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Engaging the Professional Needs of Academics with Visual Impairments in a Post- COVID-19 Pandemic Higher Education System – The Case of Cameroon

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Abstract: The study examined the needs of Academics with Visual Impairments (AVI) in a post-COVID-19 pandemic Cameroon Higher Education (HE) system, for inclusive and equitable policy recommendations. It specifically focused was on: the challenges of AVI in responding to innovative options to teaching-learning, research and related functions adopted during and post-covid-19 pandemic eras; adaptation strategies employed by AVI during and after the pandemic, and the professional needs of AVI towards aligning with post-pandemic changes and adjustment to teaching-learning activities within the Cameroon HE system. The study was theoretically underpinned by the inclusive lens model by UNESCO (2009). Being a post-positivist - qualitative study, the researchers employed the exploratory research design, making a purposive use of six (6) AVI and four (4) administrators from HE institutions in Cameroon. With the use of a focus group discussion, focus group discussion guide, and an interview, the researcher explored the views of the AVI pertaining to the issues under examination. The findings revealed that; challenges of AVI in responding to teaching innovations during the period under consideration included; limited knowledge in the use of adapted teaching-learning technologies, insufficient financial resources to acquire adapted technologies for online teaching, insufficient and exclusive nature of staff training programs during COVID, absence of inclusive teaching learning technologies, and the negative attitudes and non-collaborative nature of some sighted staff in the execution of teaching-learning tasks. Their major adaptation strategies included the acquisition of adapted and assistive ICT devices, self-sponsored training on basic adapted ICT skills and self-sponsored recruitment of sighted aid volunteers to provided sighted assistance in lesson preparation and related duties. Professional needs of AVI for alignment with post-pandemic adjustments and innovations include among others; intense training on adapted e-learning for AVI and students with visual impairment (SVI), advanced training on the use of adapted ICT tools, provision of adapted teaching-learning ICT devices and materials for university libraries, digitalization of campus services to aid the mobility and interaction of AVI and SVI, training of institutional staff for attitudes change, and State or institution sponsored employment of sighted aids attached to all academic staff with visual impairment. The underlying recommendation was on the need for strict enforcement of the laudable existing national and international extant legislations and policies geared towards protecting and upholding the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities not only within educational and professional circles but across every sector of national life in Cameroon.

Key points: Professional, needs, academics, visual impairment, post-pandemic, higher education, Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

The sustainability of higher education services during crisis and post crises in any society is critical. This is supported by the fact that higher education does not only guarantee an opportunity for advanced skills and meaningful knowledge acquisition in society as an emergency management strategy but most importantly constitutes a critical ingredient for post-emergency societal reconstruction. This implies that stakeholders of HE systems especially the teaching staff of all categories must be adequately prepared in terms of capacity and skills to be able to swiftly adapt to changes and innovations during and after such emergencies (Chinwe et al, 2022).

Based on the 2019 global health emergency – the COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant devastating socio-economic consequences on our society, academics in universities across Africa and Cameroon in particular were confronted with the challenges of adapting to emergency innovations in teaching-learning. Higher education institutions engaged in the utilization of remote learning or e-learning options, which appeared to be a new normal to a seemingly unprepared academia with diverse needs and challenges in the execution of their tri-functions - teaching, research and outreach. The adaptation of Academics with Visual Impairment (AVI) to this new reality appeared to have been problematic, considering the already existing obstacles to their smooth functioning during face-to-face teaching (Nyugap and Ngwa (2024).

Since 2015, there has been a global quest for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all and at all levels through the Education Agenda 2030 (UNESCO, 2015). The objective of this agenda is to mobilize nations and partners around the Stainable Development Goal (SDG) on education and its targets. It proposes strategies of implementing, coordinating, financing and monitoring education to ensure inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all at all levels of education. It also outlines indicative ways through which countries may draw upon in establishing contextualized plans and strategies for education, taking into cognizance different national realities and capacities among other considerations.

In higher education, inclusion has mostly been seen from the lens of excellence and competitiveness, and the aspect of quality has mostly been expressed through university rankings in various league tables (International Association of Universities –IAU, 2015). On the bases of the global education agenda, it therefore becomes paramount for HE to be directed towards serving a broader purpose of combating disparities in the availability of HE opportunities and resources for both the staff and student population (Ngwa et al, 2024). Consequently, mindful of the need to restructure the higher education systems (being a key determinant of knowledge-based societies) to suit the realities of a post-pandemic, equitable and inclusive society where key stakeholders (particularly AVI) are not caught up unprepared by future emergencies, the researchers decided to examine the professional needs of academics with visual impairments in a post-pandemic Cameroon higher education system towards inclusive and equitable policy recommendations.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As a partaker in the global emergency response to the outbreak and spread of the Coronavirus pathogen (COVID-19) between 2019 and 2021, the Cameroon government mandated a provisional closure of educational institutions at all levels. The extended closure did not only stall face-to-face teaching-learning activities particularly in higher education institutions (which had been the normal practices over the years) but also led to diminishing abilities of human capital and it attendant consequences. With these in mind, and in an attempt to mitigate these consequences, universities and related institutions were tasked to utilize remote learning or e-learning options, which appeared to be a new normal to a seemingly unprepared academia made up of individuals with diverse needs and characteristics. AVI, were confronted with new challenges and needs in the execution of their tri-function responsibilities. Their adaptation to this new reality therefore appeared problematic, considering the already existing obstacles to their smooth functioning prior to the suspension of face-to-face teaching-learning activities. In the face of this reality, and mindful of the education 2030 agenda that advocates for an inclusive and equitable education system that serves a broader

purpose of combating disparities in terms of HE opportunities and resources for both staff and students; it became necessary to examine the professional needs of these AVI within the context of a post-pandemic Cameroon higher education in order to make inclusive and equitable policy recommendations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Generally, the study sought to examine the professional needs of AVI within the context of a post-covid-19 pandemic Cameroon higher education. Specifically, it was aimed at:

- Examining the challenges of AVI in responding to the innovative teaching-learning, practices adopted during and after the covide-19 lockdown
- Find out adaptation strategies employed by AVI towards the new approach during and after the covide-19 lockdown and
- Explore the professional needs of AVI necessary for alignment with post-pandemic adjustments and innovations to teaching-learning within the Cameroon higher education system.

RELATED LITERATURE

The Cameroon Higher Education System and its Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Decree No. 92/74 of 13th April 1992 and complemented by decree No. 93/034 of 19th January 1993 established five full-fledged public universities in addition to the pioneer University of Yaoundé and also made some changes within the HE system (Ngwa and Fonkeng, 2017). Guided by the 1993 reforms and related laws, more universities have been created since then totalling eleven (11) public universities in the 10 regions of the country and other public higher institutes. In 2001, government passed law no. 005 of 16th April 2001 on the orientation of HE in Cameroon and in 2023, transitioned into law no. 2023/007 of 25 July, 2023 on Higher Education Policy in Cameroon. The Cameroon Higher Education Policy charges higher education institutions with a tri-function mandate (teaching, fundamental and applied research and community Development) for the developing of a knowledge-based economy for sustainable development, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education.

The World Bank (2020) notes that the COVID-19 lockdown brought to bear many lapses of the HE system among which is the need for improved infrastructure to support continued distance and blended learning models. Government's emergency response brought about a paradigm shift in teaching/learning approaches within the country's universities. Despite living in an ICT era, the traditional form of teaching in Cameroon Universities prior to the COVID-19 lockdown has often been face-to-face lectures given by all academic staff to large groups of students. This is combined with large group tutorials, group laboratory sessions and workshops, with some independent study methods (Lawyer and Ngwa, 2021).

In public Universities across the country, teaching-learning was sustained through the adoption of the online teaching-learning and the blended teaching-learning lecture delivery methods to replace the traditional face-to-face large groups lecture methods. These methods were adopted in an emergency stakeholders' meeting, chaired by Cameroon's Minister of Higher Education, Jacques Fame Ndongo. The aim of the meeting was to review the issues and challenges posed by the pandemic to HE and to map out emergency strategies that could help sustain continues teaching-learning, while also respecting measures put in place by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the state to contain the spread of the virus. This plan was to be achieved with strict respect for standards and to ensure quality assurance, professionalization of training, and employability of graduates (Ministry of Higher Education - MINESUP, 2020). Key among the measures adopted for implementation by heads of public and private higher institutes of learning were the mobilization of information and communication technologies and the activation of and emphasis on online teaching-learning and training activities, given the digital tools were available to students at the higher educational level. All campus activities open to the public were suspended and all campus gatherings were not to exceed 50 persons.

In compliance with the above measures, individual university administrations adopted online teaching-learning and blended learning methods to sustain teaching-learning activities. While these universities put in place measure to ensure staff preparedness, and the availability and adequacy of the prerequisite infrastructures. There was a more worrying need being that of the adaptation of AVI into the emergency teaching-learning plan given it emergency. Academics with visual impairment (AVI) were already facing some critical challenges prior to this innovation, among which is the absence assistive technological devices and special aids to facilitate the execution of their teaching-leaning function (Nyugap & Ngwa, 2015 and Nyugap & Ngwa, 2024). Having to embrace online teaching learning without the prerequisite adapted technology and coupled with the lack of training or capacity was therefore a double challenge.

Professional Needs of Academics with Visual Impairment

Academics with visual impairment refer to higher education or university teachers with visual disabilities – either with low vision or total blindness. Belson, (2003) defines visual impairment as disability in vision that even with correction adversely affects a Person's education and societal physical interactions. Persons with acute visual disability (total blindness) do not have usable vision, but could have some light perception. They therefore rely on their tactile and auditory senses to get information, study or interact with other persons in a society (Belson, 2003). On the other hand, people with mild visual disability (low vision) are able to use their vision as the primary mode of getting information. Their ability to take on visual tasks could be assisted with the use of compensatory visual strategies, low vision devices, and modifications in the physical environmental modifications (Okungu, 2014).

Like students with visual impairments, university teachers with visual impairments have similar or even greater needs in order to meet up with their professional responsibilities. Mnyanyi (2009) describe teachers as creators of the learning environment who possess the knowledge and skills to identify and address the needs of learners through performing their role in curriculum accountability (plan lessons, teach, assess, and report), design and implement teaching methodology, and manages the learning environment. Consequently, teachers with visual impairments require different accommodations and adaptations to compensate for their visual conditions, so as to enable them effectively carry out the responsibilities expected of them in the teaching-learning process (Okungu, 2014). Sefotho and Ferreira (2020) argue that students and academics with visual disabilities have the right to same opportunities as those without special needs. This means that it is the responsibility of Higher Education stakeholders and the institutions to make available to them the enabling environment that provides adequate care, and enhances the development of high self-esteem and self-efficacy among them. As academics, it is absolutely difficult to execute the tri-function (teaching research and outreach) without an accommodating or enabling environment. It therefore becomes imperative for higher education administrators to provide constant capacity building for academics with visual impairments on how to integrate themselves into teaching-learning innovations, provide improved resources and infrastructure as well as formulating policies or making decisions that take into cognizance the professional needs of academics with visual impairment.

According to Nyugap and Ngwa (2024), establishing a support team with the responsibility to ensure inclusion within university systems is critical; as lecturers with visual impairment require a lot of Assistive Technology (AT) to source for information, plan lessons, teach, assess and conduct research - which are key aspects of the teaching-learning process. Some of such adapted technological devices includes AT for reading, writing and access to computers (software and hardware). Examples of AT for reading are: braille text, braille labeler, audio books and digital text. Their writing needs include adaptive papers, slates and styluses, word processors, manuals and electronic braille writers and braille embossers. In terms of orientation and mobility for academics with visual impairment, the campus needs low tech adaptations, canes, enlarged braille or talking campus, electronic travel aids and GPS devices (Sefotho and Ferreira, 2020 & Tebo, 2022). Without

these needs being taken care of, the smooth functioning of lecturers with visual impairment is greatly impeded.

According to UNESCO (2009), it is the responsibility of society and that of educational institutions to ensure that the environment is enabling and all the needs of persons with disabilities/special needs are met and not the other way round. The teaching-learning methods and strategies adopted by higher education institutions during the covid-19 lockdown have been sustained post-COVID. E-learning platforms and hybrid teaching and learning have become the new normal (Chinwe et al, 2022) and are being fully embedded into the higher education digitalization plan of the country. Academics with visual impairment cannot therefore be left out in the engagements of teaching personnel in this innovation.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

UNESCO's Inclusive Lens Model (2009)

The study was anchored on the inclusive lens model by UNESCO (2009). The inclusive lens model is a postulation of the UNESCO (2009) on the policy guidelines towards the implementation of inclusive education practices in education systems around the world. According to UNESCO, the inclusive lens is a perspective of seeing the educational system as the cause of special needs persons' inability to attain their potentials, rather than seeing the special needs persons as the cause. Initially, the blame was placed at the door steps of the special needs persons. The inclusive lens model therefore advocates a shift from viewing the persons with special needs as the problem to seeing the educational system as the problem.

Academics with visual impairment are bona-fide stakeholders of the higher education system and thus have to enjoy all rights and privileges appertaining to their positions. As employees of their institutions, the extra burden of serving as academic staff with special needs has to be taken care of the by the institutions and not themselves. It is necessary for the institutional leaderships to make provisions for them in terms of special capacity building, provision of assistive technological/ICT devices and adapted teaching-learning materials for the effective execution of their functions in the event of innovations like e-learning and hybrid teaching and learning amongst others.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a post-positivist qualitative research that made use of the exploratory research design. The study focused on Cameroon universities that had officially registered persons with visual impairments as part of the academic staff. These institutions included the universities of Bamenda, Buea, Younde 1, and Yaounde II.

The study population constituted of the internal stakeholders of the identified universities above. The accessible population was made of all the AVI and administrators in the participating universities.

Data was collected from a sample size of 10 stakeholders (6 AVI and 4 administrators) using two researchers-developed instruments (a focus group discussion guide and an interview guide). The sample of 10 was chosen at the discretion of the researchers – employing the purposive sampling technique. The focus group discussion was conducted with the 6 AVI while interview was administered to the 4 administrators of the chosen institutions.

The Purposive sampling technique ensured that only the AVI and administrators who could provide the relevant data were part of the study. The focus group discussion and interviews were conducted though a face-to-face interactions with the AVI and administrators. After the focus group discussion and interviews, the views obtained from respondents were transcribed before analysis. The views obtained were analyzed using descriptive thematic narrations following the objectives under study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges of AVI in responding to the innovative teaching-learning practices adopted during and after the covide-19 lockdown

Thematically, AVI during the focus group discussion, identified some challenges they encountered in their attempt to respond to innovative teaching-learning practices adopted during and after the covide-19 lockdown – these include, limited knowledge in the use of adapted teaching-learning technologies, insufficient financial resources to acquire adapted technologies for online teaching, insufficient and exclusive nature of staff training programs during COVID, absence of inclusive teaching learning technologies, and the negative attitudes and non-collaborative nature of some sighted staff in the execution of teaching-learning tasks. These challenges implied that the working environment for the AVI during that period were completely non-reflective of the strategies proposed by Ottowitz, (2013) and Mnyanyi, (2009) for the improvement of educational and professional environments for learners and professionals with visual impairment. The administrators on their part identified unpreparedness of universities for educational emergencies, limited human and financial resources for inclusive training of staff during and post-COVID survival; which aligned with the argument of Chinwe et al, (2022) that COVID-19 lockdown introduced online teaching-learning in tertiary institutions is a new normal which is going to survive beyond the COVID pandemic.

The innovative teaching-learning practices adopted during the COVID-19 lockdown were the online teaching-learning and blended learning practices. According to AVI, they found it difficult adapting to these teaching-learning practices due to the limited knowledge they possessed on these innovative teaching methods.

> "…the online teaching mode brought a lot of changes in the way we use to conduct our lectures, as most of the lectures had to be done online…knowledge in the use of adapted computer and mobile phone technologies was very much required which most of us didn't have…I've never used goggle classroom before and that was the major online app my colleagues were using to organize lectures…the covid lockdown came at a time when some of us were still trying to study how to transit from analogue mobile to smartphones with an accompanying speech software, so because of this, we could not really integrate into the online teaching adopted by most universities during that period…"

According to the AVI, they couldn't be fully part of the adopted online and blended learning methods during the covid lockdown because the innovation came with additional financial burden on their personal finances, which were already strained as a result of the extra cost they encured in managing disability as lecturers with visual impairments. Consequently, they did not have the financial resources needed to acquire necessary adapted ICT/technological devices and adapt them to assistive technologies for online teaching and learning.

> "…we encountered a good number of challenges amongst which was the lack of Ubuntu spirit by some colleagues who could not carry us along during the online staff training programs…considering the emergency nature of the innovation and the fact that it was our first time trying to make use of online teaching methods, it was the responsibility of the university administrations to make the training inclusive of our needs and also encourage sighted staff to be receptive and collaborative with us…ideally, our employment in a society moving towards embracing inclusion ought to be accompanied by the employment of sighted aids with whom we are to be working. But this has not been the case, as we have to bare the extra cost of getting personal assistants to serve us and we pay them from our meager salaries, added to other expenses, from the same amount received by any other lecturer including our sighted colleagues…"

According to the lecturers, these challenges greatly hampered their teaching performances during that period. These personal challenges were further compounded by the challenges the various universities faced in an attempt to adopt the emergency measures. The university administrators interviewed all noted that they were caught up unprepared as was the case of any other institution around the world.

Adaptation strategies by AVI towards the new approach during and after the covide-19 lockdown

In the phase of the challenges encountered as a result of the adoption of the online and blended teaching innovation as a COVID-19 emergency response teaching strategy in Cameroon universities, AVI were therefore bound to also device adaptation strategies that served as coping strategies and have continued to be useful even after the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the academics, their major adaptation strategies were the acquisition of adapted ICTs and assistive technological devices, self-sponsored training on basic adapted ICT skills and self-sponsored engagement of sighted aid volunteers to work with them. By acquiring adapted ICTs and assistive technology, the academics noted that the paradigm shifts from face-to-face lectures to online teaching made them to develop consciousness in the acquisition of adapted ICTs and related technologies and softwares that facilitated and is facilitating their participation in the online teaching-learning process. The adapted technologies included adapted computes with speech sofwares, and the transition from the use of analogue mobile phones to the use of smart mobile phones with speech access. Apart from getting to own these adapted technologies, the academics argued that they also went further to acquire self-sponsored trainings on the use of the these adapted technologies and how they could be integrated to help them be part of the teaching-learning innovations adopted by the universities.

> "…we were already used to the face-to-face lectures but covid took us out of our comfort zone…the adoption of online teaching didn't only challenged most of us but it made us to go back to work in terms of technology integration into our teaching as lecturers with visual impairments…today, nearly all of us can effectively use online interactive apps like zoom, Google classrooms and others through our mobile phones and laptops to organize online lectures for our students…I must tell you that we virtually trained ourselves from our pockets on the use of the ICT devices and we also acquired our own technological gadgets…this is the extra cost or financial burden disability has placed on us as lecturers with visual impairments…in other countries, it is our institution or the state that should have made available all these devices for us and also sponsored the training…"

The inability of the institutions and the state of Cameroon to recruit and trained sighted aids for AVI reveals the weakness of and the slow pace at which Cameroon higher education institutions are going towards the implementation of inclusive education practices in the higher education sector. Nyugap and Ngwa (2024), argue that establishing a support team with the responsibility to ensure inclusion within university systems is critical; as lecturers with visual impairment require a lot of Assistive Technology (AT) to source for information, plan lessons, teach, assess and conduct research - which are key aspects of the teaching-learning process. According to the UNESCO (2009) in it inclusive lens model recommends that it is the responsibility of educational institutions to provide the enabling environment for the smooth integration of persons with disabilities within the educational system. Allowing them to seek for their own survival strategies is a way of holding them responsible for their own disabilities). Without the adapted technological needs of AVI being taken care of, their smooth functioning as special needs lecturers shall be greatly impeded (Sefotho and Ferreira, 2020).

Professional needs of AVI for alignment with post-pandemic adjustments and innovations to teaching-learning within the Cameroon higher education system.

Findings with regards to the professional needs of AVI for alignment with post-pandemic adjustments and innovations revealed that the lecturers are in need of a series of services amongst

which are; intense training on the online innovative teaching, advanced training on the use of adapted ICT tools for online teaching, provision of adapted teaching-learning materials for university libraries to aid research for AVI, digitalization of campus services to aid the mobility and interaction of staff and students with visual impairments, training of institutional staff for attitudinal change and employment of sighted aids attached to all academic staff with visual impairment among other needs.

The teaching innovations adopted by universities during the covid pandemic in African and Cameroon inclusive have come to stay. That is why Chinwe et al, (2022), notes that it has become a new normal. The sustainability of these innovations within a post-pandemic Cameroon higher Education system requires some critical measures that need to be put in place to cater for the professional needs of AVI. The AVI acknowledged the importance of capacity building for university personnel during the focus group discussion, when they recommended the need for training of university staff for attitudinal change and a capacity building program for AVI on the advanced use of assistive technologies and digital ICT tools for improved professional performance. In an era of the implementation of inclusive and lifelong education as a global development agenda, the attitude of education personnel towards professionals with disabilities within educational institutions is critical. Also, making provisions for the smooth functioning of AVI and the provision of training to AVI on the use of innovations is also very significant. These are fully in in line with the recommended standards of the education 2030 agenda on indicative ways through which countries may draw upon in establishing contextualized plans and strategies for education, taking into cognizance different national realities and capacities among other considerations (UNESCO, 2015).

Furthermore, the provision of assistive technology and adapted ICT devices for all AVI within universities and the recruitment of sighted aids to AVI are also critical professional needs. The academics during the focus group discussion lamented the fact that their abandonment by institutional and state officials to bare the additional cost of disability for themselves in the execution of their duties as lecturers is a way of telling them that their employment as lecturers with visual impairment is a privilege and not a right. According to them, there are national and international extant laws in the country that promotes their rights as persons with disabilities, which includes the right to get employment on merit and the right to operate in an enabling environment provided by the state. This means that it is not their duty as persons with visual impairment to create their own operating environment within the academic institutions but the responsibility of the authorities of these institutions and the state. As posited by Mnyanyi (2009), if teachers are creators of the learning environment who possess the knowledge and skills to identify and address the needs of learners, then, lecturers with visual impairment require different accommodations and adaptations to compensate for their visual conditions, so as to enable them effectively carry out the responsibilities expected of them in the teaching-learning process, especially in an era of the adoption of digital innovations within educational institutions and the implementation of the global development agenda on education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As nations and educational institutions, especially higher education institutions align with the paradigm shifts in teaching-learning and operations brought about by the covid pandemic, they must not do so in isolation of a critical group of stakeholders – academics with visual impairments. As members of the Cameroon higher education teaching core with all rights and privileges accrue to them as their sighted colleagues, it is important that the ministry of higher education, in collaboration with the rectorates and chancelleries of state and private universities provide them with the necessary and conducive atmosphere to operate effectively alongside their sighted peers. Every staff has the potentials to succeed and produce expected results no matter his/her physical status if provided the right and conducive working environment. It is not a matter of privilege or sympathy being given to the AVI by the state and institutions but matters of social justice, existing and legally binding national and international legislations and a global education agenda on

inclusion that have been ratified by Cameroon and other member nations to be contextualized and prioritized within the various nations of the world. On the bases of these, we earmark the following recommendations and way forward towards the improvement of the professional lots of AVI in a post-pandemic increasingly digitalized higher education system;

There is need for policy implementers to enforce existing policies and laws on the protection of the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in educational and professional organizations in the country. There already exist national and international legislations to this effect but the problem is with the implementation of these legislations by the relevant authorities. For instance, the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability; the Constitution of the Republic as amended in 2008; Law No 2010/002 of 13th April 2010 on the protection and empowerment of persons with disabilities and Prime Ministerial Decree No 2018/5233/PM of 26th July, 2018 fixing the procedures for the application of Law No 2010/002 of 13th April 2010 on the protection and empowerment of persons with disabilities, are some of the recent international and national legally binding legislations on the protection of the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in the country. Consequently, the accommodation of AVI in higher education institutions in the country especially within the framework of adopting innovations and changes in teaching-learning practices must be properly considered by the appropriate institutional authorities within the framework of these existing policies and legislations.

There is need for an intentional drive towards the introduction and adoption of an inclusive culture by the management of higher education institutions in the country. Such inclusive culture must not only be seen in the general practices of daily administration within the institutions but must be deeply entrenched in internal rules and regulations and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of management for strict adherence. With the existence of such a culture, there is a high probability that institutional authorities must always ensure that AVIs are carried along not only in innovative practices but in the general functioning of the institutions. The training of staff on attitude change towards colleagues with disabilities, the provision of necessary resources for the smooth functioning of staff with disabilities, especially those with visual impairment and the recruitment and engagement of special staff to serve as sighted aids and guides to persons with visual impairments and disabilities as a whole could become a normal practice and not subject to constant advocacy and protest from the AVI and other inclusive advocacy alliances or groups.

As an observation made during the study, it is important to note that the Universities of Bamenda and Buea – being the two anglo-saxon universities in Cameroon are gradually driving towards the right direction, by establishing resource centers on their campuses to aid teaching-learning activities for staff and students with visual impairment and the recruitment of inclusion and wellness officers to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities on the campuses are identified and reported accordingly for prompt action. These universities are also into a working partnership with inclusion and disability rights promotion institutions like the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), which has been executing community-based rehabilitation projects on Empowerment and Disability Inclusive Development (EDID) program and the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SEEPD) program.

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