EXPLORATION OF EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

BY

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK in the School of Social Work and Community Development, Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

DECLARATION

This is to confirm that the work submitted in this dissertation is my original work. It has not been submitted for a degree or diploma in any form to another institution. I also declare that where I used the works of other authors, I have referenced them in the text and in the reference list. This study was carried out in the School of Social Work and Community Development, University of KwaZulu-Natal under the supervision of Professor Carmel Matthias.

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Abstract

Research studies have indicated that people with disabilities in South Africa and across the world have difficulties in securing employment. The medical approach towards disability contributes to the negative attitudes, ignorance and stereotypes employers have about people with disabilities.

The aim of the study was to explore the employment experiences of students with disabilities who have studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The lack of previous research on this issue at UKZN motivated the researcher to undertake this research. Furthermore, since the researcher is a disability officer at UKZN, a number of students with disabilities had raised their employment frustrations with her which gave further motivation to investigate the underlying reasons. A qualitative research method was used to undertake this study. The sample used was an availability sample, comprising 21 interview subjects with disabilities who had graduated from UKZN in the period 2001-2006. An ecosystem perspective was used as a framework to guide the study.

The major conclusion of this study is that the majority of participants interviewed had difficulties in securing employment. Employers were reluctant to employ them, apparently fearing that they would not be able to cope on the job and because there might be additional costs incurred if they were employed. Visually disabled study participants also experienced difficulty accessing job advertisements. Inaccessibility of transport to access interviews and workplaces were a further obstacle for participants. The study also discovered that the limited number of subjects offered at high school impacted on the choice of tertiary courses participants wanted to take at the university as a result this caused dissatisfaction with degrees they obtained.

The findings in this study are consistent with a number of similar studies which revealed that people with disabilities are confronted with challenges in obtaining work. Regardless of established policies and programmes, unemployment among people with disabilities still persists.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my late mother Koleka Futshane. Your mothered support has encouraged me to undertake this study. Machisane, you taught me that through education you can achieve many things including ability to help others. Thank you Ma, you will always be remembered!

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADA   American Disability Act

CBR   Community Based Rehabilitation

DoE   Department of Education

DoL   Department of Labour

DoT   Department of Transport

DPSA   Disabled People South Africa

DRPI   Disability Rights Promotion International

DYSA   Disabled Youth South Africa

INDS   Integrated National Disability Strategy

LSS   Act Concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional
        Impairments (Sweden)

NDM   National Disability Machinery

OSD   Office on Status of Disabled people

SADA   South African Disability Alliance

SANCB   South African National Council for the Blind

UPIAS   Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation

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Chapter 1: Contextual and theoretical framework of the study

1.1 Introduction

According to Statistics South Africa (2005) and the Draft of the National Policy (Office of the President, 2007) there are approximately 2 255 982 people living with disabilities in South Africa. In the age groups 15-65, only 18.6% people with disabilities are employed, compared to 34.6% of non-disabled people who are employed (Statistics South Africa, 2005). These figures are similar to the figures provided in the World Bank report (2007). The Statistics South Africa (2005) report shows that 19% of people with disabilities are employed in South Africa as compared to the 40% employment rate of non-disabled people. According to the Office of the President (2007) there are approximately 12 162 people with disabilities who are competing in the open labour market.

In the categorization of disabilities, Statistics South Africa (2005) showed that the highest percentage (32.1%) of people with disabilities are partially sighted, followed by those with physical disabilities (29.6%). The provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape have the highest number of people living with disabilities. KwaZulu-Natal is estimated to have about 470 588 people living with disabilities and the Eastern Cape about 372 266 (Statistics South Africa, 2005). Africans were reported to be most affected group as compared to other racial groups (Office of the President, 2007).

Following worldwide trends towards inclusion, South Africa has created affirmative action policies to accommodate and advocate for the needs of people with disabilities. The abolition of discriminatory policies and legislation and the creation of new legislation and policies like the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) have had a profound impact on the life of people with disabilities.

The following section presents a description of the problem statement and a discussion of the rationale.

1.2 Description of the problem and rationale

As a result of enabling legislation and policies there is now an increased enrolment of students with disabilities into institutions of higher education. Crous (2004: 228) stated that

> Since the introduction of non-discriminatory legislation in various countries, there have been many changes in higher education in that colleges and universities have developed systems that provided access to qualified students with disabilities to participate effectively in academic and social programs.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal, for instance, graduated approximately 56 students with disabilities between the periods of 2001 to 2006. Thirty-eight percent of these graduates had visual disabilities (blind or partially sighted) followed by 14 students with other forms of disabilities and four with learning disabilities. In 2008, the University of KwaZulu-Natal enrolled more than 200 students with disabilities (Office for Students with Disabilities, UKZN, 2008). The university has shown its commitment and seriousness in integrating students with disabilities by launching a Policy on Students and Staff with Disabilities on 24 July 2004. The development of the policy was to act as a guideline to ensure that the needs of students and staff with disabilities are met. Section B14 (4) of the policy in particular clearly states that the "university will facilitate access to training and access of opportunities that will enable its students and graduate students with disabilities to develop appropriate work skills" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2004:18).

Even though the University of KwaZulu-Natal has enrolled students with disabilities and created a disability policy for such students (and staff), graduate students with disabilities still face problems when they seek employment. Naidoo (2005) in a study of the academic needs of visually impaired students noted students' frustrations in securing full-time employment. Naidoo (2005) recommended that more work needed to be undertaken with employers to encourage their employment of students with disabilities. Whitehead (2004) found that excessively high levels of unemployment result in those with disabilities working

in sheltered employment which is either offered by the state or by private welfare organizations and self help programmes which are not sustainable in themselves. Hennessey (2004:4), writing from an American perspective, reported that

> Although students with disabilities are enjoying unprecedented access and success in the postsecondary arena, with improved chances of employment in comparison to people with disabilities who have no formal education; they are not achieving the same employment and career outcomes after graduation as non-disabled peers.

The statistics show that the above is true of South Africa as well. Since the adoption of affirmative action policies, not much progress has been made in increasing the number of people with disabilities who participate in the open labour market.

The researcher is a disability officer working in the Disability Unit at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. One of her responsibilities is to offer counselling support to students with disabilities. Several graduate and non-graduate students with disabilities have raised their employment frustrations with her. These related to their inability to access full-time employment, and difficulties of adapting well in their working worlds. There has been no previous research on this topic at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and there is also very little empirical evidence in the literature about what is being done to facilitate employment of students with disabilities in higher education in South Africa. For the above reasons this research study set out to explore the experiences of graduate students with disabilities in seeking and obtaining employment.

1.3 Research aim

The aim of the study was to explore the employment experiences of students with disabilities who had studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4 Objectives

The study had the following objectives:

- To identify barriers to obtaining employment.

- To identify barriers that exist once employment is obtained.

- To identify university programmes available to help students with disabilities in gaining employment.

- To recommend strategies that can be implemented to meet the employment challenges of students with disabilities studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.5 Research questions

The research questions were as follows:

- What are the experiences of students with disabilities as they seek employment?

- What are the experiences of students with disabilities after employment is obtained?

- What employment support programmes are in place at the university to prepare students with disabilities for the world of work?

- What strategies need to be implemented to meet the employment challenges of graduate students with disabilities who studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal?

1.6 Underlying assumptions of the study:

The following were the key assumptions of the study:

- Current university programmes do not cater for the employment needs of students with disabilities.

- Despite the employment legislation, many employers are not willing to employ graduate students with a disability because this is regarded as being too costly.

- Employers lack knowledge of disability and how to support persons with disabilities.

- Certain disabilities impact on the ability to obtain employment.

- Structural barriers inhibit employment of people with disabilities.

- The selection of subjects at high school impacts on career choice at the university level and subsequently impacts on employability.

1.7 Value of the study

The study provides further knowledge in the area of disability as it explores the employment experiences of graduate students with disabilities. The knowledge itself highlights the employment-related difficulties, frustrations and experiences of graduates with disabilities. The findings of the study will help in developing strategies and programmes that could be implemented in assisting graduate students with disabilities to find work relevant to their qualifications. Moreover, the study identified challenges that this group of students face in the working environment, thereby informing employers about the needs of people with disabilities in order to fully accommodate them once they are employed. Although the study has been undertaken at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, it has the potential to serve as a guideline for the development of interventions that can assist students with disabilities in other institutions of higher learning. In the next section, the theoretical framework used to undertake this study is discussed.

1.8 Theoretical framework

In view of the fact that the focus of this study is on the exploration of employment experiences of students with disabilities, the researcher used an ecosystem perspective. In terms of ecosystems theory, in order to fully understand the functioning of an individual it is essential to understand the environmental context in which the individual functions and develops, because what happens in one part of the system will have a direct effect to the functioning of the whole system (Berger et al, 1996). This framework was useful in understanding students' experiences in relation to different systems that impacted on their obtaining employment.

The description of ecosystem theory given by Germain and Gitterman (cited from Healy 2005:136) is that it "encourages social workers to recognize that problems arise because of

a poor fit between a person's environment and his or her needs, capacities, rights and aspirations". For example, Hennessey (2004) has shown that people with disabilities have difficulties in securing full-time employment, so this means that there is 'poor' fit between people with disabilities and the environment which surrounds them. Thus the aim of the research was to identify this gap and advise on strategies that could be implemented in addressing the problem. The ecosystem perspective helped the researcher not to look at the individual alone because "human beings do not develop in isolation; they develop in a variety of contexts – environments which surround the individual human being and within which he is in constant interaction play a major role in development" (Huitt, 2003:3).

In the following paragraphs the four different levels of ecosystems theory will be discussed: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the ecosystem and the macrosystem (Huitt, 2003)**.**

Microsystems: This level comprises the individual and his/her immediate family and friends. It is where the individual would learn the beliefs and values of the family. Samovar and Porter (2004), for example, argue that culture is learned behaviour which is transmitted from one generation to the other. It is at this level where an individual would inherit and learn cultural values. For instance, a family which ill-treats a child with a disability as opposed to those who do not have a disability, would unconsciously teach others that children or people with disabilities should be treated differently. Even the disabled child would start believing in the distinction or accepting the ill-treatment. The argument therefore is that the microsystem has an immediate positive or negative influence on the individual.

Because the microsystem begins with the immediate family where the child learns the family's cultural beliefs, as the child grows older, he/she begins to learn the accepted standards of the people s/he interacts with. Very often parents of children with disabilities have difficulties in accepting the disability of their children. Some become emotionally distressed and consequently treat them unfairly compared to those without disabilities. Sometimes they may even lock them up in the home, feeling ashamed to let them be seen by others (Barnes and Oliver 1998). Murray and Cornell (1981) argue that the denial would surely hinder the child's progress and development.

In addition, birth of a child with a disability could cause strain and hardship in the family. For example, if the child has mobility difficulties the family would need to ensure that the house is renovated to accommodate the child's difficulties. The family would also need to worry about how the child goes to school – who will fetch him/her from school? All of this can cause tremendous strain on the family and on the individual. A family with no stable income could feel overwhelmed and distressed at having such a responsibility. In raising a child with disabilities other support networks and structures are essential.

Mesosystem: The mesosystem is characterized by interactions between the various microsystems. For example, it includes interaction between the school and the child. These interactions influence each other and eventually the individual too. For example, children who have been rejected by their parents due to their disabilities may have difficulties developing positive relations with their teachers at school, or with colleagues at work, and that may result in low self-esteem and the belief or impression that people with disabilities are unable to relate with others. In turn, this attitude may discourage employers from recruiting them. Employers may believe that they will be less productive at work compared to those without disabilities.

Murray and Cornell (1981) argue that the more linkage the child has with other settings, such as schoolmates, the more the quality of that child's development would be enhanced. But Barnes and Oliver (1998) noted that children with disabilities were restricted from interacting with other children because parents felt ashamed. Interaction with others is frequently very limited due to the prejudice that exists towards people with disabilities, and real integration with others may be something that disabled children only experience when they are sent away to special schools. Even though it has been fifteen years since we have democracy in South Africa, people with disabilities are still marginalized. They are still separated into special schools, not interacting with non-disabled peers.

Exosystem: According to Berk (2001:26) "the exosytem refers to social settings that do not contain the developing person but nevertheless affect experiences in the immediate settings. These can be formal organizations, such as the board of directors in the individual's workplace or health or and welfare services in the community". In this study the exosystem would be exemplified by the overall sum of resources that are supposed to nurture and

support the people upon whom the study focuses. These would include the availability and/or lack of disability structures, transportation, and the like. Lack of transportation to get to work or find employment, for example, can indirectly affect someone's employability.

Another example is that in South Africa there are disability organizations or structures that are meant to address the employment needs of people with disabilities. Among these are organizations like the Natal Blind and Deaf Society, the QuadPara Association and the Association for the Physically Disabled. These organizations have CBR (community based rehabilitation) workers whose job is to visit the homes of people with disabilities, assess their psycho-social/economic needs and provide support where there is a need.

However, the majority of people with disabilities in South Africa come from disadvantaged communities, where employment is scarce and where there are no facilities and resources in place (INDS, 1997). Many localities may be too difficult for CBR workers to get to, and the result is that people with disabilities are not reached for support. In most instances people with disabilities have to travel long hours to reach local amenities, with public transport which is not suitable to cater for them. Raising a child with a disability in those types of environments has been a struggle for most parents.

Macrosystem: The macrosystem comprises the political environment, the larger economy, prevalent prejudices, and environmental conditions. In this system policies are made that affect the livelihood of people with disabilities. Huitt (2003) argues that all these systems are interlinked and should not be seen separately because what happens in the macrosystem may have a great impact on all other systems, and *vice versa*. For example, employment policies for people with disabilities that have been formulated at the national level such as the Employment Equity Act or the Integrated National Disability Strategy do not necessarily mean that adequate jobs have been created for the disabled population.

If the structures at national level do not adequately fulfil the requirements of the policies, poverty and high levels of unemployment may well result. This could cause dissatisfactions and frustrations at the level of the microsystem which in turn would cause family dysfunction and ultimately leave a person with a disability vulnerable. Another example is

the inaccessibility of roads, public transport, and public buildings for people with disabilities. All these factors pose challenges for people with disabilities.

The usefulness of ecosystems theory, like other systemic viewpoints, is that it enables one to see all manner of relationships and dynamics which are otherwise relatively invisible (Berger et al, 1996). Ecosystems theory guided the researcher in focussing not only on the feelings and concerns the students had but also on other external factors that impacted on the students' employment experiences.

Even though the ecosystem perspective helped in understanding people with disabilities holistically, there are limitations in its usefulness. According to Berger et al (1996: 47), "one point of criticism centres around the concept of homeostasis, which states that a system will attempt to reorganize itself to maintain its internal balance within the system". Berger (1996) comments that this is not always possible because some levels in the different layers may have more powers than others which may subsequently affect the individual. The same applies to employers' negative attitudes and the power they have to decide not to employ people with disabilities, contributing to a high unemployment rate for people with disabilities (Whitehead 2004).

1.9 Classification of disability

The approaches to and definitions of disability are discussed in Chapter 2. For the purposes of this chapter a brief discussion of the classification to disability is provided. The classifications used by Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) (2000:19-26) are listed as physical, visual, hearing, mental, intellectual, psychiatric, epilepsy, albinism and multiple disabilities In this study only students with physical and visual impairments were included.

Physical disability refers to damaged muscles, nerves, skin, or bones that cause difficulties in moving about and performing activities of daily living (such as dressing, eating, cleaning). Sensory impairment refers to sight difficulties such as total blindness, partial sight and hearing impairment (Disabled People South Africa, 2000). The following table illustrates the difference between physical and visual impairments.

Table 1.1   Physical and Visual Disabilities (DPSA 2000)

Physical impairment	Visual disabilities
Quadriplegia - a substantial loss of function in all four limbs. **Paraplegia** - a substantial loss of function in the lower part of the body. **Hemiplegia** - a substantial loss of function on one side of the body (arm and leg), often due to a stroke or as a result of epilepsy. **Post-Polio Paralysis** - weaknesses in some muscles, and under-development of some limbs. **Cerebral Palsy** - resulting from damage to the brain (often during birth); this causes muscle dysfunction **Albinism -** an inherited condition where a person is unable to produce normal colouring of the skin, hair and eyes.	**Visual Disability –** this refers to total blindness or partial sight.

1.10 Structure of the dissertation

The study comprises six chapters:

Chapter 1: An overview of what the study entails. It incorporates the research aim and objectives as well as key questions.

Chapter 2: Review of literature on disability approaches, existing legislation, employment experiences.

Chapter 3: Research methodology.

Chapter 4 &5: Discussion of the analysis and results of the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature on disability. The chapter is divided into eleven main sections. These include the prevalence of disability in South Africa, the approaches used to view disability and the definitions and classification of disability. In addition, South African disability policies and legislation in selected countries will be discussed. South African disability organizations that aim at meeting the employment and rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities and the challenges faced by people with disabilities in both schools and in the higher education environment are reviewed as well as challenges faced in the job sector.

2.2 Prevalence of disability in South Africa

According to the White Paper on the Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:5),

> There is a serious lack of reliable information on the nature and prevalence of disability in S.A. This is because, in the past, disability issues were viewed chiefly within a health and welfare framework. This has led naturally, to a failure to integrate it into the mainstream government statistical process".

Lack of information on the prevalence of disability is not a South African problem alone but a worldwide problem. Mont (2007:1) states that the reason for the lack of reliable data is dissimilarity in the definitions of disability and diversity in methodologies of data collection in various countries which makes it difficult to compare disabilities across countries. Kenya, for example, last issued statistical data on disability in 1989 (Central Bureau of Statistics; 1996). This then makes it extremely difficult to compare the prevalence of disability, as

Mont (2007) argues. In the following section, the current statistical information on disability in South Africa is provided.

2.2.1 Prevalence of Disability in South Africa

Table 2.1 provides statistics of people with disabilities across the nine provinces.

Table 2.1   Prevalence of Disability in SA by Province:

Province	Number of people with disability
Kwa-Zulu Natal	470 588
Northern Cape	46 973
Free State	185 377
Gauteng	331 611
Northern Province	268 902
North-West	211 223
Western Cape	186 850
Mpumalanga	182 193
Eastern Cape	372 266
Total	**2 255 982**

Source: Statistics South Africa (2005:12)

As noted in chapter 1, of the nine provinces, the province with the highest number of people with disabilities is KwaZulu-Natal with an estimate of 470 588 people with disabilities, followed by Eastern Cape with an estimate of 372 266. Whitehead (2004) conducted a research study which also revealed that KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape have the highest disability prevalence rates compared to other provinces. In 2007, Johannsmeier noted that poverty is a cause and consequence of disability. She made reference to the lack of resources in most areas such as health care facilities and poor nutrition which subsequently puts people at risk of acquiring disabilities. The Draft National Disability Policy (Office of the President, 2007) and INDS (2007) also note that one of the causes of disability is poverty which includes high levels of unemployment, diseases and lack of resources.

HIV/Aids is noted as one of the contributing causes of disabilities in South Africa (Office of the President, 2007; INDS, 2007). As noted in the Draft National Disability Policy (Office of the President, 2007: 34) even though HIV/AIDS is not a disability *per se*, progression of the virus in the body could cause a disability.

According to the South African National Aids Council (2008: 4) HIV/Aids puts people in very high risk of acquiring disabilities. For example, the high number of people with disabilities in KwaZulu-Natal (Statistics South Africa, 2005) could be linked to the fact that KwaZulu-Natal is also the province with the highest percentage of HIV/AIDS cases (39.1% of the national total), which heightens vulnerability to disablement (South African National Aids Council, 2008).

Since poverty and disability are interlinked, the high prevalence rate of people with disabilities in KZN and Eastern Cape could be a result of the high levels of poverty in these provinces. The Human Science Research Council (2004:2) for instance stated that these two provinces have the highest share of people living under the poverty line. Eastern Cape was estimated to have 18.2 % of people living in poverty whilst KwaZulu-Natal was estimated to have 22.5% (Human Science Research Council, 2004). This was supported by INDS (2007) which stated that 12% of people with disabilities in South Africa live in the poorest communities where resources are very limited.

In the following discussion, the prevalence of disability by race, education and nature of disability will be discussed.

2.2.2 Disability by Race, Education and Nature of Disability.

The table below presents the prevalence of disability according to the different racial groups, education and nature of disabilities.

Table 2.2   Prevalence of disability in SA by race, education and nature of disability

Race					
African		**Indian /Asian**	**White**		**Coloured**
1 854 376		41 235	191 693		168 678
Education					
Primary level		**Secondary level**	**Post-secondary**		**No-schooling**
5, 2%		3,9%	3%		10,5%
Nature of disability					
sight	**physical**	**hearing**	**emotional**	**intellectual**	**communication**
32.1%	29.6%	20.1%	15.7%	12.4%	6.5%

Source: Statistics South Africa (2005:11-14)

These figures show that the prevalence of disability is highest amongst Africans, followed by Whites, Coloureds and Asians. The high number of people with disability in the African community could have been exacerbated by the fact that this racial group has experienced inequality and discrimination more than any other racial group (Office of the President, 2007).

Table 2.2 also shows a high prevalence of people with disabilities who have no education (10.5%) and that only 3% attained post-secondary qualifications (Statistics South Africa, 2005: 13). This implies that, since special schools in South Africa are limited in number, a large proportion of people with disabilities have been excluded by the education system, with the consequence that only a small percentage had access to postgraduate education.

The report by Simone-Meyer (1999) which indicated that the common types of disability in South Africa appear to be visual and physical disabilities is further confirmed by the information shown in Table 2.2. The figures show that in South Africa the highest proportion of people with disabilities is those with visual impairments, followed by those with physical disabilities (Statistics South Africa, 2005:14). According to Simone-Meyer (1999), the rise in reported cases of gunshot and car accidents is a concern. It seems that even though there are strict laws that restrain people from violence, society's attitudes to abide by the laws is not changing.

2.2.3 Statistical information on the employment of people with disabilities

As noted in chapter 1, the number of people with disabilities who find employment remains low. According to the Office of the President (2007:19) 12 162 people with disabilities managed to obtain employment in 2007. This number is disappointingly low considering development of policies and programmes which aim to reduce the unemployment levels of people with disabilities in South Africa. The World Bank report (2007) shows that across many countries people with disabilities continue to face higher levels of unemployment than do the general population; unemployment of people with disabilities is not just a South African problem but a global problem. This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

In the following section, the different approaches to viewing and understanding disability are discussed.

2.3 Medical, social, human rights, and developmental approaches to understanding disability

In this section medical, social, human rights, and developmental approaches to understanding disability are discussed. These approaches portray the manner in which society views disability.

2.3.1 Medical approach

This approach, according to Shakespeare (1994), focuses mainly on the impairment itself while the person becomes sidelined. Furthermore, Abberley (1987), Barnes (1990), Lunt et.al (1994), Marks (1999), Oliver (1986) and Kleinman (1986) have variously argued that this model regards illness or disability as residing within damaged bodies and that it has been severely criticized for its inattention to the context of societal responses to disability which serve to systematically exclude and disadvantage individuals with certain impairments.

As a result of too much emphasis on impairment, the main focus has historically been on the inability of the body to function, not on the capabilities and strengths that the individual has. As a result, impaired children, according to Barnes and Oliver (1998:29), "were seen as changelings – the devil's substitutes for human children. *Malleus Maleficarum* of 1487 declared that such creatures were the results of their mothers' involvement with sorcery and witchcraft". This supports Elder-Woodward and Munro's (1992) statement that even though they were included in society, there were some people who believed that they should be killed (Haffer quoted in Barnes and Oliver 1998).

They were also primary targets of amusement. For instance they were often displayed at village fairs (Barnes and Oliver, 1998). This illustrates how the medical approach had a negative impact on the way people viewed and responded to people with disabilities. "Throughout the eighteen and nineteen centuries the policy of segregating people with impairments into institutional settings slowly increased and was subsequently extended to other disadvantaged groups" (Barnes and Oliver, 1998: 29).

Basically the medical approach views people with disabilities as patients or clients who are in need of medical care and support; professionals such as medical doctors, occupational therapists, social workers, physiotherapists, neurologists and so forth are seen as experts in determining and in making decisions for people with disabilities. The message sent by this understanding to the wider society is consequently that people with disabilities are different and that they need to be treated differently.

2.3.2 Social Approach

During the 1980s the disability rights movement in South Africa emerged as part of the broader liberation struggle against apartheid (White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997). For example, DPSA (Disabled People South Africa) organized the mobilization of people with disabilities to resist oppression on the basis of both race and disability. This then built a political foundation for the disability rights movement in South Africa (Crous, 2004: 11).

In contrast to the medical model, the social model of disability, according to UPIAS (Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation, cited from Shakespeare, 2004: 9), "defined

disability not as an impairment or deficit of body or brain but as a relationship between people with impairment and within a discriminatory society". This approach, in other words, states that it is the social environment that places or creates barriers to people with disabilities. It therefore calls for society to change its old thinking (medical model) of viewing disability and requires change in the restructuring of building, roads, transportation, practices and attitudes in accommodating people with disabilities. An example of this approach is a statement that was made by a disabled person who said,

> "Do not make us special. Don't look at my disability. Me, I am a person in a wheelchair. That is not disability. Nor my paraplegia. My disability is the stairs at the Department of Health and Welfare. That disables me. Just give me an accessible environment. That will make me part of South Africa" (People's Voices 1998 cited in Patel, 2005:68).

Even though this approach may sound good, Shakespeare (2004) states that the social model has been strongly criticized in that it has failed to include everything about disability. Some of the critics of the model argue that some people may not experience disability or its barriers and may not even feel oppressed or disabled. Shakespeare (2004) also argues that because the environment is built for the entire society, by removing barriers for some, others may be affected, since different people have different requirements. In spite of the criticisms, the social approach to disability is still a preferred approach that many people use.

2.3.3 Human Rights Approach

The Declaration on the Rights of People with Disabilities was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1975 and encouraged national and international protection of the rights of the disabled (United Nations, 2003). "Human rights are those rights that every human being possesses and is entitled to enjoy simply by virtue of being human" (United Nations, 2003:4). In South Africa, since 1994, there has been a shift from the medical perspective to a social, and human rights approach (United Nations, 2003). Degener and Quinn (2002:14) mention four core values of human rights:

Human dignity: according to this value people with disabilities should be treated with dignity and not seen as objects that should be pitied.

Autonomy: people with disabilities are often regarded as people who are incapable of making their own choices and decisions in life. This value protects people with disabilities from not being taken seriously when wanting to make their own life choices.

Equality: this value provides that people with disabilities should have an equal opportunity in society in enjoying or benefiting from the things that are enjoyed by everyone. For example, if everyone in society has access to the academic curriculum that should be the case for people with disabilities as well. If all people are enjoying the benefit of accessing public transport, a person using a wheelchair should also have free access to the service.

Solidarity: this human rights value acknowledges and recommends that all people need to have a strong unity and common shared interest in making a change for people with disabilities. Without solidarity, all other values would be in vain. Sinyo (2004) also believes that people must be committed and must include those with disabilities in all plans and activities; in this way new strategic laws being put in place would have a meaningful sense. Sinyo (2004) believes, moreover, that members of the public and government officials must be equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure that the rights and needs of people with disabilities are met. Degener and Quinn et al (2002:13) mention that people with disabilities should be given:

> "access to the full benefits of basic freedoms that most people take for granted and this must be done in a way that is respectful and accommodative of their difference. It means abandoning the tendency to perceive people with disabilities as problems and viewing them instead in terms of their rights".

The human rights approach recognizes that persons with disabilities are entitled to the same political and civil rights as others, including measures necessary to enable them to become self-sufficient. So the social approach discussed above supports the human rights approach in the strong belief that people with disabilities should enjoy the same equal rights as anyone else in society; in other words it says "the opportunity to work in order to meet

basic needs of disabled people via an income is considered a right" (Turmasani, 2006 cited in Gathiram, 2008).

2.3.4 Developmental approach

One of the hurdles that stand in the way of implementing a human rights approach to the employment of people with disabilities in South Africa is the fact that the majority of people with disabilities have been excluded from the education system; consequently they face particular difficulties in attempting to compete in the labour market (Gathiram, 2008). According to Gathiram (2008:147),

> "Policy makers in South Africa envisage that the developmental approach to disability would facilitate sustainable, people- centered development and remove barriers to participation so as to improve society as a whole"

In other words, this approach supports the social and human rights approach in that it calls for society to ensure that its developmental services are sustainable. It states that a more constructive approach to the alleviation of poverty should be more than merely giving aid but rather should allow facilitation of people to become self-reliant without being too dependent on welfare grants and other people for support (Gathiram, 2008). Within the developmental approach, social grants are not seen as a problem. Instead, social security is seen as a short-term mechanism to address immediate needs while other developmental strategies are being implemented. The approach states that in order to fully implement the human rights approach all stake holders from micro level to macro levels must have socio, political and economic goals for future development.

2.4 Definition of disability

It is important to define disability in order to include people with disabilities in statistical processes. Over the years, disability was defined differently because it was previously viewed within a health or medical framework. This created difficulties and confusion in the inclusion of people with disabilities in the statistical processes (INDS, 1997).

The World Heath Organization (1980) defined disability as follows:

Impairment is a loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function. A disability is 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. A handicap is a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from impairment or a disability that prevents the fulfilment of a role that is considered normal (depending on age, sex and social and cultural factors) for that individual (WHO, 1980:4-5).

This definition was publicised as the international definition that could be used by all countries. However, the International Disability Rights Movement did not accept this definition because they felt that people with disabilities were never consulted before the decision was made (DPSA, 2000). They also argued that in the above definition there is too much emphasis on the limitation of the body's ability to function and that it doesn't reflect the social context which limits the person from enjoying full equal rights.

Disabled people organisations met and proposed that disability should be defined more as a social construct rather than on the inability of the body to function. The following was proposed as an acceptable definition by many disability organisations:

Disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream activity' (British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (cited from DPSA . 2000:4).

According to DPSA (2000) there are still many people with disabilities who do not want to be defined and categorized as having a disability. DPSA (2000) found that defining disability is a sensitive issue because people's understanding of disability can vary and even the concept itself can vary, and that whilst one person may define himself or herself as disabled another with the same condition may not. They have stated that people should not be forced to be associated with disability if they do not want to (DPSA, 2000).

What comes out very strongly from the above discussion is that disability is seen as a social construct – that it is the environment which disables the person not the disability. A social environment which enables the person with a disability to function independently reduces

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stigma associated with disability and gives the person a sense of belonging. The South African disability rights movement argued that disability must be defined in terms of the social approach rather than the medical approach which focuses on the inability of the body to function (DPSA, 2000). In line with the social approach and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), the South African government defined disability in the following manner:

> Disability is the loss or elimination of opportunities to take part in the life of the community equitably with others that is encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological or other impairments, which may be permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, thereby causing activity limitations and participation restriction with the mainstream society. These barriers may be due to economic, physical, social, attitudinal and/or cultural factors (Office of the President, 2007:16).

It can be concluded that, worldwide, societies are moving towards the social, human rights and developmental approaches when viewing or defining disability.

In order to embrace people with disability and encourage society to view them as part of society, it is vital that correct disability terminology is used. In the following section, preferred terminology will be discussed.

2.5 Terminology

The negative perceptions of people with disabilities have been shaped by incorrect use of terminology in describing such people. Viewing disabilities in terms of the medical approach has created incorrect impressions and misleading information about people with disabilities. The social, human rights, and developmental approaches, on the other hand, have suggested how people with disabilities should be viewed and treated. These approaches state that when looking at people with disabilities, you need to first look at or recognize the *person* before focusing on the *disability*. For example, sometimes people would greet or ask a question of someone accompanying a person with a disability rather than asking the person with a disability. This therefore creates the impression that people with disabilities

are incomplete and that they have to be spoken for. It takes away their human dignity and the right to speak for themselves. DPSA (2000: 15 -18) and many other disability organizations have suggested preferred terminology that should be used instead when speaking about people with disabilities. For example, it has been suggested that when referring to a person with a disability you should rather start by mentioning the person first before mentioning the disability: e.g. 'a person with a disability or 'people with disabilities' rather than saying 'disabled people'. By doing that you automatically recognize the person first rather than the wheelchair or disability. The emphasis becomes not on the disability but on the person you referring to.

In the following section disability policies and legislation aimed at addressing the needs of people with disabilities are discussed.

2.6 Disability policies and legislation

South Africa and many other countries had legislative frameworks that were oppressive in nature towards people with disabilities. Legislative frameworks in South Africa prior to 1994 were based on the medical approach. Since 1994 policy and legislation have been influenced by the social, human rights and developmental approaches. In the following discussion current policy and legislation are presented:

2.6.1 The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997)

This was introduced in November 1997. The INDS (1997) advocates a paradigm shift in the approach on issues of people with disabilities, from the medical and welfare model to a human rights and equitable development model. The paper has clear objectives in fulfilling its mission. Its objectives according to (INDS, 1997:23) are as follows:

- "The facilitation of the integration of disability issues into government developmental strategies, planning and programmes".
- "The development of integrated management system for the coordination of disability planning, implementation and monitoring in the various line functions at all spheres of government".

- "The development of capacity building strategies that will enhance government ability at all levels to implement recommendations contained in the Integrated National Disability Strategy".

- "A programme of public education and awareness raising aimed at changing fundamental prejudices in South African Society".

The strategy therefore calls for society to change in order to fully integrate people with disabilities. In the following section the Draft National Disability Policy (Office of the President, 2007) will be discussed.

2.6.2 Draft National Disability Policy 2007

Ten years after the promulgation of the INDS (2007), on 27 October 2007, South Africa introduced a Draft National Disability Policy. The policy is formulated to support the INDS framework and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2007). The aim of the policy is to ensure that there is full implementation of the INDS objectives so as to make certain that the rights of people with disabilities are met.

The Draft National Disability Policy (Office of the President, 2007) has specific goals, for instance, aimed at ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are integrated into all the government development strategies. For example, the roles and functions of all stakeholders are cited, from the office of the presidency down to civil society. The stakeholders have specific roles to play to integrate all disability matters into all government process (Office of the President, 2007). In Figure 2.1 below, the stakeholders at the meso and macro levels are indicated.
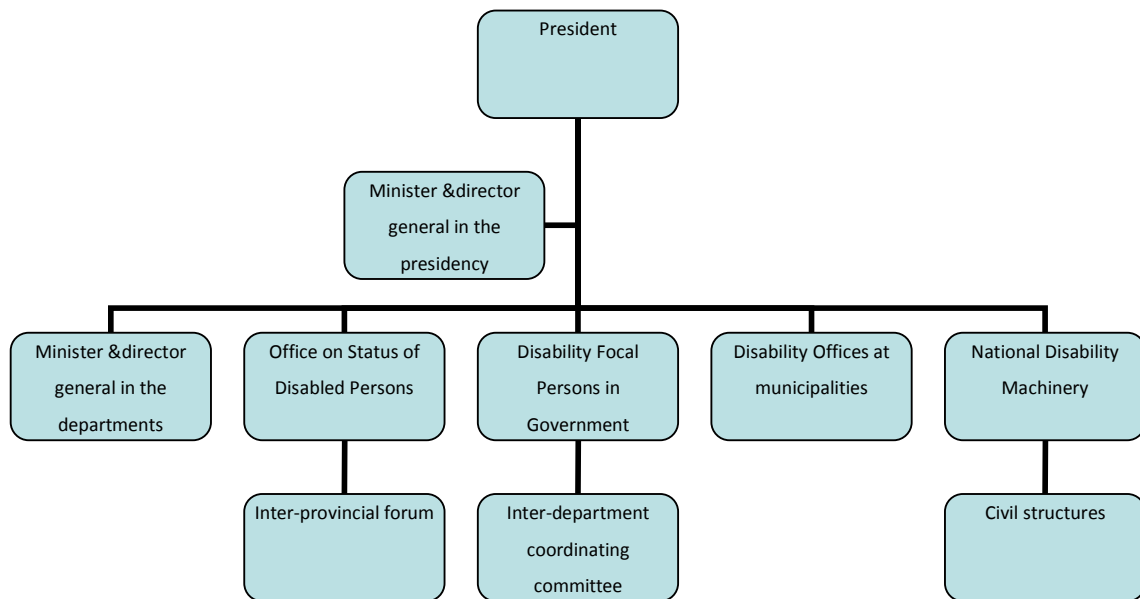
Figure 2.1   Disability stakeholders

Source: Draft National Disability Policy (2007:21-25)

According to the Draft National Disability Policy (Office of the President, 2007) the role of the president should be to manage the international relations and bilateral agreements for the benefit of people with disabilities, while the responsibility of the minister and the director general in the presidency is to ensure that disability is mainstreamed in all spheres of government. At provincial levels the ministers and directors have to ensure that the obligations emanating from the President's office are met.

Also, within the office of the President there is an OSDP (Office on Status of Disabled people) which has to ensure that disability policies are properly implemented. This office reports to the minister and the director general in the presidency. The Draft National Disability Policy (Office of the President, 2007) also states that there should be a disability focal person in each government department. According to the policy, these people are to act as the interface between people with disabilities and government structures to ensure that the problems of people with disabilities are listened to and that their concerns are directed to proper channels.

Besides having a disability focal person, the policy also states that in each municipality there has to be a disability unit in place to ensure that programmes that are planned at a

municipal level are also meeting the needs of people with disabilities. This is because very often people plan events and programmes that fail to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. Having such an office provides an advisory centre for the needs of people with disabilities. The NDM (National Disability Machinery) will serve as a tool between civil society and the government for future developmental goals (Office of the President , 2007).

Having these structures in place from the President's office all the way through to civil society, means that attempts are being made to integrate people with disabilities within South African society. However, having so many structures might cause confusion and overlapping of roles which in turn could frustrate the very people the policy wishes to serve.

The Draft National Disability Policy (Office of the President, 2007) has advocated for disability to be mainstreamed across all government departments. In 2009 President Jacob Zuma was elected as President of the country. In restructuring the cabinet he established a ministry for women, children, youth and people with disabilities and appointed Ms Noluthando Mayende Sibiya as the minister in charge (Chandre, 2009). This shows that recommendations made in the Office of the President (2007) to have a minister who will deal with disability issues at the cabinet level has been accomplished. This provides hope to people with disabilities that their employment and other challenges will be addressed.

2.6.3 The White Paper on Special Needs Education (2001)

The Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001) published by the Department of Education calls for positive changes in attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners with disabilities and states that there should be maximization of participation of learners with disabilities in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimizing barriers to learning.

The White Paper states that educational institutions should strive to accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. It states that society needs to move away from the medical thinking and adopt an inclusive approach and that all mainstream schools should also cater for the needs of students with disabilities. It is clear from the paper that instead of abolishing specialized

schools, these should be enabled as resource centres for full-service schools. These strategies move beyond the medical model to a more social and developmental model and strive to ensure full integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schooling.

Although this framework has been outlined it has not yet fully implemented. Students with disabilities are still attending special schools because there are no specialized teachers or modified environments in mainstream schools to address the needs of such students (Howell, 2006; Draft and National Disability Strategy, 2007). The limited number of special schools and inaccessibility to mainstream schools continue to exclude learners with disabilities from accessing education (Statistics South Africa, 2005).

2.6.4 The Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996)

In order to guarantee that South Africa is a democratic society, the Constitution includes a Bill of Rights for all South Africans. In Chapter 2 of the constitution, Section 9(3) addresses issues of equality. It states that all people including people with disabilities should enjoy equal rights and points out that discrimination against people with disabilities should not be tolerated.

Even though the Constitution protects people with disabilities in South Africa from unfair discrimination, they continue to suffer discrimination and prejudice. Research studies have shown that many employers do not want to employ people with disabilities. Statistics South Africa (2005) show that only a small number of people with disabilities participate in the labour market. As shown above, discrimination is aggravated still further by the limited number of special schools.

2.6.4 Employment Equity (Act No 55.1998)

According to the Employment Equity Act (1998) disabled persons qualify for affirmative employment opportunities within the public and private sectors. In addition, in August 2002 the Minister of Labour introduced a Code of Good Practice (2002) on the key aspects of disability in the workplace. Based on the Employment Equity Act (1998) the Code spells out how employers can and should assist people with disabilities so that they can perform their jobs well. Furthermore, the Act requires that all employers with a staff of over fifty should

ensure that disabled persons are equitably represented in the workforce (Employment Equity Act, 1998: 14).

Implementation of this Act is still a challenge. Whitehead (2004) and DRPI (2007) report have shown that there has been widespread ignorance, fear and stereotyping that prevents employers from hiring people with disabilities. As a result people with disabilities experience high unemployment levels, and, if they are employed, often remain in low status jobs (Crous 2004).

2.6.5 Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2007)

International disability organizations from a number of different countries have met to unify rules that should be followed in serving and recognizing people with disabilities. Proceeding from their deliberations, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2007) is a legally binding international document intended to protect people with disabilities from unfair discrimination. In 2007 the South African Government was among the first nations to sign up to this (United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, 2007).

Article 4 (1) of the Convention obligates all signatory countries to follow the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities. These rules are designed to promote the human rights of people with disabilities. Article 27 (1) in particular provides that all countries who are signatories should:

> "Recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment".

These rules accordingly outline the minimum requirements that United Nations member states need to meet in fulfilling their responsibilities to disabled people. South Africa is a member of United Nations and signatory to these rules, so all policy-makers and

organizations in this country are guided by the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities.

Although the policies and legislation are in place, Gathiram (2008) states that they have not been enforced and taken seriously. Howell (2005) feels that there is still a lack of knowledge and prejudice towards people with disabilities. It is evident therefore that apartheid and its legislation policies have left scars that cannot be easily removed.

To add to the account given above of South African policies, the next section goes on to consider selected examples of corresponding policies in some other countries to give a comparative perspective on progress made in dealing with the unemployment of people with disabilities.

2.7 Disability legislation and policies of other countries

Unlike South Africa which does not have a specific disability Act, many countries in the world have put in place specific legislation to protect the rights of people with disabilities. This section will present discussion of the disability legislation in selected developed and developing countries.

2.7.1 Kenya: the Persons with Disability Act, 2003

The Persons with Disability Act, 2003, was promulgated into law in Kenya on 16 June 2004. Part one, Section two of the Act defines disability as

'A physical, sensory, mental or other impairment, including any visual, hearing, learning or physical incapability, which impacts on social, economic or environmental participation'.

Part three of the Act discusses the rights which people with disabilities have in gaining employment and education. It states that the supervisory Council will implement projects that will promote sheltered employment, along with regular or self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Discrimination in employment is specifically prohibited by the Act. Section 15 of the Act states that:

"no employer shall discriminate against a person with a disability in relation to the advertisement of employment; the recruitment for employment; the creation, classification or abolition of posts; the determination or allocation of wages, salaries, pension, accommodation, leave or other such benefits; the choice of persons for posts, training, advancement, apprenticeships, transfer, promotion or retrenchment; the provision of facilities related to or connected with employment, or; any other matter related to employment'.

Part 2 of the Act lays down that both public and private sectors must reserve 5% of jobs – casual, emergency and contractual – for disabled persons. Furthermore, Section 16 (1) states that an employer who has employed a person with a disability will be entitled to apply for a deduction from his taxable income equivalent to 25% of the total amount paid as salary and wages to such an employee.

Section 16 (2) guarantees that employers who improve or modify the working environment for the benefit of employees with disabilities will be entitled to an additional deduction from the net taxable income. It states that the deduction will be equivalent to 50% of the direct costs of improvements, modifications or special services.

The Kenyan Constitution, on the other hand, contains provisions that could be termed as discriminatory to persons with disabilities. These include Section 15 (2) paragraph (C) which states that

"an employer shall be deemed not to have discriminated against a person with a disability if…Special facilities or modifications, whether physical, administrative or otherwise, are required at the workplace to accommodate the person with a disability, which the employer cannot reasonably be expected to provide".

I believe that having such a statement in an Act leaves loopholes for employers to justify why they cannot employ people with disabilities. Such statements are rather contradictory and discriminative against the human rights of people with disabilities.

2.7.2 United States: the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

In the United States, according to Hernandez (2001), approximately 54 million non-institutionalized Americans have physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities, and according to the US Bureau of the Census (1999), 26 million are classified as having severe disability. Severe disabilities, according to Hernandez (2001), include "Alzheimer's disease, autism, mental retardation and long-term use of cane, crutches, walker or wheelchair".

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that applies to people with disabilities and protects them from discrimination. Chapter 126, Section 12112 of the Act protects people with disabilities from being discriminated against when they want to access employment. It states:

> "A covered entity shall not conduct a medical examination or make inquiries of a job applicant as to whether such applicant is an individual with a disability or as to the nature or severity of such disability" (Section 12112 (2) (a)).
> A covered entity may require a medical examination after an offer of employment has been made to a job applicant and prior to the commencement of the employment duties of such applicant (Section 12112 (3)).

Even though ADA protects people with disabilities from unfair discrimination, there are still barriers that prevent such people from enjoying their equal rights. For example, Wilgosh and Skaret (1987) state that in the United States employer attitudes are potential barriers to employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This situation corresponds to the World Bank (2007) report which revealed that only 50% of people with disabilities are employed compared to the 80% of non-disabled people who are employed.

2.7.3 India: Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act, 1995

India's Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act (1995) includes free access to education for persons with disabilities, in an appropriate environment, until the age of 18.

Chapter V1, section 39 of the Act specifies that **"**all government educational institutions and educational institutions receiving aid from the government must reserve at least three percent of their classroom seats for students with disabilities". Furthermore (Section 40), every government department must reserve at least three percent of its vacancies for disabled people (one percent each for persons with visual impairment, hearing impairment and motor disability or cerebral palsy).

The Act also lays down what should be done in promoting easy access to transport facilities. Chapter 3, section 44 states that "The transport sector shall, within the limits of its economic capacity, take special measures to adapt trains, buses, vessels, aircraft and waiting rooms to allow easy access to disabled people". It says that government local authorities shall,

> within the limits of their economic capacity: Install sound signals at traffic lights for visually impaired people; Create curb cuts and slopes in pavements for wheelchair users; Engrave zebra crossings and the edge of railway platforms for visually impaired people; Build ramps in public buildings; Install braille symbols and sound signals in lifts.

Although the provisions of the Indian Disability Act show that in principle the needs of people with disabilities have been considered, the World Bank (2007) states that there is slow progress in implementation of the Act to address the unemployment rate of people with disabilities. Chapter 5 of the World Bank (2007:84) report states that "people with disabilities have lower employment rates than the general population across all main location and gender cuts". The report also states that those with severe disabilities like partial sightedness and mental disabilities are more likely not to be employed than people with other disabilities. India employs only about 38% of people with disabilities compared to the 61% of non-disabled people that it does employ (World Bank, 2007).

2.7.4 Sweden: Social Service Act (2001) and the Swedish Act Concerning Support and Service for Person with Certain Functional Impairments (1993).

Sweden's policies are structured in a way that improves the lives of people with disabilities. According to www.socialeurope.com one of the legislative frameworks that Sweden makes

use of is a welfare policy which guarantees security and social rights to all citizens. This policy includes a Social Service Act which "regulates responsibilities of local authorities and emphasizes that people with physical or mental functional impairments are to live in a way that would correspond to their needs and be able to gain access to public services" (www.socialeurope.com).

A further Act specifically designed for people with functional disabilities is the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (known in Sweden as LSS). This Act is limited to permanent functional disabilities only. Those who qualify under this Act according to the National Board of Health and Welfare (2006) are entitled to ten services. Among the services included in the section 9 of the LSS Act (2003) are:

Personal Assistance service: the individual may appoint their own personal assistant if they are unable to do so the municipality has a responsibility of finding the personal assistant for them (Section 9 (4)).

Short stay away from home: this is designed to relieve the family so that they do not feel overwhelmed with caring for the person with a functional disability. This also provides an opportunity to be independent for the individual with a disability (Section 9 (6)).

Special adapted home: people with functional disabilities are also entitled to a home which is adapted to suit their needs (Section 9 (6)).

Both of the Swedish Acts discussed here have made life for disabled people more meaningful. Nonetheless, it must be noted that even though Sweden has legislation for people with disabilities, these Acts are only meant to cater for certain disabilities. For example, LSS (1993) only caters for people with functional disabilities; it does not address the needs of people with other types of disabilities. People with other types of disabilities may only seek support from their municipalities under the Social Services Act (2001). This is legislation applicable to all needy people residing in Sweden, just a single section of which mention the needs of people with disabilities.

It can be concluded that, like South Africa, Sweden does not have specific legislation encompassing the needs of all people with disabilities; instead certain clauses of other Swedish Acts address the needs of people with disabilities.

By way of summary, the graph below (Figure 2.2), taken from a World Bank publication (2007:84), indicates how, across most countries, there is a high level of unemployment amongst people with disabilities compared to people with no disabilities.

Internationally, PWD employment rates are significantly below the rest of the population
Figure 5.1: Employment rates of PWD and non-PWD, various countries
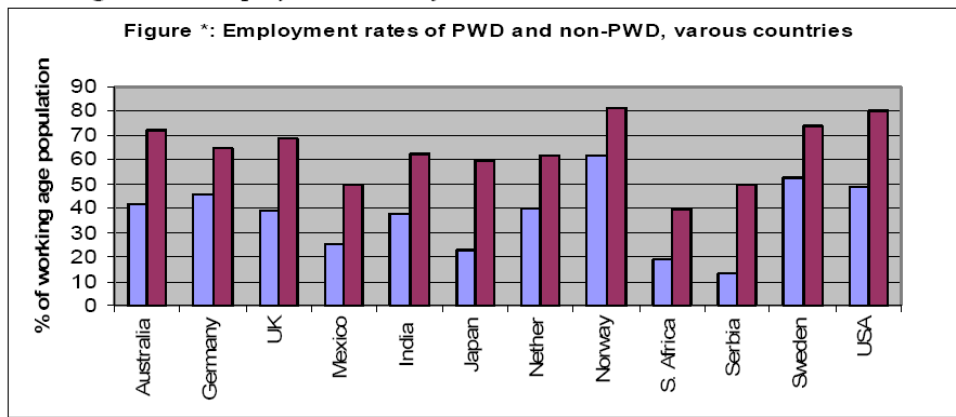
Sources: OECD (2003); Mitra and Sambamoorthi (2005). Japan – physical disabilities only. India and Serbia – non-PWD column general population.

Figure 2.2   Employment rates for persons with disabilities (World Bank Report, 2007:84)

Figure 2.2 shows that, all of the countries have high levels of unemployment amongst people with disabilities. And while South Africa does not have specific disability legislation, it is not alone in this respect. Sweden for example does not have a comprehensive disability Act that incorporates all types of disabilities.

It has been noticeable that South Africa just like other countries is finding it difficult to fully implement its laws. The legislative frameworks developed by very many countries condemn and prohibit discrimination in employment of people with disabilities nevertheless, but people with disabilities continue to experience unfair discrimination in obtaining employment (Hennessey, 2004; Naidoo, 2005; Gathiram, 2008). Likewise, all the legislative frameworks mentioned advocate access to education for people with disabilities so that

they can also enjoy meaningful lives, but people with disabilities continue to find it difficult to access education, and even when they do they are confronted with discouraging educational obstacles. (Nzimande and Sikhosana, 1996; Howell, 2005; Crous, 2004).

The next section considers government responses in dealing with social economic needs of people with disabilities.

2.8 Govt department responses to socio-economic needs of people with disabilities

The following discussion shows how some government departments have responded to the socio-economic needs of people with disabilities.

2.8.1 Department of Social Development: Social Grant Support

The high levels of unemployment of people with disabilities in South Africa necessitate that the Department of Social Development adopts a short-term approach in dealing with the problem of unemployment. Social security was introduced to reduce the poverty line as a temporary approach before a longer term approach could be developed (Gathiram, 2008). Social security in this context means an income provided by the Department of Social Development for certain people in need of care. The types of social security offered by the Department of Social Development are as follows: grant for older persons; disability grant; war veterans grant; care dependency grant; foster child grant; child support grant; grant-in-aid; Social Relief of Distress. To qualify for any of the grants listed here a person will be means tested to determine whether or not that person has sufficient means to support himself or herself; someone who is in employment and earns above a certain level may not be eligible for social assistance. Grants for which people with disabilities may qualify include the following (Department of Social Development, www.sassa.gov.za):

- **Disability grant:** The disability grant is about R960 per month. In order for a person to be eligible, he/she has to obtain a medical assessment report; if male the person must be between the ages of 18 and 59, and if female, between the ages of 18 and 62. If a disabled person, or that person's spouse, earns an income above a stipulated level, the disabled person will not be eligible for the grant.

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- **Care dependency grant:** The care dependency grant is for individuals below the age of 18. Individuals will qualify for this grant only if the parents meet the conditions of the means test explained above. If the child is cared for by foster parents the means test will not be applicable. The grant is also about R960 per month.
- **Grant-in-aid:** Depending on the severity of the disability, children or older persons with a disability will qualify for a grant-in-aid which is about R230 per month. The money is intended for a helper providing 24-hour assistance to the individual.

All of these social assistance "safety nets", as Gathiram (2008) describes them, are a way of responding to a person's immediate needs when due to their disabilities they incur additional expenses for daily survival. According to Gathiram (2008) social grants were not intended to be an answer to unemployment experienced by people with disabilities. It was just a measure of ensuring that there is a temporary mechanism in addressing the economic disempowerment of people with disabilities while long term goals are developed (Gathiram, 2008).

It has been argued by Gathiram (2008) that even though social grants are meant to be no more than a temporary mechanism, there are no indications that the long term goals are being planned to address the social and economic status of people with disabilities. Gathiram observes that "up until now, the main focus of developmental welfare within the Department of Social Welfare has been on increasing social security payments rather than services to disabled people". She goes on to make the point that "this increase in social grants and disappointing results integrating people with disabilities is not developmental" (Gathiram, 2008:149).

A study by Zungu (1991:68) reveals that unemployment was one of the major problems people with disabilities encountered. The respondents in Zungu's study (1991) state that the only income they have on which they can rely is the social grant, which they say is not enough as they have to support themselves and their families.

An aspect worth noting in relation to the Department of Social Development initiatives for people with disabilities is their continued association with the medical approach in viewing people with disabilities. As Gathiram (2008) observes, this is charity-based rather than

promoting economic independency. Responses in the research study by Johannsmeier (2007) reveal that people with disabilities have a high desire to gain full-time employment and that they are not happy to be recipients of welfare grants.

One could argue that while provision of social grants may seem to address immediate social challenges, it could also tend to be a barrier to employment for people with disabilities in that once they are employed they are not eligible to collect social assistance. This means that the social security grant could also discourage them from seeking employment. At the same time, if there are no social grants available, people with disabilities could be left very vulnerable. Johannsmeier's (2007) research shows that if people with disabilities can be given their full rights to employment and the social environment be built in a way conducive to their needs, the number of people receiving social grants could ultimately decrease.

2.8.2 Department of Labour Support

In 2001 the Department of Labour (DOL) sought to tackle unemployment by introducing the Skills Development Programme (SDP) which aims at providing skills so that people could ultimately gain employment (National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons, 2003). The NSDS was introduced to address the high overall levels of unemployment in South Africa, people with disabilities included, by initiating employment support programmes. One of the NSDS strategies was the introduction of a bursary scheme for people with disabilities, covering tuition costs, accommodation, assistive devices, books and meals allowance (National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons, 2003).

In addition, NSDS has learnership programmes where people would work in short-term employment. According to the National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (2003:126), "eighty percent of levy is paid to Sector Education and Training Authorities who will disburse funds to employers for training of employed and unemployed learners in learnerships in all the different sectors of the economy". This response to unemployment could perhaps decrease the dependency on social grants. The Department of Labour has stated that 4% of people with disabilities should be part of this strategy (National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons, 2003).

The above discussion shows that the DOL has tried to facilitate employment for people with disabilities by providing education and short-term employment through learnership programmes. It has also attempted to promote employers' interest in employing people with disabilities by providing them with funds for training. In spite of this, research studies have revealed that the majority of people with disabilities are either in short-term employment which is not sustaining or are unemployed. It seems then that even though the DOL has facilitated employment by different means of support, there are still problems faced by people with disabilities in finding permanent employment. It is evident that educational and learnership programmes are not enough; more must be done to ensure that people with disabilities participate in the development of the country.

2.8.3 Department of Education Support

In 2008, the Department of Education (DOE) provided funds to cater for the needs of people with disabilities. Similarly to the Department of Labour support, the DOE also provides bursary funding which caters for tuition costs, accommodation, assistive devices, books and meals allowance. The motive behind this support is to assist students with disabilities to pursue career aspirations and be able to participate in the open labour employment market (National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (2003).

Seemingly both departments provide bursary schemes for people with disabilities with the aim of enhancing their employability, but it remains a concern that there are low numbers of people with disabilities who seem to participate in the open labour market (Statistics South Africa; 2005 and World Bank; 2007).

2.8.4 Department of Transport Support

Alongside the support from the DOL, the Department of Transport (DOT) has also designed a strategy to make public transport accessible to people with disabilities.

For people to be able to attend DOL learnership programmes and other initiatives they would need transport which is accessible. Most people in South Africa rely on public transport, which in practice means taxis, trains and buses (Mthiyane, 2005). Those who can afford to, and who are fortunate enough, use their own cars. Unfortunately most people

with disabilities, because of their disadvantaged backgrounds, are not in a position to purchase vehicles, and those who do have support systems and adequate income would have to purchase modified vehicles which are costly. Otherwise they must rely on public transport, but public transport in South Africa is in most cases not designed to suit the needs of people with disabilities (Ndebele, 1998).

In 1998 the DOT launched a strategy to address the inaccessibility of public transport. One pilot project was 'Dial- a-ride' in Cape Town, which aimed at providing a home destination on request to people with disabilities. Another project launched in Durban was 'Sukuma buses', which were buses modified with hydraulic lifts so that people using wheelchairs could easily access them. According to the National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (2003:98) one element of the Department of Transport's strategy was the implementation of the Taxi Recapitalization Programme which aims at building new taxis accessible for all, including people with disabilities. The old taxis vehicle owners were asked to apply for a subsidy scheme to obtain new minibuses which are accessible.

The DOT did not stop there. One aspect of its developmental initiatives has been the development of infrastructure such as access to streets and pathways, shelter, bus stops, etc (National Office on The Status of Disabled Persons 2003). This shows that the department is specifically taking account of the needs of people with disabilities in its strategic plans.

Even though the DOT claims to have accessible public transport for people living with disabilities, the reality in South Africa is that public transport is not accessible to the majority of people with disabilities. It is still a dream. The majority of people with disabilities have difficulties in freely accessing public transport which meet their needs. The Sukuma buses are not widely available to all commuters with disabilities. The Dial-a-ride project only benefits people with disabilities in Cape Town, and not those elsewhere in the country (Ndebele 1998; Serlis and Swartz 2006).

2.8.5 Department of Public Works Support

The Expanded Public Works programme introduced by the Department of Public Works (Gathiram, 2008), introduced aims to address the high unemployment in South Africa by

training people, including people with disabilities, in work-related skills. The Department reported that between 2004 and 2005 there were about 88 040 jobs created from its employment programmes in a total of 2 606 projects; 5% of those employed through this initiative were people with disabilities (Department of Public Works, 2006:147). Despite the number of jobs the department states it has created, the high unemployment rate of people with disabilities does not correlate to the number of jobs the Department claims to have created for people with disabilities. The Department's report does not reveal if the employment was on permanent or on short time basis.

2.8.6 Support from Department of Trade and Industry

In line with the developmental approach, the Department of Trade and Industry has introduced BEE (Broad Based Economic Empowerment) in order to empower the previous disadvantaged groups in South Africa, including people with disabilities. One of its initiatives is to help people acquire funds to open up their own businesses so that they could be self-sufficient and independent (Gathiram 2008).

It will be apparent from the above discussion that the intention of helping people with disabilities exists in all departments at national level. Nevertheless current research studies show that there is still a high level of unemployment for people with disabilities in South Africa. This could mean that what is being done already needs to be reviewed in order to ensure that what is being implemented is reaching the intended people.

2.8.7 Support from Department of Economic Development in KZN

On the 10 October 2009 the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development launched a Disability Expo for students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This initiative was a result of collaborative efforts by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Disability Offices and two disability organizations – Valhalla Arts and Indimezulu Trust.

One of the objectives of the KZN DoED is to reduce unemployment through youth development programmes. The networking relationship between University of KwaZulu-Natal Disability Offices, Valhalla Arts and Indimezulu Trust alerted the DoED to the

difficulties that students with disabilities face in obtaining employment. In an opening address at the Expo Acting MEC Ms Ina Cronje commented that

> "It has come to light that most of the initiatives that the Department supports have not benefited undergraduates with disabilities. This is mainly because in the planning, organizing and implementation of these initiatives some of the basic requirements for people with disabilities are not taken into consideration and therefore not met." (Cronje, 2009:1).

Disability organizations and possible employers were invited to participate in the Expo to showcase what is available in the labour market for people with disabilities. It is hoped that through this initiative there would be change in the employability of people with disabilities.

In the next section, socio-economic supports provided by disability organizations to people with disabilities are discussed.

2.9 Disability organisations

In South Africa there are different disability structures that assist the government in the implementation of the policies and legislation discussed above. At the international level, there is the DPI (Disabled People International) which is recognized by the United Nations as the international assembly of disabled people (White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy, 2000). There is also an Office on the Status of Disabled Persons at the national level; this is now based in the office of the Deputy President where it has directorate status (Sadek and Winai 2003). The office serves government and civil society in dealing with disability issues. "It is responsible for managing and implementing all disability related international mechanisms, processes and systems" (Sadek and Winai, 2003:9).

At national level there is a South African Disability Alliance (SADA) which was formed to act as an umbrella body for all grassroots organizations of people with disabilities. Grassroots organizations are affiliated to SADA. The organizations come together to negotiate and develop common visions for the equalization of opportunities. Representative of the spectrum are the four organizations mentioned below.

2.9.1 DPSA (Disabled People South Africa)

Disabled People South Africa acts as a national assembly for people with disabilities. It has local offices in all South African provinces and has implemented a number of programmes dealing with disability issues. One of these programmes, Disabled Youth South Africa (DYSA), undertakes advocacy specifically for the needs of disabled youth in South Africa. Another is Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), in which people with disabilities are visited in their homes, and also in rural areas where services are least available. CBR workers assess the needs and provide people with disabilities with rehabilitation support. The Disability Economic Empowerment Programme is targeted at facilitating employment for people with disabilities, with a focus on assisting people with disabilities to start up their businesses and on helping disabled work-seekers find work suitable for their needs.

Aside from the implementation of these programmes, DPSA in the last 15 years of democracy has made a huge contribution in advocating for the rights of people with disabilities at national level. For example it has contributed to the INDS, and Code of Good Practice, ensuring that disability is integrated in South African legislation such as the Employment Equity Act and the Skills Developmental Act. The widely used Disability Pocket Guide is one more DPSA initiative (www.dpsa.org.za).

Notwithstanding the hard work done by DPSA to promote human rights for people with disabilities, people with disabilities in South Africa still experience high levels of unemployment compared to non-disabled people. It remains the case that the majority of people with disabilities have no education. Illiteracy levels may make it difficult for them to write business proposals, access information or to compete at the same level with others in the open labour market.

2.9.1 QuadPara Association of South Africa

The QuadPara Association of South Africa represents people with mobility impairments, with regional offices in several provinces. It runs employment workshops for employers to provide them with understanding about the needs of employees with disabilities in the workforce (http://www.qasa.co.za/history.php). It has also implemented skills development projects through learnerships, one such being the Amasondo Esibindi Learnerships. People

in this programme attend a one-year learnership programme which equips them with skills such as business skills, marketing and bookkeeping skills. Another project is the Neville Cohen Education Fund, which assists physically disabled individuals to access education of their choice. It is named after the disability activist Neville Cohen who passed away in 2005. A third project is a driving training programme. Here people with physical disabilities are taught to drive independently. The cars have been modified with hand controls so that they are can be operated by people with mobility impairments (Source: http://www.qasa.co.za/history.php).

2.9.2 South African National Council for the Blind

SANCB was established in 1929 and serves people with sight impairments, both the totally blind and the partially sighted. It has provincial offices across South Africa. Among the SANCB core services are the Skills Development programme and Eye Care services. In the implementation of its core services the provincial offices support societies and organizations at the grassroots level – helping, for example, to maintain local CBR workers who visit the communities to identify people with sight conditions. Once they are found they are provided with employment skills and assisted to start up their own income generating projects.

In ensuring that people with visual disabilities receive rehabilitation services, the Council has also established Optima College which offers vocational training for visually impaired people in variety of courses, including computer skills, call centre operation, Abet training, Braille training, and other forms of education support (Source: http://www.sancb.org.za/students.html).

2.9.3 National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities

The National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities (formerly the National Council for Cripples) was established in 1939. One of its core functions is to undertake fund-raising campaigns to support grassroots associations in employment placements projects, awareness raising and facilitation of accessible transport.

(Source: http://www.easterstampcampaign.co.za/about.shp).

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All these initiatives notwithstanding, people with disabilities still face considerable challenges in finding employment. Commenting on these difficulties, Ari Seirlis, Director of QuadPara, notes that:

> "This is often not a fault of their own or the employer but the fact that most people with disabilities do not have access to public transport (including minibus taxis), access to any schooling or post school education or skills training and the result is that a large portion of the people with disabilities within the designated group are unemployable. This is not because they are disabled, but because their mobility impairment does not allow them access to the same facilities for training and education" (Seirlis, 2000).

In line with the social approach to disability, Seirlis strongly believes that it is society which disadvantages people with disabilities in accessing employment. He highlighted factors that exacerbate the frustration such as difficulties in accessing education and inaccessible transportation.

In the next section, challenges facing people with disabilities in the education sector are discussed.

2.10 Challenges in accessing education

People in South Africa with disabilities still face numerous challenges in freely accessing education. Many fail to do so and remain without education (Statistics South Africa, 2005). In this section factors that contribute to the education challenges of people with disabilities are discussed, bearing in mind that in each case these are also issues that hinder a disabled person's chances of securing employment.

2.10.1 Apartheid policies and the marginalization of students with disabilities

Historical policies such as those enshrined in the Bantu Education Act, the Coloured Person's Education Act, and the Indian Education Act had a huge negative impact on the lives of people with disabilities, creating radical educational inequalities for students with disabilities. In the apartheid period learners with disabilities were expected to study in

special schools so that their special needs could be addressed but these schools were few in number and racially segregated, with separate special schools for Whites, Blacks, Indians and Coloureds (Shunmugum, 2002).

Schools that accommodated black learners were extremely under-resourced (Shunmugum 2002:6). Shunmugum comments that higher learning institutions during those times were "out of reach because of limited funds and resources dedicated to learners with disabilities" (Shunmugum 2002:5). Howell (2005) notes another factor which still limits learners from accessing higher education, namely that learners are provided with a limited choice of subjects in their matric year; this restricts the options available to them in higher learning institutions, and may even make them ineligible for the required exemption to enter tertiary education. Career possibilities may thus be ruled out because of a limited range of subject options in high school.

Despite this, since 1994 there have been a number of educational developments in relation to disability. In particular, the Department of Education's Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) is intended to mainstream special schools into full service schools, although the strategy is not yet fully implemented because of the currently limited number of special schools and a shortage of specialized teachers (Howell (2005).

Students with disabilities are, nonetheless, now managing to gain entry into institutions of higher learning, but recent studies by Shunmugum (2002) and Naidoo (2005) indicate that they are still confronted by obstacles to full enjoyment of their academic potential. Shunmugum's (2002) study found that although there is now better access to tertiary education in South Africa, students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal reported the following obstacles: inability to obtain tests in accessible format, Inaccessible lecture halls, and lecturers providing study materials after they have completed lecturing on the particular subject. In addition to challenges in accessing academic materials, according to Nzimande and Sikhosana (1996) and Howell (2005), some academics would refuse, for instance, to read overheads if they have blind students in their class, or change venues if there is a student who is unable to access their venue. A similar state of affairs is reflected in the DRPI (2007:35) report which comments that "The opportunity for a good education was also often denied by the directors of the institutions".

While access to basic education has improved for disabled students over the last 15 years, research studies shows that attitudinal barriers continue to exist, in both the schooling system and higher education institutions. Fichten (1988, cited in Hill 1996:177) observed that "professors, in general, have moderately favourable attitudes toward disabled students on campus ... their attitudes are somewhat less positive about having such students in their own department".

According to DRPI (2007:36) "the inability to access education and a suitable job lead many people with disabilities to do precarious forms of work (such as selling small quantities of good on the streets) or begging as the only possible way to survive".

Despite all these challenges, it must be acknowledged that we now have a large influx of students with disabilities into institutions of higher education. The University of KwaZulu-Natal alone graduated 56 students with disabilities between 2001 and 2006; of these, 38 had visual disabilities (blind or partially sighted), 14 had various other physical disabilities, and four had learning disabilities.

Howell (2005) conducted a research study based on analytical descriptions of the structures, policies and human and financial resources available at higher education institutions for dealing with the needs of disabled students. Her research comprised an analysis of 24 public higher education institutions in South Africa. She indentified the following core services that are offered by the institutions through Disability Units: Students with disabilities are provided with learning materials where student notes are converted through facilities on the campus or through the use of external services into formats other than the printed material normally used in classrooms. Alternative formats offered include Braille material, audio cassette tapes, printed material in larger fonts, video footage, and various electronic formats that can be accessed through existing ICT (information communication technology) facilities on campus. Learning materials include course outlines, lecture notes, study guides, course readers and various forms of library material that students may require for assignment purposes. Disability Units provide assessment materials such as examination papers and assignment outlines that are converted into the alternative formats listed above, and students are allocated extra time to complete tests and examinations. Howell also lists various mentorship programmes for students with disabilities, along with adaptive ICT

facilities (hardware and software) to give students access to information and other services which include extended curriculum options, bursary applications, accommodation support, and skills for independent living.

Hill (1996:177*)* notes that "there must also be a willingness on the part of instructors to accommodate students in their classroom. Such willingness undoubtedly comes from a positive attitude regarding the integration of non-traditional students into the academic setting". Hill (1996) found only three areas in which faculty were deemed to be willing to make a specific accommodation: (1) allowing students to tape-record lectures, (2) allowing extra time for completion of a test or examination, and (3) allowing tests to be taken in an alternative location. "It should be noted, Hill (1996) adds, "that for each of these accommodations the faculty member, in fact, does not have to make any major effort to alter their normal instructional techniques in order to accommodate the student".

Lack of information about disabilities creates negative attitudes such as those noted above. It contributes to the reluctance of lecturers to have students with disabilities in their programmes. Anxieties about having students with disabilities in an educational programme would have been reduced if teaching staff had better knowledge about how to support these students (Hill, 1996).

For example, most South African universities have disability offices to assist lecturers to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities (Howell, 2005). If lecturers sought support from the disability offices, students with disabilities would have better chances of enrolling into programmes they preferred and possibly would have more opportunities open to them in the labour market.

In conclusion, this section has shown that the greatest hurdles people with disabilities face when trying to access mainstream programmes is the negative perceptions and attitudes that lead to the social exclusion and marginalization of students with disabilities.

What also comes through strongly is that the societies in which we live are very intolerant and prejudiced towards people with disabilities, leaving them feeling marginalized and sidelined from the broader community.

The institution of special schools in particular highlights society's lack of tolerance towards people with disabilities. First they are segregated from society and then suddenly they are expected to freely engage in higher education. One has to consider that prejudice, negative attitudes and stereotypes are the consequences of segregating students when they were still in primary school and high school.

The next section considers various studies which indicate challenges that people with disabilities face in accessing employment.

2.11 Challenges in accessing employment

Schreuder and Coetzee (2006:2) comment on the centrality of work in ordinary human existence:

> "Work sustains life in the sense of biological survival, and it can also sustain the equality of life. Different meanings can be derived from different concepts associated with work, for example, work seen as a means of making a living, of being occupied, fulfilling a vocation, developing and utilizing skills, fulfilling needs, contributing to an all-embracing life-style, or fulfilling a life purpose"

For people with disabilities in South Africa, the persistent stereotyping and negative attitudes that undermine their real capabilities make achieving this goal an ongoing struggle. An added challenge is the high unemployment rate facing all South Africans (Statistics South Africa, 2005). "Since 2000, unemployment rates have hardly changed, indicating that South Africa's long-standing unemployment problem is likely to remain severe in the foreseeable future" (Nattrass, 2006; DoSD, 2006 quoted in Johannsmeier, 2007:10). This means that people with disabilities have to compete with non-disabled people to secure employment, putting then at an even greater disadvantage. The Wold Bank Report (2007), for example, shows that internationally unemployment of people with disabilities is greater than for their non-disabled counterparts.

Even though accessing education has frequently been a challenge for students with disabilities, many have managed to surmount these challenges and obtained their degrees, giving them hope that they will soon join the labour market and have more meaning in their

lives (Crous, 2004). Shunmugum (2002:63) states that "by educating and supporting students with disabilities and enabling them to graduate, the university could contribute to their integration into the workplace and in so doing improve their life choices." Moodley (1997) conducted research on economic integration of people with disabilities. He recommends that there should be appropriate education and training systems in place in order to equip people with disabilities to obtain fully secured employment, rather than just the short-term employment strategies presently in place.

In contrast to what Moodley (1997) and Shunmugum recommend, Hennessey (2004:4), makes the point that

> "although students with disabilities are enjoying unprecedented access and success in the postsecondary arena, and although a college degree improves their chances for employment in comparison to people with disabilities who have obtained formal education, they are not achieving the same employment and career outcomes after graduation as their non-disabled peers".

He adds that "a college graduate with a disability is 8-12 times more likely to be unemployed than a college graduate without a disability" (2004:6).

Naidoo's (2005) study on academic needs of visually impaired students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal notes that employment challenges were a contributing barrier to their development. She found that

> "[13%] of the respondents were employed as switchboard operators on a contract basis at the institution. Of the four postgraduate students, one chose to continue with postgraduate studies immediately. The other three embarked on postgraduate studies after failing to secure employment. Embarking on postgraduate studies was not a financial burden to these respondents as they received substantial bursaries from the Department of Labour" (Naidoo 2005:45).

Research studies illustrate some of the barriers which contributed to the unemployment of people with disabilities; these include attitudes of employers and colleagues, violations of their rights, inadequate infrastructure and unfair recruitment strategies.

The following discussion will provide examples of barriers experienced by people with disabilities in accessing employment and experiences in the workplace

2.11.1 Attitudes of employers

Unger (2002:2) states that "employers are less likely to endorse the hiring of people with disabilities when compared to those without disabilities", noting that employers had concerns of incurring cost to accommodate their needs. Johnson et al. (1988) found that local employers had doubts about the work-related skills of people with disabilities, such as flexibility and productivity in the workplace. Their study goes on to note that disabled persons work-related personality attributes were also questioned; including their ability to benefit from instruction and the amount of supervision demanded (Johnson et al., 1988).

This shows that people with disabilities are faced with being unable to find employment due to negative attitudes towards them. For example, Joseph, with a visual disability, "has been unable to find employment since obtaining his under graduate law degree, as well as a post legal qualification. He attributes this to the prejudice of prospective employers" (cited in Whitehead, 2004:15). DRPI (2007:5) notes that "about 22% of the respondents also reported barriers and obstacles in accessing work in that managers often held misconceptions and believed that people with disabilities are not able to perform the work tasks or to move around safely in the workplace".

2.11.2 Negative attitude from colleagues and friends

The DRPI (2007:7) report found that:

> "In most cases, people with disabilities faced direct rejection – that is, they were told to their face they were no good. This was most often found in cases where the performance of a person with a disability was considered to be low".

The same report also indicated that more than 86% of the respondents reported being treated unequally by people who do not have disabilities. In some cases, they claimed that their own family members had exploited them. Furthermore, 80% claimed to have experienced segregation, isolation and lack of support for their needs on the grounds of disability (DRPI, 2007).

2.11.3 Violation of rights in the workplace

Zungu's (1991) report also reveals that in the workplace people with disabilities were exposed to numerous situations in which their rights were violated and they were abused and discriminated against. "More than 25% of the respondents reported situations of abuse and violence in the workplace. Many complained of double standards, especially with regard to their salaries. Their salaries were not paid in full because the employer alleged that they had incurred extra expenses" (Zungu, 1991:69).

Zungu's (1991) research findings also showed that mistreatment of people with disabilities was evident in almost all work placements; Zungu's (1991) findings also indicated that many people with disabilities were asked to leave their jobs because of their disability. He said when someone became disabled while working; there was pressure on the individual from the management to leave the job even when their disability did not interfere with their ability to perform required tasks. Zungu's (1991) findings were supported by the DRPI (2007) report which noted how one person complained that blame was placed on her even when she was not the one who committed the errors: "They used to give me a lot of work, other staff members would make mistakes and I would be blamed as if I was the one who made the mistake" (DRPI, 2007:4).

2.11.4 Inadequate infrastructure

Whitehead (2004) states that the high levels of unemployment for persons with disabilities can be attributed to inadequate infrastructure, commenting that public transport in South Africa is not accessible for people with disabilities. He goes on to note that even buildings are not suitably adapted to the needs of people with disabilities. INDS (1997) also states that services in South Africa are designed on the assumption that people with disabilities

will not use them. Serlis and Swartz (2006) express the same opinion in their report, commenting that services in South Africa still do not meet the needs of people with disabilities. This is not in line with the legislation and policies of the country which spell out that all South Africans including people with disabilities have a right to enjoy social, political and economic rights. Even though the Department of Transport has tried to introduce buses for people with disabilities, the research studies show that municipal buses remain largely inaccessible to people with disabilities.

2.11.5 Unfair recruitment strategies

The ten year research conducted by the National Office on the Status of People with Disabilities (2003:45} comments that "In recruiting people with disabilities, some organizations simply place a symbol or insert a clause stating that 'previously disadvantaged groups, including disabled, are encouraged to apply' in their adverts for vacancies". The argument is that there are no genuine recruitment procedures in place to recruit people with disabilities. Companies merely recruit for statistical purposes. The report draws the conclusion that

> "It is not surprising therefore that the representation of people with disabilities is so low at the level of the provincial administration. The persistent use of generic methods for recruitment and selection, coupled with the low levels of outreach to relevant organizations by those departments that are recruiting, makes the low figures understandable" (National Office on the Status of People with Disabilities , 2003:46).

The next sub-section considers research studies which show how certain disabilities have impacted on employability of people with disabilities.

2.11.6 Impact of certain disabilities on employability

Physical or sensory disabilities vs *intellectual and psychiatric disabilities:* Greenwood and Johnson (1987) found that employers were more likely to express positive attitudes towards individuals with physical or sensory disabilities than those with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities. Christman and Stalen (1991) found that managers rated people who used

wheelchairs and crutches higher on the scale of employment than other employees with disabilities.

Mental disability vs *physical disabilities:* studies conducted by Unger 2002; Johnson; Greenwood & Schriner, 1998) have indicated that employers experience greater concern over employing persons with mental or emotional disabilities than persons with physical disabilities. Unger's study (2004:4) showed, on the other hand, that "employing persons with mental retardation brings other benefits to their business, such as enhancing their organization's public image and promoting diversity in the workplace".

Learning Disabilities: Minskoff, Sautter, Hoffmann, and Hawks (1987) surveyed employers across nine different industries regarding their attitudes towards individuals with learning disabilities. One third responded that they would not knowingly hire an applicant with a learning disability. Employers were less positive in their attitudes towards hiring a person with learning disabilities and affording them special considerations than toward hiring the disabled population in general.

This clearly shows that lack of understanding and misleading information about various disabilities contributes to unemployment of people with disabilities. The medical approach in viewing disability exacerbates discrimination against people with disability.

Conclusion

The literature discussed above shows that South Africa and other countries internationally have produced legislative frameworks that aim at enhancing the lives of people with disabilities. Whilst there is evidence of progress in the formulation of policies, people with disabilities internationally are confronted with challenges in securing employment when compared to non-disabled people. Negative attitudes of employers still prevail. In addition, government departments and disability structures in South Africa have implemented programmes to promote educational quality and to facilitate employment for people with disabilities. But even with such support people with disabilities are still finding it difficult to access education and employment.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology used in this study. It discusses the research paradigm, research design, sampling strategy, data collection strategies, validation and reliability, method of analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The researcher relied on information obtained from 21 students with disabilities who have studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal as well as five key informants, these being two disability officers and three employment officers.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Since the aim of the study was to determine the employment experiences of graduate students with disabilities, the design of the study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative findings, according to Key (1997), help the researcher to obtain real, rich and deep data. According to Struwig and Stead (2001:13), "qualitative data refer to any information that the researcher gathers that is not expressed in numbers." For example, the researcher was able to contextualize the information obtained from the participants. Unlike a quantitative study, the qualitative nature of this study enabled the researcher to use her interview skills in asking detailed information about the participants' employment experiences. For example, where necessary the researcher was able to ask for further clarity, using interviewing techniques to ensure that she was capturing what the participants wanted to say. Using qualitative methods also allowed the participants to engage in the discussion freely.

3.3 Research Design:

Since there has been no research conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on this topic, an exploratory approach was used. An exploratory approach has been defined by Neuman (2000:510) as "research into an area that has not been studied and in which the researcher wants to develop initial ideas and a more focused research question". Using this design helped the researcher to elicit information that produced more in-depth, comprehensive information regarding the employment experiences of students with disabilities.

3.4 Sampling strategy

Sampling, according to Strydom and Venter (2002), is when you use a portion of a population for your study as representatives that could be used to explain the situation of the population. In this study, data was obtained from three main sampling groups:

- **Graduate students with disabilities (21)**: There were 56 students with disabilities who graduated from the University of KwaZulu-Natal between 2001 and 2006. The researcher went through the list and telephonically contacted each of these graduates. The graduates were informed about the purpose and the nature of the research. They were asked if they wanted to participate. Of the 56 graduates, only 23 were available and showed willingness to be part of the study. However, when the researcher was preparing to conduct the interviews, she was only able to locate 21 of the graduates because contact details and addresses for the other two graduates had changed. Thus one could conclude that an availability sample strategy was used (de Vos et. al 2002); Struwig and Stead 2001). Furthermore, the study excluded students who graduated prior to 2001 as no records had been kept.

  Since the aim of the study was to understand the employment experiences of students with disabilities, students who graduated more recently, in 2007 and 2008, were not included in this study. The sample of 21 included blind students, partially sighted students and those with physical disabilities (paraplegic-paralysis of the leg and lower body and quadriplegic-paralysis of four limbs). The sample did not include deaf students as none had graduated between 2001 and 2006. The researcher had first hand

information of the participants in the form of addresses, contact numbers, their locations and nature of disabilities. Having these in place made it easier for the researcher to identify and contact the participants during the process of collecting information.

- **Disability Coordinators**: The University of KwaZulu-Natal has five campuses: Howard College, Westville, Edgewood, Medical School and Pietermaritzburg campuses. Across all the campuses there are four Disability Unit coordinators who serve students with disabilities. Medical school campuses do not have a Disability Unit hence students with disabilities at Medical School campus fall under the Howard College disability coordinator. During the interview process the researcher was unable to interview all the coordinators due to some of the coordinators having resigned their portfolios. Of the four coordinators that were supposed to be interviewed, only two were ultimately available.

- **Employment officers**: The University has employment officers on each campus, charged with helping students to find work experience. These officers network with external companies. The researcher therefore also wanted to interview the employment officers to find out their own experiences in helping students with disabilities in searching for work. The researcher only managed to interview three employment officers, as Edgewood and Medical School did not have employment offices in place.

3.5 Data collection procedures

The researcher used in-depth interviews in collecting information from all participants. An in-depth interview constitutes an "open-ended, discovery-oriented method that is well suited for describing both program processes and outcomes from the perspective of the target audience or key stakeholder" http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY393.

The pre-arrangements were made by calling the participants telephonically to establish their willingness to participate in the study. A further set of second telephone calls was subsequently made prior to meetings with each of the participants. The researcher personally conducted the interviews at places suitable for the participants. The researcher

used an interview schedule with themes to guide her in obtaining the information. The themes had open-ended questions which allowed the researcher to elicit rich information. This format allowed the researcher and the interviewees to engage in the discussion freely. There were three interview schedules. One was for students, the second was for the disability coordinators and the third was for employment office officers.

Prior to the interviews, an informed consent letter was drafted explaining the purpose of the research and guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity. The consent letter also provided participants with an opportunity to withdraw from the study should they feel uncomfortable. It was also made clear that they were fully at liberty not to respond to questions that made them feel uneasy. The consent letter was brailled for totally blind participants and enlarged for the partially sighted. Participants were provided with an opportunity to read the consent letter so that they were clear about the content of the research. Also, before the research commenced with the interviews, a consent letter was verbally read to the participants to ensure that they were comfortable to be part of the research. When permission was obtained from the participants, the researcher tape-recorded the interviews, which were later on transcribed into computer files. On the basis of some participants relocated to other provinces, the researcher to use a phone with voice recording so that the interviews could be taped. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours.

3.6 Method of data analysis

According to de Vos (2005:333) "Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data". De Vos (2005:334) indicates nine guidelines to help in the process of analysis of the data:

3.6.1 Planning for recording data

De Vos (2005) emphasises that it is important that the researcher plans ahead about how the data will be gathered, recorded and analyzed. In setting about this, the researcher formulated a list of things to do before embarking on data collection. The researcher, for example, had to braille and enlarge the consent forms in advance. Other things she had to

consider involved selecting the venue for interviews, funds to collect data, the kind of tape recorder to use, how many batteries and cassettes she would need, and where and how to secure the data. All these things made the life of the researcher less stressful. For example, there were times when the battery went flat during the course of the interview. Having spare batteries reduced panic and allowed the interview to flow smoothly.

3.6.2 Data collection and preliminary analyses

As recommended by de Vos (2005), this step comprises a twofold approach. One is when the researcher is collecting information at the research site and the other is when the researcher is away from the research site. De Vos (2005) advises that in this process, the researcher should ensure that immediately after the interviews the audiotapes are labelled and note taking is undertaken. These guidelines were followed by researcher to ensure that the information obtained was kept intact. Before the researcher attempted to analyze the findings, all the raw data was made available in order to ensure that there was no missing information. Also, to safeguard against fallible memory, the responses were recorded and summarized immediately after the interviews (see Struwig and Stead, 2001:130).

In addition, again following de Vos's (2005) recommendations the researcher colour coded her notes to keep track of dates, names, and events.

3.6.3 Managing data

The data management stage was demanding and time-consuming. After every interview, the researcher transcribed the tapes into computer files to ensure that the information obtained from the participants was not lost. A further advantage in this was that it was done while the researcher's memory of the interview was fresh and she retained a more immediate understanding of what the participants had communicated. This exercise took about four to eight hours, depending on the context of the data collected. In transcribing the tapes, the researcher had to listen to the whole tape repeatedly to ensure that the words of the participants were accurately captured.

The researcher also ensured that master copies of the information were kept (de Vos, 2005). This was to make sure that should information get destroyed, there would be back-

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up. Accordingly the tapes along with hard-copy print-outs were kept in a secure place, and the computer files were copied to separate computer systems.

3.6.4 Reading and writing memos

In reading and writing memos, Agar (quoted in de Vos, 2005:337) advises that the researcher should "read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts". The research followed this recommendation, re-reading all the transcripts and writing memos in order to make sense of the data. This was helpful as it allowed the researcher to have a strong understanding of the information collected.

3.6.5 Generating categories, themes and patterns

In the process of analysis, the researcher categorized the data into themes. She noted any repeated issues in the participants' responses and thereby identified broader themes that emerged from what the participants said. Afterwards, she grouped all the responses into those themes. Having done that, she then noted patterns of similar responses. This then allowed the researcher to come up with sub-themes to analyze the data.

3.6.6 Coding the Data

According to Marshall and Rossman (quoted in de Vos, 2005:338) "Coding is the formal representation of analytical thinking … codes may take several forms: abbreviations of key words, coloured dots, and numbers-the choice is up to the researcher". The researcher accordingly formulated tables that divided the information into sections, themes and sub-themes, allocating suitable headings to identity the sections and the themes that emerged from the responses. All of these categories were numbered.

3.6.7 Testing emergent understanding

Once the information had been categorized into themes and sub-themes, the researcher began to examine whether the themes were in line with the context of the research and whether or not they were relevant to include in the analysis. This investigation enabled the

researcher to focus on the quality and key issues rather than on less meaningful information.

3.6.8 Searching for alternative explanation

After all this was done, the researcher searched for alternative explanation of the data presented. For example, she went back to the literature review to search for similarities in previous research studies. This enabled the researcher to provide explanations for the information presented by the participants.

3.6.9 Report writing

Finally, the researcher had to write a report on findings she obtained. She discussed the themes and analytically interpreted them. She then interpreted and provided visualizations of the material by using tables and diagrams. Direct responses of participants were also illustrated throughout the entire writing process. This was done to provide thick description of the findings.

3.7 Validity and reliability

Lincoln and Guba (cited in de Vos, 2005) state that there are basically four ways to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative findings.

3.7.1 Credibility

"Credibility is the alternative to internal validity in which the goal is to demonstrate that the enquiry was conducted in such as manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described" (de Vos 2005:351). For the purpose of this study, credibility was enhanced when the researcher shared the information with peers who were knowledgeable on disability issues. Another way of enhancing credibility was that the researcher herself is a disability officer working with students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She had a background understanding on issues affecting students with disabilities. For example, one of the motivations for doing this study was that students with disabilities shared employment frustrations with the researcher; hence the researcher decided to

explore these experiences in a research study. For this reason, it was not just the researcher who had an interest in undertaking the study but also the core participants. The researcher also obtained authorization from the participants through verbal and written consent.

In addition, in-depth interview technique was used by the researcher to collect the data. This promoted credibility because the participants did not just state their experiences but were able to engage in discussion.

3.7.2 Transferability

As noted by de Vos (2005), one of the weaknesses of qualitative research is that it can provide information that is too generalized. De Vos therefore insists that the researcher must provide thick description of what the participants have said and state the theoretical approaches used to formulate generalization. The researcher in this study therefore ensured that thick description from participants' responses was articulated throughout the analysis process.

3.7.3 Dependability

In establishing dependability of the study, the researcher created an audit trial. This allowed other researchers to review analysis decisions. Also all the methods used to undertake the study were clearly stipulated.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Lastly, the researcher had to check the trustworthiness of the results. Following de Vos's (2005) recommendation, the researcher accordingly asked herself number of questions: Were the research findings in conformity with other research findings? Were categories well developed? In addition the researcher also verified the information by asking the participants and peers to establish whether the information obtained was making sense and whether the all aspects were comprehensively covered.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Bisman and Hardcastle (1999) state that any researcher must consider ethical considerations when undertaking a study in order to avoid harmful consequences for participants. Among the ethical considerations they indicate as most important are informed consent, confidentiality, and duty to warn and protect.

The researcher prepared a consent form that was signed by both the researcher and the interviewees. The form was enlarged and brailed for those who had limited sight or no vision. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses so that they could feel protected and safe to say whatever they might want to contribute to the study. Also reassurance was given that their names would not appear in the final text of the research.

The researcher kept in mind that people with disabilities are vulnerable in society because of unjust laws of the past and the stigma associated with disability. Keeping this in mind allowed the researcher to be sensitive when emotional issues arose that require further intervention. The researcher used her professional skills to manage and deal with emotions that arose. In particular, for example, participants who were without jobs were very emotional about their situation. In such cases the researcher referred the participants to organizations and agencies for further help.

3.9 Limitations of the study

Even though the researcher was able to complete the study, it needs to be acknowledged that she was confronted with some challenges in carrying it out. The biggest challenge was formulating a database of students with disabilities who have graduated from UKZN. There was no previous database available at the University for this group of students but through a process of consultation with the disability officers and going through files, the researcher managed to compile a list of 56 students who graduated in the period 2001 to 2006. The 56 students identified cannot be regarded as complete or definitive since no previous information was kept for this group of students.

When it came to the data collection, two of the 23 participants who agreed to take part in this study were no longer available. Also, with those who agreed to participate in the study

it was difficult to secure appointments. Some had relocated to other provinces and could not be reached. Also some would frequently cancel appointments for interviews and this was very frustrating as it delayed the analysis process.

The researcher had no bursary support to do this study, so she had to use her own funds to meet all the expenses incurred. For some participants, for example, she had to pay for travelling costs to attend interviews and go their workplaces and homes, as well having to pay for phone calls.

One of the limitations of the study is that the researcher is a disability officer at the Disability Unit and some respondents were uncomfortable being interviewed by someone they know. For example, when they needed to comment about the attitudes of their employers, they were reluctant to provide negative expressions about them. The researcher in those instances clarified the purpose of the research as well as assuring them of confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the study. With this assurance the majority of the participants then had less anxiety and were comfortable to respond to the questions asked.

Another limitation of the study is that those graduates who were unemployed had hopes that the researcher would provide suitable employment for them. This was a difficulty the researcher had anticipated and she therefore took care to clarify the purpose of the research before carrying out the interviews so as to avoid confusion and misunderstanding about the purpose of the research.

Also, the research did not look at the whole range of disabilities. It excluded people with mental and hearing impairments.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided an insight into the methodology used to undertake this study. It showed that the research study was qualitative in nature and that the approach was explorative. The sampling method comprised three groups of participants: students with disabilities, disability officers and employment officers. The researcher used an in-depth interview technique to undertake the study. She also used audiotapes to collect the data

with the authorization of the participants. Participants were properly consulted and consented to participate in the study. In addition, this chapter discussed various techniques used to ensure that the data is valid and reliable. Lastly, the researcher also indicated factors that had to be taken into account for her to undertake the study without causing anxiety for the participants.

The findings of the study will be presented in the next two chapters.

Chapter 4: Analysis & discussion: Participants' demographic data & educational experiences

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the employment experiences of participants with disabilities who had studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study comprised 8 participants with physical disabilities, 9 with total blindness and 4 who are partially sighted. The sample of the study comprised participants who were Africans and Indians. Students with disabilities from other racial groups who studied at University of KwaZulu-Natal could not be reached because their contact information had changed.

In addition, data was collected from three employment officers representing the five university campuses, and two disability officers employed at the University Disability Units.

The analysis and discussion of the responses obtained from the participants is divided into two chapters (Chapters 4 and 5). Chapter 4 commences by providing participants' demographic profiles. In addition, this chapter includes the educational experiences of participants. The discussion of educational experiences is to identify whether education received by participants impacted on their employment experiences. In discussing employment concerns whilst at University both the participants' responses and those of the employment officers are provided. The University employment officers' responses are provided to ascertain the kind of support provided at the university level. In Chapter 5 the employment experiences of participants are discussed.

To preserve anonymity, privacy and confidentiality complete profiles of the participants are not provided.

4.2 Short profile of participants

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a 32-year-old black male. He is totally blind and doesn't know the cause of his blindness. He was told that his blindness could not be corrected by an operation. Since he went blind early in life he has always attended special schools. He graduated from the University of KwaZulu-Natal with a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree, majoring in Sociology and Industrial Organization and Labour studies. After obtaining his degree he was unemployed for a period of three years. He is now employed as a disability adviser at a government department.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is a 34-year-old black female who is totally blind due to glaucoma and a cataract. Even though she underwent several operations, removal of the cataract did not solve the problem. She eventually went blind. Before she went blind she studied briefly at a mainstream school. She was eventually sent to a special school far from home owing to the limited number of special schools in the area. When enrolling at the university, she wanted to do social work but was not allowed to do so. The reasons provided were that she would not be able to conduct practical work. She obtained a Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She finished her degree in 2003 and has not been employed since.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is a black female aged 35. She is totally blind from German measles. She studied at special schools. She had hoped to do social work but was denied access. She then enrolled for the Bachelor of Social Sciences Degree majoring in Sociology, Tourism and Political Science. Participant 3 said that since she graduated with a degree she never wished for, she had no interest in applying for employment. She stated "I did not think of employment. I wanted to enrol for a postgraduate degree". She is currently furthering her studies in education.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a totally blind black female aged 31. Prior to going blind she had a diploma in nursing and was practicing as a nurse until she was shot by her boyfriend who also shot himself. She was medically boarded as she could no longer practice as a nurse. Being boarded left her unemployed. The year after the incident she enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and graduated with a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree, majoring in Psychology. After searching for employment in vain, she pursued an honours degree in Industrial Organization and Labour Studies. She has completed the degree and currently works in a contract post as an employee relations officer.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a 28-year-old black male. He is totally blind and doesn't know what caused the blindness. He said he woke up blind at the age of 19. At that time he was in grade 11 at a mainstream school and had to be transferred to a special school. He enrolled for the Bachelor of Arts degree. The participant indicated that the Bachelor of Arts degree did not give him specific focus and satisfaction, nor could he secure employment after completion of his degree. He returned to the University and enrolled for a Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership and Management in the Faculty of Management Studies. He is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Social Policy. Regardless of the challenges the participant faced, he has managed to secure employment in the Department of Education and works as a trainee officer in the Human Resource Department.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a totally blind black female aged 35. She said she doesn't know the cause of her blindness. She was partially sighted for a while and eventually went totally blind. She completed her Bachelor of Social Sciences degree in 2002, majoring in Psychology and Criminology. She also has an honours degree in Human Resources. She has not yet secured any kind of employment.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is a totally blind Indian female who is 30 years old. She was born with retinal detachment. She studied at special schools. She has four degrees, all of which were obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal; a Bachelor of Social Sciences, an LLB, a Masters in Political Science and a PHD in Public Relations. Even with so many qualifications she struggled to find employment. She said she applied and there were no responses until 2006 when she was employed as a Senior State Law Adviser. At the moment she is employed as a Chief Legislative Officer.

Participant 8

Participant 8 is a black male aged 31. He was born blind. The cause of the blindness is micropthalmia (abnormally small eyes). He attended special schools. After completing his matric he enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Laws. Thereafter he completed an honours degree in Management Studies. His reason for choosing to do management studies was that he had doubts if he would find employment. He said *"I thought of doing postgraduate studies since I did not know if I will be able to obtain employment".* He is currently working as a legal adviser at the Department of Education. He supports line managers and the MEC by providing legal advice.

Participant 9

Participant 9 is partially blind. She is an Indian female aged 26. She was born with an eye condition known as nystagmus. According to her, her parents found out about the disability when she was nine months old. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Multilingual Studies and honours in isiZulu and French from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She currently lives at home with her parents as she is still unemployed. She says that she has gone to a couple of interviews and has applied to several institutions but is unable to obtain employment.

Participant 10

Participant 10 is a 30-year-old black female. She was born with albinism. She is partially sighted and her skin is very sensitive to light due to the nature of her condition. She studied at special schools. She completed her LLB at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. After completion of her degree she had difficulties in securing articles. As a result she accepted work as an intern at the Magistrate court. She still works there in a contract position as an administrative clerk.

Participant 11

Participant 11 is a black female aged 28. She has albinism and as a result she is also partially sighted and her skin is very sensitive to light. The participant stated that her condition is hereditary and that most of her family members have it. She studied in mainstream schools. She graduated with a Bachelor of Social Sciences Degree, majoring in Community Development and Anthropology. She currently works in a contract position at the Department of Transport as a consultant. She is finding it difficult to pay rent for proper accommodation due to the low salary she earns.

Participant 12

Participant 12 is an Indian male aged 31. He is partially sighted. The reason for his partial sightedness is congenital cataracts. He stated that at the time of his birth there was a German measles epidemic and as a consequence he acquired the disability. He passed his matric at a school for visually-impaired children. He graduated with a degree in Industrial Psychology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He then obtained an honours degree in Industrial Relations and Labour studies. He currently works at the University of KwaZulu-Natal as an employee officer. He is a consultant for University support centres and helps them with queries in respect of policies and disciplinary action procedures.

Participant 13

Participant 13 is an Indian female aged 27. She is partially sighted. Her disability is hereditary. Even though she has this eyesight problem, she chose to study through

mainstream schools as she did not see herself as different from others. She graduated with a three-year Psychology degree from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and thereafter obtained a Diploma in Education at the same University. Currently, she is working in a special school for visually impaired children.

Participant 14

Participant 14 is a 27-year-old Black male. He has dystonia which is characterized by involuntary movements. Unlike other students with disabilities, participant 5 studied at mainstream schools. He wanted to be an architect or a doctor but was unable to choose his career path because he did not meet the minimum requirements to enter into those fields. He settled for a three-year degree in Psychology. He then worked at a Human Resource Department for a period of a year. He decided to return to the University to study town planning. He is currently enrolled fulltime at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, attempting to finish his Masters in town planning.

Participant 15

Participant 15 is an Indian male aged 41. He has multiple disabilities: physical, mental and severe chronic ailments. The cause of the disability was injuries sustained at work, in the police force. He was shot on numerous occasions. The damage to his body affected his mental functioning and the intake of medication resulted in severe stomach ulcers. After being medically boarded he enrolled and obtained a degree in Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He subsequently received an honours degree in Theology. He is now attempting to finish his masters in Theology.

Participant 16

Participant 16 is a 26-year-old black male. He has polio paralysis. The parts of the body affected are his legs and he uses leg braces to support them. This participant stated that he studied at a special school for a while but later chose to study at a mainstream school. He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Cell Biology and Chemistry at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is now doing postgraduate studies at the University of Pretoria.

Participant 17

Participant 17 is a black female aged 35. She has a physical disability due to polio which affected her at the age of six. The affected area is the right side of her body. She uses calipers and crutches. She studied at a mainstream school. She said she was not aware of the existence of special schools. She completed her LLB degree in 2002. She stayed at home for five years without obtaining employment. She has still not secured employment relevant to what she studied. She currently works as a receptionist.

Participant 18

Participant 18 is an Indian female aged 28. She is quadriplegic (uses a wheel chair) as a result of multiple sclerosis, a condition which causes muscle dysfunction. She cannot write or walk and is partially sighted as well. She acquired the disability later in life when she had completed matric and had begun with her tertiary studies. In that respect, she studied through mainstream schools. Despite her condition she completed her studies and qualified as a chartered accountant. She now works at a call centre in the Ethekwini Metro Police service which deals with traffic fines and related enquiries. The participant pointed out that working in a call centre is discouraging, given her University qualifications.

Participant 19

Participant 19 is a black male aged 33. He was born with a physical disability and doesn't know the cause of his disability. He has paralysis in both legs and uses calipers, crutches and sometimes a wheelchair. He said he had difficulties enrolling in special schools because of the few special schools available. He therefore studied through mainstream schools. He later graduated from the University of KwaZulu-Natal with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, majoring in Media and Communication and isiZulu. He is currently working in a contract position at a government department as a media analyst.

Participant 20

Participant 20 is a 41-year-old Indian male. He has a physical disability. He cannot walk or stand for too long. He became disabled subsequent to a series of operations for injuries

sustained in a car accident, including a major operation on his left foot and two spine operations. As a result he had to be medically boarded from being a school teacher. After being medically boarded the participant said that his life was empty with no real meaning. He then decided to further his studies at the University of Kwazulu-Natal. He now has an honours degree in Theology and is attempting to complete his masters in Theology.

Participant 21

Participant 21 is a 27–year-old Indian male. In his final year of study as a medical student, he had a car accident which left him quadriplegic (paralysis of all four limbs). In order to function and be able to carry out daily activities, he uses a wheelchair, a laptop computer, and has employed two helpers to assist him. One helper is a nursing assistant and the other helps to lift him. Even though the participant is quadriplegic he can still perform many functions independently. He said *"during the rehabilitation phase I did occupation therapy. I readapted myself. I am very well equipped. I am fairly comfortable at the desk; I can use my laptop. There are just other things which I require assistance with".* After rehabilitation, he approached the medical school to allow him to finish his degree. He was then allowed to continue his degree but was not allowed to do practical work. Despite having secured employment, the participant is not finding it easy to cope in the working environment.

In the next section the demographic details of the participants are discussed.

4.3 Demographic profile of participants

This section provides demographic information about the participants, including the prevalence of disability according to race, gender and age, the nature and causes of disability, and the onset of disability.

4.3.1 Race, Gender and Age of Participants

Table 4.1   Prevalence of disability in SA by race, gender and age

1. Race	Frequency	Percentage
African	13	62
Indian	8	38
Total	**21**	**100**
2. Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	11	52
Female	10	48
Total	**21**	**100**
3. Current age	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
26 - 35 Yrs	19	91
41 -43	2	9
Total	**21**	**100**

Table 4.1 table indicates there was a higher percentage (62%) of African participants than that of Indians (38%). This is in line with enrolment figures at UKZN. The UKZN Disability Unit report for 2006 indicated that of registered students with disabilities, 61% were Africans, 24 % Indians, 13% whites and 2% Coloured. As noted in Chapter 3, white and Coloured students were not included in the sample for this study because they could not be traced.

With regard to gender there was an almost equal representation of female (48%) and male (52%) participants with disabilities. The gender representation figures match those indicated by the UKZN, Disability Unit report (2006) which revealed that there was no significant difference between the enrolment figures of females and males with disabilities. The report showed that there were about 53% male and 47% females enrolled in that year. In terms of age representation, the majority (91%) of the participants were between 26 and 35 years. Two participants were older than 40.

4.4 Nature, causes and onset of disability

In this section, the nature, causes and onset of disability are discussed. The nature of disabilities of the study participants are presented in the following diagram.
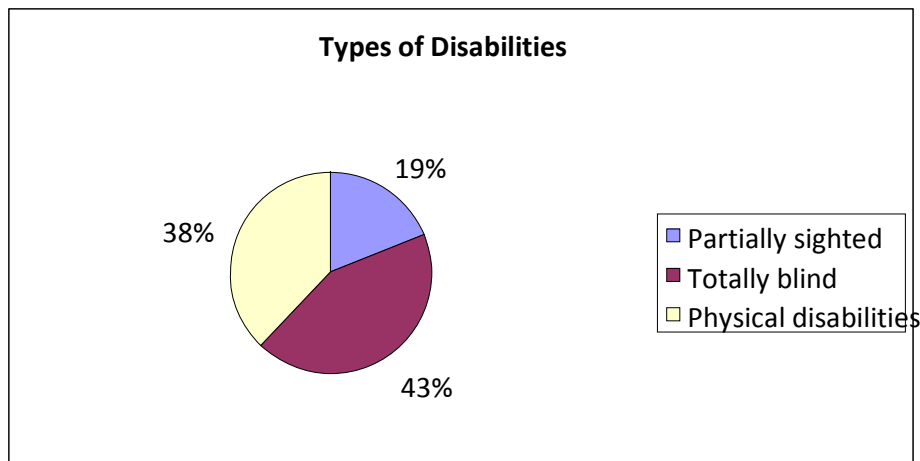
Figure 4.1   Types of disabilities

The highest percentage (43%) of participants in this study were totally blind, with 19% partially sighted and 38% with physical disabilities. This is in line with information presented in the UKZN Disability Unit reports (2007) and (2008) which shows that the highest number of students registered at the University of KwaZulu-Natal were those with visual disabilities compared to other types of disabilities.

The cause of disability in those participants with visual disabilities (total blindness and partial sightedness) were congenital cataract, micropthalmia, nystagmus, glaucoma, German measles, retinal detachment, gunshot wounds and albinism. Examples of participants' responses were as follows:

> "I had an accident whereby I was shot by my boyfriend which led to my blindness".

> "… I am blind. Some people prefer to use the phrase visually impaired. But I prefer to use totally blind. The cause is micropthalmia. Directly translated this means small eyes. The doctor said I have tiny eye balls and is congenital that means I was born with the condition."

"I am totally blind. I was born with retinal detachment."

"I am totally blind. The cause of the disability is glaucoma and cataract. I was not born blind."

"I have a visual impairment. To be specific I am totally blind, I can see colours but that doesn't help. I got blind at the age of seven. I had terrible headache and then I just got blind."

"I am visually impaired – partially-sighted as a result of albinism".

Multiple sclerosis, dystonia, car accident, and polio were the leading causes of disability in those participants with physical disabilities. The participants said they acquired their physical disability as follows:

"I got polio when I was six months old. I use a calliper on my right side. The polio affected my right hand side".

"The cause was the polio virus at the time when my mother was pregnant" .

"At the end of my final year at University I was involved in a car accident. I sustained a spinal cord injury, so I am quadriplegic".

"My disability is divided into three types. One is physical disability -back problems, mental and other chronic disabilities. Physical in terms of back problems because of injuries I sustained at work- base on choosing police force, this affected my mental capacity, post traumatic. Also I have severe stomach ulcers. I joined police in 1986, in 2002 I was shot, but it was not only one incident, numerous incidents happening. In 2002, I was medically boarded. I consider myself having multiply disability."

The factors that contributed to the onset of the disabilities are shown in the following diagram.
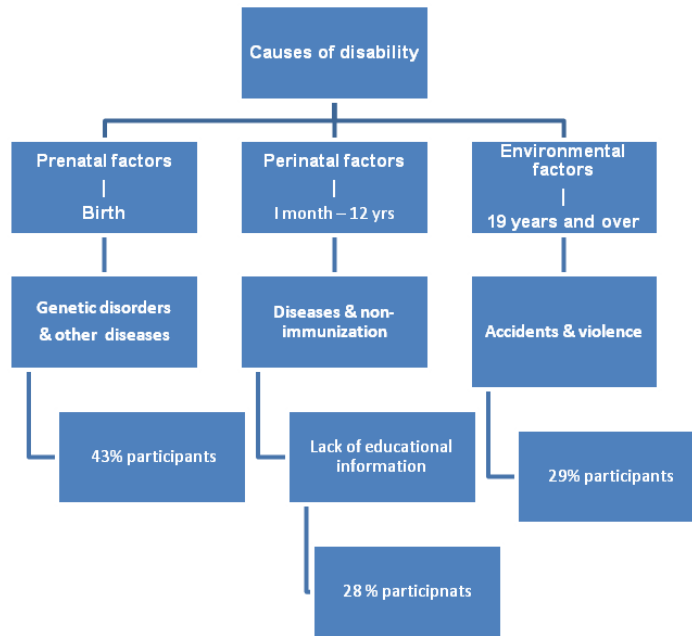
Figure 4.2   Factors that contributed to the onset of disability

Figure 4.2 shows that most (43%) of the participants acquired their disabilities at birth. Inherited biological conditions from conception to birth led to disabilities. Naidoo's (2005:30) study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal revealed that 38% participants in her study acquired their disabilities at birth.

In addition, 28% of the participants in this study acquired their disabilities between 1 month and 12 years of age. The causes of disability in this age group were polio, cataracts, glaucoma and German measles**.** Factors such as inaccessible health care services at the mesosystem level and lack of information could have resulted in children not being immunized, which in turn resulted in their acquiring a disability.

The onset of disability for the third group of participants occurred from 19 years of age onwards. For this group of participants the causes of disabilities were car accidents, gun shots and unknown factors such as headaches.

The findings of this study correlate with the findings of Simone-Meyer (1999: 7). He found that "the major cause of disability in South Africa appears to be illness, pre- and peri-natal problems such as genetic disorders and birth trauma, injuries, accidents or violence". The Office of the President (2007: 16) similarly found that: "factors that contribute to

impairments and disability include, violence and war; poverty; lack of accurate information about prevention and management of disability; failure of medical services; unhealthy lifestyles; environmental factors such as epidemics, natural disasters, pollution and trauma".

In the next section information about the educational experiences of participants will be discussed. The section will present findings in relation to the type of school participants attended, their options in choosing subjects and how this impacted on their career choices at University.

4.5 Educational experiences

In order to understand the barriers to employment, the impact of education on the employability of students with disabilities was explored. The researcher wanted to explore whether students with disabilities were provided with options in choosing subjects that would facilitate enrolment into intended degrees at higher education institutions. This section is divided into two parts. In the first part, participants' experiences in high school will be discussed. In the second part, participants' experiences at university will be discussed.

In analyzing participants' educational experiences themes and sub-themes are discussed below (Table 4.2) in two parts. In part one high school educational experiences will be discussed and in part two, university educational experiences.

Table 4.2   The educational experiences of participants: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Part one: High school educational experiences Special schools Mainstream schools	 Added support received. Insufficient number of special schools Limited choice of subjects. Insufficient number of special schools. Subject choices Degree Choices.
Part two: University educational experiences Satisfaction with degree choices at the university. Employment concerns whilst at university Use of assistive devices	 Degree Choices. Inability to do scarce skills subjects. Embarking on postgraduate studies Lack of training on job search skills Unstructured support received Perceptions of employers' attitudes. Totally blind participants Participants with partial sight Participants with physical disabilities

(Part One: High school educational experiences)

In the following discussion experiences of participants in special and mainstream schools are discussed.

4.5.1 Special schools

Four participants in this study acquired their disabilities after completion of their primary and secondary education. Of the remaining 17 participants, four went to mainstream schools because they could not access special schools and one participant, who is partially sighted, chose to study in a mainstream school. The other 12 participants attended special schools. The discussion in the first part of this section will focus on the 12 participants who attended special schools. Nine of these participants are totally blind and three are partially sighted.

4.5.1.1 Added support received.

The twelve participants with visual disabilities stated that they attended special schools because their special needs were attended to at these schools. For example, two participants who initially registered at mainstream schools before they went totally blind narrated their experiences as follows:

> *"I started at a mainstream school- there was no assistance. I had to sit in front of the blackboard. The teachers did not understand my condition. It was very frustrating to go to school. Sometimes when I could not see the blackboard, I would lie and say to the teacher that I have a terrible headache. And I would be sent home. I stayed home for sometime before attending school. I was finally sent to a special school. My father was very supportive and we were both educated to use Braille. There was much support compared to the mainstream school".*

> *"I got blind when I was doing grade 11. I stayed for a year before going to school because I had to attend special school because in the school I previously attended there were no resources to cater for my needs. I was*

exposed to the special school for the first time. I told myself that I needed to be positive about whatever is offered".

The other participants said:

"I attended special schools throughout my life. I attended these schools because the teachers understood my needs. They knew that I needed enlarged material to study. I did not have to explain myself".

"From Grade R to grade 12, I attended special school. I had to attend special school because all my special needs were addressed".

Even though participants, as stated above, received added support by attending special schools as opposed to mainstream schools, they struggled to attend in these schools due to the insufficient number of special schools. This will be discussed further in the following sub-theme.

4.5.1.2 Insufficient number of special schools

The participants indicated that it was not easy to enrol in these schools because of factors which included the scarcity of special schools and their categorization into disability types. As noted by Shunmugam (2002), during the apartheid era special schools were segregated by racial groups. He observes that in mainstream schools there were no facilities in place to cater for the needs of learners with disabilities, therefore they had to be sent to special schools where they could receive attention and support. The problem, Shunmugam explains, was that special schools were very limited and under-resourced. The account is corroborated by the INDS (1997). The INDS (1997) states that special schools were very limited. The following are examples of participants who shared similar experiences:

"I attended special schools. I attended Umlazi Enduduzweni next to Mangosuthu technology, back in 1988. The school closed down in 1990. For a year I did not go to school because I had to search for another special school that could meet my needs. In those times, special schools were very few and far away from home. My mother had to search for another one and found one

at Pietermaritzburg. Then the following year I went to Ethembeni School, then from there to Author Blaxal"

"I went to special school Endudezweni at Umlazi. The school was closed in 1989 because of violence that took place. I remember that it was difficult then to find another school but at the end of the struggle I managed to find a School at Pietermaritzburg".

"I attended special school since I became blind at earlier age. It was at Efate School for the blind in Transkei till grade 7. Another one was at Bizana till matric. I had to travel from Johannesburg and leave my home town searching for a special school".

"Before the elections I could not attend the special school near my home because it was a white school. But after 1994 I became the first Indian who was partially blind to attend that school. I loved that school very much. In that school I learnt about other disabilities as well because there were students with other different types of disabilities. That helped me to cope well at tertiary and exposed me to other different races as well.

The responses above indicate that because of the limited number of special schools, learners with disabilities struggled to gain admission to them. Participants in this study reflected that they had to leave their families in order to be able to attend special schools. For example, one participant had to leave her family in Johannesburg and go to the Eastern Cape in search of a special school. Participants who were at special schools had no opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers as they had to study separately. They were isolated not only from their peers but also from family members and the rest of their communities. This isolation, according to INDS (1997), helped to sustain the myth that people with disabilities are different and need to be treated differently.

As noted in chapter two, despite the fact that students with disabilities have struggled to attend special schools, the existing policies allow students with disabilities to freely access education. The Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001) in particular, is one of those policies which stress the importance of allowing students with disabilities to have academic freedom. However, Howell (2006:165) argued that:

"Although at the schooling level the education environment now has the potential to support greater participation by disabled people in higher education, many barriers still remain. For example, disabled learners in secondary education are still not always being appropriately advised or given the option to choose subjects that would facilitate access into higher education".

Another challenge which still remains is that even though the goal of the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001) is to make mainstream schools accommodate students with disabilities, the difficulty remains that there are a limited number of teachers that could be assigned to mainstream schools to teach learners with disabilities. As noted by Howell (2005), there aren't enough teachers to teach learners with disabilities in mainstream schools. This means that if this problem is not resolved, proper implementation of White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001) might take a while. Continuation of marginalization of students with disabilities will prevail.

The next section will provide a discussion on subject choice in special schools.

4.5.1.3 Limited choice of subjects

All the participants from special schools stated that they were not provided with options to choose subjects they wanted. Howell's (2005; 2006) research found that the limited choice of subjects in special schools disqualified students with disabilities from doing subjects they intended. Some of the participants' responses were:

"There were limited subject choices to choose from. If you were not doing business economics, you were then on physical science. That's it. It was because of the shortage of teachers".

"The choices of subjects were limited. For example, there were other subjects I wanted to do like economics but those subjects were not offered to me".

"There was a limited choice of subjects. There was no career guidance. You know the schools were in rural areas and were not fully developed and had no career counsellors. When I received career guidance it's when I was preparing

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to go to university. I received support from my friends, they invited me and that's when I obtained counselling and enrolled at university. I did subjects like biblical studies, IsiXhosa and others".

It is apparent from these responses that students with disabilities were not satisfied with the choice of subjects they were offered. The lack of subject choice caused difficulties when they came to enrol at university. They said that due to the limited range of options, they were unable to enrol in preferred fields of study at university level. These experiences will be discussed in more detail later on this chapter.

In the next section experiences of students with disabilities who registered at mainstream schools are discussed.

4.5.2 Mainstream schools

As noted in 4.5.1 above, five participants with disabilities attended mainstream schools. Four of these participants had physical disabilities and one was partially sighted.

4.5.2.1 Insufficient number of special schools

The five participants explained their reasons for registering in mainstream schools as follows:

> *"I attended a mainstream school. I knew about special schools but I had problems to enter in them. The reason was that there were few special schools to go to".*

> *"It was in the last three years that I admitted that I had a disability. So, I attended mainstream school".*

> *"I was in a mainstream school. It was not easy. But then it helped me to cope with the world. I was not aware that there were special schools until very late".*

> *"I attended both a mainstream school and special school. At first I went to special school and later to mainstream school. I decided to attend mainstream schools because I did not want to be different. Most of my friends were at*

mainstream schools, so I did not want to lose them. I coped well. But there were days when other students would look at you differently, but all that mattered was that I was with my friends and they were okay to me".

It is evident from these responses that the reasons why participants did not attend specials schools were a combination of factors which included: shortage of special schools, fear of losing friends and denial that they have disabilities. This indicates that there is a potential for integration of learners with disabilities into mainstream schools. As long as there is a good infrastructure, specialized teachers and resources are made available.

4.5.2.2 Options of subjects' choice

Unlike participants who attended special schools, all five of the participants who attended mainstream schools stated that they were provided with a range of subjects to choose from. However, two stated that they were not provided with career advice to help them choose careers meaningful to them. The other three participants stated that both career guidance and a variety of subject choices were provided.

"Career guidance was provided and we were provided with variety of options to choose subjects we wanted".

"From grade 9 the career guidance teacher, would sit with us and helped us decide subjects to choose. She helped us to secure the University of our Choice".

"Yes, there were options to choose from but there was no career guidance and I was not satisfied with the subjects I chose. I chose general subjects. I had no alternatives".

The one partially sighted participant who preferred to be in mainstream school said:

"There was a career guidance teacher but I was not happy with the subjects I chose. For example I wanted to do geography and science subjects. I could not choose them because of my disability. So, I ended up opting for Human subjects".

The participants' responses indicate that mainstream schools were better resourced than special schools, since all participants in mainstream schools stated that they were provided with options to choose preferred subjects.

(Part Two: University educational experiences)

In the following discussion experiences of participants at the university level are discussed.

4.5.3 Satisfaction with degree choices at university

This section will consider participant experiences regarding degree choices at university.

4.5.3.1 Degree Choices

Participants who went to special schools indicated that since there had been limited choice of subjects at high school, when they enrolled at the university they encountered difficulties in choosing programs that would have facilitated them an entry into areas of scarce skills and intended fields. They said:

> *"The degree I chose was not what I intended to study. But I had no choice because subjects offered at high school prevented me from doing what I wanted"*.

> *"I have four degrees. My first degree was bachelor of social sciences. Second one was my LLB degree. Third one was masters in political science and the fourth one was PHD in Public relations. I did not feel satisfied with the first degree because it had no specialization".*

> *At the university I was confused, for my junior degree I did Psychology (Social Science) . I did Social Science because I had no other choice. After a year I then said no this is not for me. I then did LLB degree. I had something in mind about LLB when I was still in high school.*

> *"I wanted to do geography and science subjects. I could not choose them because they were not offered at high school [special school]. So, at the university level I ended up opting for Humanities subjects".*

Regardless the fact that the participants who went to mainstream schools were provided with options to choose subjects they wanted. They were faced with challenges to choose intended degrees at university. Participant's responses were:

"I wanted to do Architecture but was two points off, I then decided to do Psychology".

"At the university I did Media and Communication and isiZulu. I wanted to do maths but I was very bad with calculations at high school. I had to do Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Media and IsiZulu".

The partially sighted participant said:

"Since I am partially sighted, I could not do science subjects. My disability prevented me. At the university I could only do Bachelor of Social Science, not because I wanted but because of my disability".

The conclusion that could be drawn from these responses is that even though participants were provided with subject choices at mainstream schools, when they had to register at the university level they could not choose courses they preferred. Their explanations were that they did not have enough points and therefore did not meet degree requirements. In spite of these challenges this group of students, unlike students who went to special schools, had a fair opportunity to choose career subjects at high schools. The difficulties that confronted them at high school are no different to challenges faced by non-disabled learners.

4.5.3.2 Inability to register for preferred university programmes

Besides lack of subject options, for students who went to special schools they were also confronted with challenges to embark into intended programmes at university. They stated that they were denied access by academic departments to enroll in the programmes they would have preferred. Two participants for instance expressed strong feelings of disappointment. They wanted to do social work but since they were blind the Department of Social Work refused to allow them to enroll in the programme. They articulated their experiences as follows:

"My first choice was social work. I was told that because I am blind I would not be able to conduct social work practicals. I opted for LLB and they fully accepted me".

"I wanted to do social work but the Department of Social Work did not accept me. They said I would have challenges when having to do practicals" .

Social work has been declared a scarce skill in South Africa. Had these students been allowed to do social work they would have had a better chance of employment in their field of study.

The participants experiences correspond to the research findings of Nzimande and Sikhosana (1996), Fichten (cited in Hill 1996), and the State of Disabled People's Rights report (DRPI, 2007) which show that directors of academic departments very often declined to register students with disabilities in preferred fields of studies. Participants stated that the inability to register was not on the basis of not meeting the points or criteria but because they had disabilities. Odendaal- Magwaza and Farman (cited in Howell 2005:166) also note that:

> "Disabled students have reported being denied access to certain courses because they are believed to be unable- due to impairment- to meet the course requirements. Examples cited include courses involving field work or practical professional development in off campus facilities; courses that entail the studying of graphic material or the use of particular types of equipment; and courses which require extensive interaction with the public".

These findings show that unwillingness of academic departments to admit students with disabilities to the degree of their choice forced students with disabilities to do courses they did not prefer. Thus they ended up graduating with degrees they were not satisfied with and as a result had to embark on postgraduate studies. This is discussed in the following sub-theme.

4.5.3.3 Embarking on postgraduate studies

Fifteen of the participants in this study indicated that they have postgraduate qualifications and six said they are currently finishing their postgraduate studies**.** It was significant that all participants stated that the reason why they chose to enrol in postgraduate studies was because they were finding it very frustrating to secure employment. Therefore they saw furthering their studies as an answer to unemployment. Their dissatisfaction can be categorized as follows:

> *"After finishing my first degree I tried to find work to no avail. I then decided to enroll for postgraduate studies in management. I am tired of studying now. I would like to work".*

> *"I enrolled for psychology for three years and then I did my postgraduate diploma in teaching. I went to do the Diploma in Education because I could not find work" .*

> *"My first degree had no specialization. As a result it was difficult to secure employment. I then did a Diploma in Education".*

The responses provided by the participants are in line with what Naidoo (2005) discovered in her research study. She found that respondents in her study pursued their postgraduate degrees after failing to secure full time employment, making the further observation that "Embarking on postgraduate studies was not a financial burden to these respondents as they received substantial bursaries from the Department of Labour" (Naidoo: 2005:45).

From a systemic perspective these findings show that a combination of factors impacted on the degrees obtained and subsequent employment. These factors included limited subject choices at special schools, not being allowed entry into some degree programs and negative attitudes and perceptions of academic departments. The inability to register in preferred fields of study resulted in some of the participants not obtaining the degrees that they wanted. As a result they had to embark on postgraduate studies to try and enter careers that are meaningful to them. The next section will discuss the employment concerns that the participants had.

4.5.4 Employment concerns whilst at university

Most students in their final year of study begin to worry about where they will secure employment in the open labour market. For students with disabilities, these feelings multiply as they face society's negative views. To provide support to them, the University of KwaZulu-Natal has a policy on staff and students with disabilities, Section B (4) of which states that the university has a responsibility to train and assist students with disabilities to access employment. In order to do this the university has put in place employment offices across all campuses to address their employment needs. Nonetheless, the participants in this study felt that the university failed to prepare them for the world of work. The majority of the participants stated that they did not receive adequate support from the university. The following discussion considers sub-themes that were identified in this connection.

4.5.4.1 Lack of training in job search skills

Lack of training in job search skills was a serious concern. Participants stated that there was no training provided at the university to address their employment concerns before they left the university environment. They said for instance, there were no employment recruitment agencies that came to train them in job search skills, interview skills etc. Several of them stipulated their frustrations as follows:

> *"As I have stated there was zero support. I even sent my C.V to the employment office [on campus]. Unfortunately there was no follow up or response at all. That's the disadvantage".*

> *"There was no employment training provided, no recruitment agencies specifically designed for students with disabilities. It was truly a very frustrating year with no hope for employment at all. I wish that could change".*

> *"Even though I knew that there was an employment office it was not helping at all in addressing our employment concerns. They never came to us to inform us about what was happening"* **.**

"I remember going to the employment office. They told me that there is nothing they could do for me. They said they were unable to cater for my needs".

"There was no support provided by the university in assisting students in acquiring employment. In our time there were various companies coming to university to recruit students. Those companies were not made aware that there were students with disabilities".

These criticisms were refuted by the UKZN employment officers when they were questioned about the kind of support they provide for students with disabilities. The employment officers pointed out that they provide services which include among other things employment workshops on CV writing skills, job search skills and interview skills. In addition to the employment workshops they also stated that they run employment exhibitions, where students would be invited to meet and interact with various companies looking at employing graduate students.

When employment officers were asked whether students with disabilities attend the workshops, they said there is poor attendance of students with disabilities at these workshops. The challenge which was emphasized by the employment officers was that students with disabilities do not take responsibility to attend the workshops or visit the employment officers. They stated:

"Students with disabilities do not come to our offices. For example, from last year to this year we only had about 10 students overall from many students registered in our campus".

"The main challenge would be that many graduates don't equip themselves with soft skills, e.g. teamwork, leadership, interview skills. While recruiters are targeting graduates with disabilities, their expectation is that the candidates must be well rounded in term of their skills and exposure".

It is evident from the responses above that consideration has been made to address the employment concerns of all University students including students with disabilities by putting in place employment offices at all the university campuses. However, the findings

also show that the participants felt that there was no adequate support provided to address their employment concerns.

4.5.4.2 Unstructured support received

Aside from the number of participants who felt that the university was not giving them support four participants said that they obtained some kind of unstructured support from the employment officers on the Westville Campus and at the Disability Units.

> *"The only support was from the Disability Unit and from the few students who were working. But I feel that the university dealt with only the academic life; they do not help and prepare you for the world of work".*
>
> *"There is a wellness programme at Westville campus. They have connections with outside companies. But things did not go my way. They helped me with CV writing but I just could not get employment".*
>
> *"The Disability Unit at Westville used to try to assist us with some of kind of support. There was no structured support but whenever they used to hear something they use to inform us, but nothing came up".*
>
> *"In Westville campus there was an employment centre and I submitted my C.V there and there was a lady called G who found an internship for me in Durban at Rural Women Development. I was attending there while I was pursuing my postgraduate studies".*

Participants' dissatisfaction could be linked to the fact that there was a lack of support provided to students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Disability Offices and Employment Offices are under-resourced, with limited staff numbers to adequately address the special needs of all students with disabilities. The 2006 Disability Unit report showed for instance that from 1997 to 2005, there was only one staff member employed in the Disability Units. At some campuses there were half days officers.

4.5.4.3 Perceptions of employers' attitudes

A number of participants expressed the view that employers do not have much knowledge about disability. For this reason they felt that employers may be reluctant to employ them.

Participants felt that employers would always prefer to employ non-disabled graduates instead of employing them. They said that working hard at the university did not give them the assurance that they would be employed. The participants expressed their concerns as follows:

"I knew that I was always working hard at school and at the university but that did not guarantee a good future for me. As you know the managers of firms and government departments are not disposed to disability. I did not know how they would react, whether they would even call me for an interview. I had fears even though I had good grades. I knew that it would be a bad idea for me to hide my disability. Because of my disability I felt that they would not even consider my application".

"I thought that for us as people with disabilities it will be truly difficult to find employment. Things that were worrying me were that people in the outside world have a lack of information about disability. I was fearful that they would say they do not have equipment to cater for my needs. Such thoughts like that were very discouraging for me".

"I was always worried that I would not get work after my studies. Because of my disability I was fearful that employers would not understand my needs and may think that I am too costly when I mention my needs to them. My hopes were very small" .

"I was concerned about being on my own in the employment environment. At least at varsity, you know that there is Disability Unit which is there to scan your notes. In the employment sector I thought that no one would truly bother to address my needs".

Fear of employers' negative attitudes was also illustrated by two participants who said:

"I finished my LLB in 2002. I had many employment concerns. I was not too sure if companies would take me with my disability. I wanted to do my articles first. My fears were true because I stayed at home for five years after

completing my degree trying to secure articles. I have a child and have loans to repay. It has been very difficult" .

"There was no company which was willing to take me. Even though I had 19 distinctions I still I felt my disability was a stumbling block for companies to take me. It was not easy at all".

These comments correspond with comments made by the UKZN employment officers about barriers faced by students with disabilities in obtaining employment; they said that many companies are reluctant to employ students with disabilities. The employers indicated that what contributes to their reluctance to employ students with disabilities is stereotyping and negative perceptions about people with disabilities. According to the employment officers, employers are concerned that if they employ students with disabilities they may not be able to function at the same pace as non-disabled employees. One officer for example described this negative attitude in this manner:

"Well, the companies do say that people with disabilities should apply but what I have observed is that they do not like to employ them. Most companies refuse to take students with disabilities even when we tell them that they can do the job. Some companies would argue that they do not have a budget. I think the government departments are the main ones who are taking more disabled students than private companies. But it is still a battle to make them understand. You still have to explain and educate them about the person's capabilities. We encourage students to attend our employment exhibitions so that they can meet with the prospective employers".

Referring to the participants responses stated above, it appears that participants with disabilities perceived employers as not keen to employ them. In the following section use of assistive devices used by the participants will be discussed.

4.5.5 Use of assistive devices

Even though participants shared frustrations and challenges they had while they were students, all participants excluding one who acquired his disability during the final year of

study stated that through the UKZN Disability Units, they received bursary support from the DoL which included funds to purchase technological devices like laptops, visual software, and wheelchairs.

Assistive devices are crucial in the daily lives of people with disabilities. Roessler et.al (1998) stated that "assisting students with disabilities with their technology-related needs in college is an important step toward enhancing their success both in school and work". There are different assistive devices used by people with disabilities. The table below shows assistive devices obtained by participants from DoL.

Table 4.3   Devices used by the participants

Blind students	Partially sighted	Physical disabilities
Perkins Brailler	Prisoner reader	Crutches
Braille calculator	magnifying glass	Calipers
Braille diary	large monitor	Manual& motorized wheelchair
computer with jaws software	compact glasses	computer with dragon software
dark Braille for printing	Sun screen,	digital voice recorder
scats well scanner	Glasses	Chronic medication
tape recorder & voice recorder	computer with	Leg braces
scribe	ZoomText magnifier	voice recorder
Tape recorder	voice recorder	specialized mattress,
talking cell phone		rehabilitation therapy
Pacmate		dragon natural speaking
		Specialized cushions
		Gym

4.5.5.1 Totally blind participants

Blind students use computers with Jaws software and the Perkins Brailler. Jaws software is screen reader software which helps a totally blind person use a computer just like sighted people. Perkins Brailler on the other hand is a brailing device which helps a person to type and read the material in Braille. Some participants preferred using both modes of communication. One participant said for example:

"Currently I use Braille and a computer with Jaws. Braille helps because sometimes it is tiring to use a computer all the time, sometimes I prefer to use Braille. I use Braille to read documents and when wanting to respond to my colleagues I use a computer with jaws so that they may understand. Sometimes it's difficult because at times I receive materials in ink format and translation becomes a challenge. I then have to ask people to read the information for me and that is very frustrating".

4.5.5.2 Participants with partial sight

Those who were partially sighted stated that they use computers with zoom text magnifier. The zoom text magnifier is software which enlarges materials into a bigger font, which enables the user to see small images and work independently. Apart from this software they also use glasses and tape recorders. Students with albinism are very sensitive to light, particularly sunlight. They mentioned that they use glasses and zoom text to see well. They also stated that they use sunscreen to protect their skin.

4.5.5.3 Participants with physical disabilities

Students with physical conditions use crutches, callipers, wheelchairs (both manual and motorized) and computers with Dragon software, which is software where you speak and the computer writes for you.

It's important to note that most of these participants stated that they obtained these devices from the Department of Labour while they were still at the university. They are now working in the labour market with these assistive devices, allowing them to compete with non-disabled colleagues. It is evident therefore that the bursary support which they obtained is still put to good use. It also means that employers do not have to worry about securing funds to buy these devices.

The information given by the participants correlates with the Skills Development Strategy introduced by the DoL to address the unemployment of all South Africans including people with disabilities. According to the National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (2003), the DoL awards bursaries to students with disabilities with the aim of improving the quality

of their education as well as to improve and increase their chances of employment. Their bursary support includes funds to purchase technological devices like laptops, visual software, and wheelchairs, and most of participants stated that they received bursary support from the DoL.

In spite of this kind of bursary support designed to enhance their independence; participants still had employment concerns in their final year of study. Participants' recommendations are discussed in the next section.

4.5.6 Recommendations for supporting students with disabilities in obtaining employment

Participants in this study offered recommendations regarding what could be implemented at the university level in addressing their employment frustrations and concerns. The following were some of the recommendations.

The participants felt that it would be very helpful if the University could forward a database of students with disabilities to external recruitment agencies for employers to access. The participants recommended that the University should have a separate employment office to cater for the needs of students with disabilities or else employ people in the employment offices who have knowledge of disabilities and would therefore have a better understanding of how to meet their particular challenges. Another suggestion was that there should be strong collaboration between the Disability Units and employment offices to ensure that the employment needs of students with disabilities are appropriately dealt with. In addition, the participants felt strongly that the University should lead by example by employing students with disabilities.

There was some consensus among the participants that even though the fact that the university has employment offices in place to equip students with employment skills, students with disabilities at UKZN have not been sufficiently provided with skills to equip them to prepare for the labour market.

4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, as noted from the participants responses, there were several sources of frustration that impacted on the participants' education. These include lack of subject choice at high school, particularly for students who went to special school, along with frustrations faced when seeking entrance to preferred university programmes. Participants were not provided with adequate support when studying, which exacerbated frustrations about how they would be received in the open labour market once they finished their studies. They were often left with little hope that they would ever find employment. Poor implementation of the UKZN policy on preparing students with disabilities for the open labour market had a direct negative impact to their lives. On the other hand, according to the information shown above, it seems that the National Department of Labour has made a positive contribution to the education and working environment of students with disabilities in that the majority of them stated they received assistive support from the Department which they now use at work.

Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion of participants employment experiences

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains responses of participants regarding their employment experiences. The data obtained from the participants is discussed in two sections. The first section will discuss data pertaining to the experiences of participants when they were searching for work. The second section will illustrate data regarding the experiences of participants in the job market.

5.2 Experiences when searching for employment

Table 5.1 below shows how this section is structured.

Table 5.1   Participants' employment-seeking experience: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Experiences with communication methods used to advertise jobs	Newspaper experiences. Internet experiences. Experiences with recruitment companies. Participants' recommendations.
Responses obtained to job applications	Lack of experience/Over qualification. Lack of budget and resources. Preferred types of disabilities. Disclosure or non-disclosure.
Experiences during job interviews	Inaccessible interview venues and transport. Cost of attending interviews. Disability focus in the interview. Unfair assessment procedure. Ignorance and lack of interest. Positive experiences. Participants recommendations

5.2.1 Experiences with communication methods used to advertise jobs

Participants were asked to indicate the communication methods they used when they searched for job advertisements. The following sub-themes emerged:

5.2.1.1 Newspaper Experiences

Most of the participants stated that they relied on the job advertisements in newspapers like the *Sunday Times* and *Job Mail*. Some commented that even though the newspapers were useful and contained many job advertisements, they were not accessible to them. Those who were totally blind and partially sighted said the job advertisements were in print, not in a format they can see or use like Braille. As a result, they said, they had to ask friends and family members to read the job advertisements to them. Participants felt that relying on people to read to them was a challenge. For example, participants stated that people

were not always available to read to them, and if they were available they would not read the way they would like. Some of particular comments were:

> *"To be honest to rely on people is a struggle. Some people do not read the way you want or do not have time"* .

> *"The Sunday paper is huge, so asking a person to read it for you becomes a struggle. Some people do not even know where the jobs are placed in the paper. I think they should consider other methods to consult us".*

> *"Adverts were not accessible. I used to get advertisements in papers. I actually relied on friends to read".*

Another challenge which was highlighted by the participants was the cost of buying newspapers. They said that they felt frustrated after buying the paper and the disappointment of not being able to find relevant or suitable job advertisements.

> *"Basically if you are unemployed, you have no cash. It becomes difficult to buy the newspapers and find that there is nothing suitable for you after you have used your money".*

Besides, newspapers, participants said that they also used the internet.

5.2.1.2 Internet Experience

Participants felt that using the internet to search for possible employment was better than using newspapers. They said that the internet was more effective as it allowed them to search independently rather than having to ask people to buy and read newspapers. Totally blind people search using Jaws software, which is a screen reader, the partially sighted use the Zoom text magnifier, which is software that enlarges the font. Participants said that the internet was more accessible when they were still students because there was free internet access loaded with visual aid software in the students' computer laboratories. Participants indicated that they had difficulties in accessing the internet once they had graduated and were out of the university environment, where access to the internet was very limited and costly. Examples of comments shared were:

"Internet is much better especially when you have assistive devices like computer with jaws but now since I am no longer a student accessing internet is a struggle and very costly"

"I think the Internet is not that accessible to most of us because when searching, some of the documents are not compatible to the software we use. It becomes a struggle"

"Going to the internet cafeteria was another expense as well"

"I think internet adverts were more accessible as we can view them [jobs] through the use of the zoom text, but again we need to have internet access for that."

Another way of accessing jobs for participants was recruitment agencies.

5.2.1.3 Experiences with recruitment companies

While most participants used newspapers and the internet to search for jobs, only one participant used a recruitment agency. According to this participant a recruitment agency was more convenient as she did not have to worry about asking people to buy or read to her. She narrated her experience as follows:

"I relied on newspapers. I did not have internet. I relied on my sisters and friends to buy newspapers. There was a point where I could not cope to buy newspapers. First of all they are expensive because I have to buy them every month and secondly I have to walk to buy them. So, there was a time where I could not afford to do this anymore because I can't walk for long and do not always have money to buy them every time. I then consulted a recruitment company. I had to send my C.V and wait to be called. That's how I gained this job".

In summary, the findings here were that participants mainly relied on newspapers and the internet to search for work. Only one participant used a recruitment agency. As noted in chapter 2, there are a number of disability organizations that assist people with disabilities to find work; however none of participants in this study used any of these organizations for

that purpose. It could be concluded therefore that students with disabilities are not aware of what is available to help them to achieve their needs. The Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects of Disability In the Workplace advised employers to make job advertisements accessible. The Code states that "advertisements should be accessible to persons with disabilities and, where practicable, circulated to organizations that represent the interests of people with disabilities" (Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects of Disability in the Workplace, 2001: 6). This means that The University Disability Offices and Employment Offices need to build networking relations with outside organizations to assist students with disabilities to find work.

The next sub-theme focuses on participants recommendations regarding job advertisements.

5.2.1.4 Participants' Recommendations

The recommendations suggested by participants regarding employment searches are as follows:

Participants felt that the internet is the most accessible communication method that employers should used to advertise jobs. Participants said for the internet to be accessible for people with visual disabilities, the right software needs to be available: partially sighted people would need a computer with zoom text magnifier and blind people would need a computer with Jaws software.

Participants also recommended that newspapers should be Brailled so that blind people can freely access the same information as sighted people. Partially sighted participants suggested that newspapers should be enlarged to cater for those with low vision. Moreover, the participants suggested that the university should ask the newspaper companies to print job adverts in Braille and in any other accessible format so that students who are blind can access what is available in the open labour market.

Besides information available through the use of internet and newspapers, participants suggested jobs should be advertised on radio and television. In this way participants

suggested that they can access the information by listening and would lessen the burden of having to ask people to read for them.

Participants recommended the establishment of recruitment agencies that would cater only for the needs of people with disabilities. They said that companies could advertise through these recruitment agencies.

Participants also felt that there should be strong partnerships between the University Disability Units and disability organizations in dissemination of jobs available for people with disabilities.

In the analysis of findings in this section it is clear that people with disabilities in South Africa have been marginalized. Most communication methods in use sideline people with disabilities. There are no newspapers in Braille. Not all internet cafés have computers with specialized software. Even the coding items in the shops are not properly labelled to suit the needs of visually impaired people. Not all the recommendations of participants are immediately feasible due to associated costs, but it is possible to include appropriate measures to accommodate people with disabilities in long term planning. For example, employers can post their adverts to the disability organizations to disseminate information to disability employment seekers. In that way, people with disabilities would have a fair opportunity to actively access job advertisements.

The second theme discussed below relates to the types of responses obtained after participants applied for employment.

5.2.2 Responses obtained to job applications

In analyzing the responses obtained by participants during job search, the following sub-themes emerged:

5.2.2.1 Lack of experience/Over qualification

> All of the participants stated that many companies did not inform them if
> their applications were successful or not. Participants stated that employers
> only responded when they were asked about the outcome of their

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applications. Participants stated that often employers would either inform them that they did not meet job requirements because of insufficient years working experience or that they were overqualified for the job. The following were the types of responses obtained by participants as they searched for work:

"I can't even count. I applied to as many as I could manage. There were no responses. I had to call to obtain a response. There was one where I went to an interview at Ulundi. The interview went well but they said I had no experience."

"I applied to many jobs. Every time you apply; you are told that you are unsuccessful or told that you are overqualified or have insufficient years for the position. But I think I know the reason why that was the case. You know, when they think of employing you as a blind person, they think they have to re-do a building for us. They think about cost. They do not know that's not the case for us, maybe be for a person who is using a wheelchair. Even there then; they do not have to do everything; they can just put a ramp. I think government departments should show private companies that people with disabilities are employable."

"I sent my C.V's out to many offices. I can't count the numbers. But all went through. There was no follow up, feedback. When calling, I was told to wait 3 months, after three months I still haven't received feedback."

In analyzing these responses, it did not matter whether the participants had physical disabilities or visual disabilities, they all had similar experiences. All participants, regardless of their disabilities, did not get satisfying responses. Employers provided excuses for not employing them.

5.2.2.2 Lack of budget and resources

The participants said that if the explanation or justification for not being employed was not lack of experience or over qualification then employers used lack of resources and budget as

a reason for not hiring them. One participant for instance narrated her experience in this way:

> *"I tried all over, for many jobs and for candidate attorney job opportunities. But it was a losing battle. There were no responses. Sometimes I went for interviews and did not get responses afterwards. For other interviews I even went outside the province. At some point, I applied for an internship for economic & finance aspects. I was told that I was going to be placed at he PMB office in the legal department. But I was informed that there are no resources for me, its expensive, the budget. That was their response. If you are blind, you feel that you are causing hardship to the department, because it has to incur the cost of employing you, we find as blind persons that it's still a war to secure employment. We find the struggle is still not over".*

This example bears out what Unger (2002) observed when he said that some employers offer the justification that they do not have a budget to cater for the needs of people with disabilities.

From the data gathered from the participants, some employers stated that they preferred to hire people with certain kinds of disabilities rather than others. However, it was not clear which disabilities were preferred as all participants received the same responses. Employers informed participants with visual disabilities that they were looking at hiring persons with physical disabilities. Those who had physical disabilities were told that they preferred to hire people with visual disabilities. This seems to indicate that employers were simply offering excuses for not employing participants with disabilities.

This is illustrated from the comments made by the participants.

> *"I applied to so many companies. They advertise that they needed people with disabilities but when I applied they told me that they are looking for someone with a physical impairment. But when they hear that you have a visual impairment; they will say no they are sorry".*

> *"Some will say we are looking for disabled people but not the blind one, not the physically challenged you know such things becomes a problem for us".*

"I have applied to so many companies. It was extremely quiet. On some occasions I went to interviews. Since I have a physical disability, some of the employers will say that the work environment will not suit my need".

One of the participants recounting her experience said even though she was never told that her disability was not the preferred one; in her heart she felt turned away. She said her feeling was that employers thought that she will be a burden or cost to the company if they considered her. She described her feelings as follows:

"I applied to so many companies; I can't even mention how many there have been. There were no positive responses at all. I only went to two interviews. I felt that companies were looking for visual disabilities rather than physical disabilities. I felt that they were not interested to take me as they maybe thought I would be a burden to them. I have filled out many job applications forms. Some responded with regrets. I think they were polite, others did not respond. When you apply you learn to understand that you can win or loose although it can be very devastating".

These responses were not in line with research findings by Johnson et al (1988). Their research studies showed that employers have positive attitudes towards physical and sensory disabilities compared to other types of disabilities.

As noted in Chapter 2, the National Office on Status of People with Disabilities (2003:46) came to a similar conclusion when it stated "In recruiting people with disabilities, some organizations simply place a symbol or insert a clause stating that 'previously disadvantaged groups, including disabled, are encouraged to apply' in their adverts for vacancies". The responses imply that some employers feel pressured by the Employment Equity Act to show in their advertising practices that they are interested to employ people with disabilities when actually they have little or no interest at all.

Preference of some disabilities over others causes confusion about whether to disclose disability or not. In the following discussion the issue of disclosing or not disclosing disability will be presented.

5.2.2.3 Disclosure or non-disclosure

The majority of the participants in this study expressed concerns regarding the issue of disclosing their disabilities when filling job applications. They said that disclosing or not disclosing their disabilities in their curriculum vitae created a lot of confusion. The explanation was that since employers, as shown above, preferred certain disabilities over others, disclosing their disabilities limited their chances of being selected as possible candidates. Another dilemma was that if they did not disclose that they had disabilities, employers would not know about their disability and thus would not be in a good position to address their needs, like arranging transportation for them to go to the interview venues and having a specialized budget to cater for their needs. Participants said that this was the most frustrating part as both disclosure and non-disclosure had advantages and disadvantages. This is how one participant related the experience:

> "*I applied for so many jobs but there were no positive responses. Some would stipulate that if you do not hear from us within three months, you must know that you were unsuccessful. Sometimes you will feel that if you mention that you have a disability you will be in at disadvantage, sometimes you feel that if you mention it might be in your advantage. So, you become confused if you must mention it or not".*

One participant who uses a wheelchair because of multiple sclerosis, is a chartered accountant. She expressed disappointment at being turned down after disclosing that she has a disability.

> "*I sent my C.V and they got interested and I was offered the job. The job offer was withdrawn after recognizing that I have a disability. The thing that confused me was that I gave them my C.V with a couple of letters stating my disability. They knew I had a disability. I do not know why they changed their minds. I got so frustrated because Eskom is a great company. It's a great company; I truly had an interest to work with them".*

Another example is a narrative of a participant who said that each time she applied for jobs she would disclose her disability so that employers would know that they have an employee

who may have some needs. She said this practice has been very disappointing because regardless of the fact that she has an LLB, securing articles or formal employment has been a struggle. She said employers always had excuses for not employing her. She articulated her experiences as follows:

> *"I always mention my disability in my applications. I do not think disclosing is good though. They will find reasons for not taking you. You have to go on with your life. They will say you need work experience. It doesn't make sense because how can you have experience if you want to do your articles. I did something against the will of my family like taking this job. My sisters were saying why are you taking something less than your degree. I had to take this job, either you other sink or swim. Sometimes you see people that you studied with at high positions even on T.V. And then you ask what's wrong with me. They are holding higher positions and they are not disabled".*

One participant suggested that disclosing that you have a disability does not help because once employers know that you have a disability and that they need to make some working adjustments they are reluctant to employ you. He said:

> *"I applied to so many jobs. I used to disclose in my C V that I am physically challenged but that I guess did not work. There was no reply. One company replied and when they found out about my disability, and that they needed to make some adjustments. They told me that their offices were too small. In time the company just vanished. I knew then that mentioning disability was a problem".*

In summary, this section is in line with research studies which showed that employers in the labour market are reluctant to employ persons with disabilities (Johnson et al, 1988; Zungu,1997 and Whitehead,1998). Even though policies have been developed to encourage employers to employ people with disabilities, the findings of this study reveal that budgetary constraints often is a factor impacting on employment.

The next section considers the experiences of participants during job interviews.

5.2.3 Experiences during job interviews

The following sub-themes emerged: Inaccessible transport and interview venues; cost of attending interviews; disability focus in the interview; unfair assessment procedure; ignorance and lack of interest; positive experience; participants recommendations.

5.2.3.1 Inaccessible interview venues and transport.

What was noticeable from the responses of the participants was that there was a commonality of experiences according to the disability of the participants. The experiences of those with physical disabilities differed from those who had visual disabilities.

There were two major challenges encountered by respondents with physical disabilities. The first had to do with transportation and the other with accessing the building where the interview would be held. Those who used wheelchairs said they had to hire a taxi to transport themselves and the wheelchair. Some said they had to ask friends and family members to take them to the interview venues.

> *"To go to the venue I had to ask my father to take me as you know it is very difficult to use public transportation and use a wheelchair. You have to have ask someone to wheel you. Luck enough I have family support"* **.**

A participant who had an adaptable vehicle said:

> *"Public transport is a nightmare for me so I used my own car. The main problem of my disability is to walk for long distance. The distance of parking to the interview venue was okay. Part of my coping mechanisms is to find the access routes and parking place before going so that I know the closest place to park."*

Besides the challenges they experienced in getting to the interview venues, participants were also confronted with challenges in entering or accessing the buildings where the interviews were held. A participant who uses a wheelchair related her experience as follows:

> *"We were told that the interview venue would be on second floor but we made them aware of the problem and they changed the venue to the ground*

floor and training was provided at the ground floor. After informing them about the inaccessibility of the venue, the venue was accessible, a big venue for movement of wheelchair and accessible toilet".

Those who were totally blind had different experiences to those who were partially sighted. It was noted that a generalized assumption cannot be made that all partially sighted people have similar experiences. It was noted that their experiences differed according to the nature and extent of their disability. For example, participants who had albinism, due to the nature of their condition shared a different set of experiences to those who had progressive eye conditions. Two respondents who were partially sighted due to albinism said:

"It was not difficult at all. I phoned a day before to get the address. If I am lost I phone again to ask for directions. I am used to using public transport so it was not an issue".

"I used public transport. No, it was fine. I had no problems".

Unlike people who have progressive eye sight conditions, participants with albinism can walk alone and see large images but they have problems with reading small print. A participant who had a progressive eye sight condition said:

"It was a cost to go to these interviews as I had to pay for a cab or ask someone to take me".

In contrast to this, those who were totally blind said the challenge was that they had to find people to accompany them to the interview venues. This meant that they had to pay for themselves as well as the accompanying person. Some of their experiences were as follows:

"It was a challenge getting to the interview venue. As a blind person I had to ask someone to accompany me. That means I had to pay for me and for that person".

"Access to go to the interview venue only accommodated those who are sighted and was very far. I had to ask someone to accompany me. It was difficult to use public transport; it will just drop you afar."

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The participant who has physical disabilities shared the following:

> *"In attending interviews I had to ask my family because taxi's and buses are not accessible for someone using a wheelchair. You have to pay for yourself and the wheelchair. Family members were helpful".*

> *"It was a great challenge attending interview]. Since I am using crutches my arms become sore when walking for too long. Some venues were far from where the taxis drop you. The first one was easy because it was close and in Durban. I knew the surroundings but for the second one I had challenges. I had to find someone I know who stays here since I do not know the province. Eventually I managed to find someone who was willing to take me to the interview venue. The place was far and I had to travel a long distance".*

From the experiences recorded here, it is clear that participants had transportation challenges to access the interview venues. Many of them relied on friends and family support to attend interviews. This means that friends and families had to sacrifice their time to accompany them to the interview venues. Participants' responses could be linked to Ndebele (1998) and Whitehead's (2004) findings that inaccessibility of transportation serves as a barrier to mobility of people with disabilities, hindering them from moving around independently. For example, as noted by the last-mentioned participant, inaccessible public transport created a barrier in attending interviews. From the social approach point of view (as noted in chapter 2), inaccessible public facilities marginalize people with disabilities and inhibit their rights.

Regardless of the taxi recapitalization programmes and new buses built for people with disabilities, people with disabilities in South Africa are still confronted with challenges to freely access public transport conducive to their needs (National Office on The Status of Disabled Persons, (2003) and Serlis, 2006)

5.2.3.2 Cost of attending interviews

While the majority of the participants expressed their frustration in accessing interview venues due to inaccessible public transport, four of the participants stated that some government departments paid for their transportation costs to access the interview venues.

They stated that the departments paid for themselves and the accompanying person as well as accommodation costs. Participants narrated their experiences as follows:

"Not all those companies paid for transport to go to the interviews. A few paid for air flight tickets for me and the person to go with me" .

Another one said:

"As a visually impaired person I did not have a problem with transportation or venue access. They ensured that they provide transportation for interviews."

"I went to the Pretoria Department of Land Affairs. They got me a flight. I stayed in a Johannesburg hotel for three days. We were doings tests and interviews that is why we stayed for three days. They paid for my assistant as she had to assist me.

This latter participant added that the department did not just pay for the flight and an assistant but also ensured that there was someone available for him at the airport on his arrival. He said:

"They paid for the flight and when I arrived at the airport there was someone waiting for me already. They asked us to come with assistance and told us that they will pay for the person. I feel that they did very well in that aspect.

The positive responses described above show that employers are capable of formulating strategic plans to consider the needs of people with disabilities. These responses mean that accommodating the needs of people with disabilities is possible. If some employers were able to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities, others can as well.

In the following sub-theme the reactions of interviewers towards disability are discussed.

5.2.3.3 Disability focus in the interview

Participants felt that instead of the interviewers focusing on their academic and work experience their main focus was on the disability. Three of the participants stated that questions asked were related to their disability. They said such an experience frustrated them because they could feel that the people that were interviewing them had fears that

they would not cope if they were considered. Participants articulated their experiences as follows:

> *"They asked very strange questions: Since you are blind will you be able to use a computer, tell us what kind of computer you will use, how you will communicate with us, who will be accompanying you to the office?. Those questions frustrate you afterwards, and then you tell yourself that oh! I lost that job. As part of the interview they interview you about the disability."*

> *"In the interviews, they will ask you about your disability not about your work experience".*

> *"They had a silly question in that interview. They asked me if a person with disability come to work when it's raining. I was calm and told them that yes we do come to work, but I told them that I think maybe a problem could be with a person who is using a wheelchair, but again I told them that even there if they have a good transport or their own car they can come to work even if its raining. They just assume things and make conclusions about us. I think that is why when we apply for work they do not respond. I think that will soon change, I will change them, I will educate them".*

There are two ways to interpret the above responses. One is that even though participants felt that the focus of the interviews was on their disabilities, employers may have asked the questions out of genuine concern, wanting to know how they can best meet their needs when they are employed.

Another explanation could be that interviewers were seeing participants as threats that would require them to incur expenses if they employ them. By asking disability related questions they perhaps wanted to ensure that if they do consider them they would not have to bear the cost of accommodating their needs.

Nevertheless, no matter what the explanations might have been, the interviewers had no right to judge and base their judgments on disabilities. Chapter VI section 54 of the Employment Equity Act (No 55.1998) advises the Minister of Labour to publish a Code of Good Practice that should be followed by employers in the workplace. This was published in

2001 with the title "Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects of Disability in the Workplace". Code 7.3 in this document clearly regulates how the employers should conduct interviews for people with disabilities. For instance it states that "If an applicant has disclosed a disability or has a self-evident disability, the employer must focus on the applicant's qualifications for the work rather than any actual or presumed disability but may enquire and assess if the applicant would, but for the disability, be suitably qualified" (Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects of Disability in the Workplace, 2001:6). Subsequent sections of the same document do advise employers to ask applicants with disabilities how they would cope in the workplace if they are considered, but this is to ensure that consideration is given to how their needs are to be taken care of: "Interviewers should ask all applicants to indicate how they would accomplish the inherent requirements of the job and perform its essential functions and if accommodation is required" (Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects of Disability in the Workplace, 2001:7).

It becomes evident that even though there is an Employment Equity Act and a Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects of Disability in the Workplace which advises employers on recruitment criteria in employing people with disabilities, there remain fine lines within these two legislative frameworks that present a barrier for employment of people with disabilities. For example the right given to employers to ask people with disabilities in the interviews about their disabilities can indirectly exclude people with disabilities from being hired. I think what should happen is that interviews should focus only on the qualification and the experience of that individual. No questions should be asked as to whether the person with his disability can perform the job. The person's working experience would alert the employers if he or she is a right candidate or not. The moment the questions relate to disability automatically people with disabilities are being discriminated against.

Participants also intimated that interviewers used unfair assessment procedures to assess if they were eligible for the positions. These experiences are presented in the following discussion.

5.2.3.4 Unfair assessment procedure.

People with disabilities are generally provided with extra time to write tests. They are allocated extra time on the basis that their disabilities will not allow them to write with the same speed as non-disabled people. In spite of this, one participant who was totally blind had difficulty making it understood that she needed extra time. She had to explain herself to the employer concerning why she needed extra time. This experience for this participant was very frustrating, as she made clear:

> *"I was called for one interview. They wanted two people. I was not really happy with the process. I felt that the person who was in charge of the interview knew who he wants. I remember I needed to do a test. He did not want me to have extra time and said that was not fair to others. And then I said that it is not fair also that I have a disability. Only when I said that he allowed me to have extra time even though I didn't finish writing"*

The majority of people who are blind were not taught advanced mathematics at high school. The mathematics syllabus did not cater for visual special needs (Howell 2005). One participant stated that, in an interview he went to, he was required to write a test based on calculations. He said as a blind person, this was very difficult for him to do this as he was not taught mathematics at high school. He stated that the test should have been an oral interview rather than a test. This is how he expressed his experience:

> **"**We do not have problems with oral questions but when it comes to writing that is where we have problems. There, we have to do calculations, kilometers no no no! Most of us did not do maths up to higher level. Some of the things require that knowledge. They should stop doing tests but should concentrate on oral interviews".*

Even though many participants in this study did not state that they had to write assessment tests, the responses articulated by the two participants above show that, had employers understood disability and the challenges faced by people with disabilities, they would not have asked participants to write mathematics-based tests or have been reluctant to provide them with extra time to write.

There was a general perception by the participants that interviewers were ignorant and did not have an interest in hiring them. This will be presented in the following sub-theme.

5.2.3.5 Ignorance and lack of interest

Some participants stated that interviewers' were ignorant and showed a lack of interest in the interviews. The following participant narrated her experience of being neglected in the interview venue. She said:

> *"When I got there, they called me to come inside. The lady, who called me to come inside, left me there in the waiting room until I was assisted by the receptionist. Maybe it was a lack of knowledge for that person. She should not have left me there, because I stated in my C.V that I am blind. They said if you are successful we will organize for you all the devices that you will need. At the interview, they did not show an interest, I mean, they could have asked me what kind of assistance will you need, so that they are aware in advance. But no, they were not bothered. It was frustrating as I did not know what their thinking was".*

This participant compared her expectation to another interview she went to:

> *"They organized the flight for me and when I departed there was someone already in place to fetch me. Maybe it's because they have a Disability Unit, so they were already aware of the needs of people with visual impairment. The interview was nice because they even asked me the types of devices I used. I had an opportunity to show them because I had them with me. It felt nice".*

Another participant shared her interview experience of being informed that by the interviewer that they cannot knowingly hire people with disabilities because they would not for example drive themselves to meetings. This participant said that the interviewer informed her that they do not have a budget that would accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. She said:

> *"I did not notice much. Maybe it's because I was nervous until they asked me if I had any questions. I asked them if they have any disabled person especially*

who is partially sighted or blind. They said no and then I said why. They said it is very difficult for them especially when they have to attend meetings and have to drive. They said they have to employ another person to drive for the disabled person. I told them that as a government department they are required by policies to employ disabled people and they said they are aware of such but do not have money".

Another participant said:

"When you sit in these interviews you can see the interest of people when you talk about your experiences but you can see the attitude change when you mention your disability. Whilst they acknowledge that your disability doesn't have anything to do with the employment, but in many instances they can't bypass that perceived biases. It's unfortunate we can't change that. I think it's something that cannot [change] be ratify by time. I think the Employment Equity Act is trying to assist in that perspective. There were instances when I was interviewed but not taken. I still feel that it was because of the fact that I was partially sighted."

Once an employee with a disability is employed, according to the Employment Equity Act (1998), the employer has a responsibility to ensure that the needs of that employee are met or else the participant can lay a complaint which can get the employer into serious trouble. Before employing a person with a disability the employer would need to establish whether the needs of that person can be addressed. This means that in order to decrease the anxieties of employing people with disabilities, employers should be assisted with adequate funds to respond to the needs of employees with disabilities. In that way more opportunities for employment would be created.

Even though participants had negative interview experiences, there were participants who told of positive experiences.

5.2.3.6 Positive experiences

A couple of participants stated that they had positive interview experiences. Participants stated that even though not all of them secured employment from these interviews, the interviews themselves were not negative. The following were some of the accounts given by the participants:

> *"Line managers know about the Employment Equity Act. Even though they may have reservations or misgivings about my disability they did not reveal that in front of me".*

> *"All the time when they say introduce yourself I would immediately be upfront to them about my disability. Because sometimes I might have spasms in my left arm and if they do not know that, they won't know what is happening. The attitudes have been very positive as a result".*

> *"People were very friendly and did not ask me any questions about my disability".*

> *"The Interview went fairly well. I did laptop presentations very well. It was very positive; afterwards they said they were very impressed with my presentation. The interview panel was not judgmental and they never referred to my disability but focused on the interview".*

The next section discusses participants' recommendation regarding how interviews should be conducted.

5.2.3.7 Participants' recommendations

The following were the main recommendations suggested by the participants concerning how employers should conduct the interviews.

 (a) An interviewer who is informed about disability matters:

Participants recommended that at least one interviewer on the panel should be knowledgeable about disability so that he/she could advise the panel about the needs of

people with disabilities. Participants also strongly felt that the person must have a wide knowledge of disability as a whole.

(b) Facilitation of workshops on disability

In addition participants also suggested that in order to ensure that interviewers are knowledgeable on disability matters, disability workshops should be implemented to educate employers about disability and the needs of people with disabilities.

(c) Oral interviews

Participants suggested that interviews should be oral instead of using test assessment procedures. Participants stated this on the basis that during the interviews, they were asked to write mathematical tests and had difficulties being allowed extra time to write the tests. Participants therefore felt that oral tests would reduce frustrations of having to write material for assessment.

In summary, this section explored participants' interview experiences. It indicated that public transport in South Africa was not conducive to the needs of people with disabilities. Participants said that this has affected their independence as they had to ask family members and friends to accompany them to the interview venues. This means that the lack of adequate transportation for people with disabilities had a profoundly negative impact on how participants accessed the interview venues. It also showed that the family members and friends in the microsystem were negatively affected as they had to drop their own agendas and daily activities to accompany the participants to the interview venues.

The departments which were able to recognize and act upon this made arrangements for their interviewees to access the interviews. Whilst some employers were thoughtful and acted on the disability policies, many others were not. Also the negative reactions of interviewers towards participants with disabilities, as described above, shows that some people in our society still view disability according to the medical approach rather than as a social and human rights issue.

5.3 Experiences in the job market

The research findings concerning the experiences of participants in the job market are discussed in this section.

The information shown in Table 5.2 indicates the employment profile of participants. The employment profiles of participants are divided into employment type (unemployed, permanent employed, or contract employed), current occupation, and the kind of qualification obtained by each participant.

Table 5.2   Current employment status of participants

Participant	Employment status	Current occupation	Year and qualification obtained
1	Permanently employed	Disability adviser	2004 BA in Social Science
2	Unemployed	Unemployed	2003 BA in Law
3	Unemployed	Postgraduate in Education	2003 Bachelor of Social Science
4	One year contractual employment	Employee relations officer.	2004 BA in Social Science. 2006 Honours degree in Industrial Organization and Labour Studies. Management.
5	One year contractual employment	Human resource officer	2005 Bachelor of Arts. 2007 Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership and
6	Unemployed	Unemployed	2001 Bachelor of Social Science. 2004 Honours degree in Human Resources.
7	Permanently employed	Chief legislative officer	1996 Bachelor of Social Sciences. 2001 BA in Law. 2006 Masters in Political Sciences. 2008 PHD in Public Relations.
8	Permanently employed	Legal adviser	2005 BA in Law. 2006 Honours in Management Studies
9	Unemployed	Unemployed	2004 Bachelor of Arts. 2006 Honours in isiZulu and French.
10	One year contractual employment	Administrative clerk.	2006 BA in Law
11	One year contractual employment.	Administrative officer	2006 Bachelor of Social Sciences. 2007 Honours in Community Development.
12	Permanently employed	Human resource officer	1999 Bachelor of Art. 2001 Bachelor of Commerce Honours.
13	One year contractual employment.	2009 School Teacher	2003 Bachelor of Social Sciences, majoring in Psychology 2007 Diploma in Education
14	Unemployed	Postgraduate studies	2004 Bachelor of Social Sciences, majoring in Psychology.
15	Unemployed	Postgraduate studies	1980 police force and medically boarded in 2002
16	Unemployed	Postgraduate studies	2006 Bachelor of Science, majoring in cell biology and chemistry
17	One year contractual employment.	Receptionist	2002 LLB degree
18	One year contractual employment.	Police service consultant	2006 Accountant
19	One year contractual employment.	Media analyst	2005 Bachelor of Arts, majoring in media and communication.
20	Unemployed	Postgraduate studies	1983 Diploma in education. Honours in theology.
21	One year contractual employment.	Lecturer	2006 Medicine

Table 5.3 indicates the themes and sub-themes according to which participants' job market experiences are structured

Table 5.3   Experiences in the job market: Themes and sub-themes:

Themes	Sub-themes
Current employment status	Unemployed participants. Employed participants on contract /internship. Permanently employed participants. Obtainment of employment
Experiences in the course of employment.	Transportation challenges. Inability to read hard copy documents. Lack of lifts and ramps. Negative and positive attitudes of colleagues. Difficulty in informing employers about needs. Extent to which needs was addressed. Participants' recommendations

5.3.1 Current employments status

5.3.1.1 Unemployed participants

Table 5.2 shows that of the twenty one participants in this study eight were unemployed. Six of the unemployed enrolled for postgraduate studies. As noted previously, Naidoo (2005) found that students with disabilities embark on postgraduate studies when confronted with difficulties in securing employment. Similarly the participants in this study stated that when they could not secure employment they embarked on postgraduate studies.

A contributing factor to unemployment of some participants, as noted in chapter 4, was dissatisfaction with the qualifications they had obtained. Often these qualifications were general such as a Bachelor of Social Science, which does not have a specific employment outcome. This contributed to frustrations in obtaining employment. For example in chapter 4, it was noted that two participants were denied admission to the Social Work degree. Had they been allowed to do social work, their chances of employment would be higher because there is now a high demand of social workers in South Africa and abroad. With other

participants degree choices were limited because of the restricted choice of subjects at special schools.

5.3.1.2 Employed participants on contract /internship

Nine of the participants were employed on a contractual basis, often a one-year contract. An important finding is that participants working in contract positions, did work that was not related to what they studied for. For example, three participants with law degrees were working as receptionists/administrative officers and clerks and one with a chartered accountancy degree was working in a call centre. The participants stated that this was very frustrating and very degrading. They expressed their feelings as follows:

> *"I was shocked getting this job because it is a call centre. I am an accountant for goodness sake. But then I was unemployed so I had to take it. It is not permanent, but at least it's something. It's a full day's work from 8 to 4.30. It was truly frustrating and unpleasant to sit at home being educated. Nobody said anything, that I spent a lot of money at varsity but sitting at home. But I felt like that. So much money was spent on me for having this degree. I ask myself what's the purpose to study if you won't fulfill your needs. Sometimes I feel basically if you are disabled do not study".*

> *"This is not what I wanted to do. Even though I am working at the court, its not part of the LLB. I am just an admin worker not doing what I really studied for".*

> *"Working in contract employment is difficult. First of all, I am staying at home. I can't afford to buy my place. I stay with mom and son. I do get worried because as you get old you tend to have problems walking around. When I decided to enroll at varsity I wanted my life to be like this and that. I knew I had to have this by this age like a house and car. But now I can't see that happening. I think it's so unfair. Sometimes I feel that I wasted my years by doing law because I am not even practicing as a lawyer. I cannot afford things with the little money I earn".*

Moodley's (1997) study also found that people with disabilities work in contract positions and as switchboard operators. The Disability Institute (2001) states that people with disabilities often obtain employment not related to what they have studied for, adding that if they do obtain employment it is often short-term employment. Hennessey (2004) notes likewise that after graduating, people with disabilities do not attain the same employment outcomes as non-disabled people. These findings show that there is a trend in employing people with disabilities in short term employment.

In addition, even though the above table 5.2 shows that four participants worked in employment related to what they studied for, they were not satisfied being in contract employment. They stated that working in contact employment served as a barrier when they had to make purchases. It also made them feel uncertain about their employment future.

> *"The reason why they gave me a one year contract it's because I needed a bit of experience. They said they want to see if I will cope. After one year they will then review my progress. They gave me office space. But it's making me feel uneasy because I do not know if their decision to have me will change after the end of this contract".*

> *"I ask them for internship and it became a contract position. It is very frustrating working in a contract employment because you can't open long term accounts. You worry and ask yourself, what if they change their minds after the contract? It's truly hard".*

In addition, participants commented that working in contract positions posed challenges when they had to find accommodation close to work. Four participants stated that their income was insufficient to rent reasonable accommodation that could meet their needs. The other five said that as a result they decided to live with their families so that they could avoid having to pay rent for suitable accommodation close to work.

> *"the department is in town and I stay in the township so I have to use public transport. If I was permanent I could have found a suitable place maybe in town but now I can't even afford that being in a contract position".*

"It was difficult. It was very urgent to get accommodation close to work. My friend helped me. Currently I am sharing accommodation with her because it's an expense to pay for accommodation in town".

Reflecting on participants' experiences of employment, it is clear that they were not satisfied with working in contract employment; this left them unable to afford suitable accommodation, creating added strain for the family members who had to accommodate them. It also diminished their independence as they had to keep on living with friends and family members.

In addition, their responses could mean that, although employers were relatively uneasy about employing people with disabilities, because the Employment Equity Act (1998) requires them to employ people with disabilities, they may have wanted to show that their hiring practices were in line with Employment Equity Guidelines.

5.3.1.3 Permanently employed participants

Four of the 21 participants stated that they were employed on a permanent basis. Apart from the challenges faced at work, these four participants felt satisfied with their employment as their qualifications were in line with the degrees they had. As indicated in Table 5.2, Participant 1 was employed at the Department of Traditional Affairs as a disability adviser. Participant 2 was employed by the Department of Education as a legal adviser. Participant 7 was employed as a senior law adviser at the Department of Justice and Participant 12 was employed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a human resource officer.

Considering that there were 21 participants in this study, four permanently employed participants indicates that there is slow progress in employing people with disabilities in permanent employment. The World Bank (2007) report, as noted in chapter 2, shows that the low percentage of people with disabilities in the open labour market is not a South African problem alone but a worldwide problem. The report indicates that even countries with very progressive laws have a low percentage of employed people with disabilities. This does not suggest that low employment levels of people with disabilities are acceptable but

it does mean that there should be collaborative efforts by all countries to increase the employment levels of people with disabilities.

5.3.1.3 Obtainment of employment

When participants were asked how they obtained their employment, all the employed participants, whether in permanent or short term employment, revealed that it was through people they knew who motivated them to apply. They used networking mechanisms to obtain the employment they have. They stated:

> *"It's through connections. I had to know someone from the company. If I did not know this person I am sure I would not have this job".*

> *Another one said "It was a recommendation from a person who knew me. Who said I must apply".*

> *"Once I completed my medical degree I sat with the dean of medicine. They told me that there will be a post in bi- medical ethics. I waited for that. I applied and went to the interview. I did the presentation. I was offered the job this year, a one-year contract".*

> *"I started in 2002. It first started as a contract position for two years, later on it was advertised. It was a recommendation from a person who knew me. Who said I must apply".*

Even though employment adverts are publicized, participants in this study indicated that they had found employment through people they knew rather than through regular channels. No wonder then that Statistics South Africa (2005) shows low levels of employment among people with disabilities.

5.3.2 Experiences in the course of employment

In this section participants' experiences in the labour market are discussed, shedding light on factors that impacted on their work experiences. Sub-themes that emerge include: transportation challenges; inability to read hard-copy documents; reliance on colleagues;

lack of lifts and ramps; inability to attend meetings; negative attitudes of colleagues; difficulty in informing employers about needs.

5.3.2.1   Transportation challenges

Employed participants were asked to discuss challenges they encountered during the course of employment. Transportation to and from work was a major obstacle which had a huge impact on their employment. Those who were blind stated that going to work was a daily struggle. They said just like they struggled to attend interviews, after obtaining employment, the challenge still remained. They said they had to ask colleagues and friends to drop them at work and to take them back to their accommodation. In some instances, they said they had to pay for them. They stated:

> *"It is difficult because I use taxis, it is not easy but I am coping. The distance is about 5 kilometres. It is not so far. I am assisted by someone. I do not think I will reach a point where I will to get into a taxi to get here all by myself. I have to ask for help".*

> *"Since I am blind, I had to ask someone for assistance".*

One participant who is totally blind explained her situation of having to struggle for a parking space at work. She said although she has her own car, she had to ask someone else to drive for her. She found it particularly frustrating that she then also had to fight for parking space.

> *"Well I live with my husband. He transports me to and from work. In situations when my husband is unable to take me to work. I have to ask my assistant to drive me but the problem is with the parking. Since I am blind, I am not allowed to have a license, so the problem I have at work when I use my car is to be driven by someone else. The securities do not allow me to park. This makes me angry and it becomes a battle each day when I have to park. In some situations, I end up having to bribe them".*

Participants who were partially sighted stated that they also had transportation difficulties. They said due to their sight impairments, they have difficulties seeing fine images, or bus

stop signs. As a result they had to rely on family, friends and colleagues to go to work and attend meetings. They said:

> *"It is affecting me where travelling is concerned. But I have colleagues who are assisting with lifts and the university has shuttle services. I travel with the lift club and when it is not available I travel with the public transport. The public transport, I know where they park but I cannot see the signs".*

> *"My family transports me everyday to and from work. Sometimes I do feel like I am straining them but then what can I do".*

Participants who use wheelchairs related similar experiences to those who are totally blind. They said they had to ask family members and friends to drop and take them to and from work or had to hire a cab to transport themselves and the wheelchair.

> *"I get picked up and dropped off by my mom and dad. It is very stressful. The best thing is to invest in my own vehicle and have my own driver. That is costly and I do not have those resources".*

> *"I have a lift club. Sometimes it doesn't come for me. My father is 74 and cannot take me. I have to ask someone else to transport me. Specialized cars are expensive and I do not have money. I would love owning it. I do not have money to buy a specialized car. They are expensive".*

Even though some participants stated that they were unable to afford modified cars, there was one respondent who was fortunate enough to own one. Though he has the car, he still said it was a challenge to have to undergo medical tests each time he has to renew his license. He declared the following:

> *"My left side has enough power and control when driving, dealing with steering, gear changes. However the hardest part when it comes to driving is trying to get everybody to understand that you do not need a license with special conditions. This means that you have to go to your doctor. He has to fill in a form to take it to the license department. They treat you like you are a criminal when you want to get your license. What amazes me is that the same*

person who passed you on the road is the same person who will require you to undergo some tests. They said they want to figure out how your condition will affect your driving. Every time you have to renew your license you have to go through this same process".

Serlis and Swartz (2006: 364) who manage the QuadPara Association share a related experience in their report:

> the biggest problem facing people with disabilities and in particular those with mobility impairments, is that there is no public transport that caters for persons with mobility impairments. You cannot catch a train, bus, taxi or any public transport system if you use a wheelchair or have any assistive device for your mobility. The same is true for people who are hard of hearing. Safe accessible transport which people can travel on without an assistant, is practically speaking, out of reach for those with intellectual disabilities.

The information discussed in this sub-theme shows that although the Department of Education, as noted in chapter 2, has established specialized buses for people with disabilities, these buses are not widely accessible for people with disabilities. This therefore means that the Department of Transport needs to speedily and widely make public transport accessible for people with disabilities. In addition, there is a need for companies to equip employees with disabilities with independence training once they are employed. Such initiatives will allow people with disabilities to travel to and from work on their own.

The following sub-theme relates to challenges encountered by participants in reading hard copy at work.

5.3.2.2   *Inability to read hard-copy documents*

Two participants who were totally blind related their experiences of having to read hard-copy documents. One participant said that when his colleagues used printed documents to communicate this created difficulties for him because as a blind person he cannot read documents in print. He said he had to scan the documents first and then convert them with Jaws software. But this was time-consuming and tiring and he preferred having documents

in Braille. The second participant stated that she audio-tapes meetings, but she feels uneasy because she is not sure whether her colleagues were uncomfortable with this method. They recalled their experiences as follows:

> *"My problem is that I cannot read hard-copy documents; sometimes they give me hard copy documents. I have to scan these documents and transfer them to a computer before reading them. This is a challenge for me. The other time they gave me a document on PDF files. I had a problem because since my computer has Jaws, it does not read PDF files. I had a problem for a month. I could not do any work until they had to install new software which was compatible to PDF files. So now that is why I made a request to have a personal assistant because it becomes difficult to scan my work on my own. I prefer reading brailled documents. I can use computer to type but reading Braille works better for me".*

> *"Since I cannot write to take notes, I use my tapes to record conversations in the meetings. Sometimes I am not too sure how other colleagues feel about this. Maybe they are not happy, I do not know. No one complained to me".*

The experiences described here by the participants indicate that if their needs were communicated and budgeted for, they would feel less marginalized. For instance, if the employer bought a Braille machine for the first of these participants, he would have been able to print brailled documents. Similarly had the other participant's colleagues been properly informed about her needs, she would not have felt uncomfortable using her tape recorder in meetings. This could mean that employers were not always intentionally discriminative towards the needs of employees with disabilities, but were not fully aware about how to be accommodative to employees with disabilities.

5.3.2.3   Lack of lifts and ramps.

The participants with physical disabilities stated that lack of ramps and lifts made it difficult for them to move around when they had to perform work errands. Participants conveyed their experiences as follows:

"There is one lecture theatre that was not accessible. There is no disability ramp either lifts. Where there are ramps they are not well structured for students with disabilities. This becomes very challenging for me to wheel my wheelchair"."

"The environment is okay but the lifts are apart from each other. This makes it difficult for me to move around from one office to another"

"In this building there are no lifts, it will totally be not accessible for a person using a wheelchair, because there are no lifts."

Buildings in South Africa have been constructed without considering the needs of people with disabilities. The responses provided by the participants here shows that buildings are still not barrier-free. It was only in the late 1990s that the Department of Public Works considered creating enabling and barrier free environments. The White Paper, "Creating an Enabling Environment for Reconstruction, Growth and Development in the Construction Industry" (1999), requires architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and all other stakeholders in the construction industry when establishing new buildings to ensure that they are barrier free. The National Office on the Status of Disabled People (2003) reports that the Department of Public Works has already started to renovate its buildings to ensure that all offices are more accommodative to people with disabilities. This initiative serves as an incentive for enabling environments for the future. However, since there are a number of old buildings constructed before the White Paper, it means that reconstruction of all buildings would be very costly.

5.3.2.4   *Negative and positive attitudes of employers and colleagues*

Only three participants reported negative attitudes of colleagues and employers. Of these three, two were in permanent employment and the other was not employed but recounted her previous employment. The participants expressed their frustrations regarding the negative attitudes of colleagues they work with. They said that they felt that their colleagues had misgivings about them. A participant who is totally blind said that even though his colleagues were informed about his disability prior to him resuming work with them, he said this did not help. He said:

"In this section they were told before I came about the nature of my disability. They were informed how they could assist me. Some in other sections, they think if you are blind you are deaf. I can hear other people; they will talk among themselves, they will say "why this man is here? How can he work? I think they are not used to see people with disabilities in the employment sector. For example I am the only blind employee in this building".

Participant 1 said:

"Sometimes they think that I can't do this and that. They will say you can't do this, do this. They have prejudice"

One participant recounted abuse at the hands of her previous employer. She argued that when she was trying to obtain an articled clerkship in law her employer was very reluctant to employ her but after a great deal of pleading, the employer felt sorry for her and finally employed her. She said once she was employed she faced daily emotional abuse by the employer as well as underpayment compared to other colleagues. She described her experience as follows:

"I wanted to secure articles. I moved from one firm to another firm. I managed to secure articles in a law firm in 2004. The treatment of the employer was bad. The first time he met me he knew I was blind. I think he felt sorry for me, sympathizing with me. But on my arrival, I felt unwelcomed. I felt that he was afraid that he may lose clients. I do not wear sun glasses for personal reasons. He would ask me why I do not wear sun glasses. So, I felt that this is not right. At the end of the month when he had to give me my salary, it was supposed to be R1000, however he told to me he would give me R300 as he was unsatisfied with my work but later on he decided to give me R150. One of the candidate attorneys felt it was not fair. I kept quiet about that, and I knew that I would not go back. I felt very discriminated against... I realized that I will be frustrated there forever".

This participant's employment experience bears out findings in Zungu's (2002) study which revealed that the rights of people with disabilities were often discriminated against by the

employers. For example, he revealed that employers would refuse to make full salary payments to people with disabilities compared to other colleagues in the workplace because of the belief that they incur extra expenses by having such employees with them.

Besides the stereotypes and prejudices indicated above, all other participants felt that even though they were confronted with challenges in their working environments there were also positive things they experienced. The following are examples of positive attitudes of employers and colleagues that were described by participants:

> *"The colleagues they tell me I have a good heart. I am a people's person. They are treating me good".*

> **"***My director is very is very friendly, she is not far away from here. It's easy to inform her about things.*

> *"I think my boss has a reputation of employing people who are generally competent in what they do. All they care about is the work being done; they do not care about me as an individual, which should be the case anyway".*

> *"He will come on a regular basis to check on us. He is very loving and is trying his best to accommodate people with disabilities. I am sure you could see how happy I am when speaking about my boss".*

> *"She is approachable and very understanding. She treats me the same as other colleagues. There was no need to inform her about anything. I can use whatever other employers are using. There is truly no need"*

> *"I must be honest that it is nice here. And everyone is nice. I also believe that you must not feel pitied. I got there to do my work. I feel free to tell them of my needs. I mean, if they do not provide I will surely not be effective in my work.*

> *"People will try to have a detached attitude towards issues of disability because they know that they are issues that can end up in court. so they will rather have detached attitudes towards your disability."*

These accounts could imply that one cannot generalize and say that all non-disabled people have prejudice against people with disabilities, just because a small proportion of people do display prejudice. People need to realize that people are unique and may act differently to situations. Nor does it necessarily mean that when people respond positively to people with disabilities they are free of wrong perceptions about them. They may not show their negative attitudes for fear of being seen to be discriminatory.

5.3.2.5   Difficulty in informing employers about needs

When the participants were asked if it was easy informing their employers about their needs, those who were employed in contract employment stated that it was not easy because of a fear that they might sound as if they are demanding too much. They said they felt that since their jobs were not permanent, raising needs may make employers lose interest in employing them in full-time positions. They said:

> *"It was not really easy informing her as you know that you might not be truly listened to especially that I am in a contract position. I don't know if my job won't be at stake if raising things like that. You know employers already have negative perceptions and wrong ideas about us".*

> *"If you are on contract employment like me it becomes very difficult to inform them about your needs as if you are demanding".*

On the other hand those employed in permanent positions said that it was easy informing the employer of their needs although there were delays in responses.

> *"Yes it was easy but you know that Rome was not built overnight. My devices did not come as I preferred. With the support that I have in this office, I cannot say that there is a problem because I am already provided with assistive devices. My supervisor hasn't said to me that I am not coping".*

Another participant said that for him it was easy informing the manager of his needs but nothing then happened. He said the reason was that the employer did not have knowledge about his needs and as a result did not know how to support him. He vented his frustration as follows:

"He is approachable but you find out that there are things they are not familiar about. Even if you try to approach you can see that, what you want it's something that will never happen because you could see that he doesn't really understand your needs and doesn't know how and where to start supporting you. That is why in the beginning I say they lack knowledge where disability is concerned".

"They were saying that there is no budget for me. They were sure not themselves what the procedures were . My superiors they are not really sure about disability themselves"

Participant 2 recounted her experiences in her previous employment. She said her superiors made comparisons with other employees when she asked to be accommodated:

"In my previous work. I had to call meetings, write letters but what I have found out is that people tend to compare us and say but we never had a problem with so and so. They forget that our coping strategies are different and that our disabilities differ according to when and how we acquired them".

In pinpointing what was being described here, this was an instance where, as researcher, it was helpful to draw on my own experience as a disability officer working with students with disabilities (see Chapter 1, section 1.2): at times I address lecturers about the needs of students with disabilities. A lecturer would say for example, "why does she need enlarged materials, last year I had a student with that same condition and she never used to ask to be given enlarged notes." This would be the sort of question that characteristically reveals insufficient understanding of how the needs of people with disabilities differ. Some acquire their disabilities earlier in life and others later, therefore their coping mechanisms differ as do the extent of their disabilities.

5.3.2.6   Extent to which needs were addressed

The participants were also asked to mention needs addressed by their employers and the extent to which those needs were addressed. There were four participants who stated that some of their needs were addressed by the employers. The following were the participant's responses:

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"Through negotiations and appeals, I now have a personal assistant which is paid for by the department. It makes things much easier for me".

"I have scanner software. I will inform her about having a car and an assistant who should be able to drive for me. In government it's not easy to get what you want, when you put a budget it takes months. But I had scanner and software.

"I needed an open free space to work on so that I can maneuver easily. They made sure that my office is accessible and that the position of my computer desk is accessible.

"I have never shielded my disability. I always told people upfront about my disability and my needs. For example the university bought the large monitor and the reader and that's all I needed".

"You feel free going to him. For example I can't write. He said do you want a tape recorder or voice speech. We try diffident ways of doing things. The work environment is made to fit us very nicely. Generally you feel free approaching him. A screen magnifier was installed. They are aware of the writing difficulties, and that I am slow in doing things. They have knowledge about my individual disability (multiple sclerosis)".

These responses indicated that employers strived to accommodate the needs of the participants. This means that through educational programmes aimed at educating employers about the needs of people with disabilities there is a potential that more employers would be informed and subsequently be in a better position to address the needs of people with disabilities.

5.4 Participants recommendations'

The following sub-themes emerged in participants' recommendations on how employers should address their needs.

5.4.1 Budget.

Participants suggested that employers need to have a disability budget that will accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities. They said that the budget must be readily available even if there are no employees with disabilities so that once a disability employee is employed his/her need could be met.

5.4.2 Policy implementation.

Participants also recommended that government departments should be exemplary in the implementation of policies, particularly the Employment Equity Act. They said government departments need to employ more people with disabilities so that private companies can be motivated to do the same.

5.4.3 Treating people with disability with dignity and respect

Participants encouraged employers to treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect. One participant said, for example:

> *"People with disabilities have talents, strengths and capabilities. They must be treated with dignity and respect. Employers should not relate disability with low paying positions because that is what they are currently doing"*

Another participant said:

> *"Whether we like it or not we are different from non-disabled people. They do not have to treat us unfairly, like those people who are fragile. They need to respect us. They need to consider that we can do our jobs and respect us. They fear the unknown. People do not view people with disabilities as equal. They need to consider that besides disability we are not different, we also have feelings. I think its persons attitudes, they need to deal with their own issues. It's all in the mind. Maybe, education can do something for them. Government has to force companies to take people with disabilities".*

The experiences communicated by the participants indicates that the South African government must urgently respond to the employment needs of people with disabilities. Participants are saying they do not want to be treated differently but want their human dignity to be valued. Participants see government as an answer to their problems in that when the government starts to view them as people with talents and capabilities, the attitude of other employers would also change.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this chapter it can be concluded that people with disabilities in South Africa are still struggling to be fully recognized as people with capabilities and talents. People in the broader society still see them according to the medical perspective as individuals who are incomplete. They struggle to access education and are restricted in the subject choices open to them. Once they have completed their studies they are faced with challenges in being employed. Educational programmes are not enough to address the unemployment status of people with disabilities. In South Africa there has been no disability Act in place to address the issues affecting people with disabilities. It took 15 years for the Draft National Disability policy to be implemented. It is evident that a Disability Act needs to be put in place immediately. In that Act, there should be strong clauses challenging employers to coordinate their employment criteria in a more fair and transparent way.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings: the conclusions and recommendations drawn from chapters 4 and 5. The main aim of the study was to explore employment experiences of students with disabilities who have studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives of the study included identifying barriers to employment and obstacles that exist once employment is obtained, identifying university programmes available to help students with disabilities gain employment access, and also recommending strategies that can be implemented to meet the employment challenges of students with disabilities studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The study was qualitative in nature and in-depth interviews were conducted. Of the 21 participants interviewed in this study, 8 participants had physical disabilities, 9 were totally blind and 4 were partially sighted. Forty three percent of the participants acquired their disabilities at birth, 28% between 1 month to 12 years old and 39% due to environmental factors. Emerging themes from the transcribed interviews were analyzed in chapters four and five.

6.2 Summary of the main findings and conclusions

The main findings and conclusions are as follows:

6.2.1 Barriers in education

Limited choice of subjects offered at special schools served as a stumbling block when participants came to choose courses at university level. Participants were unable to enter into preferred courses at the university due to the fact that they were not offered subjects

at special schools that would have allowed them to enrol in those courses. Thus the finding is that the inability to obtain employment is linked to the nature of subjects offered at high school and the nature of degrees obtained at the university level. The conclusion drawn from this is that had the Department of Education provided enough teachers at special schools to teach all subjects taught at mainstream schools, participants would had opportunities to enter in preferred university degrees rather than feeling confined to doing humanities subjects.

Another stumbling block for the participants was that they were unable to register for courses they wished for, not because they failed to meet the requirements but because academic departments perceived that they would not cope if offered a place in those programmes. Participants felt much discriminated against as they were treated differently from their non-disabled counterparts. After completion of their degrees, some participants enrolled in postgraduate studies because they did not feel pleased with the degrees they obtained.

It can be concluded therefore that negative attitudes of academic departments in not allowing students with disabilities to register for the degree of their choice consequently forced students with disabilities to do courses they never wanted. This also compromised their employment potential. For instance, there were two participants who were not allowed to do social work because the Department of Social Work believed that they would not cope with social work practicals. Currently there is high demand for social workers in South Africa; had those participants been allowed to do social work they would have been employed by now.

6.2.2 Barriers in obtaining employment

The barriers to obtaining employment included lack of support at university, inaccessible communication methods to advertise jobs, inability to access interview venues, negative attitudes of interviewers. The following discussion will illustrate those barriers.

Lack of employment support at the university level to prepare students with disabilities to gain employment added to frustrations in obtaining employment. Participants felt that the university did not properly assist them to gain employment. The study revealed that even

though employment officers stated that they provided employment services for students with disabilities, when student participants were asked their major employment concerns during their final year of study, they complained of not receiving proper support from the university. Only four indicated that they received unstructured support from the employment office and disability office.

Employment officers explained that the majority of students with disabilities do not make an effort to seek employment support from the employment offices. Participants' dissatisfactions with employment support provided by the university means that employment officers together with disability officers need to work together to ensure that employment needs of students with disabilities are catered for. They need to evaluate their services and find out from students why they are not coming to their programmes; doing that will allow the officers to see if there are any gaps in their services.

In addition, the study showed that that all participants, apart from one participant who acquired his disability in the final year of study, obtained bursary support from the DoL. However, the study reveals that even though the DoL has helped students with disabilities to obtain their qualifications, it has failed to support them in securing employment after they qualified.

Besides the lack of employment support at university level, once participants had completed their degrees and were out of the university environment, they confronted further challenges in searching for work. The findings indicate that participants relied on newspapers, the internet, and recruitment agencies to search for job advertisements. They informed the researcher that even though these advertisement options are useful to job searchers, for them it was not easy as they had to ask friends and family members to buy, search the job advertisements and read to them. Participants stated that their friends and family members do not have time to do this, and when they do, they are not able to read the material in a way the participants would prefer.

Even though participants said they use the above communication methods, the preferred medium was the internet as the partially sighted could then enlarge the screen font and the blind could use voice recognition software. However, the participants highlighted challenges

that still remain with internet use because some websites are not compatible to the software they use. They therefore recommended that computers must have voice recognition software to allow them to view websites easily. They also recommended that newspapers should be brailled and enlarged, and that job advertisements be disseminated through television, radio and organizations of people with disabilities as well as designated recruitment agencies for people with disabilities.

Participants were asked to share the responses they obtained when searching for work. Participants stated that in most instances employers would not inform them about the outcome of their applications. When they did, participants were told that they had insufficient experience or that they were overqualified, and in most instances they would be informed that there were no resources or budget to cater for their needs.

Participants also reported that some employers would make excuses for not hiring them; some even told them to their faces that they preferred to hire persons with physical disabilities. However, participants with physical disabilities shared different experiences. They said employers would inform them that they can't be hired because of inaccessible infrastructure. Participants said that such responses created a dilemma as to whether or not to disclose their disabilities as both have posed challenges once the person is employed. Some said that their employment offers were turned down after employers recognized that they have disabilities. The finding is that participants were confronted with great challenges when making job applications.

This study found that people with disabilities are faced with obstacles when they have to attend interviews. Participants struggled to attend the interviews due to inaccessible public transport. Family members and friends acted as a means of support to take them to the interview venues. It could be concluded that participants' rights to personal independence were violated as they had to depend on people for transport. Not only did they face a barrier in accessing transportation, they were also confronted with a challenge of accessing the interview venues. Some of the venues were not properly built to accommodate people with disabilities. For example, some did not have lifts and ramps.

When they succeeded in arriving at the interview venues, they were confronted with negative attitudes and ignorance by the employers. They said that at the interviews they were not questioned about their experiences but were questioned on their disabilities. They also complained that employers used unreasonable testing procedures to interview them; for example, totally blind students reported that they were asked to write mathematics-based tests and had difficulties in being granted extra time to write the tests.

The conclusions drawn from these findings are that there a number of obstacles confronted participants when searching for employment. The university did not properly prepare them for the world of work. Secondly, the communication methods used to advertise jobs were not accessible for the participants. Thirdly, when participants managed to secure interviews, they were confronted with challenges to access them due to inaccessible public transport and inadequate construction of buildings. Fourthly, negative attitudes and stereotyping on the part of interviewers made participants feel discriminated against in the interviews.

6.2.3 Barriers once employment was obtained

The study showed that only four participants were employed; eight were unemployed and nine were employed in one-year contract positions. Notably, too, most of the nine in short-term employment were doing work that was not related to what they had studied for or desired. For example, participants with law degrees were working as receptionists or clerks and a qualified accountant was working in a call centre. On the basis of these findings, it was noted that students with disabilities are struggling to obtain employment. When they do, it may well be short-term employment not related to what they had studied for.

All the nine participants in short-term employment stated that they had difficulty earning enough for necessities such as accommodation, modified vehicles, opening accounts and personal assistance, both because the money was insufficient but also because their jobs did not give them long-term stability. This study reveals that all participants, apart from one who had his own modified car, had difficulty accessing public transport to go to work and were obliged to ask family members and friends to take and fetch them.

This study revealed that even though the Department of Transport has established buses to accommodate people with disabilities; in reality they still find it difficult to access public

transport. Inadequate transport facilities for people with disabilities are an obstacle to accessing work placements. A further problem in the workplace itself was frustration caused by an unfriendly work environment. All participants with physical disabilities stated that the structure of the buildings made it difficult for them to carry out work errands. They made reference to lack or improper construction of ramps, unavailability of lifts, and, when there were lifts, of offices being too far from the lifts.

In addition, participants stated that use of unfriendly communication methods was another challenge they faced. For instance, totally blind participants referred to colleagues using printed documents in meetings which left them feeling excluded because they could not work with print. This study results indicates that architects, engineers and all building stakeholders need to take cognizance of the needs of people with disabilities in the construction or renovation of premises. Regarding unfriendly communication methods in the workplace, findings of this study indicates that employers need to communicate with their employees with disabilities and be advised by them on suitable communication methods.

Even though participants in this study had negative experiences when searching for work, some participants, both those in short-term positions and those in permanent employment, mentioned positive attitudes of employers and colleagues at work. They stated that employers had provided them with assistive devices and tried to accommodate their needs. Nevertheless there were three who stated they were treated unfairly by employers, complaining that employers would underpay them because they considered that the employee's disabilities prevented them from performing at the same pace as non-disabled employees. Others stated that colleagues were shocked to be working with them, mistrusting the people with disabilities ability to work at the same level. This shows that there are still people in the society prone to prejudice and stereotyping towards people with disabilities.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that people with disabilities are still facing challenges in obtaining employment. Of the 21 participants in this study, only four were able to gain permanent employment, others were jobless or had had to settle for short-term work. Participants in short-term employment found it difficult to meet their daily

needs because they could not open accounts and their salaries were too low. All of this implies that employers are reluctant to employment people with disabilities. Those that do employ people with disabilities mostly confine this to short-term employment.

The following are the recommendations made on the basis of the participant's experiences.

6.3 Recommendations

The theoretical framework of this study was the ecosystem perspective. Using this framework assisted the researcher to see how each layer in the ecosystem contributed to the employment experiences of the participants. The ecosystem perspective assisted the researcher to recommend strategies that could be implemented in assisting students with disabilities to gain employment. Hence this section will provide recommendations drawn from the findings. The recommendations are as follows:

6.3.1 Extension of health facilities and of vaccination education

Since the major cause of disability in this study was illnesses, for example polio and eye diseases, often acquired at birth or in childhood, it is vital that the Department of Health undertake programmes to educate parents about the importance of vaccination. Even though the participants were not asked where they lived at the time of acquiring diseases, research studies have indicated that the scarcity of health facilities in South Africa, especially in rural areas, makes it difficult to reach health facilities for children to be vaccinated. To ensure that vaccination programmes reach all South Africans, the Department of Health must be committed to establishing easy to reach health facilities throughout the country. The researcher believes that doing that will ultimately reduce disability cases. It is crucial to investigate the cause of disability and treat this in its early stages.

6.3.2 Range of subject choice at high school

The research findings indicate that participants had only a limited range of subjects to choose from at high school. They had to settle for what was available and subsequently this prevented them from enrolling for degrees of their choice. It is suggested that the

Department of Education should act upon this, investigate underlying reasons and ensure that people with disability are not restricted to do certain courses. If investigations show that there is a shortage of teachers to teach mathematics to blind students, for example, the Department needs to start training teachers in the use of Braille and assistive technology that would enable them to teach these subjects.

6.3.3 Full acceptance of students with disabilities in tertiary education

Even though the Disability Unit reports (2006; 2007; 2008) have shown that there has been a high enrolment of students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the research findings revealed that when participants came to register at the University they were unable to access certain courses. This study recommends that all university academic departments should seek advice from the University Disability Units before making a decision that they cannot take a student with a disability. Doing this will allow ethical fairness and transparency and would also allow the student to be properly advised about possible options.

Furthermore, it is of paramount importance that the Disability Units embark on formal education workshops, educating university employees about disability and showing how lecturers could best meet the needs of students with disabilities. These workshops should be made compulsory to enable all employees to be familiar with disability.

6.3.4 University Employment support

Despite the fact that participants revealed that they did not receive adequate support from the university through the employment offices and Disability Unit, the university officers revealed that students did not take the responsibility to approach them for support. To combat this, it is recommended that the Disability Units and employment officers structure separate programmes targeted at facilitating employment for students with disabilities. More collaboration between these two offices is vital.

6.3.5 Facilitation of employment through the Department of Labour

On the basis of the information emerging from this study, the DoL should implement its policies by actively employing graduates with disabilities. Funding them is not enough; full implementation of the policy is urgently needed. The Disability Units and University employment offices should assist by providing a database to the DoL of graduating students with disabilities as soon as they finish their studies.

6.3.6 Disability education programmes at work

It is importance to have disability education programmes in the workplace in order to inform employers about the needs of people with disabilities. Rejection of people with disabilities in the labour market may be the result of lack of knowledge. Some employers may be hesitant to employ people with disabilities because they are not fully aware how they can assist them. Sector Education and Training Authorities, for example, allocates fund to employers to employ graduates with disabilities (National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons, 2003). This kind of information may lessen employers' anxieties about employing people with disabilities. This kind of initiative would also undo some of the myths about people with disabilities and help to promote a friendlier working environment.

6.3.7 Provision of subsidies to employers

It is also recommended that in order to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities, the South African government needs to commit in terms of supporting employers with 'enough' funds to restructure their buildings, buying of equipment and other needs of people with disabilities when necessary. This is recommended on the basis that participants in this study revealed that employers are reluctant to employ them once recognizing that they have to incur expensive costs to cater for their needs. Subsidies to support employees with disabilities would motivate employers to employ them. It is also recommended that an agency should be established to deal with such allocations; the agency could be part of the DoL. The agency should employ people with disabilities as well as people who are well trained in disability matters.

6.3.8 Establishment of employment units for people with disabilities

The participants reported that they found it difficult to secure employment. One of the frustrations experienced by students with visual with disabilities was being unable to access job advertisements. To overcome this problem, government, in particular the Department of Labour, needs to establish a specialized recruitment agency where advertisements could be placed and be transcribed into accessible format for people with disabilities. The broader task of such a unit would be to train people with disabilities in job-search skills, CV writing and interview skills. The unit should be appropriately equipped with brailling machines and relevant assistive software such as Jaws, ZoomText magnifiers, Dragon Naturally Speaking, etc., and should have a mobile vehicle or centres in the rural areas to ensure that the poor and the needy people are reached.

6.3 9 Recommendation for future research

Since the sample of this study was small, with 21 participants, it is recommended that it should be followed by an expanded study with a larger sample size of students with disabilities drawn from universities across the country. This will help in comparing what could be done differently in assisting students with disabilities in gaining employment.

It is also recommended that such a study be undertaken to explore whether learners with disabilities are offered an appropriate variety of subject choices at special schools to prepare them for access to preferred university courses. In addition, heads of schools at the universities need also be interviewed to discover their perceptions towards students with disabilities.

The limitation of this study is that it did not involve a sample of employers' experiences in recruiting people with disabilities. It is recommended that such study be undertaken.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the main conclusions and recommendations derived from the participants interviewed. The study has found that people with disabilities are still confronted with challenges in obtaining employment. Contributing factors are that they

have obtained qualifications they never wanted because special schools did not provide them with an adequate range of subject, and that some academic departments at the University of KwaZulu-Natal were unwilling to admit them to programmes they preferred. This has contributed to unemployment as some qualifications received had no specializations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed Consent

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a disability officer at Howard College Campus (UKZN). I am currently doing a masters degree in social work. The purpose of my study is to explore employment experiences of students with disabilities who have studied at the University of KwaZulu- Natal. Several graduate students with disabilities have raised their frustrations at securing employment after obtaining their qualifications. You are therefore invited to participate in this study to help explore factors that exacerbate these frustrations and help in recommending strategies that could be implemented to address the situation.

You will be required to participate in an interview with the researcher. The interview will take approximately 90 minutes. With your permission I would like to use a tape recorder to tape the interview so that I can focus on listening rather than writing. The tapes will be destroyed after use. The interviews will be held at a place convenient to the participant or in the researcher's office.

Please be assured that the information provided will remain confidential and you will be given a right to withdraw from the interview at any stage. No names will be used in the research process.

There will be no payments made for participating in the study. Should emotional stress arise as a result of the interview, the researcher will use her professional counselling skills and make referrals for further services.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Declaration

I, NAME _____SIGNATURE_____ the under undersigned hereby understand the contents and conditions of participating in this research. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNED AT _____ON THIS DAY _____ MONTH_____YEAR_____.

Contact details (w) _____ (Cell) _____ (H) _____

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Appendix 2: Student interview schedule

Employment experiences of students with disabilities who have studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Student interview schedule

Section A: Participant profile

Gender: _____

Race _____

Age_____

What is the nature of your disability?

When was the onset of your disability?

What was the cause of the disability?

What kind of medication or assistive devices are you using?

At what age did you start using the assistive device?

Where are you currently staying?

Section B: Educational Information

Did you attend a mainstream or special school?

How did you choose your subjects at high school? Probe for:

- Assistance on career guidance
- Level of satisfaction with selected subjects

What were your major subjects at the university?

What was your career aspiration in choosing the above subjects?

During the final year at the university, people usually think about employment, what were your main employment concerns?

What kind of support was available at the university to address some of your employment concerns?

What factors you think need to be considered by the university to assist other students with disabilities in acquiring employment?

Section C: **Employment experiences**

a) Seeking employment

Application process

How many jobs did you apply for? Probe:

- What kind of responses did you obtain?

- How were you informed if the applications were successful or not?

- What were some of your feelings during the application process?

Advertisements

How accessible was the job advertisements to you? Probe for:

- What kind of communication methods were used to advertise the jobs applied for?

- Which communication methods do you think could have been used to make job advertisements more accessible?

- What were some of the other barriers you feel prevented you from accessing the job advertisements?

Interviews

How many interviews did you go for?

How accessible was the job interviews to you? Probe for:

- Accessibility of the venue
- Transportation access

What were the reactions of the interviewers towards your disability?

What could have been changed to make the interviews friendlier?

b) Current employment

What is your job designation?

Please share with me your main job roles.

How did you obtain this employment?

How long did it take for you to obtain this employment?

Is your employment in relation to what you studied for?

How satisfied are you with the employment you have?

How does your disability affect your work performance? Probe:

- Accessibility of the work environment
- Attitudes of colleagues

Please share with me the difficulties you encounter with the mode of transportation you use in coming to work.

Please share with me the difficulties you encountered when searching for accommodation close to work?

What is your employer's attitude towards your disability?

How did you inform your employer of your needs?

What were some of the attitudes and reactions of your employer when informing him of your needs?

How easy was it for you to inform your employer of your needs?

What were some of the needs you informed him about?

What provisions made by your employer in addressing some of your challenges?

What factors you think needs to be considered or changed to equip employers of the needs of people with disabilities in the employment sector?

Yanga Mthiyane

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Contacts – 0724232864/ 031 2601310

Email- Futshane@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix 3: Employment officers interview schedule

Employment experiences of graduate students with disabilities at the University of KwaZulu -Natal.

Employment officers interview schedule

Name of campus_____

How long you've been working here?

How many students with disabilities do you serve each year?

What is the nature of their disabilities?

How accessible is your employment advertisements and services to students with disabilities? Probe for:

- What kind of communication methods are used to advertise job opportunities?

The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal has a policy on staff and students with disabilities. Section B of the policy states that the university has a responsibility to train and assist students with disabilities to access employment. In this regard, what strategies has your office formulated to accelerate the hiring, training and promotion of people with disabilities in the open labour market?

What kinds of working relationships or partnerships has your organization developed with employers in the open labour market in recruiting students with disabilities?

What factors function as a principal barrier to the achievement of employment for students with disabilities? Probe for:

- Are they able to acquire employment relevant to what they have studied for?
- The built environment (inaccessible housing, transport and buildings)?
- Employer discrimination?
- Lack of information?

- Low productivity rates?

- Difficulty to integrate in the work force?

- Any other?

In the labour market, at present and in the foreseeable future, what are the major job opportunities and threats for students with disabilities?

What types of work opportunities are offered to students with disabilities? Probe

- Short-term?

- Full-term?

- Relevant to what they have studied for?

How successful is your office in finding suitable employment in the open labour market for students with disabilities?

How does your office ensure that the training offered is relevant to actual employment opportunities for students with disabilities?

What kind of challenges does your office face in helping students with disabilities in finding suitable employments?

What recommendation could you provide to help students with disabilities to obtain employment?

Yanga Mthiyane
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Thank you for your participation!

Appendix 4: Disability coordinators interview schedule

Employment experiences of students with disabilities who have studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Disability coordinators interview schedule

Name of campus_____

How long you've been working here?

How many students you currently have?

What is the nature of their disabilities?

What kind of services do you offer?

The University has an employment office in place to address the employment needs of all students. What relationship support have you developed with the employment office to address the employment concerns of your students?

Besides the existence of the employment office, what does your office do to ensure the employability of students with disabilities?

What are some of the challenges and experiences your students encounter as they are searching for employment? Probe for:

- The built environment (inaccessible housing, transport and buildings)?
- Employer discrimination?
- Lack of information?
- Low productivity rates?
- Difficulty to integrate in the work force?
- Any other?

What factors you think need to be considered or changed to enhance inclusion of students with disabilities into employment sector?

Thank you for your participation

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