

Special institutions for people living with disabilities in Zimbabwe: A socio-onomastic exegesis

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Abstract: A number of research studies on the naming of different entities in the context of Zimbabwe have been carried out to date. The relationship between the names and the entities they refer to has largely been proved to be significant either as commentaries on the personality traits of the people or characteristics of the animals they refer to or as an expression of the aspirations, attitude or wishes of the namers. Notwithstanding the existence of these studies, studies that focus on the naming of special institutions for people living with disabilities in Zimbabwe are almost non-existent. Focusing on the naming of institutions established specifically for people living with disabilities and taking an ethnographic approach in which interviews and website analysis were carried out, this study demonstrates that special institutions have been named either after prominent personalities in the specific area of disability, after place names in which the institutions are situated and to reflect societal aspirations and attitudes. Most significant was the finding that the names of the institutions relate closely to societal ideology and attitudes towards disability. This study thus provides more evidence that naming patterns are a window through which specific societies view their environment and its vicissitudes.

Keywords: Special institutions, disability, naming, societal ideology, attitude.

INTRODUCTION

The use of proper names is something that has been studied by linguists largely from a theoretical perspective and over a long period of time but the application of insights from such studies to disability has been very scarce. The study of proper names (onomastics) has of course been harnessed in the study of disciplines such as literature, history, anthropology, political science, religious studies; among others with important insights on these disciplines emerging [1-5]. This confirms the important role that onomastics, just like other sub-disciplines of applied linguistics plays in efforts to find solutions to different kinds of language-related problems. However though different kinds of disability have been studied internationally and locally (with useful discoveries in terms of their aetiology, epidemiology, assessment and intervention) there is a dearth of research in terms of the relationship between onomastics and disability. This paper seeks to diminish that research gap by exploring the naming of special institutions in Zimbabwe. The study focuses specifically on what the different names of the institutions communicate about the ideology towards disability as well as the historical circumstances surrounding the establishment of the special institutions. The section below contextualises this study providing the theoretical framework

informing the study before turning to a review of literature related to the phenomenon of names and naming. The study will then describe the methodology that was used in the collection of data and then discuss the findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews literature to do with the theoretical aspects of onomastics, the development of special education in Zimbabwe as well as the chequered nature of studies that have focused on the study of names in Zimbabwe. Such a background is vital in the sense that it helps in the understanding of the significance of names of special institutions in Zimbabwe.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework applied in this paper is that onomastics is an interdisciplinary field where linguistics converges with a number of related disciplines to illuminate issues to do with history, identity and other social issues. Focusing specifically on toponymy, this study is communicational-pragmatic in approach [6, 7]. This is an approach that regards names, not as mere labels but as vehicles through which significant information can be communicated and extracted.

As Pongweni [8] points out, a majority of Shona names and indeed those of other African cultures are essentially expressions of experience or attitude, both familial and national to such an extent that in analysing them, 'one is essentially engaged in linguistic investigation, with social and political considerations, predominating at various points'. This is the approach that is taken in this study.

Education infrastructural developments in newly independent Zimbabwe and special institutions

A proper perspective on the naming of special institutions in Zimbabwe will be gained if a broader description of post-independence developments in the educational sector is given. It should be stated up front that one of the strengths of the ZANU PF government soon after independence was the vigorous pursuit of educational development. A number of primary and secondary schools were constructed soon after independence. It is interesting to note that the majority of these schools were named in order to assert the indigenous thrust that was sweeping through the country soon after independence. Thus most of the schools were named either after prominent people such as chiefs or headmen (e.g. Mazungunye, Negovano, Bengura), rivers (e.g. Mukore, Checheni, Tugwi), mountains (e.g. Bambaninga, Chinyamapere, Chipendeke), to use examples from Bikita District of Zimbabwe, home to the author. This of course was not a unique practice of the new government, but a practice that was followed even by the colonial government, particularly in institutions situated in rural areas.

In its quest to satisfy the education-for-all mantra, the government of Zimbabwe, though it did not establish special institutions of its own, supported the establishment of special schools to cater for people with various forms of disability. Of course, a number of such schools had already been established by church organisations, non-governmental organisations and philanthropists such as Jairos Jiri well before independence. An analysis of the schools and centres currently involved in servicing people living with disabilities indeed revealed that these institutions were run by churches and non-governmental organisations.

According to Peresuh and Barcham [9] the number of special schools in 1982 was only 20 despite the huge number of people with disabilities by Addison [30] to be approximately 276 000, a figure that Chitiyo and Wheeler [10] then feared could actually rise due to increasing levels of poverty. Peresuh and Barcham [9] add that at that time, there being no policy on the education of people with disabilities, the education of children with disabilities was not viewed as a right of the children, but was viewed from a moral and religious perspective. Mariga *et al.* [11] note that in many countries, disability policies 'have a substantial element of protection and charity but not the right to

equalisation of opportunities'. In the foreword to Mariga *et al.*'s book, Professor Peter Mittler (University of Manchester, England) contends that the fact that one third of the 61 million children who are today excluded from school are children with disabilities is a sign of 'shameful discrimination'. This confirms the prevalence of isolation and exclusion of people living with disabilities across the world. As shown in the findings and discussion section of this paper, it is this isolation and inclusion that some of the names attempt to engage.

A review of onomastic research in Zimbabwe

The formal study of names in Zimbabwe has not received much attention until relatively recently. This is in spite of the fact that the history of the country testifies to an ever-present and keen awareness by its citizens of the importance of names and naming. For example, soon after independence, there was a massive renaming of cities, streets, schools, buildings and other public places in order to give such infrastructure an indigenous aura, in celebration of the newly attained independence from British colonialism. For example, the city of Salisbury was renamed Harare; Fort Victoria was renamed Masvingo; Marandellas was renamed Marondera; Hartley was renamed Chegutu and Umtali was renamed Mutare. Newly constructed schools were also given names with an indigenous flavour in terms of both language and ethos. It is against this background that Mushati [12] argues that the naming of infrastructure such as streets in Zimbabwe after independence was 'an integral aspect of the rebranding and reinvention of the cityscape within a broader nationalist discourse that encompasses a Pan-Africanist agenda'.

Names are arguably something that many people take for granted, perceiving them merely as labels used to identify entities. However, being an important part of speech in any language, names have received attention from applied linguists, particularly onomasticians, as well as from scholars in other human sciences. In the context of Zimbabwe, Chitando [13], Pfukwa [4, 14, 15]; Tatira [16]; Mashiri [17]; Makoni *et al.* [18]; Nyota *et al.* [19]; Makoni *et al.* [20]; Chabata [21]; Mushati [12]; Mangena and Nyambi [22]; Lantern *et al.* [5] and Kadenge *et al.* [23] are among the authors who have recently devoted their research efforts towards the study of names. It is interesting however, to note that what unites the studies of these authors is the fact that they all focus on names and use the ethnographic approach, but in terms of focusing on a more specific niche, all these studies are heterogeneous.

Firstly, Chitando [13] focuses on Shona theophoric personal names and concludes from an analysis of naming patterns in modern Zimbabwe that the marked rise in vernacular names laden with Christian themes demonstrate that Christianity is a culturally translatable phenomenon.

Pfukwa [4, 14, 15] explores the martial names used by liberation war fighters during the Zimbabwean war of liberation. Pfukwa's studies, in various degrees, demonstrate that the names were a distinct social discourse that sought to give the fighters a new identity and to question the prevailing status quo. Pfukwa [15] observes that the war name cannot be distanced from the history of resistance against an unjust political system superintended by the settler regime.

Mashiri [17] takes a different route and focuses on nicknames. His conclusion is that African nicknaming is a phenomenon that is laden with communicative utility in various contexts and situations. Mashiri demonstrates that nicknames are often used as linguistic resources to perform a variety of functions in everyday informal functions, thus to an extent agreeing with Tatira [16].

Focusing on canonymy, Tatira [16] concludes that names given to dogs are a system of communication often exploited to enable the Shona people to navigate through the taboo of open conflict and to maintain their psychological health without adversely affecting the normal rhythm of the community.

Nyota *et al.*[19] examine the reasons behind the names given to beer halls before and after independence. Their paper concludes that the names given to beer halls in colonial Zimbabwe i.e. Rhodesia, as those in independent Zimbabwe, are purposeful and informative since they entice imbibers and that 'they also function as cautionary statements because they warn the same imbibers and would-be drinkers'[19].

Makoni *et al.*[20] examine the naming practices during the Zimbabwean war of liberation and conclude that names assigned to the combatants addressed issues to do with collective history, individual life experiences and that change in the collective historical and individual life circumstances is often marked by a change in the name.

Chabata [21] explores the significance of the names of geographical features such as mountains, rivers, clinics, schools and hospitals. Focusing on the role played by place names in defining Zimbabwe physically and socially, Chabata concludes that features' names in Zimbabwe are coined around the ways people understand themselves vis-à-vis their environment. Some names describe shapes or characteristics of the features concerned, some are historical records while others are commemorative names and others are intended at inspiring people in building a better country. Thus the bestowal of names is not a haphazard process. In short, a taxonomy of names of geographical features from Chabata is that some

names are descriptive, some historical and others commemorative.

Focusing on toponymy, Mushati [12] argues that 'the urban landscape has been exploited to promote an African worldview, create and celebrate hero(in)es, author(ise) history and narratives that commit to posterity historical figures, places, episodes, ideals, values and ideologies'[12]. Mushati's study concludes that war has generated more street names in Muccheke showing the centrality of the war to the formation of the Zimbabwean nation, an observation that Pfukwa[4, 14, 15] also makes from a different perspective.

Mangena and Nyambi [22] focus on literary onomastics and conclude from a paper that interrogates the use of character names in *Harare North* and *Bones* (novels by Zimbabwean writers) that the names of characters help illuminate the personality traits of the characters in question and hence are an important vehicle through which the writer's concerns in the novels could be clarified.

Lantern *et al.*[5] focus on the historical and cultural value of the names of Ndebele children before, during and after the war of liberation and conclude from an analysis of children's names that the art of naming gives a people the weapon to archive their history in their own voice as well as reflecting the historical and cultural circumstances surrounding a people's life.

Kadenge *et al.*[23] clearly venture into the relationship between onomastics and disability as their study investigates names of children born with albinism and conclude among other things that beyond their names being functional and connotative, the names of people with albinism are a form of dialogue between the family and God and also bring out the attitude of the Shona people towards the condition of albinism.

It is evident from a majority of these studies that names and naming are a fertile phenomenon from which social, historical, religious and philosophical information about a people and their culture can be extracted. This study seeks to explore the nature of such information by looking at disability with an onomastic lens, focusing particularly on the sociolinguistic significance of the names of institutions such as schools and vocational centres that have been established specially for people with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this research report was gathered mainly through qualitative methods. A sample of institutions for people with disabilities was purposively selected and their names were identified. Once this was done, the location of each of the institutions was established. Interviews with the directors, representatives of the responsible authorities of the

institutions were conducted with the aim of getting information about the history of the institution in terms of when it was established as well as the circumstances around its establishment. From this perspective, the study can be said to be heuristic-inductive [24]. Community leaders such as councillors, former heads and school teachers and ordinary community members were also interviewed on the history, mission and activities at the schools. The data from the interviews was complemented by data posted on the websites of the institutions that had any such websites as well as other documents pertaining to the institutions. Extensive notes were taken during the interviews and later analysed for thematic patterns. The section below presents and discusses the findings from the interviews and website analysis. For the purposes of this study the names of 24 institutions were selected for analysis. The names are shown in Table 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the institutions in the sample indicated that institutions for people living with disabilities were established and managed under the purview of churches and non-governmental organisations. The Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, the Jairos Jiri Association, the ZIMCARE Trust, the Catholic Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church and a non-governmental organisation called Business 24 7 Plus were found to be key players in the provision of education and care for people living with disabilities. The Jairos Jiri Association runs 29 institutions (in addition to several craft shops, farms and community based rehabilitation projects) and ZIMCARE Trust runs 14 centres, being mainly schools that enrol people with intellectual disabilities. The analysis also showed that the institutions for people with disabilities were mainly in the form of special schools, vocational training centres, workshops, old people's homes, children's care centres and headquarter or branch administrative offices.

Table 1: Names of institutions considered in the study

Responsible authority	Name of institution
Reformed Church	Henry Murray School for the Deaf Margaretha Hugo School for the Blind
Jairos Jiri Association	Bulawayo Vocational Skills Training Centre Jairos Jiri Southerton Children's Centre Kadoma School for the Blind Masvingo Agricultural Skills Training Centre Naran Centre Mukombwe Primary School Waterfalls Children's Centre
Zimcare Trust	Batsirai School Chengetai School Homefield Centre Mudavanhu School Ratidzo School Rubatsiro School Ruvimbo School Sibantubanye School Simanyane School Sir Humphrey Gibbs School Tinokwirira School Zambuko Centre
Business 24 7 Plus	Nzeve Deaf Children's Centre
Evangelical Lutheran Church	Beitbridge Primary School
Catholic Church	Emerald Hill School

It emerged from the analysis that a number of criteria were used in the naming of the special institutions in Zimbabwe. It also emerged that the naming of the institutions, though of particular importance to the current study, is not very different from the naming, not only of other ordinary educational institutions but indeed from the naming of many other places such as towns, hospitals, clinics, business centres etc.

In terms of the different criteria used in the naming of the special schools, it was discovered that some schools were named after people that played a prominent role in the founding, sponsorship or management of those institutions. Other institutions were named after place names (provinces, districts, suburbs and villages) in which the special schools were situated. There was also one institution named after the human organ related to the disability the institution deals with i.e. the ear. Most importantly, there were

institutions that were named to dramatise the attitudes or aspirations of the namers or the community. From all these different motivations behind the naming of the institutions, it is possible to read the shifting perspectives of the Zimbabwean people towards disability.

The language of the names itself also provides a window through which the way Zimbabweans regard the practice of naming can be seen. There are institutions with names in English, Shona and Ndebele, with the language of the name being determined by the language dominantly spoken in the place in which the institution is situated. This pattern was more conspicuous with the ZIMCARE Trust schools whereby it emerged that schools in Shona-speaking areas took Shona names e.g. *Ratidzo* School, *Rubatsiro* School, *Mudavanhu* School etc and institutions in Ndebele-speaking areas took Ndebele names such as *Simanyane* School and *Sibantubanye* School etc. This naming practice demonstrates the fact that Zimbabweans believe that a name should be familiar and linguistically resonate with its host community and culture. However, all the institutions having been established at a time when English was the official language, bear an English segment e.g. Ruvimbo 'School' or Waterfalls 'Children's Centre'. Some institutions also go on to capture the specific disability that the institution deals with in the name e.g. Kadoma School '*for the Blind*' or Henry Murray School '*for the Deaf*'.

It also emerged from the analysis that political motivations in the naming of special institutions have not been very pronounced as if to suggest that there was little interest in disability issues from the politicians as is evident in the naming of streets, for example. However, interviewees from organisations and institutions dealing with people with disabilities conceded that there was significant support from government, particularly in the form of educational grants and remuneration of staff. I now turn to a discussion of the significance of the various clusters of the names of selected special institutions in Zimbabwe.

Institutions named after prominent people in the service of the people living with disabilities

Under this category, there are institutions that include Margaretha Hugo School for The Blind (Masvingo), Henry Murray School for the Deaf (Masvingo), Sir Humphrey Gibbs School (Bulawayo), Naran Centre (Gweru) and the Jairos Jiri institutions scattered around the whole country. Some brief history and the sociolinguistic significance of these names are outlined below.

Margaretha Hugo Primary School for the Blind (Masvingo)

Founded by the Hugo family (Dutch Reformed Church) in 1939, the Margaretha Hugo Primary School

for the Blind at Copota (believed to be a rendition of 'chopota' i.e. it's turning/disappearing, referring to the train disappearing from the sight of the fascinated rural observers) specialises in the teaching of learners with visual impairment. Submissions from interviewees indicated that the Margaretha Hugo School was named in memory of Margaretha Hugo, mother to Helena Hugo who was the principal of the school at the time of Margaretha Hugo's death.

The prominence of Margaretha Hugo lies in the fact that she took a bold decision to look after blind children, beginning with a child named Dzingai, who had been rejected by his parents during the 1915 drought. Approached for food assistance by Dzingai's mother and working closely with her husband Reverend Andrew Hugo, Margaretha Hugo agreed to feed the young boy. When the Hugo family discovered that there were so many odds standing in the way of posting Dzingai to Zambia in order to learn Braille, Reverend Hugo asked wife Margaretha if it would not be possible for her to teach him at home to which Margaretha replied with the famous answer 'I had not thought about it, but I will try'. The last three words of Margaretha Hugo's response have been preserved in Margaretha Hugo School's motto.

This bold and compassionate decision was taken at a time when the general practice in African and other societies was that children born with disabilities such as blindness, deafness, albinism or even twins would not be accepted [11]. Such children usually suffered rejection, stigma, and abuse if at all they managed to escape being killed. Choruma [25] observes that in most parts of Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, children born with albinism used to be killed immediately after birth and that if their lives were spared they were 'marginalised and treated as if they were not capable of functioning on their own'.

However, it should be pointed out that at the time the school was named, it seems not to have mattered very much how people with disabilities were referred to. As a result the prevailing practice was that people with disabilities were identified with the nature of their disability for example, those that had visual impairment were the 'Blind', those that had hearing impairments were the 'Deaf' while those with physical impairment were the 'Crippled'. This could explain the use of the phrase '*school for the Blind*' in the formal name of this special school. This practice seems to be changing, albeit slowly. Most of the special institutions which were established or rechristened after independence have now largely dropped the nature of the disability they specialise in from their names. For example, as will be seen later, most of ZIMCARE Trust's institutions are just 'schools', 'centres' or 'workshops'. This is in keeping with current thinking that though people with disabilities need unique

services, facilities and materials, this is no reason to view them as different or unequal to their non-disabled counterparts [11]. There are also views that assert that there is no person without a disability. However, some interviewees conceded that the dropping of the specific disability that the institutions deal with from the names is bound to present identification difficulties to parents and learners who may be looking for 'special institutions'.

Moreover, it would be also interesting to observe that as people became more and more aware of the equality of people with disabilities and those that do not have disabilities, authorities shifted from the idea of special schools towards the inclusion model. In this model, learners with various forms of disability would be integrated with their counterparts who did not have disabilities. The learners with disability would be put in resource units based at conventional schools. Mariga *et al.* [11] however propose a distinction between the integration model and the resource unit model. Most of the institutions that offered education and care for the learners with disabilities after independence followed the resource unit model. This is the case with Mutendi Primary and High Schools, Bondolfi Primary School (all in Masvingo and enrolling learners with visual and physical disabilities). On the other hand, even those institutions that initially enrolled only people with disabilities are taking learners without disabilities. Thus, nowadays, it is a bit difficult to have more cases of special schools with independent names.

Current thinking takes people with disabilities as people first. This is a result of a keener awareness of human rights, particularly the equality of all human beings and the non-discrimination against any person on any grounds, physical, religious, political or whatever [26-28]. Furthermore, the use of words such as 'blind', 'deaf', 'crippled' and 'disability' have been questioned, with activists suggesting phrases such as 'visually impaired' for 'blind', 'hearing impairment' for 'deafness', 'physical impairment' for 'crippled' and 'limitation' for 'disability'. The phrase 'disabled' has also been condemned in preference for 'people with' visual, aural, physical or intellectual impairment. The phrase 'people with' apparently seeks to emphasise the view that disability should not be viewed as a circumstance that takes away the humanity of the people who have the disability. In other words people who have any form of disability are not in any way different from people who do not have any form of disability. It should be pointed out however that the move towards the use of disability-friendly language is a very contentious issue.

Henry Murray School for the Deaf

Also founded by the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, Henry Murray School for The Deaf was established in 1948 as a learning centre for learners with

a hearing impairment, this institution was named in recognition of the work that Henry Murray had done as a successor to Andrew Louw. This included being the Chairman of the Missionary Council in (the then) Rhodesia, being the superintendent of the Morgenster mission station and being the principal of the Theological College as well as the Teacher Training College. The establishment of the school for the deaf was an extension of the work done in terms of providing education to people with disabilities.

It is also important to note that another institution, namely the theological college was also named Murray Theological College in recognition of the missionary's work.

Sir Humphrey Gibbs School

Established by the then Hopelands Trust (which later merged with SASCAM and MISMAC to become ZIMCARE Trust, Sir Humphrey Gibbs School was established following the need to provide assistance to intellectually challenged children outside the then Salisbury area which already had Montgomery Heights and St Catherine's Hostel to serve it. In addition parents of mentally handicapped children from Bulawayo preferred that training facilities for their children be provided near their homes. Thus, a former day school in Bulawayo which had been started by the Retarded Children's Aid Society in 1953 was incorporated into the Hopelands Trust and with the construction of a decent school and residential accommodation; the centre was converted into a boarding educational institution. The Bulawayo community, the government and organisations such as State Lotteries contributed to the establishment of this institution. Thus the naming of this institution is a tribute to Sir Humphrey Gibbs, the Hopelands Trust's then patron, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, for the role he played in the upliftment of the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

Naran Centre (Gweru)

Originally, built by the Rhodesian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, this centre was bought by one Mr Prag Naran who donated it to the Jairos Jiri Association (which runs it to date). The Naran Centre, which caters for children with visual as well as hearing and speech disabilities, was established in 1968. Interviewees intimated that it is the generosity and humaneness of Mr. Naran that the name 'Naran Centre' seeks to capture and commemorate.

Jairos Jiri institutions across the country

Operating under the auspices of the Jairos Jiri Association (established by the late Jairos Jiri beginning in the 1950s, there are several schools, vocational training centres and service centres that are prefixed with the name 'Jairos Jiri'. Nevertheless, there are Jairos Jiri institutions whose official names do not carry the Jairos Jiri prefix, but these institutions are still

commonly affectionately referred to as *KwaVaJiri* (Mr. Jiri's place).

The institutions run by the Jairos Jiri Association include Masvingo Agricultural Skills Training Centre, Kadoma School for the Blind, Jairos Jiri Southerton Children's Centre, Naran Centre, Waterfalls Children Centre, Bulawayo Vocational Training Centre and Mukombwe Primary School.

It should also be pointed out that the fact that the official names of the Jairos Jiri institutions do not always carry the prefix Jairos Jiri testifies to the vast expanse of the founder's efforts. Consequently the association ended up identifying each individual institution by using the name of the place where the institution is located. Thus the primary function of the name i.e. that of identification is reverted to. Interviewees pointed out that it became necessary for the public to have ways to identify the institutions just because there were now rather too many Jairos Jiri Centres.

The stupendous extent of the work initiated and developed by Jairos Jiri in the service of the needs of people living with disabilities is evident in the words of Senderayi [29] who said, 'The Jairos Jiri Association (JJA) is the largest service provider (probably in Africa) to people with disabilities and over 6500 clients are saved every year through outreach and follow-up integration programmes. In addition, the Association operates 29 centres (not counting craftshops, farms and community based rehabilitation programmes) where 1200 children and adults get treatment, care and education'.

Significant in the naming of the Jairos Jiri centres is also the fact that only a minority of the names make reference to the nature of the disability that each of the institutions deals with, though the majority of these institutions each deal with a specific disability. For example; Jairos Jiri Southerton Children's Centre, Naran Centre and Waterfalls Children's Centre. Though interviewees conceded that this would carry important identification information, using the nature of the disability on the names, as was the case with earlier institutions such as Margaretha Hugo School for the Blind and Henry Murray School for the Deaf, actually further isolates people living with these disabilities by giving an impression that they are largely a unique group of humans, a notion that the philosophy on integration and equality seeks to erase.

There are many other players who have appeared on the Zimbabwean disability service scene but the name Jairos Jiri remains synonymous with efforts to help people living with disabilities. In this light the prominence of Jairos Jiri is indisputable. It is this prominence that Zimbabweans celebrate through

naming of institutions he helped set up and develop after him.

Mushati[12] also makes reference to the recognition of Jairos Jiri as an indigenous philanthropist in the naming of streets in Masvingo as well as in the naming of other institutions. 'Jiri is regarded as a symbol of self-reliance and empowerment for the disabled and is national hero because his works have been appreciated across the land for improving the lives of many disadvantaged people in different ways'.

It is important to conclude this section by pointing out that the naming of institutions after prominent people is a way of immortalising their great work. As long as the places, institutions or entities named after prominent people still exist, society will always remember the greatness or uniqueness of the work of those people. This is an example of commemorative function of names that Chabata [21] refers to.

Institutions named to convey societal ideology and aspirations

Batsirai School (Harare)

Batsirai School was opened in Dzivarasekwa (Harare) in 1978, starting initially in a municipal house. This name is closely related to *Rubatsiro* (discussed later) in the sense that it also expresses the idea of 'help'. However *Batsirai* which is the imperative mood of 'help' seeks, according to one interviewee, to call upon an otherwise slumbering society to rise to action and help people with mental disabilities. This name is significant in that it exhorts people to shift their usual non-challant disposition and stir to action in order to avert a situation in which people with disabilities will live in deplorable conditions with nobody caring about and for them. One could argue here that the namers are making a clarion call to the community and society at large to heed the plight of the mentally challenged. It is in this context that names such as these are indicative of a shift in terms of societal attitudes towards disability.

From a different perspective, this name could however suggest that people with disabilities are 'treated as if they were not capable of functioning on their own'. [25], which stance Mariga *et al.* [11] decry when they point out that this assumption is not valid because, for example, any child can experience difficulty in learning and again 'many disabled children have no problem with learning, only in access to suitable teaching and learning opportunities'.

Chengetai School (Mutare)

Like *Batsirai*, *Chengetai* is a name that conveys a direct call by the name best owners to society to be sympathetic to the plight of the people with mental disabilities and take them into their custody. *Chengetai* means 'look after'. Again this name projects

the traditional perspective where people with disabilities were viewed with sympathy and as helpless people who would not be able to do anything in their lives apart from being 'looked after'.

Though this name suggests a shift from a stance where people with disabilities were not accepted in society, the people with disabilities are viewed as a burden to be carried by their counterparts who live without disability. Thus the name does not recognise that people with disabilities and those without disabilities are equal but indeed intends to appeal to the human emotion of pity.

Homefield School (Harare)

Homefield School owes its name to Homefield Farm about 19 kilometres outside the then Salisbury, near Mt Hampden where the school was located. The farm was bought by the Hopelands Trust with financial assistance from Government and other social organisations. This is one of the few English names for a special school. However, this name has a lot in common with the Shona and Ndebele names discussed earlier in the sense that it projects the centre as a 'home' where people with disabilities can get warmth and succour, attributes of a true home. The Homefield Centre was established to provide some form of community centre, a place where mentally handicapped men and women could live and work in small family groups once they finished their training in the junior centres such as Sir Humphrey Gibbs and Montgomery Heights. The aim of the founders of the Hopelands Trust, who included Dick McGill (after whom the building housing the ZIMCARE Trust headquarters in Milton Park, Harare is named) and his wife, had always been to provide a home and occupation for mentally handicapped people throughout their lives. Activities at Homefield initially concentrated on poultry, sheep and cattle as well as crop production, but the activities have since expanded to include making of camp chairs, dart boards, handbags, table mats etc. The fact that people with disabilities take Homefield indeed as their home, makes Homefield a very apt name. One of the documents at the ZIMCARE Trust headquarters comments: 'For most of the residents of the centre, Homefield is "home". Many of them no longer have parents or families who can care for them, and although a few still live with their parents, and travel to and from the centre to work each day, the majority know no other home. Everything is done to make Homefield as much like a normal home as possible. The men and women, although living in separate hostels (which are divided into small family units), work and have their midday meal together and, in the evenings, they enjoy together social events such as dancing, braaivleis, community singing or other forms of entertainment'.

Mudavanhu School (Gweru)

This school was mainly sponsored by Gweru Round Table 2 and started in a 2-roomed house under

the supervision of a nun. The school was built in 1980 with money coming from intensive fund-raising by the Midlands Association for Mentally Sub-normal Children (MAMSAC). *Mudavanhu* means 'lover of people'. Submissions from interviewees indicated that the name is significant in the sense that it captures the centre's principle of loving people regardless of whether they have disabilities or not. The point here is that disability should not be used as a basis for segregation or discrimination since what defines all people is their humanity and nothing else. The centre also intends to convey the message that people with disabilities have a place where they are loved and can go there to find love and refuge.

Ratidzo School (Masvingo)

Situated in Mucheke Suburb in Masvingo, this special school opened in 1986 and enrolls children with mental disabilities. The name *Ratidzo* which is also a common personal name for Shona girl children means 'demonstration', 'exhibition' or 'illustration'. Submissions by the interviewees revealed that the significance of this name lies in the sense that the name seeks to demonstrate to the community or society that it is possible to have children with mental disabilities attending school and making it in life just like any other children, as if to dispel a hitherto ubiquitous myth that there is no hope for a child with a mental disability. It is significant to note that this name (as well as more others under this section) resonates with the Jairos Jiri Association's motto i.e. 'Demistifying Disability'.

Rubatsiro School (Kadoma)

Rubatsiro means 'help' or 'assistance'. This name is like a wake-up call to the community living with mental disabilities that there is no need for them to languish in despair because there is a place where they can find help. This comes against the backdrop of there being scepticism and cynicism that there is no place where people born with disabilities can get help.

In addition interviewees submitted that there are also a number of cases where there is widespread ignorance, particularly in remote parts of the country, of the existence of centres where people with different forms of disability may get help. One could argue that such a name also seeks to portray the institution in a positive light of philanthropism where the institution is seen as providing critical assistance to those that need it. Against this background, it can also be argued that that moralising perspective on disability issues is dying hard.

Ruvimbo School (Harare)

Having started in the 1960s, Ruvimbo School was officially opened in 1971 with contributions mainly coming from an organisation called Round Table 23. It is located in Mbare, Harare. Interviews with authorities showed that *Ruvimbo* meaning 'trust' or 'faith' was

intended to express to the society that being born with a mental disability does not mean that all hope is lost. People with such disabilities, their family members and the society at large should in fact have trust and faith to assail the disability and move forward with life. Once these people adopt such a positive attitude, it is possible for them to live life to the full just like their counterparts who are living with no disabilities. Chitando [13] and Kadenge *et al.* [23] make similar observations with theophoric names and names of children born with albinism respectively.

Sibantubanye School (Bulawayo)

Sibantubanye is a Ndebele sentential name that may be translated as 'We are one people'. This is another name, just like the Shona *Tinokwirira*, which is centred more, not on the aspirations of the name bestowers, but on the vicariously perceived aspirations of the people living with mental disabilities. The name captures the stance by the people living with mental disabilities that despite their disabilities, they remain equally human just like their counterparts living with no disabilities. Thus the name seems to annihilate the key principle of the special education model that sought to define the whole child solely on the basis of his/her impairment [11] and to segregate them on this basis. This sounds like a rejoinder to the previously prevailing attitude that people with mental disability or any other form of disability for that matter were sub-human and therefore could not be treated on an equal basis with people without disabilities.

Simanyane School (Bulawayo)

Meaning 'let us unite' in Ndebele, *Simanyane* is a special school found in Bulawayo and seems to be informed by the philosophy that there is need for people with disabilities and those without disabilities to unite and regard each other equally as members of one family. The name bestowers here have intimated that they are the spokespersons of the people with mental disabilities and carry the message on behalf of the people with mental disabilities that they should unite with their counterparts that are living with disabilities.

Tinokwirira School (Harare)

Established in Mabvuku (Harare), *Tinokwirira* is a Shona sentential name which may be translated as 'we go up' and is a statement of faith. The school was initially operating in a rented house until 1979 when the present day Tinokwirira School was constructed with funds from the Government Department of Social Welfare and the Beit Hall Trust as well as the SASCAM (Salisbury Association for the Care of the African Mentally Handicapped) Trust. According to the interviewees, the name *Tinokwirira* expresses the conviction of the people living with mental disabilities that they will succeed in their educational and social efforts and move up the social ladder. This name seems to be a voice coming from the

mentally challenged and is different from those names that seem to express the conviction of the name bestowers. Here the name bestowers are kind of suggesting to the people with mental disabilities that they should have a faith and trust that they are in no less degree candidates for social mobility just like their counterparts living with no disabilities.

Zambuko Workshop (Harare)

Established for the care and education of the mentally challenged adults, Zambuko Workshop was also built after independence and specialises in home craft activities intended to help people with mental disabilities. *Zambuko* is a Shona word which means 'bridge'. Interviews with the responsible authorities revealed that they anticipated the institution to be understood as a bridge through which people with mental disabilities could cross from a life of want and despair to one of relative comfort and hope. Thus the implication, like a majority of names looked at so far, is that there is a way to obviate the challenges posed by disability.

Institutions named after place names

As discussed earlier, there are also some institutions that were named after the places (districts or suburbs) in which they are located. These include Kadoma School for the Blind, Waterfalls Children's Centre, Beitbridge Primary School, Mukombwe Primary School and Emerald Hill School, among others. This is one criterion in which the naming of institutions for people living with disabilities is guided by the same principles as the naming of any other ordinary schools. Most of the institutions discussed under the Jairos Jiri institutions above would also still fit into this category e.g. *Bulawayo* Vocational Training Centre, *Masvingo* Agricultural Skills Training Centre, *Waterfalls* Children's Centre and Jairos Jiri *Southerton* Children's Centre.

Institutions named after organs responsible for specific functions

From an array of institutions that were investigated, there was only one that belonged to this category, namely Nzeve Deaf Children's Centre (Mutare). *Nzeve* is the Shona word for 'ear'. Submissions by interviewees indicated that this name was given to capture the specific function that the ear is responsible for as well as the importance that the ear has in human life. This name reveals the nature of the disability that the school specialises in, just like other schools that carry in their names a phrase that defines the scope of their specialism. Names of this nature seem to be directed at the society so that they quickly identify the nature of the disability that the centre deals with.

Opened in 2000 in order to address the absence of facilities for the deaf and hard of hearing in Manicaland Province, Nzeve Deaf Children's Centre

teaches both deaf and hearing individuals skills that include mushroom cultivation, gardening, tree propagation, food preservation, envelope making, cooking, knitting, crocheting, candle making, budgeting and costing, woodwork and sewing in addition to sign language and other academic subjects. This institution also provides a meeting place for deaf youths and adults. It is this coming together of people with disabilities, including those without which the sponsors of the institution believe can make the community of the deaf people more visible, thus mitigate their isolation and stigmatisation.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to bridge the gap between onomastics and disability by focusing on the naming of institutions that were built to cater for people with various forms of disability in Zimbabwe. It has been observed that disability-related institutions, in addition to being named after prominent people and place names, are largely named in a way that captures the societal ideology and attitudes of a specific period towards disability. The literature review section has revealed that Kadenge *et al.*[23] have already explored the naming of children born with albinism but it would be nevertheless interesting to focus on the first names of people that have other kinds of disability in order to understand the dynamics that are at play in the naming of these people. It is hoped that this would shed more light on the relationship between disability and naming.

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