Having examined the relevant literature on how policies are made, the link between political participation and economic empowerment as well as the vulnerability of persons with disabilities, this chapter now provides a synthesis of both views from literature and findings born out of the research process as presented in the preceding chapters. This chapter begins with a summary of what has been discussed throughout the thesis before drawing some conclusions on the likely implications of the findings, finally, recommendations are passed on the basis of the conclusions reached.

8.1 SUMMARY
The need for persons with disabilities to actively participate in national political activities remains the central argument for this thesis. It has been argued that unless and until persons with disabilities actively take part in the political processes that inform public policy, all efforts directed towards the social and economic emancipation of this social group will be futile.

The central thesis here is that the bulk of persons with disabilities are living in poverty. Whilst other studies (see Chataika (2007 and Munsaka 2012) have made a splendid attempt at examining the extent to which PWDs access higher education and gain inclusion on the development agenda respectively, there is a gap in explaining the reason why PWDs remain over represented in all poverty indicators both at a national and international level. To this effect, the current thesis posits that poverty is due to lack of economic and political power other than the perceived lack of capacity borne out of impairment. The current thesis has explained this by
fronting the two disabilities namely: visual impairment and albinism, the understanding being that these disability types, given conducive environments, can independently work and sustain themselves with minimum assistance from both the state and family members.

To achieve this, the study put forward the following research questions:

1. To what extent are persons with disabilities involved in the crafting of economic empowerment policies?

2. Do Zimbabwe’s civil society organizations include persons with disabilities in their lobbying activities for various policies to government?

3. What coping strategies do persons with disabilities employ to remedy their political and economic situation?

4. What measures can be taken by both government and civil society agencies to enhance the social inclusion of persons with disabilities?

These questions shall be addressed in chronological order to provide a coherent and succinct summary of study findings.

8.1.1 To what extent are persons with disabilities involved in the formulation of economic empowerment policies?

Participation in policy formulation is seen through the process of equal share of posts in various arms and institutions of the state. There is general agreement that lack of representation within these structures and institutions is just but a recipe for disaster when it comes to the dreams of persons with disabilities to play an active role in the national economic and political life of Zimbabwe. The thesis showed that government had no concrete disability policy. As such, government officials use their discretion when it comes to national disability issues.
there was general consensus from participants that persons with disabilities were not full participating in various national structures and institutions. Nevertheless, persons with disabilities expressed their preparedness to participate in the political, governance and economic institutions once an opportunity becomes available.

The motive behind their participation was three fold namely:

(i) To advance the political and economic ambitions of persons with disabilities that in their opinion were not being fulfilled under the present political arrangement.

(ii) To provide role models against which other children with disability could aspire towards. This stemmed from the observation that lack of participation could as well come as a result of lack of a role model.

(iii) To protect their interests of a just, fair and disability friendly society within which every Zimbabwean citizen, in spite of his/her impairment is given a chance to prosper.

Results from focus group discussions reveal that persons with disabilities avoided political meetings for fear of sustaining ‘multiple impairments’ emanating from a violent and restive situation triggered by a complex wave of political contestation characteristic of Zimbabwean political processes.

Persons with disabilities showed their interest to effectively contribute their expertise to all national policies. Of paramount significance is that PWDs are ready to take public offices once the opportunities become available. This stems out of the realization that political and bureaucratic representation helps in communicating the peculiar needs and interests of such a social group. The discussion has also noted some policy gaps that are a clear sign of the absence of persons with albinism including their continued subjection to hot sitting in most schools as well as lack of a special uniform designed to protect them from the sun. At another level, the
very fact that public gatherings are usually conducted at open spaces subjecting persons with albinism to direct sun rays was cited as a shining example of lack of representation of such a social group within civic and political parties.

Although persons with visual impairments have a representative at senate, such representatives are parliamentary novices without any experience to push the disability agenda forward. Evidence from ethnographic studies gave the government’s perspective on disability. The thesis revealed the difficulties encountered by PWDs as they try to penetrate the social, political and economic life of society. Narratives concerning lack of promotion at work, the propensity to totalize and categories all PWDs has its roots in the long held view that disability as a state of being de-individuates the bearer, making him/her nothing short of a piece of trash in a dust bin. Furthermore, the prevailing attitudes are embedded within society and are present in both public and private sectors of the economy. Faced with such a predicament, PWDs saw advocacy as the way to go. The hope was that advocacy had the likely effect of triggering some changes in attitudes; from exclusion to inclusion.

The net effect of all the above obstacles to participation was that persons with disabilities tend to be relegated to the peripheries of the national policy making discourse. Therefore, poverty and social deprivation that has become characteristic of disability in Zimbabwe is largely caused by lack of political and economic power rather than personal deficiencies borne out of impairments. This therefore vindicates the social model of disability. The findings have shown that the disabling environment and not the albinism or visual impairment constitutes the barrier to participation in political and economic life of the country. The next question has to deal with
whether the civil society organisations present a level playing field in which persons with
disability find space to express their feelings.

8.1.2 Do Zimbabwe’s civil society organizations include persons with disabilities in their
lobbying activities for various policies to government?

PWDs were fully aware of the mandate and functions of civil society organisations. On the other
hand, members of civil society organisations interviewed admitted that they excluded PWDs in
their programme activities mainly on account of negative attitudes. These attitudes stemmed
largely from cultural misgivings that tend to portray disability as either an abominable state of
being whose bearer is cast with a dye of inferiority or simply as an area that requires specialist-
attention and expertise that is not readily available within these organisations. In line with what
has come to be referred to as the politics of presence, (see Philips, 1995), another challenge
hindering the participation of PWDs relates to the fact that these organisations are reluctant to
employ professionals with disabilities. Even if donors place disability programming as a
prerequisite for funding, agencies still proceed to formulate and implement disability related
programmes on the basis of misinformation. This has resulted in these programmes falling far
short of the inclusive character permissible in disability rights programming.

Given the central role played by civil society organisations on the policy formulation
arena, findings pointed to the fact that the participation of PWDs was severely curtailed.

The fact that disability was not considered as a civic or human rights issue by civil
society organizations was even emphasized by key informants. During interviews, key
informants even blamed their own agencies for turning their back and literally shutting out
persons with disabilities. Some reasons were however advanced for such a state of affairs. First
of all, unlike gender issues that are championed from three fronts that is, from women’s
organizations, government as well as the mainstream civil society organizations including service organizations, disability issues were primarily left to disabled persons organizations. Secondly, disability was left out of ignorance. Society just could not think about it. Disability is a phenomenon possessing remote existence in the minds of many. The study did examine the operations of the disability movement in the country. Submission from participants pointed to the fact that most disabled person’s organizations were not well managed. They were formed out of emotions and feelings of discrimination from society. However, their leadership tended to lose the critical democratic ideals that foster good governance and transparency. The other challenge besetting the disability movement was what Oliver (1990) referred to as the disability fragmentation. Although participants viewed DPOs as a useful platform for airing their views and as their mouthpiece concerning disability rights, some believed that lack of unity was a major drawback. The contention put forward by such participants was that Persons with disabilities tended to discriminate against each other on account of disability type. Participants even lamented the fragmentation prevailing among DPOs as one of the reasons behind government’s failure to take disability issues with the degree of urgency and seriousness they deserve.

Participants pointed towards the general propensity of the leadership of the disability movement to self aggrandise. In concurrence with the sentiments on poverty and unemployment articulated by participants, evidence gathered during conversations with PWDs indicated that poverty and social deprivation was at the centre of the demise of a strong and vibrant disability movement in Zimbabwe.

Besides setbacks caused by poverty, the founder syndrome or lack of a democratic space as well as lack of unity or fragmentation being key obstacles in the development of a robust
disability movement in Zimbabwe, some exogenous factors were identified by participants. Most prominent among these factors was that the able-bodied persons tended to patronize and sometimes misrepresent disability as a charity issue. Of prime concern was the exclusionary nature of the administrative styles employed by the able-bodied patrons of these DPOs. Participants indicated that disability has always been a source of employment for the able-bodied persons who ride on the charity model of disability. As a result, the able-bodied leadership of disabled persons organisations tended to elevate themselves well above their disabled counterparts. This amounted to the reduction of persons with disabilities to mere patients in need of charity and medical treatment rather than as equals and compatriots. Such findings were therefore in concurrence with Oliver’s conceptualization of the medical model of disability and the deleterious consequences that are bound once society adopts it in its dealings with disability.

Lack of financial support was yet another obstacle facing the operations of DPOs in Zimbabwe. Participants however observed that despite the lack of funding, DPOs had a stake in the policy formulation process in Zimbabwe.

8.1.3 What are the major barriers militating against the quest for persons with disabilities to participate in national political and economic policies and programmes?

The study revealed a number of endogenous and exogenous factors contributing to the failure of PWDs when it comes to participation in national political and economic processes. These included poor education, negative social attitudes, poverty as well as a feeling of hopelessness and self pity on the part of PWDs themselves borne out of continued exclusion. Education was identified as critical to citizens’ participation in political and economic processes of their communities. The findings revealed how Zimbabwe’s educational system lingered between special and inclusive education. To aggravate the situation, teachers as products of their own
societies stood out as contributing to the failure of inclusive education. This manifested in their inherent social attitudes, myths and misconceptions about disability. Examples from other countries like South Africa and New Zealand showed how the education of PWDs even in the so-called developed countries passed through a myriad of challenges. These challenges, like those found in Zimbabwe were based not on poverty but on societal attitudes. Unlike the situation in Zimbabwe, examples from other countries showed that the education of PWDs was steadily improving. Findings indicated that even the government of Zimbabwe did acknowledge the material needs of learners with disabilities and was doing its best to ameliorate the situation besetting them. Worse still, testimonies from participants revealed that teachers were usually not experienced in illustrating graphs, diagrams and other illustrations to a child who could not see from the chalk board. During focus group discussions with persons with visual impairments it was revealed that teachers, especially at secondary school would automatically discourage them from attending mathematics lessons. In extreme circumstances, one focus group participant confessed that teachers would show their displeasure at a visually impaired pupil by simply writing and illustrating mathematics on the chalk board in silence much to the disadvantage of visually impaired pupils. This was also emphasized by a seasoned Braille list in charge of a well-known Braille centre who indicated that none in the history of Zimbabwe’s education had ever requested mathematics books in Braille, especially at advanced level. As a result, the centre did not even bother itself acquiring the requisite skills to Braille mathematics books for tertiary levels.

Findings demonstrated that in the absence of inclusive education, the participation of PWDs in the formulation of public policies in Zimbabwe remained nothing short of a pipe dream. During a focus group discussion with persons with albinism, it was revealed that the
majority of persons with albinism came from poor socio-economic backgrounds. As such, they did not have collateral security needed to participate in the economic empowerment programmes. Focus group discussions also revealed that persons with disabilities were not benefiting much from the present economic empowerment programmes mainly due to their disability. Persons with disabilities therefore found it difficult to penetrate the national economy. A flair of bureaucratic attitudes as well as the need for collateral security remained the main obstacles against their participation in economic empowerment policies and programmes. Worst of all, their impairments stood in the way of any effort they could pursue to improve themselves economically.

The perceived incapacities of women with disabilities to determine their own destiny mainly due to their lack of sight resulted in them being refused access to both agricultural and mining business ventures. Their impairment gave birth to biological and psychological inferiority that culminated in their failure to supervise their own employees both in the mining or farming business ventures. The only option left was either to benefit from charity or to forge partnerships with the able bodied people.

Discussions with participants indicated that persons with disabilities were put in a social class or category. They were viewed as a composite unit rather than as a heterogeneous group. Any behavioral traits exhibited by one tended to be associated with all persons. Findings however revealed that society classified these people in terms of their individual disabilities. Persons with visual impairments were usually seen as beggars and people of low education and status in society. on the other hand, at a political level, persons with albinism were seen as belonging to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change simply because one of their famous activists (the late professor John Makumbe) was an outspoken and ardent critique of the
ruling ZANU PF party as well as an influential member of the MDC party. Such a state of affairs even resulted in persons with disabilities accepting and internalizing that class narrative. It was therefore revealed that they treated each other as blood brothers. The thesis however emphasized that persons with disabilities were a heterogeneous group. This heterogeneity stemmed from environmental and social characteristics. The environmental aspects of difference are determined by family attitudes, geographical location, the social groupings to which they belong as well as the general life chances open to each individual. At the same time, individual characteristics also make their lives different even if they live in a similar environment. Persons with disabilities are also women, children, mothers, husbands, the middle-aged, passive or active in nature etc. Thus, disability should not be separated from the rest of the changing and/or permanent characteristics that make up their lives. It was further emphasized that persons with disabilities were first of all human beings with many different characteristics and positive aspects in life in addition to impairment and disability at a different time, place or occasion in their lives.

The thesis identified a number of exogenous and endogenous factors standing in the way of persons with disabilities. These included among others poor education as well as limited educational opportunities that in turn forestall employability and the quest for upward social mobility, negative attitudes on the part of bureaucrats that stifle the ambitions of PWDs to participate in economic empowerment programmes such as the Indigenisation fund as well as general lack of collateral security due to the vicious circle of poverty and disability. In addition, society treat PWDs as lesser beings whose presence at public gatherings brought public discomfort.

Further to that, other factors at play were endogenous. These included low self esteem, preferring a life of begging and drinking at the expense of hard work. In addition, persons with
disabilities were said to form a cocoon around them making inclusion and participation in mainstream society difficult.

Discussions with participants, especially from focus group and key informant interviews indicated that there was a general belief that disability was contagious. As a result, many participants, especially those with albinism had problems accessing public places simply because their appearance was likely to raise alarm and panic from the public that felt such a physical condition could be transmitted to them in one way or the other. In-depth interviews as well as focus group discussions with Persons with albinism exposed that those attending school were even shunned by fellow class mates due to myths surrounding the transmission of albinism.

In line with the current thesis, the impact of social attitudes, myths and misconceptions about disability on the ability and potentialities of the bearers to participate in the political and economic life of society is practically difficult to brush aside. Being classified as beggars in need of nothing short of charity, being voiceless and in need of an able-bodied person to communicate one’s needs and feelings at the hospital, being denied the right to continue in employment simply because one has lost sight as well as being denied the right to own land and exploit minerals simply due to perceived incapacity all together speak volumes about the participation of this social group in the formulation of economic empowerment policies.

8.1.4 What copying strategies do persons with disabilities employ to remedy their political and economic situation?

In the midst of exclusion, PWDs have not just set on their laurels in the face of repeated political, economic and civic ostracism. Rather; they have devised a number of strategies to enable them to gain entry into the mainstream society. Compromise and reciprocity are one of such strategies. Although this viewpoint was not widely emphasized by persons with albinism, their quest for
inclusion was readily expressed; especially when some of them pointed out that they worked hard to get married to ‘black people’ and to ‘participate just like others’. The tone however was suggestive of the need to meet on equal terms. That is, a situation where the able-bodied did not impose their values and perceptions on PWDs but treat them as independent and sovereign human beings with economic and political aspirations.

On the economic front, the quest for survival amidst gross inequality and a skewed economic environment was pushing PWDs to stand firm and face up to the challenges of life. Employing the ‘normal’ and generally acceptable means of survival, PWDs were able to identify business opportunities to their advantage. Like everyone else, some operated grocery shops, some were actively involved in cross-border trade, while others lived a life of vending on the streets of Harare. Whilst some were entirely dependent on vending as a source of livelihood, others used vending simply to supplement incomes obtained from formal employment. As a sign that PWDs were more than prepared to effectively meaningfully contribute towards their lives and to the good of their communities and society in general, findings revealed that some of them were in formal employment. Interestingly, except for a few individuals, most of these were employed as civil servants. Borrowing from the social model of disability, narratives clearly showed that the work ethic did exist even among PWDs, with many even wishing to attain high educational qualifications that would earn them decent jobs. Such a sense of agency portrayed by PWDs revealed the central role and potential that lies in PWDs to represent and emancipate them.

In keeping with the current thesis, persons with albinism and visual impairments are able to survive outside social protection programmes from government. In the same manner, government could serve a lot of financial resources simply by creating an enabling environment
within which such individuals could participate in the formal and non-formal economic activities.

Throughout this thesis, it was made very clear that poverty among PWDs especially those with visual impairments and albinism was a function not simply of their impairment or incapacities as individuals but of the prevailing attitudes of relevant financial institutions, government bureaucrats as well as from laws that are skewed in favor of the able-bodied persons. Without generalizing these results to all disability types, Such a state of affairs directly vindicated the chorus of the social model of disability that “it is society that disables us by its laws, attitudes and institutions that do not take account of those with differential abilities” (Mtetwa, 2013).

8.2 CONCLUSIONS

From all the discussions put forward in this thesis, the following conclusions are drawn;

The participation of Persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe is greatly subdued. Persons with disabilities are not represented at the top echelons of the national bureaucracy and even in cabinet. This failure to recognize the importance of disability as a crucial stratification dichotomy has meant that the legislative and executive arms of government are devoid of the need for representation and participation of such a social group.

Political parties do not think that persons with disabilities have the required capacity to be useful in their parties. Negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities therefore still prevail in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, those attitudes and beliefs tend to guide government officials and
civic leaders in their conduct of official business with the public. The net effect of this is the automatic closure of political and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities find themselves living in extreme poverty and powerlessness mainly because of prevailing social attitudes. Implicitly, for persons with disabilities to benefit from the national economic policies and programmes, the social and attitudinal barriers to participation need to be removed first. Consequently, persons with disabilities irrespective of their economic environments, tend to have a higher than average likelihood of living in poverty. Therefore, poverty among persons with disabilities cannot be simply explained in terms of disabling attitudes and social prejudices rather, they are rooted in structural inequalities and social processes.

Evidence from ethnographic discussions and focus group submissions indicated that Zimbabwean society took persons with disabilities as less sophisticated, gullible and docile beings whose social and political life is highly predictable in compliance to the dominant political order.

The civil society has also taken a leaf from government and elected to relegate disability issues either to charity or to disabled people’s organizations which are technically and financially incapacitated to launch a formidable political challenge against the structurally pauperizing conditions.

The view that disability was a special area in terms of programming requiring specialist human and material resources not readily available to mainstream civil society organisations, contributes immensely towards lack of a disability agenda in these agencies. Presumably as a result of such a scenario, civil society policies and programme activities tend to ignore the
peculiar needs of persons with disabilities. This remains so particularly with regards to the provision of materials or literature in Braille for the visually impaired citizens.

Findings have tended to confirm the existence of a positive relationship between disability and lack of employment opportunities. In line with the current thesis, lack of economic and political power was the main cause of poverty among persons with disabilities. This was particularly so for those with visual impairments and albinism who have the potential for self-reliance given the appropriate platform for active participation in the national economy. This is akin to the long contested belief that to approximate the normal in society, PWDs must strive to shoulder an extra load to surpass ordinary expectations. The burden is upon PWDs to prove their worth before getting a license to participate in mainstream social, political and economic activities.

The family as a primary agent of socialization contributes immensely to the molding of character for PWDs from childhood. To that effect, the thesis observed that a sense of responsibility to one’s family and community was not nurtured early enough to foster a sense of assertiveness in later life. In pursuit of the central theme of this thesis, the greater the social barriers PWDs encountered as they try to negotiate through various institutions of the economy, the more the constraints to participation encountered.

The myths and misconceptions concerning disability were still firmly rooted in Zimbabwean society. As such, having a family member with albinism tended to send shivers down the spines of many in society. not only that, the fear of genetic transmission of albinism practically set this social group aside as social outcasts and least preferred relatives, playmates, and even in-laws. In all intents and purposes, disability in Zimbabwe is equated to abnormality in a normal Zimbabwean society. No matter what people might say about social inclusion, integration,
mainstreaming and other issues, in the competitive world of business, people tended to evoke their cultural perceptions. As such, employers, particularly in the private sector were reluctant to employ persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities found it difficult to penetrate the national economy, with a flair of bureaucratic attitudes as well as the need for collateral security as the main obstacles against their participation in economic empowerment activities and their disability also stood in the way of any effort they could make to participate.

The study revealed that educational opportunities for persons with disabilities were limited. To that end, persons with disabilities felt that government was not doing enough to provide appropriate learning facilities including modern infrastructure and technology to facilitate learning. Even in cases were their families were not financially constrained, persons with disabilities were not prioritized when it comes to allocating financial resources for education.

The thesis revealed that almost all schools and universities in the country did not have literature in Braille. This state of affairs tended to negatively affect the prospects of such a social group when it comes to promotion at work. Arguably, this accounts for the lower positions occupied by the visually impaired within the national bureaucracy.

In addition, there was a feeling that some of the problems faced by children with albinism and visual impairments were simply a function of negative attitudes endured by them from teachers. These were some of the educational circumstances persons with disabilities found themselves in simply on account of their impairments rather than their inert incapacities borne out of impairments. The end result therefore was extreme poverty, lack of participation in public life as
well as impaired capacity for self representation at various levels of the policy formulation process.

In spite of a life of prejudice and discrimination, there was evidence that the work ethic did exist even among PWDs, with many even wishing to attain high educational qualifications that would earn them decent jobs. There were indications of the astute abilities and determination by persons with disabilities to refute the allegation that impairment amounted to disability. With the appropriate rehabilitation interventions, a person with impairment could function in varied professional vocations, a sense of self-pity, inferiority and low self-esteem caused mainly by the vicissitudes of a life of rejection, ridicule, and humiliation also helped to keep persons with disabilities at bay when it comes to the participation in public and social life. Lower levels of educational attainment for persons with disabilities provided fertile ground for the lowered sense of self-esteem. The ultimate result of low educational levels was blamed for reduced capacity to fight for political and economic space in society. The net effect of all the above impediments is that PWDs have been relegated to the peripheries of the national policy making discourse.

Although various accolades were showered on the capacity of DPOs in facilitating the empowerment and participation of PWDs in various facets of life, a number of weaknesses within the disability movement were also cited. These internal weaknesses, if not addressed could pose a serious threat to the very purpose of its existence. The disability movement in Zimbabwe was weakened by infighting and stiff competition for scarce financial resources from donor agencies. However, the current thesis found it unfair and unproductive for the disability
fraternity to “submit and give in” to a well orchestrated fate couched by government through
countervailing and retrogressive social protection policies that kept PWDs in perpetual poverty.

Disabled persons organizations tended to be predominantly small and represent a single
disability category. Their areas of operation were therefore small and insignificant. This made it
difficult for them to have any policy impact at a national scale. The study therefore observed
that there was gain in unity of purpose. To this effect, effort must be made to minimize the
differences and work towards common goals if the disability movement is to present a
formidable force to government in the fight against social exclusion and marginalization.

On the same note, disability was observed to be more of a source of employment for the
able-bodied persons who ride on the charity model of disability. All these shortcomings have got
dire implications for the participation of PWDs in the formulation of economic empowerment
policies.

It emerged from the findings that disability was too diverse a social, economic and political as
well as medical issue that required diverse representation. Like beauty, disability was in the eyes
of the beholder. AS such, the national definition of disability did not include albinism. The net
effect of such an omission was that persons with albinism continued to live in suspense. They
were being discriminated by the mainstream society on account of their skin pigmentation, low
vision as well as vulnerability to the sun rays.

In light of the above facts, poverty and social deprivation that has become characteristic
of disability in Zimbabwe therefore was largely caused by lack of political and economic power
rather than personal deficiencies borne out of impairments. This therefore vindicates the social
model of disability.
8.3. RECOMMENDATIONS.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, a number of recommendations are given. These recommendations have conveniently been classified into three broad areas namely; those concerning the role of government in promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in national economic and political institutions and processes. In addition, other recommendations relate to the role expected to be played by civil society organisations in ensuring disability mainstreaming. Last but not least, persons with disabilities themselves both in their individual capacities and as part of the disability movement should play a more active role in fighting for space within political and economic corridors of power.

8.3.1 The role of government.

(i) Government should ensure that society accepts persons with disabilities as equals. This it should do by way of making sure that persons with disabilities occupy higher posts in government so that they become a common sight. Society that way is more likely to not only know that they exist but it will know that they are useful members of society with their own capacities just like others.

(ii) Further to that, another strategy for mainstreaming disability is for government to establish a disability desk or focal point in every ministry including parastatals. Such a desk should serve as a consultation focal point for the formulation and implementation of disability inclusive policies and strategies.

(iii) Given the apparent dearth of disability related information at the legislative branch of the state, it is recommended that a parliamentary committee on disability mainstreaming be established with a view to acquainting and entrenching within parliamentarians the
values and beliefs that disability, like gender is a cross cutting political, economic and social phenomenon and therefore an indispensable factor in any policy formulation process. On the same note, Government should ensure that persons with disabilities become part of the different commissions put in place under the new constitution. If disability is fused as at law within all the commissions just like gender, the likely effect is that disability gains primacy as a social, economic and political issue in need of attention.

(iv) Given the critical role played by political parties in policy formulation and even implementation, it is further recommended that parties be sensitive to the need for disability mainstreaming within their ranks. The best way to achieve this mainstreaming is for political parties to establish disability quotas within their structures. Such quotas could be informed by statistics from international bodies such as the World Health Organisation, the World Bank or even the National census (although the latter has been a bone of contention in as far as national disability statistics are concerned.

(v) Notwithstanding the importance of special schools (most of them integrated anywhere) in the education of children with disabilities, it is recommended that learners with visual impairments and albinism should not endure the rigorous effort to take their examinations at special schools. Rather, the examination authorities are encourage to ensure that the specific examination needs of each child are captured and appropriate examination material delivered to any examination centre in the country.
8.3.2 Disability mainstreaming within civil society agencies.

Given the critical role played by civil society organizations when it comes to influencing policy formulation and implementation, the following stand as recommendations:

(i) Civil Society Organizations should strive to mainstream disability in all their programme activities.

(ii) Civil Society Organization should employ persons with disabilities not only to facilitate disability related programmes but even within mainstream programmes as a gesture of inclusive development.

(iii) Given the financial and technical constraints experienced by disabled person’s organisations, it is recommended that the mainstream civil society organisations forge partnerships with DPOs with a view to capacity building them.

(iv) In order to realize value in the parliamentary representation of PWDs, international, inter and non-governmental agencies such as the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum, the African Parliament, and United Nations agencies are called upon to provide the required training and capacity to disability representatives. This approach however needs to be nurtured given the tendency prevailing in these agencies to somehow “shrug off” disability as a political issue on account of the socially engrained negative attitudes towards such a social group.

8.3.3 The role of the disability movement.

(i) Persons with disabilities themselves must be conscientise and capacitated to deal with their situation better. This must start with a process of building a strong disability
movement in the country that would pose a formidable force against all forces of marginalization.

(ii) The DPOs are implored to provide material, technical and moral support to their representatives in parliament.

(iv) Persons with disabilities should not be cry babies but should rise to the occasion. This calls for self motivation and astute initiative rather than laziness. This is nothing short of advocating for the urgent need for PWDs to play their part in addressing their economic and political challenges rather than waiting for others to ‘give them political and economic power on a silver plate.’

(v) There has to be change in the perceptions of PWDs themselves who must be confident that they can make an impact on the policy formulation arena. This is akin to what Finkelstein (2001) called for when he remarked that; “disabled people must find ways of engaging in the class struggle where the historical direction of society is fought, won or lost” (Finkelstein 2001: 5).

8.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the thesis has advanced the position that persons with disabilities suffer poverty and deprivation mainly as a result of lack of economic and political power. Such a social group however is ready to participate once constraints related to negative social attitudes to disability are removed. It has also been shown that as much as government is the main actor on the policy arena, the role of civil society is well pronounced. As such, the role of civil society agencies in facilitating the participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies remains paramount. Persons with disabilities themselves need to
vigorously push for inclusion. This calls for a sense of action rather than merely submitting to fate. In their various formations, persons with disabilities have a great potential for self liberation. It only takes courage and a sense of agency to grab a niche on the national economic and political arena.

8.5. Areas for further research.

In view of the issues raised in this thesis, the following areas need further research:

1. Findings revealed that not much is known about the technical requirements needed to realize gains when it comes to the parliamentary representation of persons with disabilities. It is therefore important that further studies be conducted in the area of the most ideal capacity requirements parliamentarians with disabilities need to best represent their constituency.

2. Given the tendency to exclude shown primarily by government officials as well as leaders of civil society organizations, it is critical for studies to be conducted on the social and psychological factors predisposing individuals to harbour exclusionary thoughts and behaviours.

3. Given the zeal and determination of persons with disabilities to participate in various economic vocations, there is need for studies on the actual performance of enterprises owned and run by persons with disabilities. Such a study could better inform both government and the disability fraternity when it comes to advocating for economic inclusion.
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Consent Form for participants (English Version)

RESEARCH TOPIC: PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE FORMULATION OF ECONOMIC POLICIES IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF HARARE.

Statement of Participant
1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet and understood the purpose of this study.

☐ 2. I understand that my contribution or any information shared will be kept safely and securely, and will only be shared with your research supervisors.

☐ 3. I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any specific questions during the interviews and communication.

☐ 4. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation at any time by contacting the researcher without penalty.

☐ 5. I understand that the information may be published, but my name will not be disclosed.

☐ 6. I have been given the opportunity to ask whatever questions I desire, and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

☐ 7. I agree to participate in the above named research study

☐

Participant’s:

Name: .......................... Signature: .......................... Date: ..............

Researcher: ....................... Signature: ..........................
Appendix 2

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
CORNER GRANT AND CHINHOYI STREET
P.O.BOX 66022
KOPJE
HARARE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REF: A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR EDMOS MTETWA

Edmos Mtetwa is a registered PhD student at the University of Zimbabwe. He is undertaking doctoral studies on the participation of persons with disabilities in the formulation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. He is currently undertaking fieldwork for his research study.

I would be grateful if you would offer Edmos Mtetwa assistance to undertake and complete his fieldwork.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

DR K Nyikahadzoi

(Director)
Appendix 3

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PERSONS WITH ALBINISM AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT.

My name is Edmos Mtetwa, a doctor of philosophy candidate within the faculty of social studies, at the University of Zimbabwe. I would like to solicit for information from you regarding the extent to which you are involved in the formulation of national economic empowerment policies.

Please be rest assured that the information sought is purely for academic purposes and shall be treated with great confidentiality?

1. What is the type of your disability?
2. Could you please tell me about yourself:
   (a) Family background.
   (b) Educational background.
   (c) Professional or vocational activities.
   (d) Sources of livelihood.
3. What economic empowerment programmes do you know?
4. How are you participating in these economic empowerment programmes?
5. Have you ever participated in any political activity?
6. What political activities have you engaged yourself in?
7. Why did you decide to choose such political activities?
8. In what ways did your choice of political activities influenced by your disability?
9. What role would you like to play in the governance of the country?
10. In your opinion, what role do the following play in the formulation of economic empowerment policies:

(a) Political parties
(b) Members of parliament.
(c) Government ministers.
(d) Senior government officials.
(e) Civil society organizations (e.g., trade unions, human rights groups, etc.)
(f) Disabled Persons Organizations.

11. What economic policies can be directly or indirectly attributed to the activities of these organizations?

12. In view of the above scenario, what measures can be taken to ensure that people like you participate in these institutions?

13. In your opinion, what change would have persons with a disability make if they are given senior posts in the civil service?

14. What role do you play in civil society activities in your community?

15. In your opinion, what should be done to ensure the active participation of persons with disabilities in civil society organizations?

16. As a person with a disability, what do you think causes your exclusion from political and civic activities?

17. How can these factors be mitigated for the benefit of persons like yourself?
18. Before we close this discussion, do you have any comments to make about the participation of persons with albinism and visual impairment in the economic and political life of the country?

Let me take this opportunity to thank you a lot for granting me this rear opportunity to talk to you in spite of your other pressing commitments.

Once more, I thank you.
Appendix 4

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Could you please tell me about any economic empowerment programmes being championed by government?

2. How do persons with disabilities participate in these economic empowerment programmes?

3. In your opinion, do you think it is important for persons with disabilities to participate in any political activities?

4. Do you know of any person with albinism who occupies an influential post within Zimbabwe’s political hierarchy?

5. Why is it important for persons with albinism to occupy influential positions in the political hierarchy?

6. In your Opinion, what role do the following play in the formulation of economic empowerment policies:
   
   (a) Political parties
   (b) Members of parliament.
   (c) Government ministers.
   (d) Senior government officials.
   (e) Civil society organizations (e.g.: trade unions, human rights groups, etc.
   (f) Disabled Persons Organizations.

7. What economic policies can be directly or indirectly attributed to the activities of these organizations?

8. In view of the above scenario, what measures can be taken to ensure that persons with disabilities participate in these institutions??

9. In your opinion, what change would persons with a disability make if they are given senior posts in the civil service?

10. Why is it important for persons with albinism to take an active role in the advocacy programmes of civil society organizations?

11. In your opinion, what should be done to ensure the active participation of persons with albinism in civil society organizations?

12. As persons with disabilities, what do you think causes your exclusion from political and civic activities?

13. How can these factors be mitigated for the benefit of persons like yourselves?

14. In view of the above scenario, what should persons with disabilities do to fully participate in the economic and political life of their societies?
Appendix 5

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

My name is Edmos Mtetwa, a doctor of philosophy candidate within the faculty of social studies at the University of Zimbabwe. My mission here is to solicit your opinion regarding the participation of persons with albinism and visual impairment in the formulation and implementation of economic empowerment policies in Zimbabwe. As part of the study, you have been chosen to participate in this study due to your expertise in the area of empowerment. Let me assure you that this discussion is solely for academic purposes and that utmost confidentiality shall be observed.

1. How is disability mainstreamed in your organization?

2. What do you think should be done to improve the economic and political participation of persons with albinism and visual impairment in the country?

3. From your experience as an expert in your field, what really makes it difficult for persons with albinism and visual impairment to fully and actively participate in the political and economic life of Zimbabwean society?

4. In your opinion, what should the following agencies and institutions do to enhance the economic and political participation of persons with albinism and visual impairment:

   (a) Political parties.

   (b) Government

   (c) Civil society organizations.

   (d) Disabled Persons Organisations.

   (e) Persons with albinism and visual impairment themselves.

5. Before we close this discussion, do you have anything to say about the need for persons with albinism and visual impairment to participate in political and economic spheres of life?
Let me take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for having considered my request to discuss with you in the light of your very busy schedule.

I thank you once more.