

## CHAPTER 8

### A THEORETICAL MODEL OF WORKPLACE-EFFECTIVE MOBILITY

#### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

The final aim of the study, as explained in Section 1.3, was to compile a theoretical model of the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. This chapter thus presents the process involved in attaining that aim and the results thereof. In presenting the model, the chapter illustrates how the paradigm model dimensions of building a theoretical model proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2008) were used. The chapter ends with an illustration of a theoretical model of workplace-effective mobility.

#### 8.2 CAUSAL CONDITIONS

The data suggest that workplace-effective mobility emanates from self-efficacy beliefs and a positive self-concept held by employees with disabilities, enabling organisational practices and workplace accessibility. These factors are thus regarded as the causal conditions required for employees with disabilities to attain workplace-effective mobility. With regard to self-efficacy beliefs, participants mentioned that self-motivation – determination, ambition, hard work (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:48, 179:182) – and perseverance (P9: KZN – APD – Physically Disabled.txt – 9:52, 336:337) are essential for employees with disabilities to attain workplace-effective mobility.

The phenomenon of workplace-effective mobility thus emanates from the self-efficacy of employees with disabilities. Self-efficacy relates to the achievement goal theory, which is based on mastery and performance goals (Barron *et al.*, 2006). Participants indicated that to achieve

performance goals and attain workplace-effective mobility, employees with disabilities must show '*determination, ambition, hard work, intelligence, qualifications and job-related experience [as without them] I do not think one will be able to achieve workplace-effective mobility*' (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:48, 179:182).

A person pursues a mastery goal by developing competence through acquiring new knowledge and skills. In the findings on a positive self-concept, the importance of a willingness and ability to acquire job-related knowledge and experience was also highlighted (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:48, 179:182). Some of the identified competences include 'a course on 'living practice' (P3: Free State – Focus Group with the Blind 122008.txt – 3:47, 111:114), job knowledge (P8: Gauteng – Speech Impaired experiences.txt – 8:48, 197:197) to produce positive outcomes of perseverance (P9: KZN – APD – Physically Disabled.txt – 9:52, 336:337) and job satisfaction (P9: KZN – APD – Physically Disabled.txt – 9:42, 288:291).

Developing competence is thus a self-determined activity which results in intrinsic self-motivation (Verbrugge & Jette, 1994). In its turn, intrinsic self-motivation implies that the desire for goal attainment should be internalized (Sideridis, 2006), in other words, in this case, that a person with a disability seeks to demonstrate a sense of competence. Similarly, the attainment of workplace-effective mobility is an internalized goal for employees with disabilities, as they seek to demonstrate their ability to manage their work environment (Verbrugge & Jette, 1994).

Performance goals are related to the ought-self motivation in the self-determination theory, because a person needs to demonstrate competence in relation to colleagues when pursuing these goals (Barron *et al.*, 2006). The ought-self motivation is, however, an external form of motivation that cannot be internalized, because it depends on significant

others in the person's environment. In this study, therefore, the identified type of self-motivation is both internalized and other-directed.

Indications of the internalization of self-motivation can be found in the following response from a participant: *'I want to understand for myself that yes I am a Deaf person, but then in your working environment you have to find a way to overcome the limitations that you are experiencing because of your deafness. Bugging your head against a barrier will not help; you have to find a way to get around it. ...you keep going against an obstacle; but then you get someone else being appointed who can get around it'* (P7: Western Cape – Managerial Candidates – Deaf 122008.txt – 7:113, 547:552).

The other-directed form of self-motivation was observed in the comment by a participant that people with a disability need *'a lot of determination because we have got a point to prove. I mean we have to fight to compete with able-bodied people so that you are not looked down upon. You have got to ... hey it is fight'* (P8: KZN – QuadParaAssociation – Physically Disabled.txt – 8:54, 204:206). In this fight, however, participants also acknowledged the need for employers to implement workplace equity measures such as targeted recruitment (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:73, 259:262), career paths (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:39, 147:149), and many others indicated in Section 5.3.2.6.

Be it in the form of inner motivation, or other-directed, self-efficacy is thus a critical condition for employees with disabilities to achieve workplace-effective mobility. The attainment of workplace-effective mobility is thus a function of employees with disabilities *'work with; the surroundings of the workplace and the job that (they) do'* (P9: KZN – APD – Physically Disabled.txt – 9:57, 71:73).

Enabling organisational practices would also assist in enhancing the other-directed motivation of employees with disabilities. Enabling organisational practices were highlighted under workplace equity, as discussed in Section 5.5.2.6, were also regarded as a causal condition for the attainment of workplace-effective mobility by employees with disabilities. The issue of employers providing productive types of job was highlighted as critical by a participant who said that '*the job provided must be productive*' (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:39, 147:149).

Participants underscored the issue of targeted recruitment as an important consideration to ensure access to job information by people with disabilities (P3: Free State – Focus Group with the Blind 122008.txt – 3:90, 292:294). For instance, a participant indicated that '*the other aspect of that is the advertising of vacant positions, which does not always reach suitably qualified candidates with disabilities*' (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:73, 259:262).

Generally, a positive employer attitude towards employees with disabilities is required for such employees to attain workplace-effective mobility. In this regard, a participant indicated that '*workplace mobility depends on the employer's outlook towards employees with disabilities. In the sports environment, the sporting fraternity believes in integration and involvement of sportsmen with disabilities to ensure success and competitiveness. In the same way that the sporting fraternity values its disabled sportsmen, employers must value their employees with disabilities*' (P3: Pilot Focus Group Session – Gauteng – Physically Disabled 09092006.txt – 3:71, 74:79).

Workplace accessibility has also been discussed in Section 5.5.2.4, but was found by participants to be a causal condition for workplace-effective mobility. This relates to their ability to move safely and freely in the workplace, and being able (with the help of assistive devices and

reasonable accommodation measures) to perform their jobs effectively. These causal conditions of workplace-effective mobility were summed up by a participant's comment that *'it is people I work with; the surroundings of the workplace and the job that we do that determine our mobility'* (P9: KZN – APD – Physically Disabled.txt – 9:57, 71:73). Obviously, these are all external factors to which personal factors (a positive self-concept and self-efficacy beliefs) should be added.

### **8.3 CONTEXT-INTERVENING CONDITIONS**

The context-intervening conditions for workplace-effective mobility are evident from the discussion on enablers and inhibitors (see Sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3) and are not repeated in this section. However, as it is indicated in the literature that workplace mobility depends on the availability of job opportunities (Anderson *et al.*, 1981; Hofmeister, 2006; Moscarini & Thomsson, 2007), the contribution of economic conditions to the opportunities for employees with disabilities to find and maintain jobs needs some discussion.

Participants mentioned that because of the ignorance of employers regarding tax concessions for implementing reasonable accommodation measures, people with disabilities are not always considered for jobs (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:101, 300:306). The high unemployment rate in South Africa also makes it more difficult for people with disabilities to gain employment (P4: Pilot Focus Group Session – KZN – Physically Disabled 12072006.txt – 4:57, 190:193; P24: Western Cape – Operational Employees – Deaf 12 2008.txt – 24:21, 133:135).

## 8.4 ACTIONS AND INTERACTION STRATEGIES

Participants mentioned several actions that may be taken by individuals, employers and disability organisations to enable the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities.

At an individual level, the willingness to acquire job-related knowledge and experience and to assert themselves has been identified as critical actions by participants. The participants' opinions on these actions support arguments by Van Ham (2002) on the acquisition of skills and by Sullivan and Arthur (2006) pertaining to the possession of know-how to gain employment. Participants also emphasised the importance of assertiveness as an important attribute of maintaining a positive self-concept.

At the level of employers, participants mentioned the importance of ensuring workplace accessibility and enhancing workplace equity for employees with disabilities to attain workplace-effective mobility. These measures were explained in Section 5.5.2, which deals with enablers. However, the most important actions seemed to be targeted recruitment, performance assessments in order to recognise contributions made by employees with disabilities, sensitivity training and awareness for able-bodied colleagues.

Disability organisations were regarded as essential for disability activism. Participants indicated that disability organisations could play a role in motivating people (P4: Free State – Physically Disabled.txt – 4:44, 193:197), in negotiating with employers for job opportunities for their members (P4: Free State – Physically Disabled.txt – 4:66, 299:300), providing advice regarding workplace accessibility (P4: Free State – Physically Disabled.txt – 4:91, 417:419), assisting with job interviews to enhance the self-confidence of applicants with disabilities (P4: Free State – Physically Disabled.txt – 4:101, 464:468), and acting as placement agencies for candidates with disabilities (P24: Western

Cape – Operational Employees – Deaf 12 2008.txt – 24:110, 558:562). A further role that disability organisations could play was articulated by a participant as follows: *‘organisations such as Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) should play an advocacy role as they should; they should be thinking of rolling out television programmes to educate the nation about disabilities so that prejudice may be eradicated’* (P3: Pilot Focus Group Session – Gauteng – Physically Disabled 09092006.txt – 3:45, 147:150). The disability activism is thus intended to negate the prejudicial outlook of society towards people with disabilities (Anspach, 1979).

## 8.5 CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE-EFFECTIVE MOBILITY

Several positive consequences have been identified by participants as stemming from a situation in which employees with disabilities attain workplace-effective mobility. These consequences relate to organisational and personal effectiveness (a positive self-concept and quality of life) among employees with disabilities. Improved productivity was mentioned by a participant in a remark that workplace-effective mobility is about doing work with a sense of motivation and that *‘if you are doing work with passion, I think, other people will benefit from it as well. Maybe in making sure that the organisation becomes the best organisation there is; gets recognised for appreciating the employees that it employs’* (P4: Free State – Physically Disabled.txt – 4:13, 56:60).

Regarding personal effectiveness through an enhanced self-concept, a participant indicated that workplace-effective mobility relates to the unleashing of the potential of employees with disabilities and suggested that *‘once capabilities and initiative are unleashed, employees with disabilities will develop confidence’* (P4: Pilot Focus Group Session – KZN – Physically Disabled 12072006.txt – 4:61, 108:109).

Finally, workplace-effective mobility has the potential to improve the quality of life of employees with disabilities because *‘it creates a sense of*

*independence because one would use the salary to buy things like a house, a car and also be able to pay accounts, as well as have a family'* (P2: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 2:38, 142:147). Workplace-effective mobility is thus not only about job mobility but has a potential to improve organisational commitment (Nas *et al.*, 1998) of employees with disabilities for the mutual benefit of both organisations and individuals.

Figure 8.1 below illustrates the causal effects of these conditions and actions to produce the positive consequences of workplace-effective mobility among employees with disabilities.

**Figure 8.1: Theoretical model of workplace-effective mobility**

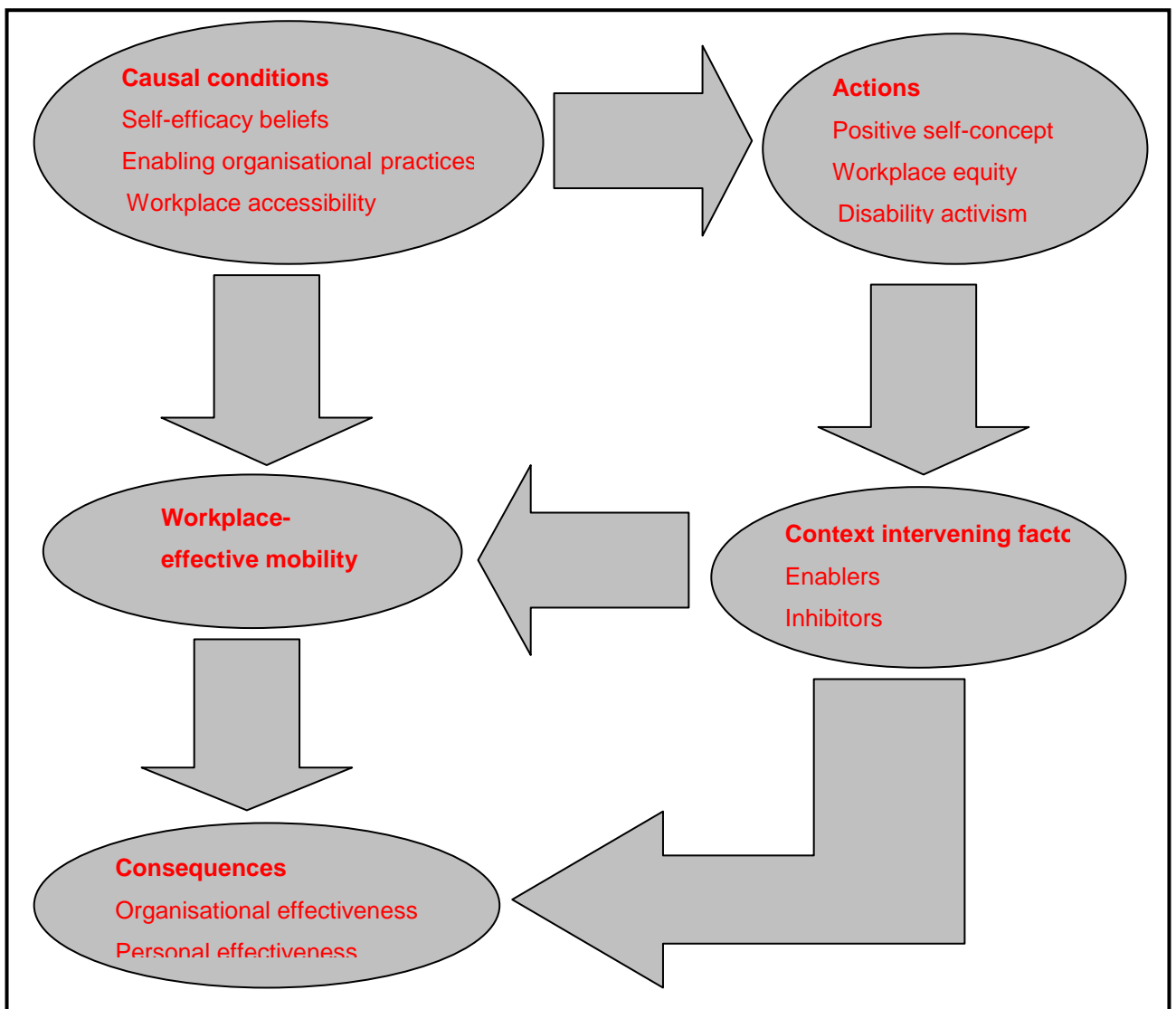




Figure 8.1 indicated that particular causal conditions (self-efficacy – indicated by self-motivation, enabling organisational practices – expressed in workplace equity and workplace accessibility) evoke actions among individuals to maintain a positive self-concept, and galvanise organisations to ensure workplace equity and disability organisations to engage in disability activism. As a result of such actions, or their absence, the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities are either enabled, or inhibited. For instance, when organisational practices are unfair and inequitable, the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities would be inhibited. However, with a positive self-concept, workplace equity and disability activism, the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities would be enabled.

Depending on the nature of the context-intervening factors (whether they be enablers or inhibitors), the workplace-effective mobility may be realised as a central concept in the figure. The various consequences are indicated as organisational and personal effectiveness. These consequences emanate from the extent to which the intervening variables are enabling or inhibiting. Only when the intervening variables are enabling can these consequences be realised. Otherwise, neither the organisation nor the individual will attain effectiveness. As Klimoski and Donahue (1997) indicate, organisations which do not implement enabling measures to mitigate the effects of disability will fail to achieve high levels of performance from these employees. Also, without enabling organisational practices, employees with disabilities would continue to be stigmatized, resulting in a reduced sense of mastery (Wright, Gronfein & Owens, 2000) and reduced quality of life due to activity limitation (Wang, Badley & Gignac, 2004).

## 8.6 SUMMARY

The chapter presented the various elements of a proposed theoretical model on workplace-effective mobility, emphasising self-efficacy, enabling organisational practices and workplace accessibility as causal conditions, as well as the mutual benefits accruing to both the organisation and employees with disabilities. The chapter culminated in a graphic representation and description of a proposed theoretical model of workplace-effective mobility.

The final chapter presents a reflection on the study and its contributions, as well as the recommendations of the study for policy, research and human resources management practice.

## CHAPTER 9

### REFLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter reflects on the research process followed, and also on my personal experience of the research journey. The implications of the study to the field of organisational behaviour, particularly Human Resources Management, are also discussed. In order to avoid duplication in the discussion, the major contributions made by the data as explained in Section 7.7.6 are acknowledged, but not repeated in this final chapter. Finally, recommendations are presented for the practical application of the findings in organisations. Directions for future research are also suggested.

#### 9.2 REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In this section, I reflect on the achievement of the objectives, controlling the trustworthiness of the study findings, the contributions made, any problems experienced, the weaknesses of the study and the personal experiences gained.

##### 9.2.1 Objectives of the study

The study focused on identifying and confirming criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. It began with a discussion of the nature of workplace-effective mobility and proceeded to identify the criteria of such mobility. Focus group interviews were the main instruments for data collection; and the data were content analysed using Atlas.ti. Criteria identified in this manner were presented to experts in the fields of industrial and organisational psychology for confirmation, which they did through a pilot and two consensus Delphi rounds. Finally, a theoretical model for workplace-effective mobility was compiled using

the paradigm model proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Therefore, the study objectives were achieved following a sequential mixed method approach, which started off with a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative Delphi procedure.

## **9.2.2 The trustworthiness of the study**

As already mentioned in Section 9.2.1, the study used a sequential mixed method approach in which a qualitative methodology was predominant in the identification of the criteria and the compilation of a theoretical framework for workplace-effective mobility. The qualitative phase was thus followed by a quantitative Delphi process to confirm the criteria identified. Although it is not easy (Schurink, 2004), this qualitative part of the study was evaluated using criteria suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994), and as mentioned in Section 4.7.1.5.

### **9.2.2.1 Reflexivity**

According to Pretorius (2006:212), reflexivity means sensitivity to the way in which a researcher's presence has contributed to the data collected and how his/her assumptions have shaped the data analysis. It includes the mistakes and/or misunderstandings experienced in the use of methods, procedures and analysis (Pretorius, 2006) for future research planning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This section, therefore, evaluates reflexivity in terms of methods used, procedures followed and analysis issues experienced in the study.

#### **(i) Methods**

This section reflects on the sampling, data collection and data analysis methods used in the study.

**(a) Sampling**

I was initially doubtful about whether I would be able to recruit participants to my study, given the comments by disability co-ordinators: *'Be forewarned, to find candidates that are employed will be a challenge in all categories'* (P6: FW Request to conduct interviews for a Doctoral Study Scanned.txt – 6:1, 16:17). Once this hurdle was overcome, it became evident that disability has diverse categories which were not envisaged in the sample design. Therefore, I acknowledged this oversight to participants (P7: Western Cape – Managerial Candidates – Deaf 122008.txt – 7:128, 670:680).

As indicated in Section 4.7.1.2, I initially envisaged developing a psychometric selection tool which necessitated larger samples of 400 respondents. The refocusing of the study towards the identification of criteria using qualitative methods resulted in smaller purposive samples being drawn for the study.

**(b) Data collection procedures**

I had initially planned to engage the services of research assistants who would be trained in the targeted selection methodology. Because this methodology is copyrighted to Deloitte, I successfully negotiated permission to use it during the envisaged training of research assistants. With a refocus of the study, I became the main instrument of data collection myself and was immersed in data in order to rigorously gather data and systematically construct informed meaning (Shar & Corley, 2006).

Conditions for the use of a cognitive interviewing strategy were not always conducive. For instance, the focus group interview with speech-impaired participants was characterised by differences between the sign languages used by participants and the interpreter. As a result, the

duration of interviews was shortened. Notwithstanding this challenge, some valuable information was collected from this group of participants.

Because of the particular participants involved in the study, accessible venues had to be used for focus group interviews. Despite the challenges experienced with the noise in some of the venues used (a gym hall in Chatsworth, a coffee shop in Bloemfontein and a primary school in Bloemfontein), venues were accessible and data collection was possible.

At the time when the focus group data for the pilot phase were collected, I was still awaiting ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. Upon follow-up, I discovered that the title registration had been '*lost in the process*', causing a delay in the research process (P5: RE Fwd Re PhD – progressScannedM1.txt – 5:1, 24:25). However, the ethical measures explained in Sections 4.7.1.6 and 4.7.2.5 were observed throughout.

**(c) Data analysis issues**

As a first-time user of Atlas.ti, I had to undergo introductory training prior to applying the software for data analysis in this study. Such training was, however, arranged at very short notice, as reflected in the following comment by the facilitator: '*I hope you are well. It is very short notice, but I might be able to help you on an individual basis in the next two weeks. I will only be presenting a course again in the New Year. I can fit you in on either this Saturday or next Saturday morning*' (P7: RE Re Atlas Ti training Scanned ScannedM2.txt – 7:3, 276:279).

Although it offered me an '*opportunity to revise my methodology chapter for comprehensiveness*' (P7: RE Re Atlas Ti training Scanned ScannedM2.txt – 7:2, 157:158), I found it a positive challenge to use Atlas.ti as a data analysis tool. The manual I received during the training session and the

technical support I received from the facilitator assisted me a great deal in the data analysis process. The prolonged period of data analysis (from 2008 to 2010) offered me an opportunity to be immersed in the data to a point where I understood participants' perspectives and nuances of their language (Daengbuppha *et al.*, 2006). Using an older version of Atlas.ti, Version 4.2, was an added challenge, because it works slower and does not have some of the more intelligent options that the latest version is endowed with.

### **9.2.2.2 Peer debriefing**

Peer debriefing was used in the study as a process to review the process (Creswell, 2009) and discuss concerns (Daymon & Holloway, 2002) with research auditor Professor Connie Moloi, as well as my study leader Professor de Beer, and other colleagues. At times, I felt a bit overwhelmed by the data and these colleagues assisted me to maintain my focus in the study.

### **9.2.2.3 Auditability**

In order to ensure that the research process is auditable, I stored the data (from the correspondence with disability organisations to analysis) on a CD, which is attached to the report for use by future researchers in a possible replication of the study. Therefore, the CD represents an audit trail for the analysis of the themes derived from different focus group responses. It is also represented in a webpage format, which is easy to navigate using the navigation bar. In order to access the data, the reader should have the Atlas.ti software to be able to view the codes and is advised to click on the folders and follow links.

#### **9.2.2.4 Credibility and dependability**

I achieved credibility of the study findings through member checking (Bitsch, 2005), ensuring theoretical saturation (Andrade, 2009), triangulating data sources (Verna, 2003) during data collection and using Atlas.ti (Goulding, 1999), as indicated in Section 4.7.1.5(i). Dependability was achieved through the engagement of a research auditor (Professor Connie Moloji) and ensuring that a CD indicating the research process would be available until after the thesis was examined, whereupon it would be destroyed to fulfil the promise made to the participants.

#### **9.2.2.5 Authenticity**

Using the five criteria (fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytical authenticity and tactical authenticity) suggested by Pretorius (2006), I reflect on the trustworthiness of the study. I contend that the study represents the views of various participants fairly through the quotations used in the data analysis process. According to Chiovitti and Piran (2003), the use of participants' own language at all levels of coding contributes to the credibility of findings.

I further conclude that participants understand their world better (ontological authenticity), given the dialogue that I conducted with them and my responses to questions they posed during the data collection process. The detailed reporting of the various focus group responses will ensure that the participants understand the perspectives of other participants better (educative authenticity).

The identified and confirmed criteria for workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities will encourage participants to take action to change their circumstances (catalytical authenticity) and the suggested workplace equity and accessibility will empower them to take steps required for engaging in action (tactical authenticity).



### **9.2.2.6 Transferability**

As a theoretical model of workplace-effective mobility was compiled with information from select target participants, it may need to be refined before it is generalized to populations other than the blind, the Deaf, people with physical disabilities and speech-impairments. Criteria for workplace-effective mobility identified through the focus group interviews with these samples and confirmed in consensus-building using Delphi with experts would require standardization before it is also generalized.

### **9.2.3 Weaknesses of the study**

Claassen (2004) suggests a list of criteria to evaluate qualitative studies, including truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Truth value of the study was achieved by assuring participants of their rights to voluntary participation, privacy, anonymity and also conducting member checks to verify the accuracy of transcripts. However, the assurance of the option of withdrawal at any stage by the research presents a potential source of research bias (Ellis & Levy, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) and thus may affect the truth value of a study. However, in this study, no withdrawals were registered during data collection.

As indicated in Section 9.2.2.6, the study involved participants with four types of disabilities and thus cannot be generalized to populations that were excluded from participation. Section 4.7.1.1 explained that people with mental and emotional disabilities were excluded from the study, as they are the least employable (Benedict *et al.*, 2004). Because the study is not applicable to them, the results generated in this study cannot be generalized to these groups.

The data collection process followed in the study also depended on the type of data available from participants. In order to ensure consistency, an interview schedule containing a preliminary non-exhaustive list of

open-ended questions to be asked (Glaser, 1992) was used. However, this was adapted from one focus group to another depending on the types of topics covered (Glaser, 1992). Therefore, the use of Deaf participants for negative case testing did not have to replicate the process followed with other participants (Schurink, 2004). Also, due to communication problems with speech-impaired participants, the focus group interview did not last for the specified duration (one and a half hours).

The use of quotations in reporting the findings allows the reader to assess the interpretation of the themes that emerged from the data for neutrality and credibility. These quotations were member-checked with participants for accuracy prior to analysis.

### **9.3 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

Personal reflections explained in this section relate to my experiences in researching people with disabilities, doing qualitative research and my relationship with the study leader.

#### **9.3.1 Researching people with disabilities**

As a first time disability researcher, I found the study challenging in many ways. I initially lacked confidence in conducting this type of research, but with the assistance of QASA, through the technical guidelines, I gained the confidence to proceed with the study. Also, as indicated in Section 9.2.2.1(i)(a), the sampling design met with wonderful surprises of diversity of disability within the 'same' categories that were sampled.

The blind participants were initially apprehensive of me as the researcher. According to Barnes and Mercer (1997), this kind of apprehension is attributable to the lack of personal experience in the researcher of disabling barriers perceived by those with a disability.

In the end, I learnt so much from this study that I did not know before. For example, I learnt about the different subcategories of the population with disabilities, the politics involved across the various disability groups and the protocol of conducting research in the disability community. I also came to appreciate the need for sign language interpretation as a critical communication tool for human resources practitioners.

### **9.3.2 Doing qualitative research**

I used qualitative research methodology in my Master's research, but I have come to appreciate that using qualitative methods is an exciting challenge for a researcher. When colleagues around you are familiar with and are experts in quantitative research methods, qualitative research can be a lonely journey. In the process, I neglected a lot of social partners who will be difficult to reconnect with after this process. I also got divorced, and was bereaved after the passing on of my two sisters. On a positive note, I got a new partner and am blessed with a very busy little daughter who keeps me on my toes.

The choice of a topic was another challenge for me. The topic changed from the original intention to develop a psychometric assessment tool to the identification and confirmation of criteria for workplace-effective mobility. The study thus emerged from various interactions with disability organisations and my promotor, thereby justifying the methodology followed, namely Grounded Theory, in the first phase.

Yet another challenge was the dearth of literature on the concept of workplace-effective mobility in particular, because of the emphasis in previous research on medical solutions to disability, which resulted in workplace prejudice and discrimination against people with disabilities. Therefore, the emancipatory/advocacy paradigm was viewed as appropriate for the study and yielded positive feedback from some of the participants regarding the gains achieved from it.

I felt particularly 'stuck' (Claassen, 2004) when coding the data and had to do it over and over again. After seeing themes emerge from the data, I felt comfortable that I was on the right track. Because of the continual peer debriefing with Professor Connie Moloi, I became so confident with the data analysis that she proposed my name for the list of facilitators for the Master's and doctoral students at the Vaal University of Technology, on the use of Atlas.ti.

### **9.3.3 My study leader**

The doctoral course work on organisational behaviour at the University of Pretoria was intended to stimulate the ability of candidates to identify a topic that they could research. I therefore met Professor Hannes de Beer when he presented a module on workforce diversity to our group. He stimulated my thinking when he argued for a need to study the relationship between the mobility of people with disability and their effectiveness in a workforce context.

The thought remained with me, until one day I approached him to be my study leader and shared my reading on the field with him. Excited, he agreed to be my study leader. Because of my work commitments, as an executive, I made slow progress towards finalising the proposal. When I was about to submit, Professor de Beer was admitted into hospital for a period of two weeks. When I was about to submit my final draft, he also had to undergo an emergency eye operation for a detached retina. Through thick and thin, he encouraged me to push on because he thought that I had the potential to become an excellent academic who would do well in researching and teaching employee diversity. Visits to his office and often to his home were not in vain, as each visit created another opportunity for me to see the study from a different, exciting perspective. He also assisted in providing support networks for data collection and research topic finalisation.

## **9.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The human resources management, policy and research implications of this study are presented in this section.

### **9.4.1 Human Resources Management implications**

The obligation on employers to meet the employment equity targets requires new strategies to address the challenges they face in balancing the operational requirements and defining suitability of employees. It is common cause that workplace equity is beneficial to the generation of ideas that may enhance productivity. Therefore, the historical and socially constructed notion (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) of workplace prejudice and discrimination to manage employees with disabilities cannot continue to remain unquestioned, because of political and social pressures. The identification and confirmation of criteria for workplace-effective mobility, which did not exist previously, will assist in fostering a culture of disability equity in workplaces. Workplace equity therefore relates to a progressive corporate culture that advocates for acceptance and inclusiveness (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997), and suggests that diversity management is a critical component of managing employees with disabilities for greater organisational effectiveness.

### **9.4.2 Implications for national policy**

Workplace equity through the implementation of well-delineated criteria for workplace-effective mobility inculcates a return-to-work culture, which supports the government's need to have more people with disabilities in paid employment. The sensitivity training and awareness programmes suggested by participants in this study also indicate a need for policy reform, both in the workplace and in society at large, to reduce workplace prejudice and discrimination against employees with disabilities.

The current system of medical boarding continues because of the insurability factor. This situation may need to be addressed as employers tend not to consider alternatives that accommodate employees with disabilities because of the financial incentives of insurance.

Also, as one participant indicated, this study may be used by government to strengthen the national disability equity drive. In this regard, the participant remarked: *'We also wish that government would consider these aspects to ensure effectiveness in the employment equity processes in this country'* (P3: EXPERIENCES OF GAUTENG PARTICIPANTS – Physically Disabled 122008.txt – 3:82, 289:297).

#### **9.4.3 Implications for research**

The main limitations of this study were the declining participation of experts in the Delphi process, as well as a lack of a clear determination of the sample frame. The latter problem is evident in the suggestions by participants that the study needed to dissect the disability sector into smaller chunks so that a balance is maintained in both the data collection and analysis phase. The following remarks were made by participants in this regard: *'Of course, what you must remember is that the group here consists mostly of culturally Deaf participants, i.e. people who are experiencing the same circumstances of the Deaf culture. It would be interesting for your research to get hold of people who, as the previous speaker said if I heard correctly, are hard of hearing, i.e. those coming from oral and hearing culture or [who] associate themselves with that and also those who have been deafened later in their lives like MP2. I think just to create a balance or get the balance in how people with hearing loss actually experience this type of thing in the workplace'* (P7: Western Cape – Managerial Candidates – Deaf 122008.txt – 7:125, 646:654).

## **9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

A number of recommendations for human resources policy, practice and research are made below in order to optimise debates on the subject of the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities and to ensure optimal workplace equity.

### **9.5.1 Policy recommendations**

Return-to-work programmes for employees with disabilities need to be regulated. Participants who have been on rehabilitation programmes have derived benefits out of such programmes in terms of enhanced self-esteem and positive attitude towards life. Also, in the workplace, these programmes should be considered to minimise dependence on life insurance. Most participants have indicated a need for adaptability training, which also has policy implications.

The incentives that employers receive for implementing reasonable accommodation measures should be made known to all employers as part of the economic development strategy – the more suitably qualified employees with disabilities in employment, the better for their well-being and the economy in terms of productivity.

### **9.5.2 Practice recommendations**

The participants' suggestions regarding workplace sensitivity training and awareness programmes should be taken seriously. These programmes are offered in partnership with disability organisations and will ensure relevance of material and a resolution of workplace conflict that arises because of mutual misunderstanding. Suitable workplace ergonomics, such as lighting, and accessible facilities must also be provided for employees with disabilities. The advertising of positions should be

considerate of the needs of candidates with disabilities for information. Workplace democracy must also be enhanced so that employees with disabilities are involved in organisational planning and decision-making to serve their needs better.

### **9.5.3 Recommendations for research**

Further studies on the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities are required to fill the gaps in the literature. Therefore, efforts regarding emancipatory/advocacy research on employees with disabilities should be increased. The debate on whether deafness is disability or not, and disability mainstreaming, should be continued in the best interest of all parties. In pursuit of these goals, the recommendation made by a Deaf participant needs to be seriously considered (P7: Western Cape – Managerial Candidates – Deaf 122008.txt – 7:125, 646:654). For instance, an all-embracing category of ‘people with hearing losses’ was proposed, if one conducts research in the Deaf area. The topic of resilient employees suggested by one expert in the Delphi rounds also needs to be further investigated.

Furthermore, the theoretical model compiled in this study and the criteria identified for workplace-effective mobility should be validated for their applicability and rigour. Therefore, future research is strongly recommended in these areas.

## **9.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The focus of this study was the identification and confirmation of criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities from an emancipatory/advocacy perspective. The study sought to understand the concept of workplace-effective mobility, its enablers and inhibitors, so that workplace equity could be enhanced by the eradication of inhibitors and the institutionalisation of enablers into policy frameworks.



Criteria were identified, namely a positive self-concept, self-efficacy, a sense of coherence, workplace accessibility and a positive sense of independence in the focus group interviews with participants with disabilities. A confirmation of these criteria and related indicators resulted in consensus among industrial and organisational psychologists.

The study was intended to place disability issues on the transformation agenda of society. The agenda proposed is the one for the optimisation of workplace equity through the implementation of well-delineated criteria for the workplace-effective mobility of employees with disabilities. These criteria, once implemented, are deemed to be potentially empowering for both employers and employees.