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EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL
IMPAIRMENTS STUDYING AT DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged.

.....

Lulu Jali

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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes the results of an investigation into the experiences of students with physical impairments studying at Durban University of Technology. The purpose of the investigation is to understand how these students live their lives amongst the able-bodied students and how they cope in the environment created for able-bodied students. The study aims at heightening the awareness of DUT community about the students with impairments' needs. The study will also attempt to explore how the facilities of the institution are accommodative to these students with impairments. The study hopes to shape the policies regarding the students with impairments at DUT as the government had developed policies which are inclusive of people with impairments..

People with impairments have been treated differently from that of their able-bodied counterparts and, as a group of people have generally been excluded from social activities. Such exclusion manifests as marginalization and oppression which does limit the students with impairments to realize their potential as citizens.

The study argues that students with impairments should be afforded access to all spheres of education as the other students. The social model is used to facilitate the argument which emphasizes that barriers which restrict people with impairments should be removed. Social model is supported by South African government policies such as White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, White Paper 6 on Special Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System of 1997 and 2001 respectively.

Qualitative research was conducted through interviews and observation in order to explore the experiences of students with impairments within the environment which disables them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

“ ... in our view, it is society which disables physically challenged people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairment by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society” (Oliver, 1996:22).

There are many debates around disability, and whether it should be considered as a medical or a social issue (Butler & Parr, 1999). On the one hand Michalko (2008) in his paper states that disability appears to society as trouble and it troubles individual persons and collective lives respectively. With disability being considered a problem, it raises questions as to how it should be resolved. Should it be resolved by medical treatment, or by removing social and environmental barriers? Traditionally, and through socialization, society has considered people with impairments as sick and therefore in need of help. Butler & Parr (1999) state that the social assumption is, that it is an individual body which is at fault and as such it can be treated largely by medical interventions and technologies. This claim is an example of the medical discourse which views people with impairments as ‘not whole’ or lacking the attributes which will enable them to fulfill their social roles and obligations (Barnes & Mercer (2003).

Fulcher (1989) describes disability as a category which is used to exclude rather than include, oppressing rather than enabling. For example, infrastructures have been designed with little thought for people with disabilities and that alone creates a demarcation line between groups (Barnes & Mercer, 2003). Buildings with steps, public transport without flexible steps, and the absence of ramps and door- handles which are too high are examples of the environment which excludes disabled people.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that disability is a social issue and, therefore, the environment has to change in order to accommodate disabled people.

Oliver & Barnes (1998) and Oliver (1996) dismiss the negative assumptions about people with impairments, that is, that they cannot assume the responsibilities of citizenship. It becomes an issue to other people that people with impairments are unable to be part of the society at large. To substantiate the point made by these activists is the claim that the social environment has barriers which prevent the people with impairments from participating. Oliver & Barnes (1998) affirm what Oliver stated in 1996 that in most situations people with impairments are excluded from participating in social activities, but that with some sensitivity and adjustment they could participate quite well. Such exclusion leads to imbalance in our society, with certain groups of people not being able to access particular areas of society. Oliver & Barnes (1998) concur with Fulcher that disability is manifest as social oppression, the social environment oppresses those with disabilities.

The 'social model' of disability is about breaking down social and environmental barriers which discriminate against disabled people. It is about the inclusion of all people regardless of the condition of their bodies. People with impairments have rights like all other citizens. Engel & Munger (2007) state that rights affect one's identity and these rights also assist in identifying who you are and where you belong. Therefore, it is society which needs to identify the areas which restrict the people with impairments from exercising their rights appropriately. It is the responsibility of society to ensure that the needs of people with impairments are met and that they are provided with the infrastructure which is best suited to their needs. Oliver and his associates, such as Finkelstein, support the view that impairment is socially constructed rather than being an individual problem (Swain, Finkelstein, French & Oliver, 1993). I also concur with these arguments that society should implement means and ways of including all citizens by dismantling the restrictions which prevent those with impairments from participating. Oliver (1996) supports the view that society has to change its perception of, and attitude towards people with impairments. In this study, I wish to expose the problems that are faced by some people with impairments in particular settings of the general public. Whilst I have only talked of two discourses, there are other discourses which are related to disability. The reason I have only discussed the 'medical' and 'rights' discourses and

left out other discourses, is because they are closely connected to 'exclusion' and 'inclusion' respectively which is the framework for this study.

People with disabilities are not the only group who experience oppression and discrimination by society. Amongst others are people of race as well as women and people of different sexual orientations. In most cases, these individuals are categorized, labeled and excluded and would therefore seek ways of identification which would ensure that they find a way to belong to society. Often these categories overlap in a complex way. There is always a danger of the assumption of a single dimension, so for example a black, female and disabled student may be three or four times discriminated against. People with impairments may tend therefore to seek to identify themselves with those who have common attributes with them so that they may create their own identity. These groups may be oppressed by their own ideas and perceptions which are seen as internal because of an unconscious absorption of the treatment that is given to them, then they would behave likewise (Butler & Parr, 1999). The possibility of internalizing this treatment without knowing it is very high since it is the daily treatment given to them. Oliver & Barnes (1998) state that disabled people learn to know themselves through social interaction which is also a norm for able-bodied people. This may mean that if they fail to meet the social norms and standards of behavior they may not be accepted. Oliver & Barnes go further and state that the sense of identity of people with impairments depends on how other people define them (Oliver & Barnes, 1998:67). It becomes easy to see oneself as incomplete, inadequate and helpless if that is the way everyone treats you. According to Warnke (2007) society uses the pre-orientation to understand the identities of others and it uses ways of socialization which may be cultural or traditional. It may be these ways which promote exclusion of other groups or individuals. Without getting into a debate about culture or tradition, these two concepts which are agents of socialization, have a role to play in categorizing people within society. In most cases, it is those with resources, power and status who categorize those who belong to minority groups and restrict access to participation within society. Society expects certain behaviours from individuals in order for them to be accepted. Usually society imposes limitations which prescribe how these

individuals should live their lives (Abrams & Hogs, 1990). Some people with physical disabilities may be unable to climb steps so they may be restricted from entering buildings with steps. This limitation excludes these people from being part of the society who use the building. I support the view of other activists that it is society that has to change those practices which exclude and discriminate against such individuals, so that they would also be able to participate within the mainstream.

The idea of inclusion and participation extends to all sectors of society; judicial, educational, financial and others. Throughout the European countries there has been an outcry to widen participation in higher education generally by addressing the critical issues of physical access, and especially to marginalized groups which includes those with impairments. This would be done by improving the quality of services that are offered to disabled students (Adams & Brown, 2006). Adams et al (2006) state that in countries like England, Scotland and Wales, funding programmes were established which were for the improvement to the physical state of institutions in order for them to be accessible to disabled students.

Through the participation of International organizations such as the International Disability Alliance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund and others, people with impairments have been included in government discussions throughout the world. These organizations are aware of the restrictions which are imposed on people with impairments and it is through such restrictions that these people are excluded from participating in all spheres of life. The above organizations and other human rights organizations have extended their protection offer also to women and children. Fulcher (1989) and Engelbrecht and associates (1999) agree on the view that people with disabilities have rights like all other citizens. It is these rights which must be claimed from society in order to allow people with disabilities to be included in the mainstream. This is supported by the Australian Human Rights Commission of 1986 which stresses the importance of accommodating all human beings regardless of age, gender and disability. According to Fulcher (1989) the rights discourse addresses independence

and gives self-reliance to people with disabilities. Rights discourse is about the emancipation and empowerment of people with disabilities, whereas the medical discourse creates dependency on those with power to make decisions on behalf of people with impairments. In the paper presented by Luttrell, Quiroz, Scrutton & Bird in 2007, they define '*empowerment as an emancipation in which the disadvantaged are empowered to exercise their rights, obtain access to resources, and participate actively in the process of shaping society and making decisions*' (Luttrell et al, 2007:2). Rights discourse is also about recognizing all people as humans with rights, as opposed to medical discourse which discriminates against people with disabilities (there is a relationship between rights discourse and the social model). My understanding is that the social model emphasizes the philosophy of inclusion, which is able to meet the diverse needs of society today.

Disabled People South Africa together with other organizations fought for the human dignity of people with disabilities. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 'enshrines the rights of all people in South Africa and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom' (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act no. 108 of 1996). The other policy which embraced disability rights is the 1997 South African White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, White Paper 3: Programme for Transformation of Higher Education (1997) and White Paper 6: Special Needs: Building and Inclusive Education (2001) The main emphasis of these White Paper is reconstructing society in order to include disabled people.

The story of Oscar Pistorius, a South African paralympic runner with double leg prostheses, is a stark example of the issues raised above. He saw himself capable of competing with able-bodied athletics, although his journey was made difficult by the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) and this tale embodies many of the frustrations that disabled people face in trying to participate in mainstream society. It was felt that such an individual should participate in the Paralympics - sports specifically designed to facilitate competition between those who are disabled in a range of different ways. The idea of such an individual participating in the main Olympics was not

considered. The gatekeepers of the process seemed extremely reluctant to consider any such suggestion, and offered many obstacles to the process. This body advanced the argument and believed that his sprung steel prostheses give him the advantage to run faster than able-bodied athletes (Longman, 2007). Pistorius' battle highlighted the issues that are raised by those who espouse the position that disability is socially constructed. The IAAF came up with excuses to exclude this athlete by mentioning the danger of his legs to other athletes. In my opinion, this body was arrogant and it ignored the abilities of the athlete, it made decisions about his life and what is best for Pistorius without consulting with him or perhaps the able-bodied athletes in such a decision-making process. This is the kind of exclusion that treats people with disabilities as objects who are not expected to associate with able-bodied. The other example is that of Natalie Du Toit, a South African amputee swimmer who became disabled late in life, but embraced the change in her life by not giving up her given talent of swimming. She was successful in being included in the main Olympic events. The tragedy of life did not change her goals of being a champion. The powerful IAAF should be embracing the bravery of such individuals, but it looks like this body is the one which discourages, putting up barriers so that these individuals may not compete with the able-bodied. This kind of discrimination is perpetrated by people with power. This is the kind of power which is explained by Luttrell and her associates as a hidden power which focuses on the actual control over decision-making by powerful people and institutions, to maintain their influence over the process of exclusion and devaluation of those who are less powerful (Luttrell et al, 2007: 8).

These stories highlight the relationship to my debate that the society has to remove restrictions which prevent disabled persons from participating in the mainstream of life.

Historically in South Africa, education for students with impairments was separate from mainstream of education. But with the new dispensation, there is a move away from paternal, top down decision-making towards a more participatory democracy. In a publication by the Council on Higher Education, Howell (2005) reports findings of a study on access to higher education for disabled students in South Africa. The report

reveals that there are problems which need to be attended to in order to provide access to disabled students. Research done by Crous in 2003 indicated that disabled students were still under-represented in South African higher education institutions. There is a general shift in policy with regard to the treatment of disabled students. As a result of this shift, more students are encouraged to join the Higher Education institutions.

There has been a debate about the use of disability terminology. It is easy to confuse the two concepts which are 'disability and impairment' because the literature uses them interchangeably. The two concepts have different meanings for some people. While for the literature it is a critical issue. The Union of the Physically Challenged Against Segregation (UPIAS) has defined these terms slightly differently from the World Health Organisation (WHO). Both organizations have defined **impairment** as lacking part or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, or organ or mechanism of the body. **Disability** as it is defined by UPIAS (1996), *'is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in mainstream of social activities'* (UPIAS, 1996:2 -3). The World Health Organisation defines **disability** as *'any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being'* (WHO, 1980: 29). The WHO also includes **handicap**, which has not been introduced in this study. According to WHO, the **impairment** represents the disease, **disability** represents a person and **handicap** represents society. I differ from those authors in the literature I used in this study who treat disability as the person with an abnormality. To avoid confusion, and in reflection of epistemologies in the context of this study I use the term disability to mean an environment or social barrier that prevents people with impairments from participating fully in society.

1.2 Focus of the study

The intention of this study is to investigate the experiences of students with impairments studying at Durban University of Technology and to draw conclusions on how they integrate into the institution. The study will also assist in identifying the disablers and

enablers which exclude and include the students with impairments. The primary objective of the study is to explore the practices which affect these students with impairments and to see how the requirements of recently developed South African policies have been responded to.

With the move towards a new democratic dispensation in South Africa in 1994 issues of equity and inclusion have come to the fore. The South African White Paper on an Integrated Strategy (1997) noted that *'the majority of people with impairments in South Africa have been excluded from the mainstream of society and have been prevented from accessing fundamental social, political and economic rights'* (office of the Deputy President, 1997:5). The same concern has been emphasized by many of the South African policies such as White Paper 3: Programme for Transformation of Higher Education (1997); White Paper 6: Special Needs: Building an Inclusive Education (2001), which includes the need for equity and redressing for the past, which is about giving fair opportunities to every individual regardless of the diversity of their needs (department of Education, 1997 and 2001 respectively).

Students with impairments need to have access to all resources which are available to able-bodied students. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) also issues a special challenge to give effect to the fundamental rights for basic education for all South Africans, and calls for equity and non-discrimination. The government's commitment to the principles of the Constitution are guided by the recognition that a new unified education and training system must be based on equity and on redressing past imbalances. Students with impairments were part of a separate system which brought imbalance in the education system, and what the government promotes now is the inclusion of all learners from all walks of life. The inclusion of students with impairments in higher education has been explored less than that of able-bodied students (DoE, 2001). The question that will be answered by the research question is whether the institution (DUT) is prepared for students with impairments; particularly students with physical impairments in terms of ramps, transport, adjustable height tables or desks, computer keyboards and potential architectural barriers. It is hoped the

study will raise awareness and encourage the institution to remove barriers which may exclude the students with impairments. There is a possibility that the students with impairments are given less recognition than the able-bodied students, for example DUT had 30 students with impairments in 2005 (Annexure E), in comparison to 20 000 (approximate) able-bodied students. This may raise a question of the disablers within the institution.

1.3 Motivation for the study

My own interest in disability began with the fact that my sister has autistic twins and a close family friend also has an autistic son. According to a medical encyclopedia autism is a behavior disorder, characterized by impairment in social communication, social interaction and social imagination (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autism>). According to the English dictionary, autism is a serious mental condition (Macmillan dictionary, 2002). My sister's children could not be registered in mainstream education as they were perceived to be uncontrollable. My sister tried to register her twins in the best schools for '*children with impairments*', Browns in Pinetown in KwaZulu Natal, but she was told to wait for two years as space was limited and the list was too long. She was asked to arrange for someone to take care of the twins while at school as they were difficult to manage. It was hard for my sister as she lives and works in Pietermaritzburg, approximately 50 kilometers from Pinetown. My concern was that the twins were getting to school-going age and they had not been registered at any school. I was curious, I wanted to know what would become of them, how would they be able to live independent lives if they were not given the opportunity to learn. I saw these children as being excluded from learning and the school was identifying them as a problem because they were without the means of including them within the system. It thus made things hard for the parents to send the children to the school and they were excluded. To me, this was an exclusion and discrimination. Then, I became more interested in impairments when I found out that there were a few students in wheelchairs at the Durban University of Technology where I am employed. My interest developed further when I found out that there was a student who was visually challenged and wanted to register for a teaching diploma at DUT (Midlands campus) but whose application was

declined. This reaction by the institution raised some concerns about the institution itself which was supposed to respond to the call from the Constitution which emphasizes the rights of all humans.

The development of policy and legislation in South Africa since 1994 has marked the introduction of a unitary system of education which is guided by the universal principles of human rights, equity and non-discrimination and recognition of gender, race and people with impairments. This means that educational institutions would need to accommodate the needs of those previously excluded. I became curious to know the situation at DUT concerning the equitable treatment of students with impairments. I requested information from the Management Information Systems department about the number of students with impairments who have registered at DUT. Data extracted from the Hemis database for Durban University of Technology from 2003 – 2005 indicated that there were 30 students with different types of impairment who were registered during that time. Statistics from Hemis show a slight increase in numbers of students with impairments from 2005 -2008, from 30 to 156, although they are not specified per kind of impairment. There is a high risk of including students who are not challenged in the figures as it seems that the students do not understand what the word 'disability' means. I had an embarrassing experience when I requested a student to participate in this study because I was given his name as someone with a disability, only to find out that he does not have but he has been included by the MIS. I assume that the figures may not be the true reflection of the students with impairments especially if not specified (Annexure E: MIS, DUT).

I recall that, for the past seven years in which I have been at DUT, I have seen few students with physical impairments. What could be preventing students with impairments from coming and studying at DUT? I was then encouraged to undertake a study of the students with physical impairments who are studying at DUT.

The new legislation in South Africa has opened the doors for students with impairments and my concern now is to find out from these students who are currently registered at

the institution what their experiences at DUT have been and what their perceptions are of DUT as a learning environment. I wish to know if they have been successfully integrated into mainstream education or not.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study was conducted to shed light on the experiences of the students with impairments and how they perceive the institution in terms of inclusive education. This study should also heighten the awareness within the institutional community about students with impairments within the institution. The institutional community includes academic and non-academic staff members, students and those who are closely connected to the institution. I learned from the interviews I conducted that the academic staff have little knowledge of the practices that should be given to the students with impairments, and what might hinder/assist their smooth learning at a Higher Education institution. I am hoping that the findings will assist the institution in becoming aware of these hindrances and as well as becoming friendlier towards all students with different impairments by removing the barriers which would be identified by participants and also those which were not identified.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The study was conducted at the Durban University of Technology in Durban campus (Ritson campus) using the students with physical impairments. This narrowed the study to focus to only a single impairment and that would mean that some element might be relevant to students with these kinds of impairments, factors affecting others with different kinds of impairments would probably find other factors affecting them. The students with other impairments were excluded in the research. Students with physical impairments in other campuses like Pietermaritzburg (Riverside and Indumiso) were also excluded.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The study would have been richer if it had covered a broader sample of students with impairments that is, those from the whole university. There were particular time and

resources constraints as the students had to attend lectures and prepare for examinations. The numbers of students with the specific impairments that are highlighted in this study are also few in number. In fact, I could not find any student with visual impairment as I initially intended to conduct a research on students with visual and physical impairments. I am not sure whether they do not exist within the institution or whether the impairment is hidden for one reason or another. From the institution's records, I could not identify any student categorized as visually challenged. This situation reduced the sample size that I assumed I would have. Basically, I was compelled to consider all students with physical impairments, without selecting them in terms of gender, race or level of study.

1.7 Definitions

This study will adopt the following definitions as defined by the Union of Physically Challenged Against Segregation:

Impairment is lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb organ or mechanism of the body.

Disability is the advantage or restriction of activity caused by a temporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities (UPIAS, 1976: 2-3).

According to Vlachou (1997) and Thomas, et al (1998) **segregation** is associated with children with learning difficulties, sensory impairments or physical impairments who may be provided with their own curricula and classroom.

According to Fulcher (1989), **Institutionalization** means taking away those children/people with impairments to isolated place, away from their families.

Socialization refers to learning about social norms, cultural expectations and shared standards of behavior.

Exclusion refers to an active process of barring or shutting out an individual from the activities that take place within the premises, hindering from participation.

1.8 Research questions

This study is an attempt to consider the inclusion/exclusion of students with impairments in higher education if they have been afforded access and whether there is heightened awareness of the experiences of students with impairments. This study is also attempting to encourage the institution to increase the enablers within the institution in order to include more students with different impairments. This may be achieved by research questions which are:

- How do students with physical impairments experience studying at the Durban University of Technology?
- What are the perceptions of students with physical impairments about the Durban University of Technology as a learning environment/social environment?
- In what ways does the institution provide for students with physical impairments studying at the Durban University of Technology?

1.9 Summary

From what has been said above, my argument posits that society has contributed to dividing people, describing them according to their *'assumed abilities'* without any proven tests. The medical discourse as it is explained by Fulcher(1997) links the two terms, *'impairment and disability'* which are separate but interlinked. Medical discourse considers people with impairments as people with a deficiency who need professional experts to fix the problem (Fulcher, 1997, Engelbrecht et al, 1999). My argument is that people with impairments are disabled more by the social and physical environment which is created by society ignoring the needs of people with impairments, thus preventing them from participating fully in mainstream society. I support the rights discourse which is characterized by self-reliance and independence of people with impairments (Fulcher, 1997, Allan, 1999).

"Poor access to educational buildings coupled with disablist attitudes of many educators meant that a thick skin was a necessary pre-requisite for kicking open the door of educational opportunity" (Oliver, 1996:11)

In my view this is the action that has to be taken by authorities of institutions to open the doors for students with impairments.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 – Describes the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the motivation for the study and the definitions which are important for the study.

Chapter 2 – Reviews the selected literature, documents and research reports which are related to segregation/integration/ inclusion. Most of the literature reviewed in this study is from international countries which may cause some confusion in the interpretation of concepts. Theoretical framework embraces empowerment and agencies which advocates on behalf of people with impairments so that they can function well in society if the society is accommodating. The discussion of medical model is discussed together with segregation whilst social model of disability is discussed with inclusion.

Chapter 3 –Describes the research methodology. The study has adopted the qualitative approach. Data is collected by using interviews and observation of the participants. Data is reported by means of narratives in order to be close to their real experiences and how they create their daily lives as students with impairments studying at Durban University of Technology.

Chapter 4 – Interrogates the data in order to find answers for the research questions with the relevant literature and documents for the study. The integration of the evidence of the students' experiences is to give validity to the study.

Chapter 5 – Makes conclusions and recommendations which emerged from the data.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

“The level and form of prejudice against disabled people amounts to being ‘oppressed’. It is illustrated by the discrimination widely practiced in the built environment, employment, leisure and personal relationships”
(Barnes & Mercer, 2003:10).

Oliver (1996) concurs with Barnes & Mercer (2003) that it is the society which disables people with impairments by creating an environment that does not accommodate people who have impairments. For example buildings with steps only are a barrier to a wheelchair users or people with leg or back injuries. These buildings are designed for the comfort of able – bodied people but overlook frail, challenged people and the elderly. Many environments fail to take account of people with different impairments, for instance through using particular signs, heavy doors and narrow spaces it is difficult if not impossible for some people who are unable to use these facilities. This tendency of excluding people with impairments is emphasized by Marks (1999) as something that is a norm (a practice which is accepted within society) whilst in fact it is the manner in which able-bodied are socialized to do. It is not expressed but it happens naturally as a fact of life. Equally, the way able bodied people think and talk often takes account of the experience of the able- bodied only, thus also excluding those who may be differently abled. My view is that society may have been socialized in such a way that the social barriers to people with impairments are normal and are part of life.

According to a study by Adolf Ratzka of the World Programme of Action (1983 – 1992) concerning people with impairments, there are more than 500 million people in the world who have impairments (United Nations, 1983). My argument is that people with impairments are not only handicapped by their physical body but also by social barriers. Once people with impairments face these barriers, they tend to depend on society for help, or are forced into dependency upon, by the same society which has created barriers that exclude them from participating in the mainstream (Oliver, 1996). Vlachou

(1997) suggests that such exclusion also brings negative development and lower self-image which is a violation of human rights. Oliver (1996) believed that for people with impairments discrimination is caused by a restrictive environment and disabling barriers. This study attempts to discover the experiences of students with impairments within an environment designed without their needs in mind. This chapter begins by discussing **segregation** of disabled people and children with special needs from the society which tends to emphasize the theory of the medical model as it sets to promote the exclusion of disabled people with the supporting literature. The discussion of **integration** follows since it came at the time when segregation was to be phased out and all students with impairments had to be integrated into the mainstream. Then, the discussion of **inclusion** follows, which includes the ideas of the social model as it seeks to promote inclusion. The concepts underpinning my argument are exclusion /inclusion and the notion of empowerment and agency which is argued with relevant literature. The chapter ends by exploring the research done internationally and nationally on inclusion to strengthen my argument in this study.

2.2 Segregation

According to Barnes & Mercer (2003:3) in twentieth century in Western societies, most people with impairments were put away and segregated from society because they were considered to be a burden to others or to make maximum use of special equipment that the individuals need. Such equipment was usually placed in institutions which were established for people with impairments. According to Vlachou (1989), the support for segregation of children with impairments was a way of protecting them from the harsh realities and challenges of the ordinary environment. Segregation was also promoted by humanitarian ideologies which viewed people's impairments as the reason of setting them apart from society (Vlachou, 1989:13). During the late nineteenth century, humanitarian religious movements supported the segregation of people with impairments, like the story in the Bible - John 5: 1 -9, the story of disabled people who used to stay next to the pool of Bethesda. One of these people had been there for a long time but no one wanted to help him, he was invisible in the eyes of other people because of his condition. This example shows how people with impairments were

treated, they were isolated from the rest of the society. It could be for the same reason that resources (physical and human) were and are still scarce, therefore people with impairments should be together and depend on the government to care for them by being sent to institutions. Government policy also compelled schools to educate children with impairments separately.

Opinions differ on the reasons for establishing segregated schools. The introduction of special schools came about as a way of taking care of learners with impairments which was seen as a good idea since the specific resources which were required by those learners were centralized (Pijl, Meijer & Hegarty, 1997). Even specialized teachers were deployed to those special schools to utilize their specialized skills. Segregated education was not well accepted by parents of children with impairments as Vlachou (1997) criticizes it saying that it was for making a profit for those in power. She goes on to state that segregation was not serving the needs of children with difficulties but it was serving the needs of society, since they were taught vocational training so that they would be productive for the society. According to her argument (Vlachou) the cost of educating children at a segregated school was low, so all children with difficulties or minor difficulties, were placed in these schools. One might argue that the government was more concerned with what it put in for the disabled child than what would come out of that child if s/he is integrated with other perceived normal children. The children with impairments were considered as inferior and difficult to teach (Vlachou, 1997).

Although the children were protected, this protection became oppressive to them as they were separated from their parents as well as from their normal culture and became institutionalized. This is the kind of exclusion that was practised on children with impairments and this set certain precedents in the minds of children with impairments.

The children accepted the society's perception and the diagnoses from professionals about themselves that they had a deficit. Being vulnerable and powerless, children had no possibility of dismissing the idea which was coming from those with power. Children had to come into terms with the fact that they were perceived as abnormal because it was something that was presented to them at all times and they had to accept it.

Meyen & Skrtic (1995) criticize the professionals for assessing children and complying

with the social norm without affording an opportunity for the individual and their family to explore their abilities. Once the deficit had been found, be it mental or physical, then children were categorized as someone with impairment (Vlachou, 1997). The same procedure is still performed in today's schools to assess the learners who are below the accepted Intelligence Quotient (IQ) despite research discrediting IQ testing based on the argument that each individual is unique whilst the testing is the same for every child and culturally-specific. The use of IQ testing is a debate on its own which needs to be researched as a subject, I just hint here at the inappropriate use of these tools without the purpose of instigating a debate. The learners would then be offered a different curriculum which was not the same as that of able-bodied learners. This practice was done mostly in schools. It was through that curriculum that most of the children from special schools were encouraged to further their studies in Further Education and Training. It is only recently that we have seen any significant numbers of students with impairments pursuing higher qualifications at higher education institutions.

As much as special schools were criticized but there were and there are still good practices which come out of the special schools such as:

- Small groups – individual attention;
- Instructions given according to individual's needs;
- More supportive and less threatening environment;
- More security;
- No comparison of students' achievements as each individual is unique (Jenkinson, 1997:10 -11).

According to Pijl et al (1997:16) segregation was perceived as a violation of basic human rights of people with impairments. This so called humanitarian ideology set them apart from the society which condemned them to live segregated adult lives (Vlachou, 1997:13). This would have a negative impact on their lives since the challenges and realities of the ordinary life are far different from those which they experienced in segregated schools. The very idea of special education was built on 'exclusion' which created a rift between groups. This exclusion- culture was based

on biomedical conditions and it ignored the social environment which might have impacted negatively on the lives of people with impairments. These people who had been excluded could find themselves seeking identification within their own society, since they have been left out of the mainstream society.

The exclusion of people with impairments from mainstream has been a matter of concern. During the nineteenth century, internationally, people with impairments suffered discrimination and ill-treatment. Their survival was determined by others. For example, in Germany in the fourteenth century, Martin Luther recommended the killing of disabled people because he believed that they were a curse from devil. During the era of Hitler's dictatorship reign, disabled people were exterminated, tortured and ill-treated. (<http://www.wcc.coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/echoes/echoes-19-02.html>).

During the same period of the nineteenth century, in Germany and Italy, segregated places were established for people with impairments who were isolated from society as they were an embarrassment and they were often seen as demonic (Albrecht, Seelman, & Bury, 2001). Western societies were biased against people with impairments due to economic and social upheavals and the policies which were designed at that time excluded them from participating (Oliver & Barnes, 1998). These are examples of discrimination which were practised then and they are still practiced in various sectors of the world.

The same practice has happened in South Africa, people with impairments being isolated from their families for an indefinite time. In fact throughout history disabled people have experienced both '*exclusion and inclusion depending on different forces which would be economic, social, political, moral and cultural*' (Oliver & Barnes, 1998:xvi). In this study the focus will be on social forces which should be changed in order to include those who have been excluded due to social barriers.

As I have mentioned earlier segregated education was seen as something to benefit society. Oliver (1996) however criticizes segregation as the main vehicle to educate children with impairments and he believed that it failed to provide the children with

sufficient knowledge and skills to live independent lives, for instance, children with impairments were not taught science which was and still is considered as the most important subject because it was thought that they were not capable of passing it. Vlachou elaborates on that point saying that learners with defects were provided with vocational skills which would be economically beneficial to society and they were being trained at a low cost (Vlachou, 1997:14). There were other opinions. Some saw no purpose for segregation, instead they thought of adaptations that could be made within the schools (Thomas et al,1998). This led to the introduction or move towards mainstreaming and integration. The introduction of integration came through the pressure of some groups who were concerned with human rights as well as from people with impairments themselves who believed that segregated education encouraged prejudice against people with impairments (Vlachou, 1997). In Western countries, it has been a recognition that not all students' needs are served by health care whether the students had an impairment or not (Jenkinson,1997).

2.3 The Medical model in relation to segregation

Segregation is associated with a medical model of disability which involves the medical procedures of assessing and fixing those bodily parts which have a deficit. According to Clark, Dyson & Millward (1995), the model is:

“... highly focused on pathology, not normalcy, on sickness, not wellbeing, on the nature and aetiology of the presenting problem itself, not on the individual who has the problem, on dealing with the specific pathology in a centred way, not on the social or ecosystem which surrounds the problem...” (Clark, Dyson & Millward, 1995:48).

According to Oliver & Barnes (1998) most disabled people are not curable by medical treatment. The debate raised by these scholars is that the people with impairments were not involved in the process, were never even asked if they wanted to be cured or not, instead these people were removed from society because they did not conform to the norms of the society. Those researchers who emphasize the fact that the medical model does influence segregation seem to have a strong point because people were

perceived as sick and needed help which was assumed to be available within the society. Without dismissing the fact that there are some individuals who do need special treatment, nevertheless, medical treatment should not be used as a blanket response to all individuals with impairments. I am aware that many mainstream schools were and are not keen to accommodate students with impairments, which may be the reason why students with impairments had to be sent to special schools. No assumption was made that the school itself could be at fault and therefore could not meet the needs of the child with an impairment (Mittler, 2000).

2.4 Integration

Jenkinson (1997) criticizes the segregated settings as artificial and non-normative since it separates members of society from their own environment. Integration is seen as a way of incorporating those members back into the society. For example, Australian education involved itself with developing an integration policy for all students with impairments recommending their placement into regular schools (Ainscow, 1991). I assume that this act by Australian authorities was a way of showing concern and interest towards its members who were differently-abled.

Ainscow (1991) confirms that there are observable similarities between mainstreaming and integration and such similarities are implemented and practised, which emphasizes the acceptance of all learners in the regular classrooms. The American government has presented their educational policy on disability as mainstreaming whilst Scandinavia, England and Australia have focused on integration (Fulcher, 1989:48). In the United States mainstreaming means the educational equivalent of the normalization principle which suggests that all people including those with impairments have a right to life as do the rest of the society (Landsberg, 2005:7). In the above mentioned countries, integration and mainstreaming meant to incorporate those with impairments within the society although I would not argue whether the settings were adjusted or not in order to meet the needs of those with impairments, but I assume this was a beginning of realizing the need for inclusion.

Mittler (2000) defines integration as the process of preparing learners for placement in a regular school. According to Mittler, it is the learners who have to adapt to the school environment not that the school has to change. I feel however that it might be just as valid to argue that, it is the school that has to change in order to meet the needs of children. Ainscow (1991) and Vlachou (1989) concur with Mittler that schools talk of integration but professionals are still performing the same procedures as they were before integration which was mainly focusing on those which are perceived 'normal' and treating the children with impairments as sick. What is said by Ainscow is that the professionals have used integration discourse and made it to look as though there were a change in society whilst in fact there has been little change.

In Western societies integration came as a reform in special schools. It has been introduced into their educational policy for a long time although it was not practised. The initiation of the policy was based on recognizing the needs and rights of people with impairments. The change had to pass so many decision-makers and so many barriers had to be conquered before it could be adopted. Then, integration was a way of expanding the social education of students with impairments and giving them an opportunity to mix with their peers within an ordinary environment. Thomas et al (1998) extended the definition of integration saying that it is a process whereby an ordinary school and a special school interact to form a new '*educational whole*'. Integration did not last long since there was nothing much being done to benefit the students but programmes were given without consideration of each students' needs (Jenkinson, 1997:91). In my view the professionals used the same programmes which were used before integration without adapting to the needs of students with impairments. What could be noticed about integration is that its focus was on the child that means the teachers were still focusing on the failures of the learner with impairments. According to Thomas et al (1998) integration is about additional arrangements in all schools which will accommodate the learners with impairments.

In South Africa, the Integrated National Disability Strategy was born after a long participatory process in 1997. This landmark policy was developed to bring change, particularly to people with impairments. The policy emphasizes the integration of

people with impairments in all spheres such as education, employment, health and transport. Research by Matshediso (2007) indicates that most of the students with impairments in South Africa are now educated to qualify for vocational training rather than to obtain other qualifications. Somehow once more, the rights of the students with impairments are being violated. This is not what was intended by the South African Constitution and other government policies such as White Paper on the Integrated National Disability Strategy of 1997. The rights of students with impairments are here promoted by the social model of disability.

When reading the literature by Jenkinson (1998), Vlachou (1989), Pilj et al (1997) and Thomas et al (1998) it shows that teachers in mainstream classrooms were confused as to what to do with children with impairments, since the schools were not going to change their practices but only aimed to incorporate those children with impairments. Vlachou (1989) further raises questions about what contributed to the confusion of teachers as how many children should be integrated, how many should be segregated and what to teach and how to teach? It could be possible that these questions had an impact on the structure of integrating children into ordinary schools. Maybe the policy was not well phrased and the focus had to change from the child to the school. This is my argument, that, to be able to include all students within the mainstream, the focus must shift from students with impairments to the institution which has to include these students.

2.5 Inclusion

Thomas et al (1998) describe inclusion as an old idea which emanated from rights movements of the 1960s. As these scholars put it the origins of inclusion may not be known but their roots are from liberal and progressive thought. According to these scholars, inclusion means that students who are at a disadvantage for any reason are not excluded from mainstream education (Thomas et al, 1998:14). According to Thomas, et al (1998), inclusion differs from integration which is defined as the process of integrating children with learning difficulties, sensory impairments or physical impairments into ordinary schooling. Integration is choosing who may be integrated within the society whilst inclusion is for all. I agree with these scholars because

children should be included in the mainstream regardless of race, gender, ethnic or cultural origin, impairment or sexual orientation. Mittler (2000) supports the idea of the need for inclusion of diversity within mainstream. Thomas et al (1998) explains inclusion as the acceptance of all whether having impairment or not. My understanding of '*acceptance of all*' means to look beyond the impairment to think of ways of including this individual into society by adjusting the barriers to her/his participation.

According to Booth & associates (1998), inclusion is a process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organization and providing and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunities. It is not simply a new form of provision, it is another option whereby the education offered by ordinary schools becomes more differentiated and geared to meet a wider range of pupils. For institutions to be able to accommodate the students with impairments, they are facing the challenge of providing resources for a small group of students with impairments and the question is, are they prepared to do that? In other situations, curricula need to be flexible and teachers need to be developed to meet the needs of students with impairments and also the community culture has to be more tolerant and accepting of these students. For example, those students who have to take public transport may not be fairly treated by the community. Theorists such as Jenkinson (1997) point out the importance of teachers' resources in terms of time, attitude, support groups, materials and knowledge in dealing with the students with impairments.

Armstrong et al (2000), argued that inclusive education is still a special education because of its practices which are conducted in a mainstream school. Other research done in Ireland which is cited by Armstrong et al (2000), indicates that learners with special needs are still not given equal opportunities with their able-bodied peers. My concern is the danger of expecting too much from inclusive education than the reality that may be offered by this process. Leicester & Lovell (1997) in their research on disability want to have an understanding of the experiences of parents who have children with impairments. Both these researchers had their own first hand experiences of impairment since Lovell had multiple-sclerosis which is a chronic

disease, while Leicester had raised a daughter who had an impairment. Findings indicated that parents were supportive of mainstreaming. Some parents were skeptical about the categorization and labeling of their children whilst others were happy that they were involved in the decision- making process and in identifying their children's needs (Leicester & Lovell, 1997). Engelbrecht & associates, in their researched paper supported the involvement of parents in decision- making for their Childs' educational needs (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, Kitching & Eloff, 2005). My concern is that parents should not take decisions alone with the schools without involving the children since it would be the children that may experience problems. By so doing, the parents would be practising what has been done by those in power when they exclude those with impairments in the process of making decisions about them.

Engelbrecht and her associates concur with other scholars saying that inclusion has been an international and national agenda for a while and it came about as a reconstruction and reconsideration of the notion of impairment (Engelbrecht et al, 1999). The philosophy of inclusive education is based on the rights of all the individuals to a quality education with equal opportunity. This involves the removal of barriers and creating an environment which is accessible to students with impairments. Once that has been developed, respect and human dignity may be restored within people with impairments. Scholars such as Lipsky & Gartner (1987) also support the concept of inclusion. Landsberg (2005) supports inclusion and she asserts that successful inclusion needs to be accompanied by a comprehensive theoretical framework and insight into historical, social, political and educational processes such as:

- dedication to building a more democratic society;
- more equitable and equality education;
- accommodation of diverse learning needs to all learners (Landsberg, 2005:3)

Peters, Johnstone, & Ferguson (2005) in their research support Landsberg saying that economic resources, unique cultures and politics that influence inclusion should not contradict the human rights.

Despite obstacles, there is an expansion of the inclusion movement into the wider educational reform at the moment and this shows that schools and society will continue to shift towards increasingly inclusive practices. This is confirmed by the number of students with impairments at DUT, which is slowly increasing from year to year (Annexure E). Meyen & Skrtic (1995) further support the idea of inclusion which should be a process emphasizing that teachers should shift their mindset towards changing practices in the classrooms. Research done by Timmons & Alur in India also assert that the inclusive policies designed towards education for all should be put into practice in order to change the attitude of charity towards students with impairments (Timmons & Alur, 2004).

South African policy on inclusive education is based on providing education that is appropriate to the needs of all children (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006). It involves having an inclusive approach to the values and views of others. This policy embraces even those students who have experienced exclusion of any kind such as barriers in environment, learning difficulties and socio-economic factors.

'Inclusion stands in opposition to the pathological /clinical model of impairment because it represents a challenge to stereotyping of the 'normal' and it is based on the notion of disability as representing a difference not a deficit' (Armstrong et al. 2000:21). This view incorporates equality of opportunities for every person. Mittler (2000) defines inclusion as a radical reform of the school in terms of curriculum, assessment and grouping of learners. Allan (1999) citing Booth (1996) supports other writers by stating that inclusion increases participation within the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools while it decreases exclusionary pressures. Allan concurs with other writers such as Mittler (2000), and Clough & Corbett (2000) stating that the schools' ethos and practices have to change to include the children's right to learn. I agree with the above scholars that inclusion is all about recognizing human rights and giving the individual with impairment the decency of being part of the society. The issue of inclusion has been promoted by the Salamanca Statement on Principle, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) which proclaimed that schools with inclusive orientation are:

“... the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all, moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system”

(UNESCO,1994:ix).

The World Conference on Special needs which was held in Salamanca, Spain, agreed on a statement on education for all saying that it should be considered as a norm (June, 1994). The Conference proclaimed that:

- *Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning;*
- *Every child has unique characteristics, interest, abilities and learning needs;*
- *Education systems and programmes should be designed and implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs (UNESCO,1994: viii)*

Scholars in the ‘discipline of inclusion’ such Kabzems & Chimedza (2002) conducted research on the development of assistance in Southern Africa. Southern African countries are poor, so inclusion of children with impairments becomes almost impossible because there are no resources. Since the countries are poor, these children with impairments survive through foreign financial assistance (Kabzems & Chimedza, 2002). This is something that needs intervention from their own governments because it is clear that these children may not even be catered for in special schools, let alone in mainstream schools, these are situations which may lead to such children to be placed in institutions where they would be kept and considered socially dead because there would be no progress in their lives. This situation should be avoided by all means.

Inclusion views are supported by the research conducted by Lynch & Baker in Dublin (2005) which was about equality in education. Amongst the conditions which would bring about equality, these researchers mentioned resources, ' *respect and recognition, love, care and solidarity, power, working and learning*' (Lynch & Baker, 2005: 132). These researchers have made a valid point about the aspects which are important for human rights. A learner should be provided with resources that would equip her/his to achieve her/his goals, be respected and loved and be able to learn from others. This would assist in the development of self-image and self –confidence which may reduce the internalized oppression that people with impairments have accepted. This can possibly happen in an inclusive environment where all learners are given the same opportunities to develop themselves as human beings with rights. This is asserted by research done by Taylor (2004) which supports the idea of widening participation by higher education for disabled students as well.

Gray & Wilkins (2004) conducted research in England on blind and partially blind students in Higher Education and revealed that students need more assistance and support from the higher Education management in order to cope with their studies (Gray & Wilkins, 2004). Other researchers such as Jones & Hodgson (2004) undertook a study on inclusion of a severely visually- challenged student studying in a German higher education institution. Access to the institution was found to be a factor which prevents equal opportunities between students, therefore, they felt that institutions should make reasonable adjustments in order to accommodate all categories of impairments as it is required by the Disability Rights Commission of 2000. This would assist in increasing the number of students who access Higher Education. Shumba & Taukobong (2005), in their research on policies and programmes relating to children with impairments in Botswana, also highlight that most of the children with impairments are not integrated within the mainstream and the government is doing very little to accommodate these children who are mainly funded by foreign sponsors (Shumba & Taukobong, 2005). Drawing information from the research done by Kabzems & Chimedza (2002) in Southern African countries, this seems to confirm that in most of these countries, inclusion is discussed, but it is not yet implemented, if it is implemented, it may not be 'inclusion' as such, but a window dressing of policies that

have been discussed. A similar situation may be taking place in South Africa. The South African National Plan in Higher Education (2001) requested institutions of higher education to provide infrastructure for students with impairments.

South Africa has had a different history compared with many other countries. During the apartheid era, resources were reserved for a minority and the majority were disadvantaged. With changes in political power in South Africa, the government has mandated, through policy documents, that people with impairments along with other groups, should be accommodated equally in all spheres of life. The government influenced this shift from the apartheid system of education to a system which embraces all. Policies are now pushing for the implementation of a single unified system of education although attempts to resist inclusive education are still evident through lack of partnership between teachers and parents (Engelbrecht et al 2005). Should all citizens be given equal opportunities, their self-esteem would increase. Habib & Bentley talks of *'redress which will enable citizen to get resources and privileges from state and institutions'* (Habib & Bentley, 2008:21). The privileges which were not afforded to others would change the status of those citizens who were disadvantaged allowing them to become valuable citizens.

The South African government is influencing the shift from a medical to a social model for disability. The issue of inclusion has been a debate for most researchers and scholars. Even the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 Section 29 (1) (b) includes the Bill of Rights which entrenches the rights of all learners, regardless of race, colour, gender, sexual orientation and disability, to basic education and access to educational institutions (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). The South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 acknowledges the Bill of Rights in that learner diversity and quality education for all within a single system of education is recognized in the Act. My argument supports the government policies which need more monitoring in terms of implementation in order to have students with impairments being included within the mainstreams of education.

Serebro (2005), an activist and scholar, presented a paper in Johannesburg entitled *Erasing the margins: Researching disabilities in Higher Education*. In this paper he

criticizes the lack of commitment and understanding by management in higher education institutions to accommodate students with impairments (Serebro, 2005). Such debates on inclusion are motivated by writers such as Moodley, the project leader of the policy document on barriers to learning and development (BTLN) in 2002. He offers guidelines on procedures and processes for assisting learners who experience barriers in learning as a result of inability of the system to recognize and accommodate diverse range of learning needs (Moodley, 2002:9). He designed this document for students at the (then) Technikon SA who could have been experiencing some barriers in their learning (Moodley, 2002). All these were means to sensitize those who are in charge of institutions as to the needs of such students, to assist in accommodating the students with impairments. This study may also assist in sensitizing those in charge of DUT to identify the disabling environment and be able to include all students.

The South African White Paper 3 emphasized the redress of past inequalities and transforming the higher Education system to serve a social order and particularly:

- human resource development: the mobilization of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social economic and cultural and intellectual life of rapidly changing society.
- high level skills training – development of professionals and knowledge workers. (DoE,1997:6)

The inclusion principle emphasizes equity. It considers students with impairments as students to be included in the mainstream education. Such attributes are to be valued. Inclusion aims to promote oneness within students because it embraced the diversity introduced by students with impairments in the learning environment. Inclusive education is opposing what has been created through exclusive education. The principle of equity requires fair opportunities to enter higher education programmes and to succeed in them. This will only be achieved with the assistance of teachers and society. Social redress should include the provision of resources to institutions who deal with the learning needs of students with impairments. The institutions should be supported financially in order to make reasonable adjustments which will be suitable to meet the needs of students with impairments. Adjustments such as having ramps,

video tapes, Braille, hearing aids, should be made. According to this study, students with physical impairments need ramps which will help to access to places like lecture theatres, residences, cafeteria, other campuses and spaces on campus.

Organizations/ institutions have to work towards repositioning 'impairment' as a human rights issue, meaning, that people with impairments should be afforded the freedom which is given to other people. This view is supported by Oliver (1996) who promotes a social model as based on the premise that it is the society that requires changing in order to include people with impairments. Other supporters of this social model such as the (then) President Thabo Mbeki, recognizes the exclusion that is experienced by people with impairments and their families through the following factors:

- political and economical inequalities;
- social attitudes which promoted stereotypes of challenged people as dependent;
- discriminatory legislation which excluded them from open labour market and low level of education;
- lack of enabling mechanisms;
- inaccessible public transport and
- an unsupportive work environment (ODP, 1997:5)

Generally, the barriers that exist in the physical, organizational, and personal aspects of society are:

- Stairs without lifts;
- Information not available in large print;
- Negative societal attitudes toward certain types of people
- Heavy doors and inaccessible public transport
- Buildings which are inaccessible
- Inappropriate leisure facilities.

Amongst the things which are promoted by the White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) are the inclusion of people with impairments in the workplace, social environment, political sphere and sports arenas.

The White Paper 3: Transformation of Higher Education addresses the goals and strategic objectives which are central to achieving the overall transformation of the higher education system: that is.

- To provide increased access to Higher Education to all irrespective of race, gender, age class or disability; (DoE, 1997:7).

The other policy which emphasizes the inclusion of students with impairments into the mainstream is the National Plan for Higher Education. This document specifies the expected number of students to be enrolled at a certain time within Higher Education (DoE, 2001).

It is imperative for Higher Education institutions to recruit students with impairments, so that the government would know how much they are committed to for implementing the policies which encourage inclusion of students with impairments, into the mainstream. In his research in South African Higher Education (Howell, 2005) indicates clearly that there is an increase in the number of students with impairments entering Higher Education although the number is not known as there is no central monitoring of students entering this system. Although there is Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the information collected is not utilized constructively to give an overview of students with impairments within higher education. I agree with Howell (2005), as I experienced a problem when trying to obtain the accurate data about students with impairments at DUT. Some of the students, who were categorized as being challenged, were not (see Annexure E for unspecified disability). A careful analysis of the statistics in higher education could not confirm the exact numbers of students with impairments.

Literature and research on 'inclusion' highlights barriers which students experience. These need to be removed in order to enable students with impairments to have access

to the educational institution of their own choice. Amongst the barriers which have been identified by the White Paper 6 are:

- Negative attitudes to and stereotyping of being different
- An inflexible curriculum
- Inaccessible and unsafe building environments
- Inappropriate and inadequate support services
- Inadequate policies and legislation (DoE,2001:7)

The (then), Deputy President Hon.Thabo Mbeki in his address to challenged people in the National Congress which took place on the 18 of October 1997 said:

“we need to commit our society to the creation of an ever expanding frontier of the dignity of the disabled. The achievement of that dignity for this section of the society should be predicated on the freedom of the individual to determine his or her own destiny” (Mbeki, 1997).

The Deputy President expressed his concern that society should recognize the people with impairments as part of society and enable them to act on their own, and set their own agenda as they organize themselves to set up their priorities and let their voices be heard. This would reduce their notion of dependency upon other people. Society should not be ashamed of these people. The theories about people with impairments have to change into practices which allow these people to live their lives and that could be achieved by making a call to organize as well as to see to it that public transport and buildings are accessible to people with impairments (ODP, 1997). It is encouraging to know that in other countries and also in South Africa, people with impairments established organizations which advocate for them. One of the organizations in South Africa is Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) which is known for assisting people with impairments to fight their own battles. Students with impairments at DUT also established their own organization which is their voice, the Differently Abled Students Association (DASA).

As a researcher, I believe that the restructuring of the education and social system will necessarily change the attitudes of society. The inclusion will represent a movement to create different schools and an environment that meets the needs of everyone. To summarize the vision of inclusive education as it stated in the Education White Paper 6:

- It is about recognizing and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities;
- Supporting all learners, educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met and
- It focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs. (DoE, 2001:17)

2.6 The Social model in relation to Inclusion

This model requires that society must address barriers to 'inclusion' rather than spending money on the segregation of the people with impairments (Quinn, 1998:xx). Quinn further asserts that people with impairments' claims are entrenched in social oppression. The unequal distribution of material resources and uneven power relations and opportunities to participate in everyday life are also examples of oppression. According to Donald et al (2006), people choose to see what they believe in, and that depends on their world-views, values and practices. If society believes that people with impairments are not normal, they will treat them as abnormal.

People with impairments do not only face disadvantages because of their impairments but they experience discrimination within the society because of the way society is organized (Barnes & Mercer, 2003). What Barnes & Mercer say concurs with my earliest point that most infrastructures have been created for able-bodied people taking little notice of people with impairments. The experience reported by participants in this study showed that our institution has limited access in some areas because it mainly caters for able-bodied students. It is however, slowly changing. Thomas (2004) in her research on how disability is understood concurs with other activists such as Oliver (1996) stating that disability is imposed on people with impairments by excluding them

from participation. I support the above researchers' point of view as she disputes the fact that it is an individual with impairment who fails to participate. My argument is that it is the society that creates much of the problem. According to Quinn (1998) the social model sees the problem within the society and it is the society which has to remove social and environmental barriers in order to include these people within society. The question to be addressed by society and institutions is how to remove the barriers.

Some schools, organizations and higher education institutions cannot accommodate students with impairments because of the barriers which restrict participation (for example a visually challenged prospective applicant to DUT -Midlands whose application was declined). I argue that the problem was not with the applicant with visual impairment but with the institution which would not provide resources to include the particular student. Adams & Brown (2006) argue that the higher education system still reflects the social inequalities which were created a long time ago, which were then based on fitting students into already available institutions without assessing their needs. The point here is to adjust the environmental barriers in order to include all students.

Researchers, scholars and activists with impairments such as Swain, Finkelstein, French & Oliver (1993) conducted research based on their abilities and found out that it is the social and environmental barriers which restrict people with impairments from participation. These activists are the founders of the social model. Marks (1999), and Barnes (2005) in their presentations, concur with other activists stating that disability is not in an challenged or malfunctioning body, but in an excluding and oppressive social environment.

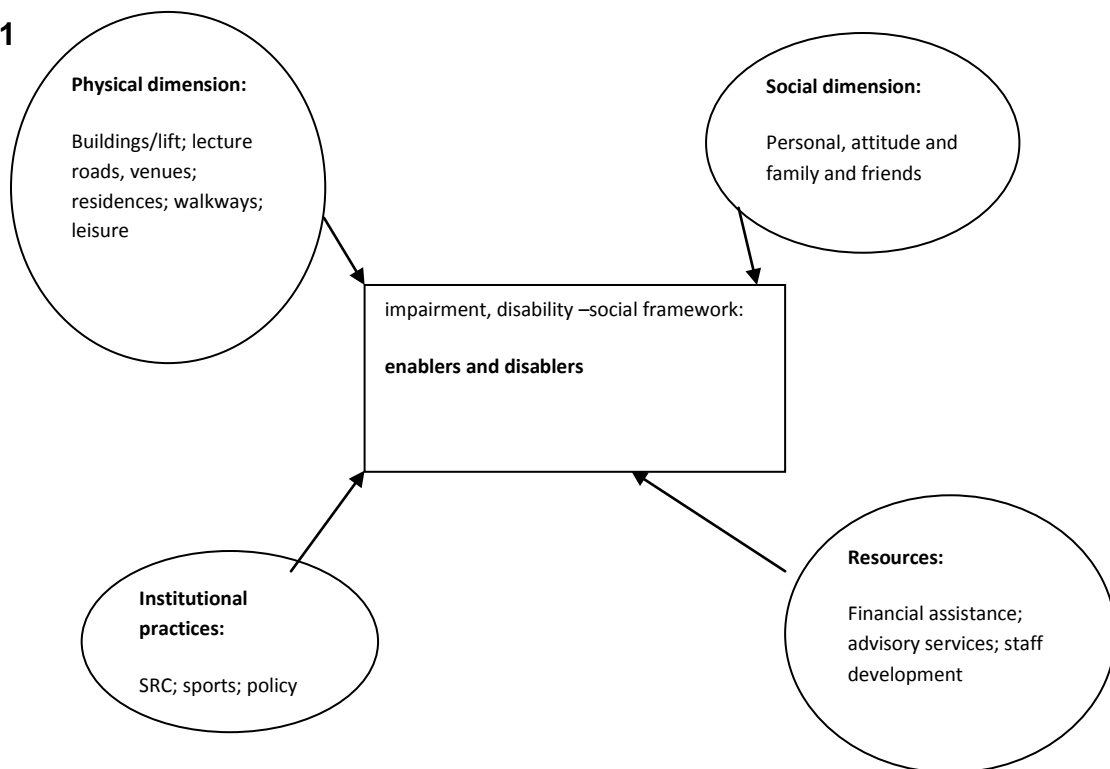
“The emphasis was on changing the real world , removing real barriers to equality of opportunity and not just modifying attitudes and changing the practice of service providers while maintaining dependency upon able bodied people to administer the solutions” (Swain, Finkelsten, French and Oliver, 1993:40).

To restore citizenship rights for all, the destruction of barriers within society has to be the first priority. Other researchers saw the social model as the tool to bring change to

economic, environmental and cultural barriers encountered by people with impairments. In most studies conducted by activists such as Oliver (1996) and Swain et al (1993), it has been concluded that people with impairments fail to take part in society on an equal level with their counterparts because of the social barriers.

All of the above concur with the idea of exclusion of individuals who have impairments therefore preventing them from performing certain tasks. According to Donald et al (2006) social problems are often incorrectly thought of as individual problems, therefore the intervention of the government with new policies should be to curb discrimination against people with impairments. The policies that are already available for the inclusion of all should be implemented immediately so that social and environmental barriers can be removed. In principle, the policies are existing, what should be investigated are the reasons why these policies are not implemented in order to offer access to people with impairments. Below is the model which summarizes the ideas of enablers and disablers which has been discussed in this chapter:

Fig 2.1



2.7 Higher Education and students with impairments

It is encouraging to know that studies similar to this study have been undertaken internationally and nationally. Ash & associates (1997) undertook a study in three UK colleges on the experiences of students with impairments in higher education. The study was conducted through interviews and questionnaires which were issued to selected able-bodied students and students with impairments. Basically the questions focused on friendship between able-bodied students and those with impairments. They found that many able-bodied students were not aware of the issues faced by their challenged friends. Social contact between able and students with impairments was not extensive and the able bodied students were not friendly towards students with impairments. Both groups of students, however supported the inclusion of students with impairments (Ash, Bellew, Davies,, Newman, & Richardson, 1997). The findings indicated the support by able-bodied students towards inclusion, but it seems as if these students are not aware of the processes that they should undergo themselves before inclusion becomes a reality.

In his paper on disabled people and access opportunities into higher education, Palfreman –Kay (1998) in his paper supported the researchers on inclusion stating that the lack of awareness by those in charge of educational institutions would result in educational barriers not being recognized therefore the students with impairments would be the victims at all times. The other research was conducted by Boxall, Carson and Docherty (2001) which encouraged the participation of students with learning difficulties in all higher education spheres. This study was conducted at Manchester University in 2001. The research emphasized the importance of support from the university in order to widen participation by the students with impairments.

The inclusion of people with impairments in higher education is legislated in many countries. Research conducted by Shevlin, Kenny & McNeela (2004) in Ireland and that of Fuller, Bradley & Healey (2004) of UK is similar to this study. The Irish government supported the widening participation by students with impairments in higher education.

This was seen as possible if the attitudes and environmental barriers were removed. The research revealed that very few students with impairments were accommodated in higher education institutions. Students had to be proactive and access the supportive environment on their own, because they were not assisted in that regard. The study indicated that the levels of awareness were not balanced within the institution. There were those who were aware of the needs of students with impairments and others who acted as if they were invisible. The same situation is revealed by the participants of this study where some members of the institution are aware of their needs whilst others are not. That is confirmed by the actions of some academic staff members who fail to provide accessible venues when students with impairments have to write tests. Fuller et al (2004) noted that barriers to learning were caused by the lack of information being disseminated to students with impairments. Moreover, Fuller et al (2004) revealed that some staff members were not aware of the existence of students with impairments regardless of the fact that the institution had two disability coordinators. This is a different situation within DUT because the institution does not have an Advisory Office which can be utilized for students with impairment and it does not have a coordinator. This indicates that the rights of students with impairments have not yet been recognized or taken as seriously as they should be. Similar experiences have been reported by participants in this study.

Howell (2005) in his study of South African higher education responses to students with impairments found that some institutions did not have any policy or guidelines on students with impairments. Questionnaires which were issued to 24 institutions indicated that 18 of the 24 had policy or guidelines and the remaining 6 had no policy at all. Amongst those schools which have policies, 10 of the 23 staff members had familiarized themselves with the content of the policy document, whilst the rest were not familiar with the contents. The study indicated that some institutions were providing support to students with impairments, of the 24, 18 stated that they provided support, 4 did not whilst 2 did not respond to the question at all. My question is what could possibly be the reasons for not providing support to students with impairments if they have entered an institution? The institutions of higher education may not have accurate and reliable information about students with impairments and they may not be in a

position to provide appropriate support for them or the information collected may not be used at all. DUT, a higher education institution does not have an official policy which guides the students with impairments, the policy that is available is only for recruiting employees with impairments.

I found very interesting the 2004 annual report by Reddy on South African Higher Education and social transformation (Reddy, 2004). This report focused on the transition from the Apartheid era whereby the higher education institutions were segregated according to ethnicity. It analysed the statistics of how many students of 'colour' were accepted by various universities at that time and also the changes that have taken place since 1994, but nothing was ever mentioned of students with impairments being integrated within these institutions of higher learning. According to the report, higher education should increase participation and responsiveness to those students who were previously excluded from entering certain higher education institutions. No mention was made of students with impairments and facilitating their participation in higher education.

I support what has been said by the above researchers, that in most of instances, it is environmental barriers and the attitudes of those who perceive themselves as normal, which exclude the students with impairments, therefore it is important for institutions of higher education to set up strategies which will identify and remove these barriers. Institutions should also have ways of informing their community of how to deal with diversity and be able to identify abilities beyond the individual's impairment. However, we do not have evidence from institutions or from the students themselves on whether this is the case. It is this that needs further investigation.

To conclude, people with impairments are often 'invisible' in the eyes of the society, they are thus excluded from participating in mainstreams of life. If they are 'visible' to society, then perhaps it would be easier to begin the process of accommodating their needs by removing barriers.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study seeks to investigate the experiences of students with physical impairments studying at DUT. This chapter addresses the research methodology and design of the study. Since the study adopts a qualitative approach, relevant methods such as in-depth interviewing and observation will be used. I will outline the design of the study, selection of participants, the ethical principles, the data collection and the description of methods of the qualitative data analysis. Data collected will be reported in the form of narratives. This will be in the form of life stories of participants. Josselson & Lieblich (1995) explain narrative as the means of shaping understanding and making sense of conversations. Narratives assist in recognizing the uniqueness of each individual. Bloor and Wood (2006) concur with Josselson & Lieblich (1995) that narratives reveal the identity of the individual. They describe narratives as continuous stories of people's experiences. Narratives work well with a small number of respondents. A similar study has been conducted in United Kingdom by Fuller et al (2004), it focused on the experiences of students with impairments in higher education. The findings were reported in a narrative form.

3.2 Qualitative research approach

A methodology is a general philosophy underpinning the research study. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1998), the qualitative approach has a long and distinguished history in the human disciplines.

“qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, trans- disciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the social and physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time”
(Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 6)

This explains why qualitative research is used in so many separate disciplines, it does not belong to a single discipline. It also does not have distinct methods, but rather uses

several different ones such as semi-structured interviews, structured interviews, participatory observation or non-participatory observations, case studies, questionnaires and focus groups. It guides the researcher on how s/he will go about studying any phenomenon. The qualitative approach is used in social settings with assumptions which are used to come to conclusions. The qualitative approach is relevant to the study of social relations as it assists in understanding actions and the meaning of the different societies and different settings. I found a qualitative approach relevant for this study as I am investigating the experiences of students with physical impairments. Qualitative research is able to discover aspects which are not easily seen at first glance. I hope to discover the experiences of students with physical impairments within the institution and how those students see themselves as part of the institution. This is usually overlooked by the members of the institution itself. My theoretical position falls within a constructivist approach because I am studying human constructions, seeking explanation of students' experiences. I am going to discover these through interviews and observation and later I will interpret what I have discovered. An interpretivist is able to create reality about his subjects through interaction. I consider myself as one, since I would be spending time in direct contact with my participants, listening and looking to see how they cope with daily performances and also I will be trying to understand the meaning of their everyday lives. This process will assist in clarifying how they have been excluded from the mainstreams of learning, and, from that, to suggest how to include these students within the institutions. My assumption is that there is no single reality about impairment, no knowledge about a static reality out there in the world, but rather to get some knowledge about the world as it is experienced by the participants. Using the constructivism paradigm, the assumption is that reality is socially constructed and I am hoping that together with my selected participants, we could undergo a process of constructing their stories out of their experiences and perceptions. I anticipate that this process will help to give a clear picture of the participants and an interpretation of who they are in society as their experiences would be read by other people. The research questions which I included in this study would assist in finding out about their experiences.

According to Esterberg (2002) qualitative research uses inductive reasoning which is a set of observations used to discover patterns, facts or ideas which are analyzed and from them conclusions will be drawn. For this study, the experiences of students with impairments will be studied and then conclusions will be drawn based on how they feel they have been excluded/ included within the institution, and to determine their sense of agency or otherwise. For this study, interviews and observations are used as a process of gathering facts. A qualitative approach tries to describe the mundane activities of everyday settings of those who are being studied. The qualitative approach expects the researcher to know who s/he is and to reflect on what her/his beliefs are about the social world and how the beliefs would affect the research in different kinds of ways. I shall be actively reflecting on my own misunderstandings and understandings about impairments in order to be able to make sense of what the participants are talking about. My attitude towards participants may also be that of excluding them in activities whereas I should be including them and making everyone a part of the integral picture. Since I am part of society and have been socialized to differentiate people with impairments, I may unconsciously be giving my participants the same treatment that is given by the society. This I need to be constantly vigilant about and to reflect upon. From the information that I will be receiving from the participants, I hope I am going to have a new understanding of who they are and how they live their lives. Using a qualitative approach, the researcher myself, wants to find out why things happen the way they do, why human beings express feelings and thoughts in a particular way. The researcher wants to give as clear a description of actions and representations of actions as possible, so that one can get a better understanding of the world dynamics. Observing the participants may give a clear picture and understanding of the participants' experiences within this context. The fuller the narrative the easier it may be to do this.

A qualitative researcher should be able to describe and understand the social issues that are researched and have some insight into the life world of the research participants because it is their '*conceptual richness that needs to be captured, it is all about their living experiences*' (Henning, 2004: 9). A qualitative researcher believes that the multivoices of participants must be heard by reporting the issues of their

everyday lives and practices. These voices are coming from people who are categorized as the same but with different experiences and perceptions. Participants of this study have different experiences since they are coming from different backgrounds as well as being separate individuals themselves. I felt it would be imperative to report their voices because that would provide the richness of this study. The best research approach in answering the questions about the experiences and perceptions of participants is a qualitative approach.

Students with impairments and able-bodied students have to comply with the same rules although they are not given the same treatment. This will be revealed in the next chapter. To put it simply, the participants may not be recognized as students who have needs which are somehow different from the other students, and for that they may need to have a clear identity and be consciously included in the discussions which involve students of the institution. Silverman (1997) notes that qualitative research offers analytical perspectives of the practical circumstances and processes of everyday life. Through interviews and observation, I will be able to gain understanding of how the participants live their lives. Therefore, the answers to the research questions in this study will sought by using the qualitative method which includes interviews and observation.

Narrative is able to bridge misunderstandings in social life, that is, it studies the unified experiences of the people who live together but are separate (Silverman, 1997). Because it tells the stories of students with physical impairments as subject, the institutional community will be able to understand how the students live their lives. In this study, to be able to interpret the experiences of participants, as a researcher, I need to have my own knowledge of what I personally encountered in the process. My interaction with the participants gave me some understanding of how they live their lives and I have gained some knowledge of how they do things without assistance. I have learned about their semi-independence and knowing how they have become self sufficient in other areas of their lives. Without undergoing the process of research, I would not have understood how they live their lives. I believe that the relationship we developed has made the participants aware that someone has noted their experiences

which exclude/include them within the institution, although nothing has been done to improve their lives up till now. Before I engaged in the process of research, the students appeared to be vulnerable and I felt sympathetic because my knowledge was influenced by medical models. Being part of the society which has set perceptions about people with impairments, I would consider participants now being included in various spheres within the institution. With newly acquired knowledge, I am aware of the areas which exclude the participants from participating so through communicating with them, I know now that this study may make an impact, not on current participants but on those who will come after them as well as those who should be responsible for them.

In qualitative research, a small numbers of texts and documents may be analyzed for very different purposes (Silverman, 1993). In this study a small number of participants are used and I am hoping to get much useful information from them. The methods to be used are observation and interviews. Once the data has been collected, it will be recorded and transcribed. The methods chosen will help to capture the variety of participants' experiences and bring about the comprehensive picture of their lives. This is supported by Ely et al (1991) that, through the process of interviewing and observation, the researcher gains an understanding of how the participants live their lives. As the research process unfolds as a researcher, I have become a part of the settings and I came to understand the participants better than before. I have learned to understand how they managed to develop positive attitudes in life, how they have learned to accept themselves and what they expect from the society at large.

3.2.1 Selection of the participants

In order to select participants I requested information from the Management Information System office about students with impairments that I had decided to focus on during my study. Initially, I wanted to investigate the experiences of physically and visually students with impairments. Unfortunately the institution does not appear to have any students with visual impairments. Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS) assisted in identifying students with physical impairments. All relevant students were invited to participate. In the initial sample I had 7 males and 2 females.

One of the male participants is an English speaker coming from the Durban Metropolitan Area. The six other males are Zulu speakers, 3 coming from the Zululand area, 2 coming from north of Durban and 1 from the Midlands area. They all use wheelchairs and they all stay in residence with the exception of one participant who stays in his home. The two females are Zulu speakers, one from Richmond and the other one from the South Coast. They both stay in residence. Later, two male participants withdrew as they were unable to honour most appointments because they were involved with in-service training and working awkward shifts. I therefore have 6 participants who are included in the study. I had only one interview with those participants who withdrew from participating, so I could not include their contributions in the study. I had hoped they would stay on, so that they could have contributed more to the study giving their own experiences.

3.2.2 Ethical considerations

The Oxford Dictionary defined 'ethics' as a set of principles or morals. People use these sets to decide what is right and what is wrong. It is the responsibility of the researcher to present a study that meets ethical requirements. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to follow those ethical issues and standards that are relevant to the process.

After I had decided on the study, I requested permission from the institution management to conduct a study on students with impairments. I had to wait for the permission from the authorities of the institution before I could continue with the process as the institution should protect student information and maintain confidentiality. I had physically identified the students that I was going to interview but I had no information about them. I requested the information about these students from the Management Information Systems. I was requested to write a letter and state the reasons for asking for this information about students with impairments. This information is normally extracted from the registration forms which are completed by students upon registration. It is confidential information between the student and the institution. My understanding is that this kind of information is utilized by the institutions as well as the Department of Education to identify the students with impairments who enroll every year. I am aware

that the information that I was requesting, is confidential and that those in authority should only disclosed it for legitimate purposes. I waited to receive the information from the MIS offices. Then I had to approach the students and they had to make a choice of participating in the study or not and since they are all regarded as adults they did not need permission from their parents. I had to explain to the students the purpose for conducting the study and I also highlighted the critical issues, like the use of their names, the publication of the information and the written transcripts. The anonymity and confidentiality of the information that was collected was going to be maintained. I discussed with the participants that I would use fictional names (pseudonyms) as I was going to tell their stories. I assured the participants of the safety of the tapes which I was using during the interviewing process. The issue of discarding the tapes after the whole process had been completed was also discussed and agreed upon. I made them aware that data collected from them and about them would be given back to them for verification.

Narrative analysis, as a chosen method of analyzing the data is sensitive for participants as it exposes their lives. In my case, it has been a difficult process because my participants are unique from the rest of the students but their stories have to be told in order to make a difference. It may be argued that the confidentiality and anonymity of participants is betrayed because of the stories which are told about them. I believe that the experiences of the participants would take on a constructed reality if they are told in their own voices and their voices would make a difference to those who are not aware of their lives. The difference I am talking about would be implemented once one is aware of the existence of students with impairments within the institutions and also to understand their needs. Atkinson (1998) warns researchers to be sensitive with the stories of the participants since they obtain information about the life experiences, perspectives and feelings. I was aware that I was writing about the sensitive issues of real people who live amongst other people. The participants informed me of their life experiences which they would read later in the dissertation. I tried to sum up the information in a way that would not change the deeper meaning that was provided by students.

3.2.3 Informed consent

Participants had to decide whether they were interested in participating in the study which involved their personal experiences and perceptions about the institution. Understanding of the process which was explained to them several times during the process led to informed consent which is recorded in writing. Participants were requested to sign the informed consent in order to show that they understood what the research was about. It clearly stated that the individual participant had a right to withdraw at any stage without negative repercussions.

3.2.4 Research tools

3.2.4.1 Observation

According to Henning (2004) observation is a tool used by a researcher to obtain information about what is happening in a situation or in someone's life. According to Kumar (2005) observation is regarded as a primary source of gathering information. Observation assists in discovering unconsciously missed or things which were not freely talked about, by a participant. The observer may be biased in her/his observation and Silverman (1997), warns that the observer should establish the difference between her/his feelings and those of the observed in order to be produce valid information. Kumar (2005) concurs with Silverman that the observer may be biased and the information gathered, may reduce the possibilities of verifying the conclusions drawn from such observation. Certain features were observed within the institution (Annexure B). The purpose of observing the students as they were moving around the campuses was to gather evidence on how each one dealt with his/her daily routine. This brought some light to bear upon how the environment within the institution enables or disables the students with impairments. Students with impairments interact with other students. In most cases, as I was observing the students with impairments, they would be accompanied by other students talking and laughing together. It was also through observation, however, that I discovered that the students with physical impairments were unable to access some areas within the institution. Observation assisted in clarifying some information which was not well covered by interviews. As a non-

participant observer, I watched the participants attending lectures and also in their residence. While observing them I was taking notes. The disadvantage of the observation method of collecting data however is that the observer interprets what has been observed in her/his own words. Kumar (2005:121) confirms that the researcher may be biased in her/his interpretation and this may lead to erroneous conclusions. It is difficult to observe and take notes at the same time because other actions are missed as you write down your observations. Observation is not an easy process because questions arise while you are busy watching the participant moving about. For example, one of the participants was waiting for the lift and I happened to be behind him. He was not looking happy, I heard that the lift was not working and he had no other means of getting to the second floor. He could have used the long route to reach the first floor but he could not in any way reach the second floor. The security guard and other students had to lift him up to the second floor. I could see the frustration on his face. Later, he told me that he had had to write a test on the second floor because the venues which were assigned to his group were not accommodative to wheelchair use, so he had to use another venue where there are tables.

I had to observe my participants as they used different types of wheelchairs and I realized how many difficulties they experienced. Some participants used electronic wheelchairs while others had manual wheelchairs. I also found it difficult to observe my participants struggling and I felt like helping them, but assumed that it might have embarrassed them. My position as a researcher gave me a different status to that of my participants, the fact that I am a lecturer who works with them in the institution potentially made things difficult as I am in a position of authority. I did not want them to feel that I was observing the bad parts of their lives too. As I was observing the students, I was also wondering what they were thinking about the institution, especially when facing a barrier and these barriers limited the opportunities to perform a certain tasks. Since I have been a non participatory observer, I could not interfere with any of the students while they were performing an activity. Observation did not give me sufficient evidence in terms of participants' perceptions about the institution but I was able to combine what I had observed with the interviews about their experiences in the institution. I had to restrain my feelings in order to protect my emotions as well. As

much as we had discussed confidentiality in our agreement, participants would have been embarrassed if I had to ask questions during the lecture or when she/he were with other students because interviews were conducted privately in their residences.

While I was observing my participants I realized that they were very capable of doing most things by themselves. I was able to observe participants while entering the lecture room. This was not easy as they often had to be assisted, so that s/he would not fall backwards. Desks in the lecture venues are not portable, and a student using a wheelchair experiences difficulty in seating infixed desk.

There were times when I observed students with impairments struggling to access lecture rooms and offices. One participant wanted to see the lecturer, unfortunately, the buzz button was too high for a wheelchair user, and he had to wait for someone to assist him. I wondered what he was thinking of the institution's environment. My assumption of the students with impairments had been wrong, I thought these students were not happy but from the information I gathered during interviews, I heard that they are happy to be around the institution although there are certain barriers which become a problem.

3.2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

I had to gather more specific information about my participants as well as the institution. Participants were only able to answer about the environment which is around them. Students were only familiar with residences where they are living and the lecture venues. I had to add in my interview schedules some questions about what I had observed. I wanted to understand how the institution includes these students in their daily routine and what the students thought of the ways in they were included in the institution.

Silverman (1997) explains interviews as the way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives, experiences, lives of those associated with them and surroundings. Interviews are interactional and conversational. In a conversation (in-depth interview), the interviewer guides the participant to tell their experiences, as they know these experiences than other people.

Mishler (1986) describes interviews as a face to face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person, the interviewee. What Mishler (1986) describes is not a conclusive process, interviews may be conducted under any setting which is decided by the participants of the interview. They may also be conducted through a telephone conversation. The purpose of an interview is to understand human action and experience. The individual information that I gathered from each participant was interpreted into a broader sphere and it was interpreted as socially constructed. The assumptions about inaccessibility of other areas in the institution were seen as society's inability to include all individuals. To Mishler, an interview is a joint product of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together (Mishler, 1986: vii). Silverman (1993) concurs with Mishler and states that the aim of conducting interviews is to gather an authentic understanding of people's experiences. Other authors refer to interviews as a conversation but the one party is more of a listener than a contributor to the conversation.

Interviews are commonly used in both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is the process of obtaining and reporting the reportable knowledge. Silverman (1993) believes that open-ended questions are useful in gathering such evidence. Open – ended questions are flexible and they tend to generate in-depth answers compared with one word answers such as 'yes or no'. This kind of interview gives detailed information which the interviewer may have not thought of. The interviewer may have pre-formulated questions which have been designed and in anticipation that there is a need of a follow up question, the interviewer would pose another question in order to get a satisfactory answer.

Silverman (1993) suggests that interviews can be conducted with a small group of participants. Generally, the process of interviewing is time- consuming. It is preferable to have a homogeneous group. It is easier when a group is small because as a researcher you are able to let the interviewees express themselves. Mishler (1986) believes that when conducting interviews, a qualitative researcher should know when not to speak during an interview in order to let the interviewee talk and provide more information. This kind of interview should be a phenomenological interview (inner

witness of an experience) which will present some truth, for example, about the life experiences of students with impairments.

As a researcher, conducting an interview, I needed to be careful of allowing my emotions to run away with me, especially if something moves me. Since my participants have different stories, some of the stories are emotional and sensitive and I had to conceal my emotions from them, or else these could have influenced them. The purpose of interviews was to get more information about their daily lives in the institution. They should surely have known that I felt empathy for the exclusion that they experience in some areas of the institution and also that there is no immediate contact individual that they could liaise with should they need help. I assumed that the students have accepted themselves as who they are, taken from the fact that they agreed to be part of the study in order to raise their voices by sharing their experiences previously and now as students at Durban University of Technology. In my interview, I requested that the participants tell their life stories which brought in so much information and told of hard times for both, the interviewee and the interviewer. Atkinson (1998) encourages the researcher to respect the moments of silence or heavy breathing from the participants because it may mean the subject is touchy or sensitive. Sometimes the question may be reminding the participant of a bad experience. I experienced such times with the participants, moments of silence or gaps while narrating.

This process of interviewing has been my major source of evidence for this study. I wanted the participants to reflect on their lives as students in higher education and I used an interview schedule (Annexure A) in the process planned around the key questions which are stated in Chapter 1 of this study.

3.2.5 The research process

I had no previous relationships with the participants although I had seen them around the institution. Having knowledge of how my sister had suffered searching for the school for her autistic twins, I was concerned about the lives of the students in the institution. I had never questioned them previously, but I would observe them as they moved around the campuses rushing to get to their lectures. After defining my research

topic, I wanted to understand further how they lived their lives daily. Students' experiences helped me too to put the pieces of the puzzle together and understanding how they overcome the challenges daily in their lives. My stereotyped thinking, that these students were sick, was dismissed by their individual narration of their life experiences and how they have overcome life's challenges.

Firstly, I identified the category of impairment that I wanted to research. While I was waiting for the permission from the authorities of the institution, I had also requested the Management Information Systems (MIS) to provide me with the information about each of these students. Originally I did not know about the MIS department, so I went to the Faculty Office to request the information about students with impairments and they are the ones who referred me to MIS. The MIS department has a summary of the information about all students who have registered with the institution. This information is drawn from the application forms of students as they fill them in during their registration period. Such information should be confidential. I believe that the information was disclosed to me knowing that I was going to use it for the benefit of the students and the institution. I believe that such information is not easily disclosed without the consent of those in authority because I had to go through the office of Postgraduate Studies to request the official in charge to request on my behalf the MIS to release this information. I had to show this official that I had been granted permission to undergo research on campus about students with impairments.

The information had all the details about the students and the kind of impairment that s/he has (see Annexure E). Once I had permission from the institution, I then to request permission from the students that I had identified to be part of my study. I made telephone calls to those who had telephone numbers so I could make an appointment to meet with each of them. Others had postal addresses. I wrote letters to those who did not have telephone numbers or working telephones. From the responses, some students explained that they did not have impairments. In two cases, I found students who were categorized by the system as physically challenged, whilst they were diabetics. One student who lives in Pietermaritzburg, whom I called for an appointment, came and he was shocked to find out that he had been categorized as someone with an

impairment while he does not actually have one. I had to provide this student with the transport fare since it had been my idea to see him also I had to organize lunch for him. I had to explain to the student that he had filled the application form in as someone with impairment. My feeling was that the students might have just filled in the space (grid) in the application forms without fully understanding what was required. This had a negative implication as the institution appears to have done nothing about the information which is required on the forms except to show how many students with specific impairments have registered. The other problem I identified is that some of the students were noted as having impairment but it was not specified (Annexure E) on their forms.

After I had received the information from the MIS, I had to identify the group of students that I needed to use for my investigation. I had no previous experience of an individual with an impairment except for my sister's autistic twins and basically I wanted to learn from the students with physical and visual impairments how the institution included them since my sister's twins could not be included in any school, even the special schools. Because of the incorrect information that I received from the MIS database, I was left with 9 students with physical impairments who were all in wheelchairs, and none with visual impairments. I had to concentrate on this group because a colleague of mine is investigating students with hearing impairment on campus. Data was collected by means of interviews and observation at the campuses and also in their residences. All these students were based on the Durban campuses and they mainly use two campuses which are ML Sultan and Ritson Road. Eight of the participants were staying in residences around the institution. One was staying at home. Since I am also based on both these two campuses, I could them regularly and I was able to observe them. After I had received permission from the institution as well as from the students themselves, I then began the process of interviewing them.

As I have indicated earlier in my selection of participants, all my participants are Zulu speakers except for one who is an English speaker. The University uses English as a medium of communication. I had to use English and Zulu when conducting the interviews because I felt that they could not be as clear as I wished often due to the

language barrier. I wanted the students to trust me and be open with their feelings and not to think that I had come to spy on them. If I were using participatory observation, I would have been part of them but I chose non-participatory observation. I believe that the participants were honest in presenting their own life stories. We even discussed the impact of the outcome that it would assist the future generation of students with impairments who might one day join the institution. The consent form which the participants signed, elaborated their rights, interests and privacy of any information that was collected, I had used fictitious initials for data analysis.

I had to establish a rapport at the beginning with each of them so that they could trust me. We always had re-arranged appointments but students could not just wait for me without socializing with others. I usually phoned to check if the student would still be available for the appointment. Besides that, I would find the student relaxing with other students, and I would ask other students politely to give us a few minutes alone so that we could discuss the matter privately. Maybe I was too harsh to 'visiting students'. I should have given them time to end their conversations. Maybe I used my authority as lecturer to have access to the student while he had other matters to deal with. I have always been honest with them and in that way I believe I have been able to gain their trust.

I made it very clear to students that the process of interviewing was a way of gathering evidence about their experiences and their perceptions of the institutions so that the information would be collectively presented to those who are in charge and it may assist in bringing awareness and taking corrective actions where necessary. The participants were warned not to expect changes too soon, but it might not assist them directly, but perhaps the next generation of students with impairments.

I am aware that I should not abandon these students after the completion of the study. I should be of help to them. After I had completed the interview, I would thank the participant for her/his time and we would set the appointment for the next meeting. Although the process of interviewing is time-consuming, I chose to ask them for an appropriate time for appointments, for example, late after lectures or on Saturday when they had done their house chores. We had to negotiate for convenient meeting places

and they generally preferred their living rooms as they could ask me to write 'no disturbance' on their doors to ensure that we had a quiet place to talk. I supported the idea of their residences because the student would feel comfortable in his/her own rooms. Out of the three scheduled appointments with each participant, I had to reschedule one or two due to the preparation for tests and examinations. I am aware of the fact that I should have used 'focus group' for my participants because I could have explored their common perceptions, experiences and understanding without repeated interviews. My main fear was that some of the participants may not be as open if they were with others.

3.2.6 Qualitative data analysis

Josselson & Lieblich (1995:17) describe the analyzing process as an ongoing struggle. The analyst tries to understand the text and also to remain faithful to the experiences of the participants. Since interviews were conducted in two languages namely, English and Zulu, those which were in Zulu were to be translated into English for the purpose of this research report. I found translation from one language to another very difficult as a second language English speaker myself but I had to make sense of what each student was saying. I might have included what I perceived to be what the student was saying which may not have been correct. I could also have put my own meaning into each story. That is the reason why I requested the students to re-read the information that I gathered from them to verify the meaning.

Data collected from interviews was transcribed into verbal responses. These responses were categorized according to subheadings from interviews. Data from observation was noted down and analyzed in conjunction with the interviews. The advantage of using verbal responses was that their responses were similar to each other with a few exceptions. I experienced difficulty incorporating observations within the responses since it was non-participatory observation. It was my own interpretation of the observed situation.

The interviews which are defined as natural conversational interaction between people will be analyzed as conversational talk (Silverman, 1993). Interviews are recommended

for bringing continuation to the conversation (chaining rule) as a compared to a questionnaire. Atkinson (1998) explains the life story as events and beliefs in a person's life which are plotted together to give a picture to others. I planned to report the participants' voices from the interviews in such a way that they are integrated so that they become powerful in order to be heard. According to Josselson & Lieblich (1995), narrative writing is making use of real people to inform the world about their experiences. Participants in this study provided small stories which I assume will bring awareness to the community of DUT about their experiences. The stories which are narrated may be stories which have never been thought of.

“stories connect the world, relate us to the lived experience of others and extend our experience of the world” (Clark, Dyson & Millwood, 1995:12)

It is important that these 'real' life stories are told, so that those who have never experienced impairment can, in turn, help find solutions to relieve students with impairments of their difficulties and also that their experiences can be seen in context of their broader experiences of other people with impairments. The next chapter has verbal responses and relevant literature.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The information gathered from the students with impairments has been collected through interviews and observations. Students have been encouraged to talk about their lives from the early stages (background), interests, hobbies and current experiences in higher education. Then, the information has been categorized into thematic responses which emerged from the interview questions. Additional information was obtained from observations. Drawing from my conceptual framework broad thematic responses of social dimensions, resources, physical and personal dimension were identified. I was also open to additional categories which emerged from the data. Although it was not easy to observe the students because of the varying schedules between the students and myself, I managed to observe the students around the campuses as well as in their residences.

The stories that are narrated are from the live experiences of the eight students with impairments at DUT, the ninth participant contributed too little towards the study to be included. These students with impairments are part of the institution and the policies of the institution should show responsibility for their care. For example, the government has produced policies which emphasize the importance of equality to all human beings including people with impairments (White Paper on Integrated Disability Strategy, 1997). The implementation of the policy has been delayed due to one reason or another. Even within the institution, the effects of this delay are witnessed because students with impairments are not accessing the whole of the institution. My assumption is that if the government had fully implemented all the policies, which are about inclusion, the institutions would also have identified the areas which are excluding the students from participating within the institution. The gap between policy and implementation is another area for future research. Despite the fact that the institutions of higher education have not made things easy for the students with impairments, these

individuals have learned become experts in their own lives. Students with impairments have learnt to adapt to a lifestyle which is compatible with social expectation, socializing with other students, attending entertainment arenas as well as attending lectures in very awkward venues. More will be revealed about this small group of students with impairments who are integrated within the broader environment mainly designed for able-bodied students. It is encouraging to see the few students who are perceived to be differently abled socializing with other students and being part of the institution. The responses from the questions have been subdivided in order to analyze individual responses. I am aware that the students and other members of the community may be able to recognize stories of these students but students' names are not used. Other information from the respondents is not included in the analysis because of the categorization of information.

4.2 Social dimensions:

4.2.1 Family background and motivation from parents/guardians

All the participants commended their parents and guardians for standing behind them in order to be able to further their studies. What emerged from the participants' responses is that they are treated like any other member of the family, taking responsibilities and doing family chores. This tells me that families have embraced the fact that these children are different but are capable of performing certain tasks. This has an effect of developing self-confidence and self-image within these children with impairments. Most of them do not spend much time at home, but when they are home, they are also given responsibilities. Parents/ guardians may be sending these children away due to lack of facilities which are suitable for their survival or as Vlachou (1989) puts it, it may be protection against harsh realities of the environment. It came up strongly that if it were not for these parents and guardians, they might not have reached higher education institutions. MB commented:

My mother has been behind my studying. From primary studies, up to now, she has been there for me. She is very excited that I have decided to further my studies after matriculation.

MA experienced difficulties with going back to school after he had an accident. He saw himself as different from others but he got courage from the family members:

I didn't want to go back to school after my accident but my brother who was studying in one of the higher education institutions by then, told me that there were other students in the wheelchairs [sic], so I would not be the first one to be at a higher education institution. In fact, my brother was saying to me, I have to go back to school, further my studies so that I could fulfill my dream. The accident should not close doors for me but I personally should decide my own future.

Engelbrecht et al (2005) state that it is important for parents/guardians to be involved in the education of their children. Parents/guardians of the participants have given them support to achieve their goals. Parents/guardians are the people with whom the children with impairments have spent their early age. These are the people who influenced the children to believe in themselves and created the positive self-image within them. MF, one of the participants recalls how his parents supported him when he came to register for the programme that he always dreamt of.

On registration day, I saw so many people and I was not sure whether I still wanted to go on studying at the institution. I had never been exposed to so many people but my parents were there to calm me, believing in me, knowing that I am capable of achieving what I want.

It should not be easy for a parent to leave his/her child in an unfamiliar environment without knowing whether he/she would cope within such environment. Oliver (1996) confirms that his relationship with family became stronger after his accident and the family believed in him. Families provide warmth and security. Without such security, it might be difficult for the people with impairments to face the world which sometimes becomes harsh for them. All participants agree with Oliver that family members' support makes you to be able to move on, regardless of the changes in your life.

4.2.2 Attitudes and perceptions of communities/society

Family support sometimes conflicts with communities' attitude which does not encourage the sight of people with impairments performing things which they assume are for normal people. MB recalls how the other members of the community and extended family reacted towards him:

Some members would look with shock without directly talking to me but would ask my mother about me. They would be shocked to hear that I am at a tertiary institution.

Society has a perception of a normal person with certain attributes, once one lacks such attributes, he/she is considered not to be normal. MA said:

People in my community are still amazed, they stop and gaze at me, and you could see that they have questions to ask but scared.

The behaviour of community members causes mixed messages to people with impairments because they are supported at home but outside the family structure, perception about them changes, they are invisible or not considered as part of the community because they are 'sick'. The attitudes of some members of the community signal embarrassment when they meet a person with impairment because they think such a person is not supposed to be out there but should be indoors and be cared for since he is sick. ME recalls:

My community does not accept me when I am wearing shorts, without my artificial legs or when I am in a wheelchair, they shout at me and say I mustn't walk like that [laughing]

ME laughed with confidence, dismissing the perception of the community about him that he is 'sick' therefore he should not expose his sickness to society. The family support gave him this confidence to accept himself and face the world as he is.

From my observation of students with impairments within the students body. I found them very comfortable with their condition, they do not feel pity. I observed ME without

his artificial leg and moving up and down with other students. I realized that, in most of the cases it is society's perceptions and attitudes which discriminate against people with impairments. It would be the able-students who would look away because they feel shy to look at him. I saw dedication and obligation in these students with impairments to fulfill the goals of being at an institution of higher learning, rushing from point A to point B, obliged by rules that bind every student, with no exception. In most cases, it is the members of the community who feel pity for students and they may try and help without asking the students whether they need help or not.

Members of the community will always be divided. There would be those who understand that a person with impairment is not sick and would accept the condition in an individual. NB's story:

My grandmother did not know what to do about me, she was advised by the priest to send me to a school and he even got the information about the school.

The priest understood that NB could go to school because she was not sick, she had an impairment. It was his advice that opened the doors for NB. The priest might also been aware that the schools in their community were unable to accommodate NB and more facilities were going to be needed.

MA said:

My mother would be assisted by our neighbour to take me to hospital because there was no car at home then.

In these stories, community members are seen being helpful to the parents/guardians of children with impairments, breaking the stereotypes and prejudices against those with impairments, changing the notion that people with impairments are 'objects and helpless'. Sometimes stereotypes go hand in hand with ignorance. Usually people hold to the social norms which were instilled to them even if such norms are not proving to be fair and equitable to others. NB said people in her community were amazed at how she managed to further her studies. This is a sign of not being well informed about impairment and using their own assumptions about people with impairments, thinking

that they are 'sick'. Lack of personal experience with disability may also contribute in the behaviour of community. The same situation could possible happen with teachers when facing the challenging situation of students with impairments without prior personal experiences or advice. Getting more knowledge about disability/impairment is difficult because it is not a subject that is openly discussed. NB mentioned that there were other children with impairments in her area but she is the only one who furthered her studies with the help of the information given by the priest to her grandmother. Maybe the understanding of members of her community about how to treat people with impairments is only to institutionalize them.

4.2.3 Personal development

From my observation, I saw the participants committed to achieve their goals within the institution. Students with impairments are taking individual responsibility for their lives within the institution. It came out from the data that each student is acting for himself/herself without questioning their rights as students, they are not working together or collectively. Acknowledging the fact that these students are self-sufficient but as students of the institution, they should be aware of the facilities /resources that may be useful to them. I observed some of the students visiting lecturers to sort out their academic problems. Such an act made me realize that these students are able to be independent when given the opportunities within a suitable environment. They would prefer to talk for themselves. MA said:

I can talk for myself whenever there is a need, I do not believe in sending people to talk for me.

As much as parents/guardians are involved in the life of their children, they gave them choices to choose what was best for them. NB said:

I have been looking for something that is relevant to my impairment and I enjoy it. That does not mean that there are no problems, but I am happy to do the programme.

NB was able to sort out the problems she faced with her lecturer, although some were beyond her ability to convince the lecturer but she was able to voice her concerns.

MD said;

I am comfortable with the programme that I am doing, I experienced problems but I have been able to conquer some of them. I cannot climb the steps or use the step ladder but that did not stand in my way of doing the programme.

MC:

I experienced problems when I came here, but I would not give up.

Students with impairments showed determination and willingness to achieve goals regardless of barriers which some of them face. They were aware of these and they could not do anything about them. Participants showed confidence in themselves in conquering some of the barriers that they may face. They believed in themselves that they have a potential besides the fact that there were aspects within the chosen programmes that challenged them and that they might not be able to do but they persistently stayed on the programmes.

Success, fulfillment of dreams and achievement increases self-image in one's life. It seems the participants' dreams are being fulfilled. MB:

I liked accounting very much when I was at school and I knew that I would like to do something with accounting when I furthered my studies. I am glad I do not have problems with it.

MA:

I liked computers, that what I wanted to do from my young age, that is why I had registered for Computer Science before I came here.

NB knew that her future is in her own hands and she had to do something in order not to be a burden to others. She recalls what the priest said to her grandmother that she has to go to school in order not to be a burden to others.

NB:

I did not want to stay at home and do nothing, being bored and start feeling sorry for myself and thinking more about my impairment and also blaming God for my impairment.

From the responses of the participants, it is clear that they are determined to get education which will be the key to their future. Adams et al (2006) emphasized that students should develop a sense of empowerment and reduce the likelihood of being helpless. The support from their family structures also assisted the students to reach the level they are. The attitudes of these students dispute the perceptions of some members of the society who associate impairment with sickness and helplessness.

4.3 Resources:

4.3.1 Financial assistance

All students who cannot afford to pay tuition and residence fees on their own, usually apply for financial assistance which is provided by the government. This financial assistance is not selective, any student who meets the requirements including students with impairments, are granted aid. Disability grants should also be provided for students with impairments but most students have no knowledge of how to apply for this. The National Financial Assistance Scheme offices are situated within the institution. Student's experiences in regard to financial assistance are almost the same. NB, NA, MB, ME, MC were all offered assistance. MA was saying:

I learnt of financial assistance from the application forms and I asked the other students where I could find the offices. Officers were very helpful.

The students felt they were part of the student body when the process of financial assistance was unfolding. All the participants who are recipients of this fund commended the officials. They were considerate of them because the set –up in the waiting room could not accommodate wheelchairs, so they were allowed to be helped first on as they come in.

MB is also getting assistance but it is through the Department of Labour. Although the application of financial assistance is done at a different place, it is still coming from the same source. Students felt that they being not singled out but were part of the student body in the process.

I am sponsored by Department of Labour, I fill in the same application form just like the one which is filled in by other students, but my sponsor goes beyond tuition and residence fees. It also provides my accessories. The problem with the government as a provider is that it takes too long to give what it has promised.

All the students are given the same treatment when applying for financial assistance, except for MB whose financial assistance is extended to accessories. Maybe if all the students with impairments were working together rather than individually, the others would have benefited from the knowledge that MB has. MB has been sponsored by DoL from the previous institution, unlike the others who obtained financial assistance when they joined this institution. There is a possibility that the institution has no idea of the extended funds which could be provided to students with impairments.

Participants commended the courtesy of the officials but complained about the lack of information, such as a disability grants which they heard of but they do not know who to approach. It was not easy to find the offices unless one had asked.

4.3.2 Advisory service offices

Around the world, there is a shift in people's perceptions about people with impairments. In South Africa, within the office of Presidency, there are individuals with different impairments who are looking at the needs of people with impairments. There are also organizations which are looking at the interest of people with impairments such as Disabled People in South Africa (DPSA); Office on the Status of Disabled Person (OSDP); South African Federal Council on Disability (SAFCD). These organizations are fighting to ensure the rights of people with impairments. They try to ensure that people are educated towards understanding the needs and issues pertaining to people with impairments while at the same time keeping an eye on the services that should be

provided for them, keeping things on the agenda so that they can be dealt with. This would also challenge the invisibility aspect of people with impairments by those in charge and it will become more difficult to ignore those issues which have been raised.

The South African White Paper 6 identified the lack of appropriate and adequate support services for people with impairments which become a barrier to them (DoE, 2007). This is corroborated by participants of the study who are concerned with the absence of the advisory offices which could help them with all the questions and requirements that they have. MC commented:

The office was there but due to the merger, it was not used much, although it was under student governance, it was there. We are the members of the organization that brought changes into our residences, particularly.

NA knows of the organization but she does not agree with MC because her concerns were not attended to by the organization:

DASA (Differently abled students association) was in existence when I joined the institution and they informed me about it but it was not effective. We had a meeting and they asked me to write down my concerns, as they were going to meet the DVC, but nothing came about. What I noticed was that there was no specific person to assist us with our concerns, the members of DASA were on their own.

Organizations are important but they are not always successful, especially if they are not powerful. They may be sidelined if they are controlled by a minority group. They become invisible and not heard. So such organization may not have an influence on those who have power.

The other participants also complained about the lack of an office which could assist them on registration and also on other matters. NB said:

I did not know where to find people who can help me. if we had a help desk, it would assist us in knowing most of the things which are useful to us. I have never heard of DASA.

MB expressed himself strongly about the lack of the office and the organization which should have advocated for them. His concerns are not only for the present students but he wishes for the inclusion of other students with different impairments.

Students Representative Council has an office but students with impairments do not have. I think it is important to have a coordinator. There is more to be done by that person together with DASA. We need an office which will take care of our concerns like UKZN, there they have a Disability Office. Those little things may not matter to other people but are important to us. The institution is trying hard to accommodate students using wheelchairs, but what about other impairments? There are no visually students with impairments here, the deaf are only doing IT, what if one wants to do something other than IT?

Adams et al (2006) argue that higher education systems still reflect the social inequalities which were created a long- time ago that were based on fitting students into already available institutions without assessing their needs. The advisory services office is seen by the participants as the vehicle which will inform the lecturers as to what the students need per programme and also assist in assessing the students' needs, as they emerge, due to new developments.

MD who could not be accommodated in a shuttle bus to another campus, requested the security guard to take him to another campus but could not be helped. He blamed a lack in the advisory services office because nobody is specifically designated to assist or deal with the needs of students with impairments.

The office would have known that the bus could not accommodate me.

One of the participants got sick and he had to go the hospital. Because of the unavailability of office staff to give help, he had to travel on his own then to take a taxi to the hospital.

I was very sick and I had to go to Chief Albert Luthuli and there was no other way except to catch a taxi from Old Dutch Road

Old Dutch Road is a very busy road with minibuses. It is not safe for a wheelchair user to use the road unaccompanied. MD also had to use his wheelchair from Berea residence to Berea City campus, going through the same road, going past the market place which is busy. Around that vicinity, are bus ranks and minibus ranks which make the place overcrowded. The area is known for mugging. The life of this participant has been endangered by the lack of someone who could take the information to those in charge of the institution.

Gathering from the data given by students, it is evident that students have never challenged the institutions on their rights as students. Each student is concerned with her/his own survival. For example, NA wanted to visit the (then) Vice Chancellor, for her own personnel problems but could not, because the building is inaccessible. With her failing attempt to meet with management, she never pursued other means. The students have never questioned their rights as students who are registered and paying fees within the institution. They accept the conditions at face value without asking the institution to provide what is due to them.

MA and MD are not the only ones who use the wheelchairs for long distances. MB also had to go to Department of Labour to query his application for accessories.

I just go down West Street to DoL whenever there is something that I need from them.

Due to the lack of a coordinator the office which deals with students with impairments has left the students to cope by themselves. All participants were concerned with the lack of the office help and the information that they should be getting like disability grants which they had heard of but they did not know how to get the information about them. The responsibility is on the students with impairments to get together and make their voices heard, it is their constitutional rights to be provided with essential needs.

4.3.3 Staff development

The lack of awareness of students with impairments by the institutional community came out from the interviews. Those participants who had to attend lectures from Ritson campus to ML Sultan campus had to make arrangements with their lecturers because they may be delayed due to congestion on the pathway. If the staff members were aware of the students with impairments' problems, they should have accommodated them. NB confirms that, she had experienced a problem in the computer laboratory and she talked to her lecturer:

I used to come late to the lab and I would find the space in the first and middle row of computers, which is completely wrong for me [sic]. Students do like to sit at the back (laughing). I do know why. So I asked Miss to provide a computer at the back because there is enough space for a wheelchair there but not in the other rows. Miss took it upon herself to explain to the students that they must always leave one computer for me.

This confirms that students can advocate for themselves. In this instance, the lecturer responded positively to student's request. Maybe she had no previous idea how to treat the student, maybe the lecturer was afraid to ask, but after being aware of the need of the student, she was able to accommodate her. There has been a mutually satisfying compromise between the two of them. Lecturers need to be informed how to accommodate the needs of students with impairments. However often lecturers have negative responses and perhaps refuse to recognize that to accommodate a student with impairment may only require a small adjustment.

MC said:

I told my lecturer that I am unable to attend his lecture since the venue had steps. He told me that he had nothing to do with that, it was my problem. I ended up not attending for the whole year, since it was a year's course.

It has been highlighted that students with impairments have never questioned their rights, they acted independently even in situations where they should have asked. The

fact that MC, having been registered and paying fees but not receiving the same treatment like other students, should have been an issue to be taken seriously by him or reported the matter to authorities. The fact that the student accepted the lecturer's decision may be setting a precedent for others in a similar situation instead of changing the lecturer's attitude. The possibility is that the student was too vulnerable to pursue the matter further because he was the only one with impairment in that programme.

The above stories of the students indicate attitudes and lack of awareness or care from some members of the institution. Once the members of the institution recognize that students with impairments are part of the institution, they may begin to change their attitude and also recognize the barriers which disable these students and make plans to overcome these. What was expected from the lecturers was to show awareness of the problem that the students were facing and think of ways of helping them. Perhaps it needs to be made clearer to the community of the institution that it is the responsibility of each member to adhere to the inclusive ethos and values of institution to treat each individual with dignity whether one has impairment or not.

The lecturer's attitude may have been caused by frustrations of not knowing what to do if they have not been informed about the students with impairments. The exclusion of these students may not be intentional but it may be caused by the lack of awareness or by socialization within the institution. The lecturer may have viewed this matter as the student's problem, without considering the other factors such as the venues/facilities which are used for lectures, or he might have been faced with a challenging situation which he/she has no idea of how to handle. The lecturers might have been in a dilemma themselves, they expect to receive support from the administration in order to be able to support the students. In fact this should be in a hierarchy form: institution above →staff →students. The other possibility is that the students with impairments are invisible in terms of providing them with the resources which are necessary for their living.

4.4 Physical dimensions:

4.4.1 Buildings/venues/lifts

Parents/guardians may have experienced emotional problems from society when their children were 'invisible' in the eyes of society and they decided to send them away to boarding schools. This 'invisibility' of children with impairments may be expressed in different forms such as the absence of ramps, appropriate transport for wheelchairs and buildings with steps. Vlachou (1997) states that some parents took their children to special schools as a way of protecting them from harsh environment. MB recalls:

My mother sent me to a local school but I couldn't cope and with the assistance of social workers she got an appropriate school for me.

Quinn (1988) supports the idea of the protection of people with impairments stating that the management and interaction with wider society and its physical environment becomes strenuous for the family due to isolation experienced by those with impairments. The inaccessibility of buildings whilst the institution has registered students with impairments is an indication of these students not being recognized as part of the institution. NA wanted to visit the SRC offices which are situated in the first floor of Open House building. She never knew that there is a lift because it is at the back of the building. She could not access those offices because there is no information or sign which indicate the direction of lift. Participants indicated the urge of integrating with others but the physical environment is not friendly to them which may endanger or complicate their lives.

4.4.1.1 Lecture venues

The learning environment is very important for a student's progress. If the learning environment is not conducive enough, students might not perform as they are expected to. The lecture venues, the laboratories, the examination venues, the availability of means to get to the lecture venues, roads and pathways leading to lecture rooms are all equally important for effective learning. The South African White Paper 6 also identified inaccessible and unsafe buildings as a barrier to students with impairments (DoE,

2001). It should be understood that effective learning may not take place if the learner is not feeling comfortable. Unesco (1994) recommends that education systems and programmes should be designed and implemented to take into account a wide diversity of characteristics and needs. Mercer & Barnes (2003) state that other people with impairments experience discrimination within the society because of the way the society is organized. Most of the stories of the participants in this study are the same as they mostly use the same venues for their lectures. MC, MF and NA had the same concern about DG1 lecture venue, which has recently been made accessible to students who use wheelchairs. The problem of exclusion which these participants experienced due to the inaccessibility of this venue, at least would not be experienced by the coming generation. It rest with the current students to put pressure to those charged with governance to make all the venues accessible.

Adams and Brown (2006:32) emphasize the importance of the staff being responsible for providing the learning environment so that students with impairments may not be disadvantaged. Jenkinson (1997) took it further when saying that teachers/lecturers feel threatened by having to cope with a student with impairments, they feel ill-equipped to deal with them. The institution has the information from MIS, It has to use that information to assist the staff to be aware of students with impairments within their programmes.

NA:

I could not attend for a semester because of steps inside the lecture venue, I told my lecturer but he could not help. The other problem I experienced was the lifts. Most of the time the lifts at ML Sultan Campus have been out of order and that meant I couldn't attend, as my lectures were in second floor.

The other venues have these fixed desks which are not good for a wheelchair. I have to sit outside the desk in order to be comfortable. The problem comes when I have to take notes because I have to use my lap.

Again, the institution should have known about the set-up in lecture of venues and take it upon itself to provide the student with comfortable desk, a flexible desk. The student

did not pursue the matter and she coped as best could with her problem of not being to fit into as desk.

NB's experiences:

The venue has steps to the first/second floor. The lecturer told me that the venue is booked in advanced for our tests. She arranged with the security guard and other students to lift me up. I felt so humiliated and scared. My greatest fear was what if I was too heavy for them and they dropped me? What if one of them stumbled and fell, what would happen to me? I did not complain to the lecturer since I had told her and she could see that I was unable to climb the steps. It has happened several times and each time I have been lifted up, my blood pressures goes high!!

The student accepted the ordeal of being lifted because **she** was vulnerable, being a first year student. The lecturer could not help much in terms of placing **her** in another venue because that might be against the rules. The lecturer sees the student's concern, the student is visible to the lecturer but the lecturer seems to be powerless to take the matter up with the administration. So the hierarchal structure is broken because the lecturer and the student are the only ones who take the responsibility and the institution is left out of the picture. The situation is critical for both. The lecturer may be blamed if anything wrong happen to the student who is being lifted up, so the lecturer has the duty to report the matter to the administration.

MF's experience is the same as the others students but he was lucky enough to have the able-bodied students doing his course who took the problem as an opportunity to assist him. They were friendly and helpful, without hurting him.

My fellow students were kind enough to lift me up. It started as a joke when I found out that the lecture venue had steps inside and they just took me in. It ended up being their responsibility to do that. I felt comfortable, I was not scared, I do not know but I just trusted them. My fellow students were kind enough, I would have lost the year's work.

With the stories above, it shows that the institution has done less to recognize the presence of the students with impairments. It has become individual's problem together with those lecturers who feel sensitive to the needs of students. Students are struggling to solve their problems without any guidance from the institution, getting help from other students or from security guards is not sustainable but it is just a measure to rescue the student who is in need at that time.

Barnes & Mercer (2003:2) stated that the incapacity of people with impairments leaves them '*dependent on the productive able-bodied*'. The experience of MF did not bring any negative feelings. There is a possibility of internalized views which MF never said, or the other students who might felt having an obligation of taking care of him now and again. The other students did not consider it as a 'tragic problem' but as something that they could be part of. It appears to be a challenge to the institution to make adjustments or to have a team of people who would assist the wheelchair users where they could not access the venue but the question is, would the institution be willing to provide such a service? Can this practice be left like it has been done without the clear policy which states the stance of the institution in regard to the inaccessible venues which are used by students with impairments?

Within the world of impairments, there are many contradictory situations, lack of community support, social isolation, success and failures alongside a sometimes caring and loving society. The South African government with its inclusive policies should have made it compulsory for institution to have inclusive policies which clearly state how inclusive practices must be implemented. The example quoted above is one of that shows that society members can take responsibility without offending the individual who is different. These students could receive assistance but they are the ones who have to dictate how they should be assisted. An example is given by one of the participants who did not like the idea of being pushed by strangers without asking for assistance; she feels offended. It came out strongly from the participants' responses that students do not like to be helped without being requested, whether they need help or not. They like to feel self-sufficient.

MA:

I do not like when people just help without telling me, as if I am sick.

I have observed these students moving around with their books at the back of their wheelchairs or on their laps. They seem to be comfortable with the situation. Friends may accompany them, but do not carry their books instead they may push them when they approach the sloping areas.

From the stories above, the lecturers were not expected to rebuild the venues or demolish the steps, but to show concern and find a reasonable means of assisting the students. In most of the stories of the students, it appeared that the students are supported by their peers and the students themselves go and ask their lecturers for help but nothing has been done by the institution in order to acknowledge their problems.

In the research by Fuller et al (2004), students with impairments identified some of the lecturers as approachable and helpful to students.

MB and MA bravely talked to lecturers:

I requested my lecturers to allow me to write in one of the venues which are accessible such as S10 and Ritson hall. They did not have a problem with that. They easily understood. For those subjects with 'calculations', I asked for extra time, then the lecturer would decide whether or not she/he would give me time before the paper or afterwards.

MA had also the same experience of advocating for himself:

If I have a problem in the lab, my lecturer helps me, if the computer that is available does not have enough space for a wheelchair, my lecturer makes arrangements.

I talk to my lecturer when there is a test or examination, I ask for extra time because my hands were affected when I started to get sick. I can talk for myself.

Participants all stressed the need for an office which would assist in helping with their needs and take steps in rectify those things that are preventing the students from enjoying being part of the institution. Students with impairments have to adapt themselves within the environment, instead of an environment changing to accommodate these students. Mittler (2000) calls this set-up 'integration'.

It is encouraging to know that the students have recognized the lecturers who are helpful. MF and MD commended the lecturers who were able to assist them in the laboratory. Oliver (1996:22) states that people with impairments do not need to be talked down to in 'lay terms'. He encourages people with impairments to address their own issues which will increase their independence.

Computer laboratories are on the first floor and the passage way is steep. Mostly, the students are pushed by their friends to reach the laboratories. The other laboratory is situated on the wing where there is a lift. So the students could use the lift and take the direction towards his/her laboratory, but the problem that is experienced most of the time, is that lifts are not working continuously in the institution.

MB:

If the lift is not working, I have to go around the long route in order to reach the lab, it is very tiring.

MB had to write a test which was schedule to be conducted in a venue which was not accessible to him, so he arranged to write in the second floor of the building. The lift was not working. I observed him using the longer route to reach the first floor and he had to be lifted up to the second floor. Students and security guard had to take him down after he finished his paper. I stood and watch the whole process and I was thinking about him, the effect it has on him, his dignity as well as the effect on the other people who are assisting him.

While MB feels that the long route is tiring, MA takes it positively:

It is an exercise because I need to exercise now and again, I don't attend the physiotherapist anymore unless I am sick.

Problems about lifts in the institution have been raised repeatedly by students. MD's comment:

My problem was when I was doing the other course, the lift was not going in the direction where my lectures were, and luckily I could walk with crutches, although it was tiring when climbing steps.

All participants complained about the condition of lifts within the institution that in most cases lifts are out of order and that leave some of them with no option except to stay away from lectures, if there is no other means for getting to the venue. Students felt pressurized to be lifted up by others if they have to write examination or tests although this is not what they like to be done to them. Maybe with prior arrangements, the students can be provided with lecture notes or the lecturer could use the consultation time to update the student. This is another responsibility of the institution which is ignored. Maybe it is the invisibility of the students which does not pressurize the institution to provide alternative means.

ME also could walk by using crutches but he complained that it is tiring too.

Shoo..., all my lectures were on the second floor and there was no way of not using a lift. If it was not working, that would mean I would have to go back to the residence to fetch crutches in order to attend otherwise I could not attend. Crutches are tiring but they are a solution for those who can use them.

MB commends the institution for the adjustments that they have undertaken in the Ritson Campus.

Ritson Campus is a wheelchair friendly environment. I do not have problems there. My nightmares come when I have to attend at ML Sultan Campus. The lifts are out of order most of the time. I was advised to get a disk for the staff members' lift. Well, the application took its time and meanwhile I was either late for lectures or did not attend at all. It was better after I had a disk, since I could use the staff's lift. Well, inside the lecture rooms, I sit on the side since the fixed chairs could not accommodate the wheelchair.

NB and MA agree with MB but argue about the pathways from the parking area to Ritson lecture venues and from Ritson campus to ML Sultan campus.

NB says:

The major problem is moving from Ritson Campus to ML Sultan Campus when one has only 5 minutes to reach the place. The pathway becomes so congested that you have to stop for others to pass. It is worse for me as I do not have an electric wheelchair. Pushing myself sometimes is slow.

I explained about the problem to my lecturer I experience on the way to the lecture room, luckily she understood and she did not think that I was disrespectful of her. Even if I am late, I just walk in without problems.

The problem is the pathway which is too narrow and it does not allow the influx of students from one campus to another to move fast. For NB, she has to give way for other students so that she does not hurt them. Again, student is taking the responsibility of reporting the problem which is a physical environment problem, but since it affects her, she has to be polite and explain the reason for being late. A student may miss part of the lecture due to a situation which is disabling to her.

From the stories above, it shows that there are areas which enable and disable the students with impairments. Some students have taken initiative to inform their lecturers of their needs. Some lecturers co-operated well to students' needs, others acted with confusion as they did not know what to do. It is encouraging when the students speak so well of some lecturers who showed the willingness to assist and learn of the ways of including the students within the group. Participants also commended the institution for making other areas to be accessible to wheelchair users.

The negative experiences of students with impairments could possibly impact on their learning. MD was attending a programme which is offered at the City campus, but his major problem was getting there. The shuttle buses which transport students from one campus to another could not accommodate him since he is in a wheelchair. He had to travel in his wheelchair with his drawing bag from Mansfield road to West Street. This

problem was raised with one of the security company members on campus, but nothing was done to help him. The security department deals with transportation in campuses around the institution which is why the student reported to them. He felt that being unable to catch the bus, was his personal problem and he alone had to sort out an alternative, otherwise, he would not attend. It was his problem, alone.

The students have to cross Mansfield Road which is very busy all the time. The minibuses and motor cars do not take notice of the wheelchairs. It may be possible that the motorists were not expecting students in wheelchairs in this vicinity. The students have to wait for so long before they get an opportunity to cross the road. The same road becomes slippery if it is raining and rain affects the wheelchairs. MB commented:

I do not attend if it is raining because the motor of the wheelchair is sensitive to water, I can't use the umbrella.

I observed a student leaving the campus after his lecture and it was raining. He waited outside the lecture room until the rain went down, so that he could go. I thought of the difficulty he would be experiencing if he had to go to another campus to attend the lecture. Surely he would not be able to go under those conditions. The only assistance that could be offered to him at that point was to take him by car which needs to be negotiated.

MA concurs with MB about the use of umbrella. MB knew about the arrangements at UKZN University whereby students who use wheelchairs are fetched from residences by a control car. The use of control cars could be negotiated between the management and an individual who would be in charge of advisory services, because that person would have a schedule of students' whereabouts.

The participants commended the libraries in the two campuses in which they are closely based. Both B.M.Patel (LM Sultan campus) and Alan Pittendrigh Library (Steve Biko campus) are accessible to students in wheelchairs. The only problem experienced by students is that they can not reach books which are placed on high shelves but they know that they have to ask for help from the librarian assistants. I have personally seen students using wheelchair struggling to get books from high shelves.

4.4.1.2 Residences

It has been stated earlier that most of the participants stay in the residences except for one who stays at home with his parents. Students occupy three residences which are Berea, Student Village and Corlo Court. Residences are part of the institution and students have to apply if they have to be provided with accommodation. Students mentioned that the application forms for residences do not ask whether one has an impairment or not. One participant was placed in one of the venue which does not have bath facilities but have shower facilities while he could not use the shower facility. Residences are as important to the learning environment as formal lectures venues. This is the place which serves as a home for students. Since the students' impairments differ in degrees, some are comfortable in performing certain tasks whilst others are not. When talking to NB she said:

I am able to cook and do my washing but my problem is the hanging line which is too high for me. Each time I have to do washing, I have to ask my roommate if she would be available to hang my clothes or I would have to wait for my family to visit and then do I do my washing while they are with me.

Some areas are not conducive for people with impairments. Amongst the other things which were mentioned by the participants were the corridors which are too narrow, door handles which are too high, door-steps, the restaurant or cafeteria which is situated in the upper level of the Sport Centre building, and uneven ramps/pavements. MB commented:

My room is cozy, the only problem is the door handle which is a little bit high for me. The hanging lines are accessible as well as the kitchen,

NB also praised the room where she stays because it has all the facilities that she needs. However:

I need somebody all the time to lift me up when getting into my room because of the step in front of the door and also to open the door itself

I happen to observe NB arriving from lectures and she was met by few girls who were rushing to push her wheelchair up the steep hill to her room. What fascinated me, was the approached of these girls. They acted as if they have been waiting for her to come. One took the keys from her bag and opened the door, lifted the wheelchair up the step and they left her with goodbyes. This was the act of goodwill from the people that she stays with. It has become a routine but she enjoys their company and she feels comfortable to be with them.

There are people who are in charge of the residences. Hopefully, they have seen the student with impairment struggling to get into his/her room. The availability of the other students to assist her does not solve the long-term problem of the student with impairment. When asking the student about this problem, she has never reported it but even other students who are not staying in this residence are aware of the problem. MA said:

I would like to stay at Corlo Court, but the door step is too high.

MA, MD and ME agree on that conditions of the residence where they stay it is good but minor changes need to be done.

The ramp in the entrance needs a little bit of adjustment, it needs to be flattened a bit.

What came up from all the participants (from all three residences) is that TV rooms are inaccessible. For NA, MB, MA, MD and ME, TV rooms are on the second floor and the participants are unable to climb the stairs. For NB, the TV room is on the ground floor.

TV room is on the ground floor, I have to go around to the main gate, which is far, in order to access it. I would need some one to assist me because the passage leading to the rooms is steep when you come up and very sloppy when going down. They bought me one at home so that I could watch it in my room.

The inaccessibility of TV rooms excludes the students from socializing with other students. South African policies promote that that people with impairments should be provided with a supportive environment (ODP, 1997).

The cafeteria which is used by students to get their meals used to be in the upper level of the Sports Centre. MA had a problem of getting there and he used to ask other students to get food with his meal card. Sometimes he would go without food if the people he trusts are not available. At least now, the cafeteria has been moved to an accessible environment where he could go.

MA alone reported that he does like to go to parties with his friends as well as to visit them in other residences but the friends should help him where he needs help. This was a contradictory behavior to other participants who indicated that they did not like to go to parties. MB commented:

I am not a party-animal, there is a lot of alcohol at these parties and I hate alcohol.

NA and NB both expressed less enthusiasm of going to parties. NB said the friends invite her but she has never been comfortable about going.

What if the environment is not wheelchair friendly and I have to be a burden to my friends?

This indicates that students wish to be self-sufficient and be able to stand up for themselves rather than be dependent to others. This is a challenge to make the surroundings accessible to students with impairments so that they would not be excluded. Such exclusion may become discrimination to them.

It emerged from the participants that friends play an important role into their lives and friends are always available to assist whenever there is a need. Friends' assistance is needed when students have to be pushed to and from residences to lecture venues and in areas which are too steep or uneven.

4.5. Institutional practices:

4.5.1 Students' Representative Council

Durban University of Technology has a Students' Representative Council which attends to the needs of the student body. This organization meets regularly to tackle issues which affect the students; even those students who have problems. Students with problems approach this organization to act on their behalf. Matters pertaining to accommodation in residences, finances in terms of Tuition fees, Residence fees and Financial Aids are some of the issues handled by the Students' Representative Council. Meetings are called to discuss these issues. From my investigation I found that SRC does not have a policy which guides them as how to assist students with impairments. According to students with impairments, they have never attended any meeting. NB said:

I do not have much information about the SRC but I know that they look after students' needs. I have never thought of anything that I could report to them and I do not know where I could find them except when they have a meeting. Unfortunately I have not attended their meetings because they are sometimes held at ML Sultan which is too far for me.

MA concurs with NB:

I have never attended any meeting. I don't hear of the meeting or I would hear after it has been held.

NA differed from the other students because she knew about SRC but her problem is to reach them since the offices are at the Open House building which has no lift according to her knowledge.

Even if I wanted to meet the SRC, I can't because the building has no lift only steps. In the absence of DASA, we should be accommodated by SRC because we are part of students' body.

Some of the students were unaware of the services that were offered by the SRC. Those who knew about the SRC did not know where the offices were except for NA who knew. Due to lack of information, NA never knew that Open House building has a lift which is behind the building but there is no sign which indicates where to find it. What emerges from the students is that they contribute a levy towards SRC but they never question its use. MA commented:

I do not know who they are and I assume that they care less about us as we are few in number and they have never even talked to me.

Students felt exclusion by these body and they have adopted a negative attitude towards the body as well. Mostly they felt invisible to the management of this body.

4.5.2 Sporting activities

Students engage in sport activities as part of relaxing and socializing. The students with impairments also engage in sporting activities for the same reasons as other students. Some of them have played sport before joining DUT. ME and MF have played basketball and they have been very active. MA was also in basketball

I used to play basketball with able-bodied students but it was not for competition, we never played seriously. When the able-bodied had to practice for serious matches, we were not part of the game because we could hurt them with our wheelchair. So when we felt like playing, we would play together. We never played as a team of disabled students. Since I came here at DUT, I have never played, because I haven't seen anyone on a wheelchair playing. The facilities are there, but I am scared to play with others (able-bodied students)

Students felt that if there was an office to handle their concerns, they would be able to mention the sporting facilities that are appropriate for them to the person in charge and he may even know. NA is also not involved in any sporting activities although she liked table tennis but she felt that she does not have enough speed to be able to play efficiently and become competent.

I tried but I had a problem with the coach, he seems not to have patience as I could not run as fast as I am expected.

The same is felt by NB, who has never been involved in any sporting activities. She mentioned that she liked table tennis but she never attempted to play here. When she came to DUT, she had not seen anybody playing, she is not sure whether it is available or not. MB has been involved in hand soccer.

I used to play hand soccer at my previous school but I came here and I never thought of organizing the other guys so as to play it again. I do not know whether they would be interested in the game.

Those students that were not previously involved in sports, expressed their concern that they would like to have facilities which could be shared amongst the universities in order to reduce costs since local universities have only a handful of students with impairments. MA and MB both expressed the love of soccer and socializing with other students. Again, students felt the need for someone to coordinate all the processes. Students suggested the sharing of facilities with other universities. If the institutional community truly believes that the students with impairments are not sick, they should consider providing what could be provided to other students, but it should be appropriate to their sporting needs.

4.5.2 Institutional policy in regard to impairments

The South African government has policies which state how to accommodate all people with impairments. The South African National Plan in Higher Education (2001) requested each institution of higher education to state how it is going to provide for students with impairments. The request was not compulsory for the institution to accommodate all types of impairments.

Participants were concerned that they are not sure whether they are known within the institution or not because no policy document which has been given to them which mention their presence within the institution and what rights they do have as part of the institution.

4.6 Conclusion

In the beginning of this chapter I mentioned that the students provided more information about their experiences at DUT, some of the information could not be included because of the categorization which has been done. The students with impairments have good experiences as well as bad experiences like any other students studying in higher education institutions. For these students, most of the problems are lack of awareness, lack of facilities which could make their lives easier and also the inaccessibility of places which are significant for their learning. The exclusion against the students with impairments exists without being noticed by able-bodied people because it is something that the able-bodied do unconsciously, closing the heavy door before him! This is the issue that needs to be addressed by those who speak up on behalf of these students. Lack of advisory service offices adds to the exclusion since the needs of these students are not known to those who should address them. The environment which is exclusive should be changed to an environment which is inclusive. Students came up with recommendations which could change their lives to a better life. Oliver states that:

'poor access to educational buildings coupled with disablist attitudes of many educators meant that a thick skin was a necessary pre-requisite for kicking open the door of educational opportunity. I soon realized that if that door was not only to be kicked open for those individuals powerful enough to do so, but was also to remain open.....' (Oliver 1996:11)

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

The participants of this study generously shared their views about their experiences as students of DUT. The Government policy such as Integrated National Disability Strategy promotes the inclusion of people with impairments in the workplace, social environment, political sphere and sport arena. It is supported by White Paper 3: Transformation of Higher Education which promotes access to higher education to all irrespective of race, gender, age, class or disability (DoE, 1997:7).

Durban University of Technology has a policy for students and staff with impairments unfortunately the students does not know about this document. I assumed that the presence of the document would assist the student to understand their rights within the institution. Findings in the study revealed that students were experiencing barriers in other areas of the institution because the parts of the environment are not accessible although there are some areas that are accessible to such students. Amongst other things of concern by the participants was lack of an advisory services office, inaccessibility in the learning environment, adjustments needed in residences, a Students' representative Council that was not sensitive to their needs and lack of suitable sport activities.

5.2 Resources:

5.2.1 Advisory services office

All the participants indicated concern about the lack of an office which could assist for students with impairments. Participants blamed the lack of offices on a lack of recognition within the institution and that this has resulted in a degree of exclusion. Participants believed that the presence of an office, with a coordinator would be able to assist in addressing the needs of students with impairments. Participants felt that the individual becoming a coordinator should have the knowledge of problems of impairment in order to be able to research the appropriate information to assist these

students. Participants indicated that they lack access to much important information because of the lack of a coordinator, as well as the political will of the administration. With the office and coordinator participants would be able to know where to send their requests which are essential for their living such as transport and accessories.

Recommendations:

This office would:

- liaise with the management of the institution about the needs of the students;
- identify students with a variety of impairments;
- provide the students with relevant resources;
- hold meetings with the students on a regular basis to resolve any issues;
- make arrangements for students who need medical attention as well as counseling;
- guide the students who need financial assistance;
- provide appropriate transport to students with impairments;
- assess the conditions of residences before students are placed;
- make arrangements for students who cannot do their washing or cooking.

5.2.2 Staff development

Findings from participants indicated that the community at DUT, particularly the academic staff members are not aware of the students with impairments and their special needs and little has been done to inform the staff members as to what is expected of them if there is a student with an impairment in the programme

Recommendations:

- provide awareness campaigns within the community of DUT about the students with impairments;
- all members of DUT community be informed by means of a workshop as to how to obtain support to help the student with impairments;

- academic staff be informed when there is a student with impairment in his programme, given sufficient information of the kind of assistance he can provide.

5.3 Physical dimension:

5.3.1 Lecture venues

Students experienced problems with examination venues and lecture venues which are not suitable in terms of flexible desks or tables. Students had to be the agents of their own welfare in order to be able to cope with life within the institution when it comes to this regard.

Participants commended the institution for those venues which are accessible and also those which are being renovated in order to be accessible to students.

Examination and tests venues are not yet suitably planned so that the venues are accessible to students. Students experienced humiliation when they have to be lifted in order to be able to write examination with others. Other participants reported that if they are informed in advanced about a venue, they are able to negotiate with the lecturer to change the venue.

Recommendations:

Some of the buildings within the institution are designed in such way that it may be difficult to re-adjust them. Findings from students recommended that:

- with the assistance of the coordinator, most of the lecture venues should have flexible desks in order to accommodate the students who are using wheelchairs.
- laboratories should have spacious seats for wheelchairs;
- disks for lifts should be provided to students from the Advisory Services office at the beginning of the year;
- ramps in lecture venues should be lowered to accommodate the manual wheelchairs to move easily;
- lecturers should provide written materials for students with a slow writing pace;

- all examination venues should be accessible so that students with impairments could write together with their peers;
- students should be given a choice between oral and written examinations;
- lecturers assisted by the coordinator should identify students who need extra time during an examination;

5.3.2 Residences

It has been reported in the study that most of the participants utilize the residences around the institution for accommodation. Participants have acknowledged some of the adjustments which have been made in other residences, although they indicated that there are areas that still exclude their participation. Participants reported that TV rooms in residences still exclude their participation as part of the student body, because the TV room is situated in the upper level whilst for the other participants, the TV room is on the ground floor which is difficult to reach because of the steepness of the passage. Participants also indicated that door handles are still too high, ramps around the residences need improvement. The pavement which is mainly used by students needs to be reconstructed because it damages the wheelchair tires.

Recommendations:

Some of the residences were the first places that were renovated in order to be inclusive to all students but not all the residences are inclusive. It has been recommended that the institution should be willing to spend money in order to remove the barriers that exclude the students with impairments, from free access. These recommendations correspond with the recommendation from the government to make environments accessible to all. The following recommendations were highlighted:

- adjustable washing lines to accommodate the wheelchair users;
- hand showers for those students who cannot stand for long;
- steps at some doors should be removed, since they make the student dependent on somebody to be available to lift him/her up all the time when entering the room;

- at least one television should be le for available for students who are unable to climb stairs. It could be placed in the common room on a lower floor.
- door -handles should be lowered so that students are able to open their room doors;
- ramps towards rooms should be lowered/flattened.

5.4. Institutional practices

5.4.1 Sport activities

It has been reported that participants of the study are not involved in the sport activities but some of them are interested. Facilities were identified as 'lacking' for some sports activities and that has reduced the interest of the students. The South African White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) encourages access for all people in every sphere of life including sport activities. It may be concluded that the students with impairments are excluded because they are a minority and it may cost the institution a lot of money to make provision for the small group of students. One participant claimed to be able to play with able-bodied students but feared to hurt the other players with a wheelchair.

Recommendations:

Students acknowledged the cost of purchasing the sport facilities for a minor group of students and they recommended that institutions could share the cost of establishing the sports facilities with other surrounding universities and then the students could be transported to the centre. Such establishment would have table tennis facilities, hand soccer facilities, basketball and others.

5.4.2 Policy in regard to students with impairments

Participants reported that they are not sure of their rights as students with impairments since they are not invited by SRC in its meeting. DASA is not in full operation.

Recommendations:

- the institution should design and make available a written policy which clearly states the rights of the students with impairments;
- the institution should clearly state in its policy which impairment is it going to provide for in terms of infrastructure.
- this policy should be made available to all members of DUT community, prospective students and stakeholders of DUT.

5.5 General recommendations:

- Participants acknowledged the accessibility of the libraries but it would be more convenient to access the information online and place their request online rather than visiting the library and request the assistance to get the books off the shelf for the students.
- Registration at the beginning of the year/semester could be done online or the coordinator could assist the students so that they would spend less time in queues.
- Information should be disseminated to students before registration informing them of facilities which are available. An institution should market itself in order to meet the recommendations of the National Plan of 2001 by Minister of Education.
- Secretaries' desks, telephones and buzzers outside the department offices should be within the reach of students.
- Pavements which are used by wheelchairs users should be widened and resurfaced in order to protect the wheelchair tires.
- Ramps should be constructed at convenient areas for students such as Ritson car park area to reduce the distance travelled by the wheelchair users.
- Should the institution consider taking students with other impairments such as visual and hearing, tapes, Braille, web-based materials, screen reading software, computers without a mouse, e-learning and acoustics should be provided.

5.6 Conclusion

The study's intention has been to understand the experiences of students with impairments. Findings revealed that there are still areas within the institution which are restricting students with impairments from participating with others. The inclusion of students with impairments in the institution is a response to the call made by the government some years ago.

Challenges faced by the students with impairments could be resolved by the removal of the barriers which restrict their participation. This will restore the rights of students within the institution. The social model promotes the inclusion and development of ways and means of recognizing the barriers which restrict people with impairments from participating in the spheres of life. Likewise, it is also a challenge to the institution to change the practices which have been excluding the students with impairments into practices which are inclusive. This can be achieved if the institution works hand in hand with the coordinator and the students.

5.7 Limitation of the study

The study was conducted within Durban University of Technology and the participants were the students with physical impairments. Students who participated came from different departments and different faculties. The information about students with impairments was drawn from Management Information Systems within the institution. All the participants were attending two campuses; Ritson and L.M. Sultan campuses. Initially, the study was going to focus on students with physical and visual impairments. However, the institution does not have students with visual impairments at this time. The contributions of the visually challenged students would have broadened the study because their experiences would have been different from those of the physically challenged. The number of male students outweighs the number of female students. This is a question which could be answered by another research project. The kind of picture which is painted assumes that the females with impairments are not keen to further their studies.

The study does not represent a national view since it was based on a single form of impairment within a single institution and it was of only students. The study could be used as a base of further study which may include other ranges of impairments or more angles and perspectives in varying institutions of higher education in KwaZulu-Natal.

5.8 Further study

There is a room for further study within the institution as a response to the call from the government policy requirements from the White Paper 3: Transformation of Higher Education (1997) and the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) which emphasize the inclusion of all students irrespective of race, gender, age, class or disability. Further research could also explore the reasons for the limited number of females with impairments in the institution. I also suggest a further study on attitudes of academic and non academic staff members towards students with impairments be undertaken.

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ANNEXURE A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS

OPENING

1. Establishment of rapport
 - Introducing myself and shaking hands with the participant
2. Purpose
 - During our first meeting, I explained to you the purpose of meeting with you and interviewing you. Just to remind you, I am studying at UKZN, pursuing my Masters' degree in Higher Education. I am investigation the experiences of students with physical disability, students studying here in our institution. You are one of those students, that is why I requested you earlier on and I made you to sign the consent letter which is an agreement of the process that we are going to undertake together.
3. Motivation

This study is not going to be completed within short period, maybe it will be completed after you have left the institution. What is good about it is that the results will hopefully benefit the future generation to come. So, your contribution will be highly appreciated because it might change the mindsets and attitudes of other people.
4. Timeline

I will appreciate if we could meet at least once a week, during those days when you finish your lectures earlier. I will request 30 minutes of your time for each of the three appointments.

BODY

1. Tell me about your family background.
(Relationship with the sisters, brothers, extended family and others)
2. Tell me about the reaction of the community towards your impairment.
(community, family members reactions)
3. Tell me about the schools that you attended before joining Higher Education (DUT)
(special schools or mainstream)

4. Were you involved in any extra-mural activities?
5. Can you explain why you chose to study at Durban University of Technology and what programme are you studying.
6. DUT, as a learning environment, is it the same as the previous institution in terms of accessibility?
(What differences or similarities?, availability of resources that are essential to you)
7. The community of the institution involves various stakeholders like lecturers, management, administration offices such as Faculty office, Financial Aid and others. How was the reception?
8. Do you stay in residence? Tell me about life there.
(cooking, washing, bathrooms, rooms)
9. Have you seen any student with the impairment like yours? Do you meet to discuss the issues that affect you?
10. Do you have an organization which looks after your interests?
11. Are you aware of Students Representative Council, are represented there?
12. What do you think of DUT in terms of awareness of students with impairments?
(DUT community, physical infrastructures)

CLOSING

Thank you for your time, I really appreciate your contribution and I am positive that the information supplied would be useful. Is there anything that you would like to add on what we have talked about, something that would help this process to be successful?

Should I come across some information which is not clear, could I call you before the next appointment?

Thank you again, I am looking forward to our next meeting.

ANNEXURE B

Observation schedule -

All students were observed at different times.

(only specific features of the institutional settings were observed).

1. The situation and physical accessibility of the buildings
(buzz buttons, lifts, help desks)
2. Movements within lecture rooms, entrances, gates, corridors in residences;
3. Individual work stations – laboratories, examination venues desks
4. Logistics within the institution – time schedules from one venue to another



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ANNEXURE C

From: Lulu Jali
To: kistenp@dit.ac.za
Date: Tue, Sep 20, 2005 9:58 AM
Subject: Request for student with special needs

Hi!

Goodmorning, I talked to you yesterday about my research that I have to conduct and I am requesting you to kindly provide me with information of students with special needs if the institution does have. I know that it is a very confidential information which goes with ethics. I wonder if you do have students from Westridge High School, Kentmont High School (Bluff) If you do not have from these special schools, kindly check if you have disability students within the Institution.

Thanks Prabashnee

Lulu Jali
Auditing Dept.
x6712

ANNEXURE D

11 Cobban Road
BLUFF
4052

14 August 2006

The Deputy Vice Chancellor –Academic
Prof. Wallis
Durban University of Technology

Sir

I am an academic staff member of Durban University of Technology and I am stationed in the Department of Auditing.

I am currently pursuing my studies towards University of KwaZulu Natal, doing Masters in Education.

I would like to be granted permission to conduct my investigation in this institution.

I have attached my proposal.

Should you have any concern about the project, be free to contact my supervisor, Mrs Ruth Searle at 033 - 2606250

Thanking you in Advance.

Yours Faithfully



Lulu Fortunate Jali
Staff No: 40002746
3086712 (Office number)
jalil@dit.ac.za
Student No: 925330922 (UKZN)

ANNEXURE E

Department of Management Information

disability_lulu_2005

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FOR 2005

DISABILITY STATUS	FACULTY	TOTAL
Disabled but unspecified	Arts	2
	Commerce	4
	ESBE	2
Hearing (even with a hearing aid)	Arts	1
	Commerce	2
	Health	1
Multiple	Arts	1
	Commerce	1
	ESBE	3
Sight	Arts	2
	Commerce	7
Unknown	ESBE	2
	Health	2
TOTAL		30

NB: Data extracted from Hemis Database

Hi Lulu,

Number of Student with Disabilities :

2006 = 97

2007 = 124

2008 = 156

I am currently busy working on 2009 information and will mail it to you tomorrow.

Kind regards
Prabashnee Kisten
Dept. of Management Information
M.L. Sultan Campus
Durban University of Technology
Tel: 031 - 373 5128
Fax 2 E-mail : 086 674 0644
E-mail: kistenp@dut.ac.za

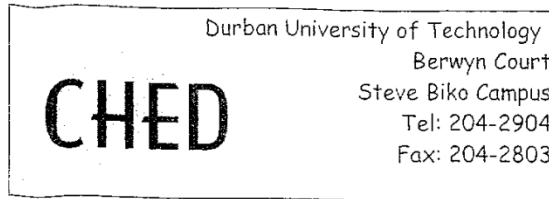
Hi Lulu,

Number of Student with Disabilities :

2009 = 141

Regards,
Prabashnee

ANNEXURE F



TO: PROFESSOR M WALLIS
(ACTING DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR : ACADEMIC)

FROM: ACTING DIRECTOR (CHED)

DATE: 6 SEPTEMBER 2006

ITEM: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION AT DUT BY MS L F JALI


The research study to be undertaken will show academic competence at masters level (NQF 8) which will assist Ms Jali to engage in further research. By looking at experiences of disabled students in Higher Education this study will surely contribute to redress and equity issues that the department and Institution are facing.

Furthermore, Ms Jali could be requested to report to DUT on the application of her findings to auditing Education once she has completed.

Thank you.



DELYSIA TIMM



14/09/06
Supported

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: ACADEMIC
DURBAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
P.O. BOX 1334 DURBAN, NATAL

ANNEXURE G

CONSENT DOCUMENT

Dear Participant

I am currently researching experiences of students with disability in Higher Education in South Africa for my Master in Education. My dissertation is entitled "Experiences of disabled students studying at one Higher Education institution in KwaZulu Natal" (Durban University of Technology)

Name of researcher: Lulu Jali

Supervisor: Mrs Ruth Searle

Contact details: 031- 4665093

031-2601388

e-mail : jali@dut.ac.za

Searle@ukzn.ac.za

The aim of the study is to examine the experiences of students with disabilities studying at Durban University of Technology in terms of learning environment, residence, leisure and other facilities. It will also heighten awareness about students with disabilities and their needs within DUT.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Questionnaires will be distributed to the students with disabilities and follow- up

interviews will be conducted individually. Such interviews will take about 20-30 minutes. Some students will be observed within the institution. All personal details of participants will be confidential. Data collected will be used in aggregate and anonymity will be provided in this way. The study hopes to shape the institutional policies for the future students with disabilities and also assist in making reasonable adjustments where there is a need.

I hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research project. I am aware that I can withdraw at any time.

.....

Participant

