

**FACTORS AFFECTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE EMPLOYMENT SECTOR**

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## **Abstract**

Since 1994, the South African Government has formulated various policies in an attempt to redress the previous political, economic and social imbalances within the country. The majority of the policies have focused on empowering previously disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities. Despite the interventions, literature reviewed reflects that there is very little progress made with regard to empowerment of people with disabilities in the employment sector.

The study seeks to explore and identify factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector. The researcher used a qualitative approach to investigate the perceptions of people with visual disabilities through conducting focus groups interviews with participants that were recruited using a purposive sampling approach. A total of four groups from Pretoria have been used to draw findings for the research study. During the focus group discussions, a semi structured interview guide was used to generate more in-depth interpretations from the participants and data was analysed using Tesch's (1990) framework that is described in Creswell (2003).

The findings of the research revealed that people with visual disabilities still have problems in accessing and retaining employment despite the South African favourable legislation. Dominating among the factors that are viewed by the participants to hinder their employability are societal negatives attitudes which include unequal treatment, discrimination when they seek employment, belittling and disregard by employers, co-workers and the society at large. There are also a number of factors that were perceived as barriers to job seekers with visual disabilities which include inaccessible advertising media for vacancies, inaccessible transports systems, inaccessible education and training and lack of funded positions suited for people with visual disabilities.

**Key Words: Disability, Employment Sector**



## **1. CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The World Health Organisation estimates that 10% of world's population experience some form of disability (World Health Organisation, 2006:1). United Nations Developmental Programme estimated that 5.2 % of the world's population was experiencing moderate to severe disability in 1990 (Buga, 2006:14). In South Africa few enquiries were conducted with regard to prevalence of disability and such enquiries include the Community Survey (2007) and Census (2001) done by Statistics South Africa which revealed that 5% and 4% respectively of the population counted was made by people with disabilities (Statistics South Africa 2005, 2007). Previously, the National Baseline Disability survey commissioned by the Department of Health in 1997 indicated a national average of 5.9% of people with disabilities (Department of Health, 1997) and the data collected in Census 1996 indicated that 6.5% of South African population was disabled (Statistics South Africa 1996). In a later analysis of Census 2001, Statistics South Africa (2005:1) revealed that the most common disability is visual disability at 32% of people with disabilities, followed by physical disability at 30%, hearing at 20%, emotional disability 16%, mental disability 12%, and lastly communication disability 7%. There are about 344 269 (3.8% of the total population with disabilities) people with disabilities living in Gauteng according to the census 2001 conducted by Statistics South Africa (2001). Out of this number 94 527 (27%) are people with visual disabilities.

Since 1994, South African Government has formulated various policies in an attempt to redress the previous political, economic and social imbalances within the country. The majority of the policies have focused in empowering previously disadvantaged groups including women, children and people with disabilities.

Several policy documents have been promulgated to equalise opportunities for people with disabilities. Such documents include the following:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:7-39) which guarantees the rights of people with disabilities to be treated equally and enjoy the same rights as other citizens;
- The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) which emphasises a need to integrate disability issues in all government development strategies, planning and programmes;
- The Employment Equity Act (1998:1-28) prohibits unfair discrimination in practice or through employment policies of people with disability. Additionally, the act mandates the organisations to recruit, retain and develop people from designated groups which include people with disabilities, and
- Code of Good Practise on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002) is a guide for employers to promote equal opportunities and fair treatment for people with disabilities as required by the Employment Equity Act no 55 of 1998.

Additionally, some municipalities, government departments, training institutions and private organisations have established their own disability policies that address the needs of people with disabilities. South African Revenue Services has introduced a number of tax benefits to organisations who employ people with disabilities on learnership programmes and Service Sector Education and Training Authority offer special grants to employers that employ learners from designated groups including people with disabilities (Fassat, 2008:1). Department of Labour offers bursaries to people with disabilities through the National Student Financial Scheme and wage subsidies to employers employing people with disabilities under National Skills Fund.

With regard to the above, one will expect a significant progress regarding skill development and employment of people with disabilities in South Africa. In contradiction to this statement, several equity reports reflect no progress with regard to disability equity. 81% of people with disabilities were unemployed nationally in 2001 (Statistics South Africa, 2005:21). Employment equity analysis done from the 2005 employment equity reports received from 2 085 large employers reveal that only 1.8% of the total employees were workers with disability (Department of Labour, 2005:6). The Public Service Commission (2008:1-80) conducted an enquiry that among other objectives was to determine the progress made by national and provincial departments in achieving the 2% target set by Cabinet for people with disabilities and the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the public service (1998). Findings of the research conducted by Public Service Commission (2008:48) indicate that a significant progress has been made in ensuring equity in terms of race and gender but there has been little progress in terms of achieving the disability equity targets.

The Public Service Commission (2008:27) revealed a disability equity figure of 0.09% in 1999, this improved to 0.3% in 2002 and regressed to 0.15% in 2005. There has been little progress on the disability equity status at April 2005 and October 2007 (Public Service Commission, 2008: 48). Public sector entities in Gauteng needed to still employ 2122 people with disabilities in total to achieve the 2% target (Public Service Commission, 2008: 48). On a positive note, the target of Department of Labour on skills development of people with disabilities has been met between April 2007 and March 2008. (Department of Labour, 2008: 48). It is clear that the efforts of creating employment opportunities do not necessary translate to employment opportunities among people with disabilities. The reports discussed above indicate that companies have failed to meet the targets and as a result people with disabilities still experience high unemployment levels.

Thus far, South African researchers had reviewed the South Africa legislation that aims to promote participation of people with disability in the country's economy, has looked at prevalence of disability, has assessed the progress in employment equity implementation including disability equity, has looked at workplace needs of mobility impaired people and at vocational acquisition by people with disabilities as well as formulated guidelines for employers to integrate people with disabilities into the open labour market. Comparatively, very little focus has been directed at factors that are experienced by people with disabilities in the employment sector especially people with visual disabilities.

International research papers have focused on barriers to employment experienced by people with disabilities from the perspective of the employer with very little work done which reflect the opinions of people with disabilities. The importance of the opinions of people with disabilities is crucial as they are the key role players in any attempt to formulate strategies that are looking at improving their participation in the open labour. This is also aligned with the White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) that emphasizes active participation of people with disabilities in policies and strategies that affect them. This research study is expected to stimulate debates that result in further research projects in an area that is perceived by the researcher as neglected in South Africa.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **1.2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The study is informed by a human rights approach and empowerment theories. These theories form the foundation for understanding the significance of exploring the perceptions of people with visual disabilities regarding their employment.

To date in South Africa, services for disabled people have been based on understanding of disability as individual pathology, the disabled person being seen as problem to be corrected (Philpott and McLaren, 1997:1). This principle forms the basis of the medical model or individual model which is defined by (Hutchinson, Atkinson and Orpwood 1998:47) as perceiving disability as illness which warrants cure. One of the implications of the medical model of disability is that it reduces problems that are experienced by disabled people to their own personal inadequacies or functional limitations.

In contrast to the medical model, the social model of disability is described by (Hutchinson et al. 1998:47) as recognising the fact that individuals may have impairment but many problems experienced are located in the way environment is organized. According to Hutchinson et al. (1998:47) within the ideology of the social model, the following are required for people with disabilities to function optimally:

- The removal of physical and environmental barriers,
- The changing attitudes and the
- Absence of institutional barriers.

The White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) agrees with the above and indicates that the social model of disability implies a paradigm shift in terms of how we construct disability. The White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) highlighted the following principles of the social model:

- It is the stairs leading into a building that disable the wheelchair user rather than the wheelchair.
- It is defects in the design of everyday equipment that cause difficulties, not the abilities of people using it.
- It is society's lack of skill in using and accepting alternative ways to communicate that excludes people with disabilities.

- It is the inability of the ordinary schools to deal with diversity in the classroom that forces children with disabilities into special schools.

The social model emphasises two things: the shortcomings of society in respect of disability, and the abilities and capabilities of people with disabilities.

There has been a general paradigm shift towards adopting more of a social model in defining disability although the contribution of modern medicine has led to increased survival rates and prolonged life expectancy for many people with disabilities (Philpott and McLaren, 1997:1). This has led to key stakeholders in disability such as World Health Organisation (WHO) and Disability Rights Movements adopting the following definitions on disability: The World Health Organisation defines Disability as the outcome or a result of a complex relationship between an individual's health condition, personal factors and external factors that represent the circumstances in which an individual lives (Philpott and McLaren, 1997:1). The Disability Rights Movement defines Disability as referring to the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by the way society is organised which takes little or no account of people who have physical, sensory or mental impairments. As a result, such people are excluded and prevented from participating fully on equal terms in mainstream society (Philpott and McLaren, 1997:1).

#### **1.2.1.1 EMPOWERMENT THEORY**

Gray & van Rooyen (2002:194-196) have examined the relevance of the Strengths Perspective in social work. According to these authors, the Strengths Perspective questions the dominant deficits-based mental health paradigm which pigeonholes people in terms of pathology and assigns them disempowering labels. The following principles undergird the Strengths Perspective:

- The language of Strengths Perspective is empowering;

- It views clients as partners who have strengths, assets and resources rather than just having needs and problems;
- It views clients as experts on their own situation and advocate for positive ownership;
- Victims becomes survivors;
- Needs are seen as gaps in resources;
- Problems are challenges and the focus should be on strengths; and
- Helping process becomes a facilitation relationship. (Gray & van Rooyen, 2002:194-196)

Empowerment is the process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. This allows them to gain ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canada, 1998:91). Empowerment resides in the person not a helper, addresses oppression, stratification and inequality and rejects that problems develop because of personal deficiencies. Gray & van Rooyen (2002:194-196) make an assertion that the first step to move away from disempowering approaches is to move away from the conception that clients are oppressed, disabled and therefore powerless. The facilitators should ask what the clients know, what they want to do and assist them in connecting with community networks, social justice legal frameworks, resources and services.

#### **1.2.1.2 HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH**

Disability Rights Promotion International (2008:1) states that the human rights approach to disability acknowledges that people with disabilities have rights and those social structures and policies that restrict or ignore such rights often lead to discrimination and exclusion. A human rights perspective requires society to actively promote the necessary

conditions for all individuals to fully realise their rights (Disability Rights Promotion International 2008:1).

South African citizens including people with disabilities are entitled to a Bill of Rights which includes access to basic and further education and equal access to employment (The South African Constitution, 2006). The human rights approach views disability as a human rights issue, emphasises that people with disabilities are holders of rights, not objects of charity and are entitled to enjoy the same rights and freedom as all other people (Disability Rights Promotion International, 2008:1).

### **1.2.2 STUDIES CONDUCTED**

Goldstone (1995:1-195) has conducted telephonic interviews with human resource managers and line managers from organisations from Great Britain to investigate barriers to employment of people with disabilities. Results of the investigation indicated two main barriers namely, confusion on defining disability and difficulties in recruiting people with disabilities to work.

Studies conducted in South Africa have looked at the legislation with regard to employment of people with disabilities. Such research projects include the study by Dube (2005: 4-6) which investigated the effectiveness of disability legislation in South Africa. The findings of the study reveal that the national government has been successful in creating an enabling environment for policy development in the field of disability but implementation of such policies remains a challenge. Dube (2005: 3) cited the following factors that have contributed to poor implementation of policies on disability:

- Definition and nature of participation of people with disability have not been adequately reviewed and articulated;



- The policy requirements for disability mainstreaming are not adequately linked to performance management, thereby undermining commitment to implementation; and
- Legislation and policies are not implemented, due to a lack of allocated fiscal resources and commitment.

Another study tracking the progress on implementation and impact of Employment Equity Act since inception was conducted by (Bezuidenhout, Bischoff, Buhlungu and Lewins, 2008:1-104). According to these authors disability is overlooked as an employment equity issue and one of the informants that they interviewed was of the view that workplace challenges of recruiting people with disabilities include the difficulty of receiving applicants with disability and potential employees with disabilities not disclosing their disability. A further study by Kuye (2001:14) examined equity in the institutions of higher learning and suggested that attention must be made in making buildings and facilities accessible to people in wheelchairs.

The Public Service Commission (2008:8) investigated the challenges and successes encountered by public service leadership in achieving disability equity. Barriers that emerged from the findings of the above study include the following:

- Disability is not clearly defined;
- Persons with disabilities do not apply for posts;
- There is an inability to attract suitably qualified and skilled people with disabilities;
- People with disabilities are reluctant to disclose their status, and
- There is poor physical accessibility for people with disabilities.

Another study aimed at identifying barriers faced by organisations in Gauteng when employing people with disabilities in the business and financial sectors was conducted by

Wordsworth (2003:1-165). The study conducted qualitative interviews with human resource managers from ten organisations in business and financial sectors. The results of this study indicated that the most common barriers identified by the participants were social barriers which included stereotypes and stigmatisation of people with disabilities as well as physical barriers which included inaccessibility of buildings and infrastructure to people with disabilities.

A factor that recurs through all the above studies is the fact that barriers of employing people with disabilities were mainly looked at from an employer's perspective in which a top-down approach was used in order to formulate the research questions. In contrast this study has looked at the perceptions of people with visual disabilities.

### **1.3 PROBLEM FORMULATION**

As indicated earlier one of the few investigations that was done with regards to prevalence of disability in South Africa was the studies conducted by Statistics South Africa. Statistics South Africa made a comparison between the results of census 2001 and the 2007 community survey. According to the results of the census 2001 visual disability was the most common type of disability and it constituted about 27% of the total disabled population (Statistics South Africa 2001, 2007). From the community survey also conducted by Statistics South Africa (2007) physical disabilities were the highest followed by visual disabilities. This indicates that visual disabilities are among the most common disabilities in South Africa.

There are various contradicting statistics with regards to the unemployment rate of people with visual disabilities. Contributing to the problem is that most of the studies done to investigate disability prevalence have compared different demographic and socio-economic characteristics of people with disabilities as a single group.

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:6) cautions the society against the tendency to view people with disabilities as a single group. Thus, people in wheelchairs have become the popular representation of people with disabilities.

According to the Cape Town Society for the Blind (2007) there is about 97% unemployment rate of people with visual disabilities in South Africa. The South African National Council for the Blind reflects the same statistics. Nyman (2008: 4) is of the view that the unemployment rate of people with visual disabilities is over 70%.

The lacuna to be addressed by the study is the exclusion of the key role players, the people with visual disabilities as evident that in the previous studies conducted there has been focus to perceptions of employers and other role players. This study focuses on people with visual disabilities as they are among the most common type of disabilities with high levels of unemployment. The study seeks to determine the problems of people with visual disabilities in the employment sector as perceived by them.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION**

In view of the above background, the overall research question to be addressed by the study can be structured as follows:

- What are the factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector?

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.5.1 RESEARCH AIM**

The primary aim of the research study is to identify and describe factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector, as perceived by them.

### **1.5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study objectives are as follows:

- To identify and explore experiences of people with visual disabilities in the employment sector;
- To explore and describe the survival strategies that are used by people with visual disabilities; and
- Based on the research findings, to make recommendations from a policy and service perspective, in order to inform appropriate support structures for people with visual disabilities.

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study employed an exploratory qualitative research design utilising focus groups and semi structured interviews as data collection techniques. A qualitative methodology investigates social issues from a micro perspective, concentrating on individual experiences or those of small groups and focus on how people think about and interpret what they are doing (Walter, 2009:1). According to Walter (2009:8) an exploratory research is undertaken to explore and open up new areas of social enquiry. As indicated earlier; there is very minimal research done with regards to factors affecting people with visual disabilities in the employment sector. The researcher is hoping to stimulate more research studies by giving exploratory research findings that are not aimed at making

general statements about people with visual disabilities, but at examining how people with visual disabilities perceive factors that affect them in the employment sector.

## **1.6.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.2.1 RESEARCH POPULATION**

Tshwane, where the study was conducted, lies in the Gauteng province and covers an area of 2 198 square kilometers. It includes Pretoria, Centurion, Laudium, Eersterust, Akasia, Soshanguve, Atteridgeville, Crocodile River, Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane, Winterveld, Hammanskraal, Temba and Mamelodi. The city has a population of about two million people who on average have the highest education level in the country. The most widely used home language is SePedi (Northern Sotho), followed by English, Tsonga, Zulu and Afrikaans (City of Tshwane, 2009).

### **1.6.2.2 RESEARCH SAMPLE**

Barnett (1974:13) describes purposive sampling as when a researcher exercises deliberate, subjective choice with the aim of making the sample reflect key characteristics of the targeted population. Walter (2008:199) explains purposive sampling as a systematic way based on what the researcher knows about the target population and the purpose of the study. The researcher has employed a purposive sampling method by approaching non government organizations and community based organisations.

A total of four focus groups were used to draw findings for the research study. Two of the groups were community based projects namely Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled and the Pretoria Workshop for the Blind. Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled is affiliated to the South African National Council for the Blind. The other two groups were drawn from on the job trainees from the South African National Council for the Blind who were undergoing various short-term courses in order to enhance their employability

chances. It must be noted that some of these participants were sent for training by their employers and others pursued the training voluntarily in order to position themselves for employment opportunities. The researcher selected purposive sampling method because it is the most convenient form of sampling for the research study, is less costly and less time consuming.

The inclusion criterion for the participants was:

- Individuals with visual disabilities for a minimum of two years who are experiencing or have experienced difficulties in obtaining and retaining their employment;
- Individuals with visual disabilities who are willing to disclose the nature of their disability;
- Individuals between 20 years and 65 years. This age group was selected because it is assumed that they have experience in the employment sector
- All participants were residing within Tshwane Municipality at the time the study was conducted

The recruitment of the participants embraced the population dynamics of Tshwane. The researcher conducted the focus groups in English, or Northern Sotho / Zulu, depending on the language group representation as well as preferred language.

### **1.6.2.3 DATA COLLECTING METHODS**

Focus groups were used as the method of data gathering for the research study. There was an average of 7 members in each group for easy facilitation. The researcher used a carefully-worded semi-structured interview schedule and the groups were held until data saturation was reached.

### **1.6.2.3.1 FOCUS GROUPS**

Focus groups are a form of in-depth interviewing but conducted with a group of people rather than individual participants. They are relatively unstructured and they are limited to discuss a number of related issues (Walter, 2009:106). According to Walter (2009:106) focus groups have the following strengths:

- Can produce concentrated amount of data exploring opinions about social issues;
- Are relatively efficient and inexpensive in terms of time and money;
- Group interaction and group synergy can produce data that can be obtained through individual in-depth interviews; and
- The group's common interest in the topic usually results in a lively and relevant discussion.

Walter (2009:106) is of the opinion that for a good focus group, participants have to share common interests or experiences around a topic. The researcher recruited participants from existing groups of people with visual disabilities who share common interests and experiences. The aim of the focus groups was to generate different opinions and insight that are informed by the interaction of people with visual disabilities (Walter, 2009:106)

A brief explanation regarding the research project was given to the participants before they participated in the group. A brief questionnaire which contains only biographic data questions was also handed to each group member to reflect the 'character' of the group and to endorse its homogeneity. Also, the recruitment of participants that are members of organised groups allowed homogeneity which is viewed by de Vos, Fouche' and Delport (2005:304) as important in focus groups as it allows the group participants to spend less time talking about themselves but focus on the issues at hand.

Carefully worded semi-structured questions based on the purpose of the study are necessary (De Vos et al. 2005: 308) when conducting focus groups. Thus an interview schedule was developed to guide the researcher during facilitating the focus group discussions. The interview guide consisted of the following open – ended questions:

- What barriers did you experience when you were looking for employment?

Ke dithibela dife tseo o kopaneng le tsona ge one o nyaka mosomo?

- What problems are you are experiencing or had experienced in your work environment?

Ke mathatha afe ao o hlakanago le ona tikologong ya mosomo goba ke mathata afe ao o kileng wa gahlana le ona tikologong ya mosomo?

- How do you survive with a visual disability

O phomelela bjang, o le sefofu?

- What strategies would you recommend to key role players to employ and retain people with visual disabilities in the work place?

Ke maele a fe a malebisha ao o ka a fago baetapele go fa batho mesomo goba go tshwarelela batho bao ba sego ba felela botse mmeleng mosomo?

#### **1.6.2.3.2 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

For any topic it is possible to come up with general set of questions or themes that are interesting to the researcher but for much richer account of different experiences and perspective, the interviewee must be allowed to expand and explain their answers (Walter, 2009:93). The aim of such approach is to explore the topic fully from the perspective of the participants (Walter, 2009:93). Gubrium & Holstein (2001:147) describe the goal of the semi structured interviews as to understand participant's thinking. Further, they indicate that the participant's interests are dominant and the questions guide the discussion. According to Gubrium & Holstein (2001:147) the interviewer facilitates the interaction and explores new direction.



## **1.7 PILOT STUDY**

According to Singleton, Straits, Straits and McAllister (1988:290) the prototyping of a measuring instrument consists of trying out the instrument on a small number of people with similar characteristics to those of the targeted respondents. The researcher conducted a pilot study by conducting one focus group interview in an attempt to test the questionnaire guide and establish its user friendliness. During the focus group attention was given to the suitability of the interview schedule, the background information questionnaire, the recordings and necessary interventions or adaptations to enhance the group participation. The participants in the pilot study were allowed to comment on the questions asked after the focus group session. The findings of the pilot study resulted in minor changes to the wording of the interview guide. It also made the researcher aware of certain limitations that were imposed by the fact that the participants had visual disabilities. This led the researcher to make available certain necessary devices such as signature guards to sign the consent forms before the focus groups interviews.

## **1.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

The aim of the focus group analysis is to look for trends and patterns that emerge among various focus groups (De Vos et al. 2005:311). The researcher recorded the focus group sessions by tape recording them and additionally took notes during the sessions. The basis for the analyses was transcripts, tapes and notes (De Vos et al. 2005: 311).

The data analysis was done using Tesch's (1990) framework that is described by Creswell (2003) and it involved the following steps:

- The tape and hand written transcripts were carefully listened to and read to make sense of whole and dotted down the ideas as they come to mind.
- The researcher picked up transcript of interest and, at that stage the researcher would not think about the substance of the information but the meaning of it.

- Next, the researcher listed emerging themes and the topics were grouped together according to similarities.
- The researcher went back to raw data and assigned codes in order to determine whether there were new categories or codes that emerged as the process continues.
- The relationship between major and sub-categories was identified and recorded as themes and sub-themes.
- The categories were grouped and analysis was done.

An independent coder was also appointed to assist with data analysis and ensure accuracy and credibility of the findings.

### **1.9 DATA VERIFICATION**

De Vos at al. (2005: 308) state that every enquiry to human condition must refer to the following questions which are presented by Lincoln & Guba (1985: 290):

- How credible are particular findings of the study and what criteria can be used to judge the credibility?
- How transferable and applicable are the findings to another setting or group of people ?
- How can a researcher be reasonably sure that the findings would be replicated if the study was conducted with the same participants in the same context?
- How can a researcher be sure that the findings are reflective of the participant's perspectives and not researcher's biases?

Lincoln & Guba (1985: 290) refer to such questions as establishing the "truth value" of the study, its applicability, consistency and neutrality.

**Truth-value** is about the truth of the findings based on the design and the contexts of the participants;

**Applicability**, can be defined as the degree to which findings are applicable to another context or setting;

**Neutrality**, refers to the degree to which the findings are a formation of participants, and this is established through confirmability;

**Consistency** of the data is concerned with whether findings would be consistent if the study was to be conducted with the same objects or in a similar context.

## **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

For sound ethical consideration the researcher ensured the following:

### **Voluntarily participation**

Participants participated following adequate information about the study and the credibility of the researcher. Participants were also given an option to pull out, should they wish to. Approval was obtained from the management and facilitators of the groups of people with visual disabilities that were targeted and from University Ethics Committee. (See the attached Appendix E).

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

According to Walter (2009:93) confidentiality is ensuring that the information provided by the research participants cannot be linked to them and anonymity is concerned with the identification of the individual participants. Participants's anonymity and confidentiality

has been provided by excluding their identities on the biographic data questionnaire and on the research findings.

### **Informed consent**

Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible information on the goal of the research study and procedures to be followed is rendered to participants before the investigation (Strydom, 2005:17). Participants had to sign a written consent before participation.

### **1.11. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

Within the context of the research study the followings concepts means the following:

#### **1.11.1 A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY:**

A person with a disability is defined as a person with a physical, mental, visual and /or multiple impairments that lead to activity limitations, such as, limited ability or inability to dress, feed oneself or to manipulate objects and participation restriction within the mainstream society (The Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).

#### **1.11.2 A PERSON WITH A VISUAL DISABILITY**

A person with a visual disability is defined as a person who is either totally blind or has very low vision to the extent that even with use of glasses she/he cannot see much. A person with low vision has difficulty to recognize images at a distance or is unable to differentiate colours of similar tones.

#### **1.11.3 EMPLOYMENT SECTOR**

Employment sector refers to broad types of economic activities within which gainful employment is provided. Included in the sector are people who are active job seekers.

## **1.12. LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS**

The study is documented according to the following chapters:

### **Chapter 1: Overview of the study:**

The chapter gives the motivation and the rationale behind the selected research study and the intended contribution of the study. The chapter presents to the reader an overview of the research study, a brief literature review with specific reference to theoretical framework that underpins the research study. Research questions, aims, objectives of the study are also presented. A summary of the research design and research methodology is also included.

### **Chapter 2: Research design and methodology**

This chapter discusses in detail the research design that forms the basis of the study and the methods which the researcher used in collecting and analysing data.

### **Chapter 3: Discussion of research findings and literature control**

In chapter 3 the research findings are presented and supported with appropriate literature.

### **Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations**

Chapter 4 summarizes the conclusions of the study and puts forward the recommendations regarding employment of people with visual disabilities in the employment sector.

### **1.13. DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS**

The research findings will be disseminated by presenting the findings to the groups who participated in the study. A copy of the dissertation will also be available in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one the researcher briefly explained the research design and methodology approaches utilised in the study. Chapter two aims to expatiate on the rationale behind the chosen research design, the research strategy used and how data was collected to answer the research questions. De Vos et al. (2002:252) explain that this is the chapter that the researcher comprehensively describes the methodology so that the reader develops confidence in the methods used.

The researcher will cover the following topics in this chapter:

- The rationale for the study
- The objectives of the study
- Research paradigm and design
- Research population and sampling methods
- Data collecting methods
- The pilot study
- Ethical consideration
- Data Analysis
- Reliability and validity

### 2.2. THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

South African researchers have reviewed the South African legislation that aims to promote participation of people with disability in the country's economy, looked at prevalence of disability, assessed the progress in employment equity implementation including disability equity, looked at the workplace needs of mobility impaired people and at vocational acquisition by people with disabilities as well as formulated guidelines for employers to integrate people with disabilities into the open labour market.

Comparatively, very little focus has been directed at factors affecting employment of people with disabilities; especially people with visual disabilities. A majority of the research papers focused on the perspective of employers rather than the people with disabilities. The opinions of people with disabilities are crucial because they are the key role players when formulating new regulations which will improve their participation in the open labour market. This is also in alignment with the White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) that emphasizes active participation of people with disabilities in policies and strategies that affect them. The research study is expected to stimulate more discussions that will result in further research projects in an area that is perceived by the researcher as neglected in South Africa.

## **2.3 THE RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **2.3.1 RESEARCH AIM**

The primary aim of the proposed research study is to identify and describe factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector, as perceived by them.

### **2.3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study objectives are as follows:

- To identify and explore experiences of people with visual disabilities in the employment sector;
- To explore and describe the survival strategies that are used by people with visual disabilities; and
- Based on the research findings, to make recommendations from a policy and service perspective, in order to inform appropriate support structures for people with visual disabilities.



## **2.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN**

Durrheim (2006:34) describes the research design as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between the research question and the implementation of the research. There are two well-known and recognised approaches to research, namely the qualitative and quantitative paradigms (De Vos et al. 2002:73).

### **2.4.1 THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

The researcher has carefully considered and compared the differences that are stated in various forms of literature between the qualitative and quantitative paradigms and chose a qualitative research design as the appropriate approach that is suitable to meet the objectives of the research study.

Such choice is motivated among other things by the following findings based on a qualitative approach:

- The qualitative research design is suitable for a study of relatively unknown domain and in seeking to understand the phenomenon (De Vos et al. 2002:73)
- One of the preliminary features of qualitative research is the ability to accommodate the perspective of the participants and their diversity (Flick, 2009:14)
- The qualitative research involves taking people's subjective experiences seriously to the essence of what is real to them and making sense of people's experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they say (Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2006:273-274).

### **2.4.2 THE EXPLORATIVE RESEARCH**

The proposed study has adopted an exploratory qualitative research design utilising focus groups and semi--structured interviews as data collection techniques.

An exploratory research is conducted to make investigations into relatively unknown areas of research (Durrheim 2006:44). Durrheim (2006:44) also states that the explorative research employs an open, flexible and inductive approach to research when it looked for new insights into the phenomenon. According to De Vos et al. (2002:106) a need for such study can arise out of a lack of basic information on a new area of interest.

As indicated in earlier, very little research has been done in the area of employing people with disabilities in South Africa and the researcher hopes to stimulate more research studies by presenting exploratory research findings that are not aimed at making general statements about people with visual disabilities but at examining how different groups of them perceive factors that affect their employability.

### **2.4.3 THE DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH**

Descriptive research aims to describe the phenomenon accurately either through narrative type of descriptions or through measuring the relationships (Durrheim, 2006:44). Neuman (2000:22) agrees with this statement and further indicates that descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of the situation, social setting or relationship. A descriptive approach was used to describe the factors that affect people with visual disability in the employment sector.

### **2.5 RESEARCH SAMPLING METHODS**

The study used a purposive sampling method which is described by Nieuwenhuis (2010:79) as selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a certain research question. The researcher used a purposive sampling method by approaching non-governmental organisations and community based groups of people with visual disabilities.

The researcher selected a purposive sampling method because it is the most convenient form of sampling to the proposed research study, is less costly and less time consuming. A total of four groups were used to derive the findings for the research study. Two of such groups were community based projects namely Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled and the Pretoria Workshop for the blind. Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled is affiliated to the South African National Council for the Blind. The other two groups were drawn from the trainees from the South African National Council for the Blind who were undergoing various short term courses in order to enhance their employability chances. It must be noted that some of these participants were employed and were sent to the training by their employers and others pursued the training voluntarily to better their employability chances.

The following criteria were used to select participants for the study:

- Individuals with visual disabilities for a minimum of two years who are experiencing or have experienced difficulties in obtaining and retaining their employment;
- Individuals with visual disabilities who are willing to disclose the nature of their disability;
- Individuals between 20 years and 65 years. This age group was selected because it is assumed that they have experience in the employment sector;
- All participants were residing within Tshwane Municipality at the time the study was conducted.

The researcher had access to the groups by initially facilitating meetings with the managers of the centres who in turn gave their consent and informed the group facilitators and group members about the objectives of the study.

## **2.6 DATA COLLECTING METHODS**

Focus groups were used as the method of data gathering for the research study. There was an average of 7 members in each group for easy facilitation. The researcher used a carefully-worded semi-structured interview schedule and the groups interviews were held until data saturation was reached. Walter (2009:106) states that focus groups are a form of in-depth interviewing but conducted with a group of people rather than individual participant. They are relatively unstructured and they are limited to discuss a number of related issues (Walter, 2009:106). According to (Walter, 2009:106) focus groups have the following strengths:

- They can produce a concentrated amount of data exploring opinions about social issues;
- They are relatively efficient and inexpensive in terms of time and money;
- The group interaction and group synergy can produce data that can be obtained through individual in-depth interviews; and
- The group's common interest in the subject usually results in a lively and relevant discussion.

Walter (2009:106) is of the opinion that for a good focus group, participants have to share common interests or experiences around a subject. The researcher recruited participants from the existing groups of people with visual disabilities who share common interests and experiences. The aim of the focus groups was to generate different opinions and insights that are informed by the interaction of people with visual disabilities (Walter, 2009:106). A brief explanation regarding the research project was given to the participants before they participated in the group. The explanation together with a consent form were read verbally to the participants and were also given to them by use of computers with Voice Over software were applicable.

A short questionnaire which contains only biographic data questions was handed to each group member to reflect the 'character' of the group and to endorse its homogeneity. The questionnaire included variables such as age, gender, race, educational level and brief employment history. Carefully worded semi-structured questions based on the purpose of the study are necessary when conducting focus groups (De Vos et al. 2005:308). According to Gubrium & Holstein (2001: 147) the goal of the semi-structured interview is to understand the thoughts of the participants. They further indicate that the participant's interests are dominant and the questions guide the discussion. During the semi-structured interviews the researcher must be attentive to the responses of the participants to identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon that is being studied and be able to probe further (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:87).

The researcher used the interview guide below and probed where necessary but at the same time steered away from insignificant subjects that are not related to the interview. The focus groups lasted between one to two hours depending on the responses that were given by the participants.

An interview guide which was utilised during the focus group facilitation consisted of the following open-ended questions which were in both English and Sepedi:

- What problems are you experiencing or had experienced in your work environment?  
Ke mathatha afe ao o hlakanago le ona tikologong ya mosomo?
- What barriers did you experience when you were looking for employment?  
Ke dithibela dife tseo o kopaneng le tsona ge one o nyaka mosomo?
- How do you survive with a visual disability?  
O phomelela bjang, o le sefofu?
- What strategies would you recommend to key role players to employ and retain people with visual disabilities in the work place?

Ke maele a fe a malebisha ao o ka a fago baetapele go fa batho mesomo goba go tshwarelela batho bao ba sego ba felela botse mmeleng mosomo?

During the group interviews the researcher adhered to the following factors that are identified by Flick (2009:12) and (De Vos et al. 2005:304-305) as important in running a successful focus group:

- A liberal climate was created to produce informal discussions and members were encouraged to contribute openly while giving each other a chance to speak;
- The researcher ensured that the participants did not drift from the research objectives ;
- The recruitment of participants that were members of focus groups allowed for homogeneity. Homogeneity is viewed by (De Vos et al. 2005:304) as important in focus groups since it allows the group participants to spend less time talking about themselves but focus on the issues at hand; and
- There was an average of 7 members on the focus groups to allow everyone to participate while the researcher could still elicit a range of responses.

One focus group was held per week. This allowed enough time for the researcher to transcribe and reflect on the focus groups. Verbal data from the participants was recorded using an audio tape recorder after the participants had given their consent to the recordings. As with all other types of qualitative data gatherings techniques; taking notes; recording the proceedings and capturing non-verbal cues are of extreme importance in focus groups (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:92). The researcher took brief notes during each focus group and immediately thereafter made comprehensive notes based on the observations and responses of the participants.

## **2.7 THE PILOT STUDY**

According to Singleton, et al. (1988:290) the prototyping of a measuring instrument consists of trying out the instrument on a small number of people with similar characteristics to those of the targeted respondents. De Vos et al (2005:304) cited that the purpose is to improve the success and effectiveness of the investigation. The researcher conducted a pilot study by conducting a focus group with 6 participants with visual disabilities. During the focus group attention was given to the suitability of the interview schedule, the background information questionnaire, the recordings and necessary interventions or adaptations to enhance the group participation. The participants in the pilot study were allowed to comment on the questions asked after the focus group session. The findings of the pilot study resulted in minor changes to the wording of the interview guide. It also made the researcher aware of certain limitations that were imposed by the fact that the participants had visual disabilities. This led the researcher to make available certain necessary devices such as signature guards to sign the consent forms before the focus groups interviews.

## **2.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The researcher adhered to the following aspects to ensure sound ethical considerations:

**Permission to conduct the study:** The managers of the South African National Council for the Blind; the Pretoria Workshop for the blind, and for the Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled granted the researcher permission to conduct the study. (See Appendix E). The researcher wrote a letter to the respective heads of the centres. The letter highlighted the objectives of the study, its purpose and its contributions as well as ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and their responses

**Voluntarily participation:** Focus group members participated following adequate information about the study and the credibility of the researcher. Participants were initially informed about the details of the study and were given a consent form which granted permission to participate in the focus group and the use of the audio tape.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** According to Walter (2009:93) confidentiality ensures that the information provided by the research participants cannot be linked to them and anonymity is concerned with the identification of the individual participants. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality was provided by excluding their identities on the biographic data questionnaire and when documenting the research findings. All research findings transcripts and audio tapes were kept safe and will be destroyed following completion of the research project.

**Informed consent:** Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible information on the goal of the research study and procedures to be followed is rendered to participants before the investigation (Strydom, 2005:17). Participants were required to sign a written consent before participation and they were informed that they can pull out from the research anytime they wanted.

## **2.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass collected data (De Vos et al. 2005: 333). The aim of data analysis with regard to a focus group is to look for trends and patterns that re-appear within a single focus group or among various focus groups (De Vos et al. 2005: 311). According to De Vos et al. (2005: 311) the basis of such analysis is the transcripts, tapes, notes and memory.



Nieuwenhuis (2010:99) is of the view that qualitative analysis aims at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data as well as establishes how the participants make a connotation to a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and their experiences.

As reported earlier, the researcher recorded all the focus group interviews using an audio tape. Additionally, brief notes were documented by the researcher and more comprehensive notes were recorded immediately after the group interviews. The researcher made comprehensive notes from the documented observations and also from the audio tape immediately after the group interviews. Notes from one focus group session were done at a time and there was at least a week between the different focus group interviews in order to have enough time to reflect on the proceedings of one group at a time.

The researcher adopted Tesch's (1990) process of data analysis as described by Creswell (2003:193):

- The tapes and hand written transcripts were carefully listened to and read to make sense of whole and the ideas that came to mind were dotted down. This step was done immediately following each focus group interview to prevent loss of important information due to the time that might elapse between the interviews and the data analysis;
- The researcher then selected the most interesting focus group interview and listen to its recording carefully in an attempt to find the underlying meaning;
- The researcher listed emerging themes and the topics from the interview and grouped responses of similar participants in columns according to their similarities;

- The researcher then went back to the raw data and assign codes in order to determine whether there were new categories or codes that emerged as the process continues;
- The relationship between major and sub-categories were identified and were recorded as themes;
- The researcher finalised the coding of the data and grouping of categories; and
- The researcher then finalised the analysis and recorded the data.

## **2.10 DATA VERIFICATION**

De Vos et al. (2005:345) state that every enquiry into the human condition must refer to the following questions which are presented by Lincoln & Guba (1985):

- How credible are particular findings of the study and what criteria can be used to judge the credibility?
- How transferable and applicable are the findings to another setting or group of people?
- How can a researcher be reasonably sure that the findings would be replicated if the study was conducted with the same participants in the same context?
- How can a researcher be sure that the findings are reflective of the participant's perspectives and not researcher's biases or prejudice?

Taking into consideration the questions outlined above, the researcher attempted to take into account the following four factors that are more accurate in reflecting the assumptions of a qualitative paradigm according to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and as reported by De Vos et al. ( 2005:346).

**Credibility:** According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) in credibility the goal is to demonstrate that the research study was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. The researcher has adhered to the following to increase credibility of the research findings:

- The researcher created a process of sharing and openness among participants but at the same time guided against leading the group discussion beyond the research parameters;
- A pilot study was done to eliminate possible errors and problems in the research instruments and the focus group environment;
- Data was documented comprehensively. De Vos et al. (2005:346) state that an in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions is crucial and enables the research findings to be valid within the parameters of its population, its context and its theoretical framework; and
- There was an average of 7 group members in each focus group to allow everyone to participate while still elicits a series of responses.

Additionally, De Vos et al. (2005:306) state that the group facilitator should be skilled, should feel comfortable and be familiar with the interviewing process in focus groups. The researcher has extensive experience in group facilitating; specifically in the area of rehabilitation and disability.

**Transferability:** Lincoln & Guba (1985) propose that transferability is an alternative to external validity or generalisability in which the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the investigator who would make transfer than with the original investigator. The researcher has comprehensively described the research findings in the next chapter and these will be available for secondary use where needed.

However, one of the limitations of qualitative research that is outlined by many authors including De Vos et al. (2005: 346) is the generalisation of its findings to other population or settings. De Vos et al. (2005:300) also cited that the use of focus groups is appropriate for instrument development, sensitisation and conceptualisation. The study is not aimed at generating findings that can be generalised across people with visual disabilities but it is looking at mainly stimulating debates that result in further research projects and in development of additional and appropriate policies in an area that is perceived by the researcher as neglected.

**Dependability:** Lincoln & Guba (1985) define dependability as an alternative to reliability, in which the researcher attempts to account for the changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study as well as changes in design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting.

**Conformability:** This is described by Lincoln & Guba (1985) as the concept which stresses the need to ask whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another one. Conformability relies more on the data itself rather than the researcher (Lincoln & Guba 1985). The researcher kept all transcripts and tapes for access to the examiners that may be needed to confirm that the data represents the participants' opinions and that the data are well translated into the research findings.

## **2.11 CONCLUSION**

The main purpose of this chapter was to elaborate on the methodology used in the study and the rationale for choosing such methodology.

To meet the purpose of the chapter the researcher has covered the following subsections: the rationale for the study, the objectives of the study, research paradigm and design, research population and sampling methods, data collecting methods, the pilot study, ethical consideration, data analysis as well as reliability and validity.

The qualitative research paradigm was selected as the appropriate approach in meeting the objectives of the study. The approach also facilitated the understanding of the meaning of the perceptions that are attached by the participants with regards to factors that affect employability of people with visual disabilities. In the next chapter the researcher focuses on the analysis of the data collected during the study.

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Justification of this research is found in very little focus comparatively that has been directed at factors affecting employment of people with disabilities; especially people with visual disabilities. A majority of research papers in South Africa and internationally has focused on the perspective of employers instead of people with disabilities.

The opinions of people with disabilities are crucial because they are the key role players when formulating new regulations which will improve their participation in the open labour market.

This is also in alignment with the White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) that emphasizes active participation of people with disabilities in policies and strategies that affect them. The proposed research is expected to stimulate more discussions that will result in further research projects in an area that is perceived by the researcher as neglected in South Africa.

The primary aim of this research study is to identify and describe factors that affect people that with visual disabilities in the employment sector. The study was conducted in Pretoria from a qualitative research paradigm and findings were drawn from a total of four focus groups which were made by participants with visual disabilities.

The study used a purposive sampling method which is described by (Nieuwenhuis 2010:79) as selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a certain research question. The researcher used a purposive sampling method by approaching non-government organisations and community based groups of people with visual disabilities.

The researcher selected a purposive sampling method because it is the most convenient form of sampling for the proposed research study, is less costly and less time consuming. Two of the groups were community based projects namely Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled and the Pretoria Workshop for the blind. The other two groups were drawn from the trainees from the South African National Council for the Blind who were either sent by their companies or who enrolled voluntarily for various short term courses that enhance their work productivity or employability chances.

In this chapter the researcher analyses the data to either endorse or refute the findings with appropriate literature. The following open-ended questions which are in both English and Sepedi were utilised as a guide of the group discussions:

- What barriers did you experience when you were looking for employment?  
Ke dithibela dife tseo o kopaneng le tsona ge one o nyaka mosomo?
- What problems are you are experiencing or had experienced in your work environment?  
Ke mathatha afe ao o hlakanago le ona tikologong ya mosomo?
- How do you survive with a visual disability?  
O phomelela bjang, o le sefofu?
- What strategies would you recommend to key role players to employ and retain people with disabilities in the work place?  
Ke maele a fe a malebisha ao o ka a fago baetapele go fa batho mesomo goba go tshwarelela batho bao ba sego ba felela botse mmeleng mosomo?

During the group interviews the researcher obtained consent from the participants to participate in the study as well as to use a tape recorder. The researcher adopted Tesch's (1990) eight steps of data analysis as described in Creswell (2003). The eight step process assisted the researcher to come with themes, subthemes and categories of the findings.

An independent coder was also appointed to assist with data analysis to ensure accuracy and credibility of the findings.

### **3.2 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

As reported earlier, a total of four focus groups were conducted. The profile of the participants was as follows:

- All participants had visual disabilities for a minimum of two years
- All participants were between 20 years and 65 years.
- All participants were residing within Tshwane Municipality at the time the study was conducted
- Participants were racially mixed with blacks being the majority

### **3.3. THE FINDINGS**

There are various factors affecting employment of people that with visual disabilities that emanated from the focus group interviews. These factors include factors that are perceived as negative to seeking employment as well as factors perceived by the research participants as work experiences of people with visual disabilities. The participants were of the view that people with visual disabilities have general challenges to adapt to their disability especially when they are not born with the disability.

Employers' and general public's negative attitudes and behaviours towards people with visual disabilities were major concerns to the participants. The participants felt that there is general disrespect and discrimination towards people with visual disabilities from the employers, co-workers and the society at large. They also identified lack of training and inaccessible education as well as lack of other resources which include accessible transport and appropriate work equipment as hindering productivity and employability of people with visual disabilities.



The participants reported that support; positive mindset, training and disability grants are survival strategies for people with visual disabilities.

Four main themes were identified from the data that emerged from the focus groups. The themes and subthemes are outlined and discussed below:

### **3.3. 1. Theme 1: Negative factors when seeking employment**

3.3.1.1. Sub-theme: Underestimation of the work ability of people with visual disabilities

3.3.1. 2. Sub-theme: Lack of funding for posts suitable for people with visual disabilities

3.3.1.3. Sub-theme: Lack of accessible media for vacancies

3.3.1.4. Sub-theme: Lack of appropriate educational facilities

### **3.3.2. Theme 2: Perceived work experiences of people with visual disabilities**

3.3.2.1. Sub-theme: Adaptation to disability

3.3.2.2. Sub-theme: Lack of support

3.3.2.3. Sub-theme: Unequal treatment

3.3.2.4. Sub-theme: Loss of employment or demotion due to disability

3.3.2.5. Sub-theme: Belittling by colleagues and society

3.3.2.6. Sub-theme: Lack of training and resources that enhance job performance

3.3.2.7. Sub-theme: Inadequate and inaccessible public transport systems

3.3.2.8. Sub-theme: Inaccessible buildings

### **3.3. 3. Theme 3: Survival strategies utilised**

3.3.3.1 Sub-theme: Support

3.3.3.2 Sub-theme: Positive mindset

3.3.3. 3 Sub-theme: Disability grants

### **3.3. 4 Theme 4: Suggestions put forward by the participants**

3.3.4.1 Subtheme: Increased government subsidies

3.3.4.2 Subtheme: Educate employers and employees

3.3.4.3 Sub-theme: Improve communication between public departments on policies regarding disabilities

3.3.4.4 Subtheme: Increase public awareness about visual disabilities

3.3.4.5 Sub-theme: Increase employment opportunities for people with visual disabilities

3.3.4.6 Sub-theme: Accessible libraries or information centres

3.3.4.7 Sub-theme: Improve communication targeting people with disabilities

3.3.4.8 Sub-theme: Accessible education and training

### **3.3. 1 Theme 1: Negative factors when seeking employment**

The participants viewed the general underestimation of the work ability of people with visual disabilities, lack of funding for posts suitable for people with visual disabilities, lack of accessible media for vacancies and lack of appropriate educational facilities and training as negative factors that are encountered by people with visual disabilities when they seek employment.

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:7) attributes the extremely high levels of unemployment amongst people with disabilities to a number of factors and notably are the following:

- Low skills levels due to inadequate education;
- Discriminatory attitudes and practices by employers;
- Past discriminatory and ineffective labour legislation;
- Lack of enabling mechanisms to promote employment opportunities;
- Inaccessible public transport;
- Inaccessible and unsupportive work environments;

- Inadequate and inaccessible provision for vocational rehabilitation and training;
- Generally high levels of unemployment;
- The fact that manual labour is often the only option for poorly skilled job-seekers;
- Inadequate access to information, and
- Ignorance in society.

The sub-themes that emerged from theme 1 are discussed below:

### **3.3.1.1 Sub-theme: Underestimation of the work ability of people with visual disabilities**

One of the negative factors impacting on job seekers with visual disabilities is that often supervisors think that people that are blind cannot do anything. These are some of the statements stated by the participants in support of the findings:

*‘Nobody wants to employ blind people and they think we cannot do anything’*

*“People see a blind person and think oh what she can do”*

*“The main problem is that finding jobs in other companies is limited by that many people think that blind people cannot do anything.*

*“I have been working here for 16 years and I am doing administrative work here, I can also do the same in a different company but it’s hard for people to believe that. If you are blind you have to prove yourself”*

A study done by Lee (1996:248) in New Jersey, United States supports the above findings. Lee (1996:248) evaluated the employers’ perceptions on barriers to the employment of people with disabilities and revealed that employers’ are of the view that people with

disabilities cannot work, they believed that there is general resistance from co-workers to work with people with disabilities and they are a safety risks.

### **3.3.1. 2 Sub-theme: Lack of funding for posts suitable for people with visual disabilities**

Another negative factor stated by the participants in seeking for employment is that there is lack of funding for positions that are suitable for people with visual disabilities. They stated that most companies do not prioritise employment of people with disabilities and often make excuses not to employ people with disabilities.

One of the participants reflected this by stating:

*“The companies always make excuses when it comes to spending to ensure that they employ blind people or any other disabilities for that matter. They always say there are no budgets, we have used the money for this and that. The number of people with disabilities continues to be low even in the government”*

*The other participant stated this:*

*“Usually employers do not want to employ people that are blind due to cost involved in putting the resources in place”.*

A study by Dube (2005:4-6) which investigated the effectiveness of disability legislation in South Africa by interviewing key role players in government departments revealed that there is generally lack of implementation of policies that include policies on employment of people with disabilities. Dube (2005: 4-6) has associated the challenge mentioned above with lack of allocated fiscal resources and commitment that supports the legislation that oblige employers to create positions for people with disabilities.

Thomas & Hlahla (2002:13) are of the view that even legislation may be a negative factor in promoting creation of positions for people with disabilities. These authors are of the opinion that the Employment Equity Act has done very little to promote employment of people with disabilities.

Another study conducted by Bezuidenhout et al (2008:1-104) tracked progress on implementation and impact of the Employment Equity Act since inception revealed that disability is overlooked as an employment equity issue. Employment of people with disabilities seems to remain a challenge whether this can be attributed to misrepresentation of the needs of people with disabilities by legislation, lack of commitment by the employers or lack of resources including funding and work equipment.

### **3.3.1.3 Sub-theme: Lack of accessible media for vacancies**

The participants identified lack of suitable and accessible media for people with visual disabilities as a barrier for seeking employment.

They also cited that there is very few printed media in braille and they have to rely on friends and family to read the job adverts for them.

One of the participants reported this:

*“You know there is literally nothing that is accessible for people that are blind in the newspapers”*

Another one supported this view in the following manner:

*“Braille magazines are so few and most of the time they are no jobs advertised there. Nobody really cares to print anything in Braille”*

The above mentioned exclusion seems to a reality despite that the Code of Good Practise on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002:11) stipulates that advertisements should be accessible to people with disabilities and, where reasonable and practical, they should be circulated to organisations that represent the interests of people with disabilities.

#### **3.3.1.4 Sub-theme: Lack of appropriate educational facilities**

Participants stated that it is very difficult to finalise grade 12 in time when you are blind. They stated that first it takes time for children who have visual disabilities to be placed in appropriate facilities and by the time they are in high school they are over the age allowed by the department of education and thus forced to drop out.

Some of the participants' statements were as follows:

*"It so difficult when you are blind to access a high school that has appropriate equipment and learnerships appropriate for the blind people"*

*I think the main problem is that the child will start in a normal school and the teachers will take time to realise the problems and place the child. By the time that child gets into high school he is already about to be 18 years and the department of education will then say that child cannot be in high school. You end up with no options as there are no finishing schools that are equipped for blind students"*

The views of the participants are also supported by what is contained in the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:1-18) which identifies the limited capacity of special schools, particularly in rural areas, as resulting in the majority of learners with disabilities being excluded from educational opportunities as the environment in regular schools does not facilitate integration.

According to The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:41) access to Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is the key to the economic liberation of adults with disabilities but the present ABET policy guidelines make virtually no provision for the special needs of adult learners with disabilities.

Wordsworth (2003: 46) agrees with the above and reiterates that the one aspect that remains even scarcer than employment opportunities in South Africa is adequate special needs education facilities. This makes acquisition of skills and knowledge very difficult for individuals with disabilities (Wordsworth, 2003: 46).

### **3.3.2 Theme 2: Perceived work experiences of people with visual disabilities**

There was a general consensus among the participants that one of the major negative experiences at work is the general negative attitudes towards them by colleagues and society at large. The participants also indicated challenges with regards to acceptance of disability by people with visual disabilities.

The following sub-themes and categories emerged from theme 2

#### **3.3.2.1 Sub-theme: Adaptation to disability**

The participants indicated that it is difficult to accept and adapt to a visual disability especially if an individual was able to see before. A number of participants also indicated feelings of inadequacy following visual disability.

The following quotes support the above statements:

*“Yha for me it was so difficult I had no disability before”*

*“It was so strange because I was also not comfortable to be near any person without disability around me”.*

*“At that time I really believed I could not do anything but after the skills I obtained here I realise there is a lot that blind people can do”*

*“And sometimes I felt that I was useless but my friends encouraged me”*

*“I just thought that I could not do anything”*

The above negative feelings are also indicated by Elliot & Richard (1999:364) as a challenge to people with visual disabilities. Elliot & Richard (1999:364) state that where onset of disability occurs later in life, denial and non-acceptance of the impairment may be experienced. From the group discussion it seemed that most of the participants had a visual disability later in life rather than being born with it. The visual disabilities were either through sickness or injuries.

It also appears that intrinsic factors such as self acceptance, adaptability to disability and confidence seem to play a crucial role in motivating people with visual disability to be productive or seek employment. According to the Cambridge Commission of Persons with Disabilities (2000:18), people with disabilities frequently experience low self esteem and lack of confidence. This makes it difficult for them to sell their skills to potential employers and also to be persistent in seeking employment (Wordsworth; 2003:44).

### **3.3.2.2 Sub-theme: Lack of support**

The participants reported that there is generally lack of support given to people with visual disabilities by the employers and the government.



These are some of the quotations that were mentioned by the participants:

*“The first person did not get any support”*

*“My employer did not know what to do with me”*

*“The other thing is there is no support to our groups”*

*“It’s is just that the government and the community are just ignoring blind people”*

For most of the participants support and assistance following the visual disability comes mainly from family and friends. However, the lack of support that is provided by the government and employers was viewed as a negative factor experienced by people with visual disabilities in the work environment.

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:7) gives a ‘solution’ to the above mentioned challenge by promoting an understanding of disability as a human rights and developmental issue. According to The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:7) an understanding of disability as a human rights and developmental issue leads to recognition and acknowledgement that people with disabilities are equal citizens and should enjoy equal rights and responsibilities. The paper recommends that people with disabilities should be given support significant to enable them to exercise their responsibilities

### **3.3.2.3 Sub-theme: Unequal treatment**

Unequal treatment by the employers was also cited as one of the negative experiences that people with visual disabilities experience at work.

In support of the finding a participant said this:

*“In terms of work itself when you are visually disabled they don’t treat you like you are a human being”*

Most people work in a social context and must therefore interact with and relate to other people (Wordsworth; 2003:71). It is during this interaction that people with disabilities encounter greatest employment barriers. Whether the negative attitudes are from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding or hate, negative and stereotypical attitudes are often the deciding factor as to whether; or not; people with disabilities enter open labour market. (Wordsworth 2003: 71). Thomas & Hlahla (2002:14) explain that employer and co-workers negative attitudes are primary factors contributing to the unemployment of people with visual disabilities as well as their underutilisation at work. Wordsworth (2003:83) who conducted a qualitative study aimed at identifying barriers faced by organisations in Gauteng when employing people with disabilities concludes that many negative factors that employers experience are based on their perceptions or beliefs about people with disabilities rather than actual abilities or expectations.

The participants were also of the view that people with visual disabilities are often more disadvantaged and discriminated against compared with other disabilities.

This is one of the statements that was uttered by a focus group member to support this:

*“The other thing is even among disabilities, blind people are always left out. When they talk about disabilities they talk about people in wheelchairs”*

According to the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:6) another factor that must be taken into account is the tendency of society to view people with disabilities as a single group.

Thus, people in wheelchairs have become the popular representation of people with disabilities. This ignores the diversity of disability and the variety of needs experienced by people with different types of disability.

The participants felt that there is a general discrimination by the employers towards people with disabilities.

The following are some of the statements that were said by the participants:

*"I have been applying and once they hear that I have a visual disability they are not interested. One time I was told that I was too slow"*

*"It's difficult; when people see a blind person they think oh this one can do nothing"*

*"One time before I got injured, I was on the panel doing interviews and there was this lady on wheelchair that came for interviews. Somehow she became our top candidate but the head of the institution felt that they cannot afford to take risks as he felt that she is more of a health risk"*

Most of the participants felt that people with visual disabilities have to prove themselves as they have to fight against negative attitudes that employers or perceptive employers have against them. They mentioned that there is also doubt whether they have ability to be productive at work.

Nyman (2008: 4) is of the opinion that people with visual disabilities are fortunate if they get from one day to another without experiencing some form of discrimination. According to Nyman (2008:4) discrimination is a pervasive phenomenon with many manifestations and anytime an individual that is visually disabled will be confronted by some form of differential treatment even if the treatment intends to benefit them or reflects an underlying attitude.

#### **3.3.2.4 Loss of employment or demotion due to disability**

All the participants agreed that it is common that following a visual disability most people got 'medically boarded' without any attempts by the employers to retain them.

Some of the statements that were reported during the interviews are as follows:

*"You will find out that a number of people who got blind are just boarded"*

*"No I was medically boarded immediately. I actually did not want to leave by they said is for my safety"*

The other participants stated the following in support of the above statement:

*"Yes: medically boarded without any attempts to make us keep our jobs"*

*"I had to keep my disability a secret because I knew that if I say something they will change and actually they will fire me".*

It is also evident that there is lack of initiatives that are done by employers especially to retain people with visual disabilities. Most of the research participants has worked before but after they had a visual disability most of them where immediately 'medically boarded'

without any attempt to retain them. A study by Goldstone (1995:1-195) who conducted telephonic interviews with human resource managers and line managers from organisations in Great Britain to investigate barriers to employment of people with disabilities also indicated that generally the employees who became disabled are unable to remain in employment. From the findings of the research it was established that the employers opted for pre-mature retirement on incapacity grounds related to disability rather than to employ strategies that aim to retain people with disabilities. This contradicts with the recommendations of the Code of Good Practise on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002:1-24) which is a guide for employers to promote equal opportunities and fair treatment for people with disabilities.

The Code of Good Practise on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002:16) advocates for re-skilling and retaining of employees who became disabled during the employment. These are some of the recommendations outlined on the code:

- Encouragement of early return to work by facilitating vocational rehabilitation, transitional work programmes or offering temporally or permanent flexible working times;
- The employer should assess the need for reasonable accommodations and should seek to minimize the impact of disability on employees; and
- If reasonable, the employers should explore the possibility of offering alternative work, reduced work or flexible work placement so that employees are not compelled or encouraged to terminate their employment.

The participants also indicated that if the individual is not 'medically boarded', it is common that he or she is demoted to a lower position and generally for people with visual disabilities is a switchboard operating position.

These are some of the statements that were mentioned by the participants:

*“I was working as a chief financial clerk and after I was blind I was moved to be a switchboard operator. I hated it. Oh I hated it”*

*“I know of somebody who was a superintendent at the police force who got shot several times on the head and became blind. He was also put as a switchboard operator and this is not challenging”*

From the findings above it is clear that there is still lack of consultation with regards to interventions that are chosen by the employers for people with visual disabilities. This is despite the recommendations by the White Paper on Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997) that emphasizes active participation of people with disabilities in policies and strategies that affect them.

Gray & van Rooyen (2002:3-4) who pinpoint the strengths perspective in social work support the assertion that people should be active partners in strategies that are aimed to empower them. Gray & van Rooyen (2002:3-4) indicate that empowerment resides in the person not a helper, addresses oppression, stratification and inequality and rejects that problems develop because of personal deficiencies. Gray & van Rooyen (2002:3-4) make a suggestion that the first step to move away from disempowering approaches is to move away from the conception that clients are oppressed, disabled and therefore powerless. The facilitators of the helping process should ask what the clients know, what they want to do and assist them in connecting with community networks, social justice legal frameworks, resources and services.

### **3.3.2.5 Sub-theme: Belittling by colleagues and society**

The participants stated that there is often belittling and disregard by colleagues and the society of people with visual disabilities. They reported that people with disabilities are often patronised.

One participant reported that:

*“Some people think when you blind you are stupid and sometimes think you cannot hear”*

Another participants added that:

*“At my work my colleagues are treating me like a baby”*

*“Often work colleagues, doctors or shop keepers or whoever is speaking with you tend to speak over you”*

As stated earlier Wordsworth (2003:71) gives insight to the challenge by stating that people work in a social context and must therefore interact with and relate to other people. It is during this interaction that people with disabilities encounter greatest employment barriers from negative attitudes from employers, co-workers and society at large. Thomas & Hlahla (2002:14) explain that employer and co-workers’ negative attitudes are primary factors contributing to the unemployment of people with disabilities as well as their underutilisation at work.

### **3.3.2.6 Sub-theme: Lack of training and resources that enhance job performance**

The participants also identified lack of training as a negative factor that is encountered by people with visual disabilities when seeking employment. They identified lack of mobility training and braille training as the major challenges.

One of the participants shared the following:

*“I have a friend who just got employed and he told me that it was so difficult without the mobility training. The first thing when you get the job is the mobility training at least for a week so that you can be shown around your work environment”*

One of the factors that was mentioned by the participants as challenges at work was lack of resources that enhance job performance. Participants reported that there is generally no equipment and companies are not willing to make plans of getting such equipment. These are some of the statements that the participants stated:

*“I think the employer did not have resources, they were also not making any plan to have the resources”*

*“I had a security experience and I could work efficiently at security control rooms but I have to have right equipment”*

*“Yes and the problem is that they are so expensive and employers are not willing to buy them”*

*“Lack of assistive devices such as Braille printers and soft programmes for blind people in the workplace is a problem. Usually employers do not want to employ people that are blind due to cost involved in putting the resources in place”.*



### **3.3.2.7 Sub-theme: Inadequate and inaccessible public transport systems**

Most of the participants viewed public transports and the general bad treatment by taxi and bus drivers as well as the transport and the roads that are inaccessible for people with visual disabilities as challenges to employment.

One of the participants stated:

*“You know, one thing that irritates me is how the taxi drivers or public transport people treat blind people. I can go to Pretoria and other areas alone but because of lack of respect to people I sometimes have to travel with people.”*

Another participant supported the above statement and expressed his concern as:

*“My main problem is the transport and travelling around. I prefer buses as they are much patient than taxis. The public transport is a problem, the taxi drivers are rude and they don’t tell us where we are and they stop anywhere and it is risky for us”*

*“ The robots have no sounds and streets are not safe, they dig holes everywhere. We can go anywhere if the government would make things right”*

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:36) recommends that there is a need for rapid progress in developing a public transport system that is flexible and accessible.

Without this, people with disabilities will continue to remain largely 'invisible' and unable to contribute to, or benefit from, the services and commercial activities available to most of their fellow citizens, (The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997:36). The fact is that the ability to use services, or attend school or work, is largely dependent on the ability of people to have appropriate transport. Lack of accessible

transport is a serious barrier to the full integration into society of people with disabilities, (The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997:36).

### **3.3.2.8 Sub-theme: Inaccessible buildings**

The participants expressed that the other challenge at work is the inaccessible buildings for people that have visual disabilities. They mentioned that often there are no suitable lifts in buildings, the colour coding is inappropriate and the signages are sometimes too small for partially sighted individuals. One of the participants mentioned that:

*“The other main problem is the accessibility of the buildings. You will take a lift and you have to ask people where am I. People will just ignore and you will go up and down without knowing where you going. Where there are lifts with sounds, I don’t need any body guard, I can walk independently”*

Another participant added the following:

*“When I was partially sighted people used to tell me go to 205, you partially sighted how are you supposed to read the numbers? It is very difficult especially when you are in the buildings that do not have different colours schemes for different things”*

This is also reflected by the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, (1997:34) which indicates that the way in which the environment is developed and organised contributes, to a large extent, to the level of independence and equality that people with disabilities enjoy.

According to The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:34) there are a number of barriers in the environment which prevent disabled people from enjoying equal opportunities with non-disabled people, for example: structural barriers in

the built environment; inaccessible service points; inaccessible entrances due to security systems; poor town planning; and poor interior design.

### **3.3. 3 Theme 3: Survival strategies utilised**

Family and doctor's support, positive mindset, training and disability grants were mentioned by the group members as the survival strategies utilised by people with visual disabilities.

#### **3.3.3.1 Sub-theme: Support**

Participants reported that they get support from family and friends. Most of the participants reported that they survive on disability grants. They also stated that doctor's support following a visual disability is crucial.

Participants stated the following:

*"But for me I got support from the doctors first while I was in the hospital"*

*"My husband has been providing for me"*

*"I am still supported by my parents"*

The significance of support is shown by Dombeck & Wells-Moran (2006:1-3) who are of the opinion that people live in families and social groupings, and depend upon one another for the means that ensure their mutual survival, including food, clothing and shelter, but also safety, belonging and social support.

Dombeck & Wells-Moran (2006:1-3) mention that family members are interconnected and every person within a family has a role to play within the life of the family as a whole.

### **3.3.3.2 Positive mindset**

A positive mindset was identified by the participants as needed to survive for people that are blind or partially sighted.

One participant stated the following to support the general view of the groups:

*“That thing I think it’s also starts from yourself to heal your mind first and your heart”*

Individuals who have accepted their disability and who are optimistic about their future are likely to seek for employment and if given resources sustain such employment. Wordsworth (2003: 26) is of the view that the decision to work is also the choice of an individual with a disability.

### **3.3.3.3 Disability grants**

The majority of the participants that were not employed were receiving disability grants with very few that are depended on their family members. The majority of these participants have worked for years before they were visually disabled and they all agreed that the main reasons for the pre-mature work span curtailments were related to poor knowledge and negative attitudes of the employers as well as lack of suitable training and equipment. Participants were of the view that they prefer to work rather than to receive grants.

There is also a majority of research that includes quantitative reports that are documented by South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) that supports the above findings. This includes reports by the Department of Social Department (2006:2) which indicate that disability grant population indicates that over 36% of the disability grants beneficiaries have disabilities that should not necessarily render them unable to obtain gainful employment. The department is of the view that the changing environment of the

modern economy and work should enable people with disabilities to meaningfully participate in society. There is therefore no reason why a number of disability grant recipients who have various impairments should be excluded from employment. (Department of Social Department, 2006:2)

There has been a general yearly increase in social grants recipients included in the increase is people receiving disability grants. Sassa (2010:2-4) reported a total growth rate of grant recipients during 2008/2009 as 5.2% and such increase is significantly higher from the year 2007/08. The disability grant recipient growth rate is higher than the average growth rate and is reported by Sassa (2010:2-4) as 5.9%. There is no doubt that the increase may be attributed to several factors but one can also not exclude the role of unemployment of people with visual disabilities.

There are several studies that support that social grants are beneficial in South Africa as they are the means of poverty eradication. Samson, MacQuene & Ingrid (2005:4) state that social grants are effectively targeted and that social grants provide households with income, they also support second-order effects that further reduce poverty. According to these authors households that receive social grants are more likely to send young children to school and provide better nutrition for children.

Nevertheless, one cannot completely ignore some of the negative criticisms with regards to social grants. Turton (2001:1) has warned that welfare benefit systems are one of the main elements keeping people with disabilities from entering open labour market. This view is also supported by Fries (2000:32) who states that social welfare systems in the United States provide harsh disincentives for people with disabilities to enter the workforce. There are therefore advantages and disadvantages of social grants for people with visual disabilities or rather the society at large as illustrated above. However, of more

importance is the ability of people with disabilities to exit grants and be integrated to the open labour market.

### **3.3. 4 Theme 4: Suggestions put forward by the participants**

#### **3.3.4.1 Sub-theme: Increased government subsidies**

Participants were of the view that the government subsidies that support the employability of people with visual disabilities should be increased.

One of the suggestions put forward by the participants is that the government should subsidise companies that employ people with visual disabilities in order to buy the equipment and assistive devices that are usually expensive.

The following quotations were verbalised by the participants:

*“All the equipment that we are using at work should be subsidised. Some of us could not get all of these things. I think the government must subsidise the employers as those things are so expensive”*

*“The assistive devices are expensive and should be subsidised by the government so that the employers are willing to keep people that are blind”*

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:34) supports that assistive/rehabilitation technology enables individuals with disabilities to participate on equal terms. If people with disabilities are to access their rights and responsibilities and participate in society as equal citizens, they must have access to appropriate and affordable assistive devices. The Code of Good Practise on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002:9) states that employers should reasonably accommodate the

needs of people with disabilities. The aim of this accommodation is to reduce the impact of the impairment of the person's capacity to fulfil the essential functions of a job. Employers should adopt the most cost-effective means that is consistent with effectively removing the barriers to perform the job, and to enjoy equal access to the benefits and opportunities to employment (Code of Good Practise on the Employment of People with Disabilities, 2002:9).

A study conducted by Lee (1996:248) in New Jersey, United States which focused on the employers' perceptions of barriers to the employment of people with disabilities revealed that employers' are of the view that reasonable accommodations and structural modifications for people with disabilities are expensive. Another study conducted by Wordsworth (2003:67) reported that the cost to employers to provide reasonable accommodations is invariably raised as an argument against employing people with disabilities. Thomas & Hlahla (2002:16) revealed in their study that a major concern expressed by employers, especially those with small businesses is the cost to modify work areas for people with disabilities. These studies justify the participants' suggestion that government should subsidise equipment needed by people with visual disabilities.

Participants reported that although there are bursaries that are offered for people with disabilities, the bursaries are only for university students and there are a number of students who have disabilities that will not qualify for universities. The participants suggested that the bursaries should be broad and should include all the courses that promote the employability of people with disabilities.

The following statement which was stated by one of the participants supports the above finding:

*“The government must make the bursaries that they offer for people with disabilities broader. Currently the bursaries that are there are mainly for university students, not everyone can qualify to go university. Some of the students will end up in colleges and won’t be able to go to the universities. Any course that will allow people to be more employable must be included in those bursaries”*

Participants also were of the view that subsidies for protective/sheltered workshops should be increased as the workshops are the main hope for people with visual disabilities.

The following quotations were stated during the focus group interviews:

*“The sad thing is that there is a decrease in support of protective workshops like these and this is the only hope for people that are blind”*

*“I also worked here for 13 years but I also agree that more subsidies and support must be given to protective workshops”*

#### **3.3.4.2 Sub-theme: Educate employers and employees**

Participants expressed that there is general lack of knowledge by employers and co-workers about various disabilities, available subsidies and other resources. They suggested that various companies should be informed about these issues.

The following quotations are participants’ responses:

*“Other employers are just afraid. Organisations such as the council for the blind must tell people about what a blind person can do”.*



*“They should ask more questions and research about what is your eye condition? What causes it and what will be your needs in future. Unfortunately there is a need for research that is needed to be conducted if companies are serious about employing people with disabilities”*

This is also supported by Wordsworth (2003: 126) who indicates that creating awareness of disability and educating and sensitising staff with regards to disabilities is the most effective means of changing attitudes and preconceived notions of employees or employers with no disabilities.

#### **3.3.4.3 Sub-theme: Improve communication between public departments on policies regarding disabilities**

Participants suggested that the communication between the public departments should be improved.

The following statement was made by one of the participants to support this:

*“Yes. Even the government departments like Sita, Department of Labour and other departments they must communicate more”*

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:34) argues that although there are a number of policies aimed at preventing disabilities; there is no coherent coordination of services between the various government departments to ensure that these policies are properly implemented.

#### **3.3.4.4 Sub-theme: Increase public awareness about visual disabilities**

The other suggestion put forward by participants was that public awareness about visual disabilities should be increased.

Some of the statements made during the focus groups interviews are:

*“The other thing is the organisations such as the Council for the Blind, Optima and other organisations have to go to the different organisations and raise awareness. They must go to the companies and raise awareness”*

*“Even among disabilities, blind people are always left out. When they talk about disabilities they talk about people in wheelchairs”*

Research findings of Wordsworth (2003:126) illustrated that most of his study's respondents were of the view that a national campaign run by the government is required to increase the awareness about people with visual disabilities. The focus of the campaign must be on the abilities of people with disabilities. The participants also suggested that outreach programmes should be done to raise awareness about visual disabilities. The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:27) suggested that disabled people's organisations are a key component of disability prevention at community level. Their involvement according to the white paper is particularly important in the facilitation of public education programmes, early identification and referral.

The Social Development Department through its community development initiatives is a key partner in increasing public awareness on disability as a human rights and development issue (The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:55). Wordsworth (2003:147) endorses the need for public awareness and suggests that Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) dealing with specific areas of disability be

used to raise awareness of people with disabilities. This could take place in the form of presentations or even marketing campaigns.

#### **3.3.4.5 Sub-theme: Increase employment opportunities for people with visual disabilities**

Most of the participants suggested that the government should be forced to employ people with visual disabilities and also must ensure other companies also employ people with blind disabilities.

These are some statements stated by the participants:

*“There must be jobs left for people that are blind, the jobs like working in the hospital chemist, packing medicine, working in laundry or linen room of a hospital, we can do those jobs. Every company must be forced to at least employ one blind person. We can also work in switchboard and do more. The government must also force and punish companies for not employing people with disabilities”*

*“Government should be an example and employ blind people, if government leaves them who is going to employ us.*

This is in line with The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:5) which recommends that government should monitor to ensure that legislation is effective and the policies with regards to disability are implemented.

The participants suggested that there must be assistance given to people with visual disabilities to start their own companies.

Some of the suggestions with regards to this that were put forward were:

*“Disabled people themselves must organise themselves and form companies so that you not only dependent on job advertisements”*

*“They must support also projects like us, people learn skills here and they can maybe run their own businesses if unable to get employed”*

#### **3.3.4.6 Sub-theme: Accessible libraries or information centres**

The participants recommended a need for accessible libraries or information centres. Some of the participants stated the following:

*“It will be nice that in different communities there can be information centers for different disabilities and those centers should have the computer programmes such as the JAWS for the blind so that we can be able to see advertised jobs. The participant was referring to a computer programme that enables people with visual disabilities to use the computers.*

*Also libraries, I don’t understand why we cannot go to the library and be able to read newspapers, look for advertisement like most people will do”*

*“The present libraries should have programmes such JAWS so that blind people can go to the libraries and look for employment on the internet”*

#### **3.3.4.7 Sub-theme: Improve communication targeting people with visual disabilities**

The participants reported that there is limited appropriate media that is targeting people with visual disabilities. One of the suggestions which were mentioned by the participants is that the media should be used to raise community awareness about visual disabilities.

These are some of the statements that were said during the focus group interviews:

*“You know that the government has introduced people responsible for disability people, in all the municipalities some of those offices are in the premier offices, those structures must be more visible. Those people must raise community awareness and use media like radios and TV.*

*“Blind people need access to information. Media should have slot targeted to people with disabilities where they can talk about different issues including employment”*

The public media plays a central role in the way society constructs images and beliefs, and should therefore be utilised as a key mechanism in changing attitudes (The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997:29).

Participants also reported that radio is the most appropriate form of media that is accessible to people with visual disabilities.

Some of the participants stated the following:

*“Radio must be used more often as it can reach more blind people”*

*“We would like the media to give people with visual disabilities more space, if the radios can have programmes for people with visual disabilities where they also advertise vacancies and it must not be the one like SA FM that plays in midnight. We would like an everyday programme where they talk about our issues, employment, jobs ect and all kinds of things”*

*“They must also use radio, we cannot see but we listen to a radio a lot”*

### **3.3.4.8 Sub-theme: Accessible education and training**

Accessible education for learners with visual disabilities was suggested by the participants. This is also supported by The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:51).

Training in computers, mobility and braille training was identified as important for people with visual disabilities.

Some the participants stated the following:

*“Even if you can be trained in braille there must be more things that must happen. For example training in computers is important”*

*“Oh yes. Computer training is very important for employment, not only for the employee but also for the employer”*

*“I have to now start looking for another job but I know that with the computer training I have much more better chances of finding a job than before. I think for everybody here computer literacy is important”*

*“Firstly if you are not taken to trainings like what we doing now you cannot do anything. If they don’t take you to training like mobility trainings and all that staff you cannot do anything”.*

The participants recommended that teachers with visual disabilities should be trained and used to teach children that unable to complete grade 12 due to age.

The following statements were reported by the participants during the focus group sessions:

*“They can also use teachers that are blind to start special classes for the blind children in their communities instead of ‘medically boarding’ them. Also these teachers can be used to assist children that have a difficulty to finish matric due to their age”*

*“You see I was a teacher before and got ‘boarded’. You know the employer or government should have trained me and placed me elsewhere for example at a blind school or even help other kids that are blind”*

The participants mentioned that one of the crucial strategies to employ and maintain people with visual disabilities is to make braille training accessible. Some of the participants supported the statement by saying:

*“Braille training is the key training. If you are blind you cannot do anything without learning braille and some of the programmes we are here for”*

*“Braille is key if you are blind”*

### **3.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

The main purpose of this chapter was to present the research findings and support them with appropriate literature. The findings were presented into themes and subthemes that emerged from the focus groups discussions. Participants with visual disabilities were interviewed as four focus groups. All participants had a visual disability for a minimum of two years. The participants were between the age of 20 years and 65 years and were in the employment sector (See concept clarification 1.11.2)

There were a number of factors that were perceived by the participants as factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector. These factors include factors that are viewed as negative when seeking employment and those that are perceived by the research participants as work experiences of people with visual disabilities. The participants were of the view that people with visual disabilities have general challenges to adapt to their disability especially when they are not born with the disability.

Employers' and general public's negative attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities were also a major concern to the participants. The participants felt that there is general disrespect and discrimination towards people with visual disabilities from the employers, co-workers and the society at large. They also identified lack of training and inaccessible education as well as lack of other resources which include accessible transport and appropriate work equipment as hindering productivity and employability of people with visual disabilities. The participants reported that support; positive mindset, and disability grants are survival strategies to people with visual disabilities. Suggestions made by the participants were that subsidies by the government for comprehensive study bursaries, work equipment and protective/sheltered workshop must be increased. They also suggested that employers must be educated about visual disabilities; communication between public departments with regards to visual disabilities must be improved, public awareness about visual disabilities must be increased, and employment opportunities for people with visual disabilities must be created. Participants also suggested that accessible libraries or information centres. They were also of the view that education must be made more accessible for people with visual disabilities.



Chapter 3 will be followed by a final chapter whereby the researcher presents a summary of the study, conclusions and puts forward the recommendations that emerged from the study.

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

**Chapter 1** gives the rationale behind the research study and the intended contribution of the study. It also presents to the reader an overview of the research study by indicating the conceptual frameworks that underpin the study and a brief literature review. Research questions, aims and objectives of the study, an implementation plan of study and a summary of the research design as well as research methodology are also briefly discussed in chapter 1.

**Chapter 2** discusses in detail the research design that forms basis of the study and the methods which the researcher has used in collecting and analysing data.

**In Chapter 3** the research findings are presented and they are endorsed by literature reviewed.

**In Chapter 4** conclusions and recommendations of the study are discussed. The chapter presents the summary of the research aims and objectives, the research design and methodology, as well as the research findings.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary aim of the research study was to identify and describe factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector, as perceived by them.

The study objectives as stated in chapter 1 are as follows:

- To identify and explore experiences of people with visual disabilities in the employment sector;

- To explore and describe the survival strategies that are used by people with visual disabilities; and
- Based on the research findings, to make recommendations from a policy and service perspective, in order to inform appropriate support structures for people with visual disabilities.

#### **4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN**

After reviewing the literature from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives; the researcher chose a qualitative research design as the appropriate approach that is suitable to meet the objectives of the research study. De Vos et al. (2002:73) make an assertion that qualitative research design is suitable for a study of relatively unknown domain and in seeking to understand the phenomenon. Flick (2009:14) is of the view that one of the preliminary features of qualitative research is the ability to accommodate the perspective of the participants and their diversity. The qualitative research was selected to enable the researcher to identify and explore experiences of people with visual disabilities in the employment sector as perceived by them.

The proposed study adopted an exploratory contextual and qualitative research designs utilising focus groups as data collection techniques. Durrheim (2006:44) is of the view that the explorative research employs an open, flexible and inductive approach to research when it looks for new insights into the phenomenon. According to De Vos et al. (2002:106) a need for such a study can arise out of a lack of basic information on a new area of interest.

As indicated earlier on, very little research has been done in the area of employing people with disabilities in South Africa especially people with visual disabilities.

The researcher hopes to stimulate more research in an area that is perceived by the researcher as neglected and endorsed by the participants as evidenced in the findings presented in chapter 3.

#### **4.3.1 RESEARCH SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The study used purposive sampling method which is described by Nieuwenhuis (2010:79) as selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a certain research question. The researcher used a purposive sampling method by approaching non-government organisations and community based groups of people with visual disabilities. The researcher selected a purposive sampling method because it is the most convenient form of sampling to the proposed research study, is less costly and less time consuming.

The researcher conducted a pilot study by conducting one focus group interview with 7 participants that has visual disabilities. During the focus group attention was given to the suitability of the interview schedule, the background information questionnaire, the recordings and necessary interventions or adaptations to enhance the group participation.

Following the pilot study, the researcher interviewed a total of four groups based in Pretoria to draw findings for the research study. Two of the groups were community based projects namely Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled and the Pretoria Workshop for the blind. Vukuzenzele Self Help for the disabled is affiliated to the South African National Council for the Blind. The other two groups were drawn from trainees which were either sent by their respective employers or who joined the council voluntarily in order to enhance their employability chances.

### **4.3.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

The researcher adopted Tesch's (1990) eight steps of data analysis as discussed in Creswell (2003). The eight step process assisted the researcher to come up with themes and subthemes of the findings. An independent coder was also consulted to assist with data analysis and ensure accuracy and credibility of the findings.

## **4.4. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Four main themes were identified from the data that emerged from the focus groups. The themes and subthemes are summarised below:

### **4.4.1. NEGATIVE FACTORS WHEN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT**

The above theme emerged from the following first question that was posed to the participants:

- What barriers did you experience when you were looking for employment?

Ke dithibela dife tseo o kopaneng le tsona ge one o nyaka mosomo

One of the negative factors impacting on job seekers with visual disabilities is that often supervisors think that people with visual disabilities cannot do anything. This was reported by the participants and they further indicated that people with visual disabilities have to always prove themselves and often they are not treated the same as other job seekers. The participants identified lack of suitable and accessible media to people with visual disabilities as a barrier for seeking employment. They also cited that there is very few printed media in braille and they have to rely on friends and family to read the job adverts for them. The above mentioned problem seems to be a reality despite the fact that the Code of Good Practise on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002:11) stipulates that advertisements should be accessible to people with disabilities and, where

reasonable and practical, should be circulated to organisations that represent the interests of people with disabilities.

Participants stated that for learners with visual disabilities it is very difficult to finalise grade 12 in time. They mentioned that it takes time for children with visual disabilities to be placed in appropriate facilities and by the time they are in high school they are over the age allowed by the department of education and they are forced to drop out. The participants also identified lack of training especially mobility training and braille training as a negative factors that are encountered by people with visual disabilities that looks for employment.

#### **4.4.2 PERCEIVED WORK EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES**

The second question that was posed to the participants was:

- What problems are you experiencing or had experienced in your work environment?

Ke mathatha afe ao o hlakanago le ona tikologong ya mosomo goba ke mathata afe ao o kileng wa gahlana le ona tikologong ya mosomo?

The responses of the participants to the above question revealed that one of the major negative experiences at work is the general negative attitudes towards people with disabilities by colleagues and society at large. The intrinsic factors such as self acceptance, adaptability to disability and confidence play a crucial role in motivating people with disability to be productive or seek employment. The participants indicated that it is difficult to accept and adapt to a visual disability especially if the individual is not born with it or if the disability has not occurred at a very young age.

For most of the participants support and assistance following the visual disability comes mainly from family and friends but the lack of support that is provided by the government

and employers was viewed as a negative factor experienced by people with visual disabilities in the work environment.

As earlier reflected in chapter 3, the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:7) recommends a 'solution' to the above mentioned challenge by promoting an understanding of disability as a human rights and developmental issue and by suggesting that people with disabilities should be given support necessary to enable them to exercise their responsibilities

Unequal treatment by the employers was also cited as one of the negative experiences that people with visual disabilities experience at work. The participants felt that there is a general discrimination towards people with visual disabilities, there is belittling and disregard by colleagues, employers and society at large.

Most participants were also of the view that people with visual disabilities are often more disadvantaged and discriminated compared with other disabilities. The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997:6) warns against tendency of society to view people with disabilities as a single group and often people refer to people in wheelchairs when they refer to disability. This ignores the diversity of disability and the variety of needs experienced by people with different types of disability.

All participants agreed that 'medical boarding' is common following a visual disability without any attempts by the employers to retain the employee. Based on the research findings employers choose pre-mature retirement on incapacity grounds related to disability rather than to employ strategies that aim to retain people with disabilities. The participants also expressed concern about the fact most people that became visually disabled are normally placed to be switchboard operators despite their skills.

One of the factors that were mentioned by the participants as challenges at work was lack of resources that enhance job performance. Participants reported that there is generally no equipment that enhances work productivity and companies are not willing to make plans of procuring such equipment. Most of the participants viewed inaccessible public transports and the general bad treatment by taxi drivers and bus drivers as well as the roads that are inaccessible for people with visual disabilities as challenges to employment. They were also concerned about inaccessible buildings to people with visual disabilities.

#### **4.4.3 SURVIVAL STRATEGIES UTILISED**

The third question put forward to the participants during the group interviews was:

- How do you survive with a visual disability?

O phomelela bjang, o le sefofu?

Family and doctor's support, positive mindset, training and disability grants were mentioned by the group members as the survival strategies utilised by people with visual disabilities. Most of the job-seeking participants were depended on social grants.

#### **4.4. 4. SUGGESTIONS PUT FORWARD BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

The final question that was asked to the participants was:

- What strategies would you recommend to key role players to employ and retain people with visual disabilities in the work place?

Ke maele a fe a malebisha ao o ka a fago baetapele go fa batho mesomo goba go tshwarelela batho bao ba sego ba felela botse mmeleng mosomo?

In response to the question, the participants were of the view that the government subsidies that support the employability of people with disabilities should be increased. One of the suggestions put forward by the participants is that the government should



subsidise companies that employ people with visual disabilities in order to buy the necessary equipment which is needed to promote their work productivity. The participants reported that although there are bursaries that are offered for people with disabilities, the bursaries are only for university students and there are a number of students who have disabilities that will not qualify for universities. The participants suggested that the bursaries should be more comprehensive and should include all the courses that promote the employability of people with visual disabilities.

Participants also were of the view that subsidies for protective/sheltered workshops should be increased as the workshops currently, are the main option for people with visual disabilities. The participants expressed that there is general lack of knowledge by employers and co-workers about various disabilities, available subsidies and other resources. They suggested that various companies should be informed about these issues. Participants further suggested that the communication between the public departments and other sectors should be improved so that employers can know the support structures available for people with visual disabilities. The other suggestion that was put forward by the participants was that general public awareness about visual disabilities should be increased. They suggested media to take an active role in promoting awareness.

Participants suggested that employment opportunities for people with disabilities should be increased. Most of the participants suggested that this can be done by the government forcing its departments to employ people with visual disabilities and by ensuring that other private companies employ people with visual disabilities as part of their transformation agenda. The other suggestion put forward to increase employment opportunities was that there must be assistance given to people that with visual disabilities to start their own companies.

Participants were of the view that there is a need for accessible libraries or information centres that are community based. The participants reported that there is limited appropriate media that is targeting people with visual disabilities. One of the suggestions which were mentioned by the participants is that radio should be used more often to target people with visual disabilities as it is more appropriate for them. Accessible education for learners with visual disabilities was also suggested by the participants. The participants mentioned that one of the crucial strategies to employ and maintain people with visual disabilities is to make braille and mobility training accessible.

#### **4.5 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

##### **4.5.1 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES STILL EXPERIENCES CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING AND RETAINING EMPLOYMENT**

People with visual disabilities are still unemployed despite the favourable legislation in South Africa. These findings cannot be claimed purely as emanating only from this research study but it has been revealed in some of the South African research studies that aimed to investigate factors with regards to employability of people with disabilities including people with visual disabilities. There are various factors that are reflected by the participants of this study and also by literature that hinder such employment but of note are societal negatives attitudes.

Existing literature and the participants have pointed out negative attitudes of employers, co-workers and the society at large are impacting negatively on the ability of people with disability to access employment and retain employment. The participants mentioned discrimination, disregard, belittling by the employers, co-workers and the society at large towards people with visual disabilities.

Some of the South African studies that have commented on this phenomenon include that of Wordsworth (2003:140) who revealed that most barriers that were reported by the organisations that were approached to participate in the study were barriers of a social nature. These included behaviours of co-workers such as ignorance, stereotypes, incorrect preconceived notions and stigmatisation of people with disabilities. Of concern is that according to the participants of the study by Wordsworth (2003:1-165) social barriers are far more difficult barriers to overcome.

Another study which supports the above findings is the one done by Thomas & Hlahla (2002:14) who concluded that employer and co-workers negative attitudes are primary factors contributing to the unemployment of people with disabilities as well as their underutilisation at work.

Most of the international and South African studies that were reviewed were done from the perspective of employer. However, despite the fact in contrast, the study under discussion investigated the views of people with visual disabilities, commonly societal negative attitudes dominated the majority of the studies. This is the major challenge to all role players within the disability sector as it appears to hinder progress with regards to employment of people with disabilities. There is a need for a vigorous drive towards adoption of strengths and human rights based approaches. Gray & van Rooyen (2002:193-201) have examined the relevance of the Strengths Perspective in social work. According to these authors, the language of Strength Perspective is empowering. It views clients as partners who have strengths, assets and resources rather than just having needs and problems. Strength based theories emphasize empowerment. Empowerment is the process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. This allows them to gain ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canada, 1998:91).

According to these authors empowerment resides in the person not a helper, addresses oppression, stratification and inequality and rejects that problems develop because of personal deficiencies. Gray & van Rooyen (2002:3-4) recommend that the first step to move away from disempowering approaches is to move away from the conception that clients are oppressed, disabled and therefore powerless. There is a strong need for all role players to realize the importance of empowering people with disabilities to become active members in the open labour.

Another approach significant in realizing the needs of people with disabilities is the human rights approach which is advocated by various human rights organisations including Disability Rights Promotion International. The Disability Rights Promotion International (2008:1) promotes the fact that people with disabilities have rights and the social structures and policies that restrict or ignore such rights often lead to discrimination and exclusion. Additionally, the South African Constitution (1996) highlights that South African citizens including people with disabilities are entitled to a Bill of Rights which includes access to basic and further education and equal access to employment.

Human rights approach views disability as a human rights issue, emphasises that people with disabilities are holders of rights, not objects of charity and are entitled to enjoy the same rights and freedom as all other people (Disability Rights Promotion International, 2008:1)

The social model, which is also a human rights approach to disability, places emphasis on the shortcomings of society and its inability to accommodate diversity and discourages that people with disabilities should be viewed as a welfare or a medical concern. The social model thus focuses on the removal of barriers to promote equal participation and the elimination of discrimination based on disability. The broad objective of the social model is thus to integrate people with disabilities into the mainstream of society.

Without key role players realizing and adopting the above approaches and being proactive to change societal negative attitudes towards people with visual disabilities, their integration to open labour will remain a challenge in South Africa.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, the study has revealed various factors that negatively affect employment of people with visual disabilities. The factors revealed includes those which relate to employers and co-workers negatives attitudes towards people with visual disabilities. These factors include unequal treatment, discrimination when they seek employment, belittling and disregard by employers, co-workers and the society at large. Of note is also the fact that participants were also of the view that intrinsic motivational factors such as acceptance of disability, adaptability and confidence by people with visual disabilities also impact on their ability to access and maintain employment.

Based on the research findings there are also a number of factors that were perceived as barriers to job seekers with visual disabilities. Included were inaccessible advertising media, inaccessible transports systems, lack of funded positions suited for people with visual disabilities. The study also revealed strategies that were suggested by people with visual disabilities to employ and retain them. These include accessible media to advertise jobs, accessible training and education and increase awareness of the general public about various disabilities and increase in government subsidies.

##### **4.6.1 RECOMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the research it is clear that people with visual disabilities experience significant negative factors that affect their employability, their productivity and ability to maintain employment. The following recommendations are made in view to promote the integration of people with visual disabilities in the open labour.

#### **4.6.1.1 A MORE PROACTIVE AND COORDINATED APPROACH IS REQUIRED**

It is of importance that government should re-prioritise employment of people with visual disabilities. It is clear from the group interviews that there is a lot to be done with regards to this. Organisations and the government should adopt a more proactive, planned and coordinated approach. As suggested by the participants Non Government Organisations should play a leading and active role. Coordination should be more evident from the top.

The National Office on the Status of Disabled Persons (OSPD) must ensure coordination and monitoring role as recommended by The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997). The coordination of services should filter down to provincial and municipality levels. Disability forums must be established and those forums should be facilitated nationally by the OSDP, provincially and at the municipal level by the special programmes units or disability desks.

People with different disabilities, including people with visual disabilities must be represented to promote targeted strategies as there are unique needs among people with various disabilities. Employment of people with disabilities should be prioritised on those forums and they must be clear planned objectives and outcomes.

#### **4.6.1.2 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MUST HAVE EXIT STRATEGIES FROM GRANTS**

The participants clearly mentioned that they would rather work than receiving disability grants. The benefits of the social grants cannot be argued but at the same time people with disabilities that are willing to work must be given opportunities to enter open labour market. Some of the strategies that may be adopted by the departments is to ensure community based vocational rehabilitation centers. The skills that are learned from the centers must align with current open labour market needs.

#### **4.6.1.3 CREATE MORE AWARENESS WITH REGARD TO DISABILITY MATTERS**

##### **Create more awareness of government subsidies and support**

As suggested by the participants various departments such as Department of Labour, Sita and Sars must employ a more aggressive approach and make organisations aware of the subsidies and tax benefits related to employing people with disabilities. Media can also be used to assist in the process so that even small medium businesses within the communities are encouraged to employ people with disabilities.

##### **Create more awareness with regards to disabilities**

The media must realize the significant role that they play with regards to information sharing.

It is recommended that people within media must include more relevant programmes that are geared to increase general public awareness and promote integration of people with disabilities in their communities. Such programmes should be done in such a way that they target various disabilities.

#### **4.6.1.3. MORE RESEARCH IN DISABILITY AND EMPLOYEMNT**

It is recommended that the researchers look further in the area of disability and employment. These are some of the topics that are recommended that future research can concentrate

- The cost related to employing a person with a visual disability
- Support structures available to employers and employees with regards to disability at work
- The correlation between disability grants and employment

#### **4.6.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

It can be concluded that the aim of the study which was to identify and describe factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector, as perceived by them was achieved. The findings of the research revealed that societal negative attitudes towards people with visual disabilities, the failure of the work and related environments to accommodate special needs of people with visual disabilities are among the factors that hinder their ability to be active members in the open labour.

The researcher hopes that the findings of this research will stipulate more studies in the area of employment of people with disabilities and also contribute to the existing limited literature with regard to the topic.



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**BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

**This questionnaire refers to the background or biographic information. The information will allow the researcher to compare groups of participants and your response will remain anonymous.**

**Please answer all questions by marking X on the appropriate box**

<b>Age</b>	
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<b>Gender</b>	<b>Female</b>		<b>Male</b>	
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<b>Nature of impairment</b>	
Physical	
Mental or Psychological	
Hearing	
Visual	

<b>Population group</b>	<b>Black</b>		<b>Coloured</b>		<b>Indian or Asian</b>		<b>White</b>	
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<b>Educational level</b>		<b>Employment history</b>	
No formal education		Never been employed	
Primary School		Employed	
Secondary School		Student	
FET qualification		Searching for employment	
University /Technikon qualification		Protective/sheltered employment	
Other please specify		Other please specify	



**CONTENT QUESTIONS**

- What problems are you experiencing or had experienced in your work environment?

Ke mathatha afe ao o hlakanago le ona tikologong ya mosomo?

- What barriers did you experience when you were looking for employment?

Ke dithibela dife tseo o kopaneng le tsona ge one o nyaka mosomo?

- How do you survive with a visual disability?

O phomelela bjang, o le sefofu?

- What strategies would you recommend to key role players to employ and retain people with visual disabilities in the work place?

Ke maele a fe a malebisha ao o ka a fago baetapele go fa batho mesomo goba go tshwarelela batho bao ba sego ba felela botse mmeleng mosomo?

P.O.BOX 44

IRENE

0062

Tel: 012 4002566/083 7374 731

Director  
South African National Council for the Blind  
Pretoria

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: Request to conduct focus groups for purpose of investigating perceptions of people with visual disabilities regarding employment**

I hereby request to be granted permission of conducting focus groups and using members of Association of Persons with Disability as participants. I am a final year student pursuing Masters in Health and Welfare and the study is a partial fulfillment of completing my master's degree. The details of the study are as follow:

**Title:** Factors affecting people with disabilities in the employment sector

**Study Aim:** To provide an explorative analysis of the factors that affect people with disabilities in the employment sector.

Participation of your members will be voluntary and anonymous and information obtained during the focus groups will be treated with confidentiality. A consent form will be provided for each participant to complete before the focus groups and the purpose of the research study will be explained to the participants. On completion of the study, research findings will be shared with your organisation.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated

Tabisa Caga

**CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

**I, the undersigned, ----- (Name of the applicant)**

**I.D-----of -----**  
**-----**

**----- (home address)**

**HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:**

1. I was invited to participate in a research project titled **“Factors affecting people with disabilities in the employment sector”** which is being undertaken by Tabisa Caga as part of the requirements of Masters in Health and Welfare from the Faculty of Health Sciences, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.
2. The research study aim to investigate factors that affect people with visual disabilities in the employment sector and the results of the research findings may be published in professional conferences and publications
3. I understand that I will complete the consent form and forward it to the researcher before I participate on the research and I will complete the biographical questionnaire and attend the focus group meeting/s.
4. My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or publication by the researcher.

5. My participation is voluntary and I can pull out any time during the research should I want to.
6. Participation in this study will not cost me
7. I give the researcher permission to use recorded audiotape during focus groups discussion.

**I consent voluntarily to participate in the above – mentioned research study**

**Signed at -----on -----**

**Signature of the applicant -----**