

CHAPTER 6

PREVALENCE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

“I’ve come loaded with statistics, for I’ve noticed that a man can’t prove anything without statistics”.
Mark Twain

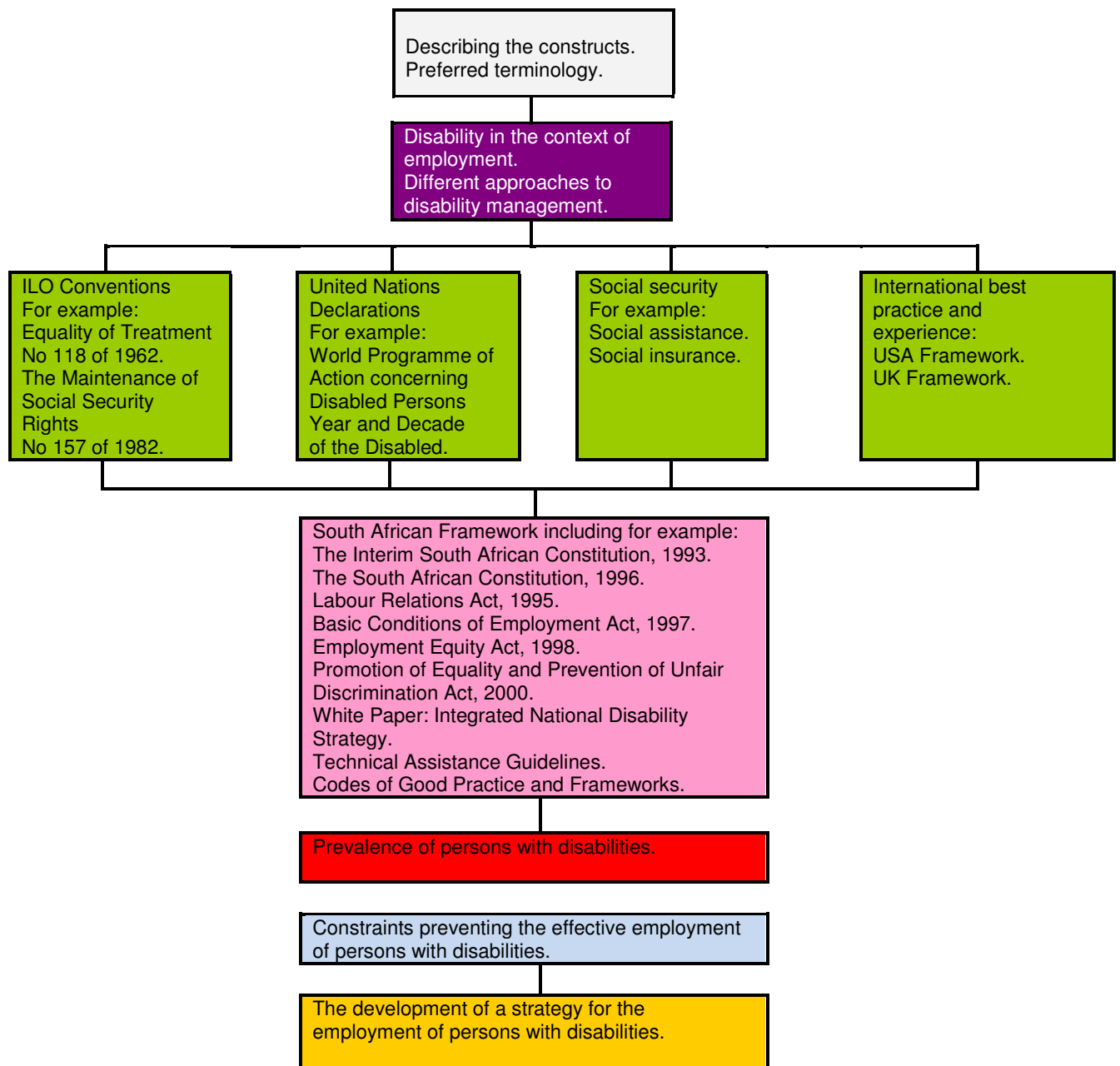
6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the prevalence of persons with disabilities in South Africa will be discussed. The number of persons with disabilities of a working age, the number employed, the number unemployed and the number actively seeking employment are relevant to the development of a strategy for the employment of persons with disabilities. Reference has been made in Chapter 1 that persons with disabilities constitute less than 1% of the total South African workforce, which raises the question, what the desired target should be. The prevalence of certain types of disabilities and level of education are also relevant to the employment of persons with disabilities.

The development of an effective strategy for the employment of persons with disabilities makes it necessary to know the number of persons with disabilities in South African society, as well as the number of working age employed/unemployed. Various publications quote figures, but these figures often vary significantly.

The relevant part of the Disability Management Literature Review Research framework is coloured red.

Table 19: Disability management literature review research framework



6.2 STATISTICAL STUDIES AND TRENDS IDENTIFIED PREVIOUSLY

It is necessary to know the prevalence of persons with disabilities. In order to develop and implement policy, nations need to know the size and make-up of their populations who experience disability (Altman 2006:1). There is a serious lack of reliable information on the nature and prevalence of disability in South Africa (INDS 1997:v). This is because, in the past, disability management was viewed within a health and welfare framework, leading to a failure to integrate disability into

mainstream government statistical processes. The INDS (1997:1) further states that the statistics are unreliable for the following reasons:

- Different definitions of disability are found;
- different survey technologies (*sic*) are used to collect information;
- negative traditional attitudes towards persons with disabilities;
- poor service infrastructure for persons with disabilities in underdeveloped areas; and
- violence levels in particular areas at particular times have impeded on the collection of data, affecting the overall picture.

The INDS (1997:3) further indicates an estimated 99% of disabled persons are excluded from employment in the open labour market.

The population Census conducted during 1996 included disability as a focus area and from the data gathered it was concluded that 6,7% of the population was disabled. During 1998 a baseline national survey was conducted on disability and the data provided an age-weighted count of 5,9% of the population as being disabled (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:6).

During the 1996 Census the question on disability was posed as follows: “Does the person have a serious sight, hearing, physical or mental disability? If yes, circle all applicable disabilities for the person: Sight 1; Hearing/Speech 2; Physical disability 3; Mental disability 4.” The disability question posed during the 2001 Census was posed differently, namely as follows: “Does the person have any serious disability that prevents his/her full participation in life activities? None 0; Sight 1; Hearing 2; Communication 3; Physical 4; Intellectual 5; Emotional 6.” The significant difference between these two questions makes it difficult to have comparable figures (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:8).

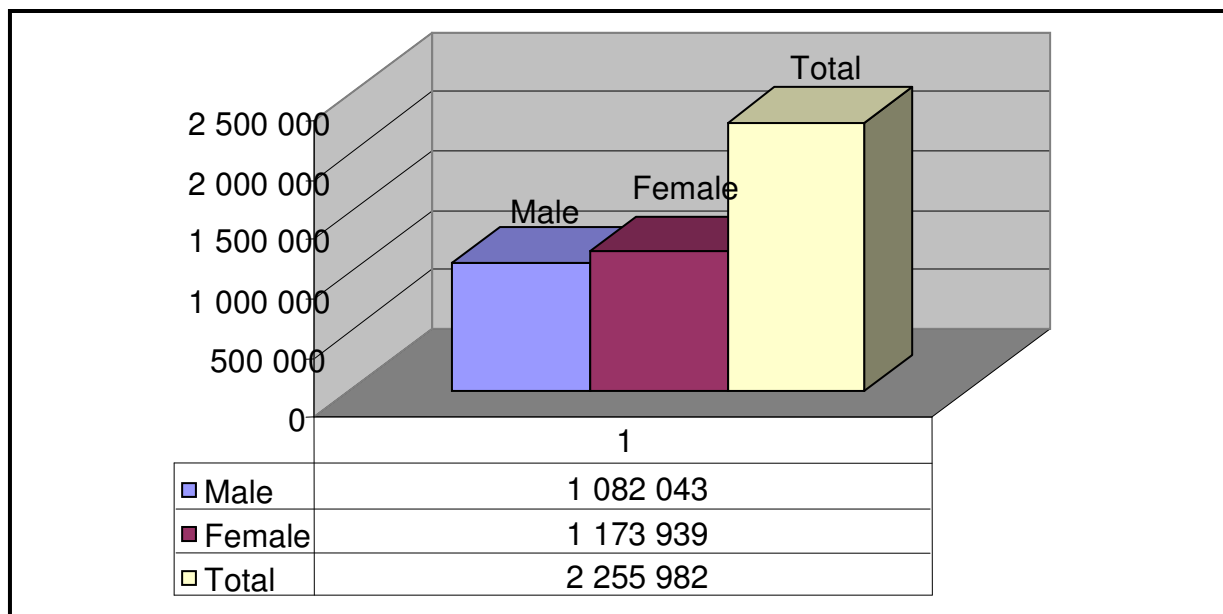
The South African Commission for Employment Equity confirms in its Annual Report (2004/2005) that data on disability remains unsatisfactory. The preceding background describes the challenges experienced to date in determining accurately how many persons with disabilities are in South Africa, and specifically how many are employed and unemployed. The results of these challenges are that it is difficult

to respond in an informed manner to disability management issues. In the employment context for example, the type of disability which is most prevalent and has the highest rate of unemployment, should be identified as a focus area in terms of a strategy for the employment of persons with disabilities. The discussion below is intended to identify some trends which would guide a strategy for the employment of persons with disabilities to focus on the most critical areas.

6.3 PREVALENCE AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The prevalence of persons with disabilities at a national level is presented in Table 20 below:

Table 20: Number of persons with disabilities according to gender



(Source: Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:12)

From Table 20 it is observed that 5% (2 255 982/ 44 819 778) of the South African population is disabled as reported during Census 2001. The percentage is significantly lower (1,7%) than reported during the Census 1996 (6,7%) and during the baseline national survey conducted during 1998 (6%). It is difficult to explain this difference and perhaps the main contributing factor is the different wording of the questions used during the 1996 and 2001 Censuses respectively as discussed above.

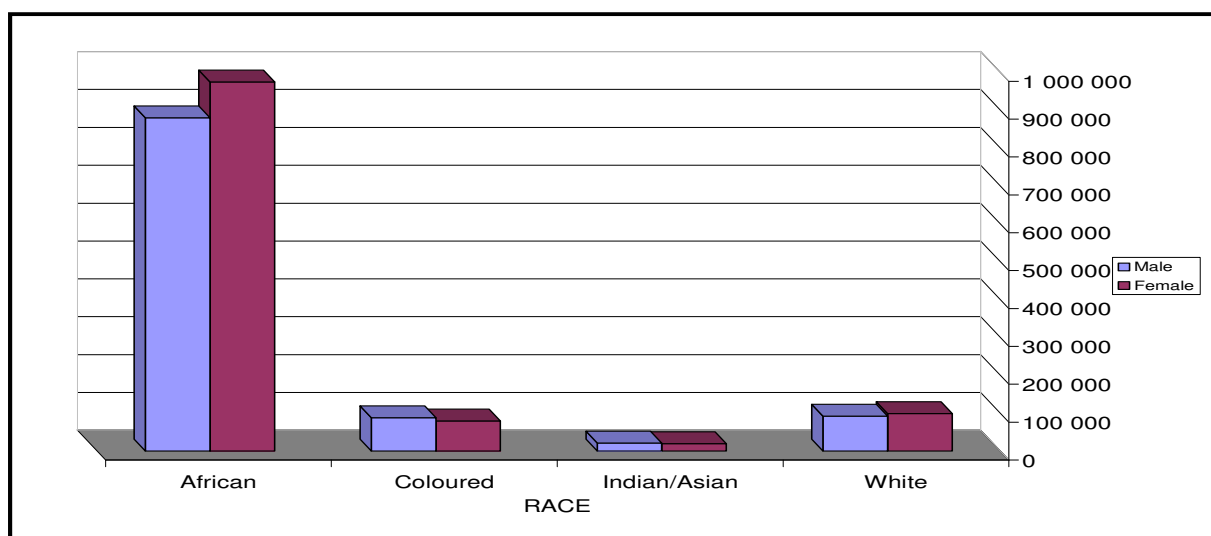
The wording of the question used in the 2001 Census referred to “...prevents his/her full participation in life activities?” A person with a disability responding to this question would have to decide whether his or her disability prevents full participation in life activities or not. Many persons with disabilities, considering the medical versus social model debate, consider themselves as able and society as the disabling factor in their full participation in normal living. The different wording would therefore not solicit a comparable response.

A precise number of the prevalence of persons with disabilities cannot be determined because the results of the studies and Censuses referred to above are not consistent and therefore it is not possible to determine a precise number. It is unlikely that the number of persons with disabilities would be less than 5% of the South African population. Considering the rurality of certain parts of South Africa, harsh living conditions and high levels of poverty, it is likely that disability will be more prevalent in these areas.

6.4 PREVALENCE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES BY GENDER AND POPULATION GROUP

The prevalence of persons with disabilities by gender and population groups is presented in Table 21 below:

Table 21: Number of disabled persons by gender and population group



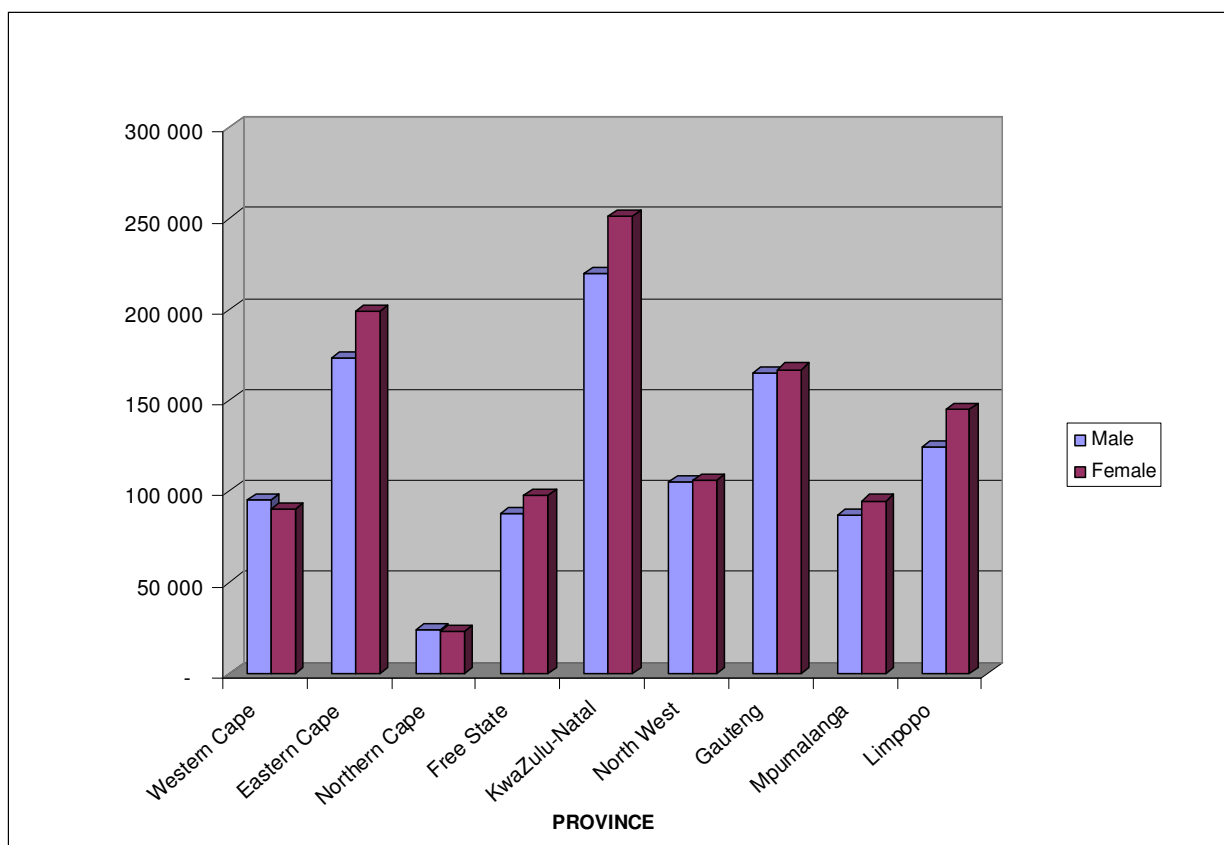
(Source: Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:12)

The African population reported the highest number of disabled persons (1 854 376 or 5,2%), followed by White (191 693 or 4,5%), Coloured (168 678 or 4,2%) and Indian (41 235 or 3,7%). These percentage differences are probably due to a variety of socio-economic and demographic factors. Unique cultural perceptions and inhibitions with regard to reporting on disability could also impact on the percentage differences (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:11 to 12). The percentage of females affected was slightly higher than males in the African and White population groups and slightly lower in the Coloured and Indian/Asian population groups (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:12).

6.5 PREVALENCE BY PROVINCE

The prevalence of persons with disabilities on a provincial basis is presented in Table 22.

Table 22: Number of persons with disabilities per province according to gender



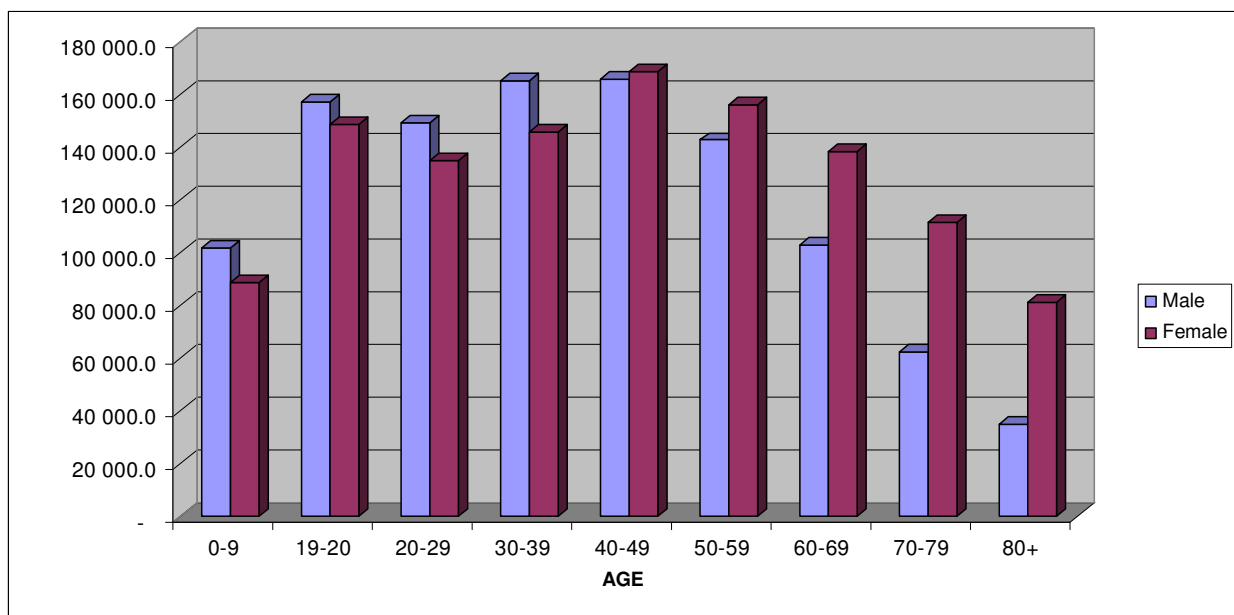
(Source: Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:12)

KwaZulu-Natal has the highest number of persons with disabilities (470 588) while Northern Cape has the lowest number (46 973). In terms of the relative percentage to the population in the province, the Free State has the highest percentage of persons with disabilities (6,8%) while the Western Cape (4,1%) and Gauteng (3,8%) respectively have the lowest relative percentage prevalence (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:12).

6.6 PREVALENCE BY GENDER AND AGE

The number of disabled persons by gender and age group is presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Number of disabled persons by gender and age group



(Source: Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:13)

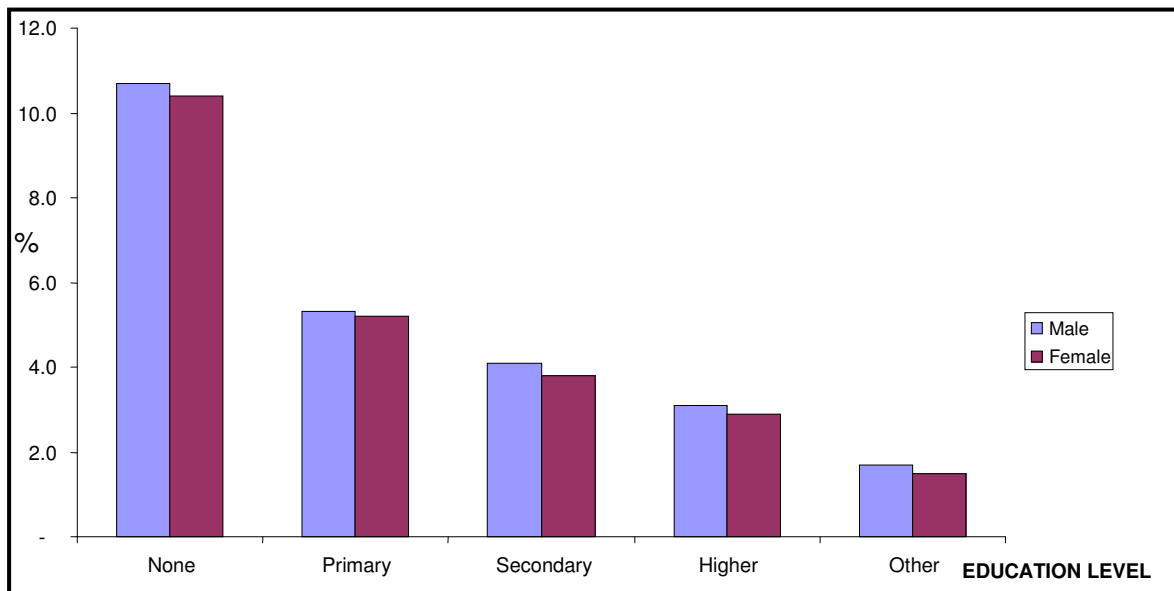
From Table 23 it is observed that the age profile of the disabled population indicates a steady increase from the lower age groups to the age category of 40-49 years of age. Below the age of 40 years more males are disabled while above the age of 40 more females are disabled. This trend is requiring further research since it could mean that more females are becoming disabled beyond the age of 40 years or it could mean that in future generations this trend could change by more men being disabled beyond the age of 40 years as the population grows older. It could also be ascribed to higher average longevity of women compared to men (Prevalence of

Disability in South Africa 2005:12). The majority of persons with disabilities are of a working age, namely between 19 and 69 years of age (normal working age in South Africa is 15 but the data does not reflect the said age groups).

6.7 PREVALENCE BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The number of persons with disabilities by level of education is presented in Table 24 below.

Table 24: Percentage of persons with disabilities in each education category per gender



(Source: Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:13)

From Table 24 it is deduced that the percentage of persons with disabilities was highest among those who had no education (10,5%) and lowest among those with higher levels of education. This could be a reflection of the fact that persons with disabilities were often excluded from educational opportunities as the environment in regular schools does not facilitate integration sufficiently and the physical environment does not accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Another possible explanation is that low levels of education is generally associated with the higher prevalence of poverty, which in turn renders people more vulnerable to become disabled because of factors such as a lack of access to health care and rehabilitation. Hence the higher prevalence of disabilities in the group with no

education could be as a result of both a lack of access to educational opportunities and poverty (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:13). It is also reported that 30% of persons with disabilities had no schooling compared to 15% of the general population. The higher proportion of persons with disabilities with no schooling could be due to the disadvantaged position they have experienced as far as access to education/opportunities is concerned (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:20).

Against the background of developing a strategy for the employment of persons with disabilities, the higher prevalence of disabilities in the lower or no education groups is significant. It is a generally accepted principle that unemployment is the highest amongst persons with “lower-education” or “no-education”. The above statistics show that disability is also the highest in this group. The question that may arise is whether this group is indeed employable as a result of the lower or no education.

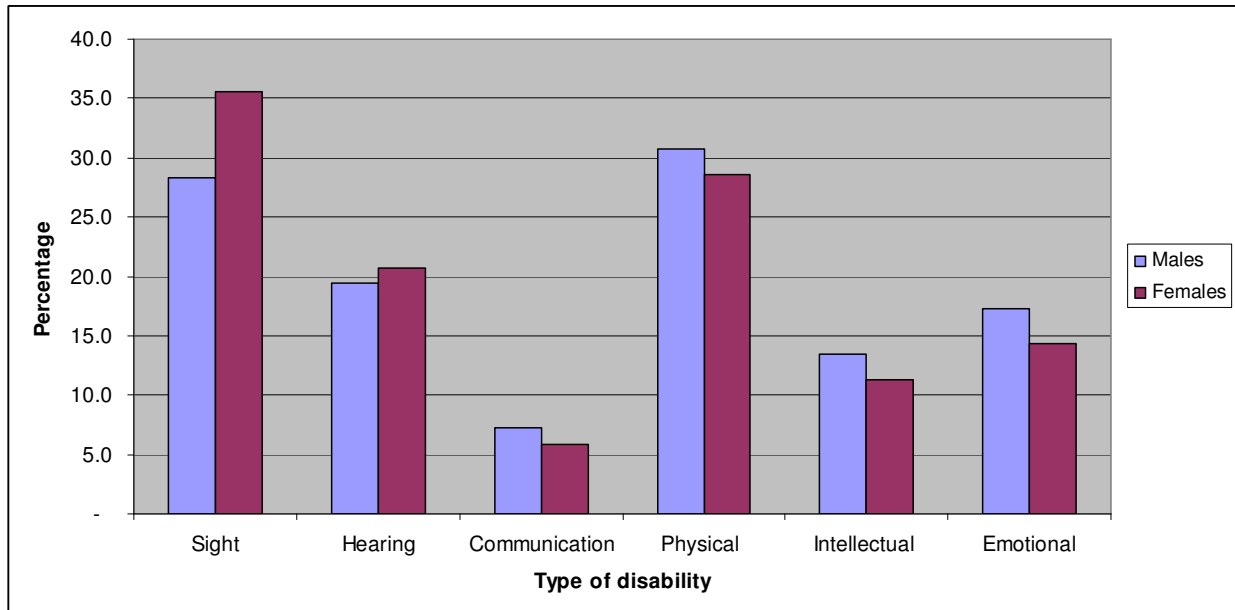
The Census, 2001 does unfortunately not provide an answer to this question. In general terms, the work at lower levels in organisations demand lower levels of thinking and higher levels of physical ability. This may not suit certain types of disability (for example physical disabilities) but it may suit other types of disabilities (for example intellectual disabilities).

A useful statistic would have been the number of persons with disabilities passing grade 12 with university exemption, however, this statistic could not be obtained as seemingly it is not recorded (www.education.gov.za – HEMIS 3).

6.8 PREVALENCE BY TYPE OF DISABILITY

The number of persons with certain types of disability is presented in Table 25. Each type of disability has a unique impact on an individual’s ability to perform certain activities. The development of a strategy to employ persons with disabilities could be more effective if it is focussed on the nature of employment in respect of the various types of disabilities.

Table 25: Percentage of disabled persons by type of disability and per gender group



(Source: Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:14)

The prevalence of sight disability is the highest (32%) followed by physical disability (30%), hearing disability (20%), emotional disability (16%), intellectual disability (12%) and c

ommunication disability (7%). The gender prevalence of these types of disability is fairly similar except that a higher percentage of disabled males (31%) have physical disabilities while a higher percentage of females (36%) have a disability related to sight.

The employment of persons with disabilities should aim to reflect the prevalence by type of disability. It is not possible to determine from Census, 2001 whether for example, 32% of persons with sight disabilities are employed or not. Certain types of disabilities like sight and hearing do have well-established schooling facilities in South Africa which prepare scholars well for suitable types of employment. Although the statistics are not available, it is expected that physically disabled employees are employed more, followed by hearing and sight disabled employees. The employment of persons with emotional and intellectual disabilities is perceived to be significantly lower.

6.9 EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Schriner (2001:644) indicates that people with disabilities are among the most economically disadvantaged groups in society. This indication was given from an international perspective. From a South African perspective the same applies.

During Census, 2001 all persons aged 10 years and above were asked whether they had done any work for pay (in kind or in cash), profit or family gain for one hour or more in the seven days prior to 10 October 2001. The information provided by the respondents facilitated the categorisation of the respondent into either employed or unemployed (Prevalence of Disability in South Africa 2005:21).

The statistics indicate that for the age group between 15 and 65 years of age (the normal working ages in South Africa) 19,0% of disabled persons were employed, compared to 35,0% of not disabled persons. In the age group between 35 and 44 years of age, both disabled and not disabled persons reported the highest percentage of the employed namely 26% of persons with disabilities compared to 53% of not disabled persons.

In comparison, there was a larger increase in unemployment rates amongst persons who had no disabilities, from 12,9% to 20,0%, over the same period. Whilst there was a substantial increase in the unemployment rate among women who were not disabled (from 19,7% in 1995 to 28,0% in 1999), the unemployment rate among disabled women rose less steeply (from 18,5% in 1995 to 21,0% in 1999) (The South African Labour Market, 2002:139-140).

The South African Commission for Employment Equity reported in its 2003/2004 Annual Report (page 23) that 29 451 of employees with disabilities are employed by large employers (defined as employing 150 or more employees). Elsewhere in the Report (page 13) it is indicated that 2 940 998 is the total number of employees employed by large employers. Employees with disabilities therefore are approximately 1% of the workforce of large employers. This is indicative of the under-representation of employees with disabilities in employment. A similar comparison was conducted using the various annual reports and specifically the 2007/08 Annual Report of the Commission for Employment Equity indicating that 10

700 (Table 4.3:p11) employees with disabilities are employed out of a total of 2 030 837 (Table 4.2:p7) reflecting persons with disabilities as 0,52% of the total number of employees employed by large employers. A total of 1 420 (Table 4.8:p27) employees with disabilities were recruited and were promoted. The Annual Report indicated that the disadvantaged position of persons with disabilities would be due to diverse socio-economic and social cultural factors, particularly their low levels of education, discrimination in the labour market and negative attitudes of those they live amongst. These low levels of employment underscore their continued marginalisation and lack of independence within society.

This is supported by Schriener (2001:645) confirming that people with disabilities were more likely to be employed in manual or unskilled occupations and less likely to hold professional or management positions. Schriener further states that only about one-third of workers who become disabled as adults retain their jobs.

6.10 SUMMARY

The contribution of this chapter to the research process and the development of a strategy to employ persons with disabilities can be summarised as follows:

- The preceding analysis provides useful information on the prevalence of disability in South Africa.
- Disabled persons are disadvantaged as far as access to educational and employment opportunities are concerned.
- The profiles by type of disability underscore the need to have preventive and rehabilitation programmes that target the most affected groups.
- These trends in the findings support other sources of data on the prevalence and the experience of disability, such as the *1998 Baseline survey on disability* (Schneider et al. 1998).
- Considering the international trends in prevalence of persons with disabilities (as discussed in Chapter 4) the South African statistics are understated.
- Considering the harsh conditions in South African rural areas the prevalence of persons with disabilities in South Africa should be markedly higher than in the developed economies of the USA and UK.
- The possibility of this understatement deepens the crises that persons with

disabilities face due to them not being employed.

- It is therefore necessary that the constraints preventing the employment of persons with disabilities be discussed. This discussion takes place in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 7

CONSTRAINTS IN THE EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

“Competence, like truth, beauty and contact lenses, is in the eye of the beholder” Dr. Laurence J Peter and Raymond Hull

7.1 INTRODUCTION

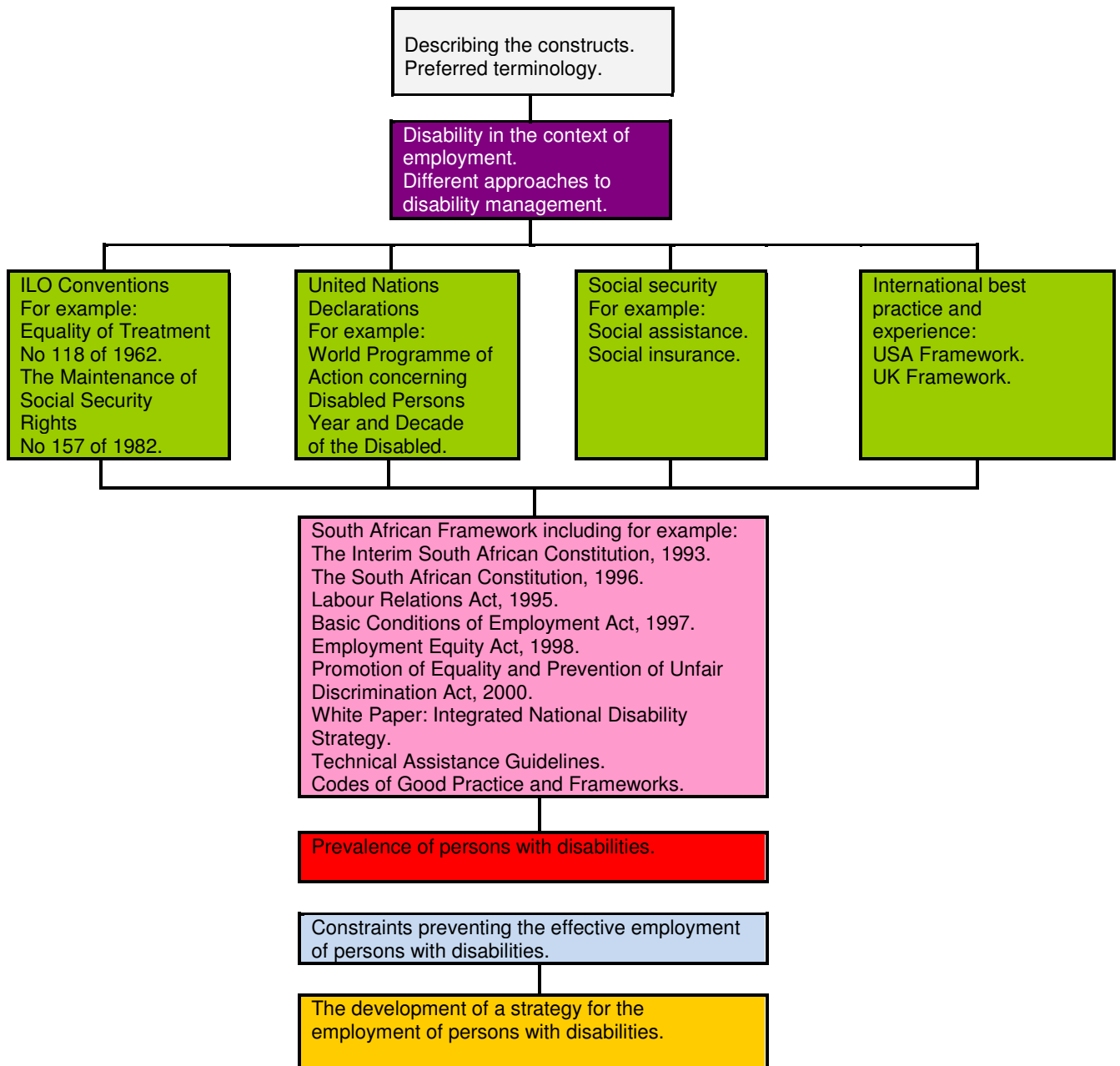
The construct “constraints” as operationalised in Chapter 2 of this research refers to those perceptions, policies, practices or management decisions which cause the deserving disabled job applicant to be unsuccessful in his or her application for employment or promotion.

This chapter identifies the constraints which prevent the employment of persons with disabilities and contextualises these constraints within the human resource and labour relations management field of research. These constraints, once identified, will be researched further by means of the survey method and therefore form the basis on which the research questionnaire is to be developed.

The identification of the constraints is done by means of the literature review and the practical experience of the researcher while managing persons with disabilities and implementing disability management programmes.

The relevant part of the disability management literature research framework is coloured blue.

Table 26: Disability literature review research framework



7.2 DESCRIBING CONSTRAINTS

Most of the day-to-day problems that persons with disabilities face are caused by the fact that they live in a hostile, disabling world which is largely designed to suit able-bodied people (<http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70265>). Constraints do differ from situation to situation and employers should also assist to deal with external factors with which persons with disabilities need to deal with on a daily basis. Many such constraints exist and some are set out in Table 27 below. These

constraints have been identified during working sessions with persons with disabilities.

Table 27: Categorisation and examples of constraints/barriers persons with disabilities face in leading a normal life

CATEGORISATION	EXAMPLES
Family.	Family members may be embarrassed to have a disabled person in their home and seek to hide the fact from the community. Family members may be unaware of laws that protect the rights of persons with disabilities and of programmes designed to assist them. As a result, they may discourage persons with disabilities from venturing outside the home.
Physical environment.	Public and private buildings, particularly in poorer areas, may not have the equipment or physical infrastructure required by persons with disabilities. Examples include ramps for wheelchairs, appropriate toilet facilities, service counters of an appropriate height, etc.
Public service.	The public transport needs of a majority of disabled South Africans are not met because the system doesn't have the necessary equipment and personnel lack the required training. A person in a wheelchair can't board a South African train because the door openings are too narrow.
Social services.	The public health system may not have the resources or expertise to assist persons with disabilities to reach their fullest potential. Sometimes health employees at clinics do not treat women with disabilities in a professional manner, for example they have been known to tell these women that they cannot and should not have sex.
Personal relationships.	Persons with disabilities tend to spend too much time alone or spend time only with other persons with disabilities. This makes it harder for them to develop the confidence to look for a job or make new friends. Some men will have relationships with women with disabilities just so they can get the money from their disability grants.
Education level.	Young children with disabilities are often sent away to special schools where they may not receive a quality education or be cared for in a nurturing environment. Prior to 1994 education programmes for non-white persons with disabilities were limited and of poor quality. Most programmes concentrated on basic vocational training in areas such as sewing, basket weaving, gardening, etc.
Communication.	It can be difficult to communicate with persons with cerebral palsy, those who have had a stroke, deaf persons and other disabled persons. Rather than take the time to find a way to communicate with them, most persons choose to ignore them. Some persons won't use the name of a disabled person. Instead they use insulting words, for example: "Hey cripple, why don't you go to your room!"
Misinformation.	Some employees may believe that persons with disabilities are being punished for something that they, or their family, did wrong. Such beliefs

CATEGORISATION	EXAMPLES
	are likely to influence how these employees work with disabled persons. Some employees may believe that certain disabilities are contagious and that they could become disabled by working with or near a disabled person.
Discriminatory attitudes.	Some employees feel that employees with disabilities are given an unfair advantage and treated “special”. For example, when a disabled employee is allowed more flexible working hours than other employees. Managers and co-employees may automatically assume that a disabled employee is physically unable to do certain tasks without even discussing it with them first.
Discriminatory practices.	Managers and co-employees may believe that disabled persons are “charity cases” and ignore or mistreat them. Managers may make half-hearted attempts to recruit persons with disabilities, and then always find a way to avoid hiring them.
Physical environment.	A safe and functional environment is very important to employee productivity. What may seem like a small concern to other employees may present substantial obstacles to a disabled employee. For example, the workspace that you provide for your receptionist may be small yet adequate for some employees, but inappropriate for a person that uses a wheelchair if the wheelchair doesn’t fit into the space or the desk is too low or narrow.
Personal environment.	Employees with disabilities often struggle to get the professional respect that they deserve, and are frequently subjected to token recognition. Unfortunately, physical appearance is often used as a measure of professional ability. Professionals who are uncomfortable with the appearance of persons with disabilities may not judge the work of their “disabled colleagues” fairly.
Inadequate training.	Traditional training programmes may not meet the learning needs of employees with disabilities. It is important to consider whether such things as the subject content, methodology, learning materials, expected outcomes and venue are appropriate for persons with disabilities.
Poor communication.	Employees with disabilities may be viewed by other employees as “charity cases” if policy on disability is not clearly communicated to everyone in the organisation. Clear communication with employees on all matters is critical to eliminating misunderstanding, confusion and unfounded rumours.
Lack of commitment.	An affirmative action programme that fades and dies soon after the numerical target for disabled employees is met is a strong indicator of a lack of commitment. A strong and intelligent organisation will regularly monitor and evaluate efforts to implement policy on disability.

(Source: Toolkit: Department of Land Affairs - Employing and Managing Persons with Disabilities, DLA, 2004).

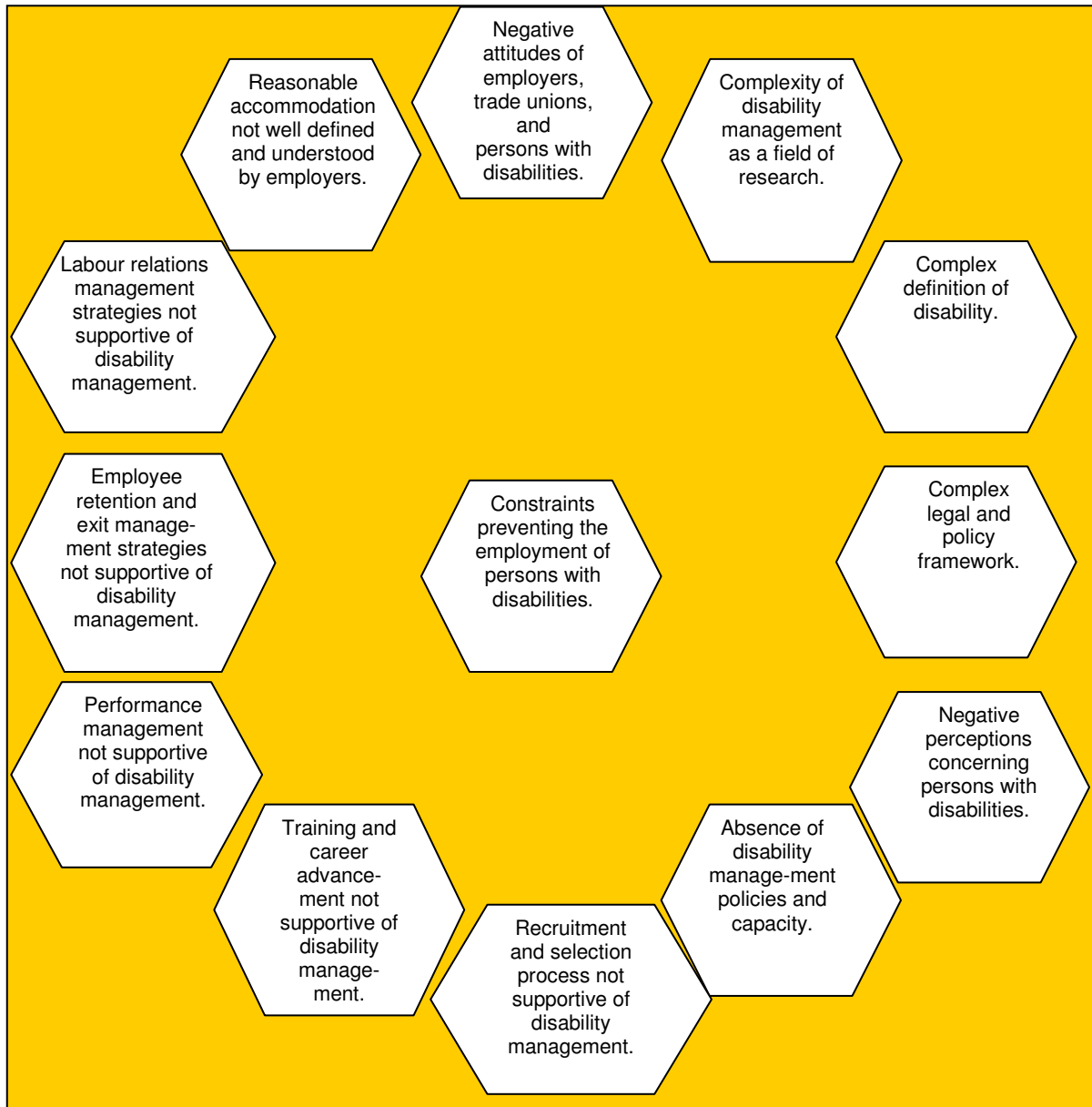
The above very broad categorisation provides examples of constraints persons with disabilities may experience in daily life. The constraints may also vary because of the different categories of disability. The nature of the specific disability and the fact that the social and physical environments are designed for persons without disabilities cause constraints which prevent persons with disabilities from leading a normal life.

Emanating from the general categorisation of constraints which persons with disabilities may experience in the everyday life, the constraints relevant to the employment of persons with disabilities could be categorised for purposes of this research as follows:

- Complexity of disability management as a field of research;
- complex definition of disability;
- complex legal and policy framework;
- perceptions concerning persons with disabilities;
- availability of disability management policies and capacity;
- training and development;
- performance management;
- recruitment and selection;
- employee retention and exit management strategies;
- labour relations management strategies; and
- reasonable accommodation.

These categories of constraints have been identified through the preceding literature review and the practical experience of the researcher gained by managing disability employment programmes for the past 14 years. These categories of constraints can be depicted graphically as set out in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Employment related categories of constraints preventing the employment of persons with disabilities



The details of each category are discussed below.

7.3 COMPLEXITY OF DISABILITY MANAGEMENT AS A FIELD OF RESEARCH

As discussed in the preceding chapter's disability management is a complex field of research. The subject matter is not easily accessible to the average person. Differing views exist concerning disability management depending on the particular

school of thought and disability management practices are not generally standardised. The multi-faceted aspects of disability management also result in different fields of research, studying certain aspects relevant to it in isolation from other areas of research. The limited research that has been performed into disability management in the workplace by the human resource management and the labour relations management fields of research further contributes to the complexity of this field of research. Other fields of research have therefore endeavoured to fill the gaps left by the limited research into this area. This resulted in principles and practices being adopted which are not dynamic by nature.

7.4 COMPLEX DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

The construct “disability”, as discussed in Chapter 2, is complex and intimidating to the layperson. It is also difficult to get an understanding of the other terminology related to disability management. Issues like “designated groups”, “unfair discrimination”, “reasonable accommodation” and “various models” are new to managers and human resource and labour relations practitioners. Some areas of employment, specifically employment equity, are well-published and widely circulated in South Africa which creates a common understanding of those areas. The application of employment equity to Black South Africans and women for example, is well-publicised and has political and public support. The various Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Charters helped to popularise the concept. The requirement, for example, in tender processes to be BBBEE compliant has given authority to the EEA requirements. The similarly legislated disability equity requirements are not enjoying equal priority status. The result is a significantly positive change in compliance with the EEA as far as race and gender are concerned, but limited success, if any, as far as disability is concerned.

The research questionnaire will probe the complexity of the definition as set out in the EEA and to what extent the respondents agree with it. The extent to which the definition covers all types of disability will also be interrogated.

The extent to which this definition assists in dealing with issues of disability is doubtful and respondents will be requested to express their views on this and to propose amendments to the definition.

7.5 COMPLEX LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The legal and policy framework is complex and is not available in a single reference document. The INDS (1997), various codes of good practice and the TAG, as detailed in Chapter 5 above, which were intended to make information more accessible are complex and the integration is often more confusing than helpful. This aspect will be explored further in the questionnaire by requesting the respondents to indicate to what extent they use the legislation or policy frameworks to assist them to manage disability in the workplace. The most important documents making up the framework will be listed in the questionnaire and respondents will be requested to indicate to what degree they find the relevant document useful. The responses will provide an indication of the extent to which respondents use the specific documents. The complexity of the legal and policy framework could also be the cause for the small number of legal actions taken to enforce the rights of persons with disabilities. The Commission for Employment Equity commented on this aspect raising its concerns. It cited that high legal costs and the inaccessibility of the Labour Court system also are contributory factors (Employment Equity Commission Annual Report 2007/08:p3).

7.6 NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

A perception exists that one of the reasons why persons with disabilities is not employed is because they are not able to work in a demanding and success driven work environment, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this research. The INDS (1997:2 and 3) also refers to this aspect as one of the main reasons why persons with disabilities are not employed.

Hajras (2002:43) states that society thinks that a disabled person is unable to work because the person is ill and needs rest, and help to heal. Employers lack

confidence in the work of a person with disabilities although the person is qualified. These perceptions lead to the person with disabilities losing confidence and stops thinking that he or she can be of use to him or herself or the family and consequently lose confidence in his or her capacity to work. As a result the person fears applying for a job. If he or she manages to get a job this lack of self-confidence becomes the next constraint.

The validity of this perception will be tested by asking respondents whether employees with disabilities generally are able to work as well as any other employee and whether they are able to do physically strenuous work. The perception also exists that it is more difficult to manage an employee with disabilities because they require special attention.

It will also be tested whether it is perceived that employees with disabilities are absent from work due to illness more often than other employees. The non-accessibility of a workplace is a significant constraint to persons with disabilities and employers may be of the opinion that it is too costly to make a workplace disability friendly. The result of this may be the perception that a *Curriculum Vitae* of a job applicant with disabilities is not considered seriously.

The perception above also relates to the relationship gap between persons with disabilities and persons who are not disabled. According to Silver and Koopman (2000:69) persons without disabilities often feel nervous and uncomfortable in their relationship with persons with disabilities. Historically society has separated these two groups, whether it is in the context of the family, education or the workplace. It is also mentioned by the same authors that all people fear incapacity and our potential inability to deal with the challenges of disability. This fear may be related to our drive to become independent as individuals. Silver and Koopman (2000:79) expresses the view that the most difficult constraints to overcome are the attitudes of people towards persons with disabilities. "Whether these (attitudes) are born from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding or hate, these attitudes keep people from appreciating and experiencing the full potential of a person with a disability".

7.7 ABSENCE OF RELEVANT DISABILITY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND CAPACITY IN ORGANISATIONS

The complexity of disability management and the likelihood of claims of unfair discrimination and unfair labour practice necessitate that organisations should have clear written policies or guidelines on employing persons with disabilities. The questionnaire will probe whether such policies are in place and whether it is used as a guide in making decisions around disability management in the workplace.

It has developed as good practice in South Africa for progressive employers to establish a disability office or a disability ombudsman to whom employees can report suspected discrimination or receive advice about disability issues. The purpose of such office or ombudsman would be to guide the different role-players in an organisation through uncertain areas. It also serves to give confidence to persons with disabilities that the organisation is serious about employing them successfully and that it is not a matter of window-dressing.

The general lack of knowledge related to disability management amongst human resource management practitioners results in the human resource management practitioners not taking the lead in this area. It is often seen that the employment equity programme is established in the human resource management component but the disability management component is established elsewhere, for example in a component with a transformation focus or in the office of the Chief Executive Officer.

The commitment of the different levels of management to the management of disability is critical. The questionnaire will explore these matters.

7.8 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES CONSTRAINING THE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The manner in which employees utilise opportunities which exist in their work environment relates to the manner in which organisations manage their talent. Creating awareness of disability management and the intricacies related thereto is an area of focus in the INDS (1997:51). In most of the policy guidelines as set out in

the INDS (1997) creating awareness is a deliverable to achieve. The emphasis thereon is because a lack of awareness is a significant barrier in the employment of persons with disabilities.

This aspect will be explored in the questionnaire by establishing whether the respondents' organisations provide training in dealing with issues related to the employment of persons with disabilities. Respondents will also be requested to indicate how often they have used the principles taught in the training to guide their decisions at work.

Managing the performance of employees is a challenging process in any organisation. The constraint relating to performance management is the fairness of the performance management process. Uncertainty also exists whether the performance standards to be used for persons with disabilities should be the same as for not disabled employees. Similarly the payment of rewards in terms of a performance management system is also unclear because views around this matter are not consistent. The TAG suggests that unique performance standards must be used but persons with disabilities think differently about this. The questionnaire will explore this matter.

The low employment levels of persons with disabilities can be attributed to the methods of recruitment and the media where advertisements are placed. Analysis has shown that the number of persons with disabilities who apply for posts is very low which raises the question whether persons with disabilities do not actively seek employment. The levels of despondency amongst persons with disabilities for continuously trying to obtain employment and never succeeding may be a contributing factor.

The selection criteria used during the selection process may also be a barrier in the employment of persons with disabilities. Depending on the nature of the disabilities and of the job, more or less effective and relevant selection criteria may be used. The manner in which the selection process is conducted is also a contributing factor. Reasonable accommodation should be made available during the interview to

ensure that the disabled applicant is given a fair and reasonable opportunity to succeed with the application.

Employee retention and exit management are relatively unexplored areas of human resource management practice in South Africa. Reasonable accommodation refers to the steps an employer takes to adjust the work environment to make it possible for an employee with disabilities to be fully functional in performing his or her work. This includes, amongst others, the provision of visual aids to a visually impaired employee, hearing aids to a hearing impaired employee and work environmental adjustments for the physically disabled employee. The question relates to the willingness of employers to reasonably accommodate a disabled employee and the amount of money an employer is willing to spend to accommodate a disabled employee, keeping in mind that some of the initiatives may be costly or perceived to be costly.

A significant barrier in employing persons with disabilities is if the cost to provide reasonable accommodation is economically unjustifiable. The lack of proper policy guidelines creates uncertainty with regard to the meaning of the word “reasonable”. The reasonable accommodation of an employee with disabilities is seen as an unnecessary expense by employers and that it is more expensive to employ people with disabilities than any other employee.

Due to the specialised nature of reasonable accommodation it may be necessary to contract with experts in this area, like occupational therapists, to advise the employer properly. Bester (2005:42) indicates that companies often fear that measures taken to accommodate a disabled person will be costly but that it is not always the case. What these companies need to consider is the significant impact on staff morale and therefore productivity if a co-worker suddenly becomes disabled and is forced to leave. By comparison if the person is rehabilitated and can return to work with the assistance of the employer, it will be motivation for staff.

7.9 THE CONSTRAINTS DERIVED FROM THE UN CONVENTION

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, discussed extensively in Chapter 4 is relevant to the identification of constraints in the employment of persons with disabilities. The activities that state parties should perform have been developed to address the constraints that persons with disabilities experience in finding employment. This convention is the latest authority which sets the tone on what should be done to ensure disability equity in the workplace. The determination as set out in the convention and the constraints that it aims to address are set out in Table 28.

Table 28: Employment related constraints derived from the UN Convention

CONSTRAINT THAT THE CONVENTION AIMS TO DEAL WITH	DETERMINATION BY THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
<p>The right of persons with disabilities to work is not recognised. This constraint is prevalent due to the medical model thinking which dominated the thinking some years ago. The perception that persons with disabilities are less competent due to their disability is also the cause of this constraint. The recognition of the existence of this constraint reflects on talent management as well as the role of the human resource and labour relations management practitioner in employing persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>Recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others.</p>
<p>The right to the opportunity to gain a living in the open labour market, out of own choice, is not always possible for persons with disabilities in South Africa. The perception that persons with disabilities are less competent narrows the labour market significantly.</p>	<p>Recognise the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.</p>
<p>The right to continue to work after a disability has been acquired is not an established right in South Africa. It can be regarded as breach of the employment contract if an employee is no longer as able as the day he or she got employed. The South African legislative and policy framework merely advises employers to consider alternative employment or to reasonably accommodate such employee.</p>	<p>Safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work, including those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation to, <i>inter alia</i> prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions.</p>
<p>The equality clause in the Constitution, 1996 specifically protects the rights of persons with</p>	<p>Protect the rights of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable</p>

CONSTRAINT THAT THE CONVENTION AIMS TO DEAL WITH	DETERMINATION BY THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
<p>disabilities in all respects, including working conditions, equal opportunities and related matters. Employers offer employment on conditions they see fit. The high unemployment levels dictate that any job will be accepted, whether at a lower level/remuneration or not. The provision of making conditional job offers to persons with disabilities also leaves room for persons with disabilities to be exploited.</p>	<p>conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment and the redress of grievances.</p>
<p>In practice very few persons with disabilities refer labour disputes. As indicated in Chapter 5 no case concerning disability equity has been considered by the Constitutional Court. The SAHRC as well as the Labour Court have dealt with a number of cases. Persons with disabilities generally have not been sufficiently empowered to exercise their rights, although the mechanisms exist for them to do so.</p>	<p>Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others.</p>
<p>General technical and vocational guidance programmes do exist in South Africa but they are not well developed and sophisticated. Efforts are being made to improve the quality of these programmes but the efforts will only show results in the long term.</p>	<p>Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training.</p>
<p>During 2009 two such programmes have been established. One such programme has been established for the South African Public Service and another by the Services SETA. Both programmes have significant potential but limited results to date.</p>	<p>Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment. Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector.</p>
<p>Due to levels of poverty amongst persons with disabilities starting an own business is extremely difficult. Start-up capital is difficult to obtain without guarantees. The Ntsika Enterprise Promotion Agency discussed in Chapter 5 aims to address this but the level of impact to date is very limited.</p>	<p>Promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting of own business.</p>

(Source: Column 1 summarised from UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, November 2007).

7.10 REASONS FOR PRIORITISING DISABILITY MANAGEMENT BY EMPLOYERS

The comprehensive discussion concerning disability management in the foregoing chapters has not articulated why it is necessary to employ persons with disabilities. The discussion of social security as a field of study reflects on the responsibility of nations to support those individuals who are unable to provide for themselves and their families due to a variety of reasons. This raises the social aspect of employing persons with disabilities.

The South African Constitutional and legal framework provide for the protection of the human rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and legislate for the affirmation of persons with disabilities as a designated group in the EEA. The South African legal framework therefore provides for the employment of persons with disabilities.

The importance of being able to work and earn a living has been identified by authors like Zadek and Scott-Parker as very important in the sense of self-worth of an individual. This is equally, if not more relevant to persons with disabilities. Having to live in a physical and social environment which is constraining daily living affects a person's sense of self-worth and belonging. Having to live on social grants also suggests that a person is unable to provide for him or herself, further affecting a person's sense of self-worth (Zadek and Scott-Parker, 2001:3).

Fear of persons with disabilities (Zadek and Scott-Parker, 2001:3, Silver and Koopman 2000) and negative perceptions of the inability of persons with disabilities have a deep rooted cause. Persons build protective mechanisms to hide from their own fears. The avoidance and fear of persons with disabilities is rooted in the fear that each person has, namely that they might be dependent on other persons for a living, to earn money and to be looked after.

Arising from the aforementioned constraints and the vision of taking care of persons with disabilities society at large and employers in particular, should show their employees and clients that they are taking on the responsibility of providing a safety

net to its employees. Should the employee become disabled, the employer would not immediately terminate the employee’s contract, but would provide a safety net. This would ease the fear all persons have of becoming disabled which would reflect on the social responsibility of the employer.

The reasons for prioritising disability management are presented in Table 29 below:

Table 29: Benefits of prioritising disability management by employers

<p>Economic benefits:</p> <p>Persons with disabilities -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are productive and reliable; ➤ have developed problem solving skills; ➤ stay longer with an employer; ➤ spending power of persons with disabilities is considerable; ➤ organisations accessible to disabled staff will also be accessible to disabled customers; ➤ access untapped reserves of talent; ➤ promote new sources of ideas, creativity and problem solving; and ➤ build hard loyalty and distinctiveness by valuing all customers and employees as individuals.
<p>Social security benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unemployment amongst persons with disabilities is significantly higher than for the rest of the population; ➤ loss to society of production capacity of those who cannot find employment; and ➤ spending on disability grants is costing tax payers a lot of money with little production value.
<p>Self-worth benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making a contribution in society by working adds to the self-worth of a person with disabilities; ➤ social cohesion is built if members of society feel they belong and participate on an equal basis; and ➤ families are the basis of a cohesive society and persons with disabilities can strengthen families with this dedication.
<p>Employer benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Staff morale and team development are enhanced when employers show they care; and ➤ enhance the reputation of the employer internally and externally creating greater loyalty to the employment brand.

(Adopted Zadek and Scott-Parker (2001:3) and Silver and Koopman (2000).

The comments by Slabbert (2004:1) that companies worldwide have no choice but to address the impact and the reality of globalisation if they want to survive in the “global village”, raises a dimension of economic survival of business which is relevant in discussing the necessity to employ persons with disabilities.

Zadek and Scott-Parker (2001:3) emphasise that tomorrow's most successful societies will be those that most effectively meet the dual challenges of social cohesion and economic competitiveness. They also add that globalisation has accelerated and reinforced the need to embrace diversity.

7.11 SUMMARY

The contribution of this chapter to the research process and the development of a strategy to employ persons with disabilities can be summarised as follows:

- Persons with disabilities live in a hostile, disabling world which is largely designed to suit people who are not disabled (<http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70265>).
- Constraints do differ from situation to situation and employers should consider and also assist in dealing with external factors with which persons with disabilities need to deal with on a daily basis.
- The nature of the specific disability and the fact that the social and physical environments are designed for persons without disabilities cause constraints which prevent persons with disabilities from leading a normal life.
- Disability management is a complex field of research because the subject matter is not easily accessible to the average person.
- The limited research that has been performed into disability management in the workplace by the human resource management and the labour relations management fields of research further contribute to the complexity of disability management.
- It is difficult to get an understanding of the terminology related to disability management. Specifically the extent to which the definition of persons with disabilities assists in dealing with issues of disability, is doubtful.
- The general lack of knowledge related to disability management amongst human resource and labour relations management practitioners results in them not taking the lead in this area.
- Lack of awareness is perhaps the most significant barrier in the employment of persons with disabilities.
- The South African disability management policy framework is complex and the fragmented nature thereof makes the practical implementation difficult.

- Negative perceptions lead to employers lacking confidence in the work of a person with disabilities although the person is qualified.
- Persons with disabilities lose confidence in their capacity to work and as a result the person fears applying for a job.
- The non-accessibility of a workplace is a significant constraint to persons with disabilities and employers may be of the opinion that it is too costly to make a workplace disability friendly.
- Constraints relating to performance management are the fairness of the performance management process and uncertainty whether the performance standards to be used for persons with disabilities should be the same as for not disabled employees.
- Low employment levels of persons with disabilities can be attributed to the methods of recruitment and the media where advertisements are placed.
- Selection criteria used during the selection process may also be a barrier in the employment of persons with disabilities.
- The right of persons with disabilities to work is not recognised.
- The right to continue to work after a disability has been acquired is not an established right in South Africa.
- General technical and vocational guidance programmes do exist in South Africa but they are not well developed and sophisticated.
- Due to levels of poverty amongst persons with disabilities starting an own business is extremely difficult because start-up capital is difficult to obtain without guarantees.
- The importance of being able to work and earn a living has been identified by authors like Zadek and Scott-Parker as very important to the sense of self-worth of an individual.
- Benefits to employ persons with disabilities have been identified and categorised in economic, social, and self-worth benefits as well as benefits to employers. These benefits justify the prioritisation of the employment of persons with disabilities by employers and human resource management practitioners.

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