

UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY REGIMES

POLICIES, CONTEXTS AND THE EVERYDAY WORK OF DISABLED STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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FROM MY SIDE OF THE GOSSAMER WALLS

- Three *gossamer walls* through which researchers construct knowledge are shaped by relations with:
- Oneself (and the ghosts that haunt us)
 - Special Educational Needs Teacher
 - First Generation University Student
 - Community Facilitator
- with research participants and
- with one's readers, audiences, and epistemological communities. (Doucet, 2018)

Gossamer (adj.)

Sheer, light, delicate, or tenuous.

“Awake at night, I’d hear her breathing or singing next to me in the dark, half comforted, half terrified that my ear was pressed against the wall between the living and the dead, that the vibrating membrane between them was so fragile. I felt her presence everywhere, in daylight, in rooms I knew weren’t empty...

Watching with curiosity and sympathy from her side of the gossamer wall” (Fugitive Pieces, Anne Michaels 1996, p. 31)

OUTLINE

- CONTEXTS
- PROBLEMATIC
- POLICY
- EVERYDAY WORK OF DISABILITY INCLUSION

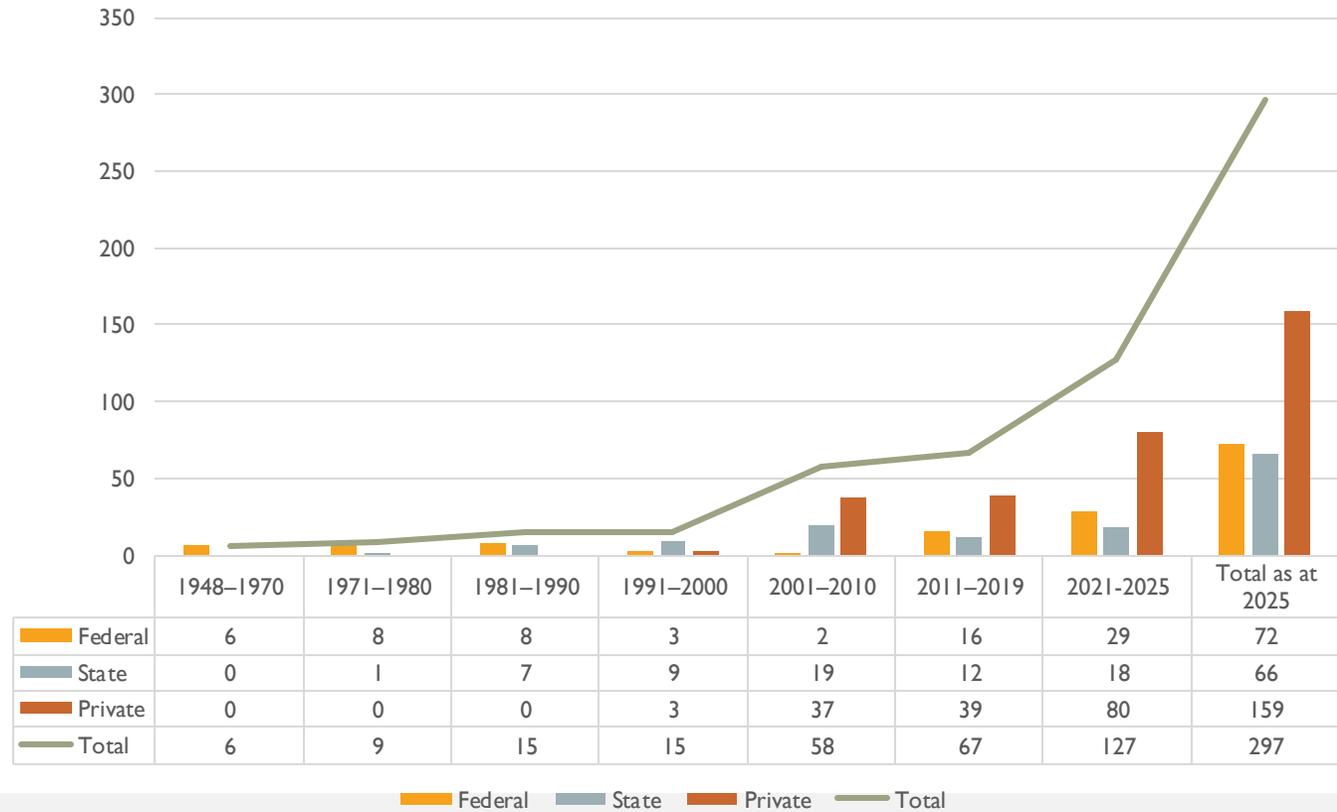
Prolixity and rigmarole might be somewhat curtailed if every orator were required to state at the beginning of his speech the point he wishes to make.

-J.-J. Rousseau
Le gouvernement de Pologne

ONE COUNTRY, ONE UNIVERSITY

- The Colonial Commissions: Asquith (1945), Elliot (1945) and Ashby (1960)... Trinitarian vs Unitarian reports.
- “In standard and curriculum... in social function they regard themselves as restricted to an elite” (Ahmed, 1968)
- Nigeria’s entry into the “University age” was in 1948.
- Nigerian universities and the question of federal character (Osaghae, 1988). An ideology of the minority ruling class aimed at protecting their interests” (Majekodunmi, 2013, p.77).
- University enrolment in Nigeria grew from **210 students in 1948** (University College, Ibadan) to **2.4 million in 2018** (NUC, 2018).
- Student participation remains **below 15%** (Okebukola, 2020).

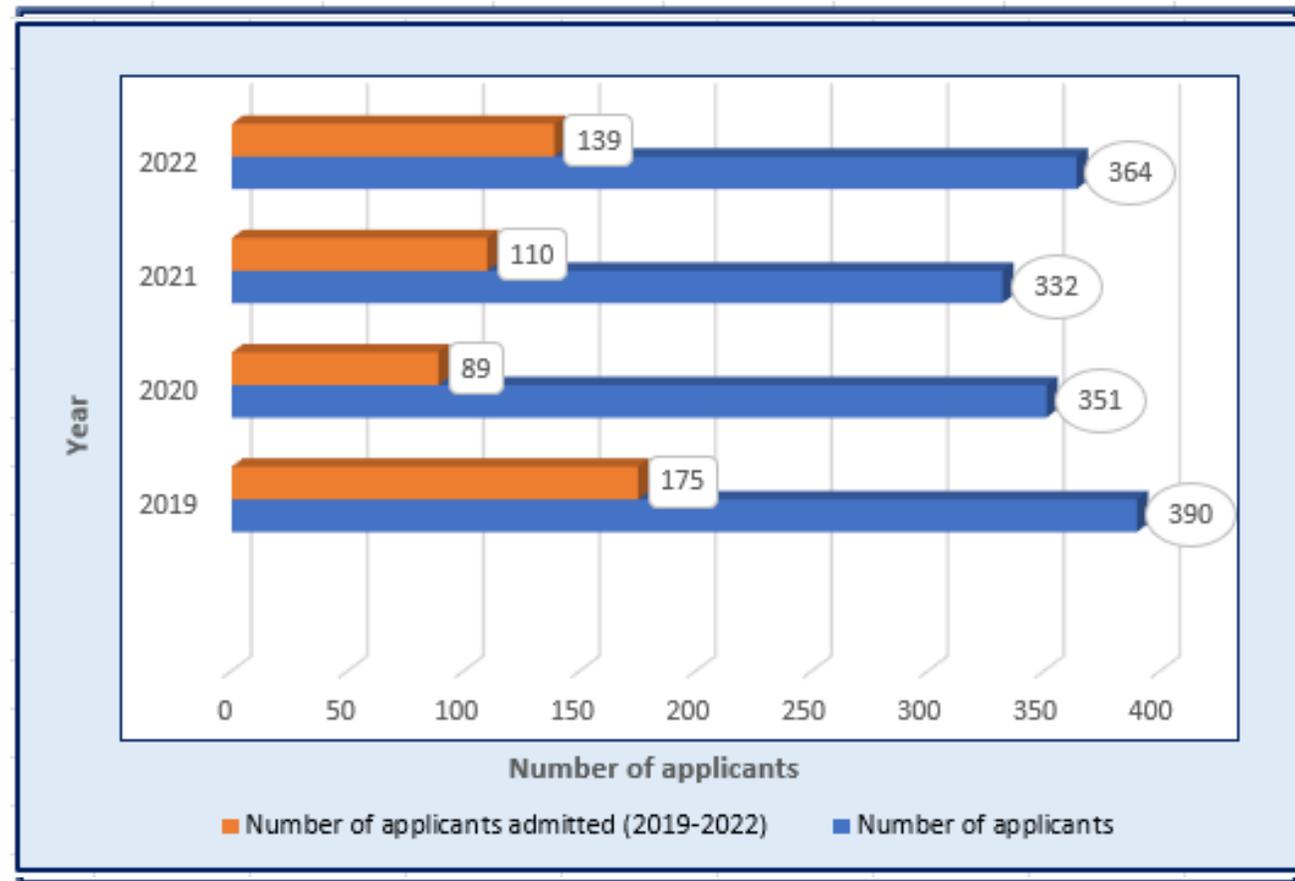
Growth of Universities in Nigeria by Ownership and Decade



Source: National Universities Commission (NUC), n,d.

JAMB EQUAL OPPORTUNITY GROUP (JEOG)

- **Pre-2017:** Sparse data and minimal national coordination on inclusive access in higher education.
- **JAMB** established **JEOG in 2017**.
- Administers the **Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME)** to blind and special needs candidates.
- Expected to track candidates from admission to graduation.
- JEOG organised the **first National Conference on Equal Opportunity of Access to Higher Education in Nigeria**.
- **Produced 2024-2028 Strategic Roadmap for Inclusive Access to Quality Higher Education**



(Source: Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) 2024–2028 Strategic Roadmap)

DISABILITY INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The minority worldview of disability studies in the North neglects the **postcolonial 'locations' of disability in the South** (Barker and Murray, 2010). S

Disability is defined and framed in context (Grech, 2015).

Global fusion of the “inclusive education” agenda with the “education for all” agenda (Kiuppis, 2014).

Whose inclusive education?
(cf Brock-Utne, 2002).

Inclusive education as a colonial project?

(Walton, 2018; Phasha et al., 2017; Kamenopoulou, 2020; and Pather, 2019)

Afrocentric IEd
Ubuntu, Ujamaa, Omoluabi, Ummuna bu ike;

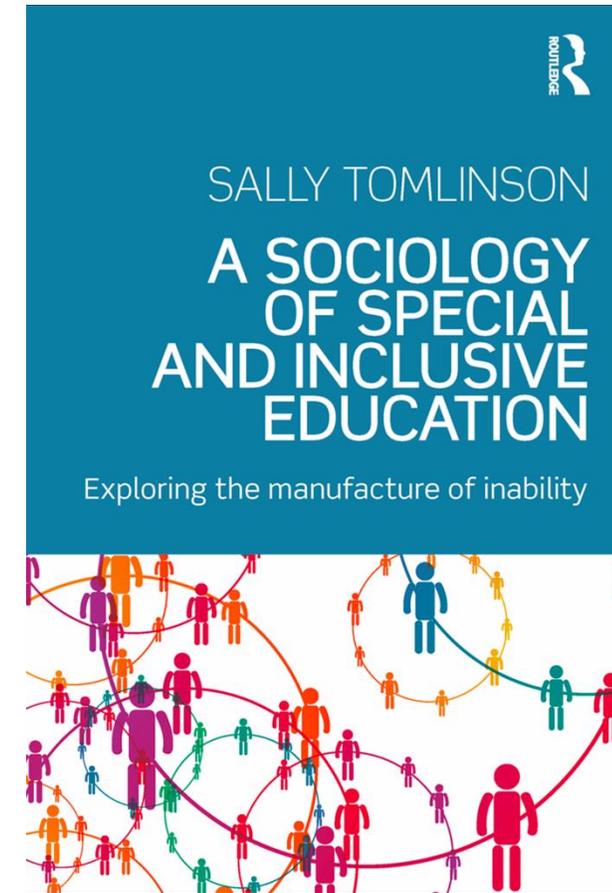
(Phasha et al. 2017, Dei 2016, Mutanga 2023, Imafidon, 2021, Isiaka, 2023)

Missionaries and
“SPECIAL” Education in
NIGERIA (Eleweke, 1999)

PROBLEMATIC

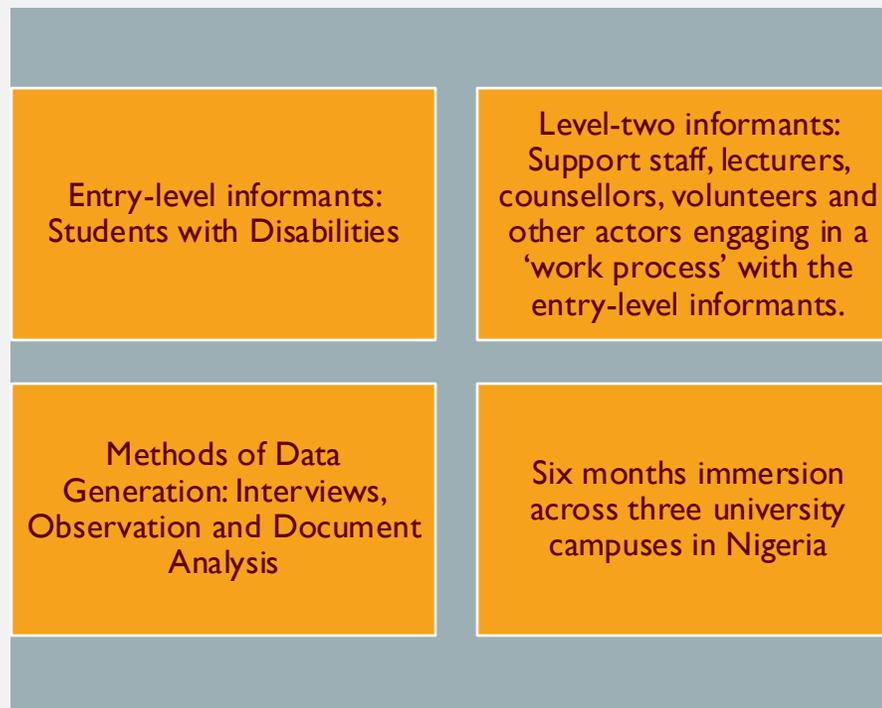
“As civilising modernity plods along, it creates a new model of ‘cultural’ citizenship...To do what is fitting is to be fit. The unfit persons fail the test of fitness for citizenship. Disabled people fail it every day, in the moralised environment where a judgement of conduct takes place.” (Bill Hughes, 2012 p.19)

How do (the constellation of) **history**, (the authority of) **texts**, (the dictatorial logic of) **time**, and (the inaccessibility of) built **spaces** interact to determine who receives what from the university system?



INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY: AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

- It is a **“sociology for people”** that explicates the interface between individual experience and their negotiation within an **institutional web of ruling relations**.
- The institutional in, I.E. is conceptualised as a **“metaphorical bundle of social relations”** that cluster around and coordinate specific societal functions such as health care, immigration, and education (Ng et al., 2013, Smith, 2005).
- The E in IE is a commitment to people and their actualities: a “commitment to discovering **‘how things are actually put together’**, **‘how it works’** (Smith, 2006: p. 1)



POLICIES ON INCLUSIVE (HIGHER) EDUCATION

NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (2013, 4th Edition)

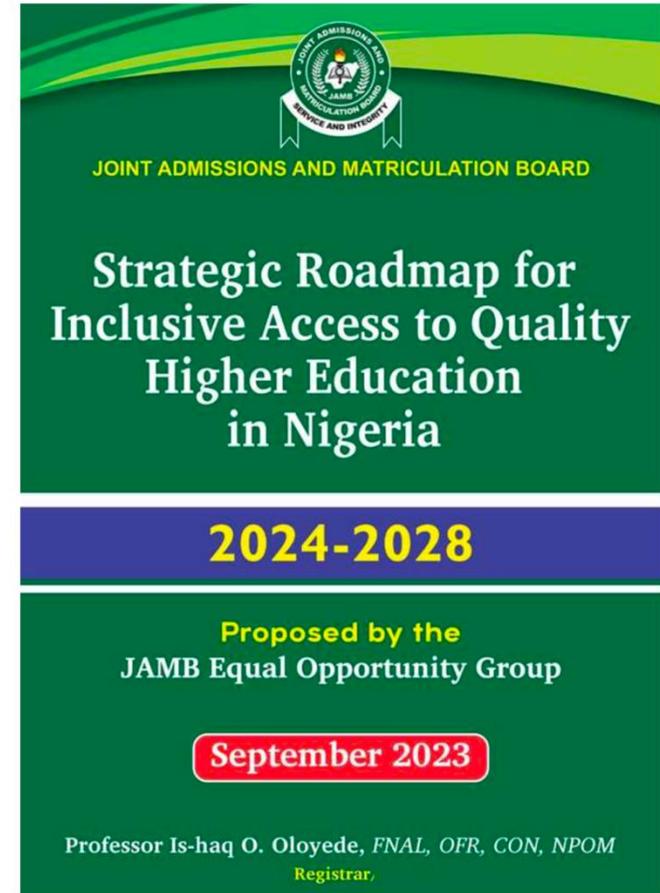
NATIONAL POLICY ON SPECIAL NEEDS AND
REHABILITATION (2015)

NATIONAL POLICY ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (2016,
2023)

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
(PROHIBITION ACT) 2018

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 2023 (NIGERIA
EDUCATION LOAN FUND)

JAMB'S STRATEGIC ROADMAP FOR INCLUSIVE ACCES
(2024-2028)



“TAKING CONTEXT SERIOUSLY”

- Set in three Nigerian Universities (Federal, State, and Private universities)
- **Federal University of Arewa (FUA)**
- Kosigi State University
- Alenje Private University
- Policy will be taken as texts and ‘things’ (legislation and national strategies) but also as discursive processes that are complexly configured, contextually mediated and institutionally rendered. (Ball et al., 2012).
- FUA is one of the second-generation universities founded in the 1970s with about 60,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- Twenty-five percent (25%) of the student population lives on campus, while the remaining 75% reside in towns and communities.
- Existing practice of admitting SWDs, and the availability of a Deaf Support Centre.

ON THE USE OF WORK IN IE

- Social organisation of **(un)acknowledged work and (un)paid activities** that people perform daily or nightly for and within the institution or elsewhere for the enactment of policies.
- **“Policy work”** (Ball et al, 2012),
- **“Diversity work”** (Ahmed, 2012),
- **“Mothering work”** (Smith and Griffith, 2005).
- I developed a tripartite analysis of **access work, participation work, and transformation work.**

“Work is intentional: it is done in some actual place under definite conditions and with definite resources, and it takes time. (Smith 2005, p. 154).

“Policy work has its pleasures, satisfactions and seductions... suffused with emotions and with psychosocial tensions and often a piecemeal process of fixing problems” (Ball et al. 2012, pp.8-9)

“Diversity work is a phenomenological practice: a way of attending to what gets passed over as routine or an ordinary feature of institutional life.” (Ahmed 2012 p.22).

ACCESS WORK

Access work is framed as the work students “do” as they navigate the changing policies of (un)equal access to HE.

Students with disabilities’ journey to HE is troublesome, complex and rhizomatic (Gravett, 2021).

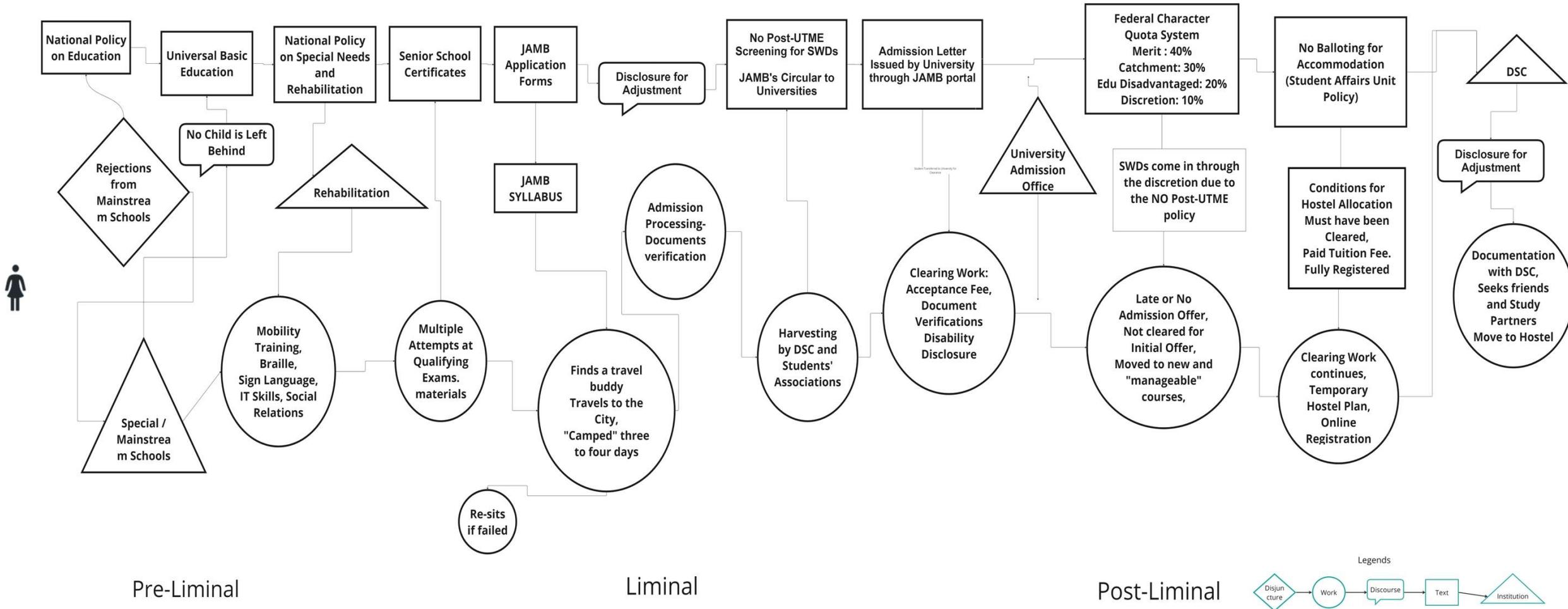
Impairment alters the path to HE. It also determines what kind of institutions they attend, which programmes, and if they will get higher education.

Phases of Transition: Pre-liminal, Liminal, Post-liminal

Admission policy and processes in Nigeria have acquired “the shape of those who tend to wear it such that it is easier to wear if you have that shape.” (Ahmed 2019 p.43).

“Access to the university is a movement upwards; only the truly ‘fit’ survive this climb.”

(Jay T. Dolmage 2017, p. 44)



MAPPING THE ACCESS WORK

PRE-LIMINAL

- “I was **still seeing. I recognise colours, I move around**. The only thing was the schools I went to; they were always sending me away. “She could not see. **She could not see the board. She could not write.**” I only see bold writings. But once it's tiny, I won't be able to identify anything. So, once I get to school with my siblings, **they sent me back saying, I was disturbing them, that I should go.” (Asake, FUA)**
- “There is a primary school section there, and during the break, the students from the primary school section come to check on me. They said I was so friendly that they would come to touch me. Initially, I wasn't happy, but I later became used to them. **They were the ones who taught me the braille. They were very good with it. Some of them were born blind, and that's what they learned to write and read.** I could understand the whole thing, and I completed the programme **instead of spending two years. I spent almost a year.” (Anthony, FUA)**

LIMINAL ACCESS WORK

- “It was **read aloud**. Professors were reading the questions, **I wasn't happy with it**. Then the camping, **why am I sleeping over?** Because I'm writing UTME, **if others without disabilities can write their exam in one day, why not just equip me to write mine too in one day** and go back to my house and continue my daily activities? You don't have to camp me because I'm writing an exam.” (Sophia , FUA)

“Actually, I sat for three UTMEs. For the first UTME I wrote in **2016**, I was unable to participate in the post-UTME due to the late information...Did another one in **2017**...My post-UTME in 2017 was poor, so poor. I had 40%. In 2018, I sat for another UTME, and my UTME was okay... For **post-UTME, it was waived for “us” the visually impaired**. That was when a memo was passed from Professor Ishaq Oloyede that the physically challenged should not sit for post-UTME again in all federal universities. Since then, we have stopped sitting for the post-UTME. Our JAMB score will determine our admission; my JAMB score was okay. I had 218. Though it deprived me of being a mass communicator” (Maggy, Interview, FUA).

JEOG IS A “CLAIMOCRATIC” POLICY INITIATIVE

- “There was neither an interpreter nor any accessibility. I did not hear anything from the invigilators. Only what I observed other candidates doing that I was able to copy. **I find out if the candidates have started as soon as the invigilator yells “start”. I would have to look around and copy what they are doing.** I have never taken an online exam like the CBT, as you can see. I have never experienced that before. I had always taken paper tests. I wasn’t well enough organised. I had to answer without thinking because I was so anxious about the entire exam” (Gabriel, HI at FUA).

POST-LIMINAL

Abass: You wanted to study mass communication, what was the required mark for it?

Maggy: 220, I missed out with two points. At first, I felt bad, I later chose English, but I was not given. JAMB gave me history, then FUA changed it to Educational Management.

Abass: How has it been so far, studying educational management?

Maggy: Educational management is a good course, apart from the calculation aspect.

Distribution of Students with Disabilities across 'Faculties'

Faculty	Count of Faculty
Education	58.62%
Management Sciences	9.20%
Social Sciences	8.05%
Arts	5.75%
Agriculture	3.45%
Environmental Sciences	2.30%
Physical Sciences	2.30%
Pharmaceutical Sciences	2.30%
Engineering and Technology	2.30%
Communication & Information Sciences	1.15%
Life Sciences	1.15%
Law	1.15%
Basic Clinical Sciences	1.15%
Clinical Sciences	1.15%
Grand Total	100.00%

THE MAKING OF TRANSACTIONAL RELATIONS

“They should make sure that their school fees are ready, because it affected some of my classmates. They lose admission because they cannot pay the school fees on time before the closure. When you come to school, make sure you read and get prepared for test or exams any time. **For visually impaired persons, they should be friendly and know how to talk to people. They should be tolerant because if I have not been, fight will have occurred in my hostel**” (Titilayo, VI, FUA)

PARTICIPATION WORK

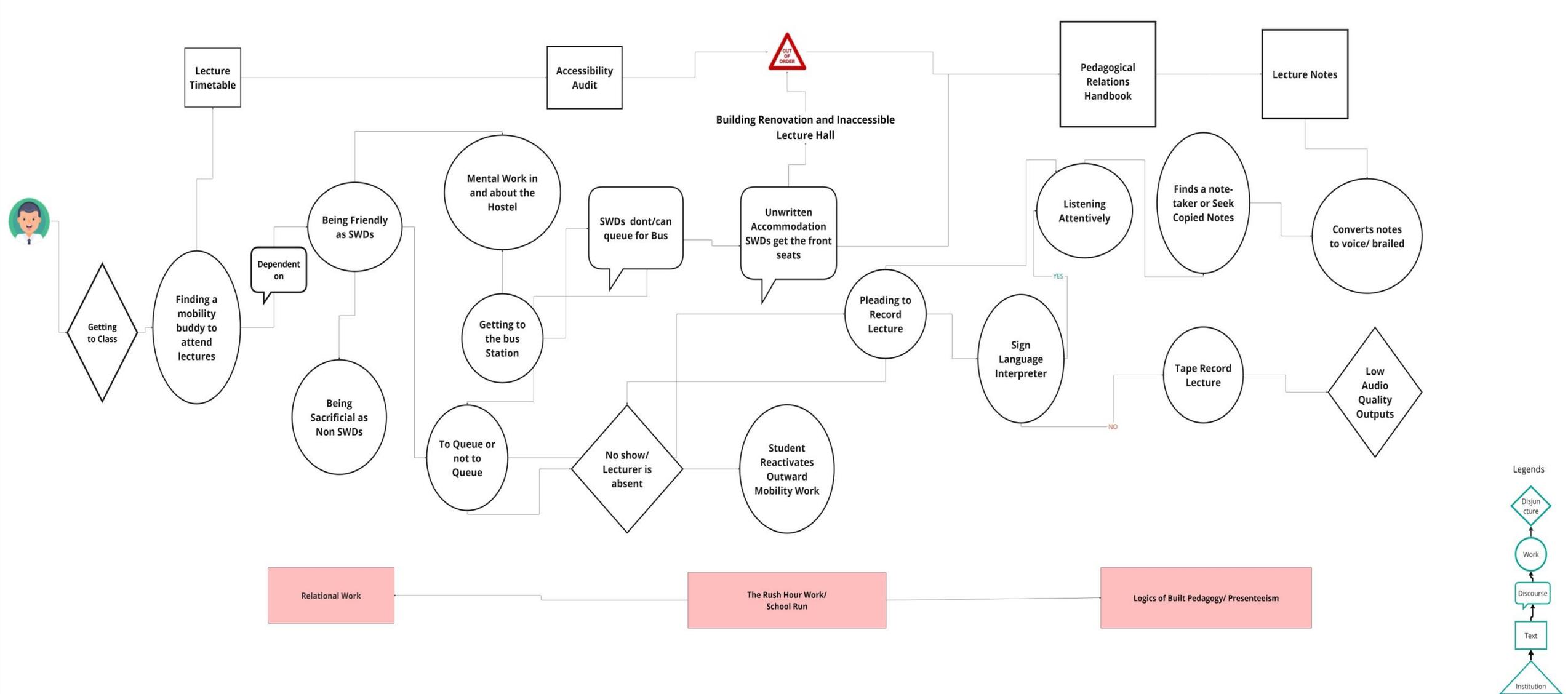
Students' relations with the curriculum, built pedagogy and assessment as the 'participating' work.

Fitting work for Mis-fits (Garland-Thomson, 2011)

University has a "history of use" (Ahmed, 2019)

A history of people it normally houses, and this history could be seen through "traces" left behind by people and ideas it was built for.

Student's "everyday resistance" (Scott, 1985) as participation work against "anthropoemic strategy of ableism" (Hughes, 2012)



MAPPING THE PARTICIPATION WORK

PROPRIOCEPTIVE WORK

“The first day in my hostel. I got in. **The lady helped move my loads. So, she left. She didn't stay, and I needed to go to class immediately... I never knew anybody I could call to be of help; would they really be available to assist me?** My hostel is somewhat inside; you have to walk a mile before reaching the main entrance. So I just decided, OK? Why not try it out yourself, then? **See how it works. So, I just moved out, so I started walking around.**”



“I came out, and I started walking around. I went the wrong way. I came back again to where I started. I counted the rooms as I was going. **When I got to a point, I discovered that I've gotten to an edge where I could no longer get any entrance. I could no longer make ways. Then I turned and counted the rooms again and went back to my first start.** I stood there. I was trying to calculate and I just heard people passing from a corner. I said okay, let me trace that side and see where it leads. I went. Then I discovered that I could make my way from there. **Though it was not the original way. I made my way, and I started moving.**”
(Asake, FUA)

TO QUEUE OR NOT TO QUEUE

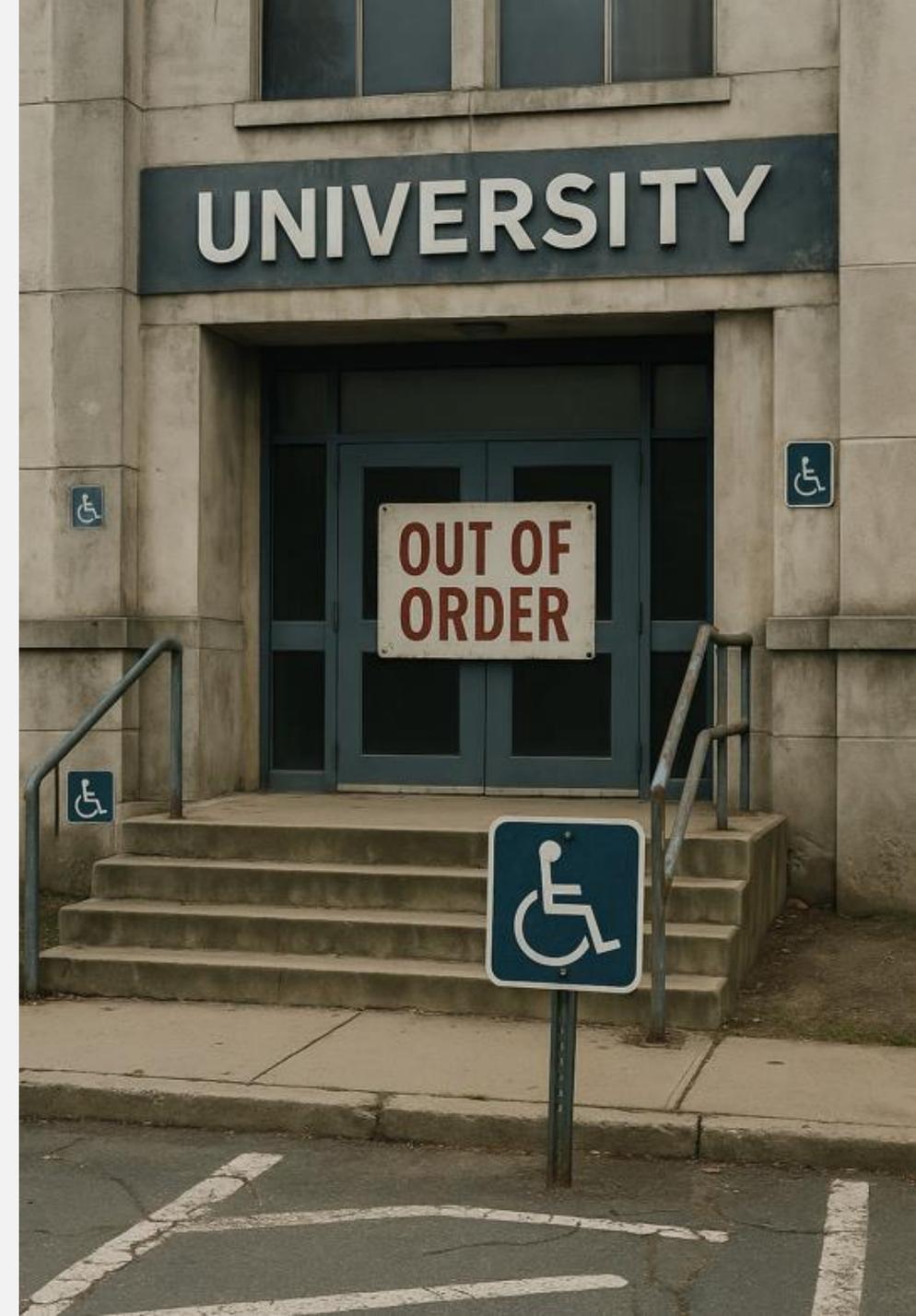
“I usually have eight o'clock classes, so by 7 am, I will be at the bus stop; most times, I use the bike to get to the bus stop. We need to fight for the bus, they don't even care if you are physically challenged. When I arrived at the terminus, I would often see a long queue, so I would initially join it. **Sometimes I would say no, I can't. Let me stay on this road and see if a miracle will happen. Most of the time, somebody will just come along.** Just pick some of us that are there on the road. That's how I get to school sometimes.” (Esosa, FUA)



“Sometimes, when you want to go to your lecture room, and you don't have the regular helper available, finding someone to help you in your immediate environment is hard. **You have to pick up your phone and call somebody from another hostel you relate with to help you to the lecture room. And if he or she is not available. You just have to forget that lecture for that day.**” (Laolu. FUA)

TRANSFORMATION WORK

- How SWDs negotiate the university's transformation for inclusion.
- The “fixing work” describes students’ activities, overt or covert, to change the situation of things, to put things **that are “out of order” within the university into order.**
- Passing a legislative bill to address mislabelling.
- Call for reasonable adjustments during admissions .
- Demanding the provision of a resource person for the resource room.



MISLABELLING

- SWDs are represented by a Senator.
- He sponsored a bill to address the mislabeling of students with disabilities (SWDs) in the students' union constitution.
- From “physically impaired students” to “persons with disabilities”

A BILL TO AMEND ARTICLE 11, SECTION 5 AND 7(a) OF THE STUDENT UNION COMPENDIUM BY SENATOR [REDACTED] REPRESENTING PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED.

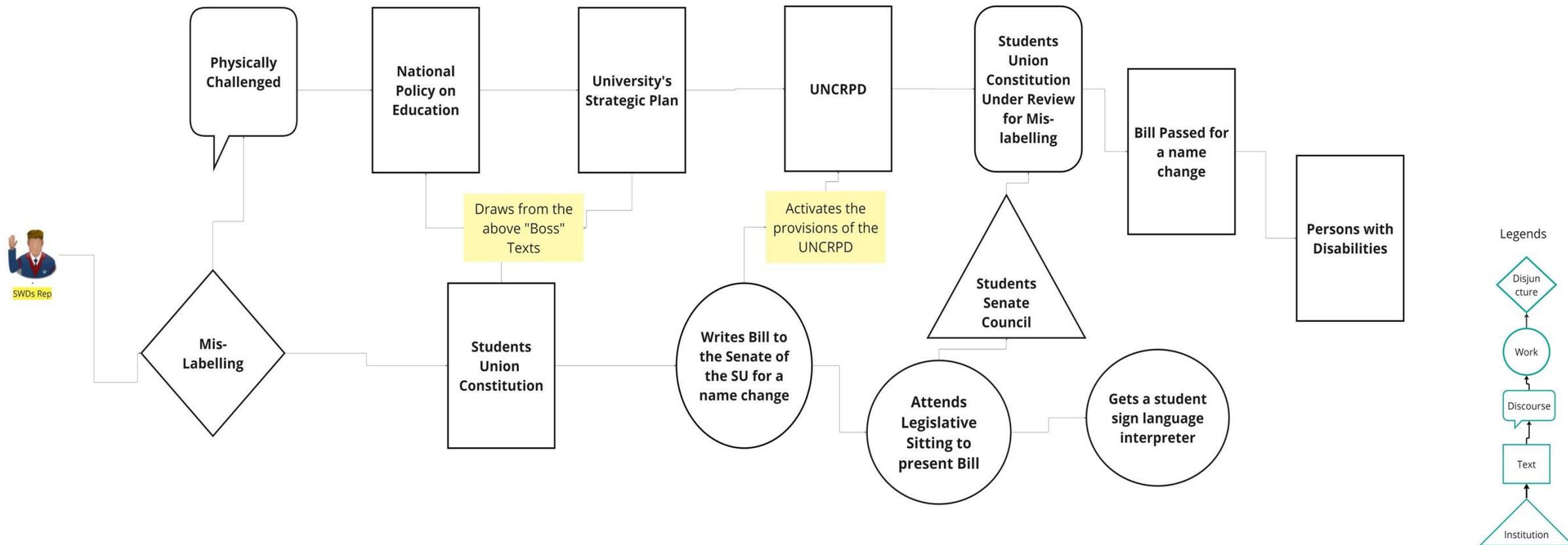
According to the student union Compendium, Article 11, Section 5 and 7(a) stated that there shall be two (2) co-opted members, which are one each, representing the UISA and the physically impaired members of the union and Co-opted - one (1) senator each from the physically impaired and UISA.

(1) With this I am proposing a bill that the phrase used "Physically Impaired" be changed to "Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)"

This is because the term "Physically Impaired" is frowned upon by the community of Persons with Disabilities both national and international.

Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), according to the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons With Disabilities (CRPWD) and its optional protocols is used to apply to all persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Person-first terminology is used because the person is more important than his or her disability.



MAPPING THE FIXING WORK

BIFURCATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

- The “governing mode” of an institution creates this bifurcation of consciousness: **“it establishes two modes of knowing, experiencing, and acting—one located in the body and in the space that it occupies and moves into, the other passing beyond it”** (Smith 1987, p 82).
- Through this continuous accommodation in **order to gain acceptance in a world that is not theirs, members of oppressed or minority groups become alienated from their “true” selves.**
- “I have been to a place before and the person said **I should send somebody to come and speak on my behalf, and I asked why? He said he had never related to a blind person before.**” (Anthony, FUA)

ASSOCIATION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS
[REDACTED] CHAPTER
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

Our Ref: _____ Your Ref: _____ Date: _____

The Vice Chancellor,
[REDACTED]

Through;
The Dean,
Students Affairs Unit.

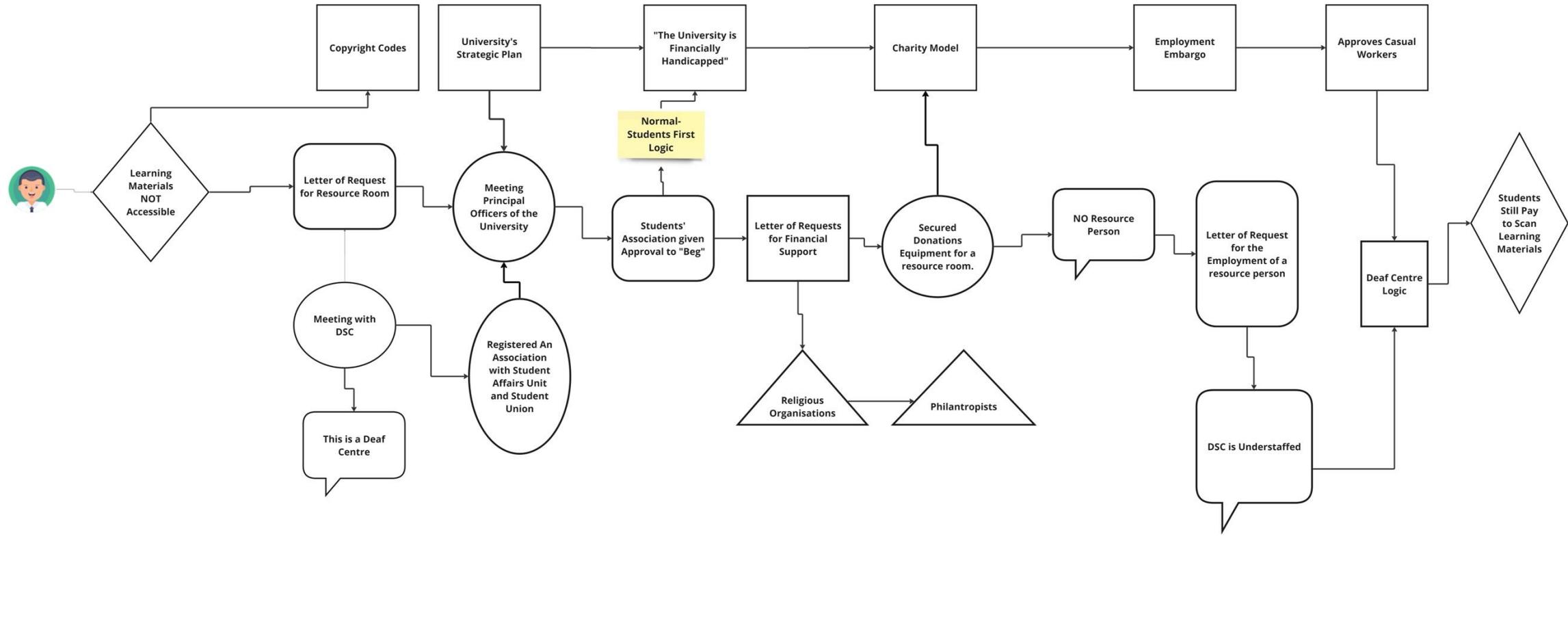
Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF RESOURCE ROOM PERSONS

With due sense of respect sir, we the above named association humbly write to request for the employment of resource persons to manage our resource room.

The Association of Visually Impaired Students, [REDACTED] Chapter, is an organised body of students living with Visual Impairments and we are into our individual pursuit of academic excellence to becoming better and relevant individuals in the society and to compete favorably with our fellow sighted counterparts in all areas. This association is duly registered in the school and its existence is well recognised by the School Management who ultimately looks after the Welfarism and up-doing of our members on campus both academically and socially.

Sir, the need for a functional resource room for visually impaired students can not be over emphasized and the lack of this service has made learning very challenging and difficult for us. Sometimes in the year 2018, we approached the school Management through the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academics to make the school understand our plights and provide us with a functional resource room but she told us that the school lack the financial capacity to embark on such project, however, she advice us to approach external bodies that may be willing to help us with such project and she said further that the school will be ready to work with them provided we are able to get one.



FIXING LEARNING MATERIALS

CONCLUSION

Structural & Policy Constraints

- Policy Stickiness (*Van Buuren et al., 2016*): Historical exclusionary practices persist despite new inclusive education policies.
- Institutions reinforce their logic through invented or symbolic policy texts (*Glynos & Howarth, 2007*).
- Institutional Capture (*Smith, 2005*): Official discourses often subsume actualities.

Everyday World is Problematic and requires “Fitting Work”

- Institutional assumptions structure bodies into “fit” and “unfit” categories (*Gunter, 2023, “eugenicist populism”*).
- Inclusion requires exhausting “fitting work” ; SWDs adapt to spaces that are not designed for people like them.
- Navigating inaccessible accommodation, transport, curriculum, and social spaces is draining.

Agency & Spill-over Effect

- C.

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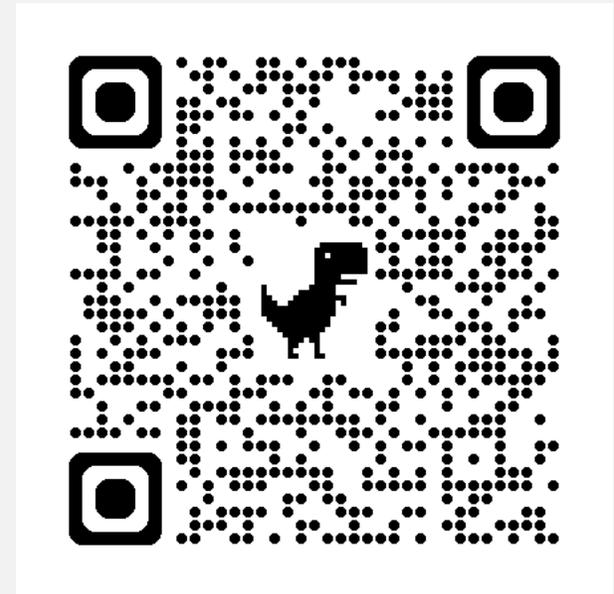
THANK YOU

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