



Institute of Social Studies

Graduate School of Development Studies

**SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES
FOR THE DISABLED :
CAN CAMEROON LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NETHERLANDS?**

A Research Paper presented by

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DEDICATION

This piece of intellectual exercise is dedicated to my beloved father

MR. TABE EMMANUEL BRUNO

and younger brother

TABE EMMANUEL TABEGBE (Junior),

both of whom were called to eternal rest respectively on the 13th of October 1996 and the 5th of September, 1997, during my brief period of study in The Netherlands. May their souls rest in perfect peace.

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION.

1.0 : Background :

The disabled people in Cameroon have for long experienced a noticeable increase in their social and economic exclusion from active life. This steady degradation in their socio-economic status originated not only from the negative societal attitudes towards the notion of disability and the inadequacy of existing facilities, but also from the sheer absence of the will to implement the seemingly attractive laws and policies that purport to address their employment and training needs. From a definitional standpoint, a disabled person is anyone who experiences significant limitations in one or several functions because of a physical, sensorial or mental impairment or deficiency¹. As a result of the limitations and the accompanying negative societal attitudes, the disabled person experiences restrictions in his ability to fully develop his or her own potential and to earn a living commensurate with his or her innate qualities and abilities. These barriers are not only most apparent, but equally accentuated, in Cameroon when the disabled persons put in tireless efforts to overcome the huge challenges of mainstream development, but end up disappointedly being discriminated upon on the basis of their physical state.

In recognition of the phenomenon of socio-economic exclusion and high-handed discrimination experienced by the disabled which was, and is still, not unique to Cameroon but a frequent occurrence world-wide, especially in the developing countries, the United Nations Organization initiated two sensitization declarations. In the first, it declared the year 1981 "International Year of the Disabled Persons " and subsequently in the second, it declared the years 1983 to 1992, " The United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons"². The prime and paramount objective of these landmark declarations was to sensitize and mobilize the international committee to put up great efforts and raise considerable funds towards the formulation and implementation of realistic policies and programmes in favour of the disabled persons. In this same direction, the International Labour Organization identified the disabled as a target group and prescribed active labour market policies to overcome the high level of discrimination inflicted on them in the labour market. These

¹ Malcom, H. & Willi, M., 1987 : 7.

² United Nations, 1983.

policies aim at improving the operation and results of the labour market so as to maximize quality employment and minimize unemployment and underemployment, and while doing so, improve efficiency, equity, growth and social justice³. These policies oscillated around special employment programmes, small enterprise development, self-employment promotion and various training and retraining schemes. The ILO Convention No. 159 and Recommendation No. 160 also raised vivid concerns on the plight of the disabled persons⁴. The afore-cited declarations, conventions and recommendations should serve as a yardstick for policy makers, service providers and society at large in dealing with disability problems.

The conventional mentality influenced a charitable response to disability problems and this found application in the establishment of institutions providing short-term solutions to their needs. Emphasis in this approach focused on temporary needs like food, clothing, accommodation, to name these few.

This classic isolated approach proved extremely ineffective as a way of addressing the direct needs of the disabled. Typically, charity catered for a large number of the disabled but left them in perpetual dependence on the good will of some members of the society, charity organizations and most often the state. This approach went in direct contradiction to the famous maxim that if you give somebody a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, you feed him for the rest of his life. The unrealistic nature of the charity response led to a rethinking of strategies. A long-term response focusing on their training and employment needs was judged appropriate, as it could guarantee some degree of autonomy for them.

The glaring disadvantages inherent in the conventional approach therefore militated favourably to a shift in policy towards a more integrated and long-term approach. This policy shift found expression in special employment and skill development programmes which try systematically to integrate severely disabled men and women into the open labour market. Some facets of these programmes involve intervention at the enterprise

³ International Labour Organization (ILO), 1993.

⁴ Momm, W. & Konig, A., 1989 : 497.

level, at the institutional level and at the level of self-employment initiatives from the disabled themselves.

Despite this shift in policy, the implementation of the afore-mentioned international instruments have not been quite successful. Not only are the disabled people subject of labour market discriminated, current literature seems to ignore the phenomenon of disability. In America for example, over 40 million people suffer some form of mental or physical disability and a high percentage of disabled individuals remain unemployed⁵. With regards to the persistent neglect of the phenomenon of disability, the following statements aptly illustrates the situation :

“We regret that the issue of the labour market experiences of disabled workers receives no systematic attention, although many of the general conclusions can be applied to disabled market suppliers”.

(Smith, S., 1994 :97).

That the international instruments for implementing disability policies and programmes, especially the United Nations inspired World Programme of Action, have been found very wanting can be confirmed by a meeting of experts, composed mostly of persons with disability held in Stockholm in August 1987 to evaluate the implementation of the programme⁶. The meeting concluded that the programme failed to place adequate emphasis on the needs of disabled women and that particular attention should be given to the improvement of their situation.

In Cameroon, some efforts have been made to create a propitious environment for skill development and employment generation for the disabled. The existing texts relating to their protection as well as related texts with isolated quotations on employment possibilities for them, testify to these efforts. However, their implementation remain half-hearted and fall short of addressing their tangible needs. Moreover, they are excluded in the formulation and noticeable limited implementation. This discouraging context warrants urgent positive policy interventions with active participation of the disabled persons. The success story of The Netherlands in addressing the employment and skill development

⁵ Strauss, G., 1996 : 39.

⁶ Esther Boylan, 1991 : XI.

needs of the disabled persons provides a useful reference point towards the attainment of this objective.

The Dutch experience reveals a high degree of correlation and coherence between the formulation of laws and policies and their implementation. Policies and programmes gear at making it possible for people with a handicap to function in the society in a worthy manner. Policy-makers always speak of an "AAU Society", that is, a society in which the services are Attainable, the physical environment is Accessible and the solutions offered are Usable⁷. This orientation is reflected in the various intervention programmes for the disabled. In point of fact, the amount of time and resources allocated for their needs in general and their employment and skill development needs in particular, demonstrate vividly, the very far extent to which The Netherlands has gone in this domain. Its experience provides a worthy lesson for a developing country like Cameroon. However, despite its remarkable success in this field of vocational rehabilitation for the disabled, an evaluation of its core programmes reveals some measure of disparity between the set objectives and the final outcome. More efforts need to be put in place to overcome some of the intermittent constraints that occasionally mar the full success in the implementation of these programmes.

1.1 : Statement of the Problem.

This researcher, being a disabled person and having gone through first-hand experience on the enormous difficulties encountered by the disabled in Cameroon, noted with disappointment, the sheer absence of facilities to vocationally accommodate this disadvantaged category of the population. This is compounded by the generally disabling environment which breeds an ever-increasing number of people with one or more functional impairments. The inadequacy of government's efforts to help the disabled acquire equal access to training and employment opportunities and the disturbing wave of increase in the number of unemployed disabled, constitute major problems which this research is addressing. By virtue of their physical state, they encounter enormous discrimination in their endeavour and this is apparent in their socio-economic exclusion

⁷ Deelder, J. A., 1995 : 1

from productive life. The discriminatory practices place them in a situation of permanent dependence which in consequence stifles their initiatives towards meaningful development and reduces their level of self-confidence. Given these barriers, the disabled persons find it difficult to make use of the opportunities in their immediate environment. The state, cognizant of this phenomenon set up a series of policy framework in their favour. This gesture is reflected in the various texts protecting the disabled persons. However, a keen observation reveals an enormous mismatch between policies and practices. The loopholes in the texts give room for the actors in the socio-economic scene responsible for implementation to bypass them with impunity. This research intends to address these mismatches, highlight the loopholes and propose corrective measures.

The above definition of disabled persons point to some significant limitations they encounter in their efforts to integrate into the community. The need to overcome these limitations calls for special employment and skill development programmes on their behalf. What efforts have been made by Cameroon in this direction and what level of success have been registered?

The socio-economic exclusion of the disabled in Cameroon, manifested in their inability to secure placement in formal employment, led some courageous ones to take up personal initiatives in creating employment opportunities for themselves. These self-employment initiatives led to the creation of micro-enterprises run by them as entrepreneurs, as well as regrouping themselves sometimes to form co-operatives to cater for their common interest. This project will examine the extent to which these approaches have solved their unemployment problems, the constraints encountered and support required.

1.2 : Objectives of the research.

A number of key objectives stand out clearly to be achieved by this project. These include

- i) To examine the existing policy framework that address the employment and training needs of the disabled in The Netherlands and Cameroon. Reviewing this policy framework and the ensuing programmes will likely illuminate avenues for reducing mismatches between policies and practices, especially in Cameroon where the level of mismatch is already attaining aberrant heights.

- ii) To evaluate the level of success of employment and skill development programmes for the disabled in Cameroon and The Netherlands and bring out the lessons which the former can learn from the latter. This is likely to help in the formulation of proposals for enhancement of these programmes. The ultimate result will be to facilitate their access to, and competitiveness in, the labour market, and in consequence, enhance their employability therein.
- iii) To identify areas of support for self-employment initiatives by the disabled.
- iv) To examine possibilities of generating productive employment for the disabled and in consequence, alleviate the high level of poverty that they experience. Additionally, their degree of vulnerability could be reduced substantially and their status changed from permanent dependants to dignified, economically productive and independent citizens.

1.3.1 : Research Hypotheses

- i) Positive policy formulation and intervention can increase the training and employment opportunities of disabled people.
- ii) Successful implementation of special intervention programmes for employment and skill development can achieve an independent lifestyle for disabled persons.
- iii) Provision of appropriate support for self-employment initiatives of the disabled can generate some measure of employment for them and alleviate their frequent experiences of hardships.

1.3.2 : Research Questions:

Key research questions to be addressed in this project are as follows: What policy changes are necessary to address the employment and skill development needs of the disabled? How can these changes eliminate mismatches between policies and practices, especially in a developing country like Cameroon? How can the experience of The Netherlands in special employment and skill development programmes for the disabled help Cameroon? Can the advanced Dutch experience in this domain help alter the alarming increase in the trend of unemployment among the disabled in Cameroon? What are the possibilities and constraints for replicability of this experience? To what extent can self-employment

initiatives generate productive employment opportunities that can improve upon the welfare of the disabled? These and some other relevant questions will be addressed in this study.

1.4 : Research Methodology.

The conduct of this research went on according to the following framework:

1.4.1 : Procedure :

Collection of primary and secondary data from organizations and institutions concerned with employment and skill development policies and programmes for the disabled in The Netherlands and Cameroon.

Collection of primary and secondary data from organizations by the disabled persons both in Cameroon and The Netherlands.

Comparing the objectives and outcomes of the policies and programmes.

Primary data from Cameroon was collected in December 1996 - January 1997, during this researcher's visit there. A number of disabled and non-disabled people were interviewed. Amongst the disabled⁸ were students, the employed and the unemployed, an entrepreneur, head of an NGO etc. The non-disabled were heads of institutions and organizations that deal with disability related policies and programmes. These respondents served as key informants.

In Holland, the data was collected in Summer (August - September 1997, to be more precise). Key informants were interviewed, amongst them the Chairman, Dutch National Board for the Disabled, the President of the Federation of the Disabled in the South of Holland, the President of the Youth Organization for the Disabled, popularly called YOPLA (Youth Platform), the Managing Director of one of the sheltered workshops in the "Haeghe Groepe" (Hague Group). Telephone conversations were made with authorities responsible for disability policies and programmes in some Dutch Ministries, followed by documentary postings which the researcher found quite valuable.

1.4.2 : Sources of data, techniques for data collection and analytical approaches.

⁸ A total of 50 respondents as table 4.2 reveals.

This project made use of primary and secondary data from Cameroon and The Netherlands and elsewhere. Data on intervention policies and programmes relating to the employment and skill development needs of the disabled were collected from ministries, specialized institutions, organizations for, and by the disabled in both The Netherlands and Cameroon.

Two main techniques were employed in the collection of primary data. These were the use of questionnaires and interviews. Key informants from the afore-mentioned institutions and organizations gave useful information for this project. The naturalistic or unstructured form of interview was employed as it tries to approximate the "feeling" of the unforced conversations of everyday life⁹. The everyday experiences of the respondents as regards disability policies and programmes were easily grasped through this method. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face while a few were done through telephone calls. Similarly, most of the questionnaires were self-administered, while few were posted to the destinations of the various respondents.

Survey of relevant publications was used to gather secondary data. Useful data on the legal framework, employment and skill development policies and programmes for the disabled were collected from the relevant literature in Cameroon, The Netherlands and elsewhere.

The analytical approaches to be employed are systematic primary data analysis and survey (secondary) data analysis. These approaches will be pivoted within the behavioural (or goal-based) as well as cost-benefit analytical framework for evaluation. The behavioural framework or objectives approach takes the goals of a given programme as stated and then collects evidence as to whether it has achieved those goals¹⁰. The cost-benefit analytical framework on the other hand seeks, in its simplest form, to measure all the social costs that are generated by a given programme (e.g. a public undertaking) and the social benefits produced. After measuring these two values, the social costs are subtracted from the social benefits. The resulting value is called "net social benefit"¹¹. If this value is positive, the programme is viewed as a worthwhile social undertaking. If it is negative,

⁹ Michel, W., 1996 : 95.

¹⁰ House, E., 1980 : 26.

¹¹ Berkowitz, E. D., 1979 : 147.

special efforts should be made to increase the benefits or decrease the costs of the project. If negative net benefits cannot be eliminated, the continuation of the programme should be questioned. Both approaches will be used to assess the extent to which employment and training policies and programmes in The Netherlands and Cameroon have helped the disabled people achieve some degree of independence in their lifestyle.

1.4.3 : Choice of The Netherlands and Cameroon.

The Netherlands was selected by this researcher for two main reasons. Firstly, this researcher intends to have first-hand experience of a country that has gone reasonably far in addressing the employment and skill development needs of the disabled. Secondly, this researcher happens to be in The Netherlands during the conduct of this study. This presence clearly facilitates access to, and collection of, relevant data for the research.

This project is by no means a comparative study of disability policies and programmes between Cameroon and The Netherlands because, sincerely speaking, objectively comparable criteria do not exist. On the contrary, Cameroon which still has a long way to go in addressing the employment and training needs of disabled, will have some lessons to learn from the experience of The Netherlands.

Cameroon was selected because it is this researcher's country. Being a disabled person himself, he has lived the enormous challenges faced by the growing number of disabled people in his community from a tender age of about two and half years to adulthood. He therefore stands in a good position to evaluate the policy framework and programmes emanating from them, and of course, propose appropriate corrective measures.

1.5 : Scope of the study.

This research project will be limited geographically to Cameroon and The Netherlands. However, the theoretical and conceptual framework as well as part of the review of literature relevant to the study may need to stretch beyond the confines of both boundaries.

This work is also limited to the physically disabled, including the mentally retarded but not the mentally or physically ill like those suffering from terminal diseases.

The time frame is the 1980s and 1990s. This period is contextualized by the proliferation of the tenets of the hegemonic neo-liberal paradigm, which saw the introduction and implementation of structural reforms in most developing countries, Cameroon inclusive. The disabled persons as a group emerged as one of the greatest losers. However, occasional reference to pre-1980 literature may become necessary since most of the issues raised with regard to employment and training programmes for disabled in Holland still have some relevance to a developing country like Cameroon.

1.6 : Limitations :

I encountered some shortcomings in the course of this research. Notable amongst them was the virtual absence of literature on the phenomenon of disability in Africa.

Additionally, although a lot of materials exist with regard to Dutch disability policies and programmes, not much was in English. This created some impediments in this researcher's efforts to venture into the depths of the Dutch model. Time and financial constraints could not permit the employment of a qualified translator.

CHAPTER TWO : REVIEW OF LITERATURE, ISSUES OF METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

2.0 : Introduction :

This chapter reviews the relevant literature, examines issues of methodology and provides the theoretical and conceptual framework as regards special intervention programmes that cater for the employment and skill development needs of the disabled. It explores supported employment and skill development programmes at the enterprise level, in specialized institutions and from the perspective of self-employment initiatives. It also examines theories and concepts like vocational rehabilitation, community-based rehabilitation, community integration programmes, mainstreaming, the labour market experience of the disabled and the crucial role of the state in providing the appropriate legal framework for disability employment and training programmes.

2.1 : Supported Employment and Skill Development Programmes for the Disabled.

Supported employment for people with disability can be defined as competitive, employer-paid work in integrated work settings in which the necessary ongoing support is provided for individuals who have not traditionally experienced competitive employment¹². The general assumption is that with his limitations, a disabled worker will naturally not be able to fully discharge his duties in an integrated work setting. This assumption militated in favour of adjustment at the work place to provide a conducive work milieu that can permit him offer the best of his qualities and abilities at his job and meet up with the expectations of his employer. The components identified with the above definition include competitive work, integrated work settings, ongoing support and persons with disabilities. Competitive work is work performed on a full- or part-time basis, for which the employee receives fair pay. The tendency is to assume that a disabled person produces sub-standard work due to his physical state. This line of thinking suggests inequality in pay systems between the disabled and the non-disabled. Supported employment therefore aims, inter alia, at

¹² Konig, A. & Schalock, R., 1991 : 21

achieving equality in payment systems. Integrated work settings are those in which non-handicapped workers predominate. A primary concern of supported employment programmes is to facilitate access of the disabled to integrated work settings. Ongoing support as suggested above is that needed, on a continuing basis, to support and maintain a person within employment. This is a fundamental prerequisite if corporate objectives are to be attained satisfactorily with the employment of a disabled person.

The conception and implementation of supported employment programmes aim primarily at achieving certain sets of key objectives. In the first set, these programmes enable the disabled to be employed in an integrated employment environment. Working alongside the non-disabled, the disabled worker faces the realities of challenges in mainstream development and will in consequence, be able to adapt faster. Secluded employment are unavoidable in some cases but have the disadvantage of removing the disabled from his usual context and increasing his chances of isolation. Obtaining appropriate training, together with ongoing support to maintain employment, remain important goals of these programmes. Likewise ensuring compensation (wages) and benefits equal to those of other workers with the same responsibilities and provision of appropriate training and support to ensure the best balance between a person's capabilities and interests, and the job requirements. Another key objective is the reduction of dependence on welfare payments and maximizing tax contributions¹³. These programmes have so far taken three forms. These are individual placement, enclave (small units of disabled persons working in a host company) and mobile work crews. It is worth mentioning that the benefits to be derived from the attainment of these inter-related goals will not only be felt by disabled men and women, but will equally trickle down to the entire society.

2.2 : Supported Employment at the Enterprise Level.

At the enterprise level, the role of employment specialists, called "job coaches" is prime and paramount, especially for the mentally handicapped. They intervene and become actively involved in job development, job analysis, client assessment, job accommodation (adapting the job to the client's abilities), training, supervision, assistance and support for

¹³ Ibid.

long-term employment, employer relations, case management as well as counselling and transportation logistics. This variety of roles suggests that job coaches require skills which go beyond those displayed by rehabilitation staff and social workers. Besides the usual tasks, the job coach needs skills in management and public relations, to successfully place and maintain a severely disabled person on a job in the open labour market.

Table 2.1 : Job Coach Qualities, Functions and Responsibilities.

Qualities Required.

- Commitment to integrated employment,
- Determination to get the disabled person accepted as a valuable individual
- Dedication to client's personal growth and development
- Attention to detail, e.g. provision of efficient transport

Planning and Implementing the rehabilitation programme

- Identifies employment opportunities and determines necessary skills or performance requirements
- Analyses client's employment interest and attitudes
- Develops individual performance goals and behaviour objectives.
- Applies business principles rather than welfare principles in placing clients
- Collaborates with other employment specialists, employer, client and parents in developing and implementing an individualized plan.
- Uses current habilitation strategies, including skill training techniques, prosthetics and job accommodation
- Uses ongoing employee assistance programmes and other support systems to ensure long-term employment.

Programme Evaluation.

- Designs and implements a system for monitoring employee progress

- Collects data on the disabled person's employment (wages per hour, average hour per week, weeks worked, taxes paid, benefits), level of integration, hours of support and job movement patterns

Source : Adapted from Schalock and Kiernan (1990)

In accordance with special intervention strategies for the disabled, Raskin (1994 : 83) proposed an affirmative action programme based on an occupation-oriented model. He suggested that at the sectorial and / or enterprise level, affirmative action programmes should be so designed as to encourage the representation of disabled persons in the group where they are known to be generally under-represented. In this model the overall percentage of disabled employed in the enterprise or industrial sector is not a major concern. This programme comes into prominence only when the percentage of the disabled employed in a particular occupational group in a specific industrial sector is below their availability or "readiness" level in the general population. Raskin's model categorizes job into "able-body" dominated and "non-able-bodied" dominated. The rationale behind this classification is to encourage the placement of disabled persons in this hitherto "non-traditional" or "able-bodied dominated" positions, for which they have all the relevant skills. The applicability of this model is to the effect that if the available or "ready" disabled are under-represented in a particular occupational grouping a certain industrial sector, the sector should be considered "able-body dominated", in which case, affirmative principles should apply. Affirmative action principles will conversely not apply if the representation of disabled persons is above certain threshold percentages.

The Canadian example is illustrative of this model. In 1991, 8.4 % of all Canadians worked as "semi-professionals and technicians" in the communications sector but, only 6.7% of the disabled did, that is, an under-representation of 20.3%¹⁴. If arbitrarily a 10% threshold of under-representation was decided as acceptable , this occupational group in this industrial sector would be considered "able-bodied dominated", would continue to be so categorized and employers would be required to take steps to redress the imbalance

¹⁴ 'Employment and Immigration', Employment Equity Annual Report, 1991 : B-19, quoted in Raskin, C., 1994 : 84.

until such a time as the differential fell below 10%. Emphasis in this model is placed on reporting the representation rate in specific jobs or occupational categories.

This approach has triggered some criticisms, particularly on the grounds that it focuses only on quantitative ways and ignores qualitative ways in which organizations tend to eliminate structural barriers to equitable employment. The advantage in this model however, is that with disabled and non-disabled workers interacting in closer contact, changed behaviour patterns in relations with disabled people would easily be attained. The ensuing result would be a change in attitudes and organizational cultures. This viewpoint is supported by Agoc. et al. (1992 : 160), who, citing Pittigrew on sex discrimination, noted that "altered behaviour is more often the precursor of altered attitudes...Employees may not welcome a woman as their supervisor at first, but if the appointment is an appropriate one and the position is properly defined and empowered, so that the new manager is able to succeed, acceptance is likely to follow". The same rationale can be applicable to the integration of disabled persons. By forcing employers to come to terms with ways in which they can reasonably accommodate disabled candidates, discriminatory practices would be discouraged. This brings in the concept of reasonable accommodation and the classification of disability, a key facet in this model.

Essentially, "reasonable accommodation" means the "tailoring of work rule, practice, condition or requirement to the specific needs of an individual or group...At its core is some degree of differential treatment" (Lepofsky, 1992 84). To put this into practice, much adjustment is needed at the work place. This may range from work rule to physical changes. This subject becomes even more complicated given the fact that disabled persons do not constitute a homogenous group. For instance, the accommodation requirements of somebody with visual disabilities will naturally differ from those of somebody with mobility impairments. Similarly, both are likely to face different employment and representation problems from those who are sensorily and mentally disabled. In this framework of affirmative action principles, the paramount pre-occupation is to identify occupations which are able-body dominated and suggest possibilities for redesigning them so that persons with various disabilities can successfully do them.

2.3 : Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment in Specialized Institutions.

Alongside intervention at the enterprise level, provision of training and facilitation of employment for the disabled also take place in specialized institutions. These institutions train disabled mostly in manual and specialized skills and may sometimes facilitate their incorporation into the labour market. For instance, these institutions may develop fruitful linkages with companies so that those requiring their skills can easily absorb them. These institutions may also help them set-up enterprises for themselves, either individually or collectively. Manual skills are always targeted in these institutions, especially in developing countries in order to reach out to as many disabled people as possible, since majority of them are illiterates or barely literates. As the experience from Cameroon demonstrates, prominent skills offered in such institutions include shoe-manufacturing and repairs, tailoring, carpentry, to name these few¹⁵. The duration of the training varies according to the skills to be acquired, but usually training lasts between one and three years maximum. In some cases certificates are awarded to meritorious trainees. Existing enterprises using these skills usually serve as avenues for evaluation of trainees. It could be more profitable for specialized institutions to establish meaningful cooperation with big companies in the private and public sectors so that training can be oriented towards their requirements. The level of success in this approach is sometimes remarkable. However, some visible problems as will be revealed by the case of Cameroon, often obstruct the full-attainment of set goals.

2.4 : Employment in Sheltered Environments :

Another important approach which currently helps a significant number of disabled persons is subsidized and protected employment as in sheltered workshops or income-generating schemes funded by assistance agencies. Assistance in this strategy covers the cardinal domains of management, protected markets, supplies of raw materials, provision of workshops or other forms of shelter from the pressures of the competitive world of business. Although this strategy has been widely criticized on the grounds that it tends to

¹⁵ Ministry of Social Affairs, 1994 : 85.

segregate disabled workers from the mainstream labour force¹⁶, for some disabled people, a sheltered environment remains the only way of partaking in productive activities and of experiencing a certain degree of economic independence and recognition.

Within the sheltered workshop, disabled workers remain physically segregated but given the prevailing enterprise culture in this era of stiff competition, they are increasingly expected to be as productive as their able-bodied counterparts in open industry. This change has been brought about mainly by the withdrawal of state subsidies, which now tend to encourage workshops to compete with other firms on the open labour market¹⁷. This change in policy is having differential effects on the disabled. While a small minority continue to regard their employment as a valuable opportunity, a larger number have come to regret the change in policy. This is portrayed in table 2.4 which reflects the experiences of some employees in sheltered employment. They were asked whether they were satisfied with their current conditions of employment.

Table 2.2 : Employee Satisfaction with Sheltered Employment.

	Sheltered workshop	Percentage
Satisfied	15	25
Dissatisfied	18	30
Wouldn't say	27	45
Total	60	100

Source : Adapted from Mark Hyde, 1996 : 695.

¹⁶ Hyde, M., 1996 : 694.

¹⁷ Wintour, 1994.

From the above table, we discover that only 25% of the employees were satisfied with sheltered employment. Typical responses tend to emphasize the importance of the 'welfare' dimension of their employment as revealed in the following statement.

"It allows me to do a worthwhile job in an environment where there are no great external pressures. It is a safe environment. People understand each other's disabilities and help each other". (Hyde, M., 1996 : 695).

30% of the employees find the experience of this kind of employment unsatisfactory. Many complained about frequent increases in the pace of their daily work routine. The comment of one respondent depicts the picture.

"I'd be gone tomorrow if I could get a job elsewhere. I'm very annoyed because we have quotas we must reach and they are the same as the quotas for able-bodied people in our workshop. I find this hard and I'm sure it isn't right." (Ibid)

Some employees complained of the inflexible and unresponsive nature of their supervisors to the workers' needs. Yet another area of grievance is the expectation of the supervisors as concerns their daily productivity levels. One employee made the following remark in this regard

"A couple of our supervisors are okay, but most of them are tyrants. They keep pushing us to do more, more and more." (Ibid).

The above analysis clearly substantiates the fact that the shift in emphasis from "humanitarian" aims and objectives to commercial values has had negative consequences for some employees in sheltered workshops. More recently in Great Britain, the "Sheltered Employment Programme" has been redesignated the "Supported Employment Programme" in order to emphasize its main priority which is to place disabled workers in open industry rather than segregated factories¹⁸.

2.5 : Support for Self-Employment Initiatives

Support for self-employment initiatives of the disabled now stands out as an important and more practicable option given the current context of increasing paucity of jobs in the open

¹⁸ Murray, I., 1994.

labour market, especially in a developing country like Cameroon.. It entails the provision of materials and/or financial support to a disabled person or group of persons for the purpose of facilitating the setting up and management of a micro- or medium-scale enterprise or expanding and sustaining an existing one. The cost-effectiveness of this approach makes it most appropriate for developing countries.

In order to benefit from assistance under this approach, a disabled person or group of persons must demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of what they want to set-up or how they intend to expand. In other words, he must do the preparatory work, gather information as far as possible so that he can realize for himself, the technicalities involved and drop out if he cannot manage. A person with no idea of what sort of business he/she might undertake, is unlikely to succeed in any business. It is worth noting that experience and commitment are by far more important than education and qualifications under this approach. In many instances, earlier failure could serve as the best preparation for future success. Qualities most desirable from an individual in this approach include persistence and initiative and these can easily be appraised from a person's past history.

In deciding the choice of business, the best idea is the one some has himself. A particular business may seem most appropriate and promising to an outsider but will be of no good if the potential entrepreneur does not believe in it. The role of the market is crucial. It is the most important factor in any enterprise. It is of little or no doubt that without customers, a business cannot even start.

It suffices at this juncture to highlight the view that self-employment should not always be treated exclusively as an activity undertaken by one person. Co-operatives or group enterprises have in some cases been formed by disabled and these initiatives have registered remarkable successes¹⁹. Under this approach , numbers of people come together in order to pull their resources and skills and to start a business. The advantages from this form of self-employment are numerous. This range from sharing the different responsibilities of the business, taking advantages of the economies in purchasing and in operations that arise from the larger scale of their enterprise and above all, benefiting from the manual support and encouragement of fellow members, rather than having to labour

¹⁹ Malcolm, H. and Willi., 1989 : 15.

alone. This approach is strongly recommended for the disabled people because, like other marginalized group, they are particularly likely to be able to work together effectively because they share a common problem and feel that they must stick together in order to show to the rest of the world that can succeed.

It must be emphasized that groups or cooperatives of disabled, like any other enterprise, must be effectively led. The approach to management should be business-like , using the necessary skills to produce goods and services at a price that others are willing to pay . While dependence on outside financing and direction may initially be indispensable, such groups must work towards genuine ownership and management by their members and avoid excessive reliance on external aid in these key positions. Co-operatives sometimes achieve limited results due to the failure of the group to work together effectively. Jealousies may also arise among members and they may not accept leadership among themselves. The ensuing disappointing outcomes are that the group either breaks up and the enterprise ceases to operate or the group is “hijacked” by a particular individual who often exploits his or her fellow members and runs the enterprise for selfish ends²⁰.

Table 2.3 : Commonalities Among Agencies with Successful Supported Employment Practices.

-
- Strong leadership, organizational development and philosophical commitment to supported employment.
 - High levels of client family involvement.
 - Provision of variety of jobs that reflect the range of opportunities available in the community.
 - Use of individual placement, which permits better social integration and job matches.
 - Commitment by disabled employees to the supported employment concept and the specific job held.
 - Assessment techniques that include job analysis and job matching

²⁰ Ibid.

- Use of supports such as assistance from co-worker, provision of transport and reasonable job accommodation.
- Effective on-site job training of employment specialists for functions and activities listed in table 2.1.
- Business advisory councils or boards including local business persons who assist with marketing.
- Non-intrusive job coaching and job support that is phased out as soon as is practical.
- Good connections with university experts and other consultants.
- Collaborative efforts among professionals, employers, school personnel, state agency staff, persons with disabilities and their families.

Source : Adapted from National Association of Rehabilitation facilities. (1989)

2.6 : Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Theory.

The CBR theory put forward by Momm and Konig (1989 : 497) received world-wide support with the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Disabled Persons, the basic guiding document for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983 - 1992)²¹. The integration of the disabled into the society is the basic premise of this theory and this motive takes priority over the creation of special environments and special services for them. An important dimension of the theory is the adjustment of the needs of the disabled people, thus rendering special centres obsolete. The key terms guiding this approach are “mainstreaming”, “normalization” and “deinstitutionalization”.

In one of its two schools of thought, CBR is perceived as an “outreach” or extension service designed to bring professional rehabilitation services and vocational training to a larger number of disabled people, especially in the rural areas and to refer people in need of more sophisticated services to rehabilitation centres. This school of thought is relevant in that it seeks to address the vocational training needs of the disabled at the community level. Bringing vocational rehabilitation services to the rural areas constitutes a laudable policy option as it is intended to reach out to the needs of majority of them who live in the rural areas. It represents government policy towards decentralization of vocational

²¹ United Nations, 1983.

rehabilitation services. CBR approach brings together both disabled and non-disabled who work closely together to further their mutual interest, while giving special support to the urgent needs of the former.

The CBR theory advocates mainstreaming, normalization and deinstitutionalization. Some countries like the United States and Italy demonstrated allegiance to this theory and in a spectacular move closed down a large number of psychiatric and vocational institutions and sent the residents back to the communities where they had come from²². The ensuing reintegration of the disabled persons into the community was however, not a complete success story. This was primarily because the policy shift was not always accompanied by the necessary reallocation of state funds to the communities to enable them cope effectively with the problems involved in reintegration. In the United States for example, there are reports of gross neglect of "reintegrated disabled persons" who have been left without the support they need to adjust and survive in the community²³. Hewitt E. (1987:2) observed that the situation in Britain was very much the same. The constraints stem from the fact that the necessary support services like vocational training, work placement, transportation, medical services and mental health care services cost money. Hence, if viewed mainly as a way to serve money on public spending, the CBR as a process of deinstitutionalization and reintegration into the community proved likely to fail. In the developing countries, a number of policy recommendations were made to find a cost-effective substitute for rehabilitation institutions and centre-based vocational training for the disabled. These recommendations found support due to the small impact of institutionalized rehabilitation in terms of quality and coverage, which in consequence led to disillusionment. Their sophisticated and expensive services reached only a few. Given this gloomy image, the idea that a grassroots-type of service will benefit large numbers of disabled, reinforced by the general wave of anti-institutional bias, resulted in the recommendation of CBR as a new approach for government of the Third World countries and its implementation, since then, by a host of international, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

²² Finch, E. S., 1985.

²³ United State Senate, Subcommittee on the Handicapped : 'Staff Report on the deinstitutionalized mentally handicapped, Washington, DC, 1985, quoted in Momm and Konig, 1985 : 499.

2.7 : The Evolution of CBR towards Community Integration Programmes (CIPs).

The implementation of CBR programmes revealed some weaknesses, notably the lack of an essential element which the United Nations World Programme of Action and particularly, organizations of disabled people have drawn attention to. They point to the fact that rehabilitation efforts need to be complemented by what has been called "equalization of opportunities". Applied to the community-oriented strategy, this means that, parallel to the development of CBR, measures must be taken to enlist the support of existing community institutions for the benefit of disabled people. In other words, rehabilitation efforts have to be complemented by measures to ensure equal opportunities for disabled, implying that activities have to be planned and carried out to encourage and enable the community to include them in its normal socio-economic life.

The realization of rehabilitation alongside equalization of opportunities, reveal a highly demanding task that exceeds the framework of CBR. The need for an all-embracing concept that goes beyond rehabilitation and incorporates the objective of integration in its widest sense became apparent. The underlying argument running through this concept is that, while rehabilitation necessarily achieves integration, the latter cannot be achieved through the former²⁴. The essential part of this community-oriented strategy falls largely outside the control of specialized rehabilitation programmes, since successful integration depends mainly on the attitude of the community and its institutions, and their acceptance of the idea that disabled people should not be marginalized or segregated but should be offered equal opportunities.

The new shift from secluded rehabilitation to mainstream programmes for promoting vocational training and employment for the disabled is reflected in the term "Community Integration Programmes (CIPs)". In this new concept, special rehabilitation activities constitute just one element, and whether carried inside the community by visiting specialists or outside the community at special rehabilitation centres, should be intended only for those who are really in need of them. In the developing countries, CIPs would be concerned with identifying and opening up training and employment opportunities in the community, identifying the needs and potential of the disabled, arranging for their training

²⁴ Momm and Konig, 1989 : 505 - 6.

in areas like agriculture and other rural occupations, helping them to find jobs, supporting the establishment of cottage industries, facilitating access to credits, encouraging and assisting them to join cooperatives, together with promotional activities. The underlying assumption is that these series of activities would be carried out by non-rehabilitation workers after they had received training and assistance from specialized rehabilitation agencies and been provided with the necessary facilities.

There are three pillars of a successful vocational training and employment-oriented CIPs. The first is the rehabilitation agency's outreach services. This must comprise a unit responsible for planning and coordinating CIP activities, especially in the domains of training, small business development and agricultural production. The second pillar is the training of community development personnel in relevant aspects of disability so that community programmes and institutions are made available to the disabled. This strategy has the potential of creating the awareness necessary to secure the acceptance of disabled people in ordinary programmes or the direct support of community institutions for rehabilitation facilities. The third pillar is the promotion of integration. This simply means that the efforts of the rehabilitation agencies be geared towards overcoming negative attitudes and prejudices and secure public acceptance of the need to integrate the disabled into the community.

2.8 : The Role of the State :

The efforts of the disabled people and organizations responsible for their long-term needs cannot be satisfactorily rewarded without an active participation of the state. The contribution of the state is critical in the provision of assistance, either financial or material, in setting up a system for monitoring the policies and programmes that cater for their needs and above all, to create the legal framework within which disabled people can claim their rights as citizens. Venkatesh²⁵ noted that the state should look after the disabled as it looks after any other of its citizens and that in an ideal world, it should look after their special needs as a matter of routine. In Cameroon for example, the National Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled stands out clearly as an incredible

²⁵ Quoted in Coleridge P., 1993 : 94.

contribution of the state to the training and employment needs of the disabled²⁶. Similarly in Kenya, the state has set the National Trust Fund for Disabled Persons²⁷. This Trust Fund among other things, provides substantial financial assistance to self-employment initiatives of the disabled. The Oyugis Sheltered Workshop, for instance, came to lime-light thanks to this Trust Fund. Besides providing finances for the purchase of relevant equipment, the Fund also provided assistance for procuring the services of an administrator responsible for organizing and assisting them their endeavour. Livion Nyathi²⁸, pointed out categorically that the role of government is of paramount importance in coordinating, funding, researching and stimulating agencies and its own departments in the establishment of rehabilitation services, particularly in the domains of employment and skill development. Fundamentally however, the role of the government is to create the environment where private voluntary action can flourish, strongly supported by the state.

2.9 : Empirical Experiences²⁹.

After the theoretical and conceptual framework, these examples from various countries are intended to provide an overview of "the state of the art". Konig and Schalock (1991:31-34) in the cases from the United States and United Kingdom, try to present the practical side of supported employment for the disabled at the enterprise level. The example from Kenya represent self-employment initiatives by a group of disabled people.

a) United States of America :

This case reflects significant subjective and objective changes noted in persons with severe disabilities who are employed in a supported employment environment. It presents the experience of a man called Ron Blakly, aged 50 who suffered from severe behaviour problems. He was so withdrawn that he did not want to get up in the morning, did not want to work, would say nothing but "yes" or "no", was not interested in being involved

²⁶ Presidential Decree No. 89 / 141 of January 1989.

²⁷ Malcolm and Willi, 1989 :23.

²⁸ Quoted in Coleridge P., 1993 :94.

²⁹ Adapted from Konig and Schalock, 1991 : 31 - 34.

in his community, seldom smiled and seemed depressed. He displayed these characteristics of seclusion while working in a sheltered workshop.

Ron later moved from sheltered workshop to an enclave and since then, experienced a new lease of life. In the enclave, along with four other people, he folds filters which are used in gathering soil samples. His new attitudinal change is observed when he runs to meet the van which takes him to work every morning. A couple of times the driver was late and Ron phoned to see where he was. He seems very motivated and actually chooses to work, which represents a dramatic change from his workshop behaviour.

His attitude to work has changed tremendously. He is all business when he gets to work. He is immediately ready to start, and even hurries back from break to begin folding filters again. When he was working in the workshop, staff continually had to find ways to get him to work. Now Ron is keeping others up to scratch. When he sees his co-workers sitting idle, he urges them to "get busy". He obviously feels better about himself now. He spends more time walking, cycling, working in his yard and looking after his figure and appearance. His salary has increased from \$1.51 (sheltered employment) to \$3.16 (supported employment). This case presents an eloquent testimony of the impact supported employment can have on the lives of severely disabled men and women.

b) United Kingdom :

In the United Kingdom, the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults (MENCAP) has developed the Pathway Employment Service. This scheme introduces employers mainly to mentally retarded persons, many of them severely disabled, who have previously been given individual training focused not only on directly relevant job skills, but also on the social skills that disabled need in order to work as independently as possible with their co-workers.

Employers who hire a disabled person are reimbursed their expenses for a trial period of up to 12 weeks before they need fully commit themselves. Employers nominate a "foster worker", who supports the new employee and helps him or her to adjust to the challenges of open employment. Experience has shown that foster workers, who receive a small payment for their efforts, are the key to the success of this scheme.

This scheme operates a continuing back-up service which provides support to employees, employers and others. This gives room for possible difficulties to be tackled early enough. As of 1992, 2,152 mentally retarded persons, 191 of them having a severe retardation, had been placed in open employment³⁰. They work in a variety of jobs, for instance, as industrial assembly workers, domestic assistants, supermarket workers, industrial cleaners and bakery workers. As they are paid the same salaries as other workers with the same job responsibilities, they enjoy a social status previously unknown to people with this degree of disability. A few characteristics responsible for the success of this strategy of supported employment stand out clearly. They include strong leadership, individual placement, co-worker support and on-site job training.

c) Kenyan Experience : The Oyugis Sheltered Workshop³¹ :

In this experience, Malcolm and Willi (1989:21-23), depict initiatives from the disabled themselves, which later attracted external support. Although confronted with problems eventually, these initiatives could have long-term sustainable impact if these problems could be properly identified and resolved.

The Oyugis sheltered workshop represents a case where a group of 25 people, physically disabled in different ways came together in an effort to earn a living for themselves instead of remaining perpetually dependent on their families. All the members were fortunate to have received training in carpentry in a number of different youth centres in Kenya. Most training centres for the disabled in Kenya always incorporate programmes offering a certain amount of very basic management training since it is widely recognized that a good number of disabled people may start their own business, either because they find this an attractive option or because they have no alternative.

A factor that contributed significantly to this spirit of togetherness was the availability of finance from the National Trust Fund for Disabled Persons. After succeeding in securing a substantial grant from the Trust Fund, they paid for essential equipment and this provided the much needed foundation to launch production initiatives. They constituted themselves

³⁰ Konig and Schalock, 1991: 34

³¹ Adapted from Malcolm and Willi, 1989 : 21-23.

into an informal self-help group, and with the assistance of the Trust Fund, an administrator was appointed to organize and assist them in their endeavour.

With the good background training received, the group manufactures high-quality furniture which is sold directly to the public. The group has set up a committee elected by its members which assumes the overall responsibility for coordinating its affairs. The appointed administrator holds the responsibility for actual day-to-day management of finance, production and personnel of the enterprise. The group now produces a quantity of goods that permits it to sell and make earnings capable of paying their rents, buy materials when these are not provided in advance by customers and to pay wages, although at a rather low and erratic rate. The Trust Fund takes care of the administrator's salary. The group receives regular visits from a social worker who advises the administrator and members on the particular problems that arise because of the member's physical disability. The group now faces some problems, particularly on the financial front because the administrator does not keep a record of annual sales of the workshop, nor is he aware of whether it makes profit or not. According to him, the main problem is the shortage of cash, and if the group were able to accumulate some funds, it could employ supervisors and build more workshops so that more disabled people could be accommodated. Attainment of these goals does not seem feasible in the nearest future given the prevailing circumstances.

2.10 : Constraints to the Implementation of Special Intervention Programmes.

Supported employment programmes are known to have highly positive effects on the lives of disabled people. However, their role in achieving integration and independence for the disabled can be hampered by a number of factors. In the first place, a job given to a severely disabled person in an enterprise can be filled by any other worker. This implies that an employer needs to have a particular motivation to hire a disabled instead of a non-disabled person. This highlights the cardinal importance of employer attitudes. Some employers have negative stereotype attitudes towards the disabled people and in consequence, tend to discriminate against them in their attempts to achieve work place equity. A primary concern then will be to encourage a more positive attitude among

employers. This can be achieved through the provision of incentives which, among other things, can help convince them to hire disabled people. Incentives may take the form of specific tax-credit or inducement offered by some quota schemes whereby, one severely disabled worker counts for several mildly disabled ones.

Besides a positive employer attitude, another fundamental prerequisite is that supported employment agency should accept responsibility for the adaptation of the work place and guarantee a clearly defined work output to meet the employer's business needs. This demands an urgency to assume the dual responsibility of modifying, for example, a push-button printer so that it can be handled by a woman who cannot move her hand, and of course, ensuring through training or direct support, that she operates the printer as often as necessary to produce the required output³². These are all demanding tasks for the employment agency.

The disabled people in supported employment environments are often subjected to the performance of simple and unskilled jobs. Some examples include bench work involving a limited number of tasks, clearing tables in a food restaurant, carrying goods in a supermarket, filling bottles with pre-sorted pills and so on. These predominantly unskilled tasks whether in factories, offices or service sector, are the first to become redundant when labour cost rise. In some countries, these jobs have already largely disappeared owing to the different structures of the service sector. Furthermore, with the emerging technological changes, the possibility of adapting the work place to severely disabled people increases also. This development has the potential for increasing the chances of cutting back on costly human labour. Employers may then prefer employees who can be more flexible and do not require as much adjustment as severely disabled men and women. Statistics have equally shown that in times of high unemployment, employers, even in countries with a quota system, are less willing to hire disabled workers³³.

The experiences of some disabled people with employment rehabilitation programmes have not been very encouraging. From their comments, one can identify three major

³² Malcolm, H. & Willi, M., 1989 : 35.

³³ Burkhauser and Hirvonen, 1989.

problems with such programmes. In the first place their aims are not always clear to users. This problem is clearly depicted in the following statements by a disabled worker.

“I didn’t understand why I was there. I played game for six months.

They then told me they could train me in ‘clerking’ which I’m already qualified to do.” (Mark Hyde, 1996 : 693).

The second problem stems from the fact that the programmes require disabled people to engage in routine and monotonous tasks which are often belittling and sometimes seem to have no clear vocational relevance. This view is portrayed in the following comment.

“It seemed like going back to school. I spent most of the time putting blocks of wood in holes. They seem to start from the assumption that you have no skills and intelligence. It is humiliating”. (Ibid).

The third and final problem identified concerns the fact that the services can sometimes be unresponsive to felt needs, imposing occupational paths that do not accord with the preferences of users. The following statement is illustrative of this view.

“I saw this as a chance to do something that I’ve always been interested in doing, but the college they sent me to didn’t do computing courses. I had to do electronics instead”. (Ibid).

These constraints should serve as important pointers when designing new programmes. More positive and long-term results could be achieved if these constraints could be identified and overcome.

2.11 : Conceptual Difference between Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps.

The heterogeneous nature of the above concepts makes it very difficult to come out with a clearly defined classification. However, some efforts have been made to come out with a generally accepted classification. A case in point is the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) of the World Health Organization (WHO)³⁴. Impairments according to WHO are abnormalities in the structures and functions of the human body, including the mental functions. The cause of the impairment (illness, accident etc.) plays no role in the classification. An example is hearing. The term

³⁴ Deelder, J. A., 1991 : 8.

disabilities is used to itemize those actions or activities which someone cannot perform as a result of an impairment. Examples are difficulties in walking or in using the telephone. The word handicap is used to refer to the social disadvantage resulting from impairments and/or disabilities. An example is experiencing a handicap because of the physical inaccessibility of buildings.

The above definitions was adopted by the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons³⁵ and its framework for implementation³⁶. The definitions attracted a lot of criticisms on the basis that they were too medical and individualistic. WPA further added :

“Handicap is therefore a function of the relationship between disabled persons and their environment. It occurs when they encounter cultural, physical or social barriers which prevent their access to the various systems of society that are available to other citizens. Thus handicap is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others”. (paragraph. 7)

For the purpose of this research, the word disability or the disabled would be used as a generic term to describe all the distinct categories mentioned above. In point of fact, Mannila describes disability as an extensive concept and one that is only partly covered by the scope of traditional handicaps, such as those affecting sight, hearing, etc.³⁷.

2.12 : The Experience of the Disabled in the Labour Market.

Rigger H. C. (1995 : 197), describes the physically handicapped as the “hard core” or structurally poor, alongside the widows and orphans. According to him, this group of people will remain untouched by economic development, reason why he suggests that society will have to look after them in special poverty alleviation programmes. A possible cause of this situation of abject poverty is the high-handed discrimination they experience in their efforts to integrate into the labour market. In fact, there seems to be a wide

³⁵ WPA; UN, 1982a.

³⁶ WPA; UN, 1982b.

³⁷ Mannila, S., 1995 : 21

international consensus concerning the marginality of the disabled in the labour market³⁸.. Some country experiences are illustrative. In Germany for example, Burger S. & Schroder M (1994), present data on the labour force participation, unemployment rate, unemployment spells and labour market segregation of the disabled compared to those of the non-disabled population. The labour force participation, they observe, is substantially lower, unemployment rate higher and unemployment spells longer among the disabled than the non-disabled. Moreover, they added, the German disabled's labour market chances have been sharply deteriorating during the 1980s.

In Great Britain, too, four surveys carried out by the Office of Population Surveys in 1985 - 88³⁹, describe the labour market status of disabled people, pointing out, for example, their high unemployment rate⁴⁰. In Finland, the disabled unemployed found, in 1987 - 93, a job in the competitive labour market more seldom (44 - 32%) than other unemployed (44 - 55%)⁴¹. Their unemployment spells are also longer than those of the non-disabled⁴². Lind et al. (1990) for example, found a high post rehabilitation unemployment rate repeatedly in some follow-up studies on Finnish rehabilitation clients⁴³.

A number of factors tend to influence the disabled's employment in the competitive labour market. Mannila S. (1995 : 23), cited age, basic education, vocational training, disability and domicile. Revaud et al. (1992), observed that besides the undeniable problems of working capacity, the disabled job seekers face discrimination based on prejudices. Their marginality as a work-force has also been explained by labour market segmentation and strategies of social exclusion⁴⁴. Barbara Harriss-White (1996 :11) remarked that disabled people experience labour market both structured against them (via the architectural environment, lack of latrines, etc.) and discriminating against them on many grounds, viz. productivity, threat to workplace safety, the cost of site design, their unreliability and the impact of preferential treatment on other workers.

³⁸ Ibid : 20.

³⁹ Martin et. al. 1989.

⁴⁰ Sweetenham C. & Massey C., 1994.

⁴¹ Finnish Ministry of Labour, unpublished.

⁴² Mannila, 1993 : 16.

⁴³ Lind et al., 1990.

⁴⁴ Heinze et. al., 1982; Buchtemann, 1984.

Attitudes, particularly those of employers stand as a major impediment to the efforts put in by disabled persons to enter the labour market. Raskin C., (1994 :82) quickly observed that a major cause of disadvantage for disabled persons is the negative stereotype attitude disabled people face in their attempts to achieve workplace equity. "Employers may react negatively to a disabled person's inability to communicate in a conventional way, to disfigurement or to the presence of a wheelchair", he noted. The following statement further illustrates the phenomenon :

"The attitudes of the hiring personnel are a major disincentive.

Often they are afraid and have concerns about how hiring a person with a disability will affect the workplace". (Roehrer Institute, 1992 : 35).

Citing Rioux, the Province of Ontario Advisory Council for Disabled Persons (1990), noted

"Assumptions about the needs of persons with disabilities are often premised on notions about what the person cannot do. The disability becomes the characterization of the whole person rather than one aspect of the person... Incapacity is seen as a generalized condition and tends to incorporate notions of incompetence". (1990 : 105).

This researcher whole-heartedly agrees with Konig and Schalock⁴⁵ that only through a change of attitudes can severely disabled men and women be accepted as trainees, employees and co-workers.

2.13 : Concluding Remarks.

This chapter has reviewed the concepts and theories underpinning this study. Besides its determining role in setting the guiding principles of analysis, it highlights the respective roles of some key actors in the political and socio-economic scene in domain of disability education, training and employment. Of primordial importance is the fact that it highlights the negative experiences of the disabled in the labour market and provides the rationale behind this research project. We will now turn to the experiences of both The Netherlands and Cameroon.

⁴⁵ 1991 : 27.

CHAPTER THREE : EXPERIENCE OF THE NETHERLANDS.

3.0 : Introduction :

Like other developed countries, The Netherlands, one of Europe's social welfare states, has gone reasonably far in attending to the needs of the disabled in general and their employment and training needs in particular. Before proceeding to disability policies and programmes, let us briefly trace the development of welfare policy in The Netherlands. Two important trends can be distinguished. The first is the designation of specific groups in the society for which specific policy attention is desirable in view of the heightened vulnerability of their members. In addition to young people and minorities, these "target groups" also include the elderly and the disabled⁴⁶. The second trend is the devolution of many of the policy responsibilities to local authorities and organizations. The rationale behind this trend is that it will enable a better response to be made to specific local differences which influence the welfare of the population. Devolution, it is argued can also contribute to better coordination of the services offered and better matching of those services to demand. One consequence of these two trends is that the integration and intersectoral coordination of the welfare and other policy aimed at these target groups takes place mainly at local level⁴⁷.

With regard to Dutch Policies for the disabled per se, a key feature running through them is the general consensus towards mainstreaming. This is reflected in the various activities of the organizations responsible for the rehabilitation of the disabled, particularly with regards to employment and skill development. However, in circumstances where people with work-related handicap cannot meet up with the challenges of mainstream development, appropriate provisions are made in sheltered workshops which provide on-the-job training and employment for this category of the disabled, as well as facilities for special education. This chapter reviews policies and programmes that cater for the long-term needs of the disabled.

⁴⁶ Kwekkeboom, M. H., 1997 : 161.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

3.1 : Policy directed at the integration and re-integration into the labour market of people with work-related handicap⁴⁸.

A number of policy measures have been introduced by the Dutch Government to redress some major problems encountered by the disabled in their efforts to seek workplace equity. One of the key legislations to this effect, the Employment of Handicapped Workers Act, was promulgated into law on 1st July 1986⁴⁹. This Act, amongst other things, compels employers to adapt the working conditions to the functional restrictions of the handicapped worker. The Act includes the following paragraph :

“Employers, employers’ organizations, and trade unions shall create, in as far as is reasonably possible, equal opportunities for handicapped and able-bodied workers with respect to the participation in employment.”⁵⁰

By virtue of this Act, the Government actively involves the social movements in sorting out and redressing the key predicaments encountered by the disabled in the labour market. The ensuing discussion highlights other problems and policy measures.

A noticeable problem often raised by employers is the high rate of absenteeism and outflow into the disablement regulations by people with work-related handicap. To keep this rate low, the tenor of a coalition agreement signed by a number of Ministries concerned with the needs of the disabled, posits that there should be an increase in the financial interest of employers. The positive effect of this development is that employers are encouraged financially to implement a policy within the enterprise which is directed at preventing or removing the causes of illness and disablement as much as possible. Negatively, increasing the financial interest of employers can result in an attempt by employers to limit the risk of illness and disablement by selecting on poor health risk. The immediate consequence may be unpleasant for people with work-related handicap. To mitigate or even eliminate any negative outcome, a number of measures directed at reintegration are given serious consideration. These measures are intended to give people with work-related handicap more possibilities of qualifying for a new function, as well as increasing their motivation to actually accept a new function by giving them certain

⁴⁸ Deelder, J. A., 1991 : 71 - 72.

⁴⁹ Ad Bocking and Tjeerd Hulsman, 1992 40.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

guarantees with reference to both their level of income during the new job and the level of their disablement benefit, should their disablement recur or increase. Additionally, measures which are intended to increase the willingness of employers to employ people with work-related handicap are equally given thoughtful consideration and positive stimuli to employers as strategy to achieve this goal, rank high in this connection. A closer look at some of the measures directed towards reintegration will give us an insight into the nature of the policies.

A regulation for wage supplementation : People with work-related handicap who are receiving a social security benefit (WAO benefit) often face a major obstacle to reintegration. This stems from the fact that when they accept a new position, their total income (wages + WAO benefit) is often lower than their previous daily wage at the time. Practical experience suggests a great need for an instrument which will put people across this threshold. The Dutch Ministerial Cabinet, hereafter simply called Cabinet, is considering the introduction of a wage supplementation regulation which will be directed at the employee, but which could also play a role as an instrument for negotiating with the employer.

A subsidy for wage costs : The Cabinet is considering the possibility of increasing the existing subsidy for wage costs. The intention here is to motivate employers to hire more disabled workers.

Encouragement of the founding of a private company : Like in Cameroon, the Cabinet in The Netherlands is exploring concrete possibilities of people with work-related handicap to make a start as independent entrepreneurs. A number of instruments can be used to achieve this goal, some of which are the Decision on Supplementary Benefits on Self-employment and Article 57, first paragraph of the General Disablement Pensions Act (AAW), which is also applicable to the mediatory population⁵¹ of the industrial insurance boards. The Cabinet now considers signaling those agencies responsible for implementation of the above regulations that this instrument must be actively used for the benefit of the mediatory population of the industrial insurance board.

⁵¹ The mediatory population consists of people awarded a disablement benefit, people who are assessed as being less than 15% disabled after one year's illness, or people whose illness during the first year makes it clear that they will no longer be able to return to their employer or who are looking for a new employer.

Stimuli for the older employee with a disablement : It is of great importance that older employees with work-related handicap be encouraged to resume employment as soon as this is possible. In the present circumstance, this stimulus is hardly present, if at all, in many cases. Furthermore, employees also run the risk that the WAO benefit following repeated terminations of employment will be lower than it was originally. The Cabinet is considering encouraging older employees to seek employment again by eliminating the financial risks associated with this.

Expansion of possibilities for schooling under the Unemployment Benefits Act (WW) : The criteria which permit schooling under the AAW/WAO are broader than those under the WW. The Cabinet is considering expanding possibilities of schooling without loss of WW benefit of the mediatory population of the industrial insurance board. Schooling, it is hoped, will enhance the employability of this target population.

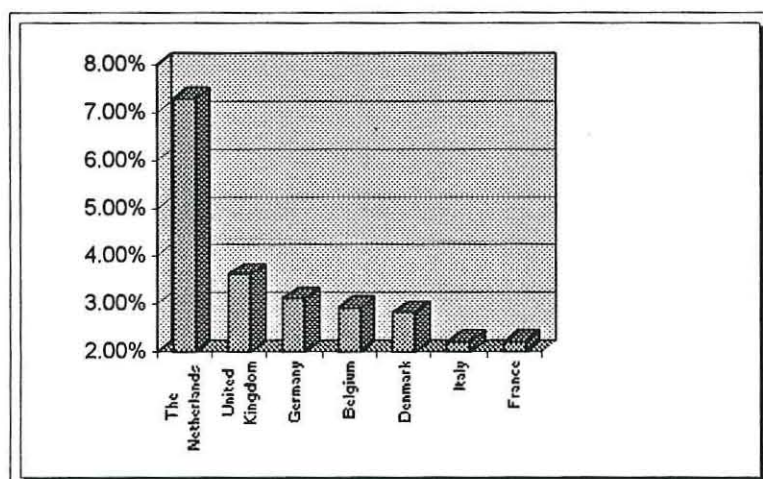
Trial placement without loss of benefits : It is a common phenomenon that even when an employee with a work-related handicap satisfies the job profile and the financial risks have been eliminated, employers still often prefer an employee who is able to undertake 100% work. Practising a trial placement may help to eliminate this prejudice on the part of employers. For this purpose, the Cabinet is considering incorporating into the regulations for disablement, insofar as these apply to partially disabled unemployed people, the possibility of trial placement without loss of benefits.

Application of the regulation for payment of personal support for handicapped employees : A contemplated outcome of this regulation is that it makes it possible to assist handicapped employees at the workplace in such a way that the employer does not have to spend additional time on them. At present, on the basis of the instructions for implementation, this regulation is limited primarily to people with mental handicap and secondarily to chronic psychiatric patients. The Cabinet is considering expanding the target population to include all the chronically ill people.

The above policies touch mostly (or even entirely) on training and employment related issues. They portray the depth into which the Dutch Government has gone and is still willing to go in order to resolve the needs of the disabled population. The objectives of the policies are clear enough from their wordings. As regards the level of implementation and

the extent to which the set objectives have been met, the ensuing programmes and activities of some selected organizations will help us evaluate the success or failures of existing policies. However, to give a tip of the iceberg in this regard, it will certainly not be a misnomer to remark generally that The Netherlands has gone reasonably far in responding to the critical needs of the disabled vis-à-vis other European countries and that its policies and strategies can amply serve as a model for a developing country like Cameroon. This strand of reasoning can be substantiated by the following graph which depicts the expenditure which the Dutch Government is making on invalidity benefit relative to other European countries.

Graph 3.1 : Expenditure on invalidity benefit in terms of percentage of the GDP for 1992.



Source : Development of the Disability Regulations in The Netherlands, Michel Rovers, 1997 : 10.

The above graph shows that the expenditure on disability benefit in The Netherlands was twice to three times higher than in neighbouring European countries. That this was not due to poorer health on the part of the Dutch population is shown by a number of indicators of general health : life expectancy in The Netherlands is higher than in most other European countries, while infant mortality rate is the lowest in Europe⁵². The above

⁵² Michel, R., 1997 : 10.

indicators suggest that the explanation for the exceptionally high number of disabled persons in The Netherlands must sooner be sought in the relatively favourable conditions of benefit set by the disability regulations in comparison with other regulations and the lenient conditions of access of the disability regulations⁵³. For instance, the Dutch take quite seriously the concept of minimum level of income which constitutes their safety net⁵⁴. This level is tied closely to the legal minimum wage which is adjusted for changes in the price level through the policy of indexation⁵⁵. Furthermore, at the bottom of the Dutch system is the means-tested social assistance programme which is administered by municipal social service officers under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment⁵⁶. These are all illustrative of the disabled-friendly policies of the Dutch government.

We will now turn to some coordinating instruments for national and regional policies and programmes, special intervention programmes, initiatives by the disabled and broad-based social employment programmes.

3.2. : Coordinating Instruments for National and Regional Policies and Programmes.

3.2.1. The Dutch National Board (Council) for the Disabled⁵⁷.

Criterion for Membership and Scope of Activities :

This Board regroups 60 national organizations of disabled and parents of the disabled. A fundamental pre-condition for membership to the Council is that 50%+1 of the members and consequently the votes must come from the disabled. This Council is concerned more with policies than with practical implementation of different programmes for the disabled. For instance, it examines special centres to see if there is enough attention given to the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Monroe B. and David D., 1987 : 21.

⁵⁵ Indexation is the linking of wages, pensions, etc. to increases in prices.

⁵⁶ Monroe B. and David D., 1987 : 21.

⁵⁷ Data collected through an interview with the Board Chairperson, August 1997.

disabled but does not interfere with methods and contents of programmes. It plays an advisory role for the government, takes initiatives for new policies, engages in monitoring and evaluation of existing programmes. Its domain of activities is broad-based but basically it is out to foster the interest of the disabled and receives financial support for all its projects and activities. Sometimes, it meets the parliament and is also free to organize protest marches. This latter dimension gives it a political connotation which most disabled organizations lack. For example, in Cameroon, no disabled organization has the courage to stage a protest march against government's growing insensitivity to the pressing needs of the disabled. On the other hand, even if a protest march is organized, there is no guarantee that the government will listen and act promptly to the expressed needs.

Policies towards Mainstreaming and Autonomy :

In pursuance of its objectives, it operates a special fund for co-opting the disabled into mainstream development, and in consequence, away from sheltered environment. This shows a shift in its emphasis from special centres to ordinary milieu. In an effort to adapt ordinary environments, especially educational and training institutions, to the needs of the disabled, a personal budget, popularly called "Back-Pack", was instituted two years ago to accelerate the trend towards mainstreaming. It is a sort of emancipation thought. Within the framework of this budget, money is given to the disabled to enable him or her, inter alia, pay for, adjustments necessary for integration into ordinary school system, services of an employee who can serve as a job-coach, particularly for severe mentally disabled, and the provision of subsidy to employers. The primary aim behind this policy is to grant the disabled persons greater autonomy in deciding what is good for them. For example, the municipality currently purchases wheel-chair for the disabled from dealers. This budget intends to transfer this responsibility to the disabled themselves since they understand their needs better than anyone else. This policy empowers and enables them to play a more active role contrary to their hitherto passive and weakened position. The special subsidy granted to employers is meant to compensate for the extra attention accorded to them in finding practical solutions to their adaptation problems. Adaptations may cover special seats, instruments for learning, lenses, special facilities for mobility, among others. These are all measures to enhance individual adaptation. It was at first limited to home care but

has been extended to other fields like education. This however, excludes infrastructural adaptation which falls out of the purview of this subsidy. The Board works in close collaboration with special institutions of the disabled for the acquisition of new skills which can facilitate their entry into the labour market. Individuals negotiate with employment agency (G.A.K. - Social Security Organization) to cover the cost of training, since this is too expensive. It should be noted that the placement services for the disabled which used to fall under the jurisdiction of Social Security Organization is now transferred to the Labour Agency where it functions as a unit.

Crucial Role of the State :

Government played and is still playing a crucial role in the existence of this board. From a historical perspective, this Board came into existence thanks to Government's initiative to harmonize the contributions coming from several organizations working for the interest of the disabled. It needed to have one voice, thus the creation of the Board which now serves as a spokesperson for this plethora of organizations. Its roles extend to the crucial domain of finances. 70% of the Board's activities, basically the fixed costs are covered by the government. Private organizations sponsor 20% of its activities, concentrated on exploring new avenues. The remaining 10% comes from contributions made by the different member organizations. The Board serves as an efficient means for the government to know the problems of the disabled. Political parties sometimes solicit advice from this Board.

Concluding Remarks :

The Board has registered a lot of successes in different domains, particularly in adaptation of housing, transportation, provision of wheel-chairs, facilitating access to training and employment opportunities and accelerating the promulgation and enforcement of anti-discriminatory laws. With regards to disabled minors (under 18 years), the Board has worked tirelessly to ensure that they receive more individualized special benefits, rather than the more complicated welfare payments which take several factors into consideration like family income, amount of money in the bank, among others. It is making major contributions to the lives of the disabled in Holland.

3.2.2: Policies and Activities of the Federation of the Disabled in the Province of South Holland (Zuid Holland)⁵⁸.

Introduction :

The Federation of Disabled in South Holland represents one of several organizations formed in the respective provinces to promote the interest of municipal workshops concerned with employment and on-the-job training for the disabled. This Federation presently works closely with the 20 workshops currently existing in South Holland Province. Its cardinal objectives are to support local workshops in working out policies, organizing meetings, gathering statistics and helping individual workshops in various ways according to expressed needs.

Statistical Trend :

A statistical information revealed by this body indicates that there are about 86.000 workers in sheltered workshops and 26.000 are hanging on the waiting lists. Financial constraints make it difficult to accommodate all those applying for sheltered employment, hence the existence of waiting list.

Repercussions of entrenched Stereotype Mentality :

From a brief historical perspective, a disturbing revelation points to the fact that disabled people have for long been prevented from involvement in policy formulation, planning and management due to the prevalent stereotype mentality suggesting that disability is synonymous to inability and that disabled people can produce only sub-standard output. This point of view regarding their ability is clearly untenable because the disabled the world over have excelled in many works of life far more than the non-disabled. Moreover, it is better to give them a chance and assess their output before stereotypically restricting oneself to such a glaring falsehood. This is a clear case of the existing barriers encountered by the disabled in the Dutch society. It is a sad reality for example, to discover that in a framework to promote the interest of the disabled, only one out of 20 workshops in South Holland is headed by a disabled general manager. Holland therefore still has some distance to cover as far as this area is concerned.

Limited Success :

⁵⁸ Data collected through an interview with the Director of the Federation, September 1997.

It should be noted that this coordinating body noted with utter dismay, the limited success registered by sheltered workshops in the domain of placements into ordinary working environment. For example, only about 5% succeed to graduate annually to mainstream development circles. A possible explanation is the fact that employers are not motivated to hire people from these workshops because, they have a high vulnerability and susceptibility to illness, so employers claim. While this perception is very unfortunate as it is not conclusive of a generalized phenomenon, it should be noted categorically that non-disabled have equal chances of falling ill also. This is a built-in bias stemming from their already contaminated and stereotype mentality. Changing this negative perception stands out as a big challenge which disabled organizations need to fight vigorously to overcome. A great cultural revolution can bring in some desirable changes.

Policies towards Disabled Women :

As regards policies towards disabled women, there are important changes currently going on. For instance, there is a swift departure from the traditional ideas that if disabled women are unfit for housewives, they should go to the workshops. Their participation in workshops was determined by their inability to cope as housewives, not very much on their personal interests and abilities. The shift in policy recognizes the right of women to employment, on equal basis as the men. The current employment structure in the workshop composing of 75% men and 25% women reflects the negative impact of the previous policy bias against the women. Recent trends portray a steady increase in women employees in the workshops at a rate far more than that of men. While this development is highly welcome, it should be pointed out that there is no deliberate policy to reduce the participation of men. On the contrary, the removal of a major barrier against women's participation, logically increases their inflow into the workshop.

Critical Role of the Government :

Conscious of its determinant role in supporting disability related policies and programmes, the government funds the activities of this regional body. It also makes an annual contribution of approximately Dfl. 42.000 per worker and if after engaging this sum to meet the needs of the disabled the amount is judged insufficient, the municipality pays the

rest. However, if the workshops do not employ the required number of disabled, they must refund the rest of the money.

Prevailing Problems :

In the accomplishment of its activities, this body experiences some obstacles. A point of concern now is the uncertainty of the law. It changes regularly, thereby rendering it difficult to make long-term plans. Additionally, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable jobs for disabled people in ordinary work environment. The labour-intensive jobs which most of them can conveniently do are disappearing rapidly to Africa and Asia. However, there are moves to create labour-intensive jobs in the service sector to accommodate these workers.

Concluding Observation :

This Federation is doing a great job to coordinate the activities of the workshops and promote the interest of the disabled population. It simply has to put in more efforts to overcome the aforementioned obstacles and assert its position as a major fighter against disrespect for the rights of the supposedly "downtrodden".

3.3 : Special Intervention Programme for the Disabled : Employment and Training in Sheltered Workshops⁵⁹.

Introduction:

The Dutch Government has made it possible to employ severely disabled men and women through the setting up of special programmes. These programmes take the forms of sheltered workshops and integration into normal working environments like companies. The programmes started around the late sixties as a result of government concern for the growing number of idle disabled men and women in the Dutch society. The main idea was to bring disabled men and women together and engage them in professional activities without necessarily having a profit motive in perspective. In the long-run, after having learnt some basic skills, primarily through on-the-job training, business-oriented strategies could be gradually introduced. Government registered some measure of success but the

⁵⁹ Data collected through an interview with one of the Managing Directors of The Haeghe Groepe, September 1997.

stiff challenges of modern day business world limits the full attainment of its original objectives, especially the introduction of strategic management practices in the sheltered workshops.

The main objective of these programmes is to get the disabled into normal working life. The programmes have however, not registered the level of success expected. For instance in one of the sheltered workshops in the Haeghe Groepe, (The Hague Group) employing about 2500 workers, only about 5% (125) end up entering normal working life each year. The reasons for this disturbing trend range from the fact that firstly, many people are severely disabled and cannot really be helped out of the workshops and secondly, the availability of good social facilities in the workshops make some users unwilling to leave. It should be pointed out that sheltered workshops can be categorized as general disability programmes. These are programmes that cover impairments independent of their causes and they differ from work-related disability programmes which are described as programmes that cover only impairments caused (or aggravated) by professional activity⁶⁰. The basic criteria for entry into the work-related programmes are loss of wage-earning capacity and the existence of functional limitation to work, although the latter criterion is used only occasionally. The criterion used in the general disability is primarily the "loss of wage-earning capacity"⁶¹.

Programme Philosophy :

As a matter of principle, the individual workshop of The Haeghe Groepe recruits the disabled and offers them on-the-job training and later on employment. After working for sometime, the workshop will help in placing them in suitable companies. These companies pay a certain amount of money to the "Groepe". The disabled people work in the company for some time to permit the employer to assess their level of productivity. If this productivity level is not satisfactory to the employer, the latter is free to declare his unwillingness to co-opt the worker concerned into his work force. If on the other hand, the employer indicates an interest in the disable worker, he is given a trial period of six months within which to take a final decision with regard to the worker. Within this period,

⁶⁰ Anneke M. van der Giezen, 1992 : 21.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the latter can still come back to the workshop if the employer decides otherwise. However, after the expiration of this period, the employer is obliged to incorporate the worker into his work force. The Dutch official regulation stipulates a trial period of two months, after which it is forbidden for an employer to fire his employee. The six months' period is therefore deliberate to give the employer sufficient allowance to judge the capabilities of the disabled employee.

There are two fundamental reasons for this comprehensive procedure. Firstly, to integrate the disabled worker into mainstream development, for instance placement in a company offering normal working environment. Secondly, placement as a permanent worker in circumstances where the employer finds him sufficiently productive. This latter reason breaks the tie with the social (sheltered) workshop.

Assessment of loss of wage-earning capacity :

For a disabled worker to get a normal job either in the workshop or other work environments, two procedures are followed. Firstly, he/she sees a medical doctor who determine his/her fitness to work in normal environments. Attention here is given to physical, mental, psychiatric and social factors. Secondly, the disabled worker goes to a test and training centre which determines what kind of job is suitable for him/her and what adaptations are needed thereupon. The centre recommends about five jobs for a particular person. These may range from typing (a blind person normally uses a braille), sawing of wood, packaging, pottery, to name these few. Both the doctor and training centre do the testing to ensure the highest level of productivity from the disabled workers. In certain cases, some categories of disabled workers are judged unfit to work in a normal environment. These categories are left to work exclusively in the workshops. It sounds positive and interesting to note that within the workshop, the salary scale used is the same as those for non-disabled workers. The disabled people who are unable to do any form of work, depending on their degree of disability, are handed over to a (an adopted) family which receives allowance from the government, takes care of them and gives them pocket allowance. A family takes care of about 15 to 20 disabled persons.

Training and Development :

Within the workshop, the development of the disabled worker is ensured by two mechanisms. Firstly, the head of the department where he is employed. This person follows up the working life of the disabled and proposes corrective measures for upgrading his abilities. The second mechanism is through the test and training centre which also follows up the disabled in their working life and also proposes corrective measures for further development or goes further to take personal action towards this goal.

A commonly observed phenomenon amongst some disabled in the workshop is the experience of a downtrend in their abilities. This occurs mostly amongst the mentally handicapped but occasionally amongst the physically impaired. Within the workshop there is a special section called network which tries to train this group of people in order to upgrade their abilities. This is usually done in a piecemeal and systematic manner without the rigour and pressure required to train people for profit motives. After this training which normally lasts for one year, the trainees are brought back to the workshop to get on again with normal working life. If this effort towards skill upgrading does not produce the desired results, the managers, for cost-effective reasons, will recommend the removal of those concerned from the workshop. They will then be taken to special houses for people who need a lot of attention. The government, through special institutions ("Oagvooviriening"), takes care of them and keeps them busy all day long. This category regroups those who suffer from chronic impairments and can do nothing productive.

State Intervention :

Like other organizations for the disabled, government stands as a major source of finance for the activities of the workshop. It contributes huge sums of money yearly for the development of each disabled in the workshop. This contribution meets up with the cost of adaptation. A second important source of finance is the sale of products in the competitive labour market. The workshops produce a variety of goods and services like furniture, pottery products, cleaning, packaging, to name these few. The need to develop the entrepreneurial propensity of managers and workers become increasingly urgent if cost-effectiveness of these programmes is to be given any serious consideration.

Organization of Work :

The organization of work takes into account the opinions of workers. Before the routine two weeks duration schedule is drawn up, the opinions of workers through their representatives are solicited. Shopfloor workers meet every morning to strategize on the day's work. Trade unions meet once every month with company manager to handle more abstract problems like adjustments in working hours, seasonal work amongst others.

Problems Encountered :

This workshop also encounters some critical problems which sometimes hamper the full attainment of its noble goals. In the first place the omni-present liquidity problem poses a serious constraint to its activities. The annual government contribution of Dfl. 42.000 per worker proves to be insufficient, given the growing demands of the disabled and their increasing number in the labour market. The workshop also faces growing competition for its products from those of prison workers as well as other agencies combating unemployment measures. Additionally the products are not quite popular in the market because of the stereotype impression about disabled people. Disabled workers also face the same fate in the labour market. Employers in big companies claim they do simple work and cannot try the more challenging tasks found in their companies. Simple work which most of them do in the workshops no doubt fetches little remuneration. A final major problem which needs to be addressed urgently is the fact that most managers lack entrepreneurial orientation. This makes the workshop less competitive in the product market.

Concluding Remarks :

The future of the workshop does not seem quite promising because of the afore-cited predicaments. A turnaround can be brought about by responding to customers' demands. It is believed this is the only strategy for survival in the current context of stiff competition. In any case, most of the workers feel happy with their work and lifestyle and this is one of the key objectives of the workshops. This can be confirmed from the following statements in a chat with two of the employees during a visit to the Packaging Department with the Managing Director. The first of them had this to say :

"I feel happy with my work and I'm not willing to go to another section"

The second voiced out his feelings as follows :

“I have been working here for the past seven years and have learnt all the skills required. Changing to another department or leaving this job to another elsewhere will cause me a lot of problems.”

The above statements demonstrate on the one hand, their satisfaction in the workshop and on the other, their unwillingness to confront new challenges in the ordinary working environment. Their apparent resignation to embrace new challenges poses a serious setback to the policy of mainstreaming.

3.4 : Employment and Skill Development Initiatives by the Disabled :Perspective of the Youth Organization for Disabled (Youth Platform, otherwise called YOPLA)⁶².

Introduction:

The disabled themselves are also actively involved in the search for long-term sustainable solutions to their crucial problems of economic dependency which has become part and parcel of their daily lives. Initiatives towards this goal is coordinated mostly by the Youth Platform, popularly called YOPLA, which concentrates a greater part of its time and resources on encouraging the training and integration of the disabled into the labour market. Its efforts are geared not only towards setting up specific employment and skill development programmes but also at drastically reverting the stereotypical mentality of most employers who believe that disability means inability to work. According to them, disabled workers are less productive and should not be engaged in activities having economic or profit-oriented goals in perspective. To a reasonable extent, YOPLA has been able to register some measure of success.

Labour Market Integration Initiatives.

The above challenge to YOPLA was an enormous and daunting task. It started off by examining special programmes designed to enable young people in general to get jobs. The formulation and implementation of these programmes were not adapted to the needs of the disabled. The immediate consequence was that large numbers of disabled people entering the labour market were left primarily unemployed. Cognizant of this structural

⁶² Data collected through an interview with the President of the Youth Platform, YOPLA, August 1997.

aberration, YOPLA intervened vigorously and initiated critical adaptive changes. It is now possible for young disabled people to enter into these programmes and get access to employment like their non-disabled counterparts. The specificity of the disabled people who succeeds to get employment after this on-the job training is that, for the first year during the trial period in employment, they receive social security allowance, not salary. When they finally acquire the status of permanent employees, they automatically become salaried workers. Other special programmes which extend to three years, tend to be all-embracing as they include all categories of disabled, not only the youths. The employers follow up closely the productivity level of the disabled and are free to decline from absorbing any of them into their companies if their output is judged unsatisfactory. Should this happen the employment agency (GAK) takes the disabled person and hands him over to the social security budget, while organizing the training and eventual employment of another disabled person to benefit from the existing space.

Despite the great efforts of YOPLA, a large number of young disabled still remain unemployed and are subjects of disability benefit payments. The following table gives a vivid illustration of the new and previous benefit payments made.

Table 3.1 : The Amount of Benefit Payments to Young Disabled from 1976 to 1992.

Year	Total Amount of ongoing benefit payments	New Benefit Payments	Last Benefit Payments
1976	40.900	41.000	200
1980	56.700	3.200	1.200
1984	67.100	3.900	1.200
1988	78.000	4.700	1.500
1992	95.100	3.900	1.700

Source : CTSV, Kroniek van de sociale, in Jonggehandicaptenatlas, November 1996.

Emerging Obstacles.

These programmes have a number of glaring set-backs, despite the noble objectives in pursuit. The uncertainty that looms over the disabled worker during the trial period adds to the gloomy results that these programmes sometimes register for the benefit of the disabled. It is never very clear whether a disabled employee will be fired or be maintained as a permanent worker. The first threatening set-back is the existing high competition in hiring disabled and non-disabled workers. The former are always in a disadvantaged position, especially as government policy requires employers to take responsibility for sick employees and employers always nurse the fear that the disabled employees are more susceptible to illness than their non-disabled counterparts. A second set-back to these special programmes is the time spent on training a worker with a disability relative to a non-disabled worker. It takes about five times more to train the former than the latter. For instance, the former can get an employment but adaptation may take about two years to do, whereas the latter does not have much problems, especially with regards to accessibility.

3.5 : Broad-based Employment Generation Programmes for Less Productive Workers : The Dutch Experience in Social Employment Programme (WSW)⁶³.

3.5.1 : Introduction :

It is a generally observed phenomenon that the number of people who desire to earn income through working, yet who have low productivity, is substantial. In some countries like U.S and Holland this population includes a high proportion of individuals classified as disabled or handicapped. It can also embrace individuals with serious social or cultural disadvantages - language, low educational attainment, background of alcohol or drug use to name these few. Irrespective of the source of their problem, these people can be described by the term "less productive workers"⁶⁴. These workers are usually accommodated in broad-based social employment programmes with a high labour content.

⁶³ Partly drawn from Robert H. Haveman's research on "Public Employment of Less Productive Workers : Lessons for the United States from the Dutch Experience" in *Disability Policies and Government Programs*, edited by Edward D. Berkowitz , 1979, Praeger.

⁶⁴ Haveman, H. R., 1979 : 131.

The labour-intensive character of the programmes is intended to cover as many disadvantaged workers as possible.

The Dutch Social Employment Programme is a large public undertaking that comprises about 1.5% of total employment⁶⁵. Existing laws and policies make it a point of duty for the public to take responsibility for providing employment for handicapped workers. The tenor of the 1969 Law provides authority to this legal duty of the state. From a historical perspective, it should be noted that while the disparate programmes that existed prior to World War II were motivated by charity, the postwar programmes were seen as an integral part of national full employment policy⁶⁶. This is a tacit illustration of a swift policy shift from charity discourse. The charity paradigm, it should be recalled, provided short-term unsustainable solutions to disability related problems. The Dutch took seriously the "right to work" mandate of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁶⁷. Employees in the postwar programmes were given normal public employee status and paid a wage that approximated that of regular private or public sector workers performing similar functions (though at substantially greater productivity levels).

The programme underwent restructuring in 1969 and since then it has had two primary components, referred to as the industrial centres programme and the open-air and administrative activities programme. While the industrial centre programme is revenue-yielding, most of the open-air and administrative activities programme do not produce a salable product or service.

⁶⁵ Palmer, J L., 1978.

⁶⁶ Haveman, H. R., 1979 132.

⁶⁷ The declaration put forth by the General Assembly in 1948 stated "Everyone has a right to work, a right to free choice of profession, just and favourable conditions of employment, as well as protection against joblessness." (Article 23), quoted in Berkowitz, 1979 : 132.

Table 3.2 : Social Employment Industrial Workers as a Percentage of Private-Sector Workers, by Industry.

	1965	1970	1974
Metal	1.7	2.1	2.1
Plastic, rubber, leather (plus chemical industry)	1.2	1.3	1.4
Paper, cardboard (including printing)	2.3	2.9	2.2
Wood furniture	5.2	7.3	5.4
Pottery, glass, concrete, tiles	0.6	0.6	0.5
Textile	0.8	0.8	2.3
Other*	2.3	5.1	5.6

*This industry includes nonhomogeneous types of activities for Social Employment and the private sector.

Source: Haveman, 1979 : 133.

The above table shows a steady increase in the industrial composition of workers in this component of the programme, relative to the composition of private sector workers. Besides the "other" category, only the wood and furniture industry had a disproportionate share of workers employed in the Social Employment Programme, representing 5.4 percent of total employment in this industry in 1974. In 1976, about 60 - 65 percent of total programme employment was concentrated in the industrial centres programme⁶⁸. There has also been a steady growth in employment in the open-air and administrative-activities component of the programme. For instance, from 1965 to 1974, open-air workers - those maintaining sport fields, parks, and road and highway grounds, and those

⁶⁸ Haveman, 1979 : 133.

working in nurseries, grew from 6.500 to nearly 14.000, whereas administrative workers - those employed in libraries, museums and public offices, grew from 1.800 to 8.000⁶⁹..

It should be pointed out that while restructuring of employment programmes and modifications to specific laws relating to the protection of the disabled, especially their socio-economic interest, intervened in Holland as far back as 1969, the very first law addressing disability needs in general and those of the labour market in particular, appeared only in July 1983, just over a decade ago. Before this date the disabled confronted mounting problems as they were left in total oblivion. Moreover, even after the promulgation of these laws into force, the provision of social employment programmes, ambiguously stated, has never been transformed into concrete reality, leaving the disabled in more or less the same situation as the pre-legislation epoch.

3.5.2 : Organization and Structure of the Programme.

The 1969 Social Employment Act saw the acceptance by the national government, the responsibility for providing employment for handicapped and other workers who cannot find work in the private or regular public sectors⁷⁰. An important actor in this programme was the Ministry of Social Affairs. This act specifically vested in its hands, the challenging responsibility of organizing, administering and financing the programme. A second major actor in the execution of this broad-based employment programme was the municipality, which had the privilege of acting single-handedly or in collaboration with other municipalities. Municipalities had the task of actually providing employment to the less productive workers. Additionally, they had to recruit a workforce from the eligible population and ensure that an adequate volume of work is available. In order to carry out its activities judiciously, the municipality is subject to a comprehensive set of regulations regarding some key functions such as management and administrative procedures, accounting, control, to name these few.

⁶⁹ Ibid : 134.

⁷⁰ The preamble of the 1969 Social Employment Law reads, "We have considered it desirable to provide regulations concerning the provision of adapted employment, aimed at conservation, retraining or stimulation of the working capacity on behalf of persons who are capable to work, but for whom, mainly due to factors connected to their person, employment under normal circumstances is not or not yet available.", (Ibid : 134).

The above structure portrays a network of activities to be performed by a municipality or group of municipalities. They also have a flexible character given the huge task bestowed on them. Extensive coverage is guaranteed with the involvement of municipalities and this portrays the decentralized character of social employment programmes. Furthermore, provision is made for ample cooperation between municipalities to enhance their common interests. These features are absent in disability programmes in Cameroon

The Dutch Law generally requires the municipalities to establish a local Social Employment Commission to give advice on criteria to be applied in admitting workers, as well as on the structure and operation of the *werkverband*, the organizational unit for administering the programme. After a close examination of the composition of this commission, this researcher discovered with utter dismay that the disabled are conspicuously excluded from the Commission. This commission can no doubt provide a proper forum for them to exert some influence through active participation in issues that shape their destiny.

A single manager, assisted by foremen, instructors and administrative personnel are responsible for the actual management of the municipality's *werkverband* and they operate in accordance with a set of operational guidelines issued by the government. Some of the important guidelines are to the effect that the work activities must rehabilitate and improve the participants' working capacity and that the work done must meet an economic or social need - it must not be "make-work". An important guideline which highlights a strategic orientation concerns marketing of the output which must be done in a professional, business-like manner, not based on appeals for charity, and must not interfere with other employment "in an irresponsible way."⁷¹ This suggests a market-oriented approach which delinks from charity paradigm. Mention is however not made as to the desirability of covering costs with revenue. Cost consideration is of course very vital for sustainability of such programmes, especially if it has to be replicated in a developing country like Cameroon which faces chronic financial problems.

Eligibility for the programme for a non-aged person is based on the fact that the latter must be able to work but not necessarily able to find work under normal conditions

⁷¹ Haveman, 1979 : 135.

because of his personal circumstance. A worker must be judged capable of attaining a minimum of one-third of normal productivity in the adapted circumstances of the programme. However, through a special provision, a limited number of persons not capable of attaining this minimum are admitted into the programme. It suffices to remark here that while the municipality ultimately offers the employment contract to a worker, substantial control over a worker is vested in the hands of a permanent Placement Subcommittee of the Social Employment Commission. This Subcommittee makes recommendation only after obtaining full education and employment records on a candidate, a rather complete set of medical and psychological tests, and the recommendation of a medical and social work personnel who have examined the candidate. This rigorous procedure is necessary to ascertain that only the disadvantaged category of the population is admitted into the programme. Once admitted, a worker is placed in a work rehabilitation or a test and training centre where, during a period from a few weeks to a number of months, an adapted work function is developed. This process ensures identification of a person's professional interest, assessment of his aptitudes and matching these traits with an adapted function. After this time the worker is assigned a job and a wage group that depends on the skills and responsibilities that he/she is judged to be capable of handling. Ten wage groups to which assignments can be made do exist. Public subsidies come in regularly to this programme. They are necessary because many activities in the programme do not yield revenue and workers are paid a rate that is approximately equivalent to that of their counterparts in the private sector. Labour market segmentation on lines of wages is thus eliminated.

It should be pointed out as regards subsidies that while the worker wage costs in the revenue-yielding activities (primarily, the industrial centres) are subsidized to the tune of 75%, those in the nonrevenue-yielding activities have a subsidy rate of 90%⁷². Nevertheless, the subsidy rate for the revenue-yielding activities can be raised to 90% if a centre deficit remains after 75% rate subsidy is paid. This is referred to as supplemental subsidy, paid by the Ministry of Social Affairs upon request from the municipality. The major categories of cost on which a subsidy is not paid are materials, equipment supplies

⁷² Ibid : 137.

and facilities costs. Any further deficit that remains can be submitted to the Ministry of Interior Affairs which will cover up to 80% of these remaining costs out of the Municipal Fund. This arrangement makes a municipality liable for only a very small share of the total costs of the programme. Unfortunately, subsidies are virtually absent in Cameroon particularly in this context of structural reforms. Moreover, municipalities are yet to be involved in the running of disability programmes. These arrangements are therefore virtually untenable for the time being in Cameroon.

Table 3.3 : Number of Disability Recipients, Netherlands, 1971 - 76.

Year	Number of Recipients
Employees Program	
1971	237.000
1972	261.000
1973	287.000
1974	313.000
1975	345.000
1976	400.000
Self-employed program	
1976	130.000

Source : Haveman, 1979 : 139.

The above data shows a steady increase in the number of recipients from 1971 to 1976. While this trend indicates the accommodating capacity of Social Employment programmes, especially as it fulfills its overriding role of providing productive employment to handicapped and other workers, it also suggests a negative phenomenon as less and less workers exit the programme to ordinary working environment.

3.5.3 : Programme Incentives and Performance : An Appraisal.

The above brief description of the Social Employment Programme presents a complex set of organizations and individuals interacting within a complex set of regulations and subsidy provisions to determine the operation of the programme. Haveman R.(1979)⁷³, after an analysis of the provisions of the law, data regarding programme operation, and discussion with individuals involved with the programme at all levels, came out with a number of conclusions, some of which include:

Firstly, the managers of the werkverbanden, municipal officials and members of the Social Employment Commission see the provision of work to people admitted to the programme as the overriding objective. The coverage of costs by sales revenue is not considered to be an important objective. The structure of the programme in consequence provides only weak incentives either to increase sales or to economize on costs. Replicability of such a structure in a developing country like Cameroon may pose a serious problem because of its negative impact on sustainability. In this context of structural adjustment, Cameroon faces acute financial problems. The government has virtually suppressed all subsidies. To be able to establish any long-term strategy, both the objectives of the provision of employment and cost-effectiveness need to be given equal weighting.

Secondly, as a result of (a) the large subsidy to administrative and open-air workers, (b) the open-ended and undefined nature of the tasks which can be performed, and (c) the lack of effective control on the growth of these components of the programme, municipal governments are able to transfer the budget costs of activities serving the municipality from the municipal budget to the national budget. This approach needs to be avoided in a developing country. Rather than seeking to transfer costs to central government, municipalities need to work towards autonomy, especially with regard to finances. Municipal governments need to put in place, effective management strategies to contain exorbitant costs increases. Primarily, labour-intensive income-generating activities should be encouraged.

Thirdly, the relaxation of eligibility criteria, the rapidly rising benefit levels, and the rapid growth of the disability programme have diminished both the referrals of people in the disability programme to the Social Employment programme and the financial incentive for

⁷³ Quoted in Berkowitz, D. 1979:140.

people in the disability programme to accept work. These circumstances have also led to a relaxation of eligibility criteria in the Social Employment programme. While eligibility criteria should be relaxed, admission should be restricted to the disadvantaged group who experience marginalized positions in the competitive labour market due to different forms of impairments.

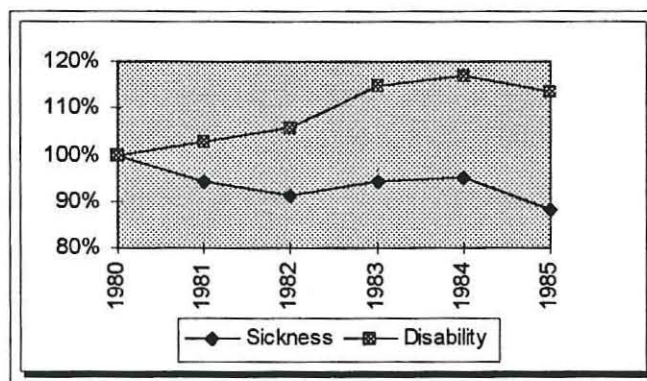
3.6. : An Overview of The Dutch Disability System in the '80s and '90s.

By 1970 the approximately 5.2% of the Dutch working population was classified as disabled, a somewhat large percentage. Ten years later the figure had grown as high as 11.5%, more than double the previous rate in just a decade⁷⁴. Two main reasons, according to Michel R. (1997), accounted for this dramatic increase in the number of disabled persons. Firstly, the economic recession led to considerable reorganization within the business community. With the more favourable conditions of benefit under the Disablement Benefits Acts (WAO) of 1976 than under the Unemployment Benefits Act (WW), surplus personnel were shepherded to the WAO on a large scale. The extraordinarily lenient eligibility criteria also facilitated this trend. Secondly, the reintegration function of the WAO failed entirely for a number of reasons. Firstly, the number of jobs available was so small that people who were (partially) disabled were rarely able to find paid employment. Secondly, the executive institutions working in the field of reintegration were inefficient - far more attention was paid to correctly establishing the level of benefit than to reintegrating those entitled to benefit. Thirdly, the cause of disability lay far more in psychic factors than had originally been expected. It should however be reiterated that the increase in the number of disabled persons had to be accounted for by factors other than the deteriorating health of the population and this can be seen from the development of the benefit paid under the terms of the Sickness Benefits Acts. Though there was indeed an increase in the number of people claiming benefit under this Act, in terms of working population, the increase in sickness benefit was far smaller than the increase in disability benefit.

⁷⁴ Michel Rovers, 1997 : 5.

The 1980s saw the introduction of cuts and measures. During this period the number of disabled persons continued to grow, though far less rapidly than it had done in the seventies. The encroaching effects of the economic crisis triggered a dramatic rise in the rate of employment. In terms of working population, there was a reverse trend in the sickness benefit and invalidity benefit paid out in the early eighties. This can be seen in the following graph.

Graph 3.2 : The Development in the number of people claiming sickness benefit and disability benefit expressed in terms of percentage of the working population, 1980 - 85 (1980=100)



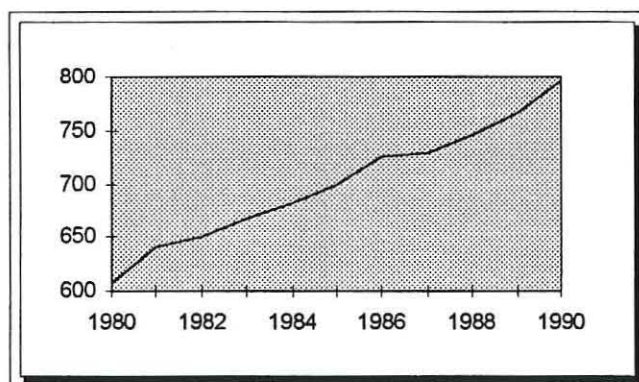
Source : Michel Rovers, 1997 : 7

We notice from the above graph that in the early eighties the number of sickness benefits payments dropped, both in an absolute sense and in a relative sense. On the other hand, the number of invalidity payments continued to rise, though the increase was far less steep than it had been in the seventies.

Developments in the early eighties revealed that the prevailing system of employee insurance schemes was unable to withstand the economic downtrend. The appropriate quarters worked assiduously on a revision of the system. The ensuing revision brought in important changes, one of which was the abolition of the assessment clause. This change entailed that henceforth, the situation in the labour market and the possibility of the disabled employee finding work were no longer to be taken into account in establishing

the level of disability. This adjustment was expected to have a considerable influence in the volume of disabled persons as it was estimated that unemployment accounted for at least 50% of disability benefit payments⁷⁵. The abolition of the assessment clause was expected to lead to a sharp drop in the number of disabled persons in terms of benefit-years. Contrarily the volume continued to increase and to a reasonable extent the maintenance of the old practice was the major cause. Employers regarded the WAO as a convenient and inexpensive method of laying off excess and above all, elderly personnel, while employees considered the WAO a safe and socially accepted regulation. Executive institutions and medical examiners continued to grant benefit and declare people fully disabled on a large scale, without taking the element of unemployment into account. Graph 3.3 vividly illustrates this trend.

Graph 3.3 : The Development in the number of people claiming disability benefit in the period 1980 - 1990 (x 1,000 benefit-years).



Source : Michel Rovers, 1997 : 8.

In the early '90s, The Netherlands was veering dangerously in the direction of one million disabled persons. This was considered to be unacceptable both politically and socially. On the political front, the country was finally ready to introduce measures which were more rigorous than those implemented previously. In 1991, a parliamentary committee of

⁷⁵ Michel R., 1997 : 8

enquiry⁷⁶ was set up to investigate what had gone awry in the implementation of the regulations. There was wide support for the need for change in the business community. Employers organizations and unions were willing to cooperate and to offer their suggestions on the kind of changes that might be introduced. The Dutch population was also finally convinced that things were no longer to be in the same way. The scenario was then ripe for the introduction of appropriate measures.

In the period 1992 - 1994 three legislative proposals were adopted. On 1st March 1992, the TAV Act ("Reduction in the Number of Disablement Benefits Claimants") came into effect. The most important elements of this Act consisted of the introduction of premium differentiation in the Sickness Benefits Act and the introduction of bonus/penalty system within the disability system. As from 1st January 1993, the premium of the Sickness Benefits Act was determined by the employer's rate of absenteeism due to illness. Three or five levels of premium existed per branch of industry, viz. low, medium and high.

The bonus/penalty system meant that an employer was rewarded for employing a disabled person. This bonus amounted to half a year's salary. If an employee was classified as disabled on the other hand, the employer was obliged to pay a penalty, which was initially equal to half a year's salary but later increased to full annual salary. The employer had the option of avoiding payment of the fine by continuous employment of the employee in question.

On 1st August 1993, the TBA Act ("Reduction of Claims on the Disablement Benefits Regulations") came into force. The two most important features of this Act were the tightening up of the assessments and the reduction in the level of benefit payments. In The Netherlands, disability is a wage-related concept rather than a medical concept. This means that the establishment of whether someone should be classified as disabled is based on what the person in question is capable of earning in relation to what he or she was formerly earning rather than on medical indications⁷⁷.

Finally, on 1st 1994, the TZ Act ("Reduction of Absenteeism due to Sickness") was introduced. The most important measure of this Act was the obligation on the part of the

⁷⁶ A Parliamentary Committee of enquiry is the most powerful investigative instrument in the Netherlands.

⁷⁷ Michel R., 1997 : 12.

employer to continue payment of the employee's salary for the first six weeks that an employee was absent from work on account of illness. For smaller companies (for up to 15 employees), the employer was obliged to continue to pay the salary for a period of two weeks.

The Results:

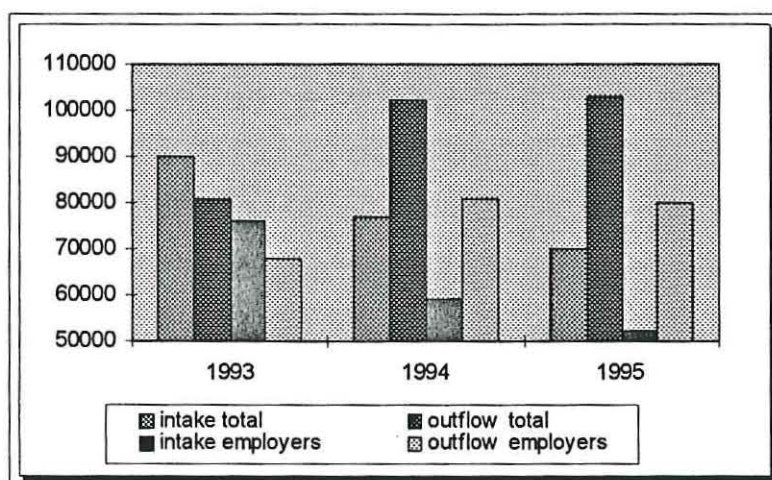
The result of the TAV Act, and particularly the results of the bonus/penalty system proved disastrous. Despite the fact that the initial proposal came from the employers' organization, it immediately met with stiff resistance from employers. The main objection raised was that in many cases the employers felt it was extremely unfair that they should be penalized for some thing which was entirely beyond their control.

In contrast to the AV Act, the TZ Act did bring about the desired effect. The introduction of the obligation to continue payment of salary for the first six weeks or two weeks of illness as the case may be, led to a considerable drop in the rate of absenteeism on account of illness. In 1993, the volume of the Sickness Benefits Act was still 342.000 benefit-years. In 1994, this figure dropped to 290.000 benefit-years. The rate of absenteeism on account of illness dropped from 6.7% in 1993 to 5.5% in 1994⁷⁸.

Of the three Acts, the results of the TBA Act were most spectacular. The introduction of the new criterion for disability was generally accepted. It was primarily the reduction in the level of benefit which met with public resistance. It was only after the TBA Act had been introduced that the consequences of the new criterion became visible. There was a dramatic drop in the number of people entering the WAO. The numbers leaving the WAO also increased enormously - mainly as a result of the reassessments. In retrospect, the fiercely fought compromise that the level of existing benefit payments should not be reduced proved to be purely a formality for many of those entitled to benefits, since the reassessment meant that a substantial number of those already entitled to benefit lost their benefit altogether. The graph below shows the result of the TBA Act .

⁷⁸ Ibid : 14.

Graph 3.4 : The Development in the intake and outflow of the AAW/WAO in the period 1993 - 1995.



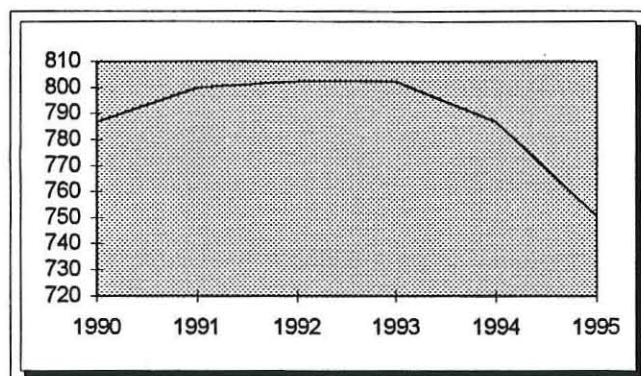
Source : Michel R, 1997 :16.

We notice from the above graph that in 1993, the intake was greater than the outflow. This pattern has been consistent since the introduction of WAO in 1967. In 1994, for the first time since the Act was introduced, there was a reversal in the trend. The outflow was greater than the intake and the number of benefits payments which were terminated exceeded the number of those which were granted by 26.000⁷⁹. This trend continued in 1995 as the intake dropped still further while the outflow continued to increase. On balance the number of disabled persons fell by more than 33.000 in 1995⁸⁰. The development in the volume of disability is represented in the following graph.

⁷⁹ Michel R, 1997 : 16.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Graph 3.5 : The Development in the volume of disability in the period 1990 - 1995 (x 1.000 benefit-years).



Source : Michel R., 1997 : 17.

The drop in the volume of disability was mainly accounted for by the introduction of the new criterion. As a result of this new criterion, fewer benefit payments were granted and more of the existing benefit payments were terminated.

3.7 : Concluding Remarks.

A keen look at the Dutch disability policies and programmes reveal clearly that there is commitment by all the principal actors concerned with improvement of the training and employment opportunities for the disabled : the government, employers, social movements and the disabled themselves. This reflects a substantial change in attitudes among the Dutch people about the notion of disability. The importance of this attitudinal change was reflected in constructive debates which led to the development of positive, flexible and excessively liberal policies in the seventies and eighties.

However, the shortcomings of the initially broad-based policies and programmes had highly negative repercussions on the management of both the human and capital resources. For instance, The Government considered the disability programmes insufficiently controllable, the number of persons entering the long-term disability programmes was considered to be too large, and the number of persons leaving too small. Furthermore, the system was becoming too expensive and human potential remained unused⁸¹. There was urgent need to redress the situation. On February 19th 1991, the Government asked for the

⁸¹ Ad Bocking and Tjeerd Hulsman, 1992 : 41.

advice of the Social Economic Council⁸² as to the structure and organization of the disability programmes and the relation between these programmes. The advice of this Council led to the introduction of successive Acts in the first half of the nineties (TAV, TBA and TZ). Although the implementation of these Acts met with some resistance, overall the initial results were spectacular. The hitherto growing number of disabled experience a drastic drop.

The Second half of the nineties appears to be problematic. The rate of increase in the number of disabled is proving too high for the available resources, despite considerable and rigorous changes in the disability regulations in The Netherlands. This is contextualized by growing pressure from the European Union to introduce stringent measures in order to meet up with the criteria for a single currency. The ultimate result is the introduction of even stricter disability regulations which will come into effect as from 1st January 1998⁸³. A remarkable change will be the introduction of a new method for financing the WAO⁸⁴. Despite these policy changes, the Dutch disability system still remains an attractive model, not only for other European counterparts, but equally and most importantly for a developing country like Cameroon.

⁸² The Social Economic Council is a tripartite organization with representatives from organizations of employers and employees, and independent members assigned by the Government.

⁸³ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), 1997.

⁸⁴ Ibid : 6.

CHAPTER FOUR : THE CAMEROON EXPERIENCE.

4.0 : Introduction:

This chapter examines the state of the art in Cameroon. It takes a close look at the existing laws and policies, the level of implementation and the impact on the lives of the physically handicapped persons. Besides the legal framework, this chapter also focuses on employment and skill development programmes for the handicapped and reviews their employment initiatives. It concludes with a critical evaluation of the existing policies and programmes.

4.1.0 : Existing Laws and Policies, level of implementation and impact on the lives of handicapped person (s).

4.1.1 : Existing Laws and Policies.

Two important complementary texts regulate different aspects of the lives of the handicapped in Cameroon. These are Law No. 83/013 of 21 July 1983, relating to the protection of the handicapped persons; and Decree No. 90/1516 of 26 November 1990 outlining the modalities of application of the afore-cited law. This analysis will be limited to specific issues of education, vocational training and employment.

In its article 1, the 1990 Decree provides for the training of the handicapped in ordinary school setting as well as in specialized centres. Article 2 stipulates that some categories of the handicapped will benefit from special education to enable them acquire the autonomy necessary for enrollment in ordinary school setting. The Cameroon legislator in this article demonstrates its orientation towards mainstreaming. In circumstances where ordinary school setting accommodates the handicapped persons and considering the felt needs, provision is made for specialized personnel and adapted didactic material to meet up with the specific exigencies of their pedagogic upbringing. To facilitate access to these schools, the necessary infrastructural adjustment could be made.

Special assistance in the domains of education and vocational training are accorded to disabled mindful of chapters two and three of the 1990 Decree. Educational aid usually takes the form of pedagogic support, award of scholarship amongst others. As regards

vocational training, this law provides that disabled children will benefit from training of a particular job adapted to their physical and mental conditions in technical and vocational establishments. In circumstances where integration into normal training systems prove unsatisfactory or impossible, there is provision for the creation of appropriate centres for orientation and professional adaptation. Where necessary, specialized teachers can be put at their disposal.

Provisions for the socio-economic integration of the disabled appear particularly attractive. Article 10 posits that individuals who become disabled as a result of an accident or an illness unrelated to work, and are declared unfit to perform their usual duties, can request adaptation to their workplace or some form of professional reorientation. The Cameroon legislator, conscious of the high-handed discrimination which the disabled face in the labour market points out poignantly in article 11 that disabled people who have undergone academic or professional training will benefit from similar conditions of recruitment and remuneration to employment in the private and public sector as non-disabled persons. This equality clause is emphasized in article 11(2) which states that on no circumstance should disability constitute a motive for rejection of candidacy or any form of discrimination. However this interestingly protective provision is compounded by a fundamental precondition which most often gives employers and heads of training institutions the leeway to successfully bypass this law without appropriate punitive measures. This is to the effect that any position or task given to a disabled must be compatible to his or her condition. Compatibility is such a flexible criterion that gives room for diverse interpretation. Moreover, the law does not state the standard for judging compatibility, neither does it create nor designate a suitable body responsible for setting things right with regard to this controversial precondition. This dilemma still prevails and the ultimate victims are undoubtedly the disabled people. The test and training centres in The Netherlands aptly performs this function and could provide a useful framework for policy-makers and practitioners in Cameroon. Resolving these intricate policy lapses will go a long way to dispel the existing controversies blocking efforts towards translating policies into practical realities. The ensuing positive impact on their lives need not be over-emphasized.

The quota system is given a prominent highlight in article 12 and it is to the effect that public and private enterprises reserve as far as possible, at least 10% of their suitable employment to disabled persons. Employment is considered suitable provided the disabled person possesses a satisfactory professional qualification and his physical and mental talents permit him or her to take up the employment with or without adaptation. The prime and paramount goal of this system is to facilitate the socio-economic integration of the disabled into mainstream development and avoid the hitherto secluded development strategy which time and again, had tended to push them further into isolation. Article 15 of the 1990 Decree explicitly puts to focus the crucial role of the state in encouraging the disabled to take the initiative in creating small- and medium-sized enterprises for themselves as well as production cooperatives. The state can intervene in providing a variety of support depending on the expressed needs of the individual or group of individuals concerned. This may take the form of aid, credit award, technical support, subsidies, tax exoneration (partial or total, temporary or permanent), to name these few. However, cognizant of the fact that some disabled, owing to the severity of their physical state, cannot meet up with the demands of normal working conditions, the state caters for their respective interests by making provisions for protected employment in special structures such as protected workshops and special training centres.

The above analysis has given us an overview of the tenor of the existing law in Cameroon with regard to training (academic and vocational) and employment of the disabled. Let us turn now to the level of implementation and impact on the lives of disabled people.

4.1.2 : Level of Implementation and Impact on the Lives of the Disabled.

Before giving a closer look at the important subjects of implementation and impact, it is worthwhile noting that the general numerical trend of the disabled has been on a steady rise for the past ten years. The World Health Organization (WHO) adopted a formula for calculating the number of disabled in each country, which is to the effect that, their total number can be estimated at 1/10th of the total population of each country⁸⁵. Basing our

⁸⁵ Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Condition Feminine, 1994 : 54.

attention on this formula, this will represent 5% in Cameroon, details of which can be numerically displayed as follows⁸⁶.

Table 4.1 (A & B) : Trend in the Growth of Disabled Population relative to the Total Population.

A

1987 : 500.000 disabled on a total of 10000000 citizens.

1991 : 593.000 “ “ 11800000 “

1994 : 645.000 “ “ 12900000 “

2000 764.000 “ “ 15300000 “

The above information can be depicted as follows:

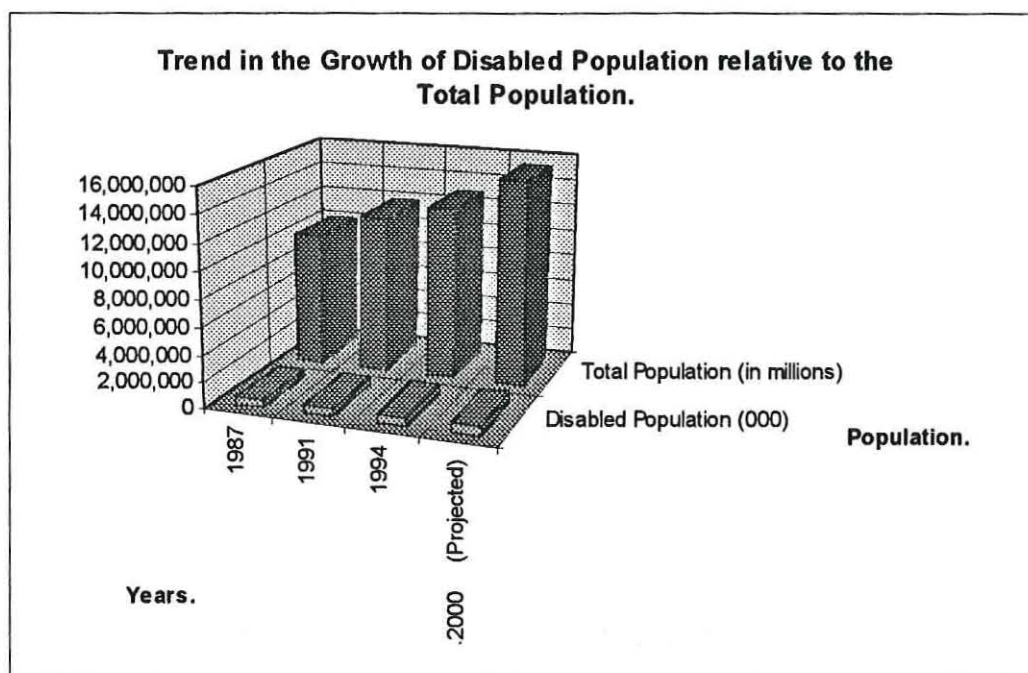
B

<i>Years</i>	<i>Disabled Population (1)</i>	<i>Total Population (2)</i>	<i>% of 1/2</i>
1987	500000	10.000.000	5
1991	593000	11.800.000	5.1
1994	645000	12.900.000	5
2000 (Projected)	764000	15.300.000	5

Source : Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Condition Féminine, 1994 : 54

⁸⁶ Ibid.

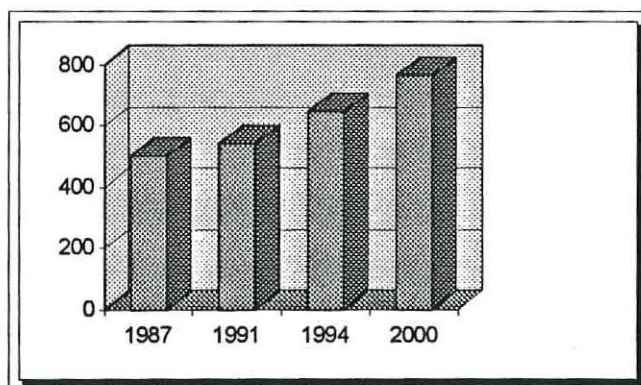
Graph 4.1 : Illustration of trend in the growth of disability population relative to the total population.



Source : Based on Table 4.1 (A & B).

From table 4.1 (A & B) the growth trend specific to the disabled population can be traced as follows :

Graph 4.2 : Growth trend in disability population from 1987 to 2000.



Source : Based on Table 4.1 (B), 1st & 2nd columns.

The trend shows a steady increase in the number of disabled people in Cameroon since 1987. The projection for the year 2000 follows the same logic of growth. This sequence stands as a pointer for the government to set the existing laws right and match them with meaningful programmes that can provide long-term investments for the disabled.

This researcher noted with dismay the poor formulation of the law protecting them in Cameroon, which has led to half-hearted implementation. For instance the provision on quota system in article 12 of the 1990 Law states that "Public and private enterprises shall reserve for the disabled as far as possible, a proportion of at least 10% of suitable employment." Difficulties have arisen as to the interpretation of the phrase "as far as possible". Most employers hide behind this phrase to declare that they have no obligation to employ this disadvantaged group. The difficulties in application stem from the absence of coercive, motivational and control measures. Furthermore, if the formulation can have some obligatory character, implementation could rather be more successful. As a corollary to this lack of concrete protection from existing texts, the General Statute of the Cameroon Civil Service, contains very ambiguous dispositions concerning the access of disabled into the state civil service, as it puts forth a controversial pre-condition of physical aptitude⁸⁷, knowing fully well that the disabled suffer from physical impairments. The state which is supposed to provide the coercive machinery to ensure adequate implementation, is doing very little to this direction, neither is it setting up programmes to provide the necessary long-term assistance to the disabled. A survey of about 50 disabled people confirm this glaring lack of concern. This sample is composed of 25 unemployed, 15 students, amongst them the head of the University Students' Association who served as a key informant and 10 employed disabled people. The questions asked focused on their experiences in the labour market and the nature of assistance received from the government. Nature of assistance is divided into long-term and short-term. Long-term assistance covered provision of education, training and employment by the government, whereas short-term assistance involved issues like provision of clothing, food, transportation. A third category concerns those who have received no assistance at all

⁸⁷ Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Condition Feminine, 1994 : 16.

from the government. Some unemployed disabled graduates interviewed expressed their frustration with the lack implementation of disability laws as follows.

“The government is doing nothing to force the employers to respect the laws”

Another who had met some employers made the following remarks:

“They are unwilling to employ me. They think that because I’m a disabled I will not be productive to their companies”

Yet another pointed out :

“They always complain of lack of capital when they have to employ disabled people, yet they keep employing non-disabled. This is very frustrating”.

The above statements demonstrate not only the prevalence of stereotype mentality among employers on the capabilities of the disabled, but also the high-handed discrimination inflicted on them in the labour market. The government stands aloof in the face of these malpractices, leaving the disabled in a state of abject helplessness.

The result of the interview with regard to the nature of assistance from the government can be displayed as follows :

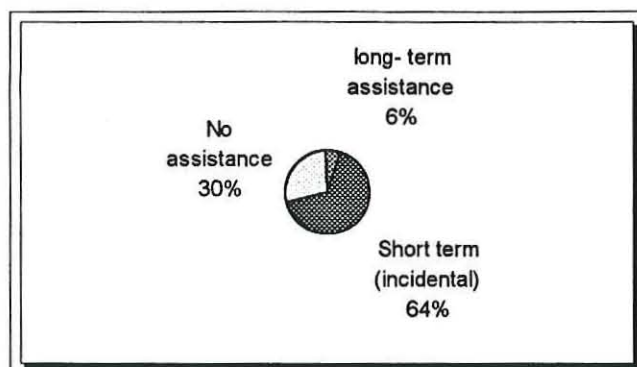
Table 4.2 : Nature of Government Assistance to the Disabled.

<i>Status</i>	<i>Nature of Assistance</i>			<i>Total %</i>	
	Long-term	Short-term (Incidental)	No Assistance		
<i>Unemployed</i>	0	15	10	25	50
<i>Employed</i>	3	7	0	10	20
<i>Students</i>	0	10	5	15	30
Total	3 (6%)	32 (64%)	15 (30%)	50	100

Source : Compiled by author from conducted interview, January 1997.

The above data can be graphically illustrated as follows :

Graph 4.3 : Nature of Assistance received by the Disabled in Cameroon.



Source : Based on Table 4.2.

The above data revealed that government efforts in Cameroon are geared towards the provision of short-term assistance to the disabled. This approach no doubt, provides temporary relief, but falls short of meeting the primary goals of government policies, that is, guarantee an independent lifestyle for them through the provision of education and training, and facilitating their entry into the labour market. Efforts should be put in place to shift emphasis to long-term investment.

4.2 : Institutional Approach in Special Employment and Skill Development Programme for the Disabled : The National Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (CNRH), Etoug-Ebe, Yaounde.⁸⁸

The authorities in Cameroon duly recognize the fact that some severely disabled men and women cannot cope with the challenges of mainstream development and have accordingly set up a centre for their training and eventual integration into the labour market. The Cameroon legislator explicitly points out in article 18 of the 1990 Decree that disabled people who, by virtue of the severity of their physical state, cannot face the challenges of working in ordinary environments, will benefit from protected employment⁸⁹ in special

⁸⁸ Adapted from Ministere des Affaires Sociales et de la Condition Feminine, *Rapport du Seminaire National sur L'Elaboration d'une Politique Multi-sectorielle d'Integration Socio-economique des Personnes Handicapees*, 1994 : 83 - 87.

⁸⁹ Article 19(1) of the 1990 Decree defines protected employments as the adjustment of a post of employment, taking into consideration the functional possibilities and capacities of the disabled.

structures such as sheltered workshops and centres of assistance for employment. The National Centre for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (CNRH) at Etoug-Ebe, Yaounde was thus set-up with the spirit and objectives of article 18 in perspective.

The Rehabilitation Centre in Etoug-Ebe Yaounde is a specialized centre that focuses on training the disabled persons and facilitating their integration into the labour market. By Presidential Decree No. 89/141 of 27 January 1989, this centre was reorganized and given the power and means to undertake this highly challenging but equally dignifying task for this disadvantaged category of the population⁹⁰.

The prime and paramount objective of this centre is to enable the disabled people achieve a high degree of autonomy in their lifestyle. This important policy gesture is in recognition of their predominantly dependent and unpleasant way of life and an overwhelming desire to alter it for the better. The training offered is broad-based and caters for the needs of those having visual, sensorial and mobility impairments. This approach posits on the assumption that an autonomous lifestyle is only possible if a disabled person benefits from professional training that will permit him or her to integrate easily into the production circuit.

Upon admission into the centre, a disabled person is administered a simple test to determine his professional orientation in accordance with his aptitude and aspirations. The severely disabled stay within the centre, while the rest stay out of it. The trainees or apprentices are in principle, expected to be drawn from the various provinces in the entire country but sadly enough, in practice they come predominantly from the capital city Yaounde where the centre is based. The duration of the training varies according to the discipline but hardly does it exceed three years. For some disciplines like shoe-making and shoe-mending, seemstressing and tailoring, the trainees benefit from practical training outside the centre. This out of centre practical training constitutes a very important aspect of the overall training because it provides an opportunity to objectively evaluate a trainee

Article 19(2) defines sheltered workshop as any workshop that undertakes professional training of the disabled and enables them to exercise a salarized function, and by so doing, contruting to their socio-economic integration.

⁹⁰ Ministere des Affaires et de la Condition Feminines, 1994 : 83 - 87.

in actual work environment and to acquaint him/her with other methods and tools which he or she is not yet familiar with.

It is a policy of the centre to provide the trainees with some allowance which enables the authorities of the centre to buy and provide them with the necessary working materials for their installation upon graduation. This policy applies to all the sections. An attestation is issued at the end of the training to serious and deserving candidates. The centre in effect plays the role of organizing and placing the trainees in a way that enables them to work together. It also monitors them on the field.

4.2.1 : Orientation and Possibilities.

Given the ever-increasing number of the disabled in the entire population⁹¹, training within a specialized institution appears to produce more positive results. However, to make it more effective and all-embracing, the orientation of their training in such institutions needs to concentrate on artisan works accessible to a larger number of the disabled persons, especially as majority of them remain uneducated or insufficiently educated. This strategy is likely to accelerate their integration into active life. This is because it will be easy to organize them into artisan groups for exhibition of their products either within or outside the institutions. New possibilities are likely to be opened because the income received from sales of products can generate funds necessary for the creation of savings for further investments.

The necessity for high level collaboration between training institutions and potential employers need not be over-emphasized. The employers will indicate lucrative areas for future employment and the specialized training centres will accordingly train the disabled persons in the indicated domains. Possibilities can also be created for on-the-job training and eventual employment for the disabled.

Considering the fact that the disabled persons coming from different parts of the country face acute accommodation problems, possibilities for their stay inside the centre should be given some attention. The purpose for this strategy is to reach out to, and train, as many

⁹¹ As of 1996, the disabled population stood at about 695.000 per Pouagam J., 1996.

of them as possible. This might however necessitate payment of a token to meet up with part of the running costs.

4.2.2 : Constraints to the Centre's Activities.

In spite of the nobility of the missions of such a centre, a number of difficulties tend to hamper their successful attainment. A clearly visible problem emanating from the above analysis is the great paucity of financial resources that can be used for purchase of didactic materials necessary for professional training. This problem is crucial and ought to be given adequate attention if the quality of the training imparted to them is considered to be of high premium. Quality training is undoubtedly a fundamental prerequisite for flexibility and rapid adaptability to new employment environments, as well as mastery of new methods of work and tools.

Another visible problem is the gross inadequacy of infrastructure. The consequent low capacity of the centre accounts for the usually reduced number of candidates retained for training. Vividly, current estimates indicate that the number of disabled persons trained in the centre falls far below one quarter of the total qualified and willing to learn.

A corollary to the above problems is the limited coverage of the centre's activities. The beneficiaries of its activities reside predominantly in Yaounde where the centre is based or its environs. This situation generates regional bias whereby a smaller component of the population, by virtue of its location within a given region, benefits from some facilities and a significant majority is discriminated upon. There is therefore an urgent need for the creation of regional branches in the various provincial capitals to cater for the needs of both the rural and urban components of the population. Involvement of municipalities as the Dutch experience indicates, need to be given serious consideration. The eventual result could be decentralization, guaranteeing to a larger extent, a wider coverage of most of the programmes.

A fundamental problem equally identified with this approach to training for the disabled persons is the indifferent attitudes of some parents and even the disabled themselves vis-a-vis manual work. Some with high professional qualifications aim very high and sometimes succeed in gaining lucrative employment in the formal sector. However, a large number of

them are bare literates with little or nothing to do. This centre targets this latter category and an indifferent attitude to the skills provided will tantamount to greater dependence in lifestyle and also greater social exclusion.

On a concluding note, I can safely remark that this centre has achieved its objectives only to a limited extent. One can notice some degree of government involvement here. The high social benefits of this institution is very obvious. Unfortunately it is limited only to a few people. The high cost involved in running this centre is primarily responsible for this limited coverage.

4.3 : Employment Initiatives by the Disabled.

Articles 15 and 16 of the 1990 Decree elucidate the framework and circumstances under which potential disabled entrepreneurs may benefit from government assistance. Within this framework, a number of disabled persons have taken concrete steps to create and manage enterprises for themselves, as a self-employment strategy. Their initiatives will be viewed from an entrepreneurial and an NGO perspectives.

4.3.1 : Entrepreneurial Perspective : A Micro-Enterprise in the Town of Mamfe⁹².

The entrepreneurial perspective takes a look at the experience of a disabled who decides to earn a living for himself by creating a micro enterprise, instead of remaining perpetually dependent on his family. He is called Vincent and resides in Mamfe⁹³. In the administrative set-up, Mamfe is a small but expanding town within the rural areas of Cameroon. Vincent suffered from poliomyelitis at a tender age and became paralyzed on lower limbs. He received elementary education and discovered early enough that getting an employment in the formal sector was a herculean task. To prepare himself for this emerging challenge, he undertook on-the-job training in handicraft and, shoe manufacturing and repairs partly in Cameroon and partly in Nigeria, a neighbouring country. The cost of training was shouldered entirely by his family.

⁹² Data collected through an interview with the entrepreneur, Vincent, January 1997.

⁹³ Address : Mr. Vincent N., P. O. Box 29 Mamfe Town.

Vincent manages his enterprise which at the time of this interview employed two persons, one of them disabled. He produces high-quality furniture and sells it directly to members of the public. Nearness to raw materials which come directly from the forest serves as an advantage to him. However, this crucial advantage is not often exploited due to mobility constraints. He cannot move to the forest and fetch canes. He is consequently obliged to use his hard earned currencies to buy these materials from the market. These are often quite expensive. Sometimes also the pace of his work is interrupted by irregular supply of raw materials. The bad state of his tri-cycle aggravates the mobility problem as this prevents regular communication with cane suppliers. He portrayed his urgent mobility problem in the following statement:

“I badly need an engine tricycle to enable me contact suppliers and buyers easily”

An engine tri-cycle could be of great help since some degree of independence can be guaranteed. Other complementary raw materials like nails, foams, paint, plywood, hammer, amongst others, are quite expensive. This plethora of constraints translates into high cost of production which has negative repercussions on the market for finished products. High cost of production impedes the realization of profits. If prices are raised consequent to the high production cost, customers will be discouraged. Mamfe provides a predominantly low-income market. Access to other markets is hampered by poor communication network. He ends up lowering prices and working at a deficit or in few occasions covering just the cost of production. His cost-revenue schedule for the past four years can be displayed as follows :

Table 4.3 1 : Cost Schedule

<i>Years / Costs</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Machines</i>	<i>Rents</i>	<i>Total</i>
1992	700000	400000	700000	300000	2.100.000
1993	600000	450000	700000	300000	2.050.000
1994	600000	500000	700000	300000	2.100.000
1995	600000	550000	700000	300000	2.150.000

Source : Data provided by the responding entrepreneur, January 1997.

Table 4.3.2 : Revenue Schedule.

<i>Years</i>	<i>Sales from canes products</i>	<i>Sales and services from shoe workshop</i>	<i>Total</i>
1992	2000000	1000000	3000000
1993	1850000	900000	2750000
1994	1750000	800000	2550000
1995	1700000	800000	2500000

Source : Data provided by the responding entrepreneur, January 1997.

From the above tables, we notice a steady increase in the cost of the enterprise as well as a declining trend in the revenue schedule from 1992 to 1995. However, profits are increasing at a diminishing rate and this keeps Vincent going. With a little support from the government, either financial or material, his enterprise could experience a great leap

forward. Unfortunately, this support is not forthcoming despite repeated requests to the appropriate quarters.

Despite these difficulties, Vincent is forging ahead. He has registered great success at provincial craft competitions which regroup both disabled and non-disabled craftsmen and women. In December 1993, he emerged winner of first prize in the provincial contest for the best craftsman. In 1995, he won the second prize in the same contest. He now lives an independent life and runs the largest micro-enterprise by a disabled person in the area. He is married and father of two children. He offers free apprenticeship to other disabled persons but cannot offer employment due to financial constraints. He tactfully combines craftwork and shoe-manufacturing and repairs. During the cane season with huge supply of canes, he concentrates on canecraft and during periods of scarcity, more attention is focused on the shoe-manufacturing department. Both activities are carried out on the same site. However, he remarks that the canecraft is more remunerating than cobbling.

Pursuant to article 15 above, one should expect the state to provide assistance to Vincent who is currently making incredible efforts to graduate from the status of permanent dependant experienced by them, both literates and illiterates, to that of an independent and productive citizen. Despite the series of applications dispatched to the appropriate quarters, not even a single response has been received. His requests for assistance have all fallen into deaf ears. He expressed his frustration in this regard in the following statements which constitute *prima facie* evidence not only of government's neglect of the disabled but also its inability to respect its own laws.:

“I’ve written several letters to the Delegation of Welfare and the Ministry of Social and Women’s Affairs, explaining my problem and asking for assistance, but nobody has sent a reply. I will keep trying, maybe one day God will help.”

He clearly acknowledges the fact that if assistance, especially financial can be provided to enable him purchase raw materials cheaper from the source, the cost-revenue situation could be drastically improved. This is a tacit demonstration of policy mismatches within the cycles of the disabled and an illustration of bias against the rural areas.

4.3.2 : Perspective of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) : Cameroon Deaf Empowerment Organization (CDEO)⁹⁴.

The needs of the disabled from the perspectives of an NGO will be analyzed from the experience of Cameroon Deaf Empowerment Organization (CDEO). CDEO is a non-profit NGO created in Yaounde, Cameroon on the 21st July 1995 under Reg. No. 00221/RDA/J06/BAPP. It is dedicated to the empowerment of Deaf people in Cameroon. Empowerment is the process that makes it possible for each person to understand his or her own power: be self-reliant, develop self-esteem and self-respect. Its administration is in the hands of a Board of Directors comprising 15 members. The President is Mr. Ogork E. N., father of a deaf child. The Director General and Director of Training and Fundraising are respectively Mr. Aloysius N. B. (Cameroonian) and his wife Mrs. Margaret B. (British), both of them deaf people. Aloysius was opportuned to study in a special school for the deaf in England due to complete absence of such schools in Cameroon. He later moved over to the United States where he studied at the University of "Galder", the only liberal arts university for the deaf people in the entire world.

In partnership with Deaf and hearing people in Cameroon, as well as national and international organizations, CDEO seeks to achieve a number of goals, amongst them to work for the full educational opportunity for deaf Cameroonians, from nursery to higher education. Its activities are partitioned into short- and long-term. Some of its long-term activities include the creation of job training and self-sustaining programmes for deaf people and facilitating higher educational opportunities for them. Aloysius noted with disappointment the limited educational opportunities for the deaf people in Cameroon as there were at the time of this interview only six schools in the entire country catering for the deaf and mainly in the primary level. There is no special support services for secondary or tertiary education for them. When they complete primary education, they face enormous problems of unemployment as they are bare literates and lack any form of vocational training. The direct implication is that they cannot live independently.

⁹⁴ Data collected through a combined interview with the Director General and Director of Training and Fundraising (both of them deaf people) with the help of an interpreter (an American lady) in sign language, Yaounde, January 1997.

The deteriorating plight of the deaf in Cameroon prompted them to undertake some projects on employment and skill development in Cameroon. At present CDEO has taken over the management of a deaf school called "Kalafata" in Kumba, a town in the South West Province of Cameroon. This school provides vocational training to the deaf people in several domains and tries to integrate them into the labour market. The management of the school plans to contact Cameroonian authorities to provide initial funds for graduates. Through this assistance, deaf people individually or as a group can generate employment for themselves. Management of this school also plans to work in collaboration with private and public enterprises so that some deserving deaf people can be absorbed into them. There are plans to extend the school to include secondary education as well as an agricultural training centre. The government has donated land to accommodate the proposed structures. Its interventions which rarely come, are mostly non-financial. With the expansion of the school, bilingual training will be introduced to enable the deaf have a broad working spectrum and also to reach out to the French speaking population. There is extensive work for the development of sign languages and training of interpreters to facilitate communication between deaf and hearing people. Conducting job interviews between employers and deaf people should in the long-run not be a major problem. This is one of the key objectives.

Counting of the deaf people is done through the use of a scientific formula proposed by the United Nations. Census conducted ten years ago by the Ministry of Social Affairs (as it then was called, but currently Social and Women's Affairs) put the figure at 8,000 deaf people. Using the scientific formula which posits that 1 in every 1000 is born deaf, the figure stands at 23,000. Furthermore, if we follow a projection of this same formula which says that 1 in every 1000 will be deaf before the age of 19, the number will be about 26,000. These estimates are based on the population of Cameroon. However, if we equally consider the high incidences of illnesses such as meningitis (especially in the Northern part of the country), measles (responsible for the deafness of CDEO president) to name these two, the number may still increase. Vaccinations are available but are not accessible to many people especially in the rural areas. Schools for the deaf also serve as a useful guide for identifying deaf people.

As concerns employment and training programmes, CDEO does not do much for now. In the school in Kumba, efforts will be made to set more formal vocational training. Presently vocational training is limited to sewing, wood work etc., but teachers who specialize in tailoring and carpentry are lacking. In the workshop in Yaounde, CDEO tries to give deaf people skills which they can use to look for employment. Some of them have demonstrated potentials in specific skills which need to be encouraged. During this researcher's visit to the workshop, a deaf person was producing nice artistic work which he sells to the public. Others do ceramic. CDEO tries to open up opportunities for them by inviting people to visit the area so that they can see and buy these articles. The finances received provide substantial support to them and reduces their dependency ratio. For example, shortly before this interview was conducted, people came from the German and Dutch Embassies to see the work. They admired them and purchased some. The advertisement was done by CDEO. This is a cost-effective strategy as no money is spent advertising by word of mouth. Although quite time-consuming with very limited coverage, this strategy is realistic for a start. In the same workshop, there were also clothing on display sown by deaf women. Similar advertising efforts were done to encourage people to buy them. These activities provide some temporary gainful employment to them, in contrast to their hitherto idle and dependent lifestyle. An emerging strategy that can promote the economic interest of the deaf people is the development of cooperatives. There are a number of deaf people who are highly skilled in carpentry. CDEO is exploring the possibility for them to form a cooperative and be able to support themselves as a group. Similar effort is being done for the women sewing dresses. The prime and paramount objective of the above efforts is confidence-building among the deaf people in Cameroon.

"They should have hopes and realize that if they have goals, they can work for them and really achieve them", the Director noted

CDEO through these efforts, try to sensitize the public about the capabilities of the deaf people. They celebrated for the first time in Cameroon, The Deaf Awareness Week, which is an international event that comes up annually in the last week of September. It was an all-day celebration and brought together the deaf community in Yaounde but in due course

celebrations will be extended to other parts of Cameroon. The series of activities contributed enormously to raising public awareness about the potentials inherent in deaf people.

“They were responsible for the entire organization and at the end of it all, they felt a sense of satisfaction and confidence at the huge success the event registered”, the Director happily remarked

Besides the proposed institutional linkage with potential employers, CDEO is making fruitful contacts with other vocational training centres. So far it has contacted Opportunities Industrialization Centre (OIC) based in Buea. It examines what they are doing and explores possibilities for future collaboration.

These promising activities of CDEO are severely constrained by financial predicaments. Their possible sources of resources are membership dues, individual donations, grants from corporations and foundations and government subvention. The income from these sources have not been able to meet up with the growing activities of CDEO. The embassies in Yaounde are doing an incredible job in providing some reasonable measure of support. From the government, the assistance received so far is the land donated. No traces of subvention are forthcoming, despite repeated requests. For instance government makes no effort to pay the salaries of teachers in the school in Kumba. This lukewarm attitude or better still stone-hearted insensitivity of the government towards the plight of the disabled in general and the deaf in particular, is further demonstrated by the utter absence of government schools catering for the needs of the deaf. The Director observes that :

“Government shows little or no concern for the education and training needs of the deaf people in Cameroon. All existing schools are privately owned and sponsored.”

This is another vivid illustration of the enormous mismatches between government laws and policies on the one hand, and the practices on the other.

This organization is manifestly far from full attainment of its objectives. Financial and material inadequacies serve as inhibiting factors. More far-reaching assistance is needed from the government to set things right.

4.4 : Concluding Observations : A Critical Evaluation.

The preceding analysis has presented the prevailing framework with regards to policies and programmes that address the training and employment needs of the disabled in Cameroon. A keen reader will quickly come to the realization that the Cameroon approach, although it reaches out to the needs of some disabled, clearly falls short of adequately meeting the rapidly growing challenges of disability in this context of structural reforms. Besides the lukewarm approach of the major actor, the Government, other prominent actors - employers, employers' organizations, trade unions, NGOS/NGDOs and disabled themselves - seem to be unaware of the magnitude of the problem and their respective roles in the individual and collective struggle for a solution.

To begin with, the basic instruments necessary to set the stage for realistic involvement in redressing the key disability predicaments - laws and policies - are built on sandy foundation. The existing laws and policies as revealed by this study, possess a voluntary rather than mandatory character. The state which is supposed to provide the coercive mechanism to ensure full compliance, stands aloof in the face of blatant violations but also condones ambiguous provisions in some laws that purport to address the needs of the disabled. It needs to assume a more purposeful and assertive role in this direction. A few examples are instructive. The Cameroon Labour Code has no provision with regard to handicapped persons. Ambiguously, its article 175 stipulates that there will be in the future, an elaboration of a text which will take into consideration the employment needs of this category of the population⁹⁵. Curiously enough, since its promulgation into law on 14th August 1992⁹⁶, no allusion has been made to this subject. The 1983 Law relating to the protection of the disabled and its Decree of application of 1990 however, contains provisions for the employment of the disabled. Mindful of this law, enterprises are expected to reserve a quota of 10% of the size of their workforce to the disabled but the application of this provision seems far-fetched. This is partly because of the negative

⁹⁵ Ministere des Affaires Sociales et de la Condition Feminine, 1994 : 15

⁹⁶ Law No.92 / 007 of 14th August 1992 on the Labour Code.

perception of the disabled by employers. On a more general note, there is a noticeable lack of harmonization among the different texts.

If we take a close look at the educational system, we notice a number of obstacles that impede equitable access of the disabled to training opportunities. For instance, the infrastructure is inadapted, personnel specialized in their needs as well as suitable didactic materials are lacking. Furthermore, only two state sponsored specialized institutions exist in the country that care for their education and training needs and these are distantly located from their respective residences⁹⁷. The others belong to private social agencies, access to which is sometimes expensive. Ordinary professional structures do not seem to integrate into their activities, the professional training of disabled persons.

The disabled and their associations constitute key actors in the socio-economic scene. However, it has been noticed that the solidarity amongst them is not cohesive enough to enable them fight collectively for their common objectives. Their national association which is normally expected to serve as a spokesperson, do not always work for their interest. Sensitization may become necessary to overcome this apparent lack of group cohesion, especially in tackling their paramount needs of employment and training. Other important actors like NGOs show very little interest in their fundamental needs. Most of them perceive the disabled as people to be assisted *ad infinitum*⁹⁸. A change in their perception could lead to more appropriate needs assessment and realistic resource allocations. Collaboration among the different actors in the socio-economic scene is indispensable for the realization of any meaningful results.

Given the plethora of shortcomings in the disability policies and programmes in Cameroon, especially as revealed in this study, the lack of cohesion and a fighting spirit among the disabled people who are directly concerned and the limited financial resources, the formulation of a viable strategy becomes an extremely urgent priority for Cameroon. This will not only attempt to overcome the prevailing problems and arrest the persistent deterioration of the plight of the disabled, but will also try to articulate in a more judicious manner, the strategies, actors and limited resources towards a more meaningful solution.

⁹⁷ Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Condition Feminine : 13.

⁹⁸ Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Condition Feminine, 1994 : 18.

The viable strategy will provide the socio-economic rationale for a local resource-based approach. The next chapter will look, inter alia, at this strategy.

CHAPTER FIVE : LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAMEROON.

5.0 : Introduction :

After a close examination of the existing laws and policies in The Netherlands and Cameroon, and some of the important programmes that emerge from them with regard to the vital domains of employment and skill development for the disabled, this last chapter reviews the lessons and recommendations for a developing country like Cameroon from the advanced experience of The Netherlands. How can these lessons be successfully replicated and sustained within the socio-economic, institutional, and technological context of Cameroon? What viable strategy can be adopted given the limited availability of resources in Cameroon? The chapter and entire work will be concluded with some important observations.

5.1 : The Dutch Experience : Lessons and Recommendations for Cameroon.

A number of key lessons can be learned from the Dutch experience in disability programmes. Firstly, the government plays a very active role in trying to sort out the problems and solutions of the disabled in the Dutch society. It is conscious of their disadvantaged position in the labour market and works purposefully towards overcoming existing barriers and facilitating integration into mainstream development. This is evident in the huge financial and material contributions which it makes to disability organizations and programmes like the National Board for the Disabled, sheltered workshops, open-air and industrial social employment programmes. This active involvement contrasts sharply with the passive nature of the Cameroon Government in addressing the pressing and long-term needs of the disabled. Not only are government policies poorly formulated, training and employment programmes that aim primarily at integration of the disabled into the labour market are virtually absent. The very few that exist suffer from severe inadequacies in finances, infrastructure and materials. It is therefore imperative for government to change its perception and orientation towards the needs of the disabled in Cameroon.

Hopefully the following lessons and recommendations will bring about the desirable impact.

The responsibility for formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in The Netherlands is vested in the hands of people and organizations that work closely with the disabled and stand a better chance to make meaningful proposals to the government. A case in point is the National Board for the disabled which plays a variety of crucial roles in promoting the interest of the disabled. To begin with, it plays the role of a spokesperson for all disability organizations in Holland. In this capacity, it receives and harmonizes contributions from organizations for, and by, the disabled and channel them in good faith to the government. It also serves as a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for all disability policies and programmes. This clearly explains why policy mismatches are apparently non-existent. The picture of Cameroon looks much different. The legislator solicits inputs from individuals who have some experience with legislation and policies but ignores those who have in-depth practical experience, particularly on subjects of employment and training for the disabled. This most probably explains the good intentions of the legislator reflected in the (weak and voluntary character of) existing laws and policies but which are rendered meaningless without proper formulations to convey a mandatory character. There is also complete absence of a monitoring and evaluation system. Some good lessons for Cameroon from this approach. Firstly, to actively involve the disabled and people with in-depth knowledge of problems of the disabled in formulating and implementing employment and skill development programmes. Secondly, the government need to set up a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure not only that laws and policies are properly formulated but also that these need to be effectively translated into meaningful programmes that meet up with the needs of the disabled in Cameroon. This mechanism should also ensure that these programmes function efficiently. The Government of Cameroon recently took a laudable initiative to create a national committee for the socio-economic rehabilitation and reintegration of the disabled. This is contained in Prime Ministerial Decree of 14 June 1996⁹⁹. This Committee is expected to

⁹⁹ Decree No. 96 / 379 / PM of 14 / 06 / 1996, creating the National Committee for the Socio-economic Rehabilitation and Reintegration of the Disabled.

play a similar role as the Dutch National Board for the Disabled. It is this researcher's wish that this instrument be properly empowered and given the opportunity to deliver the desired goals.

In point of fact, this Dutch system of actively involving the disabled and people with knowledge of problems of the disabled in formulation and implementation of employment and skill development programmes, is quite in consonance with the network approach theory. In accordance with this theory, the system is designed on the basis that policy is not so much the product of a single, rationally acting, all-powerful government but is rather the result of a process of negotiation involving several parties affected directly or indirectly by the policy. The theory posits that these parties will enter into coalitions with other parties during these negotiations in order to strengthen their chances of realizing their own, common goals¹⁰⁰. Given this "multi-actor" approach to policy, the information on the development of local policy on the disabled is gleaned usually not only from representatives of local authorities, but also from representatives of local institutions and interest groups¹⁰¹.

In addition, the nature, organization and orientation of sheltered workshops and other social employment programmes in Holland should serve as an important pointer to the government, private and public agencies in Cameroon. While the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment operating at the macro level plays a cardinal role in organizing, administering and financing these programmes, the task of actually providing employment rests in the hands of municipal governments. This far-reaching involvement of municipal governments demonstrates the extent of decentralization of policies and programmes. Decentralization enables government's efforts to reach out to local communities. This is crucially absent in Cameroon as demonstrated by the limited coverage in the activities of the National Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled. Undoubtedly, majority of the disabled population resides in the rural areas. What lessons then for Cameroon? Cameroon Government should learn from the Dutch model and prioritize the setting up of sheltered workshops and broad-based social employment programmes to adequately redress the

¹⁰⁰ Kwekkeboom, M. H., 1997 : 161.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

challenging employment and training problems of the disabled. Labour-intensive strategies may need to be adopted as this has the possibility of absorbing as many disabled as possible in a cost-effective manner. Cost-effectiveness would result from reduced expenditure on the purchase and maintenance of costly equipment due to the high labour content of the programme. However, while the overriding objective should be the provision of employment to people with different forms of impairments, the structure of the programmes should slowly but steadily introduce entrepreneurial orientation. Managers should work towards a strategic mix between provision of employment and generation of incentives to increase sales or to economize on costs. This consideration need to be given a high premium given the glaring paucity of capital in a developing country like Cameroon. The role of vocational factors in upgrading the capabilities of programme participants towards the attainment of this goal should also be given serious consideration.

The Dutch policies give paramount importance to the empowerment of the disabled. This is demonstrated in the existence of personal or individual budget. The purpose of this budget is to stimulate the individual initiative of disabled people to find a job. With this budget, they are more directly involved in all aspects of their reintegration and they are less dependent on, for instance, the employer or the executive bodies. Empowering the disabled people in Cameroon through this policy should be an important long-term policy objective for the government. The prevailing budgetary constraints forestalls any effort to make it a short-term policy objective. This could likely alleviate the impact of some discriminatory practices in the labour market. This constitutes the fourth and final important lesson for Cameroon.

5.2 : Possibilities for Replicability and Sustainability of Some Issues of Dutch Policies and Programmes.

Replicability of the Dutch Model depends first and foremost on the creation nationally and locally of managerial and technical capacities that can strategically run the special programmes in a cost-effective and business-oriented manner. Both disabled and non-disabled can be targeted in these key areas, because attainment of these objectives requires

a complex mix of highly trained personnel to assume key managerial and technical functions. Some key functions may not be discharged satisfactorily by disabled, especially those requiring mobility and physical strength. These can be assumed by non-disabled, some of whom have much experience with disability policies and programmes. Efforts need to be directed towards a gradual increase in the share of labour-intensive work programmes. Labour-intensive strategy has the advantage of accommodating as many disabled persons as possible, while cutting down on huge cost of investment on infrastructure and equipment. This represents an approach that is more cost-effective than obtaining additional investment for new programmes. Decentralization and participation by local communities can, however, eventually lead to significant mobilization of local resources and cost-sharing arrangements with central budgets.

The sustainability of employment promotion in special intervention programmes through a local resource-based approach has socio-economic, institutional and technological facets¹⁰². Socio-economic sustainability depends not only on the cost-effectiveness of specific operations within employment and training programmes but more generally on commitment by governments (for political, humanitarian or other reasons) and on a realistic assessment by national policy-makers of the long-term cost of investment and the ensuing social benefits, as well as the multiplier effect of local employment creation, especially for this segregated category of the population. Employment creation could enable them earn an income, and consequently improve their living condition, as well as recognize their contribution towards the socio-economic development of Cameroon. This will be a more dignifying approach to their socio-economic integration than the charity approach which tended persistently to exclude them from active involvement in public life. Institutional sustainability comes about by strengthening or adding to existing institutions, rather than by setting up entirely new institutions, which will depend on temporary donor support and the already poor financial state of state coffers. In this case, sustainability after the ceasure of donor support may become a daunting challenge. Existing local institutions are, for instance, more appropriate parties for contractual arrangements established between technical services and/or small contractors and beneficiaries, each party bearing

¹⁰²Gaude J and Watzlawick, 1992 : 12.

part of the responsibility for inputs and services. Retraining of technical staff is also better undertaken by existing institutions. With these advantages to be derived, it doubtless that a more realistic option adaptable to the context of Cameroon, is the strengthening of existing institutions, except in cases where these institutions are absent at all.

Technological sustainability means ensuring the adequacy and flexibility of the technological mix. For instance, governments may find it easier to afford construction and maintenance of broad-based social employment generation programmes with high labour content than with a capital content requiring a high proportion of foreign exchange funding. The critical challenge is to develop and enhance possibilities for generation of quality employment for the disabled, while maintaining or reducing overall expenditure. Focusing on construction and maintenance of these programmes, upgrading of indigenous or locally made equipment and tools, as well as better organization of the productive process in labour-intensive programmes appear more convenient with Cameroon Government, than spending huge sums of money on the purchase and importation of new and expensive equipment.

It should however be noted that replicability and sustainability of some key features in the Dutch model may not be feasible given the huge financial resources involved. This point clearly to the fact that there exist a big gap between what Cameroon can do and what The Netherlands is currently doing for the disabled. A realistic approach will be to adopt a strategy that takes into account the existing potential resources in Cameroon. However, it is to be stated strongly that neither Cameroon nor any other country is too poor to take some responsibility towards disadvantaged groups.

5.3 : Towards a Viable Strategy for the Disabled in Cameroon : A Local

Resource-based Approach.

A viable strategy for Cameroon will require not only a coordinated effort from all the key players in the political and socio-economic landscape, but also intervention at strategic areas that address directly the long-term needs of the disabled. Strategic domains to be addressed include support for micro-enterprise development, initiation of sheltered

workshops, supported employment at the enterprise level, vocational Rehabilitation, the paramount role of the state and issues of organizing the disabled.

Support for Small and Micro-enterprise development :

The context of structural reforms in Cameroon has led to diminishing employment opportunities for the disabled in the structured formal sector. Opportunities for employment creation at the informal sector appears to be the most plausible alternative. A number of factors tend to favour this option for the disabled. In the first place, more emphasis on small-scale manufacturing and repairs would be more consistent, because of its characteristics in terms of "responsiveness to opportunities, its high degree of resourcefulness and its entrepreneurial originality"¹⁰³. Secondly, entrance to occupational opportunities offered by small-scale enterprises is perhaps more open. Most of them require little or no skills, or skills that can be acquired on-the-job, and also little or no capital¹⁰⁴. They can therefore provide natural entry points for the disabled, most of whom lack formal education and training in Cameroon. However, Richardson (1983:28) noted emphatically that formal education may have little value but skill acquisition is very necessary for many subsectors, such as small-scale manufacturing, craft work or maintenance and repair services, all of them attractive areas to the disabled as the Vincent case revealed. This observation suggests that some form of skill development is required.

A key area where training is necessary is in the entrepreneurial skills of small businesses. Specifically, problems to be addressed relate to problems of goal-setting, keeping of adequate records for accounting purposes, organization of business processes and inventory control¹⁰⁵. Provision of this training can take either formal or informal channels. The informal channel is less expensive and perhaps more effective.

As the experience of Vincent reveals in this study, support for forward linkage to the market and backward linkage to the source of raw materials is indispensable for effective development of small-scale enterprises by the disabled. Formation of cooperatives with other disabled entrepreneurs to reduce costs and maximize profits through bulk purchases

¹⁰³ World Bank, 1975b.

¹⁰⁴ Reynolds, 1969.

¹⁰⁵ Enyinna Chuta, 1983.

of raw materials and sales of finished goods can be quite a helpful strategy. Dynamic linkages with medium- and large-scale enterprises will equally be quite helpful. Likewise, instead of the small-scale enterprises remaining marginal, they would become essential, instead of being stagnant, they would become dynamic and instead of being segregated in the informal sector, they would become actively connected to the formal sector¹⁰⁶.

Initiation of Sheltered Workshop :

There is no sheltered workshop in Cameroon at the moment. The huge financial resources required at the beginning, as the Dutch experience demonstrates, may probably discourage the government and other organizations from venturing into it. As the Dutch experience demonstrates, the disabled people can be asked to work in the workshop with subsidizing arrangement for some transitional period. During this transitional period which they will be trained in various skills, management in the workshop will gradually introduce a profit-making orientation and work towards sustainability and autonomy. While this initiative is financially demanding at the inception as has been stated above, the long-term social benefits can be far-reaching. Many unemployed disabled will be taken away from the streets and be actively engaged in the production circuit.

Given the frequently imbalance relation between capital and labour¹⁰⁷ in both the small-scale enterprise development and sheltered workshop strategies for employment generation for the disabled, a labour-intensive approach to production of assets, goods and services could be adopted. This approach entails the use of working methods and systems that optimize the labour content, usually through a cost-effective use of labour and light equipment¹⁰⁸. The need to give priority to local labour inputs, supported where necessary by equipment, rather than to (imported) equipment supported by labour, provides a rationale for this approach. The overriding consideration in applying labour-intensive methods should be the cost-effective production of outputs with adequate quality standards at a cost at least comparable with that of more equipment-intensive methods.¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁶ Gary, F. and Lu-lin C., 1992 : 26.

¹⁰⁷ Paucity of capital and excessive supply of labour.

¹⁰⁸ Gaude, J. and Watzlawick, H., 1992 : 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

The use of this method, especially in the sheltered workshops, could absorb many unemployed disabled.

Supported Employment at the Enterprise Level :

This approach which is for now entirely absent in Cameroon is a strategy that gives disabled workers a unique opportunity to work side by side with non-disabled workers in an ordinary working environment. Success in this strategy requires close collaboration not only between the state and employers, but also between these two and the disabled population. The state will provide the required financial support and incentive for employers in big companies to adapt their work environment to the abilities and aspirations of the disabled workers. On their part, the latter will have to display commitment and professional consciousness to encourage employers in the crucial decisions they make in their favour.

Conditions for the success of this approach are the following : Firstly, evaluating the employee's existing independence on the job. This is to be followed by further instruction on adaptability in the workplace. Thirdly, co-workers are encouraged to provide assistance until finally the employee needs little or no outside supervision, but can react independently to the supervisor's instructions, signals and other work-related stimuli¹¹⁰. Greater independence and less need for support are the key determinants of success.

Vocational Rehabilitation :

The provision of vocational training and/or employment is undoubtedly, a key area that continuously help the disabled in their efforts towards socio-economic integration. The National Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (CNRH) provides vocational training to the disabled. Its coverage and financial constraints pose serious limitations to the pursuance of its set objectives. An alternative strategy is the community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes, as the ILO's experience reveals in some developing countries. ILO's prime concern with regard to the disabled in these programmes is to ensure that they have equal access to training and employment opportunities, which in

¹¹⁰ Konig, A & Schalock, R., 1991 : 27.

rural areas means that appropriate community-level services, facilities and support programmes have to be developed for that purpose¹¹¹. CBR is basically designed to provide new specialized facilities for disabled people at the community level, and its success depends to a large extent on the staff and financial resources made available by the national Government. Breaking the urban bias and bringing training and employment opportunities to the community level will upgrade the lifestyle of majority of the disabled in Cameroon. The example from Philippines can be illustrative. In this country, CBR was planned as a complete departure from institutional approaches. Government involvement was limited to planning and coordinating CBR activities and providing some staff training. Under the ILO project, volunteers from selected communities were trained to open up income-generating opportunities for disabled community members with the support of the community and relying entirely on its own resources. These volunteers are not trained to provide rehabilitation services but to act as promoters¹¹². Cameroon can draw crucial lessons from this experience and develop its own responsive strategies. This will aptly respond to UNESCO's clarion call for technical and vocational education system to be designed so that it can be available to disadvantaged and handicapped persons in special forms adapted to their needs in order to integrate them more easily into the society¹¹³.

The Paramount Role of the State :

The state is indisputably the key player in the political and socio-economic scene with regard to disability policies and programmes. Its role is broad-based but touches on the cardinal domains of providing legal guarantees and, financial and material support. It intervenes in setting up training institutions and providing the necessary technical and logistics support. As the afore-cited Philippino case instructs, state involvement in CBR, if undertaken in Cameroon can cover the domains of planning and coordination of activities as well as providing some staff training. The role of the state is indispensable in providing a coercive mechanism to ensure full compliance to existing laws relating to the protection

¹¹¹ Momm, W. & Konig, A., 1989 : 500.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ UNESCO, 1974 : 6.

of the disabled in Cameroon and in ensuring that an appropriate mechanism is put in place to monitor the implementation of programmes emanating from its laws and policies.

Issues of Organization of the Disabled :

Conscientization and organization of the disabled¹¹⁴, are regarded as basic (pre)conditions that can attract support from other key actors in the political and socio-economic scene in Cameroon, especially from NGOs/NGDOs and donor agencies. The process normally takes place around a set of felt needs given priority by the disabled themselves. Organization is necessary for several reasons. One of the main causes of the poor plight of the disabled is powerlessness. Empowerment of the disabled, especially in alliance with other groups, helps to give them a strong voice, lowers their vulnerability and enhances their social, political and economic resources. Organization also helps them to improve their position when buying or selling, both for productive and consumption purposes. It permits NGOs/NGDOs and other agencies to reach more people and reduce the programme overhead per 'beneficiary'¹¹⁵. Furthermore, organization is also a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for autonomy, as it enables the disabled to eventually continue development programmes by themselves and widens the scope of such programmes at their own initiative. Through organization and group cohesion, they can constitute a strong force with the capacity to lobby and exert pressure on the government to organize fruitful debates towards the formulation and implementation of realistic laws and policies, and back them with concrete programmes. Through this way also, they can pressurize the employers to revise their entrenched stereotype mentality to the effect that disability means inability, which often leads to the perpetration of labour market segmentation against them. Organization and cohesion can also create more social awareness of their predicaments and attract the sympathy of other pressure groups, like trade unions, political parties etc., in the overall fight towards the betterment of their condition.

¹¹⁴ Often classified among the group of "hard core" or "structurally" poor alongside the women and the youths.

¹¹⁵ Wils, F., 1991 : 114.

5.4 : Concluding Observations:

While the objective of this study is not to compare the two, Netherlands and Cameroon, experiences, I would like to start with some comparative remarks. Whereas the Cameroon system looks static and compounded with a plethora of problems, crucial amongst them financial, the Dutch system is dynamic and operates satisfactorily in an evolving and challenging context. This is evident in the constant intervention of changes in disability laws, policies and programmes to adjust to the growing needs of disabled persons. For instance, a new system comes into effect on 1st January 1998, which reflects a substantial modification in previous laws, policies and programmes¹¹⁶. This is in response to the very large number of people who are unable to participate in the labour process because of disability. These new measures aim at reducing the number of people incapacitated for work and keep the cost of financing the Disablement Benefits (WAO) affordable, while also keeping in proper perspective, their welfare.

The importance and impact of disability policies and programmes in both countries also captured this researcher's attention. Employment and skill development policies and programmes in Holland aim at integration and reintegration of the disabled into the competitive labour market. Even if this important objective is not attained and the disabled remained unemployed, the highly developed social security system provides a safety-net for them as they are still in a position to live comfortably with unemployment benefits or other accommodating measures under the provisions of the Disablement Benefits Act (WAO). Furthermore, the government makes a lot of financial contribution to the sustenance of special programmes designed for them. These measures give a good picture of the amount of attention accorded to the disabled in Holland. The scenario in Cameroon is totally different. Not only do lapses exist in policies and programmes, but those that appear to be convincing, do not adequately address the primary needs of the disabled. Most of them remain unemployed with little or no assistance from the government as revealed from the findings of this study. It is therefore an urgent policy option to sensitize the government on the need to rethink and reformulate the existing policies and

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 1997 : 5.

programmes, so that the magnitude of the prevailing injustice can be drastically curtailed. The aforementioned viable strategy need to be given serious thought. The very first step in this strategy should be organization of awareness raising in the Cameroon community about the plight of the disabled (and by the disabled). The next step will be a struggle to influence the legislation making through representation at the legislation making organs, including parliament. These are fundamental pre-conditions if desirable changes, as suggested by the above strategy, are to be expected in the foreseeable future.

Despite the dynamism of the Dutch disability policies and programmes, they still remain far from full attainment of set objectives. For example, a good number of the disabled are caught up in the waiting list for employment in sheltered workshops, some programmes face management problems, the existence of financial constraints and the prevalence of stereotype mentality all combine to produce a synergetic effect that reveals the loopholes in the Dutch Model. These shortcomings however, give room for future adjustments in policies and programmes. The weaknesses inherent in disability policies and programmes in Cameroon need not be over-emphasized. The challenge now is how to develop a framework that can reasonably measure the level of attention accorded to the special needs of the disabled in the Holland and Cameroon, or more generally, in the developed and developing world. Drawing inspiration from traditional indicators like the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Development Index (GDI), we can conveniently introduce a new indicator called the Disability Development Index (DDI). Like HDI¹¹⁷ and GDI, the concept and measurement of DDI remain broadly the same but with slight modification on the income component. DDI will reflect a composite index of three variables, viz. life expectancy of the disabled expressed in years; education which will take into consideration percentage of adult literacy, and primary and secondary enrolment ratio; and income which will measure the total amount money spent annually by the government in addressing the needs of the disabled and the GDP per capita of the disabled.

With the inadequate attention accorded to issues of disability in many countries, this indicator could be used by the international community as well as national interest groups

¹¹⁷ Kaul, I. and Menon, S., 1993 : Annex 1.

to put pressure on governments to increase their efforts in addressing the special needs of the disabled. Donor agencies and NGOs could be better oriented in the provision of support and in the accomplishment of their activities.

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