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A Systems Analysis of Factors that Lead to the
Successful Employment of People with a Disability

Sydney Medical School

The University of Sydney

A thesis submitted to fulfil requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2018

For you mum and dad!

Declaration of Originality.

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge the content of this thesis is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Name: Peter Smith

Signature

List of Presentations and Conference Proceedings During Candidature

This is a list of events where this thesis work was presented.

- Smith, P. (2015) A systems analysis of factors that lead to the employment of people with intellectual disabilities in Australia. Paper presented at the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID). Melbourne. November.
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(Abstract)

Abstract

TITLE: An Examination of Factors that Lead to the Successful Employment of People with a Disability.

BACKGROUND: Disability Employment Services (DES) is the primary vehicle in Australia charged with promoting and supporting successful open employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This research examined the client consultant dynamic to see what factors were at play in promoting successful employment.

METHOD: Research was undertaken using a Multiple Perspective Design that resides within the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology. Clients with a wide variety of ID/DD (n=24) and Employment Consultants (n=23) were interviewed using semi-structured interviews in small group settings. The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) that allowed for themes to be developed.

RESULTS: The research highlighted five primary themes: Relationships, Processes, Compliance Driven Systems, Employers and the Environment. These themes provide a base to develop an understanding of some of the factors influencing employment outcomes amongst the client participant base and the disability employment consultants. The results highlighted disparities in perceived abilities, attitudes and a lack of understanding between the system participants. The results also highlighted the influence of ecology on

employment outcomes and a high level of disequilibrium within the employment system and environment.

IMPLICATIONS: The inability of the disability employment system to use known evidence-based processes that support clients with ID/DD and consultants has resulted in a system that lacks any real understanding of the client and consultant needs, placing primacy on compliance and system needs ahead of the stated purpose of the program which is to support people with a disability to gain and maintain meaningful employment consistent with their capacity and career aspirations. The research highlights the importance of relationships in creating real understanding of the client to supporting employment outcomes.

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There are many people that I'd like to acknowledge and thank for setting me on this pathway. My initial involvement with the University of Sydney came through the enrollment process into the Master of Health Science (Developmental Disability) and meetings with Dr. Bronwyn Hemsley. Her encouragement saw me enroll and then through the guidance of Emeritus Professor Trevor Parmenter, Professor Roger Stancliffe and Dr. Russell Shuttleworth complete the Masters' program. I am particularly indebted to these three gentlemen whose counsel and enthusiasm made the process enjoyable and career defining. Each in their way made my entry into research in this field a life-changing experience. I value them today as friends and colleagues. It was these three gentlemen that put me on the course to my PhD, through their enthusiastic encouragement to dive in and contribute. They uniquely saw that I had something deeper to offer.

The support, encouragement, guidance and expertise of my supervisory team created an environment in which doing research was fun, thought provoking and challenging. At times, so many light-bulb moments occurred, it would have been easy to go off in a multitude of directions at once. It was through them drawing me to focus that made this thesis possible. This project was under the supervision of Emeritus Professor Trevor Parmenter, Professor Patricia O'Brien and Professor Vivienne Riches. All three in their unique way offered differing views and guidance that forced me to think critically for myself. For that, I will be forever grateful and in their debt. Trevor, in particular, allowed me to

discover and have ah-ha moments by subtly suggesting items that I should read without actually telling me why.

The PhD journey is often described as a lonely adventure, and certainly, there were times that I felt isolated and very much alone. In hindsight, I can see that these were real opportunities for self-reflection and deep thinking about what I was trying to achieve. I want to particularly acknowledge the support that Professor Patricia O'Brien played through allowing me to be involved with the Centre for Disability Studies and to Professor Vivienne Riches whose ongoing support at the CDS made this possible. Circling back to Trevor, his invaluable support, knowledge, gentle admonishment and encouragement to explore – like Captain Kirk – new frontiers, has taken me on a path that has brought into my life a collection of colleagues and now workmates who have and will forever change my life and those that we seek to assist in creating a better life for themselves through our own research foundation. It's difficult to measure the impact of someone like Trevor, but I'd be certain that his influence and by default the people that he has changed are having a substantial impact on the global community. Trevor has been and will remain a significant influence on my work, and for that, I'm eternally grateful.

I want to thank my wife, Karen and our adult children: Ben, Cassie and Lauren who have both encouraged and supported my learning journey. Karen has suffered through this journey with me and has stoically remained silent when I was venting, warming when I needed support and above all patient when I said only another year. Now that's true love!

Finally, I'd like to recognise the support of my late pet, Bob the Dog who sat beside me for all those years and knew when I needed to be taken out for fresh air.

Presentation style

When considering how this thesis was to be written and presented, I was acutely aware of the need to make the research accessible for it to have any benefit and influence on practice. One criticism of academic research and papers is that they lack praxis. Academic research papers are often unfathomable to understand by lay people and workers in the field charged with implementing new practices. I consider it one of the goals of this research and indeed the reason behind the research is actually to influence practice. For this to happen, the research writing must be written in a style that is accessible.

With guidance from my primary supervisor, I believe that I have found a balance between the need to write in a pure academic style to satisfy the academic requirements of APA Six, while also fulfilling my desire to make this thesis accessible.

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Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTU	Australian Trades and Labour Council
ADE	Australian Disability Industry
AIRC	Australian Industrial Relations Council
ALF	Australian Labour Federation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMEP	Adult Migration English Program
CCAC	Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission
CDT	Critical Disability Theory
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CRS	Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations
DEN	Disability Employment Network
DES	Disability Employment Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
DMS	Disability Management Services
DSP	Disability Support Pension
DSS	Department of Social Services
EBP	Evidence Based Practices
EASt	Employment Service Assessment
ESME	Equilibrium Systems Model of Employment
ESS	Employment Support Services
ESA	Employment Service Area

FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCA	Job Capacity Assessment
JSCI	Job Seeker Classification Instrument
LRC	Labor Representation Committee
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NEIS	New Enterprise Investment Scheme
NESA	National Employment Services Australia
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PC	Productivity Commission
PCP	Person Centred Practice
PSP	Personal Support Program
RAAF	Royal Australian Airforce
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment
SQT	Social Quality Theory
SWS	Supported Wage System
TAPS	Train and Place Service
TLC	Trades and Labour Council
UFL	United Federation of Labour
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability
VRS	Vocational Rehabilitation Services

WHO World Health Organisation

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Chapter One

Introduction

A. Introduction

In this chapter I seek to outline some of the issues around disability and employment and why research this subject. Disability Employment has been a topical issue in society for many years, but with the advent of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) Neoliberalism (Soldatic & Chapman, 2010; Grover & Soldatic, 2013) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 (The United Nations, 2006) (UNCRPD) and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) it now occupies a prominent position in mainstream consciousness. Employment or lack of employment often at the forefront of community discussion.

Disability rights (Soldatic & Chapman, 2010) is an interesting issue, certainly in the context of work, one worth exploring. In modern society, we would assume that everyone would share the same rights and entitlements. People with a disability have historically the recipients of community care and sadly what comes hand in hand with this is diminished rights. In common with other welfare beneficiaries and, under the influence of Neoliberal philosophy and policy, people with a disability have moved from being passive recipients of benefits to being seen as having a mutual obligation to contribute to receive benefits (Bessant, 2000; Bessant & Watts, 2002; Grover & Soldatic, 2013).

The idea that people with a disability might want to work is not a new idea; however how to achieve this goal has been something of a moving target over the past 70 years. The logic behind sending people with disability off to farms and sheltered workshops in the middle of the last century indeed in the context of the medical or curative model of disability made sense. If we could not cure, then menial or simulated work seemed an appropriate method of “allowing” people with disability to be seen, as having a valued role in society (Nirje, 1999).

World War Two played a role in changing expectations due in part to the idea of rehabilitation, as result of the significant numbers of ex-service personnel returning with a semi-permanent and permanent disability, the outcome of which in Australia was the establishment of the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) to address this issue. It raises the problem of classifying disability to ensure that resources (capital) are applied to those with the most need. One could argue that the opposite is also true in that resource allocation is being distributed to people with the highest likelihood of returning to the workforce, thereby limiting the possibility that even the most disabled can attain some level of work capacity in the community. Indeed, the rise of sheltered workshops or Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE's) as they are now known to address the issue of the "unemployable" gives some weight to this proposition. There is, however, a real need to classify disability directly from the perspective of the need to understand and allocate appropriate supports to ensure that an individual can have a better quality of life outcome.

Employment is not merely an economic discussion but also encompasses the psychological and philosophical dimensions, the sense of self and identity (Whyte, 2001). It would be easy to look at employment through the lens of economic rationalism only, but this is short-sighted. The research methodology chosen for this study is rooted firmly in Existential Philosophy (Jacobsen, 2007; Spinelli, 2007) which highlights the subjective nature of our existence and the meaning and sense of identity that employment can help the individual to create.

Disability does not exist in isolation, but as part of the rich tapestry of society (Dempsey & Nankervis, 2006). As society evolves, so does our understanding of disability and where it fits in mainstream society, if at all. Social scientists have been developing theories about disability and society, which has given rise to Critical Disability Theory (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009), in an attempt to explore these connections. Most recently in Europe, there has been a concerted push to measure disability employment outcomes through the lens of Social Quality Theory (SQT) (Lin, Ward, & van der Maesen, 2009). In its early days, this perspective promises to shed new light on the benefits of employment across the domains of Social Cohesion, Social Inclusion, Social Empowerment and Socio-economic Security. These paradigms are significant shifts from the Medical Model of disability that prevailed through most of the past century, which took a curative approach to deal with a disability.

B. Research Rationale

This purpose of this thesis is to explore factors that influence successful outcomes for people with disabilities seeking employment and who utilise the

disability employment service system, administered by the Commonwealth Government Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and its successor, the Department of Social Services (DSS). Disability Employment Services is now under the guidance of the Commonwealth Government Department of Human Services, post-2013 Australian Commonwealth Government elections.

The Disability Employment Service – Employment Support Service (DES-ESS) is the focus of this research. It is this service that is responsible for supporting people with a permanent disability to find a job. This particular aspect of disability employment is likely to come under increasing pressure as a result of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which also provides employment assistance and support to clients with a work capacity of fewer than eight hours per week. Allied with this is the push to see people with a disability who are employed within the Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) system move to open employment in the community, essentially real work for a real wage in an integrated community setting.

Collectively there are three disability employment systems (DES, ADE, NDIS) changing, which offers the perfect opportunity to re-imagine how disability employment programs function. As recently as November 2015, the Commonwealth Government Department of Social Services (DSS) flagged a desire to see a coherent and coordinated approach to the future of disability employment in Australia. (DSS, 2015)

C. The Starting Point of this Thesis

In 2006, I started work in direct support working with clients with intellectual and developmental disability and comorbid mental health conditions. During this time, very few clients who expressed a wish to work were offered the opportunity to do so. Often staff employed in direct support were told to pursue this client objective in their own time. Sometime later I commenced work in employment services and was struck by the lack of knowledge by disability employment staff about evidence-based supports such as Active Support, which works through the method of support little and often to aid skill development (Mansell, Beadle-Brown, Ashman, & Ockenden, 2004). Attendance and observation of intake interviews revealed that staff had limited understanding of mental health and insufficient understanding of disability in general.

Working in the field assisting with on the job or post-placement support demonstrated that staff had little interest in applying evidence-based practices such as Active Support that would allow the client to grow and develop any form of independence. It has been my experience that post-placement support consisted of the disability employment staff undertaking the client's job roles to ensure that the client stayed in work and that the disability service provider reached employment outcome milestones that were claimable. Attempts to convince the staff to apply Active Support models were met with responses such as "we do not have time for that" and "it is a waste of time". Despite a compelling evidence base in existence for Active Support in the lifestyle support services to aid skill development, there was little interest in applying these practices.

Sometime later I went to work for the disability employment service providers peak body in a senior role. I found this was also lacking a focus on the client, as the peak mainly saw the Commonwealth Government as the service providers client and not the actual client with a disability. In essence, "he who pays the bills is the client". In hindsight an understandable position, given that the role of peak bodies is to represent the interests of their members.

What this continued to highlight was a lack of the client's voice in decisions about themselves, decisions that have a profound effect on the likelihood of the client attaining valued status in a society that values the employed over welfare recipients as a pathway to citizenship. It is also evident in the DES system and the provider rating system that places no value on the client's voice in determining the quality of the service provider.

Working for the DES peak body presented the opportunity to visit and talk with disability employment staff nationwide, at which point I discovered that the reality of disability employment is a system that is in the main staffed by people with little practical knowledge of disability. Staff who respond to clients in no universal manner, with little evidence-based practice and an extraordinary range of practices ranging from the ethically and morally appropriate to very questionable practices. In practice, the sector is lacking a standardised, evidence-based method of practice, with the use of evidence based practice left to individual providers to implement and monitor at their discretion. Evidence-based best practice is mostly the domain of those providers that feel the need to invest in both research and evidence-based training.

The reality of the disability employment sector is that it is compliance focused, with little knowledge of the clients lived experience of the disability employment system.

It was during my time working for the peak body that I started to research what evidence for practice existed overseas and commenced a conversation with Professor Emeritus Trevor Parmenter about disability employment in Australia. It is this conversation and frustration with the system that gave rise to this research.

During this research, I have been able to distil a direction that I hope will provide some of the answers and evidence that will lead to improved service systems and client outcomes, with reference to the voice of the client and consultant in customising the employment process. This research will use the client and consultant voice to examine their experience with the Disability Employment System, while also highlighting factors that support employment outcomes and what is needed to support a dynamic disability employment system.

D. Thesis Outline

This thesis is set out to provide the reader with an understanding of the development of employment in Australia from Federation (1901) to the present day with reference to selected international events. Open employment for non-disabled people provides the groundwork upon which to build the history of

disability employment up to the present and the setting against which this research is based.

Chapter One provides some background to the research and outlines the research rationale and motivation for this work, along with details of what is in the following chapters.

Chapter Two sets out to provide some historical context for the development of modern labour with reference to selected events domestically and internationally. It highlights the role of wage awards, the unions and significant events such as wars in setting the scene that gave rise to the role of government in setting policy that supported the development of the modern employment system.

Chapter Three sets out to look at the development of disability employment in Australia by examining the policy drivers, service provision trends and the actual service itself, along with some of the participants in the system. This chapter gives weight to the research questions and sets out those issues that are the focus of this study.

Chapter Four will outline a frame of reference that encapsulated broader philosophical and theoretical issues that influence our discussion and the development of disability rights. This point of reference will help to outline the research problems and the questions arising from these issues while highlighting

the social, political and economic forces at work shaping our current evidence base and practices that underpin disability employment.

Chapter Five looks at the Methodology and Research Procedures. It is in large part procedural, but it does provide the necessary background to why the research method was chosen, along with details of the study participants, the data collection method and strategy for analysing the data.

Chapter Six details the analytical process and contains the detailed analysis of the data. It is the heart of the research process, giving voice to the participants and allowing for a thorough examination of the issues raised, categorised by themes. The major themes are explored in detail through their subordinate themes. Without any direction or desire on my behalf, the data analysis developed its hierarchy of themes.

Chapter Seven is the discussion and recommendations, and it is in this chapter that I was able to express my observations and recommendations freely. I hope that readers will see the conclusions as appropriate and timely. This chapter finishes with a summary of the key findings.

E. Data Collection Issues

The starting point for the data collection period of the study coincided with the start of the new DES contracts that commenced in March 2013. This saw

approximately sixty providers from the previous program exit the industry and new providers enter, while the previous five-star providers (those providers whose performance against the DES key performance indicators are rated at 40% above the average provider performance) had their contracts renewed and their service areas increased by twenty-five per cent. This presented some issues in that some organisations that had indicated that they wished to be involved in the study ceased trading. Two organisations in Sydney had however indicated a desire to participate and agreed to provide access to staff and potential clients.

The data used in this research were collected between August 2013 and September 2014 across various locations in Metropolitan Sydney. At that time, close to 150,000 people were using the services of disability employment service providers through access to the disability management stream (DMS) and the employment support service (ESS).

F. Position statement

It would be folly of me to suggest that the observations are based purely on the research data, as to say so would suggest that I live in isolation. As a human being, I live in relationship and have used my best efforts to minimise that influence. However, I acknowledge that I have been influenced by being in relationship with my environment, people and the systems that I live with.

Chapter Two

Setting the Scene – A Historical Perspective on Modern Employment

A. Introduction

This chapter will provide a short history of employment and a select number of transition points and the events that gave rise to these developments in the history of labour and employment in Australia, along with the types of employment that developed out of those economic and societal transitions. This chapter will also contrast the history of employment in Australia against a limited number of global events, such as the development of award wages, seeking to provide a background against which the development of disability employment has taken place. A detailed examination of global employment history is outside the scope of this chapter and the research topic.

Open employment is the term used in Australia and other countries that refer to the employment of people with disabilities or barriers in the open or competitive workforce. Supported employment is a term that is used in some countries to describe the same thing and can be confused with sheltered workshops or disability enterprises as they are referred to in Australia.

All references to supported employment in this document refer to open employment, or what is referred to as employment in an integrated community setting work for a real wage.

B. What is Employment?

An examination of employment needs to begin with a precise definition of what is employment. For this research, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of employment as stated below has been used. The ABS definition implies employment is undertaken with the expectation of an exchange of labour for financial return.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defined employment as:
All persons 15 years of age and over who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm (comprising employees, employers and own account workers); or
 - worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. contributing family workers); or
 - were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
 - away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; or
 - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four-week period to the end of the reference week; or
 - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement; or
 - on strike or locked out; or
 - on workers' compensation and expected to be returning to their job; or
 - were employers or own-account workers, who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.
- (6102.0.55.001 - Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2006) www.abs.gov.au accessed 11/04/15. These definitions remain unchanged as at 4/ 2015.

By this definition, anyone employed for one hour or more is classified as being in employment. This definition is broadly consistent with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/ International Labour

Organisation (ILO) definition of employment. The ILO within the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE), known as ICSE-93 defines paid employment as those jobs where the incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) employment contracts, which give them a basic remuneration. (Hoffmann, 2003). The ABS acknowledges that their definition is based on the ICSE-93 definition.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6102.0.55.001Chapter112013>. Accessed 10/6/15).

The ICSE-93 definition recognised that wages and salary may also be paid by commission from sales, by piece rates, bonuses or in-kind payments such as food, housing and training consistent with the Australian definition that mentions in-kind payments. Critical to both definitions is the expectation of an exchange of labour for a basic wage or salary.

The accepted definitions of employment, however, do not take into account that "work", a term interchanged with employment and considered the same, may have a different meaning. For instance, many people undertake work of a volunteer nature with no expectation of remuneration. This would not be classified in the strictest sense as employment, but it does provide a return to the individual and society that could be defined as social capital, along with essential benefits such as social inclusion, meaning and ideas around social justice.

In that sense, meaningful employment should encapsulate personal values if it assists an individual to achieve their ambitions, supported by the desire for

personal health, security, well-being, self-image and self-actualisation. It raises the question as to whether we have a precise definition of what is “employment” and what is “work”? Do we have an adequate measure of employment or work that measures the benefit of employment or work for an individual other than pure financial gain?

In the mid-nineties, Schmid (1995) introduced the concept of Transitional Labour Markets (TLM) that proposed a different approach to how we view employment. Schmid suggested that our opinion of employment, and in particular full employment, should change to reflect a more sustainable view of employment that included domestic and voluntary work and that people are always in transition that included training and /or the accumulation of competencies during these changes. Unemployment can be viewed as another career transition to be managed, taking what could be described as a holistic view of the individual and the institutions that support transition through policies (Brzinsky-Fay, 2010; Recic and De Bruijn, 2006).

It underscores the role of employment and training as a pathway to inclusion in society. This is also consistent with the view that continuous learning is part of the process of transitional labour markets and an aim of social policy (Schmid, 1995), potentially highlighting a better pathway from school to employment by combining work preparation with school transition services pre-school exit rather than our current approach of post-school transition to work programs which commence post-school. It supports the proposition that school transition programs should have employment as a potential outcome shaped by the

individuals desire, not merely by economic philosophy (Schmid, 2007), particularly given that school is mostly about preparing someone for a life in the community that includes the expectation that employment or work is a normal part of living in the community. Rezi and De Bruijn (2006) noted that Schmid's Transitional Labor Market model is based on;

...the assumption that by the right support of the institutions, individuals should be facilitated to make smooth transitions from one life domain to the other. The smooth transitions between life domains would improve the functioning of the labour markets and would also offer individuals the possibility to find an optimal combination between their working careers, care duties, education and free time. (p2)

C. The Evolution of Modern Employment and Catalysts for Change

a. Minimum Wages and Industrial Awards

It could be argued that the current employment system in Australia had its birth in the 1907 Harvester award. The idea of a fair and reasonable wage date back to the late 1800's. However, it was not until 1907 when H. V. McKay applied to the Court of Australia to have the wages paid to his staff declared fair and reasonable for unskilled workers, that a legal definition came into being (Bray, 2013).

Mr Justice Higgins, the President of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, determined that an appropriate standard for the minimum wage be one that allowed for a family of five to live as a human being in a civilised community, which Justice Higgins based on the condition of frugal comfort.

<https://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/intguide/law/harvester.pdf>.

Accessed 01/04/2016).

Justice Higgins based his idea of fair and reasonable with fair referring to the “mode” that the agreement was obtained and reasonable meaning that the wage was not out of proportion to the work being done.

In the case of the Harvester declaration, an amount of seven shillings per day was deemed reasonable for a family of five to live in Melbourne or the equivalent of \$255 per week in current inflation-adjusted terms today. Additional or secondary wages could be paid in recognition of skills, loadings and other special considerations peculiar to an industry or occupation as determined by the authorities. The inflation-adjusted figure, while unlikely to be adequate to live on today bears a substantial similarity to current unemployment benefits.

In 1937, the Australian Commonwealth Government adopted the basic wage principle, and the definition of the family unit was removed (Hancock, 2013). The original conception of the minimum wage was one of a family wage, whereas today it is likely that minimum wage earners are more likely to supplement higher wage earners within the family group. Popular opinion would have it that minimum wage earners are situated in the poorest families, however this is not borne out by data that highlight that whilst 30% of minimum wage earners reside in the poorest 20% of families, 25% are living in the richest 40% of households (Bray, 2013). It highlights the changing nature of employment and the complex character of any discussion regarding changes to minimum wages.

Award wages differ from minimum wages, with award wages being used to describe the rates of pay for an industry or occupation, as opposed to minimum wages which put a floor under base rates of pay, sometimes referred to as minimum award wages. Following on from the 1997 Safety Net Review, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) introduced a new Federal Minimum Wage for people working under Federal Awards and later given universal application to non-federal award employees in 2006. Wage parity for women was achieved in 1972 when the Australian Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (CCAC) ruled that men and women undertaking similar work, having similar value were eligible for the same rates of pay (National Wage and Equal Pay Cases, 1972), something that people with a disability regardless of gender are still regularly denied. Up until this point in time, the original philosophy of the basic wage as one sufficient to support a family unit had prevailed.

b. International Developments

In 1938 the US Federal Government introduced the *Fair Labor Standards Act*, which prescribed a minimum hourly rate and was applicable only to employees that worked in industry engaged in cross-border or interstate commerce, essentially a Federal Award. Subsequent amendments in the 1960's extended the award to cover employees in large retail and service enterprises, state and local government employees, along with other service industries such as dry cleaning, restaurants and farms. The US Federal *Fair Labor Standards Act* (1938) (FLSA) has its origins in the 1937 *National Industrial Recovery Act* introduced by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of the depression era economic recovery

programs known as the New Deal. Mayer, Collins and Bradley (2013) reported that:

At the time of the Act's passage, the government found that some employers who paid substandard wages caused a decrease in wages within their respective industries as other companies tried to compete in the marketplace with low-priced goods. The government also found that lowered wages caused one-third of the U.S. population to be ill-nourished, ill-clad, and ill-housed. To counter these conditions, in 1938 Congress established a minimum wage of \$0.25 an hour, gradually increasing to \$0.40 an hour in 1945 (page 1).

This is roughly equivalent to US\$4.20 today. Additionally, Mayer et al. (2013) noted that part of the motivation behind the Act was to set conditions under which children could work stating;

“Not only was oppressive child labour considered immoral, as children often worked at the cost of their health and education, but Congress also believed that the lower wages earned by children drove down the wages of adult workers” (Page 1).

This example from the USA highlights the dangers of driving wages down, in that a possible outcome will be poverty, which carries with it higher levels of government support. It would also signal that for people with a disability who are routinely denied access to award paying wages, employment without

adequate wages would have little economic benefit and may be akin to working in a sheltered workshop or ADE.

In common with Australia, the US also has some state-based awards. In 1938, the US government found a link between reduced wages and reduced social and health outcomes. In recent times the Australian Commonwealth Government has pushed the argument that higher wages, particularly penalty rates led to a reduction in employment and that by reducing penalty rates or wages it will result in an increase in employment. While there may be some philosophical merit in this argument, there has been no mention of the reduction in outcomes demonstrated in the Mayer et al. (2013) report and the consequent cost to the community.

It could also be argued that a strong case for increased employment as an outcome for a reduction in wages is yet to be made, particularly if the reduction is accompanied by a cost to the community. This did not stop the Australian Commonwealth Government using the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Workplace Relations Framework (2015) to argue for a reduction in penalty rates as an antidote to weak employment growth over the past two years. This argument is very much tied to political ideology in Australia, rather than evidence.

In the United Kingdom between 1888 and 1890, an investigation by the British House of Lords into the conditions of employment in the sweating system (paper, lace, weaving industries) produced a definition of a sweatshop. It was

characterised by unusually low rates of wages, excessive hours of labour and unsanitary workplaces. What is interesting is that a sweatshop was defined as any of these conditions in an exaggerated or extreme form (Holcombe, 1910). In the United Kingdom after the turn of the century, Winston Churchill, the then President of the Board of Trade in the UK, introduced the Trade Boards Act (1909), which allowed the government to establish a board in any industry that had meagre rates of pay for setting minimum hourly and equivalent piece rates (Deakin & Green, 2009). The act was expressly designed to set minimum conditions in what was known as the “sweated industries”, initially being established for the industries of tailoring, paper-box making, lace finishing and chain making.

Churchill was also responsible for the Labour Exchanges Act (1909), which established services for assisting unemployed people to find work.

Notably, Australia had the Victorian Factories and Shops Act 1896, which gave rise to the Wages Boards that established the state-based first minimum wage in Victoria, Australia (Fair Work Commission, 2017), while New Zealand established the principle of minimum wages with the New Zealand Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1894 (New Zealand Legal Information Institute, 2017).

D. The Organisation of Labour and the Trade Union Movement

a. Organised Labour and the Union Movement

While modern folklore has it that the Eureka Stockade uprising of 1854 of independent goldfield workers objecting to government mining licences (Eureka Stockade, 2017) gave rise to the development of labour in Australia into organised unions or trade groups, the actual organisation of labour has a much more gentle and broader evolution.

Highly skilled workers until the late 1890's were members of craft associations that were organised to increase wages and lower work hours, as personified by the Stonemasons Society in Sydney whose actions in 1855 gave rise to the eight-hour day in New South Wales. In 1856, Stonemasons in Melbourne went on strike and marched from their work site at Melbourne University to Parliament, with this direct action resulting in achieving an eight-hour workday and no reduction in pay for Victorian workers (Cahill, 2007). It is this campaign that is viewed as the beginnings of unionisation in Australia (Cahill, 2007).

Around the same time, Friendly Societies came into existence in Australia to provide welfare benefits to workers at a time when sickness benefits, unemployment benefits and accident benefits were not available to the average worker. The first cooperative societies in Australia were established in the 1840's when English migrants with similar affiliations in England set-up Friendly Societies to provide similar benefits to those that they enjoyed in England. The present-day Australian Unity Friendly Society has its origins in Melbourne when

in 1840 Augustus Greeves, a member of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows established the Australian Felix Lodge with Thomas Strode.

In the latter part of the 1800's craft associations and later unions, broadened their membership base to include unskilled workers, virtually the start of industry-based unions, while at the same time rural workers began to organise.

Up until the mid-1800's, workplace conditions in Australia was governed by the New South Wales Master and Servant Act (1828), which made it an offence for any free servant to leave their place of employment without permission. Any person that left without permission ran the risk of punishment by prison or the treadmill. The NSW Act had its origins in the English Act, which found its way too many British colonies. The various states of Australia remained governed by the NSW Act until replacing it with their acts, with many still in existence until the early 1900's.

In Queensland from the mid-1860's to the mid-1880's, union membership was fostered by employers in part due to the harmonious relationship between employers and unions, primarily in the building and metal trades and to a lesser extent in the retail sector (Bowden, 2009). It was primarily driven by the twin self-interests of retaining control over and monopolising skilled labour and the need to reduce opening hours in retail to lower costs without any impact on revenue. It was out of this cooperative relationship that the first mass membership union emerged when in 1878, the Federated Seaman's Union of

Australia (Brisbane) led by William Galloway organised a strike to protest Chinese labour involvement in coastal shipping (Bowden, 2009).

This protest was an outstanding success with the Australian Steam Navigation Company reemploying union members. By contrast, the 1875 organisation of the Shearers Union in Queensland under the leadership of Captain Smith from the Volunteer Rifle Corps failed dismally and disappeared until reorganising in 1889. William Galloway in 1885 successfully created a formal arrangement of unions and established the Trades and Labour Council (TLC) to arbitrate and settle labour disputes in Queensland. In effect, the TLC was trying to replace the system of voluntary industrial relations by establishing a formal mechanism for resolving conflicts between labour and capital. This process had begun in NSW in the 1870's.

The establishment of Trade and Labour Councils in the 1870's and formal union recognition in NSW through the 1881 Trade Union Act gave rise to unions as corporate legal entities. Legislation such as the Industrial Arbitration Act 1901 in NSW to regulate wages through wage boards gave further impetus to the growth and formal organisation of unions. This resulted in the formation of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in 1927. In Great Britain, the introduction of the 1871 Trade Union Act by the Liberal Government gave similar legal status to British unions. The history of unions in Great Britain predates early attempts at forming unions in the 17th Century with their origins dating back to medieval "guilds". Notwithstanding that, their pathway recognition was just as perilous as their Australian counterparts.

In 1900, approximately 260,000 people were members of friendly societies or about three times the membership of unions. However, by 1920, union membership had risen to 52 per cent of employees, exceeding the 24 per cent of employees with friendly society membership highlighting the growth of the labour movement (Murphy, 2011).

The upward increase in union membership continued primarily unabated, despite a short-term drop during the 1933 depression to peak at 60% or 2.1 million persons by 1961. However, they have been in decline since that highpoint (ABS, 2015). While numerical numbers increased, the percentage of union member workforce has maintained a steady decline. It could be argued that this is the result of the changing nature of the workplace.

b. Politics and Labour

In 1889, following the ousting of its founder, William Galloway, the Brisbane based Trades and Labour Council (TLC) gave way to a more progressive Australian Labour Federation (ALF), which claimed membership of 15,000 unionists. The Federation membership was mainly composed of members of the Queensland Shearers Union, the Central Queensland Labourers Union and the Amalgamated Miner's Association (Bowden, 2009). In 1890, the General Council of the ALF formalised their objectives and agreed that to meet these goals a political arm needed to be established. Meeting in Blackall in December 1890 the ALF formed the Labor Party, as its political arm. Its purpose was to make industrial relations not just an industry issue, but also a political affair.

In response to these events, employers in Queensland formed the Queensland Employers' Association, which in turn opposed the idea of a union or closed shop workplace. At the same time, rural employers organised the Queensland Pastoral Employers' Association. It was this group that spearheaded the battle to reinstate the freedom to employ non-union workers or contract workers (not dissimilar to recent Howard led Commonwealth Coalition governments' "Work Choices" campaign). Its support for action against striking shearers, miners and maritime workers in mid-1890 saw the Queensland Shearers strike put down violently by Queensland police, under the direction of Premier Samuel Griffith providing the catalyst for the formation of the Australian Labour Party (Bowden, 2009).

While it would be easy to suggest that unions and employers are ideologically opposed, unions and business do co-exist with companies having used this relationship as a method to ensure that business competitors were placed at a competitive disadvantage. In 1896, Frank McDonnell, a full-time unionist in the employ of Edwards and Lamb who was elected to parliament with the support of his employers who used his union role as Secretary of the Early Closing Association to ensure that small business competitors could not stay open after they closed, as the first example of this type of self-interested co-operation (Bowden, 2009).

Nationally, unions and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) were primarily state-based groups, focused on local issues, with some states having many versions of a particular union, such as the Broken Hill branch of the Australian Miners'

Association by distance functioning as an independent body. Up until 1915, the ALP was primarily an affiliation of state-based political parties focused on controlling local municipal issues through a standardised approach to policy (Markey, 2001). It was not until 1915 that the ALP developed a federal executive.

By comparison in New Zealand, the creation of a political arm of the union movement had some starts to create a united Labour voice. In common with many countries, the labour movement had strong connections with prevailing Liberal type parties. The counter to this was the established Social Democratic Party (SDP). It was not until the union movement suffered setbacks from the 1912 Waihi strike that the need for a cohesive political movement was realised.

In July 1916, Labour Representation Committees (LRC) representatives, moderate union leaders, members of the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP), United Federation of Labour (UFL) and Labour members of parliament met in Wellington and agreed to the formation of the New Zealand Labour Party (Evening Star, 1916). At this meeting, it was decided that the new party would adopt the SDP socialist aims but agreed to accept the principles of industrial arbitration, subsequently moving the party closer to the right. The SDP itself was the result of a merger of the Socialist Party and the moderate United Labour Party (Vowles, 1982).

E. The Influence of Federation and Two World Wars

a. Federation

The development of Federation in Australia was predicated on the notion that creating a Federation would have the effect of removing some state or colonial trade barriers, which would give impetus to employment growth. At this point, Australia was a collection of independent states and territories, with Federation the start of a move away from dependence on Great Britain. It was also argued that Federation would facilitate a united defence of the colony and a consistent approach to immigration. Federation had some impact with manufacturing labour numbers increasing from 190,000 people employed in 1903 to 328,000 by 1913. However much of the growth in the manufacturing workforce in the early post-Federation days was a result of the introduction of tariffs and customs duties and the impetus provided by World War One.

b. Between the Wars - World War One & Two

In the period during World War One and leading up to the Great Depression employment growth remained relatively static with agriculture accounting for 25-26% of employed people, manufacturing accounting for 21 -18%, while services accounted for some growth moving from 48% to 54% of the population. Mining reached its high point of 6% in 1910-1911 and has been in steady decline for the past one hundred years resting at between 1-2% of the workforce, primarily under the influence of mechanisation and automation (ABS, 2001). The Depression saw the start of the decline in rural workforce numbers that has not abated to date. The Services (retail, hospitality, banking, human services)

industry, however, continued their growth to be the biggest employer by sector in Australia.

One of the peculiarities of war is a scarcity of labour available to the domestic markets. The need to engage large numbers of non-disabled people in the military resulted in what could be called aberrations in the employment markets. This is illustrated by the following Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statement, concerning the impact of war on employment rates for males and females in Australia:

Global conflict such as war has a perversely positive impact on employment, on female workforce participation rates. During the period from 1933 to 1947, the total number of males in the labour force rose from 1.738M to a peak of 2.502M in 1945, before dropping back to 2.416M in 1947. The corresponding number for females in the workforce was 0.523M peaking at 0.800M in 1943 before retreating to 0.738M in 1947. The decline in women in employment corresponded with a decline in males employed in the military. Women working for less than full-time where their income was not the sole means of providing for a living were excluded from census data (*Source: ABS (2015) Labour Statistics, Australia 1953, cat. No. 6101.0. Retrieved July 2, 2015, from www.abs.gov.au*).

In 1940, the Australian Commonwealth Government introduced a list of reserved occupations to ensure that there were sufficient human resources available to maintain the production of equipment and supplies to support the war effort. In

1942, the Australian Commonwealth Government through its Manpower Directorate took control of managing the distribution of labour between the military and industry and was able to exempt a person from military service if their employment was deemed essential to the production of goods and services to support the war effort. Sitting beside this was the requirement that anyone working in the protected industries required a permit to change employment. While all workers, male and female were required by April 1942 to be registered, only men had their employment regulated by the Manpower Directorate.

During this same period, the government of the United Kingdom introduced “The Essential Work Order (1941)” which tied workers to jobs considered essential to the war effort. It made it compulsory for women aged between 18 – 60 to register for war work and gave rise to conscription with unmarried women aged between 20 -30 given a choice to join the services or work in essential industry.

By 1945, employment participation by women in the United Kingdom had increased by 974,000, with participation dropping back to 581,000 by wars end or thirteen per cent higher than pre-war employment levels. This is against a backdrop of increased personnel in the armed services, which rose from 384,000 in 1938, peaking at 4.906M in 1945, before falling to 1.937M in 1946. The corresponding figures for the United States were 5.14 million and 2.68 million women, still an increase of 19 per cent over 1940 participation rates for women. (Wrigley, 2002). Over the period from 1939 to 1945, US military personnel increased from 334,473 to a peak of 12.209M in 1945 (National WW11 War Museum).

During this same period, the primary employment group in Australia was manufacturing, followed by finance and retail trade, building and construction and then transport and communications. Females were predominantly employed in manufacturing, followed by retail, commerce and finance. (Source: ABS (2015) *Labour Statistics, Australia 1953*, cat. No. 6101.0). The influx of men and women into military service contributed to low levels of unemployment during the war years. These datasets make no mention of employment levels for people with a disability at that time.

c. Commonwealth Employment Service

In 1941 the Commonwealth Government amended the 1908 Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act to allow the government to offer vocational training to invalid pensioners, then known as The Vocational Training and Invalid Pensioners scheme. This is potentially the first time that people with a disability were given some possibility that real employment was an option.

In June 1945, the Re-establishment and Employment Act 1945 came into being. Its intent in broad terms was to provide preference in employment for returning service personnel. Part Two, Division Five of the Act, gave rise to the Commonwealth Employment Service with the Act stating that its function was to provide services and facilities to support employment with the purpose of maintaining high and stable levels of employment throughout the Commonwealth. As a result, in 1946 the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) was established in Melbourne with part of its role to provide vocational

guidance to physically and intellectually handicapped persons entering employment.

The CES services were provided through offices in each capital city, 118 District Employment Offices, and 345 agents in the smaller country and local towns. The Vocational Guidance branch of the Department of Social Services furnished assessment services. At the same time, the Commonwealth Employment Service also undertook job analysis by occupation to assist in making effective employment placements. It bears interesting parallels to what is our current employment services model, with the primary difference being that service provision has been contracted out to private service providers.

Not long after the establishment of the CES in 1946, the Commonwealth Government in 1947, amended the Social Security Act, allowing the Department of Social Security to offer an expanded range of services, including vocational training that led to the establishment of a scheme known as the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS), which formalised the dual role of the Commonwealth government in rehabilitation and disability employment (ANAO, 2011; Social Services, 1955; Social Services, 1947).

F. Post-World War Two – Employment in Flux

In the period immediately after World War Two in Australia employment was dominated by agriculture, manufacturing, mining and services. However, by the 1950's the dominance of manufacturing and agriculture was in steady decline

with service industries becoming the dominant employment sector in the Australian economy (Connolly & Lewis, 2010). Jobs in the mining industry have been in decline since 1910, mainly due to mechanisation and now automation.

The United Kingdom and the United States of America over this same period experienced changes in the employment rates in their main sectors similar to the Australian experience, with the UK economy switching from a dominance in manufacturing (24% to 14% of employment) and agriculture employment (12% to 2%) to one dominated by service industries (65% of workforce jobs – 2000) (Office of National Statistics, 2003). Over this same period in the United States, the percentage of people employed in agriculture fell from 10.4% of the working population to 1.8%, whilst manufacturing employment levels have dropped from 30% in 1950 to below 10% by 2006, and non-farm employment in service industries has increased from 70% to 83% (Lee & Mather, 2008).

a. Manufacturing

Manufacturing industry in Australia had been focused on our domestic market for the greater part of the last century. In some ways, this was aided by a combination of tariff protection policies, worldwide shortages of goods post-depression and quantitative controls designed to protect Australia's balance of payments. By the start of the nineteen seventies, the Australian economy was booming, resulting in significant shortages of goods for retail leading to the possibility of rising inflation. In response to this, the Commonwealth Government under Prime Minister Whitlam began the process of quickly reducing tariffs by 25%.

The quick change to tariffs did not allow the manufacturing sector time to adjust, resulting in many manufacturers quickly closing. To a significant degree, this was the start of the process of trade liberalisation and the beginning of the decline of the manufacturing sector and a resultant decline in manufacturing jobs, as companies faced up to real-world competition from Asian countries with lower wages costs and larger manufacturing economies of scale (Emmery, 1999).

While the process may have slowed (Emmery, 1999) during the Fraser Commonwealth Government years in the mid-seventies to early eighties, the process accelerated again with the election of the Hawke led Commonwealth Government and the floating of the Australian dollar and the deregulation of the banking sector. During this time, the Commonwealth Government had undertaken a series of specific industry assistance plans to assist industry to adjust and develop. Industry support peaked at \$2.382M in 1994-95 and has been in steady decline since that time. Industry support did little to arrest the decline in manufacturing jobs, which has continued unabated since the seventies.

Most recent data from the ABS (Employment by Growth by Industry 2011 - 2015), illustrates the continued rise in employment opportunities in the services sector such as household services, community services and finance and confirms the ongoing decline in employment in manufacturing in percentage of overall national employment (Connolly & Lewis, 2010), consistent with the decline in Australia's manufacturing sector as a driver of economic growth.

b. Agriculture

Agriculture had been a significant contributor to the Australian economy and the development of the country since establishment. During the early part of the 20th century, agriculture accounted for 20-30% of Australia's economic output and over 20% of employment (Productivity Commission, 2005). Agriculture's contribution to the Australian economy has continued to grow in real terms; however, the rise in other industries has contributed to its reduced importance as a percentage of the gross domestic product. Similarly, employment in this area has dropped to less than four per cent of the workforce (Productivity Commission, 2005; Treasury, 2001).

Some of this can be attributed to a prosperous economy shifting its focus towards services and the periodic impact of droughts on employment levels (Productivity Commission, 2005). It should be noted that over eighty per cent of agricultural employment occurs outside of metropolitan areas, with regions accounting for concentrations of employment based on agricultural production. As an example, almost 60% of Australia's milk production is located within Victoria, with over twenty-five per cent of commercial fishing based in South Australia (Productivity Commission, 2005)

Trends in agriculture would lead to fewer and larger farms, which is consistent with global trends. It also noted that while smaller farm numbers had declined, there had been an increase in medium-sized farming operations, accompanied by an increase in the number of farming operations valued at over \$500,000 (Productivity Commission, 2005).

The Productivity Commission (2005) reported that over the past four decades there had been significant changes concerning the employment mix within agriculture. Industries involved in intensive production such as horticulture and commercial fish farming have increased employment, while some of the more traditional farming areas such as dairy, cattle and sheep farming have lost employees.

The decline in farm workers can be attributed to factors such as smaller family sizes, increased mechanisation, a high proportion of farms being family owned, low exit rates due to retirement and fewer people entering the agricultural workforce. Many agricultural sectors use highly casualised sessional workers for activities such as fruit and vegetable harvesting. Because of the increased use of technology, one area of growth in farm employment has been in the field of specialist services. These services are often contracted in and provide a limited scope for real increases in on-farm employment, particularly for unskilled workers and those with significant barriers to employment (Productivity Commission, 2005).

c. Mining

The mining sector has experienced many booms during the past one hundred years, resulting in significant increases in its contribution to the wealth of the nation and nominal gross domestic product outputs. However, the mining industry itself is highly capital intensive and not a large employer (Connolly & Orsmond, 2011).

In 1910, mining employed approximately six per cent of the Australian workforce, which could be considered the highpoint for mining-related employment. From this point on mining employment began a steady decline to less than one per cent of the employed population by 1999 and has remained stable at or near that rate ever since (1301.0 – Year Book Australia, 1988.

Updated November 2012. www.rba.gov.au. Accessed 08/07/16).

Mining's share of formal national employment has remained largely static over the past sixty years. The mining industry today is characterised by significant numbers of highly qualified professional and tradespeople, many of whom work on short-term contracts. The industry itself is undergoing a structural change as the use of automated processes, such as remotely controlled machinery and the end of the construction phase of many mining projects is lessening the number of available employment opportunities.

d. Services Industry

The growth in service industries from the nineteen-fifties has been primarily driven by changing workplace and family demographics, along with increased life expectancy. Increasing numbers of families in which both parents work has driven an increasing demand for childcare, preschool services, home maintenance and aged care services. The deregulation of the banking sector in the nineteen-eighties and the introduction of compulsory superannuation added to the growth of employment opportunities in the service industry. The government has traditionally provided many of these services, now increasingly

provided by non-government organisations with a primarily casualised workforce dominated by female employees.

Other significant factors in the rise of the service industry have been an increase in the number of qualified people in the workforce. This has been driven in part by the deregulation of education and the availability of supported places in universities driven by the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). Coupled with the establishment of private registered training organisations (RTO's) which in turn has spawned what could be called "degree factories" aided by the Vocational Education Training Fee Help scheme (Vet-Fee Help).

Between 1983 and 2002 the workforce increased by 48.4 per cent, however, those with qualifications grew by 96.2 per cent and those with tertiary qualifications has increased by a staggering 256.9 per cent (Jamrozik, 2005).

Significant amongst these figures was a 157.2 per cent rise in women with post-school qualifications and a 478.3 per cent increase in women with tertiary qualifications. However, there was only a 15.1 per cent growth in employment by those with no post-school qualifications or less than 500 new positions over this same period (Jamrozik, 2005), potentially highlighting the paucity of semi or unskilled work available, that has been a traditional path to employment for people with a disability.

G. The New Millennium

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Year Book Australia- 2012 highlighted that the workplace of today is significantly different from the one that existed fifty years ago. Until the late sixties, the ABS through its Labour Force Survey did not collect data concerning whether the employment was full or part-time; age categories were extensive, and no data were collected on industry or occupation.

Significant during this period has been the almost doubling of employment by women in the workplace from a participation rate of 34% to 59% by 2011. The ABS highlighted access to childcare, flexible work arrangements including casual employment, paid parental leave, changing social attitudes and the availability of safe contraception as catalysts for increased participation by women in the workplace. Sitting beside this has been a slight decline in male employment levels over the same period, which may hint at the redefining of the role of the breadwinner in contemporary society, while also highlighting the interaction of social policy on employment.

It is worth noting that childcare in Australia was initially set up with children as the primary beneficiary as a tool for childhood development and a service to parents. However, as Jamrozik (2005) noted, as a result of lobbying by middle-class families, the actual aims of childcare policy have been altered to reflect employment policy outcomes; enabling women to enter the workforce, highlighting how government policy can evolve away from its original intent of fulfilling an obligation to childhood development. Childcare is now perceived as a

cost of economic production rather than a personal cost of child-rearing by a parent (Jamrozik, 2005). It highlights the potential role of society in changing the nature and intent of existing programs to reflect communities rather than government priorities.

The rise in positions that require post-school qualifications can be viewed as a barrier to employment for people with a disability. While education is available to all, people with a disability face significant barriers to obtaining post-secondary school qualifications. It could be argued that while educational institutions are required to make accommodations to facilitate training for people with disabilities, there still exists significant problems with obtaining adequate supports that promote learning.

H. Summary and Implications

The development of employment and labour markets over the past century has seen a gradual shift in focus from the employment of men to equality of opportunity for both men and women. The rise of women in the workplace initially in times of need and more lately aided by the increase in service industry jobs have been supported by the provision of child care and maternity-leave which has grown the capacity of women to pursue careers. Coupled with the casualisation of the workforce and the advent of technology that has given rise to flexible workplaces and the ability to work from home, the workplace of today is vastly different to that of early last century.

Over this same time frame, we have seen the introduction of welfare services for people with a disability, initially off the back of returning service personnel and the need to provide rehabilitation, reintegration and employment support services.

Despite the introduction of services that support the integration of people with a disability into the workforce, the opportunities provided by the modernisation of the workplace and increased diversity has yet to filter to employment opportunities for people with a disability. While the increase in service industry jobs against the background of declining manufacturing jobs could be viewed as an increased employment opportunity for people with a disability, it needs to be viewed against the backdrop of increasing automation in retail such as the increasing use of self-service kiosks in retail outlets and the rise in online shopping.

These changes have to an extent depleted the number of available employment opportunities. However, we are witnessing an increasing number of people choosing self-employment in the face of declining opportunities matched to their skills. The changing face of employment presents a challenge to the government in developing policies and programs that can support the full inclusion of people with a disability in the community, particularly at a time when employment opportunities are scarce and when the number of able-bodied people unemployed and looking for work exceeds job vacancies by a factor of five.

Chapter Three

Disability Employment in Australia

A. Introduction

This chapter will outline the history of disability employment in Australia and the factors that influenced its development, along with the questions that this research seeks to answer.

The movement towards facilitating employment for people with a disability in Australia goes back over one hundred years with the establishment of vocational training services for military personnel returning from World War One with disabilities. Over the following years, successive Commonwealth governments have amended the provision of services to reflect community expectations and medical understanding of disability, although disability mostly remained a welfare service for individuals deemed to have a limited work capacity.

It was not until the mid-1980's with the passing of the Disability Services Act (1986) that disability employment started its journey from welfare to rights. Service provision over the past two decades has been heavily influenced by the prevailing ideology of the political party ruling at the time. The introduction of Workfare and Neoliberal philosophy to disability services has prevailed for most of this period (Soldatic and Chapman, 2010).

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and changing expectations and demands from people with a disability is leading the current paradigm shift towards improving disability employment services and outcomes that support full citizenship for people with a disability.

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the history of disability employment in Australia, providing a contrast to the development of the modern workforce for non-disabled workers, along with drivers for change and aspects of policy and practice. Within this area, some discussion will be had regarding the role of disability employment staff and employers in creating and supporting the employment of people with a disability.

It is not meant to be a definitive history of disability employment in Australia, as that is beyond the capacity and research focus of this thesis. Nonetheless, it will provide a background to the development of employment pathways and supports for people with a disability in Australia that will assist in understanding the research questions.

B. Historical Background and Policy Drivers

a. World Wars, Sheltered Workshops and Rehabilitation

Disability employment services in Australia were primarily established after World War One when the Commonwealth Government established the Repatriation Commission to provide vocational training to ex-servicemen with disabilities. At that time, Senator Edward Millen, Minister for Repatriation,

designed a system model to provide a comprehensive suite of services to returning members of the armed forces to assist in their rehabilitation and return to employment. These services were necessitated by the need to address the 170,000 Australian service personnel returning from World War One with wounds and illness (National Archives of Australia, 2008). To further underscore the significance of the challenge, military hospitals were rebadged as repatriation hospitals in 1921, which in turn highlighted the medical model as the preferred approach to rehabilitation.

The medical model of rehabilitation continued as the dominant model until 1941 when the Commonwealth Government amended the Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act (1908) to allow the government to offer vocational training to invalid pensioners, then known as The Vocational Training and Invalid Pensioners scheme and administered by the Department of Social Security.

In 1948, an amendment to the Social Security Act, allowed the department to offer an expanded range of services that led to the establishment of a scheme known as the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS), which formalised the dual role of the Commonwealth government in rehabilitation and disability employment. In a sense, this duality of purpose was a result of pressure from the medical profession to utilise a medical model of rehabilitation, with many centres set up in hospitals, something that the then Commonwealth government was unopposed to.

The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service program was based on the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) model of rehabilitation that focused on convalescence and vocational retraining. The genesis of the RAAF model during the Second World War was the RAAF need to focus on effective and quick rehabilitation to return scarce pilots to active duty (O'Halloran, 2002). The combining of rehabilitation with vocational training served to highlight employment as one of the aims of government policy in this area, something that remains a focus of government rehabilitation and disability policy to this day.

Vocational training became a feature of the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service from 1948 when with the agreement of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service established what was known as the 'work therapy scheme' with the use of the term therapy a method of relieving employers of any requirement to pay wages for work experience (Tipping, 1992).

In 1974, the Woodhouse and Meares Inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation recommended that the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service establish smaller regional centres that removed the focus on medical rehabilitation and large capital city-based centres. These new centres were closely aligned with community-based resources, such as education and community health care and potentially served to fill a need in regional and country areas for services to returning service personnel.

The broadening of eligibility in the 1970's allowed any Australian resident with a disability whose disability prevented access to work or independent living (APH, 1998) to access CRS services. The Australian Commonwealth Government, using the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) facilitated work trials through the establishment of seven work preparation centres, that saw school leavers with mild intellectual disability given intensive job skills and social skills training. Over a period of twelve to eighteen months, participants received training in these skill sets and were able to obtain employment in the open labour market in manufacturing that was at that time the dominant employer group. These programs ran using the supported employment model based on evidence coming out of the USA (Parmenter, Miller, & Debenham, 1977). In a sense, these centres were precursors to the Transition to Work programs that exist in most states and territories in Australia.

In tandem with the rehabilitation model, sheltered workshops or Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) as they are known today, began being established by family, voluntary and private groups to employ people with a disability who could not find work in the open employment market. At that time, options for people with significant disabilities were limited to attending congregate day activities or finding your path in the community, which essentially meant sitting at home (Symonds & Luecking, 2013). Sheltered workshops operated outside of general employment legislation with employees receiving minimal financial reward for their efforts, although the Commonwealth government at that time offered workshop providers a training fee of \$500 for each client moved into open employment (Parmenter, 1980). This was despite many being established

on the premise of teaching farm skills to people with intellectual and developmental disability. In this sense, the participants were viewed as unemployable in the open market, which seemed to reinforce the long-held view of a low expectation of any real capacity to work.

Sheltered workshops at that time operated mainly as day activity programs that focused on daily living skills, social and recreational activities. It could be argued that they also functioned as custodial settings that provided respite to carers and family. In the nineteen seventies, evidence began to accumulate that with appropriate supports people with disabilities could develop skills that could be transferred to open employment. Marc Gold's work in the early seventies and his "Try Another Way" process demonstrated viable training pathways, which along with the evolving normalisation movement started to create pressure on sheltered workshops to evolve into open employment opportunities.

b. Disability Services Act (1986) and Employment Services

Sheltered workshops continued as the primary employment outlet for people with a disability until the release of the New Directions report in 1985, which outlined a range of improved services that should be provided to people with disability. The report also highlighted concerns about the adequacy of work and wages in sheltered workshops, along with support for the development of new models of employment and the promotion of open employment outcomes (Tuckerman, Cain, Long, & Klarkowski, 2012).

The New Directions (1985) report was followed shortly after by the introduction of the Disability Services Act (1986) by the Commonwealth government that

established the rights of people with a disability to full and open employment and laid the scene for the integration of employment, training, rehabilitation and accommodation as pre-cursors to the promotion of self-determination amongst people with a disability (Ford, 1998). Following from the Disability Services Act (1986) a set of Disability Service Standards were introduced in 1992 that set standards for access, compliance, policy and procedure amongst other things that service providers were required to meet to secure funding (Symonds & Luecking, 2013). While compliance against the standards ensured funding, it did not prescribe quality of service, and it could be argued that while organisations made compliance with the standards an audit priority, it did nothing to prescribe how organisations would demonstrate respect for their client's wishes.

Before the introduction of the Disability Services Act (1986), some disability employment projects were established as demonstration projects to establish whether people with a disability could achieve open employment outcomes. An example of these types of programs was the Epilepsy Association of South Australia's Training and Placement Service (TAPS) that was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR). This program included training over ten weeks fulltime that covered a variety of personal, leisure and work skills culminating in work experience and potential employment with follow up supports (Parmenter, 1986).

In line with the push towards deinstitutionalisation as a result of the normalisation movement based on the works of Nirje and Bank-Mikkelsen from Scandinavia in the 60's and later, Wolfensburger in the USA in the 70's, the

Disability Services Act (1986) became the overarching framework for the delivery of employment services nationally, which led to the establishment of the Disability Employment Network, whose role was to promote and support open employment for people with a disability. Social justice principles largely underpinned these services and administered by the then Department of Family & Community Services (FACS). An outcome of the 1992 Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement saw state and territory governments retained responsibility for all other disability services such as day and residential services, while the Commonwealth Government took responsibility for employment.

Ford (1998) noted that the Disability Services Act (1986) at that time encouraged sheltered workshops to support those clients with the capacity to pursue open employment to be supported to do so by providing training, work skills and transportation training. At the same time, sheltered workshops were encouraged to become quality services that reflected the intent of the Disability Services Act (1986).

Transition to open employment from sheltered workshops was hindered or unlikely in part due to limited technical expertise in areas of employment interest and training possessed by support staff and the limited variety of low-paying work and low-skilled experiences provided within sheltered workshops that tended to operate within the packaging and assembly industry (Smith & McVilly, 2016). This largely continues today, in part due to a lack of investment in equipment and staff that would allow sheltered workshops to compete with

lower cost manufacturers and low-wage cost overseas competitors. What further complicates the present situation for sheltered workshops or Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE's) is that they predominately function as not for profits operating for a social benefit and are heavily dependent on government support and charitable donations (Smith, McVilly, McGillivray, & Chan, 2016).

Currently ADE's support 20,000 people with disabilities in what could be described as simulated work settings. Very few ADE's have progressed to for-profit situations, and that without the capital contributions of the support service organisation, they would likely not have been established or continue as viable commercial operations in their right. Against this setting, some ADE operators are researching alternative strategies such as establishing for-profit social enterprises as independent pathways to create open employment opportunities (Smith et al., 2016).

The start of the new millennium saw a change in the management of disability employment services with the then Howard led Commonwealth government separating the funding of sheltered workshops and disability employment services. This resulted in the shift of disability employment services to mainstream employment services managed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) as it was known then and its attendant focus on employment outcomes as the only measure of success. The Disability Employment Network (DEN) with its focus on supporting people with a disability into open employment, started to take on some of the features of the mainstream Job Network program, most notably the ranking of service

providers. Because of this policy change, the disability movement saw its input into disability employment policy minimised (Soldatic & Chapman, 2010).

Following a review in 2008 of employment services, the previous DEN program and Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) were replaced by a single program; Disability Employment Service (DES) with DEN now renamed Employment Support Service (ESS), and VRS renamed Disability Management Services (DMS). DMS services were delivered by a mixture of private providers, and the Commonwealth owned CRS until 2015, when under the policy direction of the Commonwealth Liberal Government, CRS ceased to exist, and all DMS services that it had delivered were moved to private providers through a tender process.

DMS is focused on people with disability who are unlikely to need long-term support to maintain employment, with ESS focused on permanent disability and long-term support. Davidson and Whiteford (2012) noted that along with these changes the programs took on more of the mainstream employment features such as flatter payment schedules skewed towards employment outcome payments (although significantly loaded towards process fees), loadings for remote locations and bonuses connected to employment outcomes as an outcome of vocational training. It also adopted more of the performance rating system (Star Ratings; 1 star for a provider achieving outcomes 50 percent or more below the average, 3 stars being 20% above and below the average with 5 stars being 40% above the average) and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that are a feature of mainstream employment services.

The policy shift from social welfare to mutual obligation and the focus on individual participation completed the shift in social policy to workfare and neoliberal policy begun under the Howard led Commonwealth government (Alston, 2010; Parker Harris, Owen, & Gould, 2012).

The change in Commonwealth government in 2007 from Liberal to Labor saw a further shift in emphasis to employment outcome-based measures for disability employment services. This is no better illustrated by the key measure that guides service providers, which is the use of a rating system measuring three key performance indicators (KPI), although only using two in the calculation of program success.

The three KPI's are; Efficiency, Effectiveness and Quality. Efficiency is measured by the time taken between commencement in the program and the start of employment. Effectiveness is a measure of the provider's results in providing job placements, vocational training and full efficiency outcomes. The Quality measure, which is based on feedback from clients and employers, along with certification against the Disability Service Standards, is not used in calculating the success of the service provided which highlights a flaw in a system that professes to be person-centred, however it is used for contract extensions (DEEWR, RFT 2013-2018). It has been suggested that the introduction of the star rating system and the consequences for not achieving a high star rating have been positive outcomes (Tuckerman et al., 2012). However, there is evidence to suggest that many three-star organisations achieve poorer ratings in part due to the personalised nature of their service delivery which has more in common

with the evidence-based customised employment practices adopted from the USA.

Employment Support Service (ESS) providers were the subject of a tender in late 2012 with those services rated at three stars out of five and below retendering for a new extended five-year contract for the provision of services. New contracts were awarded for successful tenders commenced in March 2013.

Over sixty existing providers lost contracts and have either merged with successful tenders or left the sector. Some five-star providers were also granted market extensions, while at the same time exempt from the tender process. What is clear from this is that the quality of outcomes and any real measures of success based on objective measures of client satisfaction are absent from the process of determining which service providers are meeting client objectives.

C. Service Provision Trends

a. International Influences

An examination of the provision of disability employment services worldwide shows a variety of different approaches, with some commonality, but increasingly reflecting the prevailing political ideology and culture of respective states. The past decade has seen an acceleration of governments to tender out services they have traditionally provided, loosely based on the ideology that market-based solutions offer better service provision than government organisations.

Employment services are one area that has seen governments abandon service provision in favour of utilising external parties to deliver services. However, the use of external providers is not without its problems. According to Struyven (2004) "Countries which decide to involve the private sector in the reintegration of long-term unemployed people face a dual challenge: not only tackling unemployment but also implementing market competition"(p11).

Struyven (2004) identified two critical issues for governments choosing this pathway; the need to create space for market competition and the need for positive creaming which encourages service providers to focus on the most profoundly disadvantaged job seekers. Counter to this; there is evidence of "creaming and parking" of clients, where providers focus on job-ready clients at the exclusion of the more disadvantaged. This risk is more closely associated with programs that primarily focus on rewarding providers for job outcomes; however, given the present system that rewards process over outcomes in Australia, there is a reasoned argument that provider interests drive practices more than policy direction. It was also noted that countries that have moved to a form of market competition for employment service provision have found themselves in an almost perpetual state of adapting and adjusting the system, which further brings into question whether the tendering systems have the capacity to achieve the necessary market competition to ensure efficiency and contribute to government policy goals (Finn, 2011).

Policy direction globally has seen four models of employment services evolve: with the government retaining control of the system and sub-contracting out

parts of it such as monitoring client outcomes at one extreme with the government carrying out all other functions and at the other extreme, the government merely provides the eligible clients or job seekers and tenders out of all services to private providers. In between are the two other models; one which sees the provider take over the process part way through the intake and the less extreme model which entails the provider being responsible for parts of the process such as case management and supports (Struyven, 2004). Australia has adopted the more extreme position of tendering out all services to private providers, although it has recently taken back some aspects of service delivery, such as job capacity assessments.

Some researchers (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993; Struyven, 2004) have noted that reintegration services are not pure markets, but quasi-markets. Quasi-markets are characterised by the presence of for profits and not for profits in competition, the use of public resources which can only move from provider to provider as the result of a new tender and purchasing power residing with one commissioning body acting on behalf of the client. In the case of Australia, DEEWR or Dept. of Social Security (DSS) as it is now, acts on behalf of the ultimate client, the Australian Commonwealth government.

Choice and the ability to move from providers is supposed to be a feature of this type of system. In practice, this type of activation system which has with it a mutual obligation to participate to receive benefits and an enforcement provision to ensure participation limits the capacity of clients to exercise effective choice as to who will provide services to them. This factor was

highlighted in the “A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes (2015) report. In a pure market system, the client would be free to choose the provider that best matches their needs and requirements, ensuring a good match and motivation to succeed.

The system of providing employment services in Australia contains the capacity to means test recipients and the provision to activity test recipients as a means of activating or creating a mutual obligation to ensure the continuation of the benefit or pension. This is a feature of mainstream employment services used to ensure clients remain "activated" or looking for work. Interestingly mutual obligation was an outcome of the McClure Welfare Reform Report (2000) into social welfare reform headed up by Patrick McClure, CEO of Mission Australia, one of Australia’s largest recipients of government funds to delivered community welfare services. Mutual obligation remained a feature of the “A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes (2015) report into social welfare reform to the Commonwealth government, again chaired by Patrick McClure.

In 2006 the “Welfare to Work” program extended activity testing requirements to individual participants in receipt of the disability support pension. People with a disability assessed as having a partial work capacity of 15 to 30 hours per week were no longer able to access the non-activity tested disability support pension and were required to test their eligibility against the criteria for Newstart or Youth Allowance. The Disability Employment Network (DEN) program was initially divided into capped programs for voluntary participants and uncapped for non-voluntary participants. This just meant that there were a

limited number of participant places within the program. The program tender in 2013 removed the placement participant limits.

b. Specialisation in Service Delivery

In Australia at present only a small body of research that investigates the integration of mental health and employment services and outcomes (King, Lloyd, Meehan, Deane, & Kavanagh, 2006) has been carried out, although researchers such as Waghorn has been actively pursuing evidence to support the provision of specialist mental health employment services. Evidence to date suggests that the integration of specialist support services with disability employment services has the potential to improve outcomes for the client.

Waghorn (2005) identified four components that have the potential to enhance outcomes for clients with severe mental illness in integrated settings: a capacity to provide intensive support, a multidisciplinary approach, an emphasis on rehabilitation and the use of systematic stigma countering and disclosure strategies. Against this, (King et al., 2006) noted that there is little incentive for the integration of mental health services with employment services, due in part to the different funding models. Mental health services are mainly a state-based responsibility, while disability employment is a Commonwealth responsibility.

Recently in Australia however, the Commonwealth government established the Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) Employment Service which is a specialist employment service that is available to anyone on a disability support pension and experiencing mental illness. The program is administered by the

Department of Social Services (DSS) and is designed to address non-vocational barriers to employment. In some ways, this replicates the previous Job Services program known as the Personal Support Program (PSP), which worked with mainstream clients with significant barriers to employment and was staffed by mental health professionals.

There is evidence to highlight that the absence of specialist integration in employment services can result in poor communication between clinicians and employment specialists often resulting in the absence of real understanding of the client's needs (Kostick et al., 2010; Shannon, Robson, & Sale, 2001). Solar (2011) cited the example of a client with schizophrenia who had been rejected by some mental health agencies due in part to an ongoing assessment that work was an unrealistic expectation. Once connected to a specialist employment service the client was supported to address his barriers with the support of the same services that had rejected him. The employment support officer has supported the client appropriately with the client now in stable accommodation and employment, working five days a week and with full control over his financial and physical resources.

This provides some support for recommendations that frontline staff need specialist training that allows them to distinguish between episodic disability and disability that does not materially change, also recognising that due to the non-linear nature of the episodic disability, employment plans need to recognise this factor in a non-judgemental way (Vick & Lightman, 2010).

Solar (2011) stated that supported employment could occur in parallel with clinical services to aid and improve recovery from mental illness. Research supports the proposition that specialist integration can improve outcomes, recognising that while work can be challenging for people with mental health issues, the benefits such as participation, inclusion, empowerment and well-being outweigh any disadvantages (King et al., 2006). Reports as far back as the early nineteenth century, show that employment had been demonstrated to improve outcomes for clients with schizophrenia (Bockoven, 1976). Recent studies covering employment and schizophrenia over the last fifteen years (Bond, 2004; Burns, Catty, Becker, Drake, Duclos, Piat, Lahaie, & St. Pierre 2007; Twamley, Becker, & Jeste, 2008) improved the evidence base for the effectiveness of supported employment in the treatment of schizophrenia. It has been reported that employment could contribute to good mental health by creating a sense of purpose, role, identity and status (Solar, 2011).

D. Disability and Employment Services

a. Understanding Disability

The idea that disability resides within the person, who is "broken", while different from the medical model of disability that requires that disability can be cured, still assumes that the problem lies within the person (Wehmeyer, 2011). While the argument that disability is a social construct has acceptance, access to disability services and disability employment services requires that a person demonstrate incompetency against a set of assessment standards, suggesting that the medical model of deficits still holds weight.

Funding and levels of support for clients and disability employment services are predicated on the client failing to meet those standards that define "normal" in society. Disability employment services are funded based on this deficit model, yet most service models now use a strengths-based approach to support clients. Apparently the reconceptualisation of disability has not yet permeated employment funding bodies (Schalock, Luckasson, Shogen, Bradley, Borthwick-Duffy, Buntinx, & Wehmeyer, 2007; Thompson, Buntinx, Schalock, Shogen, Snell, Wehmeyer, & Yeager, 2009; Wehmeyer, Buntinx, Lachapelle, Luckasson, Schalock, Verdugo-Alonzo, & Yeager, 2008).

It should not be a surprise, as low expectation about the capacity of clients to engage in employment fully has also been found amongst disability employment staff and health professionals (Schneider, 2008; King et al., 2006). Sowers, Dean and Holsapple (1999) found that there is a common belief amongst professionals and family that a job in the community is not an essential goal for people with significant disabilities, which runs counter to the evidence highlighting the importance of the family in assisting with the successful transition from school to employment. It does, however, highlight the role of the family in supporting employment outcomes.

Low expectation regarding employment is also reflected in the types of employment that people with a disability are typically found in, mainly concentrated in low paid, low skill occupations, with a significant under-representation in managerial and professional occupations (Lindsay, 2011). With the rise of the knowledge economy that places a premium on skills and

qualifications, there is the risk that clients with disabilities who successfully enter the workforce will be consigned to the low level, low skill occupations that attract menial wages and casual work (Lewis et al., 2011).

The focus on client deficits as a way in which funding for support is derived serves to reinforce the myth amongst the community and employers that people with disabilities with higher support needs are unemployable. This ignores the fact that the severity of the disability is the difference between the person's abilities and the capacity to complete a specific function (Wehmeyer, 2011). Contrary to this deficit perspective, Hendricks (2010) found that people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often display strengths such as attention to detail and intense focus that results in them having an interest in jobs that are often avoided by non-disabled workers due to the repetitive nature and social isolation.

It has been found that clients with disabilities who fall out of work and are placed into new jobs retain the skills learned on the job and appeared to benefit from increased wages and conditions, suggesting that clients with disabilities potentially follow the same vocational pathway as non-disabled persons (Cimera, 2012). This potentially highlights the unmet need for career planning as part of the disability employment service function, an aspect of disability employment pioneered by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) in their Self-Determined Career Development Model, with its emphasis on career and employment outcomes. This model highlights self-determination as a core ingredient to independence and subsequently higher levels of

employment as compared to groups that do not receive support to develop the skills associated with self-determination (Test, Bartholomew, & Cease-Cook, 2011).

b. Classifying Disability and Job Seekers

In a society that strives to limit discrimination, it would seem odd to have as part of the entry point to receiving government assistance, the need to classify job seekers with a disability. There is more than a passing historical resemblance to the English Poor Laws that date from the late 1500's that sought to differentiate between those that could work and those unwilling to work, such as those classified as "defectives" who were deigned to need relief or charity (Oliver, 1990). However, disability employment services have a limited funding level, so a methodology is used to ensure that funding is directed at those with the most significant barriers to employment receive the most funding. The current disability employment system uses an assessment tool known as the "Job Seeker Classification Instrument" or JSCI (DE, 2016).

The Commonwealth Government (2016) stated the following concerning the JSCI purpose;

The JSCI is based on a statistical model that determines a Fully Eligible Participant's ('job seeker') relative level of disadvantage in the labour market and is used to assess a job seeker's likelihood of becoming or remaining long-term unemployed. (p5)

The JSCI based on the Jobseeker Screening Instrument and the case management sourced Client Classification Levels Questionnaire. It is the result of broad consultation undertaken with clients, stakeholders and a working group of experts assembled by the then Commonwealth Government Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs in 1997, with the instrument coming into use in February 1998.

The JSCI is seen to be fundamental to the successful operation of the disability employment system, with the Commonwealth government (2016) stating;

By identifying the individual job seeker's relative level of disadvantage and referring them to the most appropriate level of assistance, the JSCI helps ensure that resources are directed to those who are most in need, in line with Government policy. The JSCI is also essential for ensuring that employment services operate within the budget parameters set by the Government. (p5)

This description reinforces the notion that classifying serves the purpose of allocating funds to the neediest when allocating employment services funding. It also highlights the deficits focus of the assessment process, which is at odds with the intent of disability employment services to be person-centred. At its heart may be the paradox of having to deliver a person-centred service in an environment of economic rationalism (Shallock, 1998).

The JSCI assess eighteen (18) factors that are considered by experts to lead to a job seeker remaining unemployed significantly. These factors are listed in the following table (Table 1).

Age and Gender	Phone Contactability	Indigenous Status	Country of Birth	Recency of Work Experience	Geographic
Disability / Medical Conditions	Job Seeker History	Indigenous Location	Stability of Residence	Educational Attainment	Personal Factors
Living Circumstances	Vocational Qualifications	Proximity to Labour Markets	Criminal Convictions	English Proficiency	Access to Transport

Table 1.0. *JSCI Assessment Factors*

The JSCI also serves additional purposes defined by the Commonwealth government as; ‘The JSCI also indicates whether a job seeker has identified multiple or complex barriers to employment that may require further assessment (p5).

The JSCI also serves to identify job seekers who have:

- Disclosed domestic violence, family grief or trauma and may need to be referred to the Department of Human Services (Human Services (DHS).
- Poor language, literacy and numeracy skills and may benefit from referral to the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program.

- Poor English language skills and may benefit from referral to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

Once a JSCI assessment is conducted participants who require further assessment are referred for an Employment Services Assessment (ESAt), which is used to confirm the client disability/medical condition.

This assessment also determines the level of program support to gain and maintain employment. This assessment process is short, being undertaken in less than an hour and is based on the evidence of disability that a participant can provide. The guidelines for this assessment are not made available to the public. However, some light can be shed on this process by examining the assessment process known as the Job Capacity Assessment or JCA (JCA, 2006).

This document states that there are no mandatory qualifications for assessors and this evaluation will be undertaken by but not limited to allied and other health professionals. The list includes; Registered Psychologists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists, Rehabilitation Consultants, Registered Nurses, Medical Practitioners, Exercise Physiologists, Audiologists and Social Workers, whose skills align with the impairment tables.

The primary skill requirement for assessors is an understanding of labour and workforce matters. It highlights the focus of the program on employment.

However, I question whether those conducting the assessments have any actual knowledge of labour markets and indeed at what point do these experts develop

sufficient understanding of the client to be able to decide what supports are necessary.

Within the JCA (2006) guidelines it states the purpose of the assessment is;

“A Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) is a comprehensive assessment of a person’s ability to work. The assessment involves identification of a person’s barriers to employment and any interventions that may be required to help them overcome those barriers. For people with medical conditions or disabilities, the assessment also identifies the person’s current and future work capacity in hour bandwidths”. (p15).

This raises the issue of how to determine a person's future work capacity without visiting their environment and developing a comprehensive understanding of the individual. Given that the environment is identified explicitly as part of disability (WHO, 2011), its absence from the assessment seems to highlight a significant flaw.

Some assessments will also involve one or both of the following:

- rating of permanent medical conditions against the eligibility criteria for Disability Support Pension (DSP)
- completion of a Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) to determine job seekers’ relative labour market disadvantage.

Importantly, JCAs also allow assessors to refer clients directly to Commonwealth Government-funded programmes of assistance and make further referrals to a

wide range of services that may help the client maximise their ability to work.

This type of assessment is still very much a deficits approach to the individual, making no reference to abilities.

The guidelines provide information on who can have a job capacity assessment.

The guideline highlights eligible persons as:

People who:

- Claim Disability Support Pension (DSP);
- have their ongoing eligibility for DSP reviewed by Centrelink;
- seek exemption from Activity Agreement requirements due to temporary incapacity;
- indicate to either Centrelink or an Employment Service Provider that they have a medical condition or disability that impacts on their work capacity and employment assistance needs;
- have barriers to employment that need to be assessed to determine the most appropriate service provision;
- have not achieved their expected level of work capacity two years after a previous assessment; or
- independently seek access to the Supported Wage System (SWS) and require an assessment to determine medical eligibility criteria for DSP (a pre-requisite for SWS).

There will also be a small number of Centrelink clients whose medical conditions and work capacity need to be assessed to determine eligibility for other payments such as Sickness Allowance, Special Benefit, Mobility Allowance or Youth Disability Supplement.

In 2015, the capacity to conduct JCA reverted to the Department of Human Services. Before that, both government and private providers performed them. An examination of the Australian Commonwealth Government, Department of Social Security website; www.guide.dss.gov.au. (*accessed 7th March 2016*) show no other substantive change to these guidelines.

c. Work Capacity Bands

The guidelines go on to state that the assessment is compulsory for anyone other than volunteer job seekers and that they may be needed for anyone seeking to access certain employment services. One outcome of the assessment is that participants will be classified into work capacity bands. These bands are defined within the guide as:

- 0-7 hours per week
- 8-14 hours per week
- 15-22 hours per week
- 23-29 hours per week
- 30+ hours per week

The assessment guidelines note that "assessed work capacity bandwidth must reflect the level of work a client could reliably perform on a sustained basis. For assessment, a sustained basis would be for 26 weeks without excessive leave or absences."

One point to note is that the DES system can only be accessed by people with a disability who have a deemed work capacity of more than eight (8) hours per

week. Individuals with a capacity of less than this level, i.e. 0-7 hours are outside of the DES system and are nominally captured by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which has provision for funding specialist employment services that will support people with this work capacity who wish to do so (NDIS, 2013).

Before the NDIS, employment opportunities for this category of job seeker principally resided in sheltered workshops or ADE's as they are now known. Under the current NDIS arrangements it is likely that all NDIS clients will only be able to access open employment services via a DES provider, as the NDIS will not specifically fund services that can be provided by another system (NDIS Act, 2013). This has the intent of limiting employment options to ADE's or sheltered workshops, surely something that is in contravention to the UNCRPD and indeed goes against the idea of client choice and control. In essence, the system would regard moving from one system to another as a successful employment outcome, something that current Transition to Work programs regularly report as successful outcomes (Xu & Stancliffe, 2017).

The notion of bandwidths seems at odds with the current evidence-based practice of Discovery and Customised Employment (ODEP, 2016) that have highlighted how everyone can develop skills and that with the appropriate opportunities people irrespective of deemed disability can pursue open employment or self-employment.

Within the NDIS employment support categories, it highlights that support outside of an ADE will be limited to supports that only come into play after a job has been found. This would seem to imply that any support for open employment within the NDIS would be limited to preparing people within this system to only transition to other services such as DES.

d. Transitioning from School to Employment

Transitioning from school to employment in the context of Australia has been supported by a variety of state-based Transition to Work programs. Very little data exist to support the impact of these programs on the long-term outcomes for students with disabilities transitioning to employment. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from 2012 identified approximately 224,000 with a disability in the 15-24-year age cohort that is potentially in this transition stage that could be served by Transition to Work programs.

However, the ABS data does highlight that over 62% of this cohort do not fully engage in work or study, suggesting that for many young people with a disability, the end of formal schooling leaves them in a vacuum. It may create a pathway to lifelong welfare dependence, with the only real exposure to work being in simulated work settings such as Australian Disability Enterprises or sheltered workshops, and day respite programs. This gap between school and employment potentially makes transition problematic, with sheltered workshops having low incidences of transition to open employment and the potential for DES providers to support such transition post-school limited by the absence of work experience and identifiable skills.

The transition from school to employment research to date has focused on high incidence disability with little emphasis on the individual experience. Gaining an understanding of what experiences contribute to later employment would provide insights into the types of opportunities that should be provided to school age persons with a disability (Carter et al., 2012). Riches and Goyer (2015) identified eight critical elements that support transition planning, amongst them vocational training, post-school options and transition planning, elements of which are apparent in the Australian version of the Ticket to Work program.

Initial data from the Australian based Ticket to Work program is highlighting the potential of this program as an alternative pathway from school to employment. While based on a small sample of participants, the initial data suggests that this model is proving successful with employment rates at levels four times greater than comparison groups (Hawkins & Rasheed, 2016), albeit for a minimal sample size. This program is based on developing community partnerships with disability organisations and mainstream services, with transition starting within the school setting. The focus of this program is school-based traineeships. This type of approach goes some way to addressing the fears of parents regarding employment for their children with a disability and dealing with the myth of low expectation in the community.

Earlier studies had found that parents held lower expectations for transition to employment than professionals, considering that transition to employment was a limited option (Hill, Seyfarth, Banks, Wehman, & Orelove, 1987). It is not uncommon for families to believe the stereotypes regarding disabilities and

incorrectly believe in the limitations that these views hold about the employability of people with disabilities (Tschopp, Bishop, & Mulvihill, 2001). Evidence suggests that this may be remediated by better communication about transition services and support from professionals (Levy, Botuck, Levy, Kramer, Murphy, & Rimmerman, 1994), something that the Ticket to Work program in Australia attempts to alleviate.

Evidence suggests that parents who hold positive expectations of post-school employment are associated with a five-fold increase in employment, while expectations of being self-supporting displayed a three-fold increase in employment post-school (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2012). Similar outcomes are found in teens with hearing disabilities with higher levels of family encouragement, with the family seen as a vital source of information and support during the transition phase (Callahan et al., 2009; Griffin et al., 2007; Hoff, Gandolfo, Gold, & Jordan, 2000; Migliore et al., 2010).

Burkhead & Wilson (1995) noted that families could be a positive influence during the transition period between school and work in five major areas, these being; providing job information, motivating the family members achievements and interests, serving as role models, influencing self-concept and influencing the individual's developmental environment.

Work experience is part of the transition process for young school age people with disabilities reaching the end of their schooling (Carter et al., 2012), with paid work experience showing a strong association with paid work two years

post-school supporting the notion that all students with disabilities should accrue work experience as part of their schooling. (Carter, Trainor, Ditchman, Swedeen, & Owens, 2009). Other factors such as good social skills, self-care, good communication skills and self-care practice, along with employment rates 3 to 4 times higher than those students without these factors, also provide support for paid work experience (Carter et al., 2012). This has implications for school to work transition programs and indicates the need for greater service integration.

E. The Role of the Disability Employment Consultant

The emergence of the disability employment consultant as a profession is still very much in its infancy with few professional bodies existing to define or promote the profession (Schneider, 2007). One such body is the US-based Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), which provides support to disability employment professionals through Advocacy, Policy, Training and Certification programs which promote the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) credential as the standard for professionals engaged in the disability employment sector. Certifying disability employment staff holds out the possibility that clients seeking employment support staff, particularly in an NDIS environment, would have some level of comfort that anyone they choose to employ has at least a base level of understanding of disability employment.

Research into the profession found that employment staff grouped under no less than eighteen job titles and that staff identified twenty-four key activities that

they undertake (Schneider, 2008). This is despite evidence suggesting that specific employment role and clear job descriptions for employment service staff can lead to increased disability employment worker outcomes (Beyer 2012). Whether this is reflective of different settings trying different methods to differentiate staff is unknown. It does run counter to Beyer's (2012) findings and does suggest that more research into defining roles and activities is needed.

According to Beyer (2012), the provision of effective employment services for people with intellectual disability requires that staff implement procedures adopted from a wide variety of disciplines such as; applied behavioural analysis, rehabilitation, social work, sales and marketing and business management. In addition to these skills, earlier research by Burt, Fuller, & Lewis (1991) included modelling, errorless learning, structured rewards systems, graduated guidance and a system of prompts to the list of skills required of disability employment staff. This type of evidence lends support to the idea that disability employment is a specialist area requiring higher level skills focused on psychology, counselling, business and marketing.

In tandem with the emerging evidence base surrounding disability employment and clients with mental illness, research has found that people with ASD require individualised training that focuses on job tasks, social integration and acclimation to the work environment (Hendricks, 2010). This further highlights the specialist nature of working with clients on the spectrum, with research into services that provide support to clients with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) finding evidence that programs that specifically target the needs of a disability

type are a more cost-effective solution (Howlin, Alcock, & Burkin, 2005). It has been found that comorbid psychiatric conditions amongst people with ASD have been a contributing factor preventing successful employment (Hendricks, 2010) further highlighting the need for specialist intervention in the employment process. It adds weight to Beyer's (2012) findings on the need for clear job descriptions and specific roles. The evidence suggests that generic employment services may not be cost-effective in the provision of services to specific disability types (Hendricks, 2010).

F. Employment Options.

a. Open Employment or Self-Employment

Self-employment is one option that has had little support to date in Australia. However, an increasing evidence base and the use of micro enterprise as a possible self-employment option has renewed interest in this option. The literature regarding self-employment and disability is limited in part due to self-employment being excluded from most studies regarding disability and employment (Pagan, 2009), although there is mounting evidence for self-employment in American literature (Griffin & Hammis, 2003). An example of self-employment as a viable option is found in the United Cerebral Palsy Associations Project Choice project with thirteen per cent of participants choosing self-employment (Callahan, Schumpert, & Mast, 2002).

Self-employment has many advantages such as flexible work hours and the capacity to address environmental barriers such as transportation issues (Ipsen,

Arnold, & Colling, 2005), along with the capacity to frame a business around the individual's skills and employment aspirations.

Evidence for this exists in projects such as the Community Living Project (CLP) in South Australia. This project has successfully supported seven clients to achieve self-employment that meets the client's needs and is framed around their capacity, rather than weakness. It has been suggested that self-employment is linked to the severity of the disability (Pagan, 2009), however projects such as the CLP Self-Employment initiative and the increasing numbers of able-bodied people choosing self-employment in an increasingly tight job market illustrate that self-employment is not the last chance option, but a viable pathway to economic independence. The 1990 USA census showed that 520,000 people with a disability were recorded as being self-employed (Arnold & Seekins, 2002).

Open employment in Australia has by using job capacity assessments been limited to those individuals with a disability who can satisfy an assessor that they can work. This process is based on medical evidence and social security department programs that appear to focus on deficits and anecdotally designed to ensure a spread of clients across the variously designated brackets and service provider areas. The arbitrary nature of the work capacity brackets seems at odds with Marc Gold's work in the seventies that illustrated the capacity to work is related to actual supports rather than perceived deficits. Combined with the strong evidence base for Active Support methods for increasing engagement and capacity to acquire lifestyle skills, highlight a system in need of revision if clients

are to be genuinely supported to achieve economic equality through open or self-employment.

The Australian Commonwealth Government has attempted to promote self-employment as an option for individuals using the disability employment system and the non-disability Jobactive program in the current contract by making the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) available to eligible participants. The scheme provides mentoring and support for 6300 eligible places per annum. It is unclear how many people with a disability and the nature of the disability have been accepted into the program. The limited number of places suggests that this is not being considered as a viable option for many participants.

b. Self-Employment, Customised Employment and the NDIS

Self-employment offers some advantages to people with a disability, including more control and self-reliance, job accommodation, non-discrimination and control over workspace and work methods (Hagner & Davies, 2002). For Self-employment to be a viable employment option for people with a disability, it needs to be accompanied by more significant levels of support from disability employment agencies, irrespective of the level of disability (Doyle, 2002; Pagan, 2009).

According to Callahan et al., (2002) there is a connection between the rise of self-employment for people with disabilities and participant choice and control. This may have implications in Australia for disability employment service providers with the advent of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Self-employment lends itself to person-centred individual approaches, such as customised employment. Customised Employment is characterised by using a strengths-based approach that recognises the individual's capabilities and talents, builds community membership by taking the training and education of the client into real business environments, listens to the clients desires and future goals and believes in the capacity of the community to assimilate all people (Griffin & Hammis, 2003). The use of customised employment processes that grew out of supported or open employment is based on individualising the employment processes. Methods such as job carving or restructuring strategies result in a job that fits the needs of the individual with a disability, while also meeting the needs of the employer highlight the strength of the individualised approach to self or open employment (Griffin & Hammis, 2007).

It is very much a person-centred approach, with the US Department of Labor, Office of Disability an Employment Policy (ODEP, 2002) stating that it is based on an individualised determination of the strengths, needs and interests of the person with a disability and is designed to meet the specific needs of the employer. The process of Discovery, the core ingredient in customised employment became a mandated process in the USA in 2015 for any disability employment provider in receipt of federal funding.

G. The Role of Employer Attitudes and Workplace Supports

a. Employer Concerns and Workplace Culture

Research has highlighted some employer concerns regarding the hiring of a person with a disability. Employer concerns about the employing of a person with a disability is a known factor influencing the decision to hire or not (Morgan & Alexander, 2005). Corporate culture, the recruiting methods of companies and the provision of specialist support services to place people with disabilities in employment are often points of tension (Beyer, 2012), with business often unaware of the need to accommodate people with a disability at the first point of contact, the employment application.

While employers away from the frontline do not take direct responsibility for the successful integration of persons with a disability into the work environment, they do create the culture that will allow for the smooth transition to work with workplace attitudes and discrimination. Aspects of culture are frequently reported as a barrier to employment for post-school leavers with a disability (Lindsay, 2011) despite the presence of the Disability Discrimination laws. Companies often reflect the prevailing culture and social values reinforcing the inequalities experienced by people with a disability with evidence suggesting that some people with a disability found that employers feared disability (Lindsay, 2011; Shier, Graham, & Jones, 2009).

Research into workforce participation barriers had found that when the onus was on the employer to provide training to people with a disability, it

significantly reduced the odds of employment. It has been reported that less than a third of people in the labour force who had restrictions received workplace accommodations, highlighting a high level of unmet need for workplace accommodations that may be a limiting factor preventing people with a disability from obtaining and maintaining employment (Hogan, Kyaw-Myint, Harris, & Denronden, 2012).

The recognition of disability as one aspect of workforce diversity is a major step towards improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities. While many organisations have statements that reflect diversity in the workplace; they regularly fail to acknowledge disability as part of that diversity. Evidence highlights organisations that recognise and promote diversity in their corporate culture are more successful in the recruitment, training and retention of employees with disabilities (Ball, Monaco, Schmeling, Schartz, & Blanck, 2005; Hernandez, McDonald, Divilbiss, Horin, Velcoff, & Donoso, 2008; Samant et al., 2009; Sandler & Blanck, 2005).

Disability awareness or employee education about disability and the values and attitudes of employees are important but secondary to the need for all workplaces to demonstrate that they are prepared to change. Adults with ASD often cite difficulties caused by insufficient knowledge about their disability as a cause of workplace difficulties (Hendricks, 2010; Muller, Schuler, Burton, & Yates, 2003) highlighting the need for disability awareness training in the workplace that foster understanding about the behaviour and characteristics of certain disabilities. It has been shown that despite many years of disability

awareness training all that has happened is that we have just made the message more sophisticated without any real gains (Luecking, 2010).

b. The Role of Workplace and Natural Supports

The use of natural supports or co-worker supports is based on the understanding that the use of such supports provides for better opportunities for social integration in the workforce (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988). Natural supports are not restricted to physical support, but “include help with work and personal problems” (p263).

The capacity to take on a “real job” for someone with a disability is based on the idea that adequate job supports are available, that may include a job coach who may be a support worker (Wilson, 2003). Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of the job coach as being critical to employment outcomes, little is known about the factors that contribute to outcomes (Beyer, 2012). The idea that a job coach can adequately train each client in all areas of a job is not without its problems. For this reason, there is a reliance on the development of a relationship with co-workers, who may not be skilled enough to support a person with disabilities. This can have a negative impact on the nature of the relationship itself (Callahan, 1992; Beyer, 1997), which highlights another area of tension in the successful on-boarding of a person with a disability.

There is evidence indicating that the use of workplace supports lead to higher levels of worker empowerment if a person with a disability is given sufficient workplace training that they can actively use their skills to communicate with

supervisors and co-workers (Hagner, Noll & Enien-Donovan, 2002). Workplace supports are a non-intrusive method of providing support for the disability client that should be the first support of choice (Wehman et al., 2003), with the use of natural supports or co-workers, supported by internal training found to result in higher wages and social integration (Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff (1997). Cimera (2001) found that the use of co-worker supports also increased the length of time that supported employees held their employment.

Supporting clients with severe mental illness requires ongoing intensive assistance, with employers and supports also needing ongoing assistance to accommodate the individual in the workplace (King et al., 2006). Similarly, employment success for people with ASD is often contingent on employers and co-workers providing a flexible, supportive environment that allows them to interact or collaborate with co-workers (Burt et al., 1991). It can often be accomplished by the provision of reasonable accommodations in the workplace. Given that the diverse nature of the employment settings and disability types can make finding suitable workplace supports difficult, it suggests that a rethink of workplace flexibility is needed to ensure more success for people with a disability who wish to work (Vick & Lightman, 2010).

Reasonable accommodation is a feature of most open employment programs, wherein the working environment can be modified to support the employment of a person with a disability (Wehmeyer, 2011) For people with ASD, it has been shown that modifications to the work environment, tasks and assistance with communication and social interaction increase the chance of employment success (Hagner & Cooney, 2005). This highlights the importance of a workplace

assessment that can identify distractions in the workplace as an essential part of any workplace accommodation for clients with ASD, who find environmental stimuli distracting (Keel, Mesibov, & Woods, 1997). This type of assessment should be a common feature of any successful disability employment service.

H. Discussion and the Research Questions

An examination of the history and evidence behind disability employment highlight both areas of agreement and disagreement regarding our current understanding of disability employment practice. While we have universally accepted definitions of disability, it is evident that beyond this fact, there is no universal agreement or understanding as to the factors that contribute to successful employment. It is apparent that there is little understanding of the role of the various participants in the system, highlighted by the fact that the disability employment consultant and their relationship to disability service clients are largely undefined.

Researchers such as Simonsen, Fabian, Buchanan, & Luecking (2011) have demonstrated that there has been little change in approaches to work practices over a fifteen-year period, despite major changes in the funding and operating environment. Sitting beside advances in our understanding of disability, it would seem incongruous that work practices and staff development remain unchanged. Given that we do not have any real measures of the success of disability employment practice beyond measuring service delivery employment outcomes, this may not be so surprising.

The competing agendas of fiscal restraint versus social responsibility suggest a system that is not keeping pace with evidence concerning good practice. The apparent push by the Commonwealth government for disability employment service providers to be person-centred in their approach, despite evidence to suggest that there is little understanding of this construct within disability employment services, highlights the disparity between actual evidence-based work practices and rhetoric. Considering the evidence that there is no real understanding of person-centred principles within the disability employment service providers, further research into what constitutes appropriate training, skills and knowledge for disability employment consultants is overdue.

It is apparent that there is tension between economic imperatives and evidence-based work practices. This highlights the need for further research into what type of operating system would need to exist to allow for the use of known evidence-based employment practices that would allow consultants to operate in a manner that genuinely respects the disability client, their dreams, goals and aspirations, whilst at the same time meeting the government's economic agenda. It is the intent of this research project to develop a dynamic model of practice rather than a static model, as our knowledge of disability and the employment environment are in a constant state of change, particularly in an environment that introduced a new system of supports such as the NDIS. The impact of the NDIS is largely unknown at this early stage and the impact of changes to the DES system over the next three years leading to a possible reframing of the system in 2020 when the current contracts come up for tender.

The research to date concerning the operating environment has focused on the shift in economic philosophy and has largely ignored the actual operating environment. With the advent of the NDIS, an examination of what constitutes an appropriate operating system to take disability employment forward takes on a matter of urgency.

In examining the literature on disability employment, it is apparent that there is no real consensus understanding of what constitutes good practice by disability employment consultants. Some of the outcomes discussed such as inclusion and integration show disagreement on the validity of measures to date, while other areas such as work experience where there is good evidence are not universally seen in disability employment service practice as an imperative in assisting the client to set employment goals.

Much of the literature reviewed has highlighted a variety of good practices, but none have been able to comprehensively show evidence that disability employment consultants consistently adopt known evidence base work practices in a uniform organisational manner. Research to date has demonstrated a need for a more effective measure than currently exists for disability employment, with good evidence starting to exist for adopting measures aligned with Social Quality Theory, such as social inclusion, self-determination and social cohesion.

In examining the literature, it is clear that there is a need to bring together known current evidence-based work practices that support employment outcomes (such as Discovery, Job Matching, Job Analysis, Informational

Interviews, Work Experience, Job Carving, Employer Engagement, Skills Development, Resource Ownership, Ongoing Support, Natural Supports) (Griffin, Hammis, & Geary, 2007; Hagner, Noll, Enien-Donovan, 2002; Hagner, Phillips, & Dague, 2014; Luecking, Fabian, & Tilson, 2004), personal factors (such as self-determination, families, relationships) (Wehman, 2001), current disability employment work practices and develop a new understanding of what is actually happening in practice and develop that into applied practice that is both evidence-based and practical.

The literature demonstrates a lack of voice given to the recipients of disability employment services; people with a disability. More research that focuses on the client experience would also be beneficial, particularly considering the NDIS, the evolving situation with ADE's and the need to develop a seamless employment process that aligns all sectors of the disability employment system.

There are definite gaps in the consistent application of known evidence-based work practices and the importance of relationships in the process of developing meaningful employment outcomes, meaningful to the client and community. A clear set of practice guidelines that consider the disability employment service client and the disability employment service consultant is overdue.

However, any research that produces new evidence-based guidelines would only reach its potential if these practices were to take place in a system that allows consultants to practice without the undue influence of Commonwealth government economic imperatives. While not advocating for a complete

disregard for fiscal responsibility, it is my view that change to the service provider system that promotes better employment service practices, while supporting the disability employment consultant and the client is a necessary part of the promotion of improved practices and the application of those practices in a cohesive consistent manner.

For the system to be fully responsive to the needs of people with a disability, there is a need to involve them in this research. There is much to be gained by looking at the practices of disability employment service providers to see what practices contribute to their success as a service and how, the client views this.

This research project intends to uncover factors that are at play by answering the following questions:

- What is the experience of Client and the Disability Employment Consultant within the Disability Employment Service?
- What factors are at play for the Disability Employment Consultant in their role of supporting successful employment outcomes?
- What elements would need to be in place to support a dynamic disability employment system?

Chapter Four

Frame of Reference

A. Introduction

This chapter will outline the theoretical and conceptual framework which has influenced this research. The theoretical and conceptual framework will facilitate an understanding of the research frame of reference and provide the foundation on which this research stands. The framework will contribute to outlining the research problems and the questions arising from these issues and in the case of this study, highlight the social, political and economic forces at work shaping our current evidence base and practices that surround disability and employment.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current system of disability employment services, current work practices and the impact of these services on the client and a possible future course. The reference point for this research is the interaction between the client with a disability and the disability employment consultant, who from a client perspective is the system. It will also seek to highlight the absence of the client's voice in disability employment practice highlighted by the absence of the client's voice in measuring meaningful employment outcomes. The potential impact of this diminished role may, in turn, shed light on the potential role of the client's voice in improving outcomes and disability employment services. The absence of the client's voice is illustrated by

the low weighting of client feedback in the KPI's used to assign performance ratings to service providers.

The client voice and the impact of having or not having a real voice in determining the employment outcome are rooted in the subjective, the experience of the phenomenon that is their experience of the disability employment system. In a similar vein, listening to the voice of the disability employment consultant provides a subjective counterpoint to the client experience and will highlight the phenomenon from the service provider side of the system interaction. It is this counterpoint experience that will build on the client experience and may provide evidence for supporting system change that is beneficial not just to the client, but to those who represent the system.

Recent years has seen the disability employment system and people with a disability subject to a range of pressures from human rights issues, the social, political and economic ideology that have given us the current system of practice.

It is beyond the scope of this research to provide in-depth analysis of these influences, as they are distinct bodies of work in themselves; however, their influence cannot be denied, and no study of disability employment would be complete, without reference to them.

B. Conceptual Issues

Many conceptual issues that became apparent when looking at disability and employment within this research. Some concepts highlighted and relevant to this research are:

- a. Why Bother with Employment?**
- b. Impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**
- c. Defining Disability?**
- d. Underpinning Theoretical and Philosophical Perspective to this Research**
- e. Social Quality Theory**
- f. Social Determinants**
- g. Quality of Life**
- h. Person Centred Practice – A Matter of Choice**
- i. Human Rights, Power and Control -Who Matters?**

It is these issues that will be explored in this chapter, as they provide context for this research, particularly concerning my experience of the system.

a. Why Bother with Employment?

Many people struggle to answer that question when it comes to individuals with a disability. Asked of themselves, you would no doubt hear responses that range

from I need the money to pay my bills, to have a holiday, to party, to buy a new car or buy clothes. All valid responses yet are they not equally valid for everyone irrespective of disablement or not?

Given the inconsistent nature of disability employment services and what on the surface appears to be an attitude of the client does not matter, why would we continue to pursue employment options for people with a disability, particularly with the high cost of providing disability employment services?

Work for reward either through salary or self-employment is how our society defines an individual and how many people construct their identity, develop self-esteem and dignity, along with structuring their lives around the notion of five days of work and two days of recreation and the activities that support this structure (Bessant & Watts, 2002; Wehman, 2001). Neoliberal policy promotes the idea of citizenship through the lens of employment, with work an accepted part of social status in contemporary western societies (Jamrozik, 2005). For people with a disability, the inability to gain access to the employment market reduces their status to one of welfare recipient and by reference to citizenship, non-citizens. It could be argued that the ascent of the various disability laws and regulations through the later part of the last century was a response to the need for people with a disability to have equal status amongst all citizens of Australia.

Irrespective of personal views, work is an accepted pathway to a higher quality of life and a significant influence on culture and community. Work provides opportunities to build new friendships and develop networks of social support

that come from these friendships and being in the community (Leucking, Fabian, & Tilson, 2004; Wehman, 2001). From an economic perspective, governments have finite financial resources as such increasing the numbers of people accessing the Disability Support Pension (DSP) is not sustainable long term. What makes more sense is a reduction in DSP outlays that can only be achieved by a decrease in the number of recipients of the DSP. This is only achievable by either forcing more people with a disability off the DSP and into a life of charity and poverty or by increasing the employment opportunities for individuals with a disability and therefore, an increase in taxation revenue. There are some competing imperatives, all of which can be achieved by increasing the number of people with a disability in employment.

Employment is seen as a fundamental characteristic of citizenship, social identity and status (Jamrozik, 2005). The Commonwealth Government workfare policies have continued to promote the idea that there are potentially 800,000 people with disability receiving benefits that could be employed and the benefit they would bring to the gross national product. In some ways it has the unintended consequence of lumping people with disability into the same category as other welfare recipients who are undeserving of citizenship, in part due to being unable to validate their citizenship through employment (Lantz & Marston, 2012). Citizenship under neoliberal policy influences has been reduced to that of a welfare recipient learning how to “achieve productive citizenship” (p865). Of course, people with a disability are not alone in seeking to “validate” their existence through employment.

Unemployment brings with it significant reductions in quality of life, as illustrated by a decrease in standards of living, elevated anxiety levels, poverty and weakened social ties. Employment is seen as an avenue for developing life skills, self-esteem, positive mental health, purpose and social relationships, all of which contribute to the health of society (Boreham, Povey, & Tomaszewski, 2016; Cocks, Thoresen, & Lee, 2015) and improved quality of life.

At its essence, employment is at the heart of the cultural fabric of a healthy society and is an accepted path to achieving a higher quality of life. The personal and community factors of citizenship, quality of life and a healthy society, alone make employment for people with a disability an imperative, made even more relevant by the financial contribution of reduced welfare outlays and increased tax contributions from personal exertion income and spending.

b. Impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (UNCRPD)

To underscore the significance of the convention, it is important to highlight the following parts of the document; Article One (1) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) states;

The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments

which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

This positions the UNCRPD as a human rights agenda.

Section twenty-seven highlights the convention signatories' obligations regarding work and employment. It lists eleven steps that signatories should take to safeguard and promote opportunities for people with a disability to work.

These steps are:

(a) 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:

(b) Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable 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:

(c) Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others:

(d) Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training:

- (e) 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:
- (f) Promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business:
- (g) Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector:
- (h) Promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programmes, incentives and other measures;
- (i) Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace;
- (j) Promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market;
- (k) Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programmes for persons with disabilities. (UNCRPD, 2006).

The Australian Commonwealth Government ratified the UNCRPD in July 2008 obligating the government to improve the lives of people with a disability under with the convention. In February 2011, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed a new National Disability Strategy 2010 -2020 incorporating the principles of the UNCRPD. Central to this document is the policy direction to provide increased access to employment opportunities for people with a disability. It is noted that employment is the pathway used by most Australians to enjoy long-term economic security and well-being.

Based on these actions it would appear that our State and Commonwealth governments have committed to ensuring equal access to employment for people with a disability. A general reading of the UNCRPD and the steps relating to employment suggest that our governments are broadly not meeting their obligations under section 27, particularly in reference to wage equality, work experience and career development.

What has been the impact of this agreement on employment opportunities for people with a disability? Figures relating to employment levels since the COAG agreement ratification within the Australian Public Service suggest very little, with employment rates for individuals with a disability hovering around two-point nine (2.9) percent in 2012, significantly lower than the highest rate of over five (5) reached in the early 1990's (APSC, 2013). It would be reasonable to assume that as part of the government's commitment to the UNCRPD, employment rates within the public service would have risen and demonstrated to private sector employers the virtues and steps necessary to successfully onboard a person with a disability into employment. Recent data (2016) suggests a slight improvement to three-point-seven per cent (3.7) (APSC, 2016).

Given the relatively unchanged employment levels of people with a disability, there is a strong argument to suggest that the impact of the UNCRPD on employment has been negligible. Workforce participation rates for people with a disability sits uncomfortably at fifty-three-point four (53.4) per cent when compared to eighty-two-point five (82.5) per cent for individuals without a disability (ABS, 2015). This raises questions about the effectiveness of the

current disability employment programs and what factors may be at play restricting the growth in employment amongst people with a disability.

c. Defining Disability

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2001) defined disability as; "the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and the individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)"(p213). This positions disability not solely within the person but residing also within society and the barriers within that environment that prevent full participation.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF, 2001) define disability as difficulties encountered in any or all of three areas of functioning, these being:

- Impairment (issues relating to body function or body structure alterations)
- Activity Limitations (difficulties with executive functioning such as walking or eating)
- Participation Restrictions (problems relating to participation in any area of life such as employment or transportation)

Within these three sectors, impairment covers such issues as; mental functioning, sensory issues, voice, cardiovascular, digestive, skin, nervous system

and so on, in essence, every area of physiology. Activities and Participation relate to learning and praxis, general tasks, communication, mobility, self-care, domestic life, interpersonal relationships and includes employment. This model is known as the bio-psycho-social model of disability.

What is interesting within the WHO classification are some environmental factors, ranging from technology, supports, education and important services, systems and policies. Of particular interest is the specific reference to "Labour and Employment Services, Systems and Policies." The idea that Employment Services contributes to the definition of disability highlights the importance of these services as a contributing factor in defining what a disability is. This very idea highlights that employment services can potentially be an enabler or disabler of an individual (ICF, 2001).

The ICF (2001) describes Labour and Employment Services as:

Services and programmes provided by local, regional or national governments, or private organizations to find suitable work for persons who are unemployed or looking for different work, or to support individuals already employed, such as services of employment search and preparation, reemployment, job placement, outplacement, vocational follow-up, occupational health and safety services, and work environment services (e.g. ergonomics, human resources and personnel management services, labour relations services, professional association services), including those who provide these services. (p.205).

This definition remains unchanged as of 2017 (Rehadat, 2017).

This is a broad, all-encompassing definition that might lead to the suggestion that the current method of providing disability employment services in Australia may have too narrow a focus and that by narrowing the service focus, it is, in fact, a maintainer of the client's disability. The other side of this may well be that the definitions of what is and what should be are too vague and open to manipulation by providers and government. I would suggest that having three different employment pathways; DES, ADE's and the NDIS do nothing to address this vagueness.

The Disability Employment Service Deed (DEEWR, 2013) that covers the program at the time of this research has no definition of disability within the document and defines the program objectives as:

To help individuals with disability, injury or health condition to secure and maintain sustainable employment in the open labour market. The Program Services will increase the focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged job seekers and will achieve greater social inclusion. The Program Services will boost employment participation and the productive capacity of the workforce, address Skills Shortage areas and better meet the needs of employers. (p53).

In 2015 a new DES Deed came into force with unchanged objectives and again no definition of a disability. The Disability Services Act (1986) defined that Acts target group as those with disabilities that are permanent or likely to be permanent and as a result will need substantial support to obtain or retain paid employment. Is the absence of a definition in the DES deed a reflection of the fact

that DES-ESS is designed for people with a life-long disability or simply missed to provide latitude in services?

(https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/12_2015/disability_employment_services_deed.pdf. Accessed 25th March 2016).

How then does the program achieve greater social inclusion without defining disability, measuring it or for that matter making provision for a social outcome? Social outcomes were a feature of the previous mainstream employment program before the change in 2013 through its delivery of the Personal Support Program (PSP). This program was essentially a counselling service that focused on the most disadvantaged job seekers, which had as its goal, not just employment, but support with a range of issues such as advocacy, housing, mental illness, children, abuse, gay, lesbian and transgender, retraining, intellectual and developmental issues to name a few.

The 2013 definition contains the proposition that the service "will increase the focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged job seekers" (p.53).

A simple interpretation of this would seem to imply that those with the most disadvantage would receive the most attention or support. In practice, providers are more likely to focus on those clients that have the least barriers to employment, that can be quickly placed in jobs and maintained there to improve financial outcomes for the providers. This process was highlighted in submissions to the 2011 Senate's Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee inquiry into the administration and purchasing

of Disability Employment Services (DES) in Australia (Hansard, 2011). This practice was given some credibility in part due to the Commonwealth Governments push following reforms to the disability support pension (DSP) in 2006, that saw disability employment funds nominally directed to those with a higher capacity to work.

Prominent amongst the Senate's Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee recommendations was the development of a more robust and quantifiable quality assessment measure. In its February 2012 response to the committee report, the Australian Commonwealth Government stated; "It is inherently difficult to incorporate a quality of service or a quality of employment assessment mechanism into the DES Star Rating model." (DEEWR, 2012). Such commentary raises the question as to whether the quality of the outcome, service provided and the client's voice – the subjective experience of the DES Employment Support Service (ESS), have ever been prioritised in a system that paradoxically is obligated to be person-centred in practice.

The Disability Employment Service deed refers to performing under the Disability Services (Rehabilitation Services) Guidelines 2007, which does not define disability but stipulates conditions for holding a DES contract.

Specifically, it states within section two;

The ability of the provider to provide services that:

- (i) enable people with an injury, disability or other health condition to achieve sustainable employment to maximise use of their capabilities:

- (ii) promote the capabilities of the target group, leading to improved employment opportunities for them; and
- (iii) demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement in the provision of employment services to the target group;

There is no reference to what a disability is in the Deed, but instead, it references the Disability Services Act 1986, which only defines disability by referring to a target group in Part Two (8) – Funding Services for Persons with a Disability.

It states;

- (1) the target group for the purposes of this Part consists of persons with a disability that:
 - (a) is attributable to an intellectual, psychiatric, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of such impairments;
 - (b) is permanent or likely to be permanent; and
 - (c) results in:
 - (i) a substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, learning or mobility; and
 - (ii) the need for ongoing support services. (p13)

The Disability Services Act 1986 has had a substantial number of amendments since its inception, but none appear to have changed the definition of what is a disability; certainly, there is no reference to the ICF (2001) definition of disability, which includes environmental factors such as disability employment service provision.

The inability to specifically include a definition of disability and the Commonwealth government's unwillingness to include measures of quality outcomes of the system has the potential to be contributing factors to the low levels of employment of people with a disability and highlights a significant gap in the evidence base for disability employment practice. At the very least it highlights a need to develop an evidence-based outcome measure that encompasses quality of life issues, something that elements of Social Quality Theory (SQT) have the potential to achieve (van der Maesen & Walker, 2005).

d. Underpinning Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives on this Research

My initial question was whether a theoretical and philosophical stand is necessary to examine the lived experiences of people accessing the disability employment system is important. Asking this question of individuals with a disability in all likelihood would generate a nice but not necessary view, and most likely we do not care about the theory, is from my point of view, not dissimilar to the "no researching about us without us" paradigm. (Johnson, 2009). Is it necessary to examine the theoretical and philosophical perspectives that surround disability and employment? For a researcher, a theoretical perspective can provide some background to how society may interpret the research topic, in this case, societies view on disability and employment.

In his review of Modern Social Theory, Harrington (2005) describes Social Theory as;

“The study of scientific ways of thinking about social life. It encompasses ideas about how societies change and develop, about methods of explaining social behaviour, about power and social structure, class, gender and ethnicity, modernity and civilisation, revolutions and utopias, and numerous other concepts and problems in social life” (p1.)

Based on Harrington's (2005) description and an examination of the history of disability employment in Australia and the government of the day's position of moving disability around various departments based on political and social objectives, there is an argument to suggest that having a theoretical perspective is warranted.

Within the realms of Social Theory, there are some perspectives and potential worldviews, relevant to this research which is rooted in the Interpretivist vein, well described by Outhwaite (2005) as, ‘a label for approaches stressing the importance of subjective meanings carried by actions and institutions in the social world’(p110).

Interpretive social theory has at its heart the desire to understand what the experience is like for the various participants in a social system, and to know how much people know about their social situation. Outhwaite (2005) noted that interpretivists are more interested in understanding the individual experience from the inside rather than in explaining the experience from the outside perspective.

As an Existential Therapist, I am familiar with this paradigm and feeds nicely into the qualitative research approach of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, which seeks to understand the various participant's subjective experience of phenomena. It is this perception or experience of yourself within the social system that may impact on whether we perceive that we have a disability or not or indeed any limitations.

Merleau-Ponty (2002) wrote:

The theory of the body schema is, implicitly, a theory of perception. We have relearned to feel our body, we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which we have of it by its always being with us and of the fact that we are our body. In the same way, we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us as far as we are in the world through our body, and as far as we perceive the world with our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover yourself, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception (p 239).

In a way, I interpret Merleau-Ponty to be alluding to how we perceive our body as a factor in whether we are disabled. It is this perception of our body and how we interact with society that determines our level of disability. At its simplest, perception is reality, a reality formed by our understanding of ourself interpreted by our physical interaction with society, something that can only be experienced by being in our body. This could be construed as a "Symbolic

Interactionist" approach in which social reality is defined by whatever meaning that you give to social experiences, words and gestures (Bessant and Watts, 2002).

Symbolic Interactionism was introduced by Herbert Blumer in 1937 and has its origins in the works of George Mead (1863-1931) and Charles Cooley (1864-1929). Mead believed that behaviour is a learnt aspect of a person and developed through the meanings that individuals give to social situations and their interpretation of that interaction. Cooley developed the notion of the "looking glass" self, which is founded on three aspects; (1) we imagine how we appear to others, (2) we imagine how they might see us and (3) we modify our perception of self, based on the judgment of others (Poole and Germov, 2007). Together, they posit social reality in the realm of understanding and meaning, giving voice to and empowering the individual (Lal, 1995).

This research has its historical roots in the works of Shultz and Husserl, who posit that society is a human construction. Consistent with this, Merleau-Ponty's view suggests and supports the social construct of society. Taken together it is not hard to believe that they might have concluded that disability is a social construct. Whilst written initially in 1945 seems to reject the held belief at that time that disability is a medical condition, a model that relied on measuring IQ in people with mental retardation (intellectual disability) and deficits in those with developmental disability (Dempsey & Nankervis, 2006).

In recent years, we have seen the view of disability evolve through medical, social and now bio-psycho-social models. Is this simply part of the process of trying to construct a consensus view of disability, which seems to be an evolving picture influenced by the politics of disability and the human rights movements.

This evolution of consensus is consistent with the parallel development of Disability Theory under the influence of the disability rights movement and its pushback against control and exclusion (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009), which has now evolved into Critical Disability Theory (CDT). Critical Disability Theory proposes people with a disability should have equal access to all aspects of society, which places it on the human rights agenda.

Hosking (2008) breaks CDT down into seven components; the social model of disability, multidimensionality, valuing diversity, rights, voices of disability, language, and transformative politics. Hosking's view was not one of excluding the medical component of disability, but one of identifying how disability is portrayed by media and its tendency to condition societies attitude to disability. Hosking (2008) felt that CDT was unabashedly political in its objective of transforming society to accept people with a disability, as equal members entitled to live in an inclusive community.

Considered together, the various models of disability (medical, social and bio-psycho-social) highlight the experiences and goals of people with a disability, in a sense, their transactions with the various systems within society or possibly their interaction with societies view of disability (Dempsey & Nankervis, 2006).

One sociological perspective is that of Systems Theory, which provides us with the means to elaborate on a person's experience within their lived environment. Systems Theory is credited to the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901-1972), a theoretical biologist, who took the view that interaction with various biological systems was the driver for change. His General Systems Theory held that systems must be seen in their wholeness and that there is a tendency towards integration across the various natural and social sciences. In that sense, it has parallels with the Existential view that we do not exist in isolation, that we are always in relationships, not just with another human being, but in our relatedness to the world and that by acknowledging this we exist as part of it (Jacobsen, 2007).

Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), an economist, philosopher and social scientist, developed a systems model that supported his proposition that social systems are related to either the internal environment (the Subjective?) or non-social external environments. Parsons developed a model that consisted of four systems: Adaptive (external reference with a future orientation), Secondary (goal-directed), Third (focus on systems integration) and Fourth (Maintenance or focused on long-term patterns). Known as 'The Structure of Social Action (1937), it sought to demonstrate how divergent social and economic theories were, in fact, coalescing into one integrated social theory (Cubbon, 1991). Parsons view on the integration of systems into a whole, parallels von Bertalanffy's view of integrated systems.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) extended von Bertalanffy's work from the biological system to his bioecological model (BES) (Hines-Martin, Speck, Stetson, & Looney, 2009), that highlighted the various systems that surround an individual, proposing that we exist within an environment composed of four systems known as, the microsystem (family), the mesosystem (neighbours, direct relationships), the exosystem (Indirect such as school systems) and the macrosystem (influences such as culture). Binding these systems together is context, culture and history with the individual at the centre (early person-centredness?) (Darling, 2007). (fig. 1.0). Bronfenbrenner later added another dimension, the chronosystem to account for change over time.

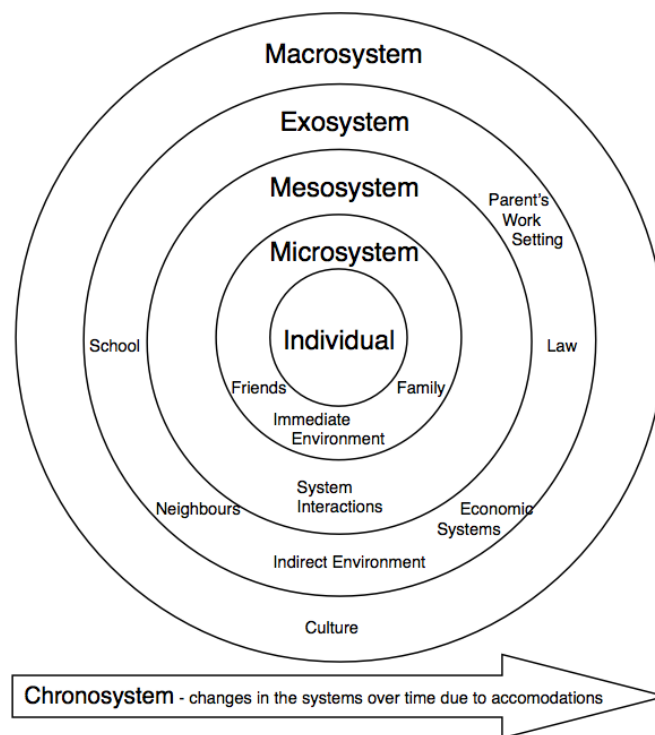


Fig. 1.0. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Model.

Systems Theory with its clear links to Mead (1863-1931) and Cooley (1864-1929), highlight the range of influences on a person with a disability from an environmental, developmental and activist perspective; however, were does

employment sit within the day-to-day economic point of view or indeed within Bronfenbrenner's lifespan system?

Over the past twenty years, the influence of social theory and the role of the individual have given way as many western governments moved to adopt a neoliberal philosophy. This has been characterised by a laissez-faire approach to market deregulation under the guise that free markets function better when there is less government regulation, ongoing privatisation of state utilities, again based on the business does it better philosophy and a reduction in public services on the back of a decline in community or common good, supported by the concept of individual responsibility. This is best illustrated by the introduction of "mutual obligation" requirements that underpin disability employment practices in Australia that were commenced by the Commonwealth Government in 2006. This required all new recipients of the disability support pension (DSP) to engage in activation programs not dissimilar to the mainstream "Work for the Dole" programs, which perversely went hand in hand with cuts to welfare (Soldatic & Pini, 2012).

Neoliberalism, economic rationalism, neo-conservatism and economic rationalisation are all terms that have been used to describe the same philosophy which essentially is based on the notion that Western liberal governments have been interfering with the correct running of free markets to the detriment of the markets (Maddison & Martin, 2010). Paradoxically this position is at odds with the same governments' position of subsidising business and most noticeably in

recent times bailing out financial institutions during the Global Financial Crisis; an event primarily brought about by free market forces.

In the late 1990's, the Commonwealth government adopted the Workfare philosophy that underpins the Neoliberal idealism which saw the notion of citizenship rights and entitlements replaced by a new discourse that sought to constrain individual freedoms by citizenship responsibilities and obligations (Soldatic & Chapman, 2010). During this period, the Commonwealth Government restructured disability employment services, which saw people with a disability excluded from the policy and control process (lack of voice) replaced by disability organisations and carer voices. The success of the program not measured in person-centred terms of client preference and control, but simple economic outcomes that favoured the service providers and to a degree government public relations interests.

Reimbursing providers for how quickly they commenced a client in the Disability Employment Service (DES) program and whether they reached employment benchmarks of 13 and 26 weeks employed served to highlight the precarious nature of employment services for people with high barriers to employment. The changing nature of eligibility for the DSP further highlight the Commonwealth government's preferred agenda of investing disability employment support funds in clients with limited barriers (Soldatic & Pini, 2012).

There is a reasoned argument to be made that over the past twenty years governments of all persuasions pursued their favoured ideology with little reference to the individual with a disability.

e. Social Quality Theory

In response to the rise of Washington centric neoliberal philosophy, European countries sought a counter to this with a different view that could address the social dimension of policy-making (Lin, Ward, & van der Maesen, 2009). In a sense, this is a move back towards giving prominence to the role of the individual and the impact of the system on the individual. In 1997, the European Union established The European Foundation on Social Quality whose purpose was to design and apply a new theory of social quality (SQT) and its conditional factors, namely: socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment. Following this, member countries over the period from 2001 to 2005 tested the significance of the indicators in their own country. These tests resulted in a list of ninety-five quality indicators spread over the four domains as a starting point for discussion.

The four domains or conditional factors of Social Quality Theory are defined as:

1. Socioeconomic security – meaning, the extent to which individual people or groups of people have access to and utilisation of successful outcomes related to a variety of resources (including finances, housing, healthcare, employment and education) throughout and over time.

2. Social Cohesion – related to the extent to which individual people or groups of people share in social relations (including identities, values and norms).
3. Social Inclusion – related to the extent to which particular individuals and groups have access to and are integrated into the different institutions and social relations of everyday life.
4. Social Empowerment – related to the extent to which their social relations enhance the personal capabilities of people. (Walker and van der Maesen, 2005).

Social Quality has been mooted as a foundation to bridge the tension between economic and social policy and become a standard that European policymakers could measure the effectiveness of national policy decisions (Fairweather, Roncevic, Rydbjerg, Valentova, and Zajc, 2001). With awareness of SQT rising globally, work continues to provide empirical evidence to validate it as a reliable tool for measuring social quality in such a holistic manner. At this point, work is being undertaken using the principles that underlie SQT to develop outcomes measures across some areas such as health and employment.

Employment is situated within the domain of social cohesion as a measure of the quality of life taking in education, employment, the standard of living, accommodation, family and social life and health. One of the issues that research into Social Quality Theory will need to address is the need to ensure that indicators that can be situated in several domains are qualified and located within the appropriate area. Employment could easily fall into the category of

social inclusion concerning the amount of time a person spends per week at their job/paid work.

Social Quality Theory holds out the possibility of a new paradigm in employment at a time when insecure employment is fast becoming a feature of modern society. This is at odds with the employees need for both income security and flexibility balanced against the needs of employers to control all aspects of their business including the right to reduce labour costs and the labour pool. Against there is the need to ensure access to a skilled workforce to ensure continuity of business. In recent years the term “Flexicurity” was coined to describe this paradigm, which is seen as meeting the needs of business and the employee (Nectoux & van der Maesen, 2003).

f. Social Determinants

The principles of normalisation (Nirje, 1973; Wolfensburger 1972) have been an influence on service providers for some decades. It has been suggested that this has led to some disability employment practices which expect that the person with the disability should be able to complete all the tasks required of a non-disabled worker (Wilson, 2003).

Normalisation is frequently linked to concepts of social inclusion and integration, which are defined in general terms as being physically present in locations frequented by the public as a whole (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Lysaght, Cobigo, & Hamilton, 2012). Social inclusion itself is a poorly misunderstood concept, often

equated with the frequency that someone is seen in public (Lysaght et al., 2012; Wilson, 2003), a practice routinely advocated by service providers as an exercise in being person-centred, but it had little to do with client development and engagement.

In a similar vein, Cummins & Lau (2003) looked at the concept of integration, noting that service providers and policymakers view integration as being present in the community. They cite the example of people with intellectual disability, who since deinstitutionalisation are now living in the community in group homes, but this could hardly be integration given the small circle of people in their lives, many of who are support staff. The support staff may be the only non-disabled person in their lives, not dissimilar to the arrangements that they may have experienced within an institution. In effect, this type of integration is simply a community-based micro institution.

Social inclusion is frequently cited as a benefit of open employment; however, little evidence exists to support this conclusion (Dempsey & Ford, 2009; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Lysaght et al., 2012; Solar, 2011). Lysaght et al., (2012) examined forty-two studies into social inclusion looking at which elements of social inclusion were included in the studies. It was noted that employment was a factor in thirty-six of those studies reviewed. It was concluded that integration rather than inclusion was the goal of many of the vocational services.

Integration into the workplace with non-disabled workers is cited by Lewis, Johnson, & Mangen, (1998) as one of the major components of supported employment in the USA at that time, noting that the intent of federal social policy

on supported employment was to provide competitive employment opportunities in integrated settings for persons with severe disabilities, who could not either access open employment or have experienced periods of interrupted employment. Lysaght et al., (2012) also noted that placement rates were the only key measures of success used by employment services, which is consistent with the performance framework employed in Australia.

Lewis et al., (1998) reported these as being the only indicators used with most measures taking in the conceptual frameworks of integration and quality of life as measures of service effectiveness. Lewis et al., (1998) stated that contact, interaction and relationships are the primary reasons for supported or open employment, suggesting socially relevant outcomes may be a goal. This, in turn, is at odds with outcome measures used at present, which only focus on employment placement.

Cummins & Lau (2003) cited a study by Inge, Banks, Wehman, Hill, & Shafer (1988) purporting to demonstrate the benefits of open employment versus sheltered employment and its positive impact on integration. Cummins & Lau (2003) concluded that errors in the analysis of the literature skewed the result, when in fact the only conclusion that could be drawn was that there was an increase in wages. Highlighting the mixed evidence regarding inclusion and integration, Cummins & Lau (2003) have concluded that much of the literature regarding employment as being a progenitor of integration is questionable. They offered the alternative view that people with disabilities who have higher social

skills are more likely to get a job, remain employed and obtain higher scores in measures of integration.

The literature concerning employment, social inclusion and integration demonstrate a degree of confusion and conflicting outcomes. It may be that to measure or state that employment is a precursor to inclusion and integration that further research is needed to accurately define what integration is and what is inclusion, possibly something that Social Quality Theory (SQT) may hold the key.

Currently, no universal model of open employment service exists, with different countries having their version ostensibly focused on employment in open labour markets (Wilson, 2003). There is a general view that open employment constitutes real jobs for real pay with real benefits (Schneider, 2008; Wehman, Revell, & Brooke, 2003) with open employment for people with a disability having been shown to provide opportunities for individuals to use and enhance skills, develop a sense of pride through successfully contributing to society through their workplace accomplishments, along with enhanced self-esteem and the capacity to connect with society as a whole (Belgrave, 1991, Krause & Anson, 1997; Samant, Soffer, Hernandez, Adya, Akinpelu, Levy, Repoli, Kramer, & Blanck, 2009).

Access to disability employment services, which provide support for people with a disability to access open employment, is still low when compared to the known numbers of people with a disability in the community. Wehman et al., (2003)

reported a figure of 15% for US citizens with a disability, which is consistent with the recent data for access to services in Australia (DEEWR, 2012).

In the absence of a detailed understanding of the dimensions of supported or open employment, the integration of people with a disability into open employment settings runs the risk of diminishing support for efforts to promote open employment for individuals with severe disabilities (Johnson & Lewis, 1994). Research has highlighted the benefits of open employment services for higher functioning individuals (Kober & Eggleton, 2005), while at the same time appears to support the proposition that for lower functioning individuals, the entry point, either sheltered workshop or open employment has no discernible difference. This runs counter to the outcomes and experiences of people with severe limitations that pursue open employment through employment settings utilising practices such as customised employment (Citron, Brooks-Lane, Crandell, Brady, Cooper, & Revell, 2008; Griffin, Hammis, & Geary, 2007) and the benefits that open employment or self-employment can contribute to an individual quality of life.

The contradictory nature of some of the research outcomes adds further weight to the proposition that without a detailed understanding of what clients' experience when interacting with the open employment system, the real benefits of open employment service provision may remain unknown. This research seeks to examine the client-consultant experience of the current DES system and shed light on some of the factors that support successful employment outcomes.

The absence of reliable data on employment for people with intellectual disability and from my perspective as it relates to the domains of Social Quality Theory prevents efforts to monitor employment services efficiently and shift to a meaningful outcomes-focused approach (Dempsey & Ford, 2009). This may suggest that while employment, as a result, is measurable, the intangible or subjective experience is yet to be formalised in a meaningful way for participants, reflective of the absence of the client's voice in measuring meaningful employment outcomes. The current DES system places more weight on compliance and program activities with quality of outcome (KPI 3) and the benefits of the employment outcome secondary. KPI 3 is not used in calculating the provider performance rating and is essentially a measure against the Disability Service Standards (Australian Government, 2015).

g. Quality of Life

Improvements in quality of life for people with disabilities will only improve when they have the freedom to exercise control and make the changes they want, particularly in funding and the types of services that they require (Sowers, McLean, & Owens, 2002), with this level of self-determination a feature of the NDIS. For people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) employment leads to an improvement in their quality of life, in part due to the lessening of reliance on government funds (Hendricks, 2010). This outcome is also apparent when examining increased choice and control for people with a disability working in open employment settings showing significantly better quality of life outcomes compared to those operating in simulated work settings such as sheltered

workshops or ADE's (Blick, Litz, Thornhill, & Goreczny, 2016). This tends to support the discussion that our current methods for measuring employment outcomes are missing the dimensions of the client that most non-disabled people would consider a primary employment outcome, which is a better quality of life.

Dempsey and Ford (2009) noted that little employment research had been carried out in Australia on quality of life outcomes for people with disabilities. Most of the research to date focused on access, tenure and wages without any regard for the employment outcomes and the relationships between outcomes and the nature and extent of the support provided, particularly in relation to people with intellectual disability. Further, they wrote that there was little research that looks at the person with the disability and their perception of the employment and the supports that contribute to valued status. This is consistent with the present system that focuses on compliance and is supported by findings from previous research that highlighted the focus on provider outcomes (Kober & Eggleton, 2009; Schalock & Lilley, 1986) and a focus on system efficiency from the view of input costs versus outcome costs (Kober & Eggleton, 2006).

This research project seeks to explore the client-consultant factors from the personal perspective, giving weight to personal factors as a measure of employment success.

Quality of life in the absence of a multi-dimensional contextual model is still a largely subjective concept rooted in notions of wellbeing and satisfaction (Verdugo, Jordan de Urries, Jenaro, Caballo, & Crespo, 2006). In a study of

Spanish workers, Verdugo et al., (2006) found that typicalness; meaning that employment for people with a disability that was close to that of a non-disabled worker in the same setting was closely related to higher quality of life, highlighting another benefit of open employment. This same study found that women and workers with lower training levels also displayed a lower quality of life. The severity of the intellectual disability has little impact on quality of life; with the seriousness of any behavioural problems not impacting on quality of life. The research by Verdugo et al., (2006) would suggest that the issue of finding sustainable employment has a closer relationship to support surrounding behaviour problems and is not related to the disability. It has implications for pre and post placement employment support and warrants further research to verify this, which could provide evidence for more appropriate pre and post-employment interventions and support.

h. Person-Centred Practice – A Matter of Choice

The capacity to exercise choice in employment opportunities by people with a disability that access disability employment services is not evident; however, changes to the Australian DES in 2018 will provide improved but limited choices; with job preference or choice having been indicated as a factor in employment success (Hendricks, 2010; Beyer, 2012; Wehman et al., 2003). This has the potential to improve outcomes with agencies that maintain a clear focus on the client's needs more likely to exercise safe work practices and provide greater opportunities to exercise choice for clients (Beyer, Goodere, & Kilsby, 1996).

The capacity to exercise choice in choosing which disability employment service that a client uses, while it exists, nominally faces barriers such as defined market percentage that prevents any agency operating from taking on new clients within its defined Employment Service Area (ESA). This requirement will be modified in 2018, with providers able to work across other ESA and markets being defined by limited client choice. Currently set at a nominal 25%, an agency can exceed its allocation by a small percentage, but not enough to demonstrate that clients exercise real choice in which agency to use. Current practices are at odds with the neoliberal workfare policies that dominate current ideology by the government.

Choice is a factor in any agency that promotes person-centred practices for its clients. A client or person-centred approach to understanding and supporting the client is generally regarded as the principle approach to client success in the securing and maintaining employment, which requires a greater understanding of the client beyond the formal setting of the office (Callahan, Shumpert, & Condon, 2009; Griffin, Hammis, & Geary, 2007). Focusing on developing a client centred non-judgemental relationship has been shown to improve successful employment outcomes, highlighting a need to develop a deeper understanding of the client's emotions and attitudes for providers be client centred (Rogers, 1946; Vick & Lightman, 2010). The current process focused system that exists in Australia would appear to allow for little time to invest in developing a real understanding of the client.

Kostick, Whitley, & Bush (2010) noted that client-centred practice is in effect a client led negotiation that requires an understanding of the client perspective to set standards and boundaries to protect their clients' best interests, a factor in the evidence-based practice of Discovery. However, this practice is not followed as a matter of course. Migliore, Hall, Butterworth, & Winsor (2010), reported that less than half of the disability employment consultants in their study spent any time getting to know the client using evidence-based approaches recommended in the literature, with the reasons unclear.

The inability to implement person-centred practices as a benchmark of quality suggests that programs may become devoid of values and a clear focus (Wehman et al., 2003). Yun-Tung (2010) noted that the level of services provided by the disability employment consultant or job coach was a predictor of program outcomes measures.

Research suggests that four primary factors affected whether a client centred approach to disability employment was implemented. These are; client anxieties about their interests and abilities, difficulties interpreting and negotiating client preferences in realistic contexts, quality of supervision and guidance in implementing client centred practices and maintaining morale in the face of challenges and managing discrepancies in resource sharing amongst agencies (Kostick et al., 2010). For disability employment staff to implement person-centred practices, staff would need to have some formal training in person-centred practices, but this is rarely given (Kostick et al.,2010) suggesting that

employment consultants are potentially engaging in guesswork when trying to understand the client's experiences and wishes.

Recent experiences by the author in educating disability employment staff in person-centred practices have demonstrated that few staff have any real understanding of what person-centred practice is. This is consistent with the findings of Kostick et al., (2010) that little training has been given in this area to date and has implications for future Australian government employment services procurement requirements that require organisations adopt a person-centred approach when dealing with disability employment service clients.

i. Human Rights, Power and Control -Who Matters?

It is generally accepted that the International Year of Disabled Citizens (1981) provided the impetus for advancement of the rights of disabled people in Australia (O'Brien, Newell, McEninery, & Thesing, 2006), which saw the establishment of the Disability Advisory Council of Australia in 1983 and later the Disability Services Act of 1986. The significance of these events cannot be overstated in that it demonstrated a shift in government philosophy from treating people with disabilities as policy objects to citizens who were impacted by the policy. Over the following 20 years, both state and local governments give voice to and support for the ambitions of people with a disability by establishing disability advisory committees.

In the mid-1990's, Federal government reviews into disability and employment resulted in a push to reform the disability employment sector, and amongst the changes floated was a reform of the sheltered workshop system and a move towards open employment opportunities for all people with a disability, which was supported by the disability rights movement. However, at that time, the peak body representing sheltered workshop providers, the Australian Council for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (ACROD) mounted a campaign against this government move, which succeeded in placing primacy of provider rights ahead of the rights of people with a disability. It has been suggested that the success of the campaign was due in large part to the exclusion of families and traditional services providers from the reform process (Parmenter, 1999).

This raises the issue of whose rights are being promoted, indeed, at that time suggests that it was those of the service providers, despite the implementation of the various disability rights acts. Pathways to employment for people with a disability has historically had some pathways, mainly DES or ADE's.

While ADE's are not part of this research, they are nonetheless a factor in disability employment services in Australia, with clients having the capacity to move from ADE's to the DES system and back. Along with the NDIS they are part of the disability employment system and represent alternative pathways. As such it is important that some commentary is made for reference purposes in this research, particularly, in light of recent moves by the Commonwealth government to have ADE's explore open employment pathways for clients.

A hallmark of ADE's is the use of wage assessments to determine wages, as distinct from open employment where employees are usually paid award wages. Despite this difference, many ADE's operate as commercial businesses with clients/workers who demonstrate a higher work capacity and the capability to hold employment in open employment settings having different wage outcomes separate from award wages. Australian Disability Enterprises, in common with sheltered workshops overseas are now exploring the idea of rebadging themselves as social enterprises (Smith & McVilly, 2016). Without any change in their fundamental employment practices, this may be an exercise in semantics.

It has been suggested that the re-badging of sheltered workshops into ADE's may obscure the fact that for many people, these organisations are a continuance of the provision of occupational work in simulated workplaces based on the notion of work for all, irrespective of the meaning and purpose (Hall, 2015). These types of activities could be best characterised as "capture and keep" employment, serving to highlight the power imbalance further.

The 2012 Federal Court ruling in the wage discrimination case brought by Nojin & Prior declared the wage assessment tool; the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) used to determine wages paid in sheltered workshops was invalid. The National Disability Services (NDS), the provider peak body in response to the ruling on the payment of subminimum wages in sheltered workshops or ADE's mounted a campaign to overturn this decision. In a sense, this was about protecting their position from the nineties and highlighted that little had changed in the provider attitude to wage equality.

This series of events, in turn, led to the Federal Government offering people with a disability impacted by the BSWAT ruling and employed by ADE's, a one-off compensation package in exchange for forfeiting the right to sue for compensation. At the same time, new Australian Federal Government legislation was enacted protecting ADE's and allowing for the transfer of the BSWAT to the Supported Wage System, or alternative assessment tools as approved by the Fair Work Commission (FWC). Such a tool is currently under development by the Australian Federal Government, with the outcome due by February 2018.

Paying sub-minimum wages undermines ADE's as an authentic provider of employment for people with a disability (Parker-Harris, Renko, & Caldwell, 2014). A position not helped by the image of ADE operators being sued by the very people that they are charged with protecting and supporting and their peak representative body (NDS) being seen to work against the interests of individuals with a disability actively. There is an ongoing unresolved rights issue at play, but whose rights take primacy? The evidence suggests that individuals with a disability have a long way to go to have their rights accepted.

Paradoxically, the NDS supports the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), is mooted as a seismic shift in rights with disability rights moving further to the individual.

While ADE's and the NDIS are not the subjects of this research; they do impact on policy settings and the future course of the DES system. This is particularly so with the NDIS and its employment supports that encourage open employment.

A separate question yet to be answered is why do we need to categorise people by hourly work capacity? Certainly, the government position on budget control and operating the disability employment system within its budget parameters pushes the economic case. However, the National Employment Services Australia (NESA) (2014) noted that the Disability Services Act 1986 made no mention of minimum work capacity and recommended that DES-ESS should be available to everyone with a disability. Interestingly it highlights the ability of the NDIS to increase the number of people with disability who may wish to pursue employment. However, it stops short of suggesting an integrated real person-centred approach.

In its 2014 recommendations paper; Strengthening Disability Employment Services, NESA; an employment service provider peak body, made recommendations regarding the minimum work capacity. It highlighted the need to remove the current limitation on service access that saw people categorised as having a work capacity of 0-7 Hours per week excluded from the DES-ESS service. Overwhelmingly individuals who were classified as such found employment support with sheltered workshops or what are now known as ADE's. I would suggest that this had little to do with improving service access for clients and more to do with improving the income levels of providers, particularly in light of the evidence highlighting the focus of providers on high functioning clients. In essence, this, may merely have been an exercise in staking out the ground under the potential influence of the NDIS.

While the NESAs recommendation taken at face value had merit, in a way reflective of Marc Gold's "Try Another Way" process from the 1970's that highlighted that everyone could develop work skills. I would question whether mainstream disability service providers have the knowledge and capacity to work with higher support needs clients. In an era where mainstream service providers have displayed little understanding of known evidence-based employment practices such as Customised Employment (a person-centred process), and with services rewarded for how quickly they place clients in employment, it seems that clients with this level of barrier are unlikely to be afforded the service that they require and be potentially subject to the practices of service providers that focus on clients with the least amounts of barriers.

What is missing from the NESAs submission is mention of the power imbalance, the capacity for the client to take control of the process, a process that seemingly ignores the fundamental relationship between employment and social inclusion. Rather than looking at isolating employment in its various guises as separate and distinct services, it should seek to take a client-centred or holistic approach to service provision by engaging with providers of other services. This would allow disability employment services providers to function in a person or client-centred way, something that is written into the deed that disability service providers operate under.

While the research is clear that customised employment practices (a person-centred approach) produce open employment and self-employment outcomes, there is little research into whether customised employment practices are being

applied universally across the various employment settings in Australia. Recent studies into ADE's in Australia has highlighted the lack of understanding of this process in ADE settings (Smith & McVilly, 2016).

The NESAs proposal fits within the neoliberal workfare policies that started in the late nineties under the Howard led Liberal/National party government, which saw disability employment move from an advocacy-based process to one that was firmly a human resource services based on the needs of employers and the outsourcing of government services to the private sector.

Soldatic & Chapman (2010) noted that this position was articulated by the then CEO of the disability employment services providers peak body (ACE, now known as DEA) in December 2005 as:

Initially, there would have been a focus on advocacy regarding employment on behalf of people with disability concerning employment. The approach would have been different. Now the employer is our customer, and we are trying to meet their recruitment needs (p.143)

As recently as 2011, the then current CEO of DEA had stated that their client was whoever pays the bills and in the case of disability employment, the government (Smith, 2011). While this is a slight departure from the previous view, it does nonetheless highlight the absence of the client or person with a disability from the equation.

The issue of client rights has not been resolved within the disability employment service provider settings within Australia. The current NDIS employment framework also highlights the disparity between the promise of the UNCRPD and the actual NDIS settings.

The United Nations UNCRPD articulates the right to work, recognising that people with a disability have the same right to employment that is enjoyed by others. It highlights the capacity to be employed in open employment settings, self-employment and the ability to start one's own business, along with promoting career development and vocational training, work experience and reasonable accommodations. In short, it simply highlights the power that non-disabled people enjoy and makes explicit the need to devolve this type of power to people with a disability to choose their employment pathway.

C. Summary

This chapter set out to examine some of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have influenced this research. I believe that much of the DES framework is in tension with international policy obligations such as the UNCRPD, government policy and ideology, and provider practices and client needs. It is apparent that UNCRPD obligations have had minimal impact on employment outcomes, particularly concerning the requirement to increase employment of people with a disability in government. Our country has had

consistently falling levels of employment for individuals with a disability in public service positions.

Definitions of disability have not kept pace with our understanding of disability and along with the idea of classification of work capacity only serve to highlight inability and act as nothing more than a method of exclusion. They are in effect a means of allocating a resource – people with a disability – to the various provider service groups, such as DES and ADE's. The role of social policy, whilst an important theoretical perspective seems to have been lost with policy more in line with government ideology and the unspoken reality that disability is irrelevant to a program. The program is in fact nothing more than a treasury program that aims to minimise government outlays whilst trying to achieve outcomes in line with some of the societies expectations. I will not say all the societies expectations as if this were the case disability employment and ideas of inclusion and cohesion would not be discussion points.

The idea of meaningful employment is a utopian dream while we have no real measures of such. Social Quality Theory holds out the prospect of providing an evidence-based framework for developing outcome measures that address the benefits of meaningful employment not just to the individual, but also the extent to which as a society we achieve social inclusion, social cohesion and real self-determination and empowerment for people with a disability.

As to the question of whether disability employment is a rights or power issue illustrates the tension between person-centred and client choice versus a system

of economic rationalism. Who prevails, the client or the government' agents – the disability service providers?

The issues that have been highlighted in this chapter provide an important background to my thinking and research agenda. To not acknowledge them is to ignore the potential for bias that I seek to guard against in this research and potentially highlight future research pathways.

Chapter Five

Methods & Methodology

A. Methods

a. Introduction

This chapter will outline the research method used, why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is it appropriate for the research subject, its potential limitations and advantages and why other methodologies were not deemed suitable for this research subject. It will highlight the influences on the research subject and how they impacted on the research questions and how I arrived at the chosen methodology.

This chapter will also explain the procedures used in determining the sample size, along with how research subjects were selected as well as an explanation of the analytical approach used.

b. Disability Employment Practice and its Influence in Shaping This Research

Disability Employment, in general, is a complex system, in part due to having different methods of entry and differing funding bodies and influences. At a provider level, the system is a mix of for profits and not for profits. Within these two simple groups, there are some variations, ranging from specialist providers to generalist providers further highlighting the fact that disability employment providers are not a homogenous group (Social Services, 2017).

Clients by their very nature are unique and different, with the complexity of disability varying by location and to a degree under the influence of government system changes outside of disability employment. As an example, the changes in the previous mainstream employment program that saw the creation of Job Services Australia (JSA) resulted in the creation of four streams of clients, the highest level, stream four which has as its client base clients with persistent barriers to employment such as mental illness. In 2006 clients having identified mental illness represented twenty-five per cent of clients, while clients with intellectual disability represented twenty-two per cent (Australian Government Disability Services Census, 2006). There is anecdotal evidence that the mental illness cohort has been moving into the disability employment sector, creating what is now the largest group after physical disability at thirty-seven per cent of current caseloads (DES Caseload Data, 2017). This is distinctly different from a decade ago, which would have seen the larger cohorts consisting of intellectual and developmental disability.

Disability Employment practice in Australia within the Disability Employment Service (DES) system has been characterised by high staff turnover and varying degrees of education and training, with no standards to ensure that staff are qualified in the field of disability employment or have any knowledge of disability at all (DEA, 2011). Until recently the system was characterised by short-term contract arrangements for the provision of services. In response to provider pressure, the DES provider contracts moved from three-year contracts to five-year contracts with the start of the new contracts ending in 2018. Post-2018, the system will change again. It also suffers from changing Commonwealth

government priorities and departmental oversight, along with changes in the political will of the incumbent government, best illustrated by the movement of DES oversight between the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to the Department of Social Services in 2013 that saw DEEWR restructured to become the Department of Education and Training (DEEWR, 2013).

Further influences have been the creation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (NDIS Act, 2013) and the provision within it for funded clients to direct purchase disability employment services from approved providers, many of which are not disability employment providers within the current DES system. Sitting alongside this are the state government funded Transition to Work (TTW) programs that allow funded clients to access employment services from school that can provide training and support to create a pathway to open employment.

The providers of TTW programs tend to be existing disability support organisations and Australian Disability Entreprises (ADE), although the NDIS School Leavers Employment Supports (SLES) program is progressively replacing state TTW programs (Smith, Rhodes, Newton, & McVilly, 2017).

While the NDIS and TTW programs could influence this research project, they are not the primary focus of the research project. However, they cannot be ignored and to a degree, how they impact on client choice is a factor to be taken into account. Research into the disability employment system must factor in these influences, and indeed I intend to ensure that any impact on client

pathways is included. For research to have relevance, it must be conscious of all the influences on disability employment programs and take if you will, a holistic view of the development of disability employment systems.

c. Influences on Methods - Why IPA?

I began the development of the proposal for this project with no clear empirically validated method of analysing the questions and subsequent data in mind. As someone who came to academic inquiry after a substantial time spent in the workplace, most recently within the disability employment sector, I was aware of issues that needed examining and the limited amount of research that had been undertaken within the Australian context. After completing study in both qualitative and quantitative methods, I was no closer to reaching a firm conclusion as to the appropriate methodology. I knew that I needed to conduct the research by exploring the actors in the disability employment sector and their experience of the system that was essentially designed to assist people with a disability to enter the open employment market. When I began thinking about this research, the methodology and the questions, I collected a considerable number of ideas that can best be conceptualised in the following figure (Figure 2.0). This provided the basis for further refining and guiding the research.

This figure allowed me to visualise my interest in the subject and focus on elements such as; Who would participate; How would I analyse the data; What was I trying to understand; What was I trying to shine a light on and What did I intend the research to achieve?

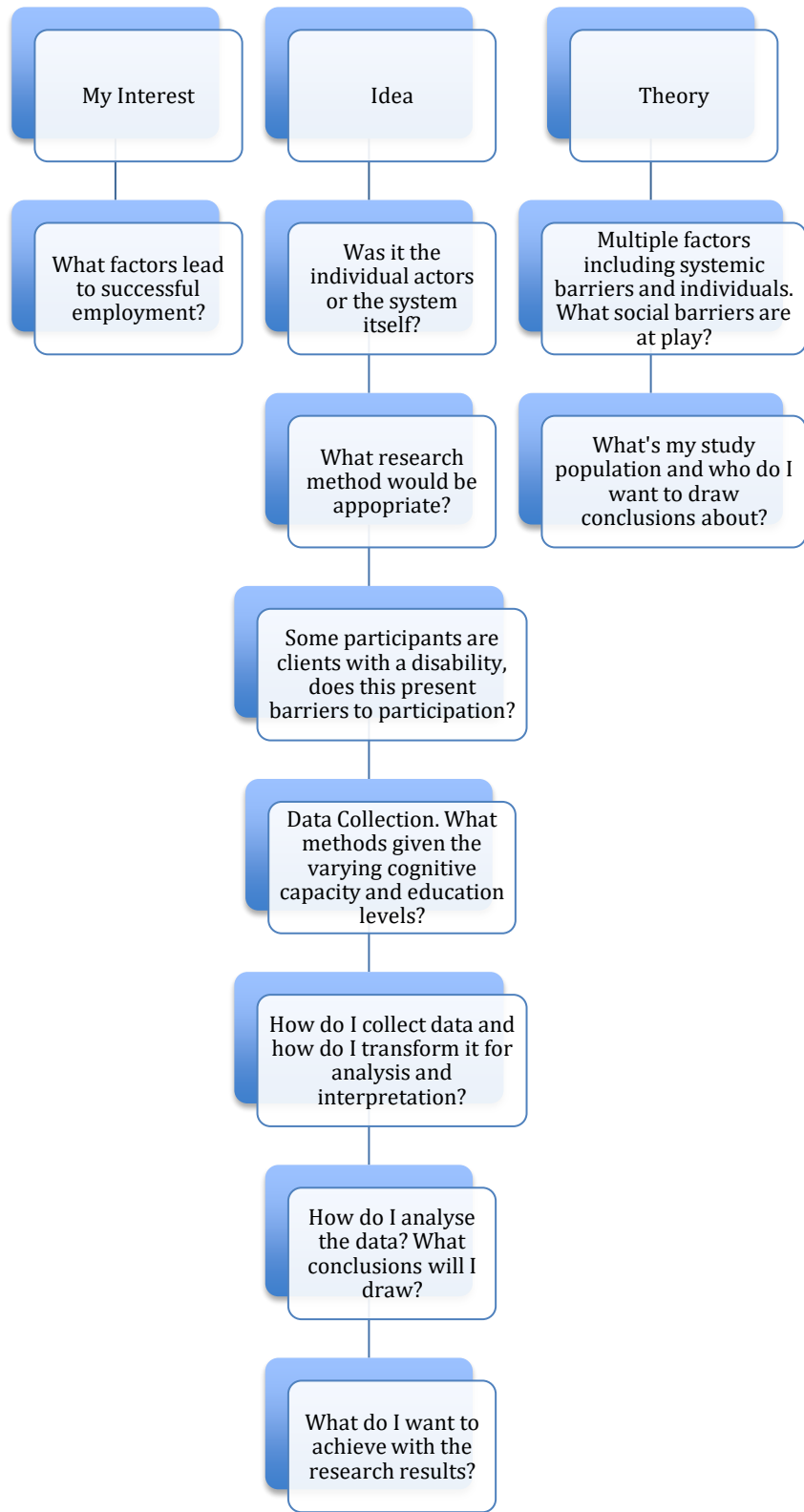


Figure 2.0. Research Conceptualisation.

In determining what type of research methodology to use for this thesis, I initially was attracted to Classical Grounded Theory, which Babbie (2007) defined as "the attempt to derive theories from an analysis of the patterns, themes and common categories discovered in observational data" (p.296). On this basis, Classical Grounded Theory initially appeared eminently suited to the process for collecting data and looking for themes to analyse and guide further data collection.

Initial research into methodology led to Dawson's (2013) framework for researchers seeking to determine the appropriate research methodology. Using this framework, I was able to refine the research method. Dawson's framework consists of six questions to guide the process of selecting an appropriate methodology, these being:

1. Why have you chosen your method?
2. Why is your chosen methodology the most appropriate for your topic?
3. How does your method help you to work towards answering your research question?
4. What other methodologies could have been chosen and why were they rejected?
5. How does your preferred method fit your epistemological standpoint and theoretical perspective?
6. Is it possible to refine, combine or alter your methodology (if required) yet still to retain a coherent epistemological position?

Klein (2012) in her review of action research provided an excellent overview of research paradigms, using the headings of research paradigm, theoretical framework, data collection methods and tools, methodologies and aims. This table, along with Dawson's approach to selecting a method allowed me to gain a more focused view, in part because I was able to identify the components of the research and see clearly within which methodology they lay.

As a starting point, it is useful to establish a particular paradigm to work from. As a therapist with an Existential / Phenomenological / Narrative framework of practice, the Interpretive paradigm situated within the Qualitative research framework sits comfortably with my background. Interpretive researchers seek to understand the individual's subjective experience of their everyday experiences, the phenomena, in this case, the person's experience of the services that they subscribe to or work within.

Hegel (1807) described phenomenology as the science of knowing the mind as it is in itself. By the mid-1850's the use of the term become associated with a descriptive study of any given subject. Phenomenology has its origins as a social research tool in the work of interpretive theorist Alfred Shultz. Shultz (1932) adapted many of his concepts from the work of Existential philosopher Edmund Husserl and his phenomenological approach to knowledge, which focused on our experience of things, our subjective relativity or world of common sense perception. For me, this reinforces the use of the Phenomenological approach of trying to understand a person's individual experiences (Smith, Flowers and

Larkin, 2009). Both Phenomenology and Grounded Theory sit within the theoretical framework of the Qualitative Interpretive paradigm.

The Qualitative Interpretive paradigm with its use of narrative data enables the reduction of individual stories and descriptions to themes for a systematic analysis of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. VanderStoep and Johnston (2009) noted that the ultimate goal of the researcher is to create a better understanding of a particular phenomenon by highlighting the interpretations of those that experience it. The outcome should be research that closely reflects the reality of the participant's experience.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis relies heavily on the capacity of the participants to articulate their experience and the ability of the researcher to make sense of the data by reflection and analysis (Smith et al., 2009). The ability to articulate provides some limitations for the range of clients that can participate in the research. However, this was not an issue in this research as the participants that volunteered to participate had few if any limitations on their capacity to articulate their views. The DES system itself is only designed for clients with a deemed work capacity of eight hours per week or above.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is different to the traditional biomedical model of research (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) in that it places importance on the participant's perceptions and interpretations of their experience of phenomena. This method allows for the use of semi-structured interviews, acknowledging the participant as expert and provides a collaborative approach between the

participant and researcher to data collection. This type of non-directive approach worked well with both client and consultant participants and allowed for a much broader collection of topics to be explored, again placing primacy on the participant experience and the issues that they wished to raise.

Interpretive Social Theory (Outhwaite, 2005) has at its heart the desire to understand what the experience is like for the various participants in a social system, to know how much people know about their social situation. Outhwaite (2005) noted that interpretivists are more interested in understanding the individual experience from the inside rather than in explaining the experience from the outside perspective.

Rubin & Babbie (1997) noted that Interpretive researchers are more likely to be satisfied with a theory if the people they studied say the theory makes sense to them or if those who read their theory acknowledge its usefulness in helping them better see the world through the eyes of the people studied. The current disability employment system that mainly underweights Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 3: the clients' experience of the quality of the service provided; would benefit from research that gives those that run and manage the system a better understanding of the client's subjective experience. Currently, the DES Quality Framework system only takes into account only KPI's 1 (Efficiency) & 2 (Effectiveness) (DEEWR, 2013). Acknowledgement of this would provide some validation for the research, in line with Rubin & Babbie's observation.

d. Alternative Methods

There are many social research paradigms available in which to frame this research project. I will provide an overview of some of those considered within the Klein (2012) and Dawson (2013) frameworks that assisted in arriving at the methodology for this research.

Neuman (2014) noted these as positivism, interpretive and critical. The positivist approach to social research implies that reality is made up of objective facts that can be precisely measured and statistically tested against theories. According to Neuman (2014), "PSS researchers prefer precise quantitative data and often use experiments, surveys and statistics. They seek rigorous, exact measures and objective research" (p.97). The positivist approach values replication of results by different observers of the same facts (Neuman, 2014).

While not disputing the merits of this approach, the very nature of its reliance on objective data makes this method an unlikely pathway, given the nature of the research project which relies heavily on the subjective experience of the disability employment system by individuals. This is not to discount the fact that some aspects of the setting are objective. Participants access the disability employment system via an economically agreed on pathway, but their experience of that is subjective.

The challenge for a positivist approach is assuming that as a scientist you can be value-free, however, to be human is to be subjective, and that our personal feelings can influence what we study, how we choose to observe and often the

conclusions that we draw from these observations. As Babbie (2007) noted, our experiences are inescapably subjective. We see through one set of eyes, hear with one set of ears and process the data with one unique brain, all of which have a tendency to produce a reality that is uniquely our own, shaped by our values.

A second approach, namely the Critical Research approach seeks to challenge inequities and to blend objective viewpoints with a constructionist view of reality. This type of research is about the creation of new knowledge and is often used to advance political and moral ends (Neuman, 2004; Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006). With the inclusion of frameworks within this paradigm such as Socialist Feminism, Queer Theory, Critical Indigenous Theory amongst others, it is not hard to see how this paradigm is used to challenge prevailing wisdom and advance personal and political agendas. Its assumption that people are oppressed (Payne, 1991), is too early to assume for participants of this study, as part of the purpose of the study is to ascertain through examining the subjective reality of the participants their status within the disability employment system.

Another alternative methodology considered was that of Mixed Methodology. Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) provided an early definition of mixed methods when they stated; "we defined mixed method designs like those that include at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words), were neither type of method is inherently linked to any particular inquiry paradigm" (p.256). Research by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) into mixed methodology resulted in a composite definition, "Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a

researcher or team of researchers combined elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and understanding and corroboration" (p.123). The focus of this research is the collection of participant narratives about their experience of the DES system and will not be using any quantitative data collection methods, making a mixed approach unsuitable.

The final methodology considered was that of Action Research which as a method has application in various qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Greenwood and Levin (1998) note that Action Research is holistic and seeks to produce practical solutions and new knowledge and that this knowledge generation process can provide insights to researchers and participants alike.

While this method has merit, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is more closely aligned with the subject matter and participant type, particularly when one considers that there is one primary method being used in the data collection. IPA seeks to make sense of the participant's feelings about their experience of an event by engaging with the client in reflecting on their experience. Smith et al., (2009) make the point that the IPA researcher is engaged in a double hermeneutic in that they are trying to make sense of the " participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (p3). IPA flows from the qualitative analysis of participant interviews to produce a narrative account which is then interpreted by the researcher with verbatim extracts supporting the analytic interpretation (Smith et al., (2009).

e. IPA, Determining the Sample Size and Type

The original intent of this research was to take a large sample approach, with the view towards increasing validity of the findings. After some initial interviews and in discussion with my supervisors, it was determined that this approach would be time intensive and cost prohibitive due to having to self-fund the research. IPA allows for a case study approach (Smith et al., 2009), in the case of this research focusing on one central organisation and less intensive focus on a smaller number of participants from one other organisation. This would provide outliers that could be used to support generalisability of the results. However, generalisation within IPA can be assessed by the reader of the report using the evidence "...in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge" (Smith et al., 2009). The use of case studies is appropriate given the focus on smaller groups (Rubin & Babbie, 1997).

Yin (2014) makes the point that the use of "how" and "why" questions in case study research are more explanatory and likely to lead to links between the various operations, in this case, the various phenomena at play within the disability employment sector. This adds weight to the use of case studies and use of semi-structured interviews.

The use of case studies is seen in many different theoretical approaches to research (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011), with the phenomenological perspective seeking to examine the social interaction and construction of meaning in situ. This position seeks to engage with the actors and examine the meaning that these actors bring to the phenomena that they experience. One of

the challenges a researcher faces is to choose between a broad coverage of phenomena or an in-depth approach. The use of case studies that look at a broader coverage is expanding with Smith et al., (2009) noting that this usage of IPA will require an examination of similarities and differences across each case study looking for patterns of meaning from the shared experiences.

Idiography has a strong influence on IPA with its focus on the individual and the individual's experience and unique perception, with purposely selected participants (Smith et al., 2009). Traditionally Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is conducted with small sample sizes to ensure that the researcher is not overwhelmed with data. The epistemology of IPA data is orientated towards an individual's understanding of their lived experiences. Data samples are typically between one to fifteen participants, although larger sets are not unusual (Pietkiewicz, Smith, 2014).

Correspondence with Larkin (2015) provided evidence of the development of Multiple Perspective designs within IPA as a specific advanced research design that would provide a series of perspectives that can open more complex views of the context and dynamics of personal experience of any given phenomena. Larkin (2015) noted that by adopting this advanced use of IPA, it raised the potential to increase the inferential power and persuasiveness of all stakeholders view and contextual range while reducing the possibility of over-reliance on anecdotes.

Peer-reviewed IPA method studies by Clare, Rowlands, Bruce, Surr, & Downs (2008), into the lived experience of dementia, had eighty (80) participants, whilst a study by Reid, McKenna, Fitzsimons, and McCance (2009), into the experience of cancer cachexia in advanced patients, used a sample of twenty-seven (27) participants.

While it would have been easier to restrict the sample size, evidence of larger sample size studies supports the proposition that the potential exists for a richer depth to the research and outcomes, consistent with the IPA focus on in-depth analysis.

Smith et al., (2009) supports the use of case studies, or in this project setting, case studies within case studies and sits comfortably within the realm of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Larkin (2015) highlighted the challenge of ethical issues such as retaining anonymity as something to consider. This issue can be addressed by the coding system developed for analysis and data retrieval.

In structuring the research interviews, I was in some ways driven by the participants and their employer constraints. By default, DES providers asked that I conduct the interviews in small groups where possible, so as not take participants away from their operational duties for an extended period. All participants were given a day and self-nominated a time, based simply on allocating one-hour timeslots.

The interview sessions times were arranged by the Disability Employment Service providers who promoted the study amongst clients and staff. This resulted in what could be categorised as small case studies within each provider. This allowed for small groups of participants, which meets the standard sample size range for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. These small case studies are categorised as; clients with a disability and disability employment consultants. This is illustrated by the accompanying diagram (Figure 3.0).

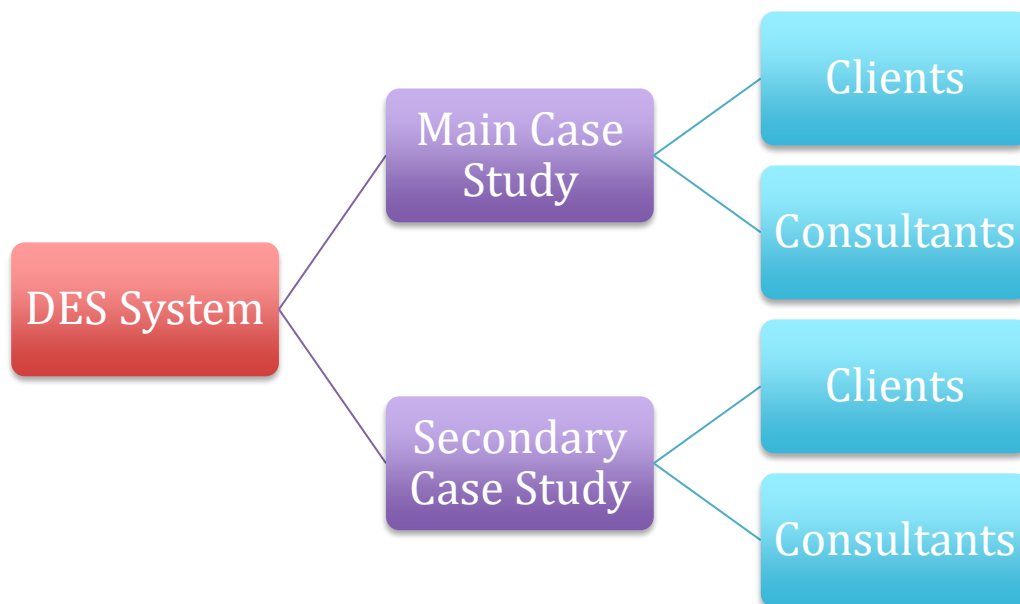


Figure 3.0. Participant Relationships.

Smith et al., (2009) noted that there is no right answer to the question of sample size in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. They noted that this partially depends on the “degree of commitment” to the various constraints that the researcher is operating under. There can be no doubt that smaller sample sizes can lead to richer accounts and analysis of a phenomenon. Equally, it could be

said that given the setting for this research, a larger sample is imperative to gain a richer and more representative sampling of the participant experience of the disability employment system. This is in line with the notion of multi-perspective studies of one phenomenon that can lead to a more detailed and multifaceted account of the phenomena.

Chadderton and Torrance (2011) noted that given the inductive nature of case study analysis the data defines the boundaries of the case and the critical issues. Using smaller case studies to contrast and test the data from the larger case study, can add further weight to the probability that the outcomes can be generalised across the wider system. It has been suggested that the way to address the issue of depth is to visit and conduct research across some fieldwork sites, conduct interviews and then engage in "progressive focusing" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972). The practice of continuous focusing is relevant to this research project in that at its heart it involves the researcher having some knowledge of the research problem, engaging in the process of observation, enquiry, focusing on the issues and then seeking to explain. This could also be a simple explanation of the research process that this project engaged in.

In examining the research area within the environmental scan, it is apparent that researchers looking into disability employment has successfully used different methodologies. However, Arbnor and Bjerke (1997) provided some guidance regarding choosing one method over another pointing out that the best approach can only be decided by reflectively considering a situation to be studied and your own opinion of life.

An examination of the employment literature, suggests that much of the current research does not address to any extent the lived experience of the employment system by people with a disability. This fact alone decides to preference IPA over other research methods, where you explore the participants' lived experience through their words, eminently appropriate.

f. The Intention of This Research

This research aims to identify factors that influence successful open employment outcomes for people with disabilities by examining both the participants and the disability employment service system administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (DEEWR) and its successor, the Department of Social Services (DSS).

This research aims to examine the following domains:

- The disability employment service client
- The disability employment service consultant

The overall intent of the research is to highlight barriers and enablers to employment within the DES system, to potentially inform a dynamic new model of practice that considers the changing environment and expectations of clients, along with addressing the need to meet economic imperatives and fiscal responsibility.

B. Procedures

a. Inclusion Criteria

Many criteria exist for inclusion in this research, primary amongst them being a participant at some level having had experience of the disability employment service system. Participants also need to be able to participate in the interview process and be able to give informed consent or at the very least in the case of people with a disability, have a guardian that would give consent.

Given the nature of the research topic, the experience of participants of the disability employment system and the inclusion of people with a disability, it is essential that the inclusion criteria do not act to limit the scope of people available to participate and at the same time provides accommodations that encourage participation by people with a disability.

Participants fall into one the following categories:

1. Clients of disability employment service providers.
2. Disability employment services consultants.

As can be seen, the inclusion criteria are not crafted so narrowly as to exclude any participant with experience of the system. It could argued that this may be too general, however, given the complexity of the system I felt that it was important to have criteria that were a little open to give voice to anybody that felt they had something to contribute to the research based on their experience of the system.

b. Consultation and Provider Recruitment

The recruiting process required approaching disability employment service providers to gain access to disability employment clients and consultants. From this group, participants were invited to participate in the research, and if agreeable, set up meetings in the disability employment office or if necessary, at another location that was convenient and conducive to confidential nature of the interview. All participants were given copies of the information sheets and consents, as required by the ethics approval.

Initially, two organisations located in Adelaide and regional Victoria agreed to participate. After discussion with my supervisors, it was agreed that these providers would form the basis for piloting the interview process and using the data provided by these interviews to confirm or not the validity of the data collection processes.

After conducting the pilot study at these locations with disability employment consultants, I reviewed the data and felt that some revision was needed of the questions, as the data collected was limited in scope and depth. This is consistent with Yardley's (2000) broad principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research, particularly the principle of commitment and rigour applied to the appropriateness of the questions. Smith et al., (2009) make the point that IPA researchers can demonstrate this by demonstrating sensitivity to context. Subsequently, after discussions with my supervisors, I made some minor revisions to the wording of the questions and determined that it would be appropriate to set up the appropriate circumstances for participants to define

the research interaction, consistent with IPA's inductive epistemology (Smith et al., 2009).

This type of explorative approach allows for the research questions to be answered by analysis rather than by myself asking direct questions. This process involves starting out with the set questions but allowing the conversation to go where the participants want it to go. In this sense, it is the participants that focus on what is important to them in their experience of the system. As noted by Smith et al., (2009), this allows for unexpected valuable insights from participants experience.

After conducting the validation interviews, I met with the CEO and staff of Disability Employment Australia, the sector peak body with the view towards using their network to promote and recruit participants. They offered to promote the study to members via their electronic newsletter. This took some six weeks to eventuate and resulted in one provider based in Sydney approaching me and offering unqualified support and access to their staff and clients. Subsequently, I approached some providers in regional and metropolitan Victoria via email directly to the CEO. This produced no results. An alternative strategy of approaching providers directly that I had a work history with through my employment with the peak body; Disability Employment Australia was tried. This resulted in one additional Sydney based provider offering to be involved.

Discussions with the General Manager of a disability service organisation that had recently lost their DES contract revealed that with sixty providers losing

their contracts as result of the new tender for service, there had been a significant number of staff leaving or being shuffled to new organisations. Indeed, one organisation with a long history of community service provision in Victoria that was to be part of the research completely disappeared having not had their contract renewed. This confirmed my belief that the new DES contract and the introduction of new for-profit providers were impacting on the research recruiting process.

After a supervision meeting with my primary supervisor in late July 2013, we agreed that given the reluctance of providers to get involved, that I would contact other players in the system, such as the two peak bodies. Their participation shed little light on the client and consultant position. Following on from this process, I changed the focus of the research to providers that had agreed to participate.

c. Consent process

Central to the recruitment process was finding participants who could give informed consent. Given that a large number of participants and in particular the client cohort of people with varying levels of disability, it was imperative that all clients have this capacity individually or through a parent or guardian. That in itself raises questions as to whether those individuals participating through the approval of a parent or guardian had the cognitive capacity to understand and respond to the research questions. However, this possibility never arose as clients need to have some level of cognitive capacity to access the employment system. All service participants fell into the category of mild to no intellectual

impairment. Consent from service provider consultants was not an issue as the staff were both male and female with few indicating any disability.

d. Participant Recruitment

The recruitment process then consisted of promoting the research to provider staff and clients, setting up a timetable on a specific date for staff that had responded to the invitation from me to participate to be rostered away from their day-to-day roles to participate. These interviews took place at the respective organisation's head office. At the same time, the provider organisation clients that had responded and accepted the invitation to participate had their participation time confirmed. The providers established the roster of all participants base on their indicated time preference. Most participants had nominated overlapping times and were given the opportunity to participate in small groups or individual sessions. Only two participants requested individual sessions. All participants were given copies of the ethics approved research information sheet outlining what the research was all about before and on the day of participation.

This same approach was used in recruiting the second smaller sample set, that is a direct approach to management, followed by recruitment of participants that volunteered and could make themselves available on a date to be set.

e. Participant Descriptions

The following table highlights the number of participants:

Table 2. *Participant Description.*

Participants	Organisation One	Organisation Two	Male	Female	Total
Consultants	18	5	1	22	23
Clients	16	8	10	14	24

Clients of disability service providers must meet certain criteria to be eligible for support. In general, these criteria are:

- Have a permanent, or potentially permanent disability (for example sensory, physical, psychiatric, intellectual, neurological or acquired brain injury) or a mental health condition
- Be assessed as eligible by an independent Job Capacity Assessor or through another process, ESaT (Employment Service Assessment, which is conducted by health and allied health professionals)
- Be aged between fourteen (14) and sixty-five (65) years old.
- Require support for more than six months after placement in employment or require specialist assistance to meet participation requirements
- Have an assessed future work capacity of eight (8) or more hours per week
- Require long-term support in the workplace and are unable to work at full wages. (DES Deed, 2013).

a. Disability Employment Service Clients

Client participants were evenly spread across male and female genders, with most reporting a Year Twelve (12) education level. Average time within the

disability employment service network was three (3) years. No participants were under guardianship arrangements, with all reporting independent status.

Participants covered a broad cross-section of disability categories.

These were self-reported as the following:

- Developmental disability, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, learning disability, dyslexia, psychiatric disability such as clinical depression, schizophrenia, generalized anxiety disorders, neurological disability such as acquired brain injury, degenerative disability such as MS and motor neuron disease, along with some clients who reported as having physical disability, Asperger's and ASD. Some participants exhibited co-morbid disability.

The following figure highlights the range of disabilities disclosed by the participants.

Table 3. *Participants categorised by primary disability*

Disability by Type	
Learning / Intellectual Disability	5
ASD/Asperger's	4
Cerebral Palsy	3
Mental Health (not specified)	2
Dyslexia	2
Huntington's Disease	1
Multiple Sclerosis	1
Physical	1
Bipolar Disorder	1
Cardiac Conditions	1
Vision	1
Down Syndrome	1
Non-Disclosure	1
Total	24

b. Disability Employment Service Consultants

Participants covered both male and female and age groups ranging from the early twenties to early sixties. The dominant gender group is female with over 90% of participants within this group. Cultural affiliation and identity covered a broad cross-section of society. Education levels reported were overwhelmingly Certificate Four (4) level covering areas such as disability, employment services, community service work, landscaping, business and nursing aide. A small number of participants reported diploma and above level qualifications.

Length of time in disability employment service as reported averaged three (3) years, with the longest serving participant having worked in this role for twelve (12) years and the newest being two (2) weeks. Participants largely fell into the thirty (30) plus age range and most were married.

f. Data collection strategies

The nature of a qualitative research interview is likened to a conversation with a purpose, not unlike group therapy. In small groups, reluctant participants often when hearing others speak and see that they shared similar experiences "give themselves" permission to engage in the process knowing that they are not going to be judged by the other participants. This shared process can be reaffirming for participants and provide some comfort from the fact that they are not alone in their experience and that by sharing subjective experiences, we can see objective facts emerging or in this case, themes.

While small group settings offer the potential for one participant to unduly influence the group; I purposefully engaged all clients to ensure that each had the opportunity to lead the discussion. I am of the view that this limited the potential for undue influence by any particular group member. In that sense, it was akin to conducting group therapy, something that I have established skills for through my work within the disability employment and therapy sectors.

The process of collecting data remained largely consistent through the data collection phase. Participants were interviewed in small groups of two to three participants. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Participants have been de-identified in the research write-up and are not identifiable from the transcripts for ethical reasons.

As part of the process of data collection, I made notes during and after each interview to aid in providing further insight during the data analysis process. This process of taking memos allows for my subjective experience of the clients and their participation to aid in the analysis of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

g. Data Collection Issues

I experienced no issues with any of the staff interviews. All staff were forthcoming and open about their experiences. Some staff participants did choose to withhold some personal details, as is their right.

Interviewing clients produced some events that were to be expected. These events included the following:

- One client with mental health issues became overwhelmed by the prospect of participating while waiting. The participant was excused from the process and supported to return to a relaxed state.
- One client with mental health issues chose to continue providing input after the group interview as this suited the participant. All participants were offered this opportunity.
- One participant started the interview, excused herself and then returned. This process happened twice with this one client. The client felt that she was able to come in small doses and when offered the choice to terminate, the participant declined and insisted on participating as she felt she had something to say and wanted to say it.
- Some clients from one organisation seemed to have a collegiate relationship and chose to participate in pairs. This was insightful, as they appeared to have a relationship outside of the employment system.
- Some clients were happy to sign permissions but were reluctant to provide personal details; however, they were happy to participate and have the interviews recorded.

One important issue for interpretive researchers is to monitor the impact of the emotional state of the participants and in particular how they are reacting to the interview and revisiting their experiences. This is where the skills of a counsellor are critical to ensuring that the research upholds ethical considerations concerning doing no harm to the participants.

Other than issues relating to timeframes and the availability of opportunities to conduct interviews, no other problems arose.

h. Data Analysis Method

Analysis of data within the IPA method can be best described as flexible; however, there are some general procedures that are followed. These can be illustrated in the following Figure 4.0 which highlights the process that was followed. This description provides an outline that was used to focus the research. I would add that the final section gives the researcher the possibility for making recommendations regarding a change. In the case of this research project, it is my view that the research would be incomplete if it did not attempt to highlight the implications or comment on the system, highlighting potential pathways that could improve the system as a whole and improve outcomes.

1. Reading and reading individual transcripts to identify the matters of concern that are raised by participants.
2. Annotating transcripts with the themes or matters raised.
3. Clustering themes into main and subordinate themes based on connections or conceptual similarities.
4. Clustering participant themes identified into main and subordinate themes. Subordinate themes may be disposed of if the evidence is not sufficiently strong enough.
5. Writing up of main themes utilising selected participant statements and researcher interpretative commentary.
6. Discussion of identified themes against what is presently known in the literature.
7. A reflection on the research to identify further areas for research.

Figure 4.0. IPA Method.

The method described above was followed during the data analysis and the subsequent development of themes. Initial reading produced preliminary themes, and these were noted in the transcript margins. Each transcript was read using this same process, after which all identified themes were transferred to mind maps (Appendix 5) so that I could look for connections and identify dominant themes. This allowed me to create spatial maps of the emerging

themes and at the same time extract verbatim lines of interest into a separate document within the same process. The mind maps allowed for direct comparison visually of developing themes and aided in the development of connections and identifying dominant themes.

Each transcript was subsequently re-read a number of times to ensure that the emergent themes were *trustworthy*. Here the notion of '*trustworthy*' is understood in the technical context as developed by Guba (1981). That is, the approach to data collection, together with the analysis and interpretation of data are assessed to have four key features: (1) *credibility* (cf the positivistic notion of 'internal validity'); (2) *transferability* (cf the positivistic notion of 'external validity' or 'generalisability'); (3) *dependability* (cf the positivistic notion of 'reliability'); and (4) *confirmability* (cf the positivistic notion of 'objectivity'). After this process, themes were divided into dominant and subordinate categories for final analysis. The dominant themes can be interpreted as the overall common inter-subjective experience of the phenomena; i.e., areas of general agreement. Sub-ordinate categories can be understood to represent 'clusters of agreement'.

To test the validity of the methodology, following a suggestion from one of my supervisors, I requested that a colleague select and examine three sets of transcripts and the results following this method. The individual was able to follow the method from transcript to a theme and arrive at similar themes illustrating a degree of validity. Discussions with the individual confirmed that he agreed with the conclusions and that the themes were consistent with his

observations and known processes. Exact replication of results is highly unlikely due to the subjective nature of the IPA process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). This provides a level of confidence that the methodology is sound and consistent with IPA methods as this process is more about ensuring the credibility of the research outcomes (Osborn & Smith, 1998).

i. Coding

In considering the nature of coding for this research, I used a simple code system for the different participants, the clients and consultants.

These codes came down to the assignment of a simple identifier such as:

- Cl - Client
- Co - Consultant
- Numerical identification of successive clients and consultants with the first letters the client (Cl) or consultants (Co) and the second one the client number (Cl11).

Coding is in the first instance important to de-identify participants, while the secondary consideration was to allow for thematic analysis of the different participant groups.

When considering coding and analysis, I had investigated a number of software programs; however, I felt uncomfortable with the task of mastering software, and after discussions with my supervisors, it was suggested that I use a manual approach. While potentially more time consuming, it was something that I felt more comfortable with and allowed me to immerse myself in the data.

Coding itself serves a variety of purposes: primary amongst them is the ability to retrieve data with shared themes or ideas so that comparisons can be made across these shared elements. Codes identify interesting features within the data and can be deductive or inductive in nature. Neuman (2014) makes the point that within qualitative research, coding serves the dual purpose of data reduction and analytic reduction. In this description of coding for qualitative research, a progression is outlined that starts with open coding, progresses to axial coding and concludes with selective coding. Neuman's (2014) method is not dissimilar to the method described in figure 5.5 that outlines the general rules followed in IPA analysis.

The methodology as described in Figure 5.5 served as the guide during the data analysis and development of themes. During this stage of the research, I met with my primary supervisor monthly and sent copies of the thesis sections as I worked on them on a weekly basis for comment and advice.

j. Data Presentation

Data will be presented in separate sections for clients and consultants and grouped under dominant theme headings where each theme will be explored using the client narrative extracted verbatim and interpreted by the researcher. Sub-ordinate themes will also be clustered for analysis and possible linkage to the dominant themes. Sub-ordinate themes may hold many insights well worth exploring in the discussion.

k. Ethics Approval Process

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on Monday 18th March 2013 for four (4) years. This project was approved as HREC project number 2012/2828. All forms used in this research were approved, and all conditions set down in the approval have been complied with.

l. Condition/s of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
- All unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

C. Summary

In this chapter I have highlighted the process of arriving at a research methodology and how that methodology was applied to the research. The examination of other possible research methods aides in developing a better understanding of research and the analytical process. The methodology chosen is inductive and useful for developing an understanding of the phenomena researched, in particular, the process of attempting to enter the participant's personal world by way of the participants' capacity to articulate their experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The use of semi-structured interviews recognises that the participant is the expert in their life with the process viewed as a collaboration. The researcher facilitates the exchange by virtue of open-ended questions and a non-directive approach (Alexander & Clare, 2004).

Participant selection for the research was based on simple self-selection after an invitation was made to the provider staff and clients. As expected this attracts participants who wish to express an opinion, although, in line with IPA philosophy, the selection criteria are purposive in that most participants in IPA studies are the result of approaches to gatekeepers, opportunities provided by own contacts or the process of snowballing or referral by participants (Smith et al., 2009).

In settling on sample size, the process itself was driven by IPA principles and to some degree the responses from the invitations. Smith et al., (2009) suggest that sample size is more a function of research experience in handling larger data sets

and avoiding being overwhelmed by data. I experienced little in the way of issues with the sample size other than time management, although at times the rawness of the data did force me to step away and refresh my mind.

All approved procedural matters that govern this research have been adhered to, with the research itself monitored through six monthly and annual reviews by the approving body. Regular supervision ensured that the research maintained its focus.

Chapter Six

Results

A. Introduction

This research set out to highlight factors that lead to the successful employment of people with a disability by researching with clients with a disability and disability employment consultants. The intent is to give voice to these key participants in the disability employment system, to hear their stories about their interaction with the system and highlight what they see as factors that influence their system interaction and outcomes.

This chapter will outline the analytical process used to arrive at the themes based on the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) process and how it is used to develop the research outcomes. This is followed by an analysis of the findings by theme with some discussion on the subordinate themes and section summaries. The chapter ends with an overall summary leading to the final chapter, that will discuss in detail the findings and contrast these against current published research.

B. The Analytical Process

When I started the analysis, I perceived that it would be a straightforward process of developing the themes and subordinate themes following the IPA process, (detailed in Fig.4) and manually undertaking the analysis without the aid of software. I found that I needed to develop a process that aligned with IPA

methods, one that helped to focus on the data. After transcribing the data, I used Mind Mapping software to make a first pass analysis of the transcripts. That allowed me to highlight emerging themes with some participant statements that stood out and highlighted on the individual maps. Once completed I went back to the audio files and listened to them for nuances, second impressions and for statements that were inaccurately transcribed by the transcription service or ones that did not stand out during my first reading.

Following this process, I set up a spreadsheet that allowed me to capture emerging themes, subordinate themes and major themes. This spreadsheet also included participant statements that supported the theme development and a column for reflection and comments on participant statements and themes (see Appendix 6). It quickly became apparent that moving from emerging themes to sub-ordinate themes to major themes was too big of a jump and left me feeling that something could be missing. I was able to address this by adding an additional column: pre-emergent themes to the spreadsheet that filled this gap.

Pre-emergent themes were mainly derived from first pass analysis of the participant data. As an example, a pre-emergent theme of disability knowledge for Interview Group One emerged in the initial first pass analysis. During the subsequent listening to the audio file, a more nuanced theme of relationships over knowledge started to reveal itself, something that did not stand out in the first pass, leading to an emerging theme of relationships and understanding. The third pass started to reveal compassion and capacity to listen as qualities that clients revered. Taken together with other participant data, it highlighted a

major theme of Relationships. This process was repeated across every line of data for every participant (Appendix 5). The process of the distillation of deeper analysis of the data resulted in the major themes, an action consistent with IPA processes (Smith et al., 2009). This process was conducted for the consultant and client data creating separate theme lists which led to 23 consultant themes and 14 client themes emerging. At this point, I re-examined the themes to look for themes common to both participant groups. This process allowed me to distil the data to five core themes. In a sense, the process can be likened to a funnel, which illustrates the IPA process that was followed (Fig 5.0).



Fig. 5.0. IPA Analytical Process

The process of working with large groups in IPA and developing group level themes allows for reference to individual themes (Smith et al., 2009). In the case of this research were individual themes emerge that differ from the group level

theme, they will be referenced for contrast. In the case of this research, this contrast will be limited to the provider consultant and client data sets.

As this thesis examines the human systems interaction, that is the interaction between the participants and the wider disability employment system, to reduce the themes further would undermine the capacity to consider the data in its fullest. In a similar vein, I have in parts reproduced some extensive dialogue between participants as the conversation is highly illustrative and provides context. It became apparent during the interviews that some participants seemed more inclined to “open up” when they had a view that they wanted to share. To shorten some of these conversations would not do justice to the material. Participant quotes have been reproduced verbatim.

A system is a collection of parts that interact with each other and directly influence the performance of the system (Schalock & Verdugo, 2012). An understanding of this interaction highlights the importance of systems analysis. Systems often take on a life independent of the actions of the individual components, showing the importance of understanding the behaviour of a system that is a result of the system itself and not due to the influence of the individual components (Stacey, 1992).

This factor turned my attention back to systems models, which in my view seemed to not account for disability employment accurately. This forced me to rethink systems models as they apply to disability employment. Taking a systems view allowed me to look at themes through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's

Ecological Systems (1979) model concerning the Micro, Meso, Exo and Macro system layers. The benefit of systems archetypes is the capacity to unify knowledge (Senge, 1990) across a range of fields, which in the case of this research area includes balancing human activity against economic activity and policy imperatives.

C. Themes

The experience of being human and the lived experience of human interaction is a focus of interest for phenomenologists as they seek to understand the lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). It is this focus on the lived experience that influenced the presentation of the themes, with the first two themes; Relationships and Provider Processes, essentially about the client and consultant. This relationship influenced how the results section is presented. I have chosen to focus on the theme and combine the client and consultant results to allow for contrasting of experiences. This process allows for connection across shared themes, but it does not dilute the unique, idiosyncratic experience of the individual (Smith et al., 2009).

The analytical process resulted in the development of five major themes; Relationships, Provider Processes, Compliance Driven Systems, Employers and Environment. To be expected, given the nature of the subject being the interaction between two groups of individuals and the system that holds them together there is overlap that creates a hierarchy represented by order of the themes as they are examined. This does not lessen the importance of any one theme.

A. Relationships

Relationships emerge as the dominant theme, and this is not surprising given that in the first instance, relationships underpin the client-consultant experience.

It follows that the type of relationship that the client-consultant develops will have a major impact on the client experience of the disability employment system.

The following figure (Fig 6.0) highlights the sub-ordinate themes of Trust, Control and Choice; Understanding and Knowledge, and Families that support the major theme each of which is examined individually.

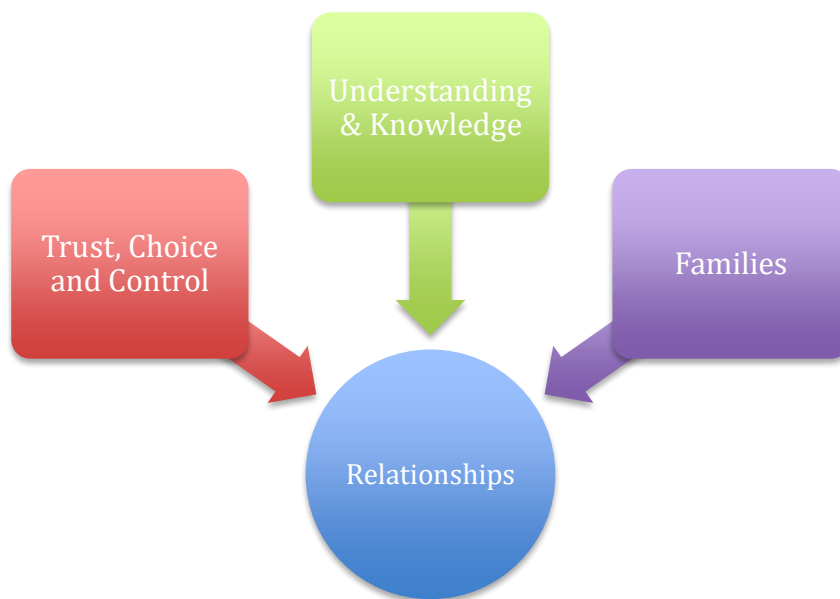


Fig 6.0 Relationship Theme

a. **Trust, Choice and Control**

Trust, one of the core ingredients in relationship building emerged as a theme presented from two perspectives with clients highlighting Centrelink, the government agency as core to the relationship in client statements such as:

CI31: *Yes, I originally, because when I left my job, and I was diagnosed finally about a year ago, I went straight to (Provider name omitted) and they sent me to Centrelink to make sure that I got here. But when I tried to apply for disability, they didn't tell me the exact outcomes and what will happen with it."*

CI32: *I think when you start from the very beginning when I was first sent to Centrelink, it was between me and mum because my mum was part of this issue we had with Centrelink. We had a little issue with them regarding that and a couple of months later they sent a form saying we had to fill in another medical form, because we had already filled out one with them, and they were like "oh you've got to fill out another one, because we weren't satisfied with the first one", even though we've already got your medical form from when my mum was on one of those pay schemes. When she first found out I was disabled, they should have already found that out, so it was like a long complicated, go here, go there...*

CI42: *It's not that, it's just they know, and from that, they'll know where you are, and I have to bring records in from school.*

These statements highlight the inability of the system to acknowledge lifelong disability, suggesting that continually having to reaffirm your disability is leading to a lack of trust and respect for the system, with the following statements reiterating a lack of confidence in the system. They also highlight the inability of the service to communicate with those that it seeks to serve in any meaningful manner.

CI7: *Capacity assessments should be dropped after two years, and my disability isn't going to change. Continuously providing evidence of disability too much. Nothing is going to change.*

CI8: *Constant checking impacts on personal mental health. I had to get a certificate from my doctor stating that I had CP and that my condition isn't going to change - every two years. The system lacks commonsense, still uses a deficits approach, should flip it and assume we want to work.*

CI8: *the system doesn't recognise the nature of our disability.*

CI7: *system doesn't respect you.*

There is frustration at having to prove that your disability still exists. The fact that the clients had to continually prove that they had a lifelong disability could be interpreted as a lack of respect, in a sense an additional barrier. The regularity of having to demonstrate that you have a disability, along with the fact that after school they had to prove again that they had a disability highlights a disconnect between reality and Centrelink's (Government agency) understanding of lifelong disability. The comments seem to underline the absence of a link between school records about disability and the Centrelink system.

Some consultants, however, highlighted trust from the perspective of their relationship with their employer, the DES provider and the volume of unpaid work and need to justify your job, potentially highlighting a lack of control.

Co41: *We can't get paid for going over 38 hours.*

Co42: *We actually do service our clients. It's the paperwork we need. Personally, the paperwork I do at home, overnight, over the weekends to catch up because there are no hours left in the week to do it and all of us in our office do that, but we don't get paid over time. Head office will not even be aware of it because they haven't got hours that we put down for it.*

Co41: *We're not allowed to put down outside of hours because that would be regarded as time in lieu and there's no justification because you should be able to manage your workload within a 38-hour week.*

Co42: *It's unrealistic.*

Co41: *Not only do we have to do the paperwork for our client each day, but have notes after seeing them each day. We have to then rebook them into new appointments, another issue. We're still going to do interaction with the employers and we'll get employers over and then still see our clients. We've got our diary and then case note on the computer and then we've got to do a planner and we've got to account for 8.30 in the morning and 4.30 in the afternoon in the planner two weeks in advance at any given time and it's just a lot of pressure for us maintaining our job.*

It is interesting that the staff has to plan two weeks out and then justify their hours and production with employees feeling pressured to defend their positions. I kept sensing resentment about having to justify being employed continuously. Is this a management style or merely an exercise in compliance? Coupled with the consultant's statement regarding unpaid work hours, it seems to highlight a lack of understanding of the amount of work required. I wonder if management is aware of this, as there is the possibility that staff are not telling them, given that they do not record the extra hours because they will not get paid for it?

Taking the issue of trust further, some consultants highlighted the trust they placed in their peer support network to cope with the workload.

Co11: *You've got to have a good mental state to be able to and balance the negatives and positives of the job. If you have a client with issues knowing how to handle these matters, knowing that you can go to a manager or a different staff member and have various strategies to think things out*

instead of taking it all on yourself and not being able to deal with an issue that a client may have.

Co13: *We have a great team and ability to unload, even though there are confidentiality issues, we're only human.*

Co11: *I think it just comes down to the person if you care and realising that we do change lives and give people the opportunity to become independent.*

The issue of control and choice is prominent concerning Centrelink, as evidenced by the following statements.

CI41: *Wherever they send you, but I would rather stay here all the time I would rather stay here as well. But you can stay here, there's a way you can do it, there is a way you can. I demanded to come back here.*

CI42: *I demanded it too, they were like "you can't" but since I was so upset when I went there because I wanted to stay here, they said they can give me another job capacity, do another test, and that's the way you get back on.*

CI43: *Yes, they put me onto another, but I left that one because they weren't doing nothing at all.*

CI42: *That's what I did with the other agency, I decided to go to (provider name omitted).*

It seems that in relation to Centrelink, there is a less than concerted effort to support client choice and control. Overall, the theme of choice and control permeates the Relationship theme, and while it would be easy to view it as a lesser theme, that would ignore the intent of disability employment, legislation and convention obligations that illustrate choice and control as an outcome of service delivery.

b. **Knowledge and Understanding**

Given the value that consultants placed on trust and support, many consultants held what would be considered a contradictory view regarding clients with the soft bigotry of low expectation feeding the narrative around the apparent lack of knowledge and understanding manifest in these consultant statements.

Co31: I think the human being is sometimes out of your control, so that's something. That's why I thought so we place them into a job so if you see that they like the job, they enjoy it, it's interesting, so you take them into work, but really after one Monday work, they get bored, I don't want to do it I'm out of it. You just can't control it you know. That happens all the time.

Co42: I've got about 11 clients and of them, they've been long-term clients because I haven't been able to find any position for them because they don't have the skills.

To suggest that the client cannot develop skills is at odds with the existing evidence (Gold, 1980; Luecking, Fabian, & Tilson, 2004) potentially highlighting gaps in consultant knowledge and organisational capacity. This again would impact on the ability to generate strong client relationships, given the sense of hopelessness evident in the consultant comments. This would seem to suggest consultants lack trust in the capacity of the client to sustain employment and possibly highlights a lack of real understanding of the client and an acceptance that clients will fail and that it is out of the consultant's control. The acceptance of failure may impact on placement efforts as illustrated by the following comments;

Co81: And that's why maybe the consultants find it easier to place somebody where there's an obvious disability.

Interviewer: Because the expectation of the employer isn't that great?

Co81: *Exactly. And the employer knows that there is specifically job carving for that disability.*

Interviewer: Yep as opposed to someone like--

Co81: *So, their work expectation isn't that high of a person and it's more maybe about the inclusion or the improvement.*

While this set of statements may reflect the consultant (Co81) view of employer attitude, it was nonetheless something that they did not challenge. In a sense, this links to the theme of Employer Attitude expressed by some participants. It raises questions about the capacity of the consultant to build a strong employment case for the employer to buy into.

A continuation of the level of low expectation was mirrored in some client commentary regarding their experience of their consultant and what they wanted from them, particularly as it relates to developing an understanding of them. The following statements highlight something of a low expectation by the clients of the consultant's ability to support their employment ambitions in any meaningful way, in the context of any form of procedure to understand the clients' abilities.

CI22: *Not really sure, I'm really not sure.*

CI23: *We've gone through my (strengths, if I want it), just getting out there and doing it.*

CI23: *mine doing the best he can, I don't know about the other case managers. I don't know about the other case managers around here so; he's ringing up every time, ring up for interviews and saying we might have a job for you.*

CI33: *Understanding.*

CI32: *An idea of where I am coming from, just understand that this person needs to go and work with this, or just to continue...*

CI31: *Yes, to understand where I am coming from.*

CI33: *Yes, someone that understands you.*

CI31: *Someone that understands about my disability and what kind of jobs would suit me.*

CI32: *Just to try and get the job that I want and understanding where I am coming from so when I get out there, the employers know that this person has a disability, we might have to give him a bit more respect, so we don't treat him badly or anything.*

CI42: *Someone who understands the disability that I have and Understanding and helpful. That's the two main things.*

The lack of understanding of the client may in part be, a reflection of what appears to be an absence of the application of any real evidence-based work practices that support the development of an accurate picture of the client, their aspirations, ideal working conditions and the impact of their disability.

Clients had a variety of expectations of their providers, many basic and personal, often reflective of mainstream employment services. The client experience was at best mixed, suggesting a lack of understanding of what the service will provide that potentially leads to mixed outcomes and expectations. The following client commentary illustrates this:

CI51: *Better understanding of how the job is, more information on how things work. More information about how the job system works. About how different jobs work.*

CI32: *I expecting to get a job, so I can get out of the house, I was getting nagged by my parents.*

CI31: *Yes, basically to get a job that the employer knows where I am coming from and what I can bring to the table and that sort of thing.*

CI33: *To get a job that I wanted to work in.*

CI1: *Moral support. Non-judgmental. Everyone gets treated equally. Work prep training.*

CI4: *I use the equipment, computers, printers. (Provider name omitted) also marketing me. Often, they see an ad and ask if I want them to send my resume.*

CI2: *Doing my resume and cover letter" help, "mainly just the computer and job search.*

While the clients had a wide variety of provider expectations, most appear to be basic and may be indicative of a lack of understanding of what providers can do or potentially indicative of low expectation. The low expectation was mirrored in some consultant responses regarding clients illustrated in the following statements:

Co83: *I guess it's finding the right job for the right person. You can tell like some of the jobs we've got recently I know are not going to be sustainable jobs. Who wants to wash cars for the rest of their life? It might be okay when you're 20, but when you're 40 or 50, those sorts of jobs you know. So, you know straight away, but it does sort of get the guys into paid work. It does give them transferable skills so it's a learning process for young ones. Eventually, you find the right job. Like we've got some clients now. We got about four working with a (name omitted). It's a dry- cleaning place and they have a shop front at the Commonwealth Bank at Homebush and one in the city and these are people with intellectual disabilities. So, all they've got to do is just give them a ticket for their suits and then give the suits back. They don't have to do much. It's a perfect job. They're happy, they're engaged, but where else would you get them a job like that. It's amazing. This is the right job for those people and they will stay there for years doing that.*

Co84: *A lot of guys we see that they've got depression. They don't feel good about themselves. A lot of it is you are a good person, let's try and get you in a bit of volunteer work so you can feel good about yourself. Presentation, a lot of them need an awful lot of work there, their personal hygiene, if they're overweight or they're badly dressed or they're dirty and smelly. Just so they sort of come up to meet sort of the basic benchmarks and then sort of like, okay, let's look at your CV, get your resume tidied up, try and sort of get the gaps filled."*

Co84: *I like working with younger--actually I like working with anybody that really wants to work if they've got the right attitude. Because then if they're genuine and they're keen, I can usually find them something if I get to ring 50 because all of the jobs that I get people, I'm ringing up cold out of the blue to an employer saying I got Freddie Nerk. Freddie is Aspergy but can read a Gregory's and he will drop these brochures every day of the week. He wouldn't talk to anybody. He'll just drop it and then leave. And I know he will do it. If they're younger, they are easier because it's easier to sell the person that's just out of school regardless of what sort of disability so long as they want to work. If somebody is more willing to hear the story from the interview point of view, willing to give that person a go and try to accommodate them.*

These statements are a little disturbing in that who decided that this is the right job? There is no attempt to understand who the client is and it is almost as though low expectation pervades the job search. Handing out tickets appears to be the limit of the consultants' idea of ideal employment. It seems that low expectation works for some consultants who feel that just doing something is a good deed. The focus on social skills highlights a holistic approach, even elements of active support. The focus seems all about interview skills, which appears to be shortchanging the client. Job preparation for what job? Do they understand the client?

The consultant position on understanding stands in stark contrast to the experience of the following clients. The following Client comments suggest that their experience did highlight consultants working to develop an understanding of the client.

CI11: *They would have some sort of basic understanding. But an in-depth understanding is probably unrealistic because of the range of people they are presented with, as long as they are compassionate and are listening.*

CI11: *What I've seen is very different to what I had in non-disability employment services. So, like a different job agency. I've only been here for three months, but my experience so far is that there is a lot more personal interactions with your job consultant, and for me there is a lot more support, as they have offered, when I do get a job so my issues with anxiety and things like that; there's someone there to support.*

CI12: *With me I've been with them for more than two years now and from what I have seen as an example is, they are very understanding, they are very trustworthy and the personal connections between the person who teaches you how to look for work and so forth like that.*

CI22: *The thing I like about (consultant name omitted) is the fact she doesn't look down on me because I'm younger than most of the people that come here because I'm only eighteen and everyone else is older than I am.*

There seems to be a consensus amongst the participants that compassion, listening and support is more important than disability knowledge given the brevity of the relationship with the lack of personal relationships or connections to the client seeming to override any other consideration. Understanding who they are and what they want stood out, but I wonder about the client experience which highlights understanding from the consultant which is not reflected in the consultant statements? Understanding appears to be a highly sought characteristic that clients desire in their consultants.

The following three statements highlight the impact of staff turnover in hindering employment success and the impact on relationships. This was emphasised by C121, whose comment suggest that work or any job is seen as an escape from the frustrations inherent in a high turnover low connection provider system.

C121: *There's nothing much I can say because I've been seen by too many different people, they keep on leaving (provider name omitted), five consultants over two years. Don't know who I am. I would rather have one person instead of being transferred to too many people because they want to leave the job and go do something else.*

C122: *Similar to hers but not as bad, because I come in here every fortnight, but the lady I was originally with left to actually go to a school, I was then brought in with (consultant name omitted), who is my new lady now. But I haven't really had many problems with her. I've finally started handing out 'resume' with her and whereas with the other lady we never got to that because we done everything else but that.*

C121: *I just want a job, that's all I want, I don't care I just want a job. I'm not good around people, so that's why I left school. I've been to TAFE and that was it, I failed the course at TAFE.*

C13: *I've had different people here helping me find jobs, and then they give me different people once I've got them.*

It is apparent that the lack of a stable relationship with the provider is having an impact on the clients. It is interesting that clients see handing out resumes as a service benchmark, even if it presents as merely doing something rather than a task with some plan.

The experience illustrated below by the following comments highlights some job search activity. It further supports the idea that job search takes place without

any real attempt to understand the client, although there is some reference to tests and what appears random work placement, which seems inconsistent with our current understanding of strengths-based processes.

CI41: *I was with (provider name omitted) and they did nothing, all they did was put me in front of a computer, what's the point of doing that? I could have done that at home, then I left and came here and ever since I've come here, they've been so helpful. They get out there and contact employers.*

CI43: *And they didn't even help us contacting employers, and when I came here they just started going out there and contacting employers and everything.*

CI42: *And also, they did tests with me here, 'what job would you like go into?' better assessment so they know what job would better fit me, instead of putting me somewhere and going go and see them.*

CI51: *Unsure, but worked in food shops.*

CI62: *Office delivery but not good at it.*

Conversely, other clients seemed to lack any real understanding of their abilities and strengths. It adds further weight to the idea that there is no consistently applied work practice to support consultants in this setting to develop any real understanding of the client. This absence of understanding is potentially reflective in the previous statements regarding handing out resumes as a milestone.

Some clients had better experiences, but they tended to lack any real structure and may be reflective of consultant interest and relationships. The following client statements illustrate a different consultant experience to the previous set of clients. These statements reflect the experience of the client sample attending the large provider.

CI8: *The way that I can see them helping me find a job is the unadvertised job field, the relationship building that type of grunt work. Finding the hidden jobs, tailoring a role for you.*

CI7: *Similar to CI8, making connections with people in different organisations, to carve a job for me. About getting to the right people to talk to.*

CI8: *Marketing people can help by speaking business language to employers.*

CI5: *People here actually sit down and talk to you about your interests, what previous employment have you had, did you like it, what did you learn from there, do you see yourself continuing there or do you want to pursue something different.*

CI5: *Finding work is going to be extremely difficult unless you have like qualifications or work experience. They look through your past employment and what did you like about, what did you feel most comfortable. They find out what work is available in that industry as well.*

CI6: *The consultant knows I have MS and look at my work history and try and work with me knowing my sickness, disease, illness, call it what you will and try and guide me.*

These statements suggest some knowledge of the evidence-based employment practices. Potentially this points to different provider practices and may be illustrative of a system that lacks practice guidance to ensure clients receive comparable service irrespective of what service area they live in. The statements may reflect client knowledge, consistent with their experience of providers, although the idea of assessment seems flawed in that it appears to be simply about the dream job approach (the if I could be anything quest) and no real attempt to understand the client. Some consultants commented that they asked the clients about their dream job and worked from there in developing their view of what type of work the client is suitable for. While the dream job

approach is reflective of person-centred planning approaches (Mount, 1987), the approach often leads to chasing one of a kind jobs within a narrow band. It has been suggested that this approach is about one-time placements rather than careers (Hoff et al., 2000).

c. **Families**

Evidence highlights the role of families in the relationship that develops between provider and the client, yet there appears to be at best a confusing minimal attempt to engage the family in any meaningful way to support employment. Consultants offered the following statements regarding the role of family in the work process is when asked about family involvement, highlighting the lack of any real engagement.

Co31: *Ok, so I don't normally involve them too much, if they are dependable if they are independent enough I don't involve them at all.*

Interviewer: If the client is living at home?

Co31: *if you get a job you need to talk to the mother or father see whether they are ok with the arrangement, most of the time the parent would say yes but some are not. He thought she could because she had education from TAFE or whatever, he believed that she could do the job; the daughter can do the job. But you put them into the job and she just can't-do it because of the disability she can't remember, the memory is not up to the usual standards for that job because they thought they understand their children but putting them into jobs so is a totally different thing.*

These comments suggest that consultants may not have any real interest in engaging with the family. In a sense, they are dismissive of the parent's knowledge and seem to view it as a hindrance. This may hark back from the old programs such as the mainstream Job Services Australia program were talking

with family and friends was discouraged on the basis that we had a duty to keep their discussions with the client private and not share with immediate family. It is at odds with the view from some consultants that a holistic approach works better, illustrated by the following consultant statement;

Co51: It's holistic, the whole approach is holistic as far as I'm concerned. It needs to stay like that, but it's disappearing fast. Rather, it needs to stay holistic because we've got people who may have issues at home or they've not linked up to the services that could support them in other barriers in their life and if that's linked up that then work is pretty sweet if they can support that.

What is interesting is that the provider service deed (DEEWR, 2013) allows for addressing any barriers to employment which raises the question as to why consultants feel that the system does not allow for this practice?

d. Section Summary

This section examined the theme of Relationships, specifically between the client and consultant. Trust and Understanding stand out as underpinning characteristics; trust between client, consultant, family, the provider and Centrelink were highlighted. These characteristics are potential enablers and barriers to successful relationship building and by extension movement towards successful employment outcomes.

Clients underlined the disconnect between Centrelink, the government agency and the various transitions that they undertake, illustrating their frustration of

having to prove regularly that their lifelong disability still exists. The client relationship with the consultant shed light on some interesting aspects, notably that understanding was more important than specific disability knowledge reflecting the primacy of relationships over disability knowledge.

Consultants highlighted a lack of disability knowledge; a subordinate theme that is also discussed in the following section, with some contradictory positions on training, some wanting it, and some not. It is not clear whether these contradictory positions are personal preferences or for that matter a reflection of client-consultant relationships. Clients seemed inclined to favour understanding and trust which may be a factor in individual consultant training needs.

Peer support in the absence of employer support ranked highly as a factor to offset the lack of trust evident in some work processes. Both consultant and client appear to hold a position of low expectations of each other, something that is a little confounding but also telling of a system that does not seem to value real understanding of the client derived from any specific work practices. The lack of trust was also evident in the lack of a relationship between client families and consultants, something that is a known factor in successful employment outcomes, all but missing from the employment processes described.

Lack of choice, trust and understanding, along with limited support to develop knowledge undermine opportunities for the development of relationships are key observations in this section. Some of the possibilities to develop real

understanding are being denied consultants with their preference to ignore families as valuable sources of information and support for the employment process.

b. Provider Processes

Provider Processes which focus on how the consultants work with the clients presented as something of a conundrum in that clients and consultants had comments that suggested that the system presented itself with processes that drove the work. The theme of Provider Processes is supported by the subordinate themes of; Disability Knowledge, Work Practices and Work Experience. Disability Knowledge is a theme that carries over from Relationships. It is explored from the organisational perspective. Figure 7.0 highlights the subordinate themes that support the major theme.

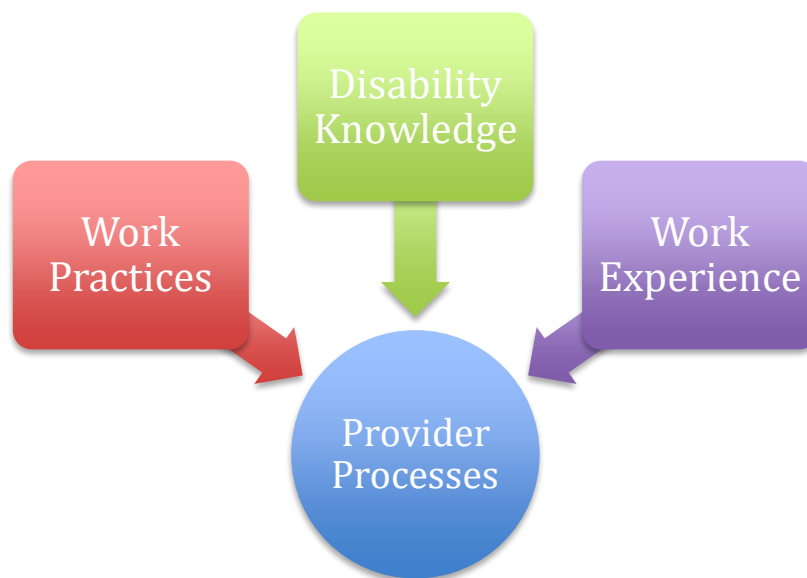


Fig 7.0 Provider Theme

a. Disability Knowledge

Disability knowledge presented as something of a paradox in that consultants had positive views about technical understanding, but at the same time indicated that they lacked any real knowledge or support to improve their technical expertise. The following statements illustrate the availability of education.

Co13: (provider name omitted) *offer a wide variety of training.*

Co11: *We had a big influx of people with Autism and not everybody knew how to work with autism, so we got training and up-skilled on it to better serve our clients.*

However, the following exchange highlights the contradictory positions that exist within the same organisation regarding disability knowledge:

Co41: *I'm just doing my best in that now.*

Co42: *It has to be a plus to learn about the different effects and what to look for. Maybe if I'd be trained, a couple of my schizophrenia people who attempted suicide, I may have been able to see that earlier if I'd been taught to look at something like that if you know what I mean.*

Interviewer: *Do you disagree with that?*

Co41: *Totally disagree.*

Interviewer: *Why is that?*

Co41:

I'm not a mental health worker, I'm an employment consultant. I like to have a basic understanding of basic disabilities of the ones we work with, but I'm not paid to be mental health worker. I'm definitely not educated and for me to be educated, I couldn't do my job at the same time with standard education.

Interviewer: *Right. So, you don't think having mental health training would be a benefit to you?*

Co41: *I think it's going to take way too much of my time to learn it simultaneously with my clients with the amount of time that they need*

while doing my job with 20 plus clients and to be studying at the same time while I'm doing it. I basically had to self-teach myself in going to Google and the internet and reading about the ten to twelve main disabilities that I work with and understand it, but I've had to get information out of my clients about medication, its effects in the first six weeks of getting to know my clients because every disability is individual.

Google appears as substitute knowledge base for some consultants in the absence of time or desire to undertake professional development. It raises the question of whether it is simply a shortcut for time-poor consultants? At the very least the use of Google without any critical oversight of the content accessed and its application makes the knowledge obtained questionable.

Within the same organisation, the following statements regarding disability education seem at odds with other consultants who indicated that they had been receiving training.

Co51: *We're not getting that knowledge and tools to help us successfully deal with the clients that are having a meltdown because they're not Asperger's. They're actually having a mental health issue at a time. I mean I've had to help some of the girls with clients that I've seen four personalities in half an hour and a lot of people cannot deal with that, but because I've been exposed to it and I'd been able to work with mental health, it's a shock for someone that's not used to that, not use to it who's never even been around that. It gets very confronting and very confusing and it's just those tools, it's okay, calm down.*

Co53: *I mean part of the problem, of course, is like people have disability and don't know how to deal with people, but that's not enough.*

Co51: *And we want education. If we didn't, we wouldn't be here. We'd be down in packing shelves at Woolies or we'll be a receptionist somewhere,*

but we're all happy to do this job. It's just at times, we need that extra knowledge.

Co51: *I would love them to offer something else that would be more useful years ago they offered Cert IV in disabilities. That's what we're doing. We're working with people with disabilities. Disability is becoming huge now. I think there needs to be more education. When I first started this job, I had the urge and I could work with these people, but I had no understanding of their disabilities I was going to work with.*

Co41: *I'd been here for over a year and I still have not been given any formal training other than what I've taught myself and guidance from my managers.*

Interviewer: Right so in a certain sense, yes, we want to have it, but actually having that knowledge may well be a hindrance.

Co41: *It would be a benefit, but if you were to ask me to educate myself along the way while doing my job, I don't have enough time. I'd be going into my own timeframe and I still have a work-life balance.*

Co42: *You still have to look it up. Getting new clients and it's something that we have dealt with before. She'll Google that disability and see what it is.*

Co41: *We're meant to provide a service to people with disabilities without the education.*

The previous statements appear to highlight both a desire for knowledge and a commitment to clients in the absence of any real understanding of their conditions. Google is highlighted again as a source of consultant information on disability. A similar lack of any real disability knowledge was also evident when consultants were interviewed at the second provider even though some consultants highlighted the organisation's encouragement for staff to develop skills. This potentially highlights a failing of the system itself, evidenced by the following statements:

Co81: *So, we get some basic disability training when we first come in. We get a little bit of compliance training when we first come in both which we need. Have we had ongoing training? I haven't had ongoing training in the last 3-1/2 years. I mean there are touch-on. So obviously systems will change and what have you, in terms of but no I can't see valuable training in my period.*

Interviewer: Would you disagree with it?

Co82: *No, I agree. There's no formal training.*

Co83: *PD none. There's no focus on employment, none. But nothing particularly. I kept asking to do the Cert 4 Work-Place Assessment and Training which should be good because I often find that in my role, I get to train all the guys in policies and stuff and it's a big job and finding the time is really hard sometimes.*

Co84: *I got a Diploma of Employment Services. I went and did that externally off my own bat last year through a private RTO and then occasionally like if we have staff we will put request like can we do a staff-training day with the ASPECT Association on managing autism or mental health. A recent one that's come up is on alcoholics because we got lot of alcoholics on the program.*

Co85: *Two years of the first year of high school so I repeated the first year of high school. The (provider name omitted) often has courses that we can take. Last year I did a, I forgot what it's called now, a training program with them. It was too hard, and I ended up finishing one part of the course. Yeah, when there's something that comes up with the training because (provider name omitted) is very big on training. If anything comes up, they always encourage us to do courses that encourage to give us any assistance we need for us to do a course and be successful in the course.*

The provision of training seems inconsistent at best. Consultants held mixed views, but when I reflect on these conversations, what is apparent is that the demands of serving clients have created a situation where consultants lack any time in their schedules to undertake training. In one sense some of the

comments could be taken as being expressions of frustration. Yes, we want training, but how do we find the time to develop ourselves and still meet our client workloads? The DES system itself does not prescribe any level of education for consultants, and there is no professional body for disability employment consultants in Australia to advance the standing of the profession, such as exists in the USA through Association of Professionals Supporting Employment 1st (APSE). Within the DES system, the only known training requirement is for consultants to be familiar with the DES / Provider computer interface.

b. **Work Practices**

The absence of any real understanding of disability was impacting on any real attempt to implement and use known evidence-based employment processes to understand the client in any consistent manner. It is clear that there is an unmet need for training. Staff are passionate, but not well supported with appropriate training. Consultants had some understanding of evidence-based work practices, but it appears this may have more to do with consultant initiative than any real organisational attempt to implement universal practice principles. The following statements illustrate this:

Co85: *There are times where we can make list, so the clients got something to go by, task list, so they may have trouble remembering the steps to the task, so we make a task list, a point form for them. Sometimes that can have boxes that they can tick off as they go through their jobs or parts of the task so that they know they're doing the whole task. If any, I think it's the quality of service that we give has been brought to the forefront with our new manager and they're going to be starting with a contact with the employers and find out how they feel our service is.*

The consultant statement highlights some evidence of task analysis, but there seems to be a focus on quality control regarding how employers feel about the service.

Concerning understanding the client, the same consultant responded:

Co85: *That's a hard question because it depends on the client. It depends on the job that they're doing. Sometimes their job doesn't allow you to be there for very long. It depends on how hands-on it is for the client. For a majority, some employers like you to be there, some don't like you to be there. Yeah and some clients, it takes a bit longer than others. Some you will click with straight away. Others, it takes time to work up and some of our clients resent the coaching because they want to be independent, but they don't have a good view or good understanding of how their disability impacts on their job.*

Consultants with the same provider highlighted what could be described as an *ad hoc* approach to understanding the client, utilising a variety of methods, as illustrated by the following:

CO84: *Like I work from the client first, what they'll do, what they can do. I can't put them into volunteer work to see what they can do, to check what they say is right and then where they'll go and then how many hours and that's when I then go to potential volunteer places or potential employers and say I got (name omitted), he can XYZ. Do you want to try him on a bit of a volunteer basis first and then see if we can roll it into a job? I've got 20 clients from a caseload and I try and see half each fortnight so to 10 fortnights face to face. My focus is actually working one to one with the client, ringing up employers and seeing if they're interested and then having a look on Seek or whatever, or community jobs and then seeing what jobs are up, direct employer jobs and then ringing them to see whether or not they can look at positive and include somebody.*

Co82: *We've never been an organisation that just puts our bum on a seat. We've always worked on a win-win situation. If it's not a win for the employer as equally as it is for the client, then it doesn't have as much longevity or legs to moving forward positively. We also do a fair bit of reverse-marketing, so we will take a client, we will meet a client, get to know them and then actually knock on doors in areas or industries specifically for the client to try and find an industry or an organisation that is suitable to the environment that their client wants to work in.*

The previous statements make little sense in that they highlight what I would consider conflicting approaches. While volunteering may provide some insight, it seems to lack structure and real purpose. Evidence suggests that volunteering weakens a person's case for wages and is something that most people do after their wage needs are met (Griffin et al.,2007). How can you place a client if you do not know anything about them? Where is the application of evidence-based employment practices? Consultants at the second provider shared similar practices that could indicate a lack of any real understanding of evidence-based work practices, illustrated by the following statements:

Co41: *I ask my clients to tell their dream job, the job they want to do to survive and what a job they could do right now. If I put you in a job right now what can you do with the knowledge you've got, what is the job you can do to survive, what can do if you don't need any knowledge and any job that they may have aspiration to do but physically do or mentally they can't do. Out of all that I can whittle down and go to the bulls-eye website and then I can go these are six things you can possibly do and out of these three things I accumulate the three things I can find you a job in a minute.*

Interviewer: Is this a methodology that everyone uses here or just your way of working with the clients?

Co41: *I do it differently because any employment services whether its JSA or DES go just place them, get them into work. I'd like to see them successful*

outcome long term, so you know therefore so when a client of mine says they can't do this, they can't do that, but I'll do this so and try that and I'll just feel let down.

Co42: *To a degree I agree with that you do have to look at their lifestyle, their support systems that they've got outside of (provider omitted) for work, you've got to look at their job of choice. I put the job of their choice as number one, and if I've exhausted all avenues to try and get them the job of their choice then I'll go down to the number two job and doing all that and your learning about the client and um the same thing I guess. I had someone who needed accommodation to the point where I found them somewhere to go and live and if he's set up there it's going to be much easier for me put him in a job and keep him there if he's already happier in his outside life.*

These comments suggest a variety of practices at work, some illustrate knowledge of person-centred planning (dream job), but nothing indicates a consistent application of any organisational directed use of evidence-based work practices. One group of consultants did appear to have some knowledge evidenced by the following statements:

Interviewer: So, you do informational visits with your clients?

Co21: Yes.

Co22: *We're very grateful we have a lot of employers that are happy to do that and that's part of obviously due to our good relationship with certain employers, so we can job match.*

Co21: *get to know the client, you've got to know the job they do, that's the job match and placing them in the job, their job choice and helping them in the job and post-placement support. Take them out, let them see different environments, different places, it's really important. The more you talk with them, the more you learn about them, the more they let their guard down and the more they're willing to let you know in regards to their triggers, what's going to set them off and things like if you don't spend enough time, but then you place them in an environment where it has too many of the*

triggers for them then they're not going to be successful so it's really key to understanding all of that before placing them.

Co21: *Sometimes we do in-house visits. We got some clients that have never worked. They say they want to work, but they don't really know what type of work, they don't know what to work or what the employer requires of them. So, most of the time, we literally take them into the site like warehouses, in the factory. We stand there. This is how things go so if you are using this, you have to make sure you do it faster than the other person or else you're going to have a pile of things that will drive you nuts. If you lose your job, it means you are not performing well.*

These comments evidence a variety of work practices, but without any of the fidelity associated with the application of any known model of employment practice. The responses indicate that they understood what I meant when I asked about informational interviews, but it is apparent that they are not doing this. They invest time in the client, but I wonder how much more productive it would be if they had thorough training in a known evidence-based practice model such as Customised Employment?

c. Work Experience

Work Experience is an evidenced practice that supports employment outcomes; a known factor in job success (Griffin et al., 2007). It is an essential part of developing an understanding of the client which appeared to be missing from the client experience, while at the same time presented with mixed views from consultants. Only one client mentioned having had any work experience while with a DES provider, however, some had participated in limited work experience when at school. Despite this, two clients (C111, C112) were in favour of it as a way

of finding out what you want to do, with others (CI21, CI22, CI23) detailed that it was not part of the employment process that they had experienced with their current provider. There is a consensus that work experience has value in developing skills and working out what you want to do, even the suggestion that work experience is part of the interview process (CI31, CI32, CI33) something that can lead to employment. What is missing is the idea that work experience is a regular part of the provider experience. It seems that work experience is *ad hoc* and not routinely part of the process of job development aiding in working out the client's ideal place of employment. Consultants do not seem to be applying this with any degree of regularity.

Clients within the same provider had different experiences and had the following comments about work experience:

CI11: *No, but It sounds like a really good concept, for someone like myself who is not quite sure what I would like to do, something like that would be really good. I would be able to try a few different things and see what works and what doesn't.*

CI12: *In the past, a couple of years ago I had done a lot of work experience in various areas, like after when I left school, I wanted to go to retail. That was very interesting, and it got me so passionate about doing retail.*

CI21: *The last time I did any work experience was through TAFE about three years ago."*

CI23: *Not through here I haven't, I had plenty of work experience at places.*

CI33: *I helped me because you become more reliable going to an actual work job and it gives you skills.*

CI32: *Yes, now being two different work experiences, pretty much on the same page there, as well as understanding with me, because having two different work experiences, (it helped find out) I'm good with other people, I'm not just a one-trick pony. I'm still trying to work out what I want to do,*

because at the moment (the placements are not really what I want to do), so I am trying to get myself back inline. Well probably with me, more work experience and education would probably be on the right track with me but that's just about it.

CI31: *Work experiences could be better than job interviews because I have learned through the numerous jobs I have had, you can do really well in the interview but be really bad at the job, so if you can get a little of both then they can understand you more.*

CI41: *There's a class in school in year ten that you go to, and they give you one week off, work experience and the next year I had childcare, and that actually helped with my second one.*

There appears to be an unfilled opportunity to develop a better understanding that is supported by the clients. However, consultants from the same provider had the following views on work experience:

Co42: *Not allowed to do any work unless they're paid. You don't want to devalue the job seeker either." "You can't match them to the job until they're in employment.*

Co41: *It actually disheartens a client ten time more to fall out of a job because it didn't work out then put him in a job and have a taster. If there was a pool for clients to go and do a two-day taster, you can't learn much in a day but I think two days. One they work a full day and have a sleep and see how they react to the second day as well because quite often they stay in their old habits and go to work, they don't go to bed until 2.00am in the morning and then they have to get up at 6.00am to go to work and see how that works. If there was some way of having funding to support our clients to do tasters, especially people who are two years plus out of work and say they can do this and can do that. I had a client who was an amputee who said it wouldn't stop him from doing anything, but he went through seven different jobs in a year. He said he could do all of them, yet he failed within two hours.*

There is little in the way of known evidence-based employment processes being displayed in practice here. Is this simply a reflection of time pressures, provider philosophy or absence of training? The DES provider deed allows for work experience yet there is little evidence of providers making this investment. Possibly, this suggests providers do not see it as a cost-effective use of their resources. It may well be merely a bias within the provider staff borne of past negative experiences. Indeed, the comments indicate a lack of real understanding about who the client is. While consultants had mixed opinions, there appears to be some contradiction in that one consultant stated they were not allowed to deliver work experience, while one simply seemed to dismiss it as demeaning to the client. The second provider clients made no mention of work experience.

d. Section Summary

In this section, I examined the processes that exist within the provider system revealing a range of contradictory positions. Consultants suggested that the system drove the processes that they used, but at the same time evidenced a lack of evidence-based work practices, something of a conundrum. There were contradictory views presented by consultants on the need for disability knowledge with most stating a need for it while at the same time others pointing out that they did not have the time to pursue knowledge that would improve their work capacity. Some consultants indicated that they had access to full training, while others in the same organisation highlighted a lack of training opportunities, despite requests.

Google appears as a default position for knowledge acquisition in the absence of real opportunity to acquire the skills needed. What is clear is that consultants want knowledge, want support from their employer but are at best getting it in an *ad-hoc* way. Consultants are conflicted by the need to do their job within the allocated work hours while trying to have something of a work-life balance. Staff come across as passionate about their work but lack any real support and evidence-based training and tools to improve their work capacity and improve client relations.

Work experience (Griffin et al., 2007), a known factor in employment success and a factor instrumental in getting to understand the client is absent from the work processes. Indeed, many consultants had an active disregard for it, despite clients having positive views on what it could achieve. Some consultants held the view that work experience was demeaning to the client. Overall there seems to be a jointly held view of low expectations with much of the consultant focus simply on job interview skills and searching for what consultants consider to be suitable jobs.

c. Compliance Driven Systems

Compliance is examined from the client and consultant perspective, with clients highlighting the lack of respect and understanding that exists within the requirements to stay in the program. The subordinate themes derived from the data focus on the Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) and Respect, Repetition concerning paperwork and Holism or precisely the move away from Holistic

practices are a consequence of system pressure. The following Figure 8.0 highlights the main subordinate themes that support the major theme.

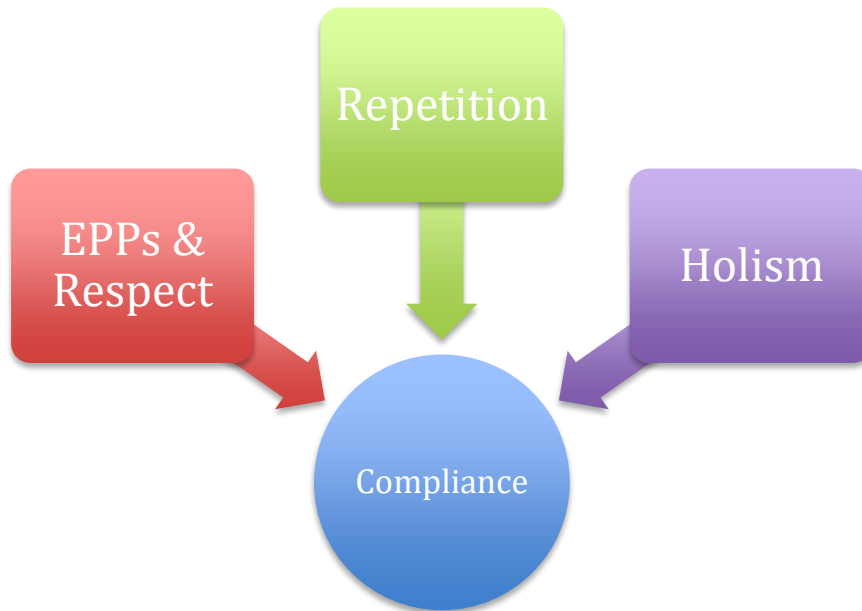


Fig 8.0 Compliance Systems Theme

a. **Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) and Respect**

Clients had views that highlighted the inability of the system, specifically the EPP requirements as a factor that lacked respect and empathy for them, possibly indicating an apparent lack of understanding of the impact of their disability and the lifelong progression of the disability.

The following statements illustrate this:

CI7: *Some of the requirements of the providers are somewhat demeaning to me. Fortnightly meetings when you have a debilitating illness.*

CI8: *Employment Pathway plan frequency of changing plans unnecessary, because the plan doesn't change that much. Disability doesn't change that much, the majority of us would get gradually worse than better.*

CI7: More flexibility at provider level so they can actually help - more individualised.

The current system appears to lack flexibility when it comes to individualising the process to reflect client capacity. Possibly, the system needs to recognise lifelong disability versus less debilitating disability. It may be a reflection of current system requirement to prove that you still have your disability and its current status. Certainly, an individualised flexible system could address this aspect.

Consultants highlighted the impact of the Employment Pathway Plan by its compliance driven repetition driving increased paperwork load, as evidenced by the following statements;

Co51: It's just a continual repetition and it's keeping us from doing what we want to do, what our passion is. We can say like the forms have changed, but it's still the same form but it's an extra piece of work. And our job is to get out there and get people jobs and support them in those roles.

Co53: I mean that takes too much of your time that's a big problem. I mean paperwork you need to do those, it's too much for 30 people and employer interviews you need to get going all the time. One employer interview can take up to 3 hours going there and coming back. It's 3 hours' time so how much time left to do other work so that's taking more time.

There is a case to be made that the current process regarding EPP's is time-consuming and an additional barrier to delivering what the service is about – finding jobs.

b. Repetition

Consultants had mixed views but overall saw the compliance requirements of the system as both repetitious and unnecessarily burdensome, holding a position that is broadly consistent with the clients' worldview on compliance. While clients focused on the lack of respect inherent in requirements to regularly update their Employment Pathway Plan, Consultants focused on the inflexibility of the process, illustrated by the following extracts:

Interviewer: So, is that saying, this process, every time it changes, the paperwork increases?

Co51: *Yeah and we're looking at it because we're the ones who had been doing it. They're going, but you said that on page 2 and you say it again on page 4 and then you're going to say it again on page 6. It's just a continual repetition and it's keeping us from doing what we want to do, what our passion is. We can say like the forms have changed, but it's still the same form but it's an extra piece of work. And our job is to get out there and get people jobs and support them in those roles. I'm a terrible paperwork person. I've got dyslexia, so I struggle with it, but I'm not paperwork bound. I'd rather be out there and talking to employers and doing that sort of stuff. Whereas, paperwork is starting to, like I know because I'm in 6 years now and I've noticed the difference when I first started to what we're doing now with paperwork.*

Co52: *But I've also been on maternity leave for the last four months, went off in March and came back in July and the amount of paperwork that*

increased in four months, I've actually requested to go back to induction training to up-skill myself again because there's been that many changes that I've got to run as quick as possible so the easiest way to do that is to attend part of the inductions for new staff members because of the focus on this is what we've got to do, this is the new changes in ESS and all that.

Co53: *You can say time management, but it comes to daily work, something can happen with our clients coming. They're doing fine for four weeks and all of the sudden, something happens.*

Co84: *The boxes you got to tick, and compliance and all that sort of stuff is there's a lot to that. Just from the point of view like this, you got to make sure the resume is right there. You only do that sort of once when the client comes on. If I think back to when it was years ago when it was block grant and you just had that clients and you manage them from start to getting them the job, the paperwork sort of side of it was a lot less onerous.*

These statements are consistent with the client position on the impact of paperwork as a barrier, with consultants also highlighting the apparent frequent changes to the actual document itself. Consultants expressed the following view on paperwork overload and its impact on their job.

Co51: *And now that DEEWR wants the Employment Pathway Plan (EPP) done every month and if you're a non-worker and then if you're a worker that, but some of our guys don't disclose so for us to be keeping on that paperwork, I don't want you at the workplace. They start work at 7:00 and don't finish until 6:00, they don't want to come to see you after work.*

Co52: *And all of the clients feel that they don't get along with paperwork. You got me in for paperwork again and you explain the system that this is a requirement from Centrelink and if they don't have this, chances are your payments will only get cut and it's just the same thing. Time is going so fast at the moment so within a month, you see a client once and you're lucky not to have any paperwork. Your job seeking, your interviewing skills, you do whatever you need to, but then the next visit, you know you've got these*

EPP's again and really to change the EPP's for our clients, you may change a full stop in all honesty because there's not a dramatic amount of change. You got some of these guys in process of getting a psychologist's assistance. These things don't work in a month.

It is evident from these statements that consultants see the regularity of updating Employment Pathway Plans as unnecessary and support the client position that it does not respect them, possibly alluding to the fact that consultants are not being trusted. The following consultant statements back the absence of trust, also highlighting their position on the system not respecting them.

Co51: *I sort of feel that it's maybe a little bit more than that. I think with tenders and stuff like that, sometimes you do get organisations, they're not doing what they're supposed to do, but they're taking in the funds for you, so I think it's to a point where DEEWR has got to look and they've got to set certain things like who's doing everything right for the funding that they receive.*

Co52: *You can understand why they are like that because they got a few shonky companies out there. In every organisation, there's people that aren't doing what they're supposed to be doing and reaping the rewards for it, but it's just unfortunate that everybody has been finding a painful task now because of that small amount of people.*

In response to monthly changes in the EPP's, the following consultant observations were offered:

Co52: *And they need to be more client focused, more client orientated. Sometimes those things don't relate to our guys. They really don't.*

Co51: *Yeah, that's all it is now. That's all it is now. Employment services as I've said, they're doing well. I started with (provider omitted). It is all about just getting that number in and placing, it's not (provider omitted) fault.*

It's not (provider omitted) fault, it's the way the system has been created now. It's the pressures. We're employment consultants. We have to perform, same as our manager has to perform and senior management has to perform so it's going to be harder and harder as it comes down.

It is clear that monthly changes are creating unnecessary paperwork burdens.

There seems to be the view that it is about compliance and ensuring that providers are not submitting fraudulent claims. There is no recognition that for some clients there can be no change in their situation over a 30-day period, with some consultants (Co51, Co52) expressing the feeling that it was becoming more like Job Services – the mainstream interface. There is also a feeling that it is keeping them from what they see as their primary role - finding employment for clients.

c. Holism

At the same time one consultant alluded to the system preventing her from working effectively with clients, with the increasing paperwork load coming up again as a driver away from taking a holistic approach to placement illustrated by the following statement:

***Co51:** It's holistic, the whole approach is holistic as far as I'm concerned. It needs to stay like that, but it's disappearing fast. Rather, it needs to stay holistic because we've got people who may have issues at home or they've not linked up to the services that could support them in other barriers in their life and if that's linked up that then work is pretty sweet if they can support that. The holistic approach needs to be there, and I know a lot of my colleagues that I work with, we still stick to it. We may not be placing 50 people a week or 4 people a week, but we're keeping to that holistic approach and people are staying in employment. They're happy with their*

placement and it's working. We go the way that they wanted us to go, sure. Any of us can chuck someone a job in a week.

There is a distinct preference for tusing a holistic approach to employment with a recognition that unless you address the other barriers, then work is not possible. Consultants highlighted how taking a holistic approach is under pressure and that they prefer to pursue a holistic approach to placement. Taking a whole of client approach has been a feature of employment services in the past, notably in the Personal Support Program (PSP) that worked to address barriers in the client's other life domains as a precursor to finding and maintaining a job. It has a close relationship to Person-Centred Practice, something that the current program purports to be with Person-Centredness highlighted in the DES tender documents. The DES deed does allow for consultants to address any client barrier to employment, yet it may be the case that current work practices limit the number of time consultants has to address non-employment barriers, such as homelessness and family issues. Consultant commentary suggests that provider practices are forcing a narrowing of service provision.

d. Section Summary

This section addressed the compliance system and its impact on the consultant and the client. Clients highlighted how the compliance requirements showed a lack of respect and trust, and that some of the requirements were demeaning to them. The need for Employment Pathway Plans to be changed monthly illustrated a lack of understanding that lifelong disability does not change every 30 days with consultants expressing a similar view that the required monthly

changes were a barrier to their doing their jobs, which they viewed as getting out there helping clients find employment.

Consultants had mixed views on compliance but saw much of the requirements as repetitious and an unnecessary burden. There was also the view that the current compliance regime was more about ensuring that fraudulent claims were not made and that overall the system did not trust them.

There is a stated preference for using holistic approaches; however, the current compliance-based system acts as a barrier to using this method, one that recognises that unless you address the other obstacles in a person's life, then employment is unlikely, and indeed unsustainable. What is clear is that compliance, while a fundamental requisite of government-funded services and a necessary element, appears to be a barrier to good practice and seen as one factor that is dehumanising the process.

D. Employers

Employers as a theme produced three areas of discussion: Attitude, Disclosure and Subsidies and Quotas. It would be easy to list them collectively as Employer Attitude, but to my thinking, that is too simple for what is a complex area of the employment question. While there is some overlap of the three subordinate themes, there are essential differences between the views of consultants and clients that are worth investigating. The following Figure 9.0 displays the subordinate themes that support the major theme.

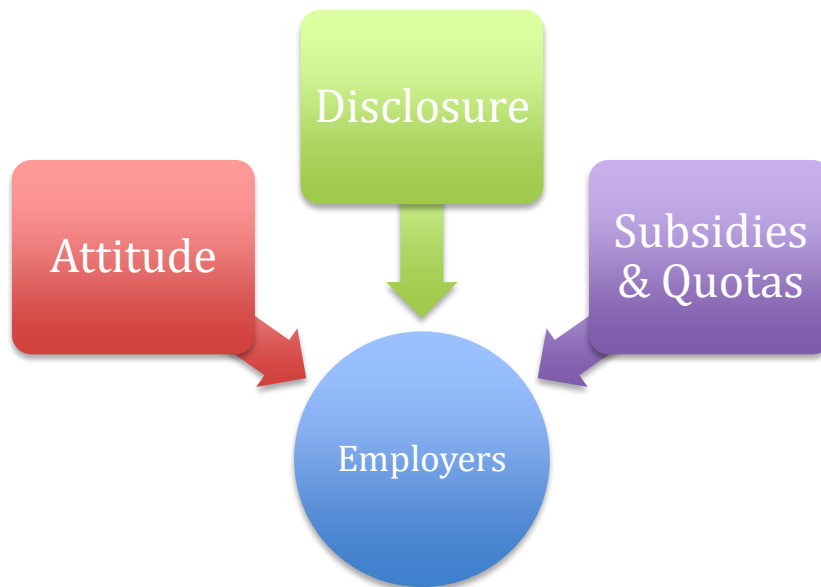


Fig 9.0 Employer Themes

a. Attitude

Much has been made of disability awareness programs for employers with these types of awareness programs being run for several decades. Despite this, the experience of the client and consultant would suggest that employer attitudes still present as a significant barrier. There was a consensus that if they could change one thing, it would be employer attitudes to people with a disability. This is consistent with their view on quotas. It seems that consideration, respect and equal treatment are consistent themes around employers. A contrast is the following consultant statements on disability awareness advertising that their organisation runs.

Co12: *We have advertising every week, that helps. We have on Friday where our office just had our Open Day, and it was huge, and employees come to that.*

Co13: *Advertising is the main thing I would say. (Name omitted) does a lot of advertising on radio and also TV.*

Co11: *It's rare that a lot of employers haven't heard about that.*

This paradox presents a compelling argument about the merits of disability awareness programs as influencers of employer attitude as they presently exist. If as the consultant states, that it is rare that a business has not heard about them, then I wonder as to what the impact of the advertising is on employment rates amongst employers who were aware of the provider?

Consultants had a variety of views on employer attitude, many consistent with the client experience.

Co11: *Some employers not too open-minded when it comes to disabilities, and you have to educate them a little bit more about disabilities to take down their barriers.*

Co12: *I've come across a lot of employers that think, oh god, this is going to be more trouble than it's worth and I'm going to stop doing my job and to re-insure and that's a barrier I think sometimes.*

Co23: *Some of them see (provider omitted), and they see inability. Focus on ability, not the disability, and I think at the end of the day, people will see disability more as a physical thing more than like mental or IDs.*

Co21: *It's like employers aren't really informed about disabilities and how it may affect the workers and the workplace.*

Co71: *I would say another one would be a lot of employers don't want to put, say like not just our clients, but other people with disabilities. They're worried about their insurance and paying them. Yeah, what I'm saying the government should have to change the policy if you are to employ somebody with a disability. It might make things a little bit easier.*

Co71: *I sent a client to an employer last week and he said, oh yeah, cleaning the dregs, but it's his way of asking for somebody that he didn't think was suitable for the job. It was like, yeah, I don't think I can really help you because don't they belong at McDonald's and he'd actually seen that person working in McDonald's cleaning tables.*

This type of low expectations and what could be perceived as a bias amongst some employers stands in contrast to the investment in advertising and promotion that this provider has invested in. Taking a different approach such as informational interviews that help dispel myths may be an advantage. It may well also be indicative of some aversion to potential risks associated with employing someone with a disability.

Employer attitude towards disability is evident in the following consultant statement:

Co41: *Basically, if client will serve this, they will employ them, but they need to be able to keep up with the other people. They need to pick up the information just as quickly. Disability is irrelevant as long as they got the knowledge and understanding of the disability. It then comes back to well can they cope? Can they manage? Will they be on time? But they're going to have the same questions if person doesn't turn out for work or anyone can't turn out for work if they don't want the job or they're not being able to work for long time. They struggle to kick-start themselves related to their routines, so you come up with the same barrier as you would with able-bodied, as you would with people with disability.*

This statement suggests that irrespective of accommodations, the employer attitude is that unless the client is as productive as a non-disabled person, then they are not suitable for the job. This highlights an employer attitude to disability that potentially indicates the inability of disability awareness programs to recognise the employer perspective.

Following on from this statement, one client (Cl32) had the point of view that went to the employer lacking any capacity to follow through on this. When asked about reasonable accommodation Cl32 made the following observation:

Cl32: *Because when you see most employers, they just ignore it, maybe they should have someone to ensure that maybe they should try and change it a bit, so they can consider it while running their business. Because obviously, they've got a business to run, they could have someone there to ensure that everyone gets a fair go at it.*

This would suggest again that unless the client can match non-disabled employees, then they are not a suitable employee.

The following statement appears to reflect a perception that employers are too busy to adequately support the induction of new staff, further highlights taking the position of the employer being too busy. This possibly indicates an inadequate system to develop natural supports.

Co21: *Employers don't have time to really stick behind you because you got other things to do so you make the most of your time to go in detail. You should have the time to keep telling him that's the answer as well as the idea. Most of the time, they are not just used to people with a disability. Some people with disability have poor social skills, and so they need support from someone they're known to be around to get them into the work environment.*

Given this statement is from a consultant, what is the level of effort to create natural supports in the workplace? The statement seems to be an acceptance that employers are too busy to support the onboarding process for someone with a disability.

One provider illustrated the benefits of using allied health services to support reasonable accommodations in the workplace as a factor leading to placement success and longevity of placement, with the provider utilising this approach as a norm illustrated by the following statements:

Co85: *It's occupational therapist, so anything to do with their job. We look at the job and look at how they do the job. Yeah, ask the client what they feel that could help them as well. So occupational therapy is huge for us because of how they sit with their work, how they can move around their work and what technologies are out there, that can help them up. We have a client who is visually impaired, and we're just trying to source up a talking email for her. That's something that's not been brought up before, but she just brought that up herself now. She's been in the job for five years, and she's just thought about that now that that might be a good thing.*

Co83: *Sometimes it's behavioural especially with the autistic spectrum guys. Sometimes, they do bizarre behaviours and things, and sometimes they find that hard to deal with in the mainstream-type employment, so all we can do is just go in and maybe talk to the co-workers about how the best way to work with this person. It could be Asperger's, the strings not to pull and that sort of thing. Generally, it's quite individual really. It could be behavioural. It could be that they're too slow doing the task. We've had a couple of job in jeopardy sort of come on because the person has cerebral palsy and they're just too slow, they're not keeping up, or they're deteriorating as they're getting older. Then we just bring (OT name omitted) in to have a look, and she's really good. She comes up with a lot of assistive technology.*

Clearly this provider benefits from utilising allied health services to support placements. It seems that much of the longevity of employment is based on the provision of Occupational Therapy (OT) services and workplace

accommodations. This is different from other providers and may indicate a potential pathway for providers to improve outcomes.

Clients continued to emphasise the widely held stereotypes that exist in the community about employability. The overall impression of employers is not high. They felt that employers are still viewing disability employment as a negative and potentially feel they have to carry someone with a disability.

No one seemed frustrated with it, but it was almost an acceptance that this was to be expected of employers.

Clients in the following statements express this:

CI3: *Once they know you've got this disability they won't um, they don't know how to handle it. Get companies to be more aware and pay people "not getting ahead, more higher up.*

CI4: *I don't think it's with the system itself, it's with employers, they don't understand disability. Stereotypes about disability being either physical or mental. I think that employers think that anyone over 40 don't have the capacity to learn quickly as somebody younger as well or that they're not willing to learn, the stereotype about anyone over 50 unable to use technology.*

This particular observation also introduced the construct of age discrimination as a factor, demonstrating another type of negative employer attitude.

Clients experienced a broad range of what could be perceived as discrimination, as evidenced by the following:

CI31: *Probably more fairness to them, because my consultant has spoken to a few companies, and they have said they don't want to work with people like that, so they are quite arrogant when it comes down to it.*

CI32: *For me probably just the employers to treat everyone more fairly and just go on would I have him in my job or something."*

CI6: *"I have been applying for jobs on Seek, but once the recruiter sees I have MS nothing.*

CI5: *One employer took me in for an interview and they said how come you're with this job supporting thing that they'd never really heard about so I said well its right across the road and asked me about my diagnosis, like Asperger's and once I explained about Asperger's and did some work with here, she kept telling people to take care of me because I'm a bit special and I kept saying well I'm not.*

These client statements demonstrate the perceived discrimination that occurs as a consequence of disclosure and the lengths they have to go to when trying to secure interviews. Overall, employer attitude to disability manifests itself in a variety of ways.

b. Disclosure

Disclosure presents as something of an issue. If I disclose will I get an interview? When do I disclose or if I do at all? This appears to go hand in hand with low levels of disability awareness about the capability of people with a disability, low expectations and general employer indifference. Is this linked to risk aversion or is it only reinforcing negative employer attitudes?

The clients and consultants held a wide variety of views regarding the impact of disclosure. Clients expressed views on disclosure such as:

CI61: *Because I didn't disclose, no, but I've had other jobs where I did disclose my mental health, and I was terminated shortly thereafter by making my work harder and hours cut back. Employer doesn't know about (provider omitted). I chose not to disclose because of possible employer attitude.*

CI8: *I never put my disability on job applications, I've seen it when I was into interviews, the look on their faces, crap he's got something not right about him. Some employers talk crap about someone they had with a disability.*

CI7: *Employers hesitant and terrified of you.*

CI5: *I have been applying for jobs on Seek, but once the recruiter sees I have MS nothing.*

These clients have experienced discrimination as a result of disclosing their disability, one at the recruiting level and one in the workplace. This appears to be indicative of a lack of understanding of disability. It indicates that discrimination is happening, although it could be asked how much of it is simply related to employers being wary and risk-averse of employing someone with a disability, something was highlighted in the following statement:

CI3: *Once they know you've got this disability they won't um, they don't know how to handle it."*

One client had a view of what disclosure should result in:

CI61: *I'm just trying to think. Well, I think successful employment would be having my employer know that I've got a mental health issue and still being able to work.*

This same client had previously disclosed and had a negative response commensurate with other client experiences, as stated below:

Cl61: *I've had other jobs where I did disclose my mental health, and I was terminated shortly thereafter by making my work harder and hours cut back.*

Disclosure of mental illness by this client resulted in being terminated or reduced employment hours making the employment untenable. This may suggest that employers still display negative attitudes towards disability and in the case of these clients view it as a reason to terminate employment.

Consultants expressed a wide variety of views regarding disclosure, highlighting respecting client choice in the matter, employer attitudes and what could simply be discrimination. The following statements reflect a positive attitude about the client and the impact of disclosure.

Co22: *And you find that if the employer is not willing to hear or understand it, then you'll find we don't place them there.*

Co21: *Yeah that's not going to be suitable environment for the client.*

Co22: *That's why you'll find our KPI's will probably be lower than other organisations due to that fact and we'll place them in alternatives. We disclose 100%. We would like to pride ourselves in disclosing because, for us, we find the more they know, the better and the longer the outcome.*

Co21: *Even before placing, I pass on information about the client that they've given me consent to release to employers to tell the employers about the disability and how it might affect my plans at work.*

These statements appear to indicate a positive, respectful attitude about the client, even though it would appear to impact on their service rating. Disclosure seems to be part of their placement process and a method of obtaining long-term placements. They are cognisant of the impact on KPI's of taking longer to place. It

would be interesting to know if they are aware that lower KPI's imperil their jobs?

Some consultants referred to some of the issues disclosure has on clients who fail to do so, but also recognise that the client has the right to make that decision.

Co72: *And also, the other barrier is the fact that because the people experience this, they're reluctant to want to disclose their disability, but it's in their best interest in the long term.*

Co71: *That's right.*

Interviewer: So, it's a catch-22.

Co71: *Yeah and we've had that happen. We've had a young fellow go for an apprenticeship. He wanted to go by himself. He got the job. Just before he's three months was up, he told the employer that he had a disability and he went "bye-bye."*

Co72: *Okay, but I think the problem is, as Co71 said, if the employers had a little bit more understanding and were more open to it, it would be okay.*

Consultants had a view that disclosure was appropriate, but they also understood the clients' rights. At the same time, they recognised that without disclosure there is a likelihood of termination of employment. There is the view that it is about client choice regarding disclosure as expressed by the following statements:

Co85: *Our job is to be invisible. Yeah so that we're not being a problem, we're not being embarrassing to the client because they get the sense of, you know, they don't want their peers to know. I just started three new clients, and I asked them where would you like me to see you and they will see here in the office. Café and stuff like that, yeah. Like I said, if a client doesn't really want you there, that can hinder you from being effective in helping them.*

Co83: *Like I said, it depends on the client. Some are non-disclosure, so it's really hard. As you know, we've got to see them at least once a fortnight and if they're high support once a week. So, if they're non-disclosure that makes it really hard and often those guys will fall out of the job because they don't get the support they actually need because they don't want the employer to know whereas you'll find the next job, they're happy to tell the employer. They learn by experience. It can be big time. I mean most employers I find are very, very good if you explain the sort of disabilities and how it affects them at work so if something goes wrong at work, they're not saying like, well why didn't you tell me about this? I mean because we can even sort of do an employer's wage subsidy, so we have a relationship with the employer, but we can't tell him what the disability is.*

The sentiment is understandable, but if you have taken the time to develop a relationship with the employer, would not it be about developing natural supports and then fading? The following statement highlights the benefits of disclosure in allowing for the development of natural workplace supports that can underpin successful long-term employment.

Co84: *I think from the employer's perspective, it's difficult for them to know like often the reason, this is my personal opinion. I reckon often the reason that disability employment works as for me with the guys I place, is that the buddy in the background that is supporting that person with the disability or just managing them so they're quietly off to the side. And if that person leaves the workplace, then at the higher level of the management, may not be aware and I've seen in the past the key link person leaves, and then the wheels fall off the job. Most of my placements like a long-term, I've had people in job support for 4, 5 to 6 years, so they've got longevity.*

This consultant understood the benefits of developing natural supports as an enabler of long-term employment. Co-workers as natural supports have a deep

understanding of workplace culture and a better understanding of the job requirements than a consultant and development of natural supports should be a consultant priority (Rogan, Callahan, Griffin and Hammis, 2007).

c. Subsidies and Quotas

Subsidies and Quotas are a frequent topic of discussion particularly in disability media. The clients interviewed held a position on quotas at odds with the current public discussion highlighting what they felt were the potential negative consequences of holding employers to employment quotas for people with a disability. The prevailing view was that employers would not like it and simply find a way around it and potentially make life unpleasant. They lent more towards employers changing their attitude to disability and being more considerate. The following statements highlight the negative perception:

CI12: *It could. It is sometimes a bit of a struggle for some people like there are people with disabilities out there who are really passionate, really caring and really eager to work, but then sometimes, it depends on the job you apply for. They just feel they don't have time or patience to train a disabled person and they prefer someone who knows what they are doing, rather than taking time to learn.*

CI31: *If a company is forced to hire people with disabilities and they really don't want to, they'll make it as hard as they can to make their life unpleasant.*

CI32: *It would probably be better to change the government rules that employers have to be a bit more considerate of others, and not actually when they get there, they hate them for what they have.*

There is a clear preference for not using quotas. Clients suggested other methods that have less of a negative impact on client/employer relationship as a better

option. No consultant interviewed raised the issue of quotas, however, they held strong views on the use of subsidies as an employment incentive for employers.

The consultants expressed the following views on subsidies:

Co31: *Yeah it might be. Sometimes maybe when you're achieving some of the outcomes, maybe the subsidy is a big help because of the employability and the situation there, okay, I don't have much budget at the moment, but I just need somebody, but you can help them, so you tend to help differently.*

Co42: *To a degree. We're always talking about their expectations in that actual sentence. That's their expectations, but they will then because they got a disability, what can I get out of it? A lot of the employers say what incentive are you going to offer me?*

Co41: *Because that's what they know now, and they talk about it.*

Co42: *All the agencies or providers that go around now to get employment, mostly everybody sprouts about if you have him, and he's got a learning disability we can give you \$3000 in the first three months to help you get over those hurdles, to help you train, and the employer knows this money is available and they ask for it.*

It could be argued that this is “buying” employment and is not placing based on an ideal fit or for that matter client desire. This suggests that the subsidies and incentives that the mainstream Job Services program offer have coloured the potential employer market to believe that incentives are available irrespective of the service. There is also some acknowledgement that subsidies only provide short-term employment outcomes and push back towards actual work capacity as a stronger factor, as illustrated by the following comments:

Co83: *We often find though, after we finish paying the wage subsidies that their jobs do finish with some people because some employers, especially small businesses, they really can't support employees after the money runs*

out. I mean we put them in good faith hoping it will, but business is business, and we understand.

Co84: *I mean they're still a very vulnerable group. There are some very mercenary businesses out there like you do hear of some bad things happening. We've picked up some job in jeopardy from employers in the past that have been quite; they don't have a great gift. And then also I have noticed that occasionally I've had this happened, but it's not occasionally, but maybe once or twice over 12 years. I've had a few job seekers in, and they'll have the same employer show up from their CV so that the employee you know is aware of how the system runs so they're just cycling people through and grabbing the incentives and maybe they're just doing it to give that person a 3-month work experience put on their CV, and that has merit. But where it's not good is where you've got companies that they're doing it all the time. I think that would be very disillusioning to sort of get put into short-term placement, short-term placement. I think possibly, and the difficulty within the sector too is if you've got unscrupulous operators that are putting people in just for the churn, it really gave the sector a bad name like I've got company, how many times I've rung companies about X, Y and Z as a job seeker. They say, no, we hate you bastards. We've had a bad experience with you.*

The consultants held strong views on subsidies and the negative impact on both clients and providers when they are used only to buy a job and cycle clients through the system. This is at odds with the frequent citing by provider management of the absence of real subsidies in disability employment being a disadvantage when compared to government-funded mainstream employment services, which have significantly more subsidies available for employers. While the size of the support may be an issue, it is possible that based on the consultant statements it may be more reflective of the less than an ethical application of subsidies to chase outcomes at the expense of system integrity and fidelity.

Despite the absence of financial incentives and acknowledgement that a subsidy would help, in its absence, consultants find ways to work around it. The consultants' statements indicate the failings of a system that has conditioned employers to money for placement and then churn to the next client adding some weight to the idea of the churning of placements by employers for profit.

d. Section Summary

In this section, the role of employers in the disability employment cycle was examined. Both consultants and clients see changing employer attitudes as a priority with showing consideration, respect and equal treatment key factors. Consultants highlighted extensive advertising campaigns developing brand awareness, but it is interesting in that consultants did not suggest that it has had any real impact on placement rates. The impact of advertising on employment rates for people with a disability warrants investigating to determine its real impact.

Consultants held the view that employers were opposed to the idea of employing someone with a disability highlighting issues relating to risk, low skills expectation and what can only be described as discrimination in hiring practices. Clients shared similar views stressing the impact of disclosure, even to the point of illustrating that they can get interviews if they do not disclose, but do not get past reception once they have been sighted and their disability becomes apparent to recruiters. Added to this, clients pointed out the universal stereotyping of the capacity of people with a disability was still a barrier to

employment. Clients almost seemed resigned to this being the norm when it came to employer attitude.

Clients and consultants held matching views about reasonable accommodation in the workplace, that it was in general something that employers ignored or had no time for. This stresses the importance of natural supports in the workplace, but this strategy seemed not to be generally applied. One provider is using occupational therapists to address this aspect with some success, possibly pointing to a factor that needs further support to develop as a universal approach.

Disclosure was something of a vexed position with consultants highlighting that it was the clients right to disclose or not, but they, as a rule, did disclose and that outcomes from this are mixed, possibly bordering on the cynical. Indeed, clients had lost jobs because of disclosure. This again goes back to employer attitudes to people with a disability and the soft discrimination that exists within the community.

The impact of subsidies and quotas was examined with consultants having strong views on subsidies, while clients held strong views on quotas. Consultants had negative views on subsidies highlighting the distortion in the marketplace between what DES could offer employers versus what mainstream employment services could offer. There is some evidence that subsidies have distorted the market with employers routinely using them as income streams churning

through clients when subsidies finish with little regard for the longevity of employment.

Clients held strong views that quotas would not be useful and indeed would foster resentment amongst employers making employment a less than ideal experience. This view is starkly in contrast to the current discussion in some media about the need for quotas. There is a dearth of available literature on the impact of subsidies and quota in disability employment highlighting a gap in our knowledge regarding their impact on disability employment outcomes.

e. Environment

The environment can be considered those factors that have an impact on employment success but are largely out of the sphere of influence of the employment services system. This theme draws together issues such as transportation networks, the impact of automation on employment opportunities, Big Business and Human Resources barriers. All have an impact on the opportunity for employment and potentially serve as enablers or barriers and as such are factors in the provision of successful employment outcomes. The following Figure 10.0 highlights the subordinate themes that support the major theme.

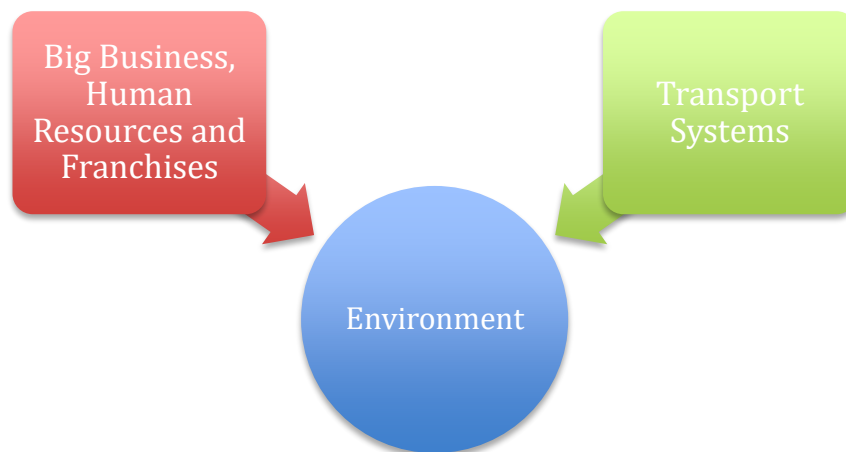


Fig 10.0 Environment Themes

a. **Big Business, Human Resources and Franchises**

Human Resource Departments and big business hiring policies were seen as exclusionary factors by consultants making the following observations:

Co84: *In terms of the employers, I generally don't go for big corporates at all because the HR departments are bouncing. They're not aware of the intricacies of the services that providers can offer back to the general market. So, there's a real discord within the HR and within the general community, within employers that a good disability employment service can offer the tools of supported wage, can offer the tools of traineeship, these are the ongoing support, here's the HR staff are gatekeepers, and they're ticking the boxes. But the hiring and firing like the decision to, particularly I just met with a couple of large advertising companies that we've worked with, the decision is made by decision makers so general managers, company secretary, the owner of the business and personally like in terms of placing people into jobs, it has been more sort of meaning for those company, small companies, community organisation, where they're a bit more willing to take a risk if you like.*

Co41: *The RAAF base, they hire contractors that run the place, so they're getting contractors. It's almost impossible even though one of our*

managers knows them and knows people that do the employment, but still no. Even the hospital wouldn't even entertain someone from us.

Co42: *I've been in contact with HR at our local hospital which is actually a private hospital too because it's run by Catholics and I've been told that they're happy to have a look at anybody that we might like to send over, but the truth of the thing is, nothing has ever come from it.*

Co72: *We do have Woolworths and Coles, and we do have some chain stores, but after speaking with some of the employers, a lot of the chain stores take on way more employees than they need and only give them few hours per week. That doesn't work for us.*

With opportunities limited to big box stores (bulk retailers such as Bunnings, K-Mart), no one indicated that they had any contact with the National Disability Recruitment Co-Coordinator (NDRC) program that was set up to work with large employers and support DES. However, given that what is available is insufficient hours that do not meet the DES criteria, it could be asked if DES needs to reframe what work is and accept lower hours as a starting point and acceptable outcomes in this type of setting? The view of HR as a barrier was a commonly held view despite efforts by the human resources peak bodies (such as Australian Human Resources Institute) in Australia to highlight the advantages of employing someone with a disability.

Many of those big retail groups are progressively moving towards automated checkouts as illustrated by the following consultant statement:

Co62: *I went into K-Mart on a Saturday at Penrith, and they've revamped the whole thing, and there are all these cash registers at the front, and they're all self-service. They're doing the job instead of going for all the*

other guys that are working on the counters. I was just oh, my god. Well, this isn't the government's doing like this is ridiculous.

This demonstrates how increasing automation of even low-level skill jobs such as checkouts is reducing employment opportunities. It could be asked why they believe that all the employment is restricted to service industries? Is this a reflection of the absence of employment opportunities in their areas or merely an acknowledgement that they pursue employment in a narrow band of job types?

While consultants highlighted issues with large companies in general, one group of consultants highlighted a hiring bias towards certain disability types within one multi-national big business franchise, as illustrated by the following:

Co21: Some organisations are biased towards disabilities that they want to employ like McDonald's is really biased to Down syndrome. They always make them like frontline staff. So, you get them into McDonald's and they are cleaning tables.

Co22: *We have an employer long term that I've known since I've started, and they specifically like to have someone who looks more like they have a disability than normal than not as they're around children and they want the children to see that person and learn from a young age that it's acceptable to have them in that environment and they're quite particular in who they employ, in regard to disability.*

Does this indicate whether the hiring preferences noted above are franchise driven or emblematic of the entire group? In a sense, you could regard this as tokenism which requires further research.

At the other end of the employer spectrum is the impact of the area itself on employment opportunities as illustrated by the following statements:

Co71: *We have a lot of agriculture, so I would not say they're not farmers, so it's harder to find a job. I think it's very more rural, don't you agree?*

Co72: *Yep.*

Co71: *So, if you want to do IT, you got to move down the track pretty much. Its limited resources and yeah in terms of small businesses, so you have got to remember for small business at the moment the economy is not ideal.*

This seems to feed into the idea of limited local opportunities and the need to access transport to pursue employment outside of the area. It may be suggestive of a certain mindset held by consultants. Did they consider alternatives such as self-employment in the absence of wage employment opportunities?

b. Transport Systems

While transport figured prominently for the consultants, only a few clients had any comment on this.

CI21: *I've don't have my own transport, I've only got public transport, I don't like being around many people and communication.*

CI22: *With me, I'm not exactly good with a large group of people, but the area that I want to go to, every job that, there are so many jobs that are great, but there are problems with transport because I don't have my license or lack of job experience, which is kinda hard to get if they don't allow me to have it.*

While clients acknowledged transport as an issue, no one over-emphasised it to the degree that consultants did. Consultants expressed many points regarding

transport as a barrier to employment, highlighting inadequate transport scheduling and service provision as factors, noted in the following exchange;

Co41: *One bus out, one bus in the areas.*

Co42: *In Penrith, they stop halfway through the day they don't even run.*

Interviewer: *There's nothing in Castlereagh road?*

Co42: *No, not halfway through the day.*

Co41: *On the Northern Road, two buses.*

Co42: *During the day you've got to get the train to Blacktown and back to Penrith.*

Co42: *Yeah. If you're offered a job 90 minutes away, maybe you should take it.*

Co41: *I think that's an extreme challenge. You already got disability against and then time on top of that where they got to struggle on public transport for 90 minutes.*

Co42: *And then maybe walk 15 minutes from Penrith station to a job.*

Co41: *So, therefore, my client just turned a job down. At our office, we don't advocate for it, we don't push for it. At tops, maybe 45 minutes.*

Co61: *Trains come past Katoomba during the day will not run. You'll get a train every 2 hours to Mt Victoria, but in the middle of the day, there's no train at all.*

Co64: *And the barrier is that a lot of our clients can't travel haven't got their transport so that can restrict us from finding employment for them even though we try and help them to drive. It does.*

The idea of clients learning to drive and hold licences was mentioned as an option, although only a few clients as noted earlier raised the issue of drivers licences. The following consultant remark illustrates economic and disability-related barriers to clients holding licences:

Co64: *And also, the fact that it's not necessarily getting on a train. You might get clients that can't travel by public transport, but in those industrial estates, you need to have your own car to actually get to, so a lot*

of our barriers is our clients driving, and I got about three clients that I could find work for, but every single job, a license or a car. I think the government should get involved in helping people with disabilities learn to drive. We used to, do we, but even sort of helping towards the driving lessons would be advantageous, but unfortunately, parents can't afford it. They can't afford it on their DSP pensions, and I think that would be another barrier, a major barrier for a lot of my clients. Some people don't. They've got issues. They got anxiety. They got all different things like that they can't-do. It's a disability and that some people just can't cope with that. They need to be working locally, and this is where the problem rises.

While there are examples of clients obtaining drivers licences, it is clear from the comments that for most of the cohort, this appears not to be a viable option in the consultants' views. Consultants also pointed out the time taken to travel, and the number of different modes of public transport needed just to get to the job, again supporting the inadequacy of transport scheduling as a factor. The following statement supports this:

Co61: *I got clients who work like three stations away. It takes him 3 hours to get to and from work every day because he has to wait for the train to get to the place called Blackheath and he has to walk an hour to get to where he works, and he does it because he wants to work.*

Co64: *I mean I've got a client who is going to an interview. She's working in Penrith, but she's having to get the bus from where she lives to Springwood, from Springwood then to Penrith and then another bus to where she was working.*

Co61: *And yet if they had a bus that went down regularly, there wouldn't have to be issues.*

Inadequate transport options which add significant time to any journey are a barrier that also impacts in the area of employer flexibility. Consultants raised this issue of transport and employer flexibility, as illustrated by the following:

Co62: *And so, we have to get employers to work around the train timetables for the clients to get to work.*

Co63: *Some of them do, but it's a lot of effort.*

Co62: *Yeah exactly. A lot of people will go too bad if they can't be here by 8 o'clock to start will then it's so late. If you do, they have to be there an hour before, but you have to be really lucky to get a really good employer.*

Transport continues to be a theme with poor scheduling and client inability to drive. The absence of any real services during the day compounds the problem. The lack of viable and regular transport in semi-rural areas are potentially limiting factors, particularly when coupled with the inability to find flexible hour employment that fits transport scheduling. It is understandable employers are reluctant to bend their rules to accommodate transportation issues.

c. **Section Summary**

This section has examined environmental factors, which are defined as those aspects of employment that are largely out of the control of both the client and service provider. Consultants talked about how Human Resource (HR) departments and large shopping chains are perceived as displaying a certain bias. Human Resources is seen as a bulwark against the hiring of people with a disability due to perceived indifference to what service providers can do to assist them to employ people with a disability, something that is consistent with client observations regarding disclosure. While business owners may talk publically about their desire to employ people with a disability, it appears that Human Resources indifference is getting in the way of translating intent into actual action.

In a similar vein, consultants indicated that there were limited opportunities in big box stores, something that is highlighted in much of the literature regarding where to find employment opportunities. It is apparent that while some consultants had heard of the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator as a service that supports DES to work with large employers, none appeared to have used this service. Consultants also highlighted the rise of automation in large retailers as a factor that is reducing the number of what would be low-skilled entry-level jobs. These jobs in the past would have been good employment opportunities for people with a disability citing the increase in self-serve checkouts in retail outlets.

Paradoxically there was mention of perceived employer bias towards certain disabilities with McDonald's, the multinational burger chain showing a preference for people with Down syndrome. One consultant talked about this as the employer looking to employ someone with a disability to be around children as a sort of normalisation process. Regional economies were also seen as a limiting factor for employment opportunities.

Transport, more specifically unreliable, poorly scheduled train and buses and indeed the absence of public transport outside of the peak periods were also noted as a barrier. Taken together with limited opportunities for employers to provide flexible work schedules that fit into the transportation system, particularly in city fringe areas was seen as another barrier to employment.

D. Summary

The development of the five major themes; Relationships, Provider Processes, Compliance, Employers and Environment is the result of utilising the IPA process to analyse and rigorously examine the participant data. The data produced over two hundred pre-emergent themes that a process of read, analyse and refine allowed for the reduction of the data to the main themes, which are underpinned by fourteen subordinate themes. Taken together they highlight factors that influence disability employment outcomes and inform the disability employment system. Systems can take on a life of their own and in-turn influence how participants interact and, in a sense create a virtuous and sometimes vicious cycle.

While the themes present as separate entities, they are symbiotic and dependent on all parts of the system to exist, their existence in fact predicated on community expectations for people with a disability. This fact itself dictates that disability employment be seen as more than service provision, but a service that supports community inclusion and cohesion, something that is rarely ever considered in the employment discussion.

The results have illustrated a system that appears to lack cohesion and a real understanding of what is required to improve employment outcomes, a system that provides a level of stress to clients and consultants that suggests “just getting by” is a successful outcome in itself. The system relies heavily on employers to support outcomes, yet the data suggest that employers are not fully

engaged in the process with no real evidence of a cohesive approach to employers beyond what appears to be a numbers game and the possibility of employment through inducements to employers.

Compliance is highlighted as a driver for increasing stress levels and to a degree illustrates a system that is progressively wearing down participants. Taken together it is clear that the system lacks an understanding or capacity to develop relationships across all levels that would reduce stress and improve potential outcomes, in a sense the system lacks empathy and understanding of its real purpose and those whose existence allows the system to exist.

A significant challenge exists in aligning factors such as transport that could improve access to employment. It would require substantial demands and co-operation amongst governments across all levels, a challenge that is yet to be taken up.

In essence, the data while illustrating areas of good practice, however, based on static employment outcomes over a number of years, it is simply not fulfilling its promise and is in need of reimagining. Reimagining that takes advantage of recent developments such as the NDIS and the potential for change that exists when the system moves closer to client control in 2020. This proposition will be explored further in the discussion chapter that follows.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

A. Introduction

Chapter Seven will outline the findings in the same order of findings in Chapter Six and discuss them with reference to selected evidence and make recommendations for future research. This study set out to determine factors that lead to the successful employment of people with a disability. Its intent is to shine a light on the client-consultant experience, the role of the consultant in supporting successful employment outcomes and what elements would need to be included in any new dynamic system model. The data collected highlighted many factors that were already known in the literature, but in a system that preferences expediency of process over the value of the client who is diminished by this system. The results highlighted that the most significant factor at play is the capacity to develop meaningful relationships between system participants and the inability of current practice to support this process.

This research has emphasised the importance of listening to the voice of the client and the disability employment service consultant. It is this voice of the lived experience of those receiving and delivering services that have much to offer in developing an understanding of the factors that support employment outcomes and service delivery.

Much of the research to date has focused on employment outcomes, systems and the content of the consultant role, with little focus on the interaction between the

client and consultant within the disability employment service system. This research with its focus on the subjective experience of the participants builds on previous research by highlighting areas of agreement and differences and in some cases, highlights compelling evidence of indifference in the existing system to known success factors, such as work experience and the role of the family. These factors suggest a system lacking in equilibrium, an imbalance that works against successful employment placement when you consider that any discord between client and consultant would create a less than ideal relationship with other parties such as family and of course the employer.

Interestingly, the research also illustrates a system that places undue pressure on participants with seeming indifference to the impact on those participants and their capacity to participate in any meaningful way. The obvious example being consultants having to justify their role, which highlights a lack of trust and adds uncertainty to the longevity of employment. At the same, they are charged with the responsibility to engage clients and employers in the quest for meaningful employment. Anecdotally, I have spoken to consultants who when in this position, spend part of their time looking for better employment for themselves. In a similar vein, the ongoing need to reaffirm your disability or deficit highlights a system that is focused on cost reduction, a not unimportant aspect of government responsibility. The frequency of such activity suggests a less than ideal understanding of the life trajectory of the diverse nature of disability experienced by people.

B. Discussing the Themes

In any examination of research results, the discussion generally flows from answering each of the research questions. In seeking to highlight factors that influence employment outcomes, I have found that the experience of the participants is intertwined with the factors. It is for this reason I have chosen to discuss the results as a homogenous group within each theme.

The themes are discussed in the context of answering the following three questions;

- *What is the **experience** of Client and the Disability Employment Consultant within the Disability Employment Service?*
- *What **factors** are at play for the Disability Employment Consultant in their role of supporting successful employment outcomes?*
- *What **elements** would need to be in place to support a dynamic disability employment system?*

The research produced five primary themes with the data leading to a subtle hierarchy. Based on the data analysis, the concept of Relationships appears as the major factor in delivering meaningful long-term employment, underpinned by notions of trust, choice and control, understanding and knowledge of the client and the role of families. This is not to diminish the impact or importance of the other four themes of Provider Processes, Compliance Driven Systems, Employers and Environment. It is simply a recognition of the existential view

that we are always in relationship and the interrelatedness of each of us to our world.

a. Relationships

a. Trust

The issue of trust is highlighted by clients as a factor in their engagement with Centrelink in relationship to constantly having to prove that their disability is unchanged. This highlights a continued focus on deficits and the idea that the client cannot be trusted with their disability, something that could easily be rectified by respecting the client and recognising their disability as life-long impairment without the need to report. The system currently does this for clients with what is considered non-life long disability accessing support services through the rehabilitation focused Disability Management Service (DMS). This is a case of low expectation being built into the system. Luecking et al., (2004) in their book on disability employment entitled "*Working Relationships*" introduced the construct of Trust and Mutuality as ingredients to building trusting relationships, with trust being a degree of confidence that presages credibility and integrity that underpin successful relationships.

Luecking et al., (2004) defined Mutuality as the confidence or trust that each participant develops from a position of mutual benefit. These definitions emphasise a level of freedom that is inherent in trusting relationships. However, if you consider that the closest proximity that the current system reaches is the notion of mutual obligation which carries with it connotations of punishment for

failing to honour your obligation, obligation supported by negative reinforcement is not built on any real understanding of trust. The absence of trust is illustrated in the data through the ongoing requirement to reaffirm your level of disability (deficits) and the ongoing need to regularly change EPP's when there is no material change in the client's situation.

From the analysis of the data, it is apparent that the relationship between Centrelink and clients is less about trust and more about compliance. To a degree, this supports the client proposition that the relationship is demeaning, an experience at odds with research that highlights that taking a focus on client centred non-judgemental relationships can provide for successful employment outcomes (Vick & Lightman, 2010).

Given the known lifelong trajectory of many disabilities, this issue of having to prove the ongoing existence of your disability could be addressed by a re-conceptualisation of disability with the client only needing to engage in the event of a rapid decline in functionality and the need for additional supports. In the event of employment, given that the client has a relationship with a service provider who in all likelihood is providing ongoing employment support, the service provider can interface with Centrelink to ensure that they are abreast of the income status of the client and the necessity to make any changes. This would illustrate to the client that they are in a mutually trusting relationship, with the consultant interacting with the system and acting in a supportive role that will free the client to focus on workplace and employment issues inherent in maintaining meaningful employment. This could be easily addressed by virtue of

the post support person collecting and reporting the income status of the client during this support period, something that is part of mainstream service provision post-placement support.

b. Control, Choice and Families

Choice is a factor in any agency that promotes person-centred practices for its clients. A client or person-centred approach to understanding and supporting the client is generally regarded as the principal approach to client success in the securing and maintaining employment, requiring a greater understanding of the client beyond the formal setting of the office (Callahan, Shumpert, & Condon, 2009; Griffin et al., 2007). This factor conflicts with the consultant activities highlighted in the data collected, which suggest minimal engagement with the client away from provider offices and certainly negligible engagement with family and friends. The data illustrated a manifest disregard for the involvement of client families in any meaningful way. This is inconsistent with the evidence supporting the use of Discovery in the employment process. Discovery places significant value on the resources and information that families bring to the employment process in developing a deeper understanding of the client, their abilities and community connections (Griffin et al., 2007., Migliore et al., 2010., O'Brien & Callahan, 2010., Wehman, 2001., Wehman, Sale, Parent, 1992), along with the capacity to develop a deeper understanding of the client's emotions and attitudes in order to be client-centred (Rogers, 1946).

When you consider that the first relationship and certainly the primary relationship for the client is with their family, this research has highlighted a lack

of any real attempt to engage with the clients' families and indeed an almost dismissive attitude to family knowledge, despite developing a positive working relationship with families being a known success factor (Wehman, Sale, & Parent, 1992). The evidence from this research demonstrates a lack of constructive engagement with families as a factor that warrants further consideration and research into why consultants are ignoring such a vital factor to employment success.

The role of the family in the employment cycle as a factor is an important consideration, with family a vital source of information and support (Callahan et al., 2009; Griffin et al., 2007; Hagner, Noll, and Donovan, 2002; Hoff et al., 2000., Migliore et al., 2010). Research highlights parental expectations of post-school employment being associated with a five-fold increase in employment, while expectations of being self-supporting by the family displayed a three-fold increase in employment post-school (Carter et al., 2012). This emphasises the importance of engaging with the families at the outset as a significant factor.

Burkhead & Wilson (1995) noted that families could be a positive influence during the transition period between school and work in five major areas, these being; providing job information, motivating the family members achievements and interests, serving as role models, influencing self-concept and influencing the individual's developmental environment. These factors contribute to building positive expectation within the client and setting the scene for healthy relationships.

It is normal for families to believe the stereotypes regarding disabilities and incorrectly believe in the limitations that these views hold about the employability of people with disabilities (Tschopp et al., 2001). Given that relationships take time to develop, it may well be that the time pressures associated with our current system that rewards processes and service delivery markers over the importance of meaningful employment outcomes are influencing consultants to diminish the role of families. Evidence suggests that early engagement with parents before the school to employment transition begins increases the expectation of employment in the community (Wehman, 2001). This suggests that for consultants currently delivering employment services there is a need to engage with clients and families prior to their leaving the school system. These facts strongly suggest that consultants need to engage with parents if successful relationships and outcomes are to be achieved.

If you consider this in the light of Super's (1990) five-stage theory of career development, the ideal phase for engagement is the second or "Exploration" phase that occurs from the age of 15 to 24 when an individual begins the process of ideation or identity development and construction of self-concept which starts the process of job or career choice, amongst other aspects of identity. The age of fifteen in the Australian schooling system would see involvement in the employment discussion begin two to three years before school concludes for most students. This could easily be undertaken within the NDIS environment with families funded to begin "Discovery" with the support of qualified experts who would add significant value to the NDIS planning process for economic participation or possible transition to DES post-school.

The current system that separates mainstream disability employment services from transition services, although often delivered by the same service provider, displays little understanding of this process and may be a barrier to developing effective relationships.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that providers who deliver both TTW and DES services have a higher star rating for their DES services, although there is little research to highlight the enablers of this process outcome measure. Certainly, there is a suggestion that current transition programs have been used simply to groom clients for entry into the DES system. It may well be the case that current assessment measures can actually be used to cull clients who threaten an agency's success rate (O'Brien & Callahan, 2010) A process known as "parking" is a known practice in mainstream employment services, and indeed given that service providers are rewarded by processes (60% of 2017 program income), there is a real temptation for providers to focus on low support needs, higher functioning clients, excluding by default clients deemed to lack employability skills, something that one consultant highlighted in this research. While this research did not directly pursue the topic of providers focusing on low support needs, higher functioning clients directly, it did find this attitude or bias in consultant statements such as the following;

Co42: I've got about 11 clients and of them, they've been long-term clients because I haven't been able to find any position for them because they don't have the skills.

To support the development of relationships, it may be the case that state-based transition to work programs, whilst currently being replaced by the NDIS School

Leaver Employment Supports (SLES), would be better placed in a new disability employment model that provides seamless transition for clients between services that also recognises the development phase that clients progress through. For clients with intellectual or other cognitive impairments, this process may begin later and take longer, which again highlights the significance of families in the employment cycle.

The current DES system, based on deemed work capacity, needs a complete revamp to align it with NDIS principles of choice and control, giving primacy to relationships and less emphasis on “benchmark” hours of work capacity as determinates of support and service provider provision. The current system has failed to keep pace with the changing employment environment and the fundamental shift in the expectations of people with a disability to be able to lead a normal life in the community. These expectations challenge the orthodoxy of the previous century that underpin low employment levels for people with a disability (O’Brien & Callahan, 2010) and may be a factor in employment outcomes.

The capacity to exercise choice in employment opportunities for people with a disability that access disability employment services was not readily apparent in the data collected, which tended to highlight how clients had to go to extreme lengths to exercise any real choice. Previous research (Beyer et al., 1996., Wehman et al., 2003) found that agencies that maintained a clear focus on the clients’ needs were more likely to exercise good work practices and provide greater opportunities to exercise choice for clients.

There is a need to adopt a person or client-centred practices in disability employment services, both at the provider and Centrelink level. In the case of the provider, the current provider contracts stipulate that providers are to be person-centred; however, despite proclamations to this effect, there is little evidence to support that providers are person-centred at the client-consultant interface. The data did highlight how consultants believed that current practices are forcing a move away from holism, something that could be seen as person-centred practice. Consultants acknowledged the need to address non-employment barriers such as homelessness as a precursor to successful employment. This highlights that providers must adopt processes that are client-centred such as the use of Discovery, the core ingredient in the Customised Employment process. The adoption of known evidence-based processes is no guarantee that the provider will deliver them with any degree of fidelity.

However, with the development of Discovery Fidelity Scale (Hall, Keeton, Cassidy, Iovannone, Griffin, 2016) in the USA and the current research collaboration between subject matter experts in Australia and the USA to contextualise the scale to the Australian setting, an opportunity exists to fully involve the client in the process of auditing provider practices for client-centred service delivery fidelity, thereby creating conditions of mutuality. Kostick et al., (2010) noted that client-centred practice is in effect a client led negotiation that requires an understanding of the client's perspective to set standards and boundaries to protect the client's best interests, potentially highlighting a role for self-guided discovery with the consultant acting in the role of mentor/advocate during this stage of job development. This inability to implement person-centred practices as a

benchmark of quality suggests that programs may be devoid of values and a clear focus (Wehman et al., 2003), indicating a significant barrier to clients' exercising choice and control.

Along with other identified employment practices were not followed as a matter of course, with Migliore et al., (2010) reporting that less than half of the disability employment consultants in their study spent any time getting to know the client using approaches recommended in the literature. They hypothesise this may relate to the short length of time consultants had been in employment services. The current study was populated with consultants with longer terms in employment services, which suggests factors other than employment longevity being at play.

b. Provider Processes

a. Disability Knowledge, Work Experience and Work Practices

The role of the disability employment consultant is to assist people with a disability find employment in the "open labour market" by addressing barriers to employment and providing appropriate supports to ensure successful long-term employment (Migliore et al., 2010; Schneider, 2007; Yun-Tung, 2010). The role of disability employment consultant is viewed as an emerging professional vocation. However, little is known about the work practices of this profession, something this research has tried to shine a light on.

Researchers have attempted to identify the work practices of the profession and whether there is a consistent approach in the application of evidence-based practice when working with clients (Migliore et al., 2010; Schneider, 2007; Yun-Tung, 2010; Wehman et al., 2003). Published literature shows no consistent methodology at work, with studies showing no definitive reasoning behind this with examples such as employment consultant attitude, work environment, subjective assessment and setting as some of the possible reasons.

The data collected in the current project did not uncover anything that could be reliably defined as work processes such as; observing the client in settings where they can illustrate skills, informational interviews, neighbourhood mapping or methodology, despite clients and consultants suggesting that processes drove the employment process. Other researchers have uncovered similar evidence regarding processes that suggest that a lack of knowledge and time-poor practices contributed to consultants largely ignoring practices that they considered to be unnecessary for clients (Migliore et al., 2010).

In the context of this research, the data suggested that processes are in fact a compendium of practices, knowledge and work experience. Yet even this description presents something of a conundrum, as work experience was not a regular part of the employment process, despite evidence that highlights the importance of work experience in developing a better understanding of the client's skills and potential work settings. Failure to match the characteristics of the client to the workplace requirements has been cited as a reason for employment failure (Brown, Kessler, & Toson, 2016).

There is a strong association with paid work experience and work that supports the idea that all students with disabilities should accrue work experience as part of their schooling (Carter, Trainor, Ditchman, Swedeen, & Owens, 2009). Martz (2003) found that invisibility of disability and work experience were the two best predictors of employment with paid work experience a better indicator than volunteer work. It was suggested that while volunteer work experience demonstrated to the individual that they are capable of work, paid work experience provided a higher level of motivation by the receipt of the wage. The invisibility of the disability related to the potential for stigma, which highlights the issues and potential impact of disclosure.

Despite the evidence supporting the positive benefits of work experience, few disability employment consultants considered regular work experience to be part of the employment process. Work experience provides an opportunity to taste various occupations prior to placement.

We are disabled and enabled by our environments, so surely the best place to determine a client's capacity is in a work setting determined by using the evidence-based practice of Discovery that can highlight a client's interests and provide clues to a person's ideal conditions of employment (Luecking et al., 2004) leading to better work experience opportunities. Given the apparent focus on clients with low support needs within the DES system, it may well be time to shift the DES focus to clients with 15 hours plus deemed work capacity. Clients with lower thresholds can be supported within the NDIS system and indeed this may provide the impetus for ADE's to restructure to provide open employment

services to this cohort, a cohort that they have experience in providing a more holistic service.

Together with the contradictory positions held by consultants and clients about disability knowledge and the absence of any real application of known evidence-based practices, it appears that processes are based on what individual consultants do with clients, and the strength of that relationship to drives work practices to support the individual outcomes achieved.

While relationships seem cursory to practice in this research, this research did highlight Relationships (between client, consultant and family) as a significant factor in driving employment outcomes, highlighting the need for further investigation. Further research would add to the findings that have highlighted mixed or uncertain expectations by clients of providers, possibly due to the lack of real relationships and the starkly different views that consultants held on the availability of training to improve disability knowledge.

In the context of Australia, there is no recognised disability employment certification that would support credentialing and knowledge to underpin the work of disability employment consultants. Mainstream employment consultants in Australia have followed the pathway of Employment Services certificates and diplomas, providing some measure that consultants have some consistency of knowledge. In the disability employment consultant area, organisations have provided some level of professional development training, possibly driven by the need to replace staff in what is a high turnover industry

(Hagner, Phillips, & Dague, 2014). This has not guaranteed any level of consistent practice and knowledge, and indeed the data collected highlight an absence of any detailed understanding and application of evidence-based practices that are specific to disability employment. This may reflect an absence of leadership that is crucial to the adoption of new processes (Citron, Brookes-Lane, Crandell, Brady, Cooper, and Revell, 2008).

In the USA, the Association for Persons in Supported Employment First (APSE) has developed a certification process for disability employment consultants that can be undertaken after completing one of several Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) approved training programs for existing staff. These programs have a defined set of core competencies for employment staff. This process results in a nationally recognised endorsement of practitioners who are competent Employment Support Professionals. The certification process requires employment in the field for at least one year, a minimum education of high school diploma and the satisfactory completion of the certification exam which consists of 135 questions completed over a three hours exam timeframe. With support from APSE, this process is being developed for the Australian setting by the Centre for Disability Employment Research and Practice in Melbourne.

It is questionable as to whether qualifications in themselves produce better outcomes. However, supported by robust fidelity testing, it is possible to ensure that evidence-based practices are implemented. This is one of the drivers in the USA for the development of the Discovery Fidelity Scale, to ensure that

Customised Employment is implemented fully by properly trained professionals and goes some way towards ensuring consistency of practice.

Research into consultants and providers highlighted that the ability of a client to find employment is dependent on the effectiveness of the employment consultant (Luecking et al., 2004), effectiveness underpinned by competence and the capacity of consultants and clients to overcome organisational processes or lack of to achieve outcomes. This competency requires adequate professional development to support skills development and acquisition by the consultant (Hagner et al., 2002).

Given the relatively unchanged employment rates amongst people with a disability in Australia, it questions what employment outcomes would look like if organisations adopted evidence-based processes and invested in competency-based training specific to disability employment. There is a role for government to play such as happened in the USA where the process of Discovery was mandated into funding requirements for providers of disability employment services. Discovery is a strengths-based process that has the potential to change the discussion in Australia from a focus on deficits to access support, to one that illuminates strengths and builds on those strengths to develop employment opportunities.

The use of Discovery would ensure that consultants engage with families, enhancing the relationship building process and at the same time building a better profile of the clients' capacity. Starting the process of developing

understanding in the clients' neighbourhood would allow the job development process to start from a setting that may already have the potential for employment outcomes. Observing the client interacting within their local community has the potential to uncover hidden skills and talents not obvious in written resume's or the provider office setting. In this sense, it can be likened to the use of work experience to display work skills, but in this setting, we are uncovering the clients' communication and relationship building skills, essential to successful employment.

c. Compliance Driven Systems

a. Employment Pathway Plans, Respect, Repetition and Holism

The idea of compliance driving the actual employment system is not new, particularly in systems that have a mutual obligation as a feature and the current DES system that favours provider income based primarily on processes, as opposed to outcomes and client choice and control.

The overriding factor for consultants and clients within this study regarding compliance was the recognition that the absence of trust and respect was driving the system and work processes. Indeed it is a significant factor underpinning a lack of trust in the system. The lack of trust in economic systems presages an absence of integrity and highlights a system that places the system interests ahead of the very people that it is charged with helping (Luecking et al., 2004: Griffin, 1999). It suggests that the process is the outcome, highlighted by the repetition involved in altering EPP's on a prescribed timeline, rather than when

there is a substantial change in the client's setting. The high level of compliance was also noted as a factor driving consultants away from using a holistic approach to service provision.

The eco-system that surrounds the client-consultant relationship is not one that lends itself to a pure focus on employment outcomes. In a sense, the client and consultant are being hobbled by a system that lacks a real understanding of its purpose. This research has highlighted a disconnect between the various system actors, possibly indicating a lack of equilibrium. If employment outcomes are to be maximised and improved, then it follows that the disability employment system needs to be in equilibrium; an equilibrium built on mutuality and trust that underpin sound relationships. Both clients and consultants highlighted poor levels of trust inherent in compliance activities.

d. Employers

a. Attitude, Disclosure, Subsidies and Quota

Employers have been a vexing conundrum for some time with considerable investment by both providers and government in disability awareness programs. Despite this long-term investment, employment rates have remained largely unchanged over time. Consultants highlighted how heavily they promoted what they do and that very few employers had not heard of their services, yet are the outcome rates consistent with this level of investment or are there other factors at work that require further investigation?

The idea of low expectation that permeated some of the consultant's worldviews also held true for some employers, based on the evidence from consultants and clients collected suggesting that both the advertising and approaches to employers lacked any real empathy or any attempt to understand what employers want. It should not be a surprise, as low expectation about the capacity of clients to engage in employment fully has been found amongst disability employment staff and health professionals (King et al., 2006; Schneider, 2007).

This research highlighted an approach that could be likened to selling clients with disabilities to employers, that is designed to appeal to the employers' sense of altruism inherent in approaches to employer engagement. Like reverse marketing, this approach lacks any real attempt to understand the business needs and to present a sound business case for employing someone, not just someone with a disability. Sowers et al., (1999) found that there is a common belief amongst professionals and families that a job in the community is not an important goal for people with significant disabilities; something at odds with the intent of the NDIS and inconsistent with the reason for having disability employment services.

Given the perception of the abilities of someone with a disability in a work setting that was displayed in this research, the absence of any real attempt to mount a business case for employing someone highlights a failing of the consultants' knowledge of business and the capacity to develop a coherent reason for employing people. This may well feed into the issue of disclosure, with

clients highlighting the inability even to get an interview or in one case having employment terminated based on disclosure. This was against the narrative from some consultants who did disclose the clients' disability.

Whether this supports Shier et al., (2009) reporting that some people with a disability found that employers feared disability is worthy of investigation. It does highlight a strong case for disability employment staff to engage more intensely with employers so that they develop a real understanding of what business needs. This approach has the potential to develop a better understanding of both parties. Consultants could move beyond simply looking to place someone in delivering cost-effective employment solutions matched to an individual who can meet that need and at the same time alleviating any employer disquiet over employing someone with a disability. This is consistent with the idea of mutuality explored earlier in this discussion and a feature of the process of Discovery (Luecking et al., 2004).

The issue of subsidies and quota presents as something of a paradox in that business, disability consultants and government have a strong addiction to the use of subsidies to "entice" business to employ a more diverse workforce. The consultants presented evidence of distortions in the employment marketplace due to the significantly larger purse available to mainstream employment services (a practice inconsistent with free market systems, but at one with the quasi-free market nature of employment services). Clients showed a preference for relationship building over the idea that quota and subsidies should be

applied – something that is regularly raised in mainstream media as an antidote to poor employment outcomes.

The use of subsidies to underpin employment for every cohort of the community that is the focus of government agendas has rendered them largely ineffectual in creating meaningful long-term employment, something highlighted by consultants in this study who cited evidence of employers churning through work placements as subsidies ran out. This is an area of government investment that bears further investigation to determine the real impact of subsidies long term in creating meaningful employment outcomes.

e. Environment

a. Big Business, Human Resources and Franchises

The data collected during this research highlighted some of the barriers consultants experienced when dealing with Human Resource (HR) departments in their quest to find employment for clients. Consultants reported that HR was indifferent and ignorant of what providers could offer. Some researchers have found that corporate culture, particularly the recruiting methods of companies via Human Resources, are at odds with the employment specialist support services creating tension in their interaction (Beyer, 2012). I would suggest that there is a role for senior management within the DES system to take in developing relationships with executive level staff that can influence corporate culture. Potentially this highlights what might be a better focus for disability awareness strategies, which should be examined. While employers away from

the frontline do not take direct responsibility for the successful integration of persons with a disability into the work environment; they do create the culture that will allow for the smooth transition to work (Westmorland & Williams, 2002).

Workplace attitudes and discrimination are frequently reported barriers to employment for post-school leavers with a disability (Lindsay, 2011), often reflecting the prevailing culture and social values reinforcing the inequalities experienced by people with a disability.

The absence of any evidence in this research that the development of natural supports received any real attention suggests that providers who invest in employers to develop natural supports add to the value proposition for an employer. This fact highlights an area where consultants could potentially have an impact on the business proposition, given the evidence for natural supports as a factor in job retention (Griffin, Hammis & Geary, 2007).

This activity would be consistent with the evidence that emerged in the 1990's about the capacity of natural supports in the workplace to enhance workplace integration and support the potential for higher wage outcomes for people with developmental disabilities (Mank, 2007), which further highlights the potential to shift employment practices towards the known evidence for practice and improved fidelity.

Many organisations have statements that reflect diversity in the workplace; however, they regularly fail to acknowledge disability as part of that diversity (Ball et al., 2005; Samant et al., 2009). Organisations that did recognise and promote diversity in their corporate culture were more successful at the recruitment, training and retention of employees with disabilities (Hernandez et al., 2008; Sandler & Blanck, 2005). The recognition of disability as one aspect of workforce diversity is one important step towards improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

The absence of this recognition is reflected in the types of employment that people with a disability are typically found in, concentrated in low paid, low skill occupations, with a major under-representation in managerial and professional occupations (Lindsay, 2011). With the rise of the knowledge economy that places a premium on skills and qualifications, there is the risk that clients with disabilities who successfully enter the workforce will be consigned to the low level, low skill occupations that attract menial wages and casual work (Lewis, Thoreson, & Cocks, 2011). Balanced against the increasing use of automation in these areas of business, it signals a need for providers to take a different approach to find employment, potentially highlighting the benefits of customising employment to the individual, rather than simply trying to fit the client into a prescribed job. This fact was highlighted by one consultant who noted that even basic register jobs at stores were being replaced by automated self-serve kiosks.

Similarly, it is a question as to whether it is good practice or simply a mild form of discrimination regarding the proposition that certain organisations prefer certain disability type for basic cleaning jobs. The comments with regards to McDonald's and their hiring practices from the consultant data hark back to the former ways of inclusion where organisations simply took people with a disability out into the community as their version of inclusion. Despite this activity, individuals remained isolated and largely did not interact with the community. True inclusion would mean that individuals with a disability also have career paths consistent with their fellow employees. It would be worth researching the career paths of individuals with a disability to see if such a condition exists and what if any barriers exist.

b. Transport Systems

The issue of transport as a barrier was raised by several participants, but no one had any clear idea of how to address this. The inconsistent nature of transport timetables and proximity to employment and homes appeared to be an issue, along with what is deemed to be inflexibility in employer work schedule. Within mainstream employment services in Australia, there is an expectation that you will travel up to ninety minutes to secure employment or move to areas where employment is available. The idea of moving closer to employment was not raised, despite this being an option to consider that would reduce reliance on transportation (Stancliffe & Lakin, 2007). Without the ability to live closer to employment, the need to access creative transport solutions (Wehman, Brooke, & Inge, 2001) becomes paramount, although, in the case of this research, no such ideas or solutions were evident. No one explored options such as self-

employment or working from home, ride sharing or potentially seeking out employment in settings where transport was offered.

There is a valid argument to be made that if the employment process started in the home, would outcomes be better? In the case of this research, there is almost a pervading attitude that “we will find employment for you anywhere, but transport well that is not something we do”. It questions whether the employment search was truly based on an honest assessment of the clients’ strengths and capacities as a starting point.

C. Equilibrium Systems Model of Employment (ESME)

During the analysis phase of this research, it became apparent that current systems models did not adequately account for the disability employment system. Bronfenbrenner’s systems work inspired the conceptualisation of a systems model that accounted for those participants in the system. The research findings illustrated a level of disconnectedness within current service practices that failed to adequately account for the benefits of developing relationships and the impact of each system participant.

A potential new model that challenges current thinking highlighting relationships and system roles emerged during the analysis of the data. While still in its infancy, the model may enable a shift in focus back to the client, highlighting that in employment settings meaningful outcomes can only be

achieved by recognising the value of all system entities in creating the employment relationship.

The model proposes four interdependent systems, both internal and external to the client, but departs from traditional understanding by placing the family relationship away from the client, but in an area that places significant value in the family relationship.

The model posits that for the individual to obtain meaningful employment, the system levels must be in equilibrium in their role of providing setting conditions that will allow meaningful employment to be achieved. This equilibrium can only be achieved when the system entities obtain a reciprocal benefit. The client resides at the centre of the system that is surrounded by the Immediate level systems (consultant and employer), Intermediate level systems (provider and community/government) and Global level system (family) (fig. 11.0).

a. Client Level System

The client resides at the centre of the system and is both the pivot of the system and the purpose of the system. The client is an active participant and purchaser of services within the system.

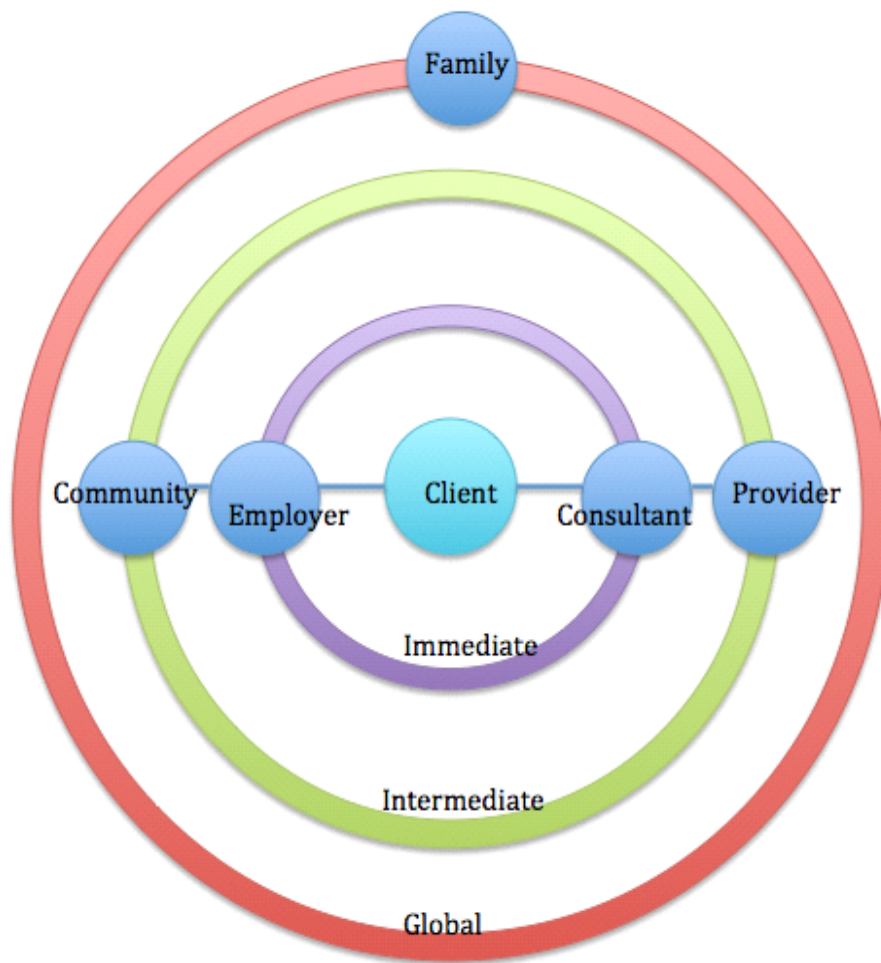


Fig 11.0 Equilibrium Systems Model of Employment (ESME)

b. Immediate Level System

This system level consists of two participants:

- The consultant who provides immediate supports and conditions that enable the client and the employer to develop a mutually beneficial relationship that supports the client to pursue meaningful career/employment opportunities by exchanging labour for productive outputs and meaningful income.

- The employer who provides the employment opportunity and risk capital to pursue personally meaningful services/manufacturing outputs that produce income and gain that supports the community need for capital to underpin the capacity of the government to deliver services to the community. The idea of an equilibrium between employers and consultant's need is based on Luecking et al. (2004) concept of mutuality and trust, that is there is a relationship based on mutual benefit rather than that of a consultant "selling" the client to an employer.

c. Intermediate Level System

This system level consists of two participants:

- The employment service provider that supplies the assets and conditions that allows the consultant to use evidence-based practices to support the client and employer in exchange for meaningful employment and income.
- The community/government agencies that provide the necessary infrastructure and economic conditions for the employer to pursue an economic activity in a setting that promotes employment and profit in exchange for revenue that supports government obligations to the community. These economic settings also provide the resources for the provider to act as an agent of the government in delivering services to the community.

Given the relationship between the provider and government, there is a role for policymakers to address and potentially support the development of disability employment staff by addressing the time pressure and duplication of processes

that prevent consultants from investing more time in the community developing relationships and fostering both awareness and employment opportunities (Mank, 2009).

d. Global Level System

The research findings highlighted the lack of involvement of the family in the employment process, which runs counter to the evidence derived from the Discovery process that highlights the importance of the family in the employment process (Callahan et al., 2009). In the new system model, the family is placed at the outer edge of the system because the family provide protective factors by looking at and influencing all system levels and participants (Luecking et al., 2004). The family influence the client, directly and indirectly, the other system participants by supporting the client to pursue meaningful employment in exchange for income.

The exchange of income for engagement in meaningful employment directly improves the protective factors such as trust, relationships, inclusive practice and community participation that underpins cohesion in society. Family and clients alike should be supported to develop self-advocacy skills that would enable them to have a clear and purposeful voice in the employment setting.

The model highlights the inter-relatedness of all employment system participants, a feature of the Customised Employment approach. While the model highlights the importance of developing relationships that support meaningful employment outcomes, it will need further research to highlight how

innovation can be supported to ensure that the system grows and remains relevant. Equilibrium is the goal of the system. However, relationships are fluid and rarely in perfect balance. In the model, I propose that the space between each participant is filled with bounded chaos (Stacey, 1992).

Bounded chaos serves to activate the system (Stacey, 1992), a system I propose is constrained or bounded by equilibrium. The alternative of unbounded chaos leads to anarchy which destroys systems and would serve no purpose in the employment system. Equilibrium is created by the strength of the relationship between each of the participants in the system. That alone will not be sufficient to ensure that the system evolves through innovation. It is my view that change requires a trigger which I propose is the family, who in this model resides at the outer edge of the system and have a global view.

Families led the movement for de-institutionalisation and were significant drivers for the development of the NDIS in Australia (Wiesel & Bigby, 2015). We need to recognise that the original employment systems for people with a disability, sheltered workshops were created by families.

If disability employment services are to embrace the construct of person-centredness, choice and control truly, then they will have to undertake a radical departure from the current system and build into the system supports that allow the client and consultant to develop a better relationship. It could be easily achieved by shifting to a portable funding model that is primarily outcomes based with appropriate safeguards built in to prevent clients from extinguishing

funding. This could include funding evidence-based processes that have known outcome points.

The current disability employment system is 60% process and 40% outcomes, which will change in 2018 to a 50/50 split (DSS, 2017). Moving to 80% outcomes, 20% process model will produce a potentially dynamic shift in disability employment culture with the potential to create nimble client responsive holistic providers, something that consultants need to be supported to participate in and drive change due to their intimate involvement in the employment process.

These changes present themselves as opportunities for researchers to partner with system participants to collect and collate data that promotes the development of responsive employment systems that support employment outcomes for people with a disability.

In 2007, David Mank wrote;

Fifty years ago, it was assumed that real work for people with disabilities was largely impossible. As we collectively discovered that people could learn and be productive, the discussion shifted from “it is possible” for people to work – to a discussion of how beneficial “it is to work.” As the data in the USA and indeed worldwide, have shown the benefits of work for people with disabilities are the same as the benefits of working for everybody else. The discussion then evolved into how to make

employment outcomes “allowable” in a government system and in social services originally designed to avoid employment outcomes (p2).

I suggest that we not have yet resolved this conundrum in Australia, despite being a signatory to various global disability agreements, Disability Service Acts and for that matter the new NDIS.

D. Recommendations for Changes to Practice and Policy

The research to date concerning the operating environment has focused on the shift in economic philosophy and has largely ignored the actual operating environment. With the advent of the NDIS, an examination of what constitutes an appropriate operating system takes on a matter of urgency.

What is clear from this research is that there is no real understanding of what constitutes the application of known evidence-based practice with any fidelity by disability employment consultants. Some of the outcomes discussed such as inclusion and integration show disagreement on the validity of measures to date, while other areas such as work experience where there is good evidence are not universally seen in disability employment service practice as an imperative in assisting clients to set employment goals.

Much of the literature reviewed has highlighted a variety of good practices, with Customised Employment and the Discovery process emerging as a potential pathway for Australian service providers to adopt. Detailed research into the

actual practices of employment consultants and the system that supports practice would provide answers and in turn guidelines for practice. It would need to be measured against what disability employment service clients see as important to them and the long-term vision for the disability employment system in the light of the emergence of the NDIS.

Evidence from past government enquiries and this research illustrate a need to rethink the target client for DES. I recommend that DES should shift its focus to clients with higher benchmark hours – if indeed this measure remains – and focus on clients that have higher capacity, lower support needs, clients with benchmark hours above 15 hours. The evidence in this research illustrates a focus on higher capacity; low support needs clients and a reluctance to support clients with higher skill development needs, a form of discrimination no doubt, almost certainly exclusionary practice at odds with the zero exclusion practices now gaining prominence overseas.

Benchmark hours, essentially a comparative evaluation of the client's capacity are not indicators of employability or real work capacity. Those clients with benchmark hours below 15 hours would be better served within the NDIS environment were ADE's are in the process of evolving into open employment settings. These settings with the experience and capacity to provide lifestyle supports are better placed to provide a holistic approach to employment, something that some consultants indicated was being driven out of the DES system by its emphasis on compliance and pursuing Star ratings. The mooted

changes to DES post-2018 of moving towards a registered provider system with no boundaries or defined clients presents a good opportunity to begin this shift.

In the same vein, the idea that work capacity can be determined in the school setting which is unrelated to the client's actual ambitions and capacity to thrive in employment settings without the benefit of multiple work experiences (Griffin et al., 2007; O'Brien & Callahan, 2010) is at odds with the evidence about the benefits of work experience as a predictor of employability. It may well be a de-facto process for screening out clients the system deems to have limited employment prospects.

Work experience can serve as knowledge creation activities that support future employment ambitions with current practices at odds with UNCRPD obligations and certainly at odds with disability rights, choice and control.

The changing DES client profile weighted towards mental illness highlights a need for an urgent review of what skills and systems need to be in place to support clients where the "norm" is no longer the norm regarding capacity to sustain a five-day 38-hour job. Options such as self-employment need to be investigated as part of the normal employment process, something the current DES system and providers are not equipped to handle and seem reluctant to provide.

E. Statement of Strengths and Limitations

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a vehicle to give voice to system participants has much to offer the researcher, as it allows for a depth and richness of the engagement that can sometimes be lost in pure quantitative studies that reduce the participant experience to simple numbers. This is not to dismiss Quantitative Research but highlights that from my perspective the participant's voice needs to be heard in any research into what are notionally person-centred systems.

The data used in this research was collected in 2014 from two providers operating under the current DES system. In mid-2018, the next DES contract period will commence with minor changes to the system that they impact on generalisability. Research centred on a small sample of providers brings with it limitations concerning generalisability to the larger sector. IPA, however, is strongly influenced by Ideography, which posits that while the research is concerned with the individual experience of phenomena, the individual is not so discrete as to be removed from the practical aspect of the phenomena in its relationship with the larger system. It is simply another way of coming to that point, recognising that the individual is embedded in the world of things and always in relationship (Smith et al., 2009)

There is a consistency evident in the results that highlights a system in flux, a system that lacks authenticity in the application of evidence-based practices and a system that serves itself. While the research was centred on two providers; it

does highlight the need for a detailed examination of the system and providers using a larger cohort, at the very least the research highlights a need for change. One limitation of this study is the absence of the employer's voice, an area that warrants significant research.

F. Recommendations for Future Research

The intersection of the NDIS and the DES evolution will present challenges that require answers and evidence to move towards a true person-centred system. The NDIS will support the rise of client and parent advocacy that will drive systemic change in a way currently not envisioned.

The research agenda needs to examine the intersection of client advocacy and employment systems that support client direction, control and meaningful outcomes that are free from quasi-market drivers such as benchmark hours as an indicator of work capacity. Work needs to be redefined in the context of meaning for the individual with a disability and the development of outcome measures that go beyond whether someone found a job and how long they stayed in it. Outcomes measures underpinned by Social Quality Theory provide some hint of the possibility of redefining work that incorporates transitional labour market models into the next paradigm.

Allied with this is the possibility of developing fully the system model presented in this thesis to support future employment systems at a functional level for providers and activate systems that truly respect the client, whilst highlighting

the interdependence of the employer, client, consultant relationship rather than current practices that seem almost antagonistic towards the employer and sometimes the client.

G. Closing Statement

From the beginning of this research, I aimed to give a voice to the participants in the DES system, something that had been lacking in research to date. The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was the ideal vehicle for this research, as it allowed voices to be heard free from organisational and political constraints so often a feature of government consultancies and reports that appear at times more intent on supporting the status quo and protecting positions.

The richness of the participants' responses at times was deeply challenging; however, anything less would be a compromise as I believe that change comes from challenging the norm and in the case of this research at times assaults the senses with its rawness. It is this relentless questioning that made the journey at times both challenging and motivating. There are aspects of this research that were unexpected and at times almost what I would expect from a system that appears to serve only itself. Hopefully, I have done justice to the participants and those who supported this research and that their participation will help to contribute to supporting change.

I believe that this research has highlighted a number of factors that impact on the capacity of the client and consultant to fully engage in the employment

process. By placing greater emphasis on these factors, I believe that outcomes can improve, but only if the system reflects the evidence that time, time to invest in the client/consultant/employer relationship is an essential ingredient to promoting successful employment outcomes.

H. Key Findings

This research highlighted the following factors that influence employment outcomes for people with a disability;

1. Relationships

- a. Trust, supported by choice, control and the role of families are significant factors in influencing employment outcomes.

2. Provider Processes

- a. Disability Knowledge, Work Experience and Work Practices, in particular the role of the employment consultant and their capacity to use known evidence-based processes can influence employment outcomes and the role that this plays in building trust. A trusting relationship is a primary factor in developing employment outcomes.

3. Compliance Driven Systems

- a. Employment Pathway Plans, Respect, Repetition and Holism. The compliance-based nature of the present system is seen as a factor that drove the relationship and to a degree diminished trust in the system and its capacity to deliver meaningful outcomes that addressed the client from a holistic perspective. The continual

need to undertake repetitive tasks such as regularly proving that you have a disability for someone with a life-long disability undermines the integrity of the system.

4. Employers

- a. Attitude, Disclosure, Subsidies and Quota. While these factors have been the subject of much discussion; no clear direction exists that would meet with universal approval. The use of subsidies and quota show clear areas of disagreement between clients and consultants, much that same as disclosure appears as another area of disagreement. While it would be easy to suggest that this is a trust factor, I feel that it is much more complex and highlights an area for future research that is urgently needed.

5. Environment

- a. Big Business, Human Resources and Franchises. This factor highlighted what could be called organisational barriers in that despite a significant investment in disability awareness, employment systems within business still lack what could be called accessible disability processes that would enable people with a disability to easily access the employment processes used by big business today. The research also highlighted the impact of automation is reducing employment opportunities for people with barriers and the ongoing reduction in employment opportunities or entry level roles. The perennial issue of transport was also highlighted as a barrier to employment with inflexible work

timetables and inconsistent transport options again shown to be a barrier.

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Appendices.

1. HREC Approval



Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Monday, 18 March 2013

A systems analysis of factors which lead to the successful employment of people with a disability
Trevor Parmenter
Northern Clinical School: Medicine; Sydney Medical School
Email: trevor.parmenter@sydney.edu.au

Dear Trevor

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled "A systems analysis of factors which lead to the successful employment of people with a disability".

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2012/2838

Approval Date: 18 March 2013

First Annual Report Due: 18 March 2014

Authorised Personnel: Parmenter Trevor; Riches Vivienne; O'Brien Patricia; Smith Peter;

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Type	Document Name
08/02/2013	Recruitment Letter/Email	email sample
07/03/2013	Participant Info Statement	PIS
08/02/2013	Participant Consent Form	PIS Consent
08/02/2013	Interview Questions	Question samples

HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Condition/s of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
- All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

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2. Plain Language Statements - Information



Centre for Disability Studies

Northern Clinical School
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The Successful Employment of People with a Disability

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of factors that influence successful open employment outcomes for people with disabilities by examining both the participants and the disability employment service system administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Peter Smith and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Professor Emeritus Trevor R. Parmenter.

(3) What does the study involve?

The study may involve the use of audio/video taping and questionnaires. It is expected that the interviews may take place in the workplace or the offices of your disability employment service provider. Guardians are permitted to sit in on interviews.

(4) How much time will the study take?

Interviews will take place only once and should not involve more than 1 hour of time.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you are not under any obligation to consent to complete the questionnaire/survey. Submitting a completed questionnaire/survey is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw any time prior to submitting your completed questionnaire/survey. Once you have submitted your questionnaire/survey anonymously, your responses cannot be withdrawn.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you or the participant under your guardianship will receive any benefits from the study

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

There are no restriction on you talking about the study.

(9) What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, Peter Smith is available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Peter Smith on 0427 813840 or email: peter.j.smith@sydney.edu.au

(10) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep

ABN 15 211 513 464

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The Successful Employment of People with a Disability

PARENTAL (OR CAREGIVER) INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is the study about?

You are invited to permit your child to participate in a study of the factors that influence successful open employment outcomes for people with disabilities by examining both the participants and the disability employment service system administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because they have been identified as being a client of a disability service provider and they have achieved successful long term employment outcomes.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Peter Smith and will form the basis for the degree of Master of Philosophy at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Professor Emeritus Trevor R. Parmenter.

(3) What does the study involve?

The study may involve the use of audio/video taping and questionnaires. It is expected that the interviews may take place in the workplace or the offices of your disability employment service provider. Parents (care giver) are permitted to sit in on interviews.

(4) How much time will the study take?

Interviews will take place only once and should not involve more than 1 hour of time.

(5) Can my child withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to consent your child.

Your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate will not prejudice you or your child's future relations with The University of Sydney. If you decide to permit your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your child's participation at any time without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney

Your child may stop the interview at any time if they do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

Being in this study is completely voluntary and neither you nor your child is not under any obligation to consent to complete the questionnaire/survey. Submitting a completed questionnaire/survey is an

indication of consent to participate in the study. Your child can withdraw any time prior to submitting the completed questionnaire/survey. Once a questionnaire/survey has been submitted anonymously, responses cannot be withdrawn.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you or the participant under your care or guardianship will receive any benefits from the study.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

There are no restriction on you talking about the study.

(9) What if I require further information about the study or my child's involvement?

When you have read this information, Peter Smith is available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Peter Smith on 0427 813840 or email: peter.j.smith@sydney.edu.au

(10) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep

3. Consents



Centre for Disability Studies

Northern Clinical School
Faculty of Medicine

ABN 15 211 513 464

Professor Emeritus Trevor R. Parmenter
Chief Investigator /Supervisor

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trevor.parmenter@sydney.edu.au
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/> □

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I,[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: **The Successful Employment of People with a Disability**

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

- Audio-recording YES NO
- Receiving Feedback YES NO

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: _____

Email: _____

.....
Signature

.....
Please PRINT name

.....
Date

ABN 15 211 513 464

Professor Emeritus Trevor R. Parmenter
Chief Investigator /Supervisor

**The Medical Foundation
Building- K25**
Level 1 92-94 Parramatta Road
Camperdown NSW 12050
Telephone: +61 2 9036 3600
Facsimile: +61 2 9806 3613
Email:
trevor.parmenter@sydney.edu.au
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/> □

PARTICIPANT (DES) CONSENT FORM

I,[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project. The venue for the participation is:..... or at a venue deemed acceptable to myself and the interviewer.

TITLE: The Successful Employment of People with a Disability

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

- Audio-recording YES NO
- Receiving Feedback YES NO

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: _____

Email: _____

.....
Signature

.....
Please PRINT name

.....
Date

ABN 15 211 513 464

Professor Emeritus Trevor R. Parmenter
Chief Investigator /Supervisor

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- K25

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Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/> □

PARENTAL (OR CAREGIVER) CONSENT FORM

I.....[PRINT NAME], agree to permit
.....[PRINT CHILD'S NAME], who is aged years,
to participate in the research project

TITLE The Successful Employment of People with a Disability

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved for my child's participation in the project have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent to my child's participation.
4. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about my child nor I will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time without prejudice to my or my child's relationship with the researcher/s or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

6. I understand that the interview can be stopped at any time if my child or I do not wish the interview to continue. The audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

- Audio-recording YES NO
- Receiving Feedback YES NO

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: _____

Email: _____

.....
Signature of Parent/Caregiver

.....
Please PRINT name

.....
Date

.....
Signature of Child

.....
Please PRINT name

.....
Date

4. Research Questions

a. Disability Employment Client (PWD) – Questions

Personal Details.

In relation to yourself;

What is your age: <20 20-29 30-39 40-49 over 50

Gender: Male Female

What is your highest level of education and type?

What is the nature of your disability?

Disability Employment Service Provider Information.

How long have you been a client of disability employment services?

Is this your first DES provider? If no, how many others have you been with?

Do you receive post placement support from your DES provider?

How many hours per week is support provided?

In what way do you consider that your DES provider assisted you to find employment?

Does your DES provider support your future career aspirations?

Employment Situation.

How long have you been with your current employer?

What is the nature of your work?

How many hours per week do you work?

System Factors.

What barriers exist that prevent you from achieving your desired employment outcome?

In what way could the current DES system be improved to facilitate your employment and career aspirations?

b. Disability Employment Consultant – Questions

Personal Details.

In relation to yourself;

What is your age: <20 20-29 30-39 40-49 over 50

Gender: Male Female

Relationship Status:

How long have you been employed in disability employment services?

How long have you been with your current employer?

What is your highest level of education and type?

What is your salary range: <\$20K \$20-29K \$30-39K \$40-49K over \$50K

Detail your current professional development and skill training program.

Do you identify as having a disability?

Do you work with specific disability types?

Are you employed by a specialist provider?

What client / disability group do you prefer to work with?

What disability type / client are you most successful at placing in employment?

What factors or actions contribute to this outcome?

What type of employment support post placement do you undertake?

How long does this support run?

What type of support do you offer employers?

What area of client development do you focus on when preparing a client for employment?

What area of client development do employers believe requires the most attention?

What area of client development does your employer require you to focus on?

How would you describe your personality?

Do you identify with any particular culture?

Do you derive any financial benefits from successful placements?

Work Situation.

What specific training have you received in relation to disabilities and employment?

How many hours per week do you work?

What is your job title?

How much time per week do you spend on:

Getting to know the client

Job development

Job coaching

Post Placement Support

Engaging with employers

Facilitating transition to employment

Maintaining clients in employment

Administration of DEEWR employment system

How many client placements do you complete each month?

How many of your clients have been able to maintain employment beyond 24 months?

System Factors.

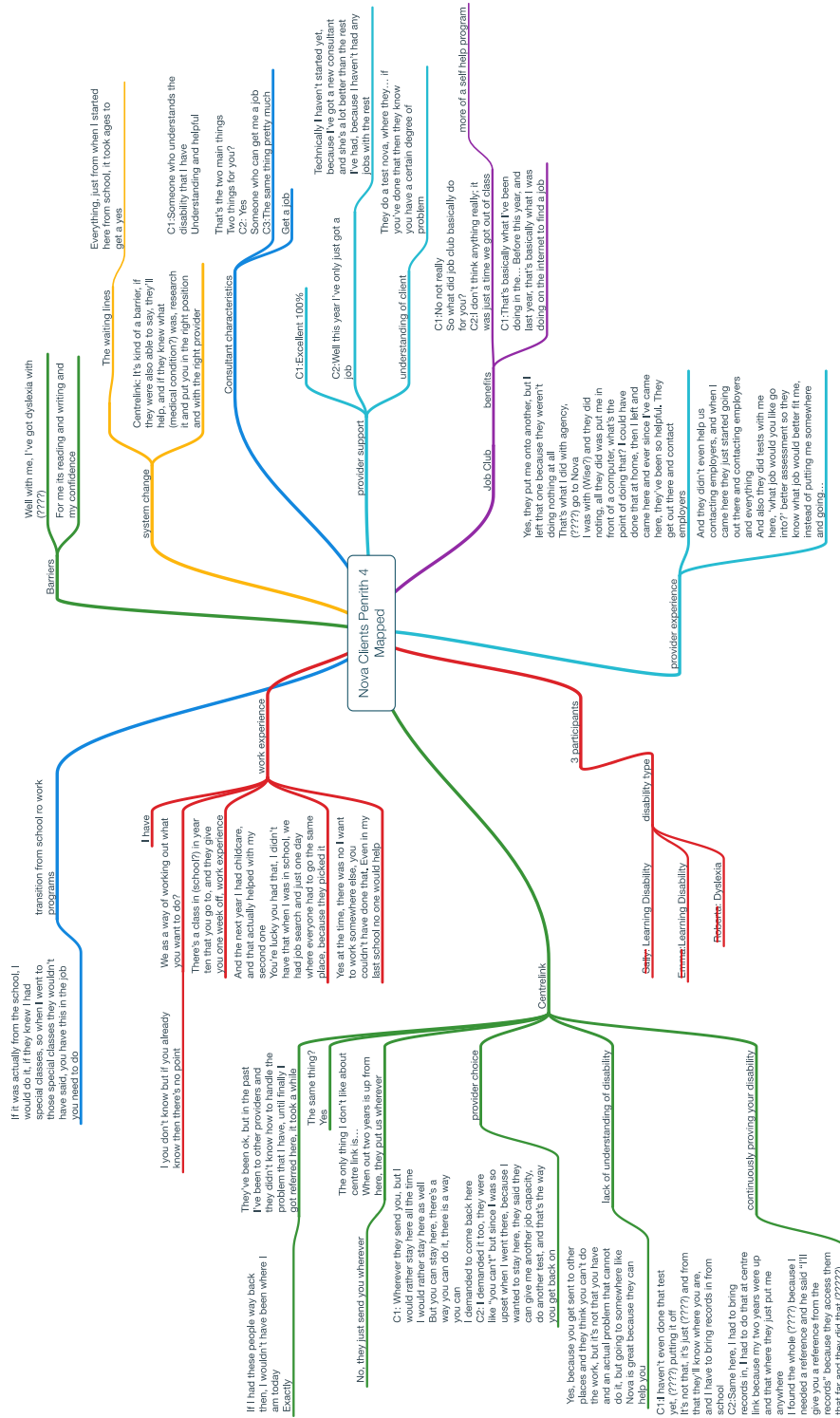
In what way does the DEEWR reporting system support or enhance your job role?

Do you believe that there are barriers to you effectively carrying out your role in facilitating employment outcomes for people with a disability? Please expand on your answer.

In what way does DEEWR facilitate successful outcomes?

How does your employer contribute to successful outcomes?

5. Mind Map Image



6. Image illustrating Spread-sheet system used.

