CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND

This study focuses on the identification and confirmation of criteria for the workplace-effective mobility (as defined in the last paragraph of Section 1.1, in Section 1.11.2 and in Chapter 3) of employees with disabilities. It uses an emancipatory approach. The identification and confirmation of criteria for workplace-effective mobility add to the workplace equity debate and put it on the workplace agenda to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in paid employment. Workplace equity is thus central to the study, because it relates to the pursuit of the universal human right to work and associate with others, and constitutes a fundamental human right enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities are essential for ensuring workplace equity. In order to identify and confirm criteria for workplace-effective mobility, however, the concept of workplace-effective mobility itself needs to be clarified for common understanding. Workplace-effective mobility is a multi-dimensional concept that can be inferred from various definitions of the mobility of employees in the workplace; and it includes elements such as self-motivation (Ingledew, Markland & Sheppard, 2004), a sense of independence (Patel *et al.*, 2006), good quality of life (Patla & Shumway-Cook, 1999), personal competence, the ability to work and physical accessibility (Chatterton, 2005). The availability of job opportunities (Anderson, Milkovich & Tsui, 1981) determines the extent to which employees may attain such workplace-effective mobility, based on well-delineated criteria. However, employers may wrongly allocate or even

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refuse to allocate available job opportunities to people with disabilities when they apply medical criteria (Kopec, 1995).

Based on research by Anderson *et al*. (1981) aimed at developing a model for intra-organisational mobility, the central argument in this study is that organisations often lack well-delineated criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. This is regrettable, because the lack of such criteria in organisations inhibits the employment, development and promotion (Williams, 2006) of suitably qualified employees with disabilities. The Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998, defines 'suitably qualified' people in terms of their formal qualifications, prior learning, relevant experience and capacity to acquire, within a reasonable time, the ability to do a given job (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

Suitably qualified employees with disabilities whose employment, development and promotion opportunities are inhibited do not achieve good quality of life. Therefore the study further contends that the lack of well-delineated criteria in South African organisations for the employment, development and promotion of employees with disabilities results in workplace prejudice against them. According to the Commission for Employment Equity (2007), the under-achievement of the 4% skills development targets by South African employers reflects workplace prejudice against employees with disabilities. Indeed, only 1.4% of employees with disabilities (more half less than the target of 4%) received training in 2007 (Republic of South Africa, 2007).

Similarly, South African employers have not been able to achieve the 2% employment equity targets for employees with disabilities set in terms of to the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998: Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects of Disability in the Workplace – Draft for Public Comments (Republic of South Africa, 2001). The 2008/9 employment equity report indicates that employees with disabilities represent only 0.7% of the total

number of employees that is reported by all designated employers (in other words, almost three-quarters less than the target of 2%), with the majority of these employees concentrated in the lower levels of employment, that is, from the skilled level downwards (Commission for Employment Equity, 2009). Designated employers are employers who employ more than 150 employees, as defined by the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998. In senior management occupations, South Africa reflects an even lower (0.3%) representation of employees with disabilities (Commission for Employment Equity, 2009), compared to 6% in Canada (Williams, 2006).

The implementation of well-delineated criteria (Kreismann & Palmer, 2001; Ross, 2004) for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities is essential to address growing shortages of skilled labour – due to the aging population in countries such as Canada (Williams 2006) or the general skills shortages in South Africa (Daniels, 2007), coupled with the growing need to rationalise policies and procedures for enhanced workplace equity. Given this need and interest in the implementation of well-delineated criteria for workplace-effective mobility, it is surprising that so little empirical research has thus far been conducted on the identification and confirmation of criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. Regrettably, previous research in the field of criteria identification and confirmation tended to focus mainly on criteria for improving the health conditions of people with disabilities, addressing issues such as the following:

- developing criteria to assess the appropriateness of hip replacement surgery for osteoarthritis patients (Quintana *et al.*, 2000);
- evaluating the quality of research on health promotion, for funding purposes (Lahtinen *et al.*, 2005); and
- setting guidelines for the development of health survey instruments and criteria for the adoption thereof (Tafforeau *et al.*, n.d.).

Furthermore, some of the previous research on criteria identification and confirmation used self-reporting (Van Vianen, Feij, Krausz & Taris, 2003), which does not allow concepts to be transformed into observable competences which make it possible for the achievements of employees in the workplace to be monitored (Altink, Visser & Castelijns, 1997) . A criterion based on self-reporting may thus not assist employers to distinguish between mobile and immobile employees with disabilities in the workplace. Thus employers face a challenge in attempting to distinguish between mobile and immobile employees with disabilities in the workplace; and this problem is compounded by the fact that previous research on criteria identification and confirmation has failed to recognize that disability is not simply a medical or welfare issue (Oliver, 2002), but also has a social dimension. The scarcity of criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities is unfortunate, because it is the sort of knowledge required by human resources practitioners and employers to ensure a constant supply and availability of competent employees (Williams, 2006) and to achieve greater workplace equity for employees with disabilities.

At this stage in the research, workplace-effective mobility is generally defined as the willingness and ability of employees with disabilities to find work in the open labour market, make an effective contribution and maintain an economically active lifestyle. Because of the effects of workplace prejudice on the attainment of workplace-effective mobility by employees with disabilities, this study is based on the social theory of disability and adopted an emancipatory research paradigm to argue for a transformation of workplace practices in order to enhance workplace equity.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main problem that this study attempts to address is that there is an absence of well-delineated criteria for workplace-effective mobility to

assess potential employees with disabilities for available job opportunities (Anderson *et al.*, 1981), and that the absence of such criteria inhibits the appointment of people with disabilities and has a negative impact on the well-being of both the individual and of the organisation.

When employers set criteria that exclude employees with disabilities from employment (Kreismann & Palmer, 2001), believing that employing such employees would pose risks to their workplace safety (Republic of South Africa, 2001), it reflects negatively on the effectiveness of their human resources management function (Community Constituency, 2003). Consequently, the human resources management departments of such employers are not able to sustain a constant supply of suitably qualified people with disabilities (Anderson *et al.*, 1981), particularly to meet the new requirements of a knowledge economy during an economic recession (Muffels & Luijkx, 2004).

Conversely, people with disabilities who are excluded from employment on arbitrary grounds are deprived of opportunities to develop personal attributes (Jette, 2006) which could enhance their sense of independent living (Stephens, Collins & Dodder, 2003). Workplace-effective criteria therefore include goal-setting behaviours such as self-efficacy (Rigby *et al.*, 2003). According to Rigby *et al.* (2003), organisations need to appoint individuals with strong self-efficacy beliefs who tend to set high goals and are committed to achieving them.

Mrug and Wallander (2002) contend that disabled people's self-concept drives their functioning and is formed and changed by their social environment. For instance, employees who feel rejected by others experience greater hostility, low self-esteem, emotional instability, unresponsiveness, and a negative view of the world. Conversely, a positive self-concept results in a positive worldview (Mrug & Wallander, 2002) and in more effective employees.

The lack of suitable criteria for workplace-effective mobility leads to ineffective differentiation between people with disabilities who should receive disability grants and those who should not, especially when disability is treated as a medical issue only, for the purposes of allocating disability grants (Dossa, 2005). When such a medical model is used, the allocation of disability grants does not distinguish between suitably qualified candidates with disabilities who choose not to be employed (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001) on the one hand, and those who choose to work (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001) on the other. Therefore, the career aspirations and self-motivation of those who want to work are thwarted. This system creates a culture of entitlement (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001) and the economy is then burdened with the growing financial costs of maintaining people with a disability (Swartz & Schneider, 2007).

During times of economic distress, employees who become disabled in the workplace are often wrongly dismissed (Kennedy & Olney, 2001) because of the application of the medical model and the absence of more suitable criteria for workplace-effective mobility. Drawing on Pinder's study (1996), I argue that this tendency to dismiss employees with disabilities for alleged operational reasons reflects a disabling environment and not the poor capabilities of employees with disabilities *per se*, as such decisions are not based on any well-defined criteria. Consequently, the dismissed employees experience emotional and psychological distress (Barnes, 1990) and feelings of reduced capacity and confidence (Reiser & Mason, 1990).

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that there is a need to improve the understanding of workplace-effective mobility and to identify its criteria (Ross, 2004). The decision to undertake a study in this field was also informed by the dearth of literature on the topic and the inadequacy of research on the subject (Anderson *et al.*, 1981; Kopec, 1995). Therefore, the purpose of this two-phase sequential mixed-methods study, as described by Creswell (2009), is to identify and confirm criteria

for workplace-effective mobility for employees with disabilities in four of the nine provinces in South Africa (the Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape).

1.3   RESEARCH AIMS

The main aim of this two-phase sequential triangulation study is therefore to identify and confirm criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. Other specific aims that are pursued are the following:

- to describe the nature of and identify criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities;
- to apply the Delphi technique in order to confirm the criteria identified; and
- to compile a theoretical model of the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities.

The envisaged overall outcome of the study is criteria that can be applied to determine the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities, and which should minimize workplace discrimination against this group.

1.4   THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question for this study is: 'What are the criteria for workplace-effective mobility?' Based on this question, the sub-questions are the following:

- What is the nature of the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities?
- Why should criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities be identified?
- What are the criteria for workplace-effective mobility?

- How do experts working in the field of industrial and organisational psychology view the relevance and correctness of the identified criteria?

1.5 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

This study was conducted to promote workplace equity, for economic and business reasons, as well as in response to a personal interest related to my place of work.

From a workplace equity perspective, the rationale for this study is that the medical model (see Section 2.3.1), which is the predominant model implemented in the selection of suitable people with disabilities, is inadequate. As will become evident in Section 2.4, in the next chapter, the continued use of the medical model presents several challenges to the inclusion of people with disabilities in paid employment. More emphasis should therefore be placed on the social (see Section 2.3.3) and biopsychosocial models (see Section 2.3.4) of disability as a basis for the selection of competent employees with disabilities. These models are best represented by the concept of workplace-effective mobility. Therefore, the criteria for workplace-effective mobility need to be identified and confirmed in the context of the social and biopsychosocial models.

The study is also conducted against the backdrop of the rising burden that disability grants impose on the fiscus and of limited family resources to maintain a dignified lifestyle for disabled family members. According to Emmett (2006), disabled people are often the responsibility of their families and, because of the reduced employment opportunities for people with disabilities, they present a risk of economic hardship due to increased demands on family resources. According to the World Bank (2008) report, disability presents a major challenge for equitable and sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation. Therefore, the economic value of employment for disabled people lies in their inclusion in paid

employment (World Bank, 2008). However, as indicated in Section 1.1, the provision of employment requires well-delineated criteria, which makes this study necessary.

A further economic rationale for this study is the rising cost of disability grants, which implies an increasing burden on the taxpayer and growing dependence on such grants by people with disabilities. The rising cost and the disincentive influence of disability grants are explained in Section 2.4.5, and the implications thereof are indicated in Section 2.5, highlighting the need for greater workplace equity. It is evident in these sections that disability costs have increased by 53% over a ten-year period (from 1997 to 2007) in South Africa and continue to rise (Swartz & Schneider, 2007), and hence return-to-work initiatives are required. The inability to distinguish people with disabilities who can work from those who should receive disability grants (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001) is compounded by a dearth of information on recipients who are able to work and in what type of job, as Mutasa (2010) argues. Therefore, an investigation into well-delineated criteria for workplace-effective mobility is essential because such criteria will enable a distinction between those who should be grant beneficiaries as opposed to those who are potential employees with disabilities.

Regarding the diversity rationale for the study, I posit that the benefits of including people with disabilities in paid employment accrue to both organisations and individuals. For individuals, a diversity approach to managing disability in workplaces deconstructs a view of disabled people as a group of marginalised workers to focus more on individual capabilities and differences. According to Woodhams and Danieli (2000), a diversity management approach to disability deconstructs group identities and promotes individuality; it thus calls for the implementation of workplace practices that appreciate differences and mutual respect. Individuals should therefore be recognized, rather than the group they come from; therefore, criteria for workplace-effective mobility of employees with

disabilities should be investigated that will enable the optimization of diversity in workplaces.

Based on the assertions of Woodhams and Danieli (2000), I argue that the organisational benefits of optimizing diversity in workplaces by including people with disabilities in paid employment can be realised in the increased economic viability of organisations (it ensures a personal touch with regard to disabled customers), the acquisition of desirable skills (it addresses a shortage of skills) and the promotion of proactive human resources management practices (it removes barriers and fosters a culture that celebrates uniqueness). Harrison (1998) found that employers tend to value employees with disabilities for their strong work ethic, which has positive spin-offs for organisational effectiveness. Specific benefits for people with disabilities of being included in paid employment are explained in Section 2.5.2.

As an able-bodied researcher (although I am short-sighted and use spectacles), I became involved in this study for personal development reasons. I am involved in processes of employment equity at the Vaal University of Technology. Because we were not able to attract suitable employees with disabilities, I developed an interest in the subject. The study was thus regarded as a learning ground on matters of disability equity. Also, as an organisational development practitioner, I saw the study as an organisational development activity which could contribute to the identification of equitable workplace practices for more effective diversity management, thereby addressing the barriers to inclusion facing people with disabilities who want to enter paid employment. My personal motivation for undertaking this kind of study and the implications thereof are discussed in more detail in Section 2.5.5.

As a contribution to the workplace equity agenda for people with disabilities, this study therefore seeks to generate empirical information that, firstly, contributes to the body of knowledge on workplace-effective

mobility by describing the concept of workplace-effective mobility; secondly, assists employers in planning their human resources strategy to achieve greater workplace equity for employees with disabilities and workforce diversity; and, thirdly, provides some answers to the questions raised by human resources practitioners and employers about why some employees with disabilities are able to achieve workplace-effective mobility more successfully than others with similar levels of disability, by identifying and confirming suitable criteria for workplace-effective mobility.

1.6   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The identification and confirmation of workplace-effective criteria will assist employers to mitigate workplace prejudice and promote the employment of competent and well-motivated employees with disabilities (Ross, 2004). Such criteria will thus enable the absorption of people with disabilities in the open labour market (Baum, 1995).

Furthermore, employers will be able to plan their human resources strategies for optimal equity, taking into consideration the workplace-effective mobility needs of employees with disabilities. The workplace-effective mobility criteria identified by the study will also provide useful additional information for organisational policy on the fair dismissal of employees with disabilities for incapacity and/or to determine appropriate reasonable accommodation measures with minimal undue hardship to the employer's business. Similarly, the criteria can be administered to normal retirees and those who retire early due to ill-health as part of the career and/or retirement counselling processes.

The gaps identified in the process of assessing employees with disabilities using criteria for workplace-effective mobility can be addressed through appropriate interventions in the form of training and development. This process should assist employers to increase the

targets for employment equity effectively and to develop the skills of employees with disabilities appropriately.

The outcomes of this study will provide a better understanding of the reasons for the low employment rate of employees with disabilities in the mainstream economy and provide a basis for finding solutions that will promote their fair and practical integration into workplaces. Therefore, the use of workplace-effective mobility criteria will also enhance opportunities for employees with disabilities to enjoy the societal goal of 'a better life for all', live more independently and reduce their dependence on disability grants.

The fair assessment of employees with disabilities for employment, promotion and development purposes may enable the implementation of a return-to-work programme, thereby reducing welfare costs for the government. Finally, the theoretical model that is developed in this study will assist future research on the concept of workplace-effective mobility to advance workplace equity.

1.7   THE RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

Because it is not always possible to prove the findings of a study conclusively on the basis of empirical data (Mouton, 1996), assumptions were made to guide the process decisions in identifying and confirming criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), assumptions are those 'things' that researchers accept as true without concrete proof to guide research process decisions in order to reduce misinterpretation of the findings. Therefore research assumptions that guided the research process in this study were made, and these are clarified below to enhance correct interpretation of the findings.

1.7.1 Ontological assumptions

The study assumes that any 'reality' regarding the concept of the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities is imperfect and must be subject to critique (Guba, 1990). Such a philosophical stance enables critical analysis of continuing workplace prejudice and discrimination as socially constructed views (Williams, 1998) on how to manage employees with disabilities. Such critical analysis is necessary because of the negative consequences of workplace prejudice and discrimination, which become evident in the marginalization and stigmatization of employees with disabilities (Lupton & Seymour, 2000), and which subject them to an inferior (Oliver, 2002) and passive role in society.

This study therefore attempts to make a contribution to redress this untenable historical reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) by advocating the use of specific and appropriate criteria for workplace-effective mobility in order to enhance workplace equity. In order to make this contribution, the study adopts an emancipatory and advocacy paradigm which puts the issue of criteria for workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities on a political agenda, thereby influencing the transformation of South African workplaces to ensure optimal workplace equity. According to Creswell (2009), emancipatory research interweaves science with politics and a political agenda for change. Because disability has been politicised (Barnes, 2001), the use of an emancipatory and advocacy paradigm in this study is appropriate.

1.7.2 Epistemological assumptions

The study adopts a sequential mixed methods approach (see Section 1.8), which necessitates that qualitative and quantitative phases are used. In the qualitative phase of the study, a subjectivist epistemology is adopted in order to act collaboratively with the participants to avoid the

possible marginalisation of the participants (Creswell, 2009). The enquiry thus involves a collective production (Oliver, 2002) of knowledge, which in this case requires a united voice raised for changes (Creswell, 2009) in employment policies and practices, thereby arriving at the truth about the abilities of employees with disabilities. According to Plack (2005), truth is arrived at through discourse which is subjectively and inter-subjectively grounded. Subjectivist epistemology is also adopted because the emancipation of employees with disabilities is a value-driven activity, referring particularly to the value of workplace equity. According to Guba (1990), a subjectivist epistemology recognises that values mediate the inquiry.

Therefore, I engaged with participants in the qualitative phase of the study to identify the subjective interpretations and meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) that they attached to criteria for workplace-effective mobility. It is assumed that both my values and those of the participants inevitably permeate the findings, thereby constituting a united voice against the marginalisation of employees with disabilities. Fieldwork was thus undertaken to enable the engagement of participants in the inquiry and record their voices on the subject, as suggested by Plack (2005) and Shah (2006). In the process of the information exchange between the participants and me, a mutual change of our perspectives (as suggested by Krauss, 2005) regarding the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities could occur.

The study also necessitated the inclusion of a quantitative phase concerned with confirming criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of people with a disability. In this phase, an objectivist worldview was adopted to select an external and independent panel (as advocated by Williams, 1998) of experts (as suggested by Plack, 2005) for this purpose. The confirmation (Krauss, 2005) of the criteria identified subjectively by participants was crucial in order to provide clarity, relevance and representativeness of workplace-effective mobility using a

five-point Likert scale. Therefore, workplace-effective mobility was dimensionalised or presented in its identified parts (indicators and categories) to a panel of experts for confirmation. This approach was used to study the parts of a phenomenon to understand its wholeness (Williams, 1998).

1.7.3 Axiological assumptions

Because the findings of an emancipatory and advocacy inquiry are value-mediated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), my interpretations and those of the participants, and presentations thereof, may reflect our various orientations, as Creswell (2007) explains. My orientation in this study emanates from my role as a registered industrial psychologist, an Employment Equity practitioner, and a Human Resources executive. The orientations of the participants emanate from their experiences as people with disabilities working under conditions of workplace prejudice.

As orientations emanating from my theoretical exposure and professional practice have a potential for researcher bias (see Section 4.5.), I have made an attempt to suspend these orientations, as recommended by Williams (1998) in order to understand workplace-effective mobility from the perspectives of employees with disabilities. Furthermore, researcher bias was reduced by implementing measures that ensure trustworthiness, as indicated in Section 4.7.1.5 of this study. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research uses a qualitative concept of trustworthiness, instead of validity.

1.7.4 Rhetorical assumptions

A personal style of writing (first person) is adopted in this study to confirm the closeness of the researcher to the process, and also to enhance understanding of the findings (Creswell, 2007).

1.7.5 Methodological assumptions

In order to achieve the study objectives of identifying and verifying criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities, a dialectical dialogue with the participants is assumed. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), such a dialogue must be dialectical in order to address the historically inappropriate reality pertaining to participants. In this regard, the study brings workplace prejudice against employees with disabilities to the fore so that transformative actions towards workplace equity can be performed in the workplace through the implementation of criteria for workplace-effective mobility.

Therefore, the research process was guided by the evolving data collection and analysis, and the statements from interactions with participants were recorded through thick descriptions (see Plack, 2005). Merriam (1998) defines a thick description as the complete and literal description of the incident or entity that is being investigated. Accordingly, the research setting and responses of participants in the study are described in detail in Chapter 5.

In order to identify the criteria for workplace-effective mobility, the behavioural representations thereof by employees with disabilities were observed as they emerged and were compared with the existing literature in order to attain theoretical generalisations or external validity. The process of observing behavioural representations as they emerge from the field and comparing these representations with the relevant literature is referred to as an inductive (Olsen, 2004) and emergent (Creswell, 2007) logic. Inductive logic assists in the development (Olsen, 2004) of a theoretical model; and emergent logic provides the flexibility necessary for a researcher to develop detailed knowledge of the topic being studied (Creswell, 2007).

1.8 VISUAL PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODS

The research design and methodology are discussed comprehensively in Chapter 4. However, in the interests of providing clarity and orienting the reader, the research process is discussed briefly in this introductory chapter.

This study employs a two-phase sequential, confirmatory and dialectical mixed design. It is sequential because a qualitative research paradigm is used first in describing the concept of workplace-effective mobility and identifying related criteria, and then a quantitative research paradigm is used in confirming the criteria that have been identified, by using a Likert-type scale as recommended by Creswell, Fetters and Ivankova (2004). The design is dialectical because it uses a constant comparative method to analyse the multiple subjective realities of participants in the study, as described by Rocco *et al.* (2003).

Table 1.1 (below) provides a summary of the sequential mixed method design adopted in this study.

Table 1.1: Summary of the research process and methods

Research design step	Phases of the sequential mixed methods design	
Phase	**Phase 1:** Focus group interviews with employees with disabilities	**Phase 2:** A pilot study followed by two main rounds of the Delphi method with selected industrial and organisational psychologists
Purpose	Identify criteria for workplace-effective mobility	Confirming criteria for workplace-effective mobility

Research design step	Phases of the sequential mixed methods design	
Sampling	Purposive	Purposive
Data collection	Interview schedule Focus group interviews Audio and video tapes Field notes	Online questionnaire Interactive database
Data analysis	Constant comparison method Theoretical sensitivity Content analysis: Atlas.ti	Statistical analysis Content analysis: Atlas.ti
Results/Outcomes	Criteria for workplace-effective mobility and a theoretical model	Confirmed criteria through consensus-building

1.8.1 Phase 1: Focus group interviews

Phase 1 of the study was concerned with the identification of criteria and the compilation of a theoretical model of the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. It represents the most prominent activity in this study. Therefore, the dominant research design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) of this study is interpretivist grounded theory, using focus group interviews for data collection. As explained more fully in Section 4.3.1, interpretivist approaches are designed around interpreting trends and patterns observed in data.

An interview schedule was compiled after conducting a literature review on workplace-effective mobility; getting inputs from project coordinators and considering the opinions of 15 participants in a pilot study (see Section 5.4.4.1). It was used to collect data from purposive samples. Conversations were recorded on audio- or videotapes and field notes were taken. After each stage of collection, the data content was analysed, using constant comparison methods on Atlas.ti. Consideration for theoretical sensitivity was included in the data analysis in order to

understand the multiple meaning of the data in the context of applicable theory, as recommended by Brown *et al.* (2002). The envisaged results from this analysis process were criteria for and a theoretical model of the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities.

1.8.2 Phase 2: Delphi technique

Phase 2 involved the confirmation of the criteria for workplace-effective mobility using the Delphi technique and a quantitative Likert-type scale. Therefore, in this phase, a mixed methods design was used to confirm the criteria identified in the qualitative phase of the study, as recommended by Risjord, Moloney and Dunbar (2001).

A purposive sample of industrial and organisational psychologists was drawn for these purposes. An online questionnaire and an interactive database were used to collect the data in two rounds. These two rounds of the actual data-gathering process were preceded by a pilot round aimed at testing the questionnaire for comprehension.

After the first round, data were analysed statistically and in terms of their content. Thereafter, the analysed data were packaged into a second round questionnaire as feedback to enable consensus-building among industrial and organisational psychologists. The envisaged result was confirmed criteria for workplace-effective mobility.

1.8.3 Validity and reliability

The results of a study should be valid and reliable, as recommended by Mouton and Marais (1990). How the current study achieved validity and reliability is explained in detail in Sections 4.7.1.5 and 4.7.2.6, and this is not repeated here, to avoid any duplication of the discussion.

1.8.4 Trustworthiness

As discussed in Section 4.6, a qualitative research methodology was appropriate for performing the prominent activity of this study (also see Section 1.8.1). Measures to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative results are therefore very important in a qualitative study such as this. Trustworthiness refers to the conceptual soundness from which the value of qualitative research can be judged (Brown *et al.*, 2002). Criteria to judge the conceptual soundness of the findings are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bitsch, 2005). This study's compliance with these criteria is therefore explained in detail in Section 4.7.1.5.

1.8.5 Ethical measures

The codes of ethical conduct of the Health Professions Council of South Africa regulating the conduct of psychologists pertaining to human subjects and good practice for disabilities were used as ethical guidelines for this study. Details of the ethical compliance measures undertaken in this study are explained in Sections 4.7.1.6 and 4.7.2.5.

1.9 DEMARCATON OF THE STUDY

Swartz and Watermeyer (2006) show that the literature on disability studies in South Africa has yet to emerge and develop. As a relatively young democracy, South Africa needs to foster a culture of disability equity to support the series of anti-discrimination laws the country has promulgated. Against this background, the study focuses only on a South African perspective and does not seek to draw comparisons with other countries.

The study was thus conducted in four provinces in South Africa, namely the Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. Participation in the study was limited to Deaf, blind and speech-impaired

employees and employees with physical disabilities who are employed in operational and management positions, as well as self-employed people with such disabilities. The participation criteria were set to include employees with disabilities in the age categories from 25 to 55 years (the prime age for being economically active), and to include diversity of gender and race.

Generalisation of the results of this study to other countries or employees with disabilities in sheltered employment or other types of disabilities is limited, due to the relatively small size of the sample used and the use of qualitative procedures, such as purposive sampling. Thus, the limited possibility of generalising the results to other employees with disabilities or other countries affects the external validity of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Ellis & Levy, 2009). The study's external validity is therefore limited to comparing its results with the relevant literature, without engaging in cross-country comparisons, as indicated in Section 4.7.1.4(i)(c).

Given that all the participants in the study were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point if they felt uncomfortable, the participants who completed the questionnaire (Delphi process) and who participated in the data collection processes (focus group interviews) may not be fully representative of the population of people with disabilities.

The members of the expert panel that confirmed the criteria for workplace-effective mobility were drawn from the ranks of professionals believed to specialise in the development of assessment tools and criteria, namely industrial and organisational psychologists, and may thus not fully represent the full range of expert opinion or universal opinion among professionals. Despite the utility of the information generated by the study for the possible compilation of a psychometric assessment tool, the development of such a tool was not the primary intention of the study, because of the limitations imposed on the research in respect of time and

resources. However, the results may be useful for future research regarding the development of such a tool.

These considerations for study demarcation are clarified here because they pose a threat to the internal validity of the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009) and should thus be stated clearly to enable future replication or expansion of the study (Creswell, 2003) in other settings.

1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was performed within the parameters of a social model of disability, which aims to achieve greater workplace equity and redress for employees with disabilities. According to the social model, disability is socially constructed through prejudicial social practices and policies (Hahn, 1993). Proponents of the social model of disability posit that society should create a sense of acceptance (Finkelstein, 2001) and provide equal membership status (Jayasooria, 1999) to employees with disabilities, thereby eradicating workplace prejudice against them (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

A well-developed sense of acceptance, coupled with a socially supportive environment, optimises the individual effectiveness (Mrug & Wallander, 2002) of employees with disabilities. Therefore, minimizing workplace prejudice through the use of well-delineated criteria for workplace-effective mobility is essential to harness individual capabilities and develop the potential of employees with disabilities. Baldwin and Johnson (2001) argue that it is necessary to access and use such individual abilities, because most people with disabilities are as able to perform productively as non-disabled persons.

Given the need to eradicate workplace prejudice against employees with disabilities in order to harness their individual capabilities, the study therefore fits within an emancipatory and advocacy worldview. The

emancipatory and advocacy framework worldview requires that researchers advance a collective change agenda by means of a participatory research process (Creswell, 2009). The proposed change agenda should therefore empower participants in the inquiry arising out of the discussions with the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

The use of an emancipatory and advocacy worldview in the context of a social model of disability is explained more fully in Section 2.5.5, which deals with the importance of emancipatory research strategies in disability studies.

1.11   CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Two main concepts used in this study are disability and workplace-effective mobility. In order to limit misunderstanding of the concepts, it is necessary for these concepts to be introduced at an early stage of the discussion in the dissertation. These concepts are discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. However, for the sake of clarity, a brief definition of these terms is provided below.

1.11.1 Disability

The definitions of disability are as diverse as the conceptual models designed to clarify the term. From a medical perspective, a disability is a disease, medical condition or resource deficit residing in an individual. Such a deficit affects the person's interactions with the workplace environment negatively, but, in some cases, it may be remedied by some medical treatment or intervention in a medical institution. The successful remedying of an employee's deficit(s) through medical technology, surgery, hospitalization and/or remediation boosts the personal resource capacity of the employee (Drum *et al.*, 2005).

Another definition of disability is based on a functional model of disability. According to this kind of model, disability is a functional gap that is remediable through technological interventions or social support or assistive devices and rehabilitation aimed at enhancing the functional resource capacity of an employee (Lupton & Seymour, 2000). From a social model viewpoint, disability is a social construct created by broader environmental constraints inhibiting productive interactions between employees with disabilities and their environment (Swartz & Schneider, 2007). In terms of the biopsychosocial model, disability is a consequence of interactions between personal, social and biological variables (Jette, 2003, 2006).

Irrespective of the model one adopts, disability as a long-term or recurring physical or mental impairment substantially limits a person's access to employment opportunities, prevents effective performance and/or career advancement (Republic of South Africa, 1998). It is thus evident that employees with disabilities experience workplace prejudice and/or inequity based on the misconception that disability prevents effective performance.

Since disability is defined in behavioural terms, it seems obvious that disability should be influenced by the same variables that influence other behaviours, including physiological, environmental, social, cognitive and emotional factors. Perceptions of control have been found to determine levels of disability, for example, greater perceived control results in less disability (Johnston, 1997). Although the above definitions seem to comply with this requirement, they do not facilitate the inclusion of people who experience disability discrimination in the protected group. In this study, disability is therefore defined as a consequence of disability discrimination that becomes evident in the form of the presence of an aversive attitude (Ngwena, 2007) of the employer against people with disabilities.

1.11.2 Workplace-effective mobility

Because of the importance of the concept of workplace-effective mobility for this research, and because clarity is required to ensure the understanding of the text, the concept is briefly defined here in the introductory chapter, although it is more comprehensively discussed in Chapter 3.

The concept of workplace-effective mobility has not yet been clearly defined in the literature, but is implied in a myriad of perspectives on job mobility, that is, the personal (Chatterton, 2005), physical (Patla & Shumway-Cook, 1999), economic (Ginzberg & Hiestand, 1968) and social perspectives (Bouret *et al.*, 2002; Mauro, 1999). In this study, these different perspectives are integrated – workplace-effective mobility is thus defined as the identifiable willingness and ability of employees with disabilities to break socio-physical barriers in order to access job opportunities, make an effective contribution and achieve a sense of independence and good quality of life.

Unlike the incapacity conceptualisation of disability, this definition of workplace-effective mobility necessitates an identification of the willingness and ability of employees with disabilities. Therefore, well-delineated criteria to define a range of work-related competences of employees with disabilities need to be identified. This study focuses on the identification of enabling indicators which will be categorised into well-delineated criteria and a checklist for use by employers in identifying suitably qualified employees with disabilities in workplaces.

1.12 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

The main reason for conducting this study is explained in this chapter: it is to identify and confirm criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities in order to optimise workplace equity. The theoretical framework in which the study is undertaken is explained as the social model, with an emphasis on the emancipatory and advocacy paradigm. The research assumptions, research design, methodology and data collection process are also discussed. A brief explanation is given of important concepts used, namely disability and workplace-effective mobility, for the purposes of the study.

Chapter 2: Employees with disability

The chapter begins with a review of conceptual models of disability, and their implications for the management of disability in the workplace. Also, the method used to locate literature for such review is explained. The chapter presents measures employers could implement to attain workplace equity and culminates with a discussion of the importance of emancipatory research in ensuring a balance between academic needs and those of the participants in order to empower them.

Chapter 3: Workplace-effective mobility

The chapter begins by highlighting the nature and origins of workplace-effective mobility and explains its various dimensions in detail. Previous research on workplace-effective mobility could not be found, but the chapter reviews related studies that pertain to the development of criteria for such mobility and argue for their significance to this study. The chapter ends by advocating the use of well-delineated criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

The research design and methodology used to achieve the objectives of the study are discussed. An in-depth discussion is provided of the choice of the sequential mixed methods design and Grounded Theory method, including details on how the data was collected, analysed and used. The chapter also explains the role of the researcher and moderators, and how the trustworthiness, validity and reliability of the results were ensured.

Chapter 5: Presentation of the results from the qualitative phase, involving the focus group interviews

This chapter contextualises the results in terms of the research sites visited and a profile of the participants. Thereafter, the results from the qualitative phase involving the focus group interviews in the pilot phase and in the main phase are presented by citing some of the participants' responses and highlighting the concepts to which these quotations relate. The chapter culminates in a presentation of tentative criteria for workplace-effective mobility.

Chapter 6: Presentation of the results from the quantitative phase, using the Delphi technique

The chapter presents the results of a two-round Delphi process with industrial and organisational psychologists in order to confirm the proposed criteria for workplace-effective mobility. The chapter also maps the process followed towards consensus-building among members of this panel of experts.

Chapter 7: Discussion of results

In preparation for the compilation of a theoretical model of workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities, this chapter integrates the findings of both the focus group interviews and the Delphi processes. The final criteria are thus presented and the over-arching concepts that emerged from data are then compared with the existing relevant literature. The chapter ends with a discussion of the contributions made by the data to the existing body of knowledge.

Chapter 8: A theoretical model of workplace-effective mobility

The chapter explains the process followed in compiling a theoretical model of workplace-effective mobility. It culminates with the graphic illustration of the proposed theoretical model.

Chapter 9: Reflection and recommendations

This chapter reflects on the study, setting out its implications and wider contributions. The chapter ends with recommendations for the theory, policy and practice in relation to the concept of workplace-effective mobility.

1.13   SUMMARY

The management of disability in the workplace does not at present give enough recognition to the abilities of employees with disabilities. As a result, these employees experience workplace prejudice, which manifests in their under-representation in organisational structures. This is mainly because employers lack well-delineated criteria for workplace-effective mobility. This study is therefore an emancipatory and advocacy study aimed at placing workplace equity on the agenda of human resources practice and policy transformation. The basic assumptions

underlying the use of emancipatory research are explained in this chapter.

The main objective of this study has been explained as identifying and confirming criteria for workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities in order to optimise workplace equity. The chapter also explains the theoretical framework into which the study fits. The research design, methodology and data collection process are also discussed, together with a brief explanation of important concepts used in the study, namely disability and workplace-effective mobility.

The chapter ends with an outline of the chapters. In the next chapter, the implications of the various theoretical models for the management and research of disability are explained.

CHAPTER 2

EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the commonly used conceptual frameworks used in managing disability and explains the various implications of these frameworks for employees with a disability in the workplace. The discussion of conceptual frameworks is imperative to the study, because some of the factors that inhibit the attainment of workplace-effective mobility by employees with disabilities emanate from the application of these frameworks.

As disability introduces ambiguity in both the person experiencing it and the community he or she lives in, it is necessary to understand how coping resources are harnessed by both the person and his or her community. The salutogenesis framework is therefore also presented as a conceptual framework that advocates for the identification of the coping resources available to employees with disabilities in order to improve workplace-effective mobility among this set of employees.

The chapter begins with an explanation of how the literature was located and ends with a discussion of the need for workplace equity and a presentation of various strategies that could be used to ensure such equity.

2.2 LOCATING LITERATURE FOR THE STUDY

As already indicated in Section 1.11, there is a conceptual divide between disability and organisational effectiveness – there seems to be a perception that people with disabilities cannot contribute to organisational effectiveness, which limits their inclusion in paid employment. In order to

develop an understanding of the concept of the workplace-effective mobility of people with disabilities for this study, an integrative review of the literature was required. According to Whittemore and Knafl (2005), an integrative review provides a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon in preparation for the development of a theory.

Given the objectives of this study as defined in Section 1.3, an integrative review of the literature enabled the development of a theoretical model by integrating the concepts of disability and workplace-effective mobility. An integrative review can be used to define the research problem, conduct literature searches and analyse data, as proposed by Whittemore and Knafl (2005). Drawing on Whittemore and Knafl (2005), this section therefore focuses on the process followed to conduct literature searches and analyse the literature to define the research problem so as to avoid bias and ensure scientific rigour.

2.2.1 Conducting literature searches for the study

Computerised databases were used for their efficiency and effectiveness. Google Scholar was used as a search engine to identify relevant literature, focusing mainly on scholarly articles in the portable document format (PDF). In addition, with the assistance of the designated subject librarians, the electronic library databases of the Vaal University of Technology were exhaustively searched. The databases used include Emerald, on the management of employees with disabilities, EBSCOHost for health-related literature, and Science Direct and JSTOR for multi-disciplinary literature on people with disabilities and the workplace.

As will become evident in Section 2.4, people with disabilities and the workplace were reviewed in respect of the field of workforce diversity, the extent to which people with disabilities are included or excluded from the workplaces and the implications of such practices. In order to

contextualise the inclusion of people with disabilities in paid employment or their exclusion from it, relevant legislation that prohibits discrimination and promotes employment equity in South Africa was also reviewed. As proposed by Whittemore and Knafl (2005), the terms were purposively sampled for their inclusion in the literature in the reading of the scholarly articles that were found. Any previous literature that did not focus on workforce diversity and the inclusion of people with disabilities in paid employment was excluded from Chapters 2 and 3 of this study.

Because integrative reviews allow for networking as a strategy for literature searches, an electronic discussion with a disability organisation was conducted. It became evident from the discussion that accessibility needed to be considered as an important variable in the process of employees with disabilities' attaining workplace-effective mobility. In my interactions with my promotor, a need was also identified to consider the impact of the differential treatment of different disability groups by employers. Differential treatment of the various disability groups thus became another search term. When the interview schedule was piloted, a project coordinator suggested the use of terminology such as 'successful gainful employment' and 'career advancement'. These terms were therefore also used to conduct the literature search for the study.

To ensure consistency in the search terminology, the terms used for the literature searches were 'people with disabilities and the workplace', 'emancipatory research and people with disabilities', 'theoretical models of disability and the workplace', 'workplace implications for employing people with disabilities', 'employment equity and people with disabilities', 'people with disabilities and quality of life', 'workplace accessibility and employees with disabilities', 'criteria for workplace-effective mobility', 'successful gainful employment and career advancement of employees with disabilities'.

An integration of this diverse literature to determine its relevance for an understanding of the concept of 'workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities' indicated that the study should be located in the field of workplace equity and emancipatory research, focusing on the need to include people with disabilities in paid employment, using scientifically identified and verified criteria.

2.2.2 Analysing the literature searches

In line with the suggestions by Whittemore and Knafl (2005), the aim of analysing the literature searches was to interpret and synthesise the data obtained from the literature pertaining to the study. In order to achieve this, a constant comparison method, as explained in detail in Section 4.7.1.4(i)(c), was used to reduce the information, to cluster it into meaningful presentation for write-up and to identify patterns that were present as themes. For the purposes of Chapters 2 and 3, the themes that emerged were understanding and managing disability, employees with disabilities and the workplace, the need for workplace equity, the origins, nature and dimensions of workplace-effective mobility, previous research on criteria development and the significance of such research for the study. These themes are presented in the sections below and in the next chapter.

After the relevant literature had been located and the information had been analysed, it was possible for me to state categorically the problem that this study seeks to address, as indicated in Section 1.2.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING DISABILITY

Disability is better understood and managed when it is defined in the context of a conceptual scheme (Jette, 2003). Verbrugge and Jette (1994) define a conceptual scheme as a basic scientific model that guides the understanding, investigation and management of social

phenomena. This implies that various disability models were developed either to enhance the effectiveness of clinical interventions or to influence social policy and public debate towards social change (Johnston, 1997).

The enhancement of clinical interventions regarding disability depends on an understanding and investigation of disability for the effective management thereof, and subsequent social policy development. The implications of various disability models in managing people with disabilities and informing policy development on the phenomenon are explained below.

2.3.1 The medical model of disability

The medical model regards disability as a deviation from the norm (Ngwena, 2004) that requires professional intervention (Jette, 2006) to restore normality. Disability is thus viewed as a deficiency which is linked to a personal tragedy theory (Oliver, 1986) in its argument that disabled people are unproductive (Shakespeare, 1996). Because it explains disability as an intrinsic pathology (Ngwena, 2007), the medical model fails to address the problem of discrimination that holds back many disabled people (Hays, Hahn & Marshall, 2002). The medical model has been widely used to determine the prevalence of disability (Eide & Loeb, 2005) for the purpose of establishing eligibility for governmental services (Drum *et al.*, 2005).

2.3.2 The functional model of disability

The functional model defines disability as a gap between personal ability to perform an activity and the activity's demand (Kempen *et al.*, 1996). Thus it sees disability as an inability to perform functional activities, regardless of etiology (Drum *et al.*, 2005). As a result of treating disability as a form of inability, society has adopted paternalistic or superficially charitable feelings towards disabled people (Hays *et al.*, 2002) which

manifest in social policy pertaining to the reasonable accommodation and rehabilitation of employees with disabilities.

Reasonable accommodation is defined as any conscious modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment which is aimed at affirming the rights and privileges of qualified employees with disabilities to equal employment and effective performance (Winning, 2002). With regard to rehabilitation, Seelman (2004) has observed a trend towards more justification of the (in)effectiveness of assistive technology before benefit payments are made. Hence, this may be more of a trial-and-error intervention than a guaranteed intervention.

Another measure to enhance the effectiveness of employees with disabilities is the provision of assistive devices. However, assistive devices may isolate people with disabilities from the rest of society, given the prohibitive costs associated with the provision of many of these devices (Sheldon, 2003).

2.3.3 The social model of disability

The social model defines disability as a problem created by unaccommodating attitudes (Jette, 2006) and disabling environments (Pinder, 1996), rather than as an intrinsic pathology. Such attitudes and disabling environments create social inequalities and injustices against disabled people (Hall, 2005) and must therefore be redressed in order to optimize their participation (Swartz & Schneider, 2007) in employment.

Disabling environments and unaccommodating attitudes arise from society's tendency to treat disability as an incapacity or inability to contribute to the economic good of the community (Barnes & Mercer, 1997), due to a perceived lack of competence among disabled employees. This approach to disability, seeing it as a kind of incapacity, has resulted in discrimination against and the oppression of disabled

people (Ngwena, 2004). Discrimination against and oppression of this group in South Africa arise from a lack of universal (or at least national) criteria for determining who is to be classified as a person with disability, a question which the courts have failed to resolve in South Africa (Ngwena, 2007).

Unaccommodating attitudes and disabling environments limit disabled people in performing socially defined activities (Fawcett & Hearn, 2001) by restricting their access to enabling resources such as technologies (Lupton & Seymour, 2000). However, some disabled people have penetrated these disabling environments by acquiring new competencies, such as flexibility, social competence and experience in information technology (Backenroth, 2001).

In order to achieve disability equity, the problems of disabled people must be redefined as sociopolitical problems that require changes to public policy (Hays *et al.*, 2002). Furthermore, the needs of disabled people should be assessed in order to determine which aspects of their lives are best addressed by medical interventions, policy development and political action (Oliver, 1986). Scotch and Schriner (1997) argue that employers who adjust to individual needs should optimise their productivity and may be at a competitive advantage in the future.

The social model suggests that to appreciate the different needs of disabled people, disability should be treated as a civil rights issue (Shakespeare, 1996). The barriers that people with disabilities face when interacting with the environment should therefore be examined (Drum *et al.*, 2005) and systematically addressed in order to attain workplace equity (Scotch & Schriner, 1997). In order to address the barriers confronting disabled people effectively, actions must be directed towards emancipating them from oppressively disabling environments and unaccommodating societal attitudes (Finkelstein, 2001).

In order to ensure the emancipation of people with disabilities from unaccommodating societal attitudes, the role of social control on the self needs to be understood. The impact of social control on the self was studied by Mead (1925), who attempted to trace the genesis of the relation of self and social control. He argued that human conduct is more than just a matter of stimulus and response, and that the task of liberating the self requires people to transcend the barriers of the fixed attitudes of a person's status in which the self is embedded. In this context, therefore, a person with a disability would seek to break the negative attitudes of a society that perceives disability as a kind of incapacity (Barnes & Mercer, 1997) and the resultant social limitations in the performance of people's roles (Fawcett & Hearn, 2001).

Drawing on Mead (1925), however, I contend that the barriers that need to be transcended are not only external, in terms of physical access and facilities, and society (negative perceptions held by able-bodied, resulting in limiting behaviour), but may also be internal (negative self-perception). In fulfilling a liberating task, therefore, one needs to be aware that there is a constant interplay between the internal and external perceptual worlds. In this regard, Ngwena (2007) argues that in order to comprehend disability fully, the intrinsic physical or mental impairment of the individual and how it interacts with societal barriers should be analysed for their impact on the self. Because any self is a social self, it never abandons itself until it finds access into the larger society, and maintains itself there.

Therefore, in this constant battle for access and self-maintenance, employees with disabilities would invoke such coping strategies as self-efficacy, a sense of coherence and a positive self-concept. It is in order to understand the use of these strategies among people with disabilities that the biopsychosocial approach and salutogenesis approach (explained in Section 2.3.5) to disability were developed.

2.3.4 The biopsychosocial model of disability

The biopsychosocial model of disability defines disability as a product of the interplay among biological, personal and social forces. According to Ngwena (2007), medical and social models of disability need to be combined to enable us to comprehend the phenomenon of disability more fully by looking at the intrinsic physical or mental impairment of the individual.

At a biological level, disability results from biological disruptions (Brown, Bonello & Pollard, 2005). Therefore, from a biological perspective, disability is defined as a gap between a person's capabilities and environmental demands, or a decrement in the person's body functions and structures, level of activity performance and participation in his or her life situation (Jette, 2006). Activity limitations and restrictions in social participation are regarded as universal phenomena that are relevant to everyone, regardless of a person's health condition (Eide & Loeb, 2005). Research indicates that activity limitation is associated with increased dependence on others, which reduces life expectance and quality of life, and increases the prevalence of depression and health care utilization (Wang, Badley & Gignac, 2004) among disabled people.

At a personal level, disability is attributable to maladaptation to environmental stimuli. Florian and Dangoor (1994:736) define such maladaptation as a continued imbalance between demands and resources. Such maladaptation results in perceived low self-efficacy and perceived helplessness, and fear-avoidance beliefs (Brown *et al.*, 2005) among people with disabilities. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her personal capabilities (Mihalko & Wickley, 2003) to successfully perform intended behaviours. Therefore, it includes perceived control and a personal sense of mastery (Kempen *et al.*, 1999). Although the environment is multi-faceted, in research so far, the focus has been mainly on self-efficacy (a personal factor) at the expense of the

intervening role of policy, and a person's social and physical environments in the performance of an activity (Mihalko & Wickley, 2003).

Because personal forces may include behavioural intentions, the psychological model is also designed to explain limitations in behaviour due to a lack of self-motivation, which accounts for differences in performance (Johnston, 1997). The concept of coping efficacy is related to a broader concept of self-efficacy. Coping efficacy is defined as a person's appraisal of his or her ability to cope or manage the stressful aspects of a particular life experience (Wang *et al.*, 2004).

As I have already indicated in Section 2.3.2, assistive devices may be necessary to alleviate a capacity gap or functional decrement. The provision of assistive devices may address the underlying disability of a person, in other words, the functional disability experienced in the absence of any modifications or adjustments (Agree, 1999). However, assistive devices do not always completely address a person's functional disability, resulting in residual disability (Agree, 1999). Education and income may also alleviate a capacity gap or functional decrement – sadly, a lack of education and income have been observed to affect the health status of the lower socio-economic status group, as this lack reduces their capacity to acquire health care when it is needed (Raina *et al.*, 2000).

At a social level, disability is aggravated by a lack of support and the break-down of social relations (Brown *et al.*, 2005). It is thus necessary to assist and/or support disabled people to access their environment(s) to minimize the stressful effects of disability. A study on health-seeking behaviour among people with disabilities found that respondents with serious personal or emotional problems sought help more frequently than respondents without work limitations did (Willis, Fabian & Hendershot, 2005). Conversely, strong social support networks and community ties

offer a promise of buffering people with disabilities from stress, helping them to maintain a balance and anchoring them in the daily activities of the community (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999).

When support is provided in response to the notion of disability as a resource deficit (Morgan, Brown & Ziglio, n.d.), it leads to the following negative consequences for the independent living of disabled people (Gignac & Cott, 1998):

- imposed dependency emanating from tendencies by significant others to over-care and over-protect their loved ones with disabilities; and

- learned dependency, which serves as a work disincentive and thus adversely affects the employability of disabled people.

Social support should be provided with due regard for disabled people's need for independence, which includes the management of activities without assistance or relying on assistive devices rather than on other people (Gignac & Cott, 1998). With proper assistance and resources, people with severe disabilities are able to live independently, can secure and maintain employment, and can participate actively in their community (Beatty *et al.*, 1998).

2.3.5 Salutogenesis

Salutogenesis as an approach argues that disability introduces chaos and ambiguity into the social worlds of an individual and the community, but is mediated by a strong sense of coherence (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999). Individuals with a strong sense of coherence are characterized by the following:

- because they perceive that the requisite resources are available, they demonstrate an ability to manage life stressors successfully;

- they possess the motivation and desire to cope meaningfully with environmental stimuli, based on a belief that life makes sense emotionally; and

- they perceive life's challenges as comprehensible, in other words, as clear, ordered and structured.

The concept of a sense of coherence is thus a useful indicator when assessing the capacity of vulnerable populations (Wolff & Ratner, 1999), for example, people with disabilities, to deal with their environments. In their study on the psychological adaptation of women with severe physical disabilities, Florian and Dangoor (1994) found that a high sense of individual coherence serves as a protective factor against externally imposed negative views by reducing the psychological distress of people with disabilities and increasing their psychological well-being.

Therefore, salutogenesis focuses on elements of subjective (psychological) well-being or the quality of life of people with disabilities from emotional and cognitive-judgmental perspectives, given their capacity to access the environment (Richards *et al.*, 1999) and manage their environments. Subjective quality of life refers to a person's satisfaction with various domains of life quality, such as health, or social and physical function (Manns & Chad, 1999), to the extent that his or her hopes are matched by his or her experience. Experience defines life and shapes self-esteem; hopes determine a person's ability to perform various activities after the disability recovery process (Stineman *et al.*, 2003).

Negative experiences of rejection lead to low self-esteem and a negative outlook on the world; positive experiences result in high self-esteem and a positive outlook on the world (Mrug & Wallander, 2002). Self-esteem is associated with a person's self-concept, which is a multidimensional concept, comprised of cognitive competence, physical competence, social acceptance and general self-worth. A positive self-concept is associated with emotional stability, positive adjustment, independence

and resiliency to stress, whereas a negative self-concept is associated with anger and depression (Weiss *et al.*, 2003).

Quality of life or subjective well-being is thus an emotional and cognitive-judgmental issue resulting from the capacity of people with disabilities to access and manage their environments. Respondents who report a high quality of life acknowledge their impairment and express a 'can do' approach to life; they demonstrate spirituality, inner strength, resilience and a sense of achievement. Conversely, poor quality of life is associated with experiences of pain, fatigue, lost control and a negative sense of purpose in life (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999).

It should be noted that physical difference does not necessarily result in inferior quality of life. According to Koch (2000), contrary to the widespread belief that physical difference results in inferior quality of life, the quality of life of deaf people, for example, is not necessarily lessened. They simply require a different means of communication to audible speech and hearing (Koch, 2000). There is thus some indication in the literature that some persons with disabilities do experience good quality life against the odds (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999). Many notions about poor quality of life are biased and stigmatizing, rendering people with disabilities underprivileged. The quest for good quality of life therefore seeks to achieve a balance between body, mind and spirit. It is thus vital to address disability in terms of positive adaptation and resilience to stress rather than in terms of pathogenesis (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999).

People with a high quality of life feel socially supported but independent. They demonstrate competence and self-determination when dealing with their environments (Sideridis, 2006). Competence or mastery is developed by acquiring new knowledge and skills (Barron *et al.*, 2006). The ability to acquire competence represents an asset model, which emphasises positive ability, resilience or the ability to progress against adversity with less reliance on professional services (Morgan *et al.*, n.d.).

Resilience is associated with problem-solving skills, social competence, a sense of purpose and autonomy (Morgan *et al.*, n.d.).

2.4 EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES AND THE WORKPLACE

The inclusion of people with disabilities in paid employment depends on the availability of job opportunities. Because job opportunities are scarce during an economic recession, only some people with disability are prosperous, while others pay the price of economic transformation (Yelin & Katz, 1994) because of unfair discrimination, social neglect and stigmatization (Ngwena, 2004). Moreover, the playing field is not level, because the disability status of individuals often evokes different levels of discomfort and behavioural expectations (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997) among colleagues. Very few people with disabilities are therefore gainfully employed (Ngwena, 2004).

The concepts of unfair discrimination, social neglect and stigmatization are closely related because of the negative influence thereof on the employment of people with disabilities. For the purposes of this study, however, these concepts are discussed separately, because each one may contribute independently to the identification of criteria for workplace-effective mobility.

2.4.1 Unfair discrimination

An employer's decision to appoint a person or not to do so represents an administrative procedure which implicitly discriminates between candidates with potential and those without potential. If the process is based on well-delineated criteria and uniform procedures, it would be fair discrimination. Otherwise, it is unfair when such a decision is based purely on an employer's whim. Unfair discrimination in employment therefore takes the form of an unwarranted refusal to appoint certain applicants, or job terminations in response to reductions in the demand

for labour or refusals to rehire workers after they have become disabled (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001). Unfair discrimination can sometimes be attributed to employers' continued use of medically defined criteria only, in the absence of other well-delineated criteria.

The continual assessment of disability using subjective criteria of pain or difficulty to perform specific activities is associated with the treatment of disability as a kind of incapacity (Kopec, 1995). The perception of disability as a type of incapacity is compounded by employers' developing and implementing policies based on presumed competence (Philo & Metzel, 2005), leading to the exclusion of people with disabilities from employment. Unfair discrimination also results in inappropriate appointments or a failure to appoint competent and well-motivated staff, thereby impoverishing organisations (Ross, 2004) by a loss of competence.

There is some evidence that a failure to employ people with disabilities is often compounded by race and gender issues. In the American context, Emmett and Alant (2006) found that the majority of African-Americans and women with disabilities are excluded from paid employment. Similarly, in South Africa, African and Coloured people with disabilities have experienced the same challenges, arising from the apartheid past, which segregated education on the basis of race. With regard to women with disabilities, Emmett (2006) argues that, internationally, disabled women have to face the challenge that they are less likely to be employed than disabled men, and they also likely to earn a lower salary. Women with disabilities are thus at a double disadvantage situation (Emmett & Alant, 2006). The extent of disadvantagedness among South African women with disabilities is reflected in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Percentage of the total population of people with disabilities employed by race and gender

Race group	Male	Female	% Employed Male	% Employed Female
African	879 680	974 696	1.7	0.8
Coloured	88 583	80 095	2.6	2.0
Indian/Asian	21 550	19 685	7.7	3.7
White	92 230	99 463	7.3	3.8

Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa (2005:12)

Table 2.1 indicates that the situation of gender disadvantagedness differs by race, with a higher percentage of employed women with disabilities coming from the Indian/Asian and White communities in South Africa.

Table 2.2, below, presents the distribution of employees with disabilities by gender and race in South Africa, as adapted from a document from the Commission of Employment Equity (2010). It is evident from Table 2.2 that Whites with disabilities predominate at levels higher than the skilled level, while the majority of Africans and females with disabilities are mainly represented at the skilled occupational level and lower levels.

Table 2.2: Composition of employees with disabilities by gender and race

Occupational levels	Male				Female				Foreign national		Total
	A	C	I	W	A	C	I	W	M	F	
Top management	25	4	12	168	12	2	4	32	1	0	260
%	9.6	1.5	4.6	64.6	4.6	0.8	1.5	12.3	0.4	0.0	100
Senior management	93	24	57	346	62	12	10	89	10	1	704
%	13.2	3.4	8.1	49.1	8.8	1.7	1.4	12.6	1.4	0.1	100
Professionally qualified, experienced specialists, mid-management	565	128	168	1912	414	80	53	562	19	8	3 909
%	14.5	3.3	4.3	48.9	10.6	2.0	1.4	14.4	0.5	0.2	100
Skilled technical and academically qualified workers, junior management	2235	626	606	2554	1185	344	246	1396	90	18	9 300
%	24.0	6.7	6.5	27.5	12.7	3.7	2.6	15	1.0	0.2	100

Occupational levels	Male				Female				Foreign national		Total
	A	C	I	W	A	C	I	W	M	F	
Semi-skilled and discretionary decision-making	6144	1051	648	1415	3455	902	346	1505	172	10	15 648
%	39.3	6.7	4.1	9.0	22.1	5.8	2.2	9.6	1.1	0.1	100
Unskilled and defined decision-making	4936	388	149	217	2092	222	60	177	714	5	8 960
%	55.1	4.3	1.7	2.4	23.3	2.5	0.7	2.0	8.0	0.1	100
Total permanent	**13 998**	**2 221**	**1 640**	**6 612**	**7 220**	**1 562**	**719**	**3761**	**1 006**	**42**	**38 781**
%	36.1	5.7	4.2	17.0	18.6	4.0	1.9	9.7	2.6	0.1	100
Temporary employees	731	97	19	79	971	86	5	53	6	2	2 049
%	35.7	4.7	0.9	3.9	47.4	4.2	0.2	2.6	0.3	0.1	100
Grand Total	**14 729**	**2 318**	**1 659**	**6 691**	**8 191**	**1 648**	**724**	**3 814**	**112**	**44**	**40 830**

Source: Adapted from Commission for Employment Equity (2010:18)

In summary, the exclusion of people with disabilities from paid employment is associated with their race and gender profile, with the majority of Africans and females being the most disadvantaged people with disability in South Africa.

As a result of unfair discrimination, people with disabilities may either underestimate their capacities and engage in work avoidance behaviour or inflate their levels of personal efficacy to undertake activities beyond their reach (Kopec, 1995), so as to prove their performance capacities. People with disabilities are often placed in entry-level, unskilled and low-earning positions with limited advancement opportunities, negative performance evaluations and differential rates of discharge (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997). Because of managers' unfounded negative expectations of people with disabilities (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997), these employees may be relegated to an underprivileged status (Meyerson, 1988), even though they may display demonstrable levels of productivity (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001).

Many employers lack programmes to mitigate the effects of disability and/or to enhance the potential of a person with a disability to achieve high levels of performance (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997) and growth in the organisation. Consequently, employees with disabilities often feel that

they have to work hard to demonstrate a level of accomplishment equal to that of their peers, but have a lower probability of getting similar rewards in return (Feldman, 2004).

2.4.2 Social neglect

The social neglect of people with disabilities is associated with negative societal attitudes or stereotypes, an inaccessible built environment and transport systems and a lack of access to education (Ngwena, 2004). In terms of these indicators of social neglect, people with psychological problems or disabilities are the most neglected in society. According to Klimoski and Donahue (1997), organisations tend to be more open to people with physical or sensory disabilities than those with psychological problems. Kennedy and Olney (2001) attribute the social neglect of individuals with mental disabilities to decisions that employers make on the basis of disability stereotypes, rather than on the basis of individuals' actual abilities.

Stereotypes regarding disability represent unfair or inaccurate employer expectations of performance which are imposed on disabled employees (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997). Despite legislative attempts to include disabled people in the mainstream of economic and social life, the biggest obstacle continues to be such stereotypes. Stereotypes or negative attitudes about disability are attributable to cultural perceptions of impairment, which are shaped by deep-rooted fears of the abnormal and the unknown, and the material organisation of disabled people's oppression in the economy (Barnes & Mercer, 1997).

People with disabilities therefore often feel that they are not accepted by their peers, because of stereotypes, which are often at the core of the negative attitudes people hold towards disabled individuals (Ziegler, 2001). Stereotypes may manifest in the dismissal of disabled employees for poor performance or incapacity, or in their resigning unnecessarily

(Republic of South Africa, 1998). To alleviate the exclusionary power of stereotypes, employers should set reasonable criteria for recruiting and selecting people with disabilities (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

The physical work environment is constructed on an implicit assumption that everyone conforms to a certain biological norm (Ngwena, 2007). However, the physical work environment is often inaccessible to employees with disabilities. Therefore, Lupton and Seymour (2000) suggest that technology is a tangible way of facilitating the entry and participation by people with disabilities into previously inaccessible activities and domains. However, these authors warn that technology may be presented as a correction to or normalization of impairment, which may be offensive to people with a disability (Lupton & Seymour, 2000).

Social neglect, coupled with inaccessible transport infrastructure, creates serious barriers for people with a disability, despite the potential of the transport system to fight poverty by enhancing access to education, employment and social services (Kenyon, Lyons & Rafferty, 2002; Ngwena, 2004).

As a result of all the factors discussed above, disability status is regarded as a major impediment to the attainment of equal opportunities by people with disabilities (Ngwena, 2004). Many people with disabilities are disadvantaged in the labour market by inadequate systems of social support (Scotch & Schriner, 1997) or by social neglect.

2.4.3 Stigmatization

The under-representation of employees with disabilities in the workforce is also attributable to stigma, which is regarded as a critical barrier to their employment (Scheid, 2005) for several reasons (Puhl & Brownell, 2001). Firstly, stigma inhibits the attainment of a sense of

accomplishment by people with disabilities in an achievement-oriented society (Scheid, 2005) and erodes their self-concept (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997).

Secondly, stigma leads employees with disabilities to internalize negative workplace attitudes and expect rejection from others. Stigma thus presents a subjective constraint that presumes the intolerance of others, and lowers both the person's self-esteem and self-efficacy through negative feedback (Feldman, 2004). Moreover, these experiences increase feelings of self-depreciation that in turn weaken a sense of mastery (Wright, Gronfein & Owens, 2000) and result in frustration and stress (Ross, 2004) among people with disabilities.

Thirdly, stigma leads to reduced earnings and prolonged unemployment, which demoralizes people with disabilities due to their everyday experiences of intimidation in public spaces (Hall, 2005). The lower earnings capacity of people with disabilities is confirmed by Baldwin and Johnson's (2001) study, which found that employees with disabilities earn less than those without disabilities. Also, stigma results in indignity and social inferiority (Ngwena, 2004) among people with disabilities. Because of stigma, many people have avoided declaring their disabilities (Venter *et al.*, 2002) to minimize the resultant spoiled identity evident in negative employment outcomes (Wright *et al.*, 2000).

Unfair discrimination, social neglect and stigmatization result in negative employment outcomes such as slow progress towards achieving employment equity, growing dependence on disability grants, inequalities and poverty, and over-protective families. These outcomes are explained below.

2.4.4 Slow progress towards achieving employment equity

By 2004, only 1% employment equity for employees with disabilities had been achieved in South Africa, instead of the target of 2% (Dube & Charowa, 2005). This figure dropped to 0.7% in the reporting period from October 2008 to September 2009 (Commission for Employment Equity, 2009). This situation is, sadly, not unique to South Africa – the employment rate among persons with disabilities is the lowest among any group in the United States (Kennedy & Olney, 2001).

Work avoidance behaviour has led to under-representation of employees with disabilities in the workforce and their overrepresentation among the poor and unemployed (Ngwena, 2004). The low employment rates of disabled people are attributed to attitudinal, behavioural and physical barriers created by corporate culture. According to Schur, Kruse and Blanck (2005), corporate culture is organised into the following three levels within an organisation:

- the values and norms that guide the organisation when it encounters new situations and problems;
- the fundamental level, which represents the values espoused by an organisation, including its strategies and goals, and the philosophies that guide organisational policies; and
- artefacts of (organisational) culture, which include the physical and social environment, such as the dress code in a company.

At each of these levels of corporate culture, organisations determine rules for inclusion in the organisation by designing power structures and developing a reward and punishment system to deal with compliance and deviance (Schur *et al.*, 2005).

The slow achievement of employment equity for South African employees with disabilities is compounded by the general scarcity of decent jobs and a high unemployment rate (Swartz & Schneider, 2007),

and by their lack of experience and skills, inaccessible work environments and the disincentives arising from benefit entitlement (Swartz & Schneider, 2007), as discussed below.

2.4.5 Disincentive of disability grants and resultant growing dependence

In South Africa, most people with disabilities benefit from disability grants (Dube & Charowa, 2005), but these grants marginalize them. Disability grants and insurance programmes can serve as work disincentives (Scotch & Schriner, 1997) when suitably qualified people with disabilities choose not to be employed in order to access disability grants (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001). This situation can be attributed to the fact that disability grants are seen as a benevolent income support (Ngwena, 2007) by some people with disabilities.

The negative implications of disability grants are the stigmatization (Ngwena, 2004) of people with disabilities. The payment of these grants increases the burden on the fiscus. With regard to the fiscus, Swartz and Schneider (2007) have observed that paying a disability income to people with disabilities in South Africa has cumulatively led to an increase in the costs of disability grants by 53% in the period from 1997 to 2007.

2.4.6 Inequality and poverty

Because it is associated with social exclusion, marginalization, vulnerability, powerlessness, isolation and deprivation, disability increases the chances that a person with a disability will live in extreme poverty by approximately 10% (Dube & Charowa, 2005). There are several reasons for this situation. Firstly, the high unemployment rate results in a high poverty rate among people with disabilities (Kennedy & Olney, 2001). Secondly, the vast social inequalities in South Africa make the progressive provisioning of disability impossible (Swartz & Schneider,

2007). A historically stigmatized and socially oppressed group, most people with disabilities in South Africa live in conditions of extreme poverty and inequality (Ngwena, 2007). Disability is thus both a cause and consequence of poverty, which among people with disabilities is compounded by a lack of access to education, health care and employment opportunities (Venter *et al.*, 2002).

Many people with disabilities are disadvantaged in the labour market by inadequate education (Scotch & Schriner, 1997). A high quality, adequately resourced, mainstreamed education creates a barrier-free society (Swartz & Schneider, 2007) and promotes the well-being of people with disabilities by increasing access to paid employment and economic resources (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999). However, the attainment of a barrier-free society in South Africa is impossible because of an inadequate schooling system (Swartz & Schneider, 2007). The schooling system in the country for many learners is characterized by inadequate facilities, inadequately qualified teachers and large classes that inhibit optimal learning opportunities for many learners, and particularly for disabled learners.

The limited learning opportunities for disabled people result in their being perceived as inadequately skilled for the labour market, which invariably reinforces an erroneous view that all are unable to participate fully in employment (Swartz & Schneider, 2007). The United States resolved this problem by an inclusive education system, which firstly supports acceptance and respect for human differences and secondly ensures the empowerment of disabled people by giving them back power and authority (Ziegler, 2001).

Finally, the socialization of people with disabilities to think of themselves as inferior and to think of disability in a medical way has also exacerbated the problem of social inequalities based on disability by

separating people with disabilities from one another and from sources of collective support and strength (Shakespeare, 1996).

2.4.7 Over-protective families

Although people with disabilities may have talent and potential, which if applied optimally can improve their lives, many families and communities tend to hide people with disabilities away from society to avoid family and social disgrace (Dube & Charowa, 2005) linked to stigmatization. Alternatively, parents may consciously or unconsciously discourage their children with disabilities from taking risks or may over-protect them from perceived inevitable failures (Feldman, 2004).

2.5 NEED FOR WORKPLACE EQUITY

Several initiatives may be implemented to enhance workplace equity, especially for employees with disabilities. These initiatives are explained below.

2.5.1 Progressive corporate culture

In order to mitigate the negative consequences of managing workplace disability, Klimoski and Donahue (1997) advocate a progressive corporate culture that reflects acceptance and inclusiveness, tolerance and cooperation, mutual respect and support for employees with disabilities. Such a culture is characterized by the establishment of disability advisory panels composed of people with disabilities to shape policy and practices.

Also, employers may need to recruit employees with disabilities through the current employees, reassign and (re)train them after the onset of a disability and institutionalize performance management systems (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997).

2.5.2 Welfare-to-work strategies

The reassignment and training of people with disabilities can take the form of welfare-to-work strategies in order to accelerate workplace equity. Welfare-to-work strategies have thus been crafted to focus on raising the levels of education and vocational skills for people with disabilities, providing support and advice in locating and obtaining work, and overcoming financial concerns about the benefits-to-work transition.

However, welfare-to-work strategies are still in their infancy and thus have not yet shown positive results in addressing the lower employment rates among people with disabilities and the rising costs of disability grants (Bambra, Whitehead & Hamilton, 2005). Notwithstanding these limitations, the importance of welfare-to-work strategies derives from the following roles that employment plays in the lives of people with disabilities:

- employment is a key to economic security for persons with disabilities (Baldwin & Johnson, 2001);
- employment helps incorporate people with disabilities fully into mainstream society by increasing their social networks, care skills, independence and sense of efficacy and inclusion because they feel they are fulfilling a valued social role (Schur *et al.*, 2005); and
- employment is important to the self-esteem and quality of life of people with disabilities because it enables them to acquire adaptive skills, develop new skills and enhance existing skills (Stephens *et al.*, 2003). Improving adaptive abilities may lead to increased feelings of competence and consequently a positive self-concept (Weiss *et al.*, 2003) in people with disabilities.

2.5.3 Sensitisation programmes

Sensitisation programmes are also important features of a progressive corporate culture aimed at addressing disability discrimination and

ensuring the retention of employees with disabilities (Kennedy & Olney, 2001). Groce (1999) therefore recommends the education of the non-disabled majority, and the establishment and enforcement of legal guarantees.

Education of the non-disabled majority and legal guarantees have the advantages of minimizing insensitivity towards people with disabilities (Puhl & Brownell, 2001) and ensuring workplace equity, which is enhanced by the ability of sensitisation programmes to tear down stereotypes and prejudice, thereby improving the quality of treatment received by people with disabilities (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997).

2.5.4 Sign language appreciation

In order to assert their rights in society, deaf people encourage the growth of sign language as a means of communication and argue in favour of special schools for the deaf as strongholds of deaf culture (Barnes & Mercer, 1997).

2.5.5 Emancipatory research and strategies

Emancipatory research and related strategies are necessary to address the oppressive social practices of acute unfair discrimination, social neglect and stigmatization levelled against disabled people (Duckett & Pratt, 2001). Because people with disabilities have been relegated to a social subordinate status by a dominant group, strategies for the attainment of social justice are also needed to respond to the resultant structural inequalities (Ngwena, 2007) in society.

Such strategies should ensure that disability studies continue to focus on issues that are important to disabled people and not only on issues that are intellectually challenging or academically rewarding for disability scholars themselves. Therefore, emancipatory research emphasises

these strategies (Oliver & Barton, 2000) by advocating that researchers do not only research emancipation, while preaching discrimination (Oliver & Barnes, 1997). For instance, biomedical knowledge is derived by treating disabled people as passive objects of medical inquiry (Bahrs *et al.,* 2003). To attain the emancipatory goal, therefore, the research process must be collaborative and should be negotiated between the researcher and the researched (Fawcett & Hearn, 2001).

Therefore, an empowering, emancipatory research agenda is lauded for changing research methods (Duckett & Pratt, 2001) by rejecting claims of researcher objectivity and neutrality in favour of a collaborative production of socially and culturally relative knowledge (Barnes & Mercer, 1997). Emancipatory research is thus located in the social model of disability, guided by principles of reciprocity, gain and empowerment (Barnes & Mercer, 1997).

Reciprocity requires researchers to place their skills and knowledge at the disposal of those who are researched (Barnes & Mercer, 1997) and provides an opportunity for participants to comment on and change working drafts (Oliver, 1997). Unless the relationship between the researcher and the researched is reciprocal, research data can be used to manipulate, abuse and control those who are researched. Therefore, reciprocity implies engaging participants in the research planning and design to ensure that they assume control of the naming of their own world – this is a process that takes time, and requires the building of trust and negotiations (Lynch, 1999).

The inclusion of people with disabilities increases the relevance and enhances competence in the research process. It also facilitates an exchange of information and enhances the quality of the data (Eide & Loeb, 2005). The involvement of people with disabilities is also intended to change the social and material relations of research production. Such involvement takes various forms, such as the involvement of local

organisations of disabled people as paid consultants to the project, or canvassing comments on research plans (Zarb, 1997).

Gains from the research process are realized when researchers are critical of their role(s) in the research process (Barnes & Mercer, 1997) and work collaboratively with the participants or subjects to implement the necessary change (Lynch, 1999). Because non-disabled researchers are perceived to lack personal experience of the various disabling barriers, the authenticity of such researchers in disability research is often criticised (Barnes & Mercer, 1997). Therefore, reflexivity or a self-critical stance and research feedback provided by non-disabled researchers to participants ensure that the research practice is appropriate in the context of the often oppressive social and material relations of research production (Oliver, 1997).

Empowerment is evident in research processes that contribute towards empowering disabled people (Oliver, 1997) by confronting social oppression at whatever levels it occurs and placing control back in the hands of those who are researched (Oliver, 1997). Because previous research has failed to improve the conditions under which disabled people live – disabled people have been alienated from the process and product of social research (Oliver, 2002) – to acknowledge their struggles and to recognize that disability is a political act. Therefore, any knowledge that is generated should provide power to disabled people themselves (Barnes, 2001).

2.6   SUMMARY

The chapter explained how literature was located for this study and reviewed four theoretical frameworks of disability. On the basis of the review of the four theoretical frameworks of disability, I concluded that the treatment of disability as incapacity encourages disability discrimination in the workplace. Various manifestations of disability

discrimination and their implications for managing disability as incapacity or ill health have also been discussed.

A need was identified for the removal of these barriers in order to ensure workplace equity, and various strategies to achieve this were presented. An argument was also presented for the use of emancipatory research as a strategy to ensure the empowerment of employees with disabilities by highlighting discrimination and oppression as barriers to their employability.

The next chapter explores various dimensions of workplace-effective mobility and argues for the development of suitable criteria to assist in the attainment of disability equity in the workplace.