DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES: A CASE STUDY ON TRANSITION TO FORMAL EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Karina Fischer Mogensen

Student number: MGNKAR007

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Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Faculty of Health Sciences

University of Cape Town

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Supervisor: Professor Harsha Kathard

Co-Supervisor: Professor Theresa Lorenzo

University of Cape Town

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Declaration

I, Karina Fischer Mogensen do hereby declare that this thesis titled, Disability Employment Support Services: A Case Study on Transition to Formal Employment for Persons with Disabilities in South Africa, is my own work and it has not been submitted to any other University for a degree or examination. Also, I do hereby declare that all the sources of information I have used or quoted have been acknowledged and indicated in the reference list. I have used the 6th edition of the American Psychology Association referencing style.

Signed:

Name: Karina Fischer Mogensen Date: 20 January 2022

Abstract

General unemployment rates are high in South Africa, but unemployment rates for persons with disabilities in the open labour market are still considerably higher than those of able-bodied persons. Research has identified a number of barriers which hinder the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the open labour market. These barriers include poor quality education and health care, lack of sufficient accessible infrastructure and information, lack of appropriate knowledge of and access to reasonable accommodation, and attitudinal barriers in society including a narrow belief that equates disability with inability to work. On top of these barriers black persons with disabilities are further marginalised due to the historical intersectional influences of race, poverty and disability in South Africa.

With a label of 'non-productive' and dependent, persons with disabilities struggle to access the open labour market, and sustainable decent formal employment is not a reality for many persons with disabilities. Often a capitalist labour market excludes people not only from getting an income but also from other aspects of well-being such as active participation in one's community, and it denies people the opportunity to realise their basic human rights and human dignity. Disability Employment Support Services (DESS) provide specific supports to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities but there is little formal knowledge in this area.

Through a qualitative case study, I sought to understand why South Africa is still struggling to make real advancements for persons with disabilities in formal employment. The research question was: How are DESS provided by a disability NGO facilitating transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa?

The study included the main stakeholders as study participants, namely learners with disabilities, the DESS provider, and host employers of the DESS learners. The study site was a disability NGO in the Western Cape Province in South Africa providing DESS.

The main findings of the study were:

- The importance of an integrated support structure for learners with disabilities in and around the classroom and the workplace including family, peers, work colleagues as well as a health system for impairment management.
- The DESS struggled to close the hard skills gap for persons with disabilities with substantial work experience and accredited qualifications.
- Host employers became disability confident through interpersonal connections with persons with disabilities. The disability confidence however did not translate into significant changes for workplace inclusivity.
- The DESS opened doors to the world of work for the learners with disabilities for temporary work placements but lacked effective tools for sustainable transformation of the workplaces.
- Learners with disabilities graduated from the DESS with hopes and dreams for their future careers, but they were then left to their own devices with limited capabilities to transition into formal employment.
- With these findings the study provided new knowledge for almost non-existing evidence on the outcomes of DESS for persons with disabilities to transition into formal employment.

In investigating the research question of how DESS provided by a disability NGO are facilitating transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa the study found that the DESS and the disability NGO are indeed a key opportunity for support of persons with disabilities. However, the DESS are not enough to bridge the transition gap into formal employment. The study identified the need for broadening the thinking of transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment beyond the provision of DESS. The study therefore offer a new Integrated Inclusive Employment Approach enabled by a radical disability transformation in the labour market for formal employment of persons with disabilities emphasising well-being for jobseekers and employees with disabilities. The Integrated Inclusive Employment Approach focuses on both the supply and demand side of the labour market for upskilling persons with disabilities *and* systemic changes in the open labour

market where employers take equal responsibility for social justice and workers' dignity and well-being.

Acknowledgement

So many people have supported me in this journey, directly and indirectly. They made this journey possible.

Firstly, my study participants who all shared so willingly and openly. All their stories and experiences have contributed with new important knowledge as well as had a profound influence on me personally as my perspectives have widened.

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Prologue

I would like to share my story of what lead me to my PhD journey. In particular, I would like to share moments and experiences which have brought me to where I am and which have shaped me personally and my professional pathway leading to a PhD in Disability Studies.

I did a BA in Ethnography and Social Anthropology at Aarhus University in Denmark and in 2005 I graduated with a MSc in Development Studies from the University of Aalborg, Denmark. Right up until I graduated, basically no university graduates were struggling to find jobs in Denmark, regardless of their academic discipline. Due to a stagnation in the labour market that year, however, my fellow graduates and I got no jobs – at least not within our field or at our education level. In the Danish social welfare state, I was by no means left destitute, but I definitely felt the discouragement and frustration growing with each job rejection. After a year of unemployment, I went for an interview with a small Danish NGO, Ghana Friends, for a position as a development worker with their partner organisation in north Ghana. The interview went really well – and I was told I was a strong second. But seconds get no jobs! I was 'beaten' by a candidate with 30 years of work experience in Africa. After a few days of wallowing in the disappointment, I realised that I could use a Danish government scheme for new graduates. I called Ghana Friends and told them of the scheme, and they were immediately on board. That meant that the Danish government covered my salary for one year. I ended up working with the woman with 30 years of development experience in Africa. The Danish government scheme and a mentor with immense experience had a defining role in my early career path.

With experience in Ghana, I then got a job with the Danish Association of the Blind (DAB), based at their long-term partner organisation, Ghana Blind Union (GBU), in the capital of Ghana. This was my first professional engagement with persons with disabilities and I had wonderful people both at DAB and at GBU to introduce me to the disability movement. With both organisations being Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), they were firmly rooted in a membership structure governed by persons with visual impairments. In the 3,5 years I worked at GBU, I engaged across all the

organisation's programmes and with all levels of their membership. Two moments in particular left a permanent and defining impression on me. The first one was related to GBU's Youth Wing, which was governed by the youth members of the organisation with support from the secretariate. My colleagues and I at the secretariate at times had our challenges with the Youth Wing as we struggled to contain their 'governing' within the funded projects. Our Director at GBU then reminded us that the youth are supposed to challenge us (the established structures) and it is from the youth that new ideas emerge. I also worked closely with members of the Youth Wing to establish a Sports Wing of the GBU. My director's words have stuck with me – and I am sure have influenced my study focus on youth with disabilities and their early career paths.

The other moment which has stuck with me came after I left GBU. I had worked a lot with GBU's Women's Wing and with the executives. While I was visiting Ghana about a year later, the President of the Women's Wing told me how much she missed me. Both as a friend but also as a colleague, as I had worked **with** the Women's Wing and we had made decisions on projects together. She implied this was definitely not the case with the new (Ghanaian sighted) project manager. The new project manager instead made all the decisions for the Women's Wing, making the executives feel as if they were in empty positions without power. I think my approach to working with the Women's Wing and (unconsciously at the time) empowerment came through my introduction to and grounding in the disability movements (as opposed to a service organisation). I hope and I strive to keep this grounding in empowerment and ownership for people and I have strived to foregrounding my study participants with disabilities in my thesis.

I arrived in South Africa in June 2009 on a six-month contract employed by the Danish national umbrella DPO and based at their relatively new partner organisation in Cape Town. My job was to support the organisation specifically in developing work and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. We worked with protective workshops, with enterprise development, and with formal employment, working both with persons with disabilities and employers. I ended up working at the organisation for almost four years. The work was exciting as we got to work with so many different stakeholders and test new ideas. The frustration came as I felt that we were not

making significant headway. This was not just within the organisation but a feeling I had with the general development and disability environment – and a bigger frustration with the 'business of development'. This frustration led me to focus more on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) aspects as I felt this would give me tools for learning, to see what works and what does not work. I then did a post-graduate degree in M&E at Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

In 2014 I started a consultancy company with a good South African friend and now fellow PhD student. M&E is still a central tool in my work with DPOs, disability organisations, NGOs, government institutions, funders, and corporates to support disability inclusive development. I have been lucky to be able to continue working in Africa and especially in South Africa. Work and employment have featured prominently in the consultancy work I have done and having done evaluations of employment preparation programmes for persons with disabilities and especially youth with disabilities has greatly influenced my study focus and how I have approached it. It has been an advantage having these experiences as a background and context for my study. Having these prior experiences has also meant that I have continuously had to check my own pre-assumptions about my study focus and to ensure that I let my data speak in my findings and theorising.

Another central aspect of my professional identity (which overlaps with a personal identity) is being a Danish 'development worker' working in Africa. There is no doubt that 'development worker' has a connotation of the Global North coming to help the Global South with expert knowledge and skills that will solve the Global South's problems – maybe a 'white saviour' image also comes to mind. I have to believe though that with the Danish DPOs' development approach of solidarity and long-term partnerships with Global South DPOs, we at least strive to do development right as much as possible – within a structure of still unequal power due to the legacy of colonialism and where the funding is coming from. I still believe we can do development better. Not in the North/South way it has traditionally been done and still often is being done, but development driven from and done by the Global South, with the relevant support from the Global North as defined and requested by the Global South. In this, development workers from both the Global South and North, with a

grounding in empowerment, ownership, sustainability, learning, and inclusion, are essential and I want to be part of that community – a community of decolonising development in Africa.

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Abbreviations

ALMP	Active Labour Market Programmes
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CLET	Collage Life Elicitation Technique
DESS	Disability Employment Support Services
DoH	Declaration of Helsinki
DPO	Disabled People Organisation
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EEA	Employment Equity Act
GBDN	Global Business Disability Network
HR	Human Resource
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
IIEA	Integrated Inclusive Employment Approach
ILO	International Labour Organization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
PWT	Psychology of Working Theory
SAQA	South Africa Qualification Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organization
WPA	World Programme of Africa

Glossary of Terms

Language and words have meaning, and it is important to acknowledge that there is both a sender and a receiver of any communication. The meaning of words and how to talk about individuals and groups, especially marginalised and oppressed groups, are ongoing debates, but I find it most important to listen to people and how they express themselves. In this thesis I have taken certain decisions on the terminology, especially regarding disability and race. These decisions are guided by the literature, by the South African context, my study participants, and discussions with my supervisors. I list the terminology used in the thesis below as well as define some key concepts of this thesis.

Able-bodied persons: I use able-bodied persons to described people without disclosed or diagnosed disabilities (Swartz, 2010). I use this term as it was predominantly used by my study participants. In some instances, I use 'persons without disabilities' when the sentence includes both 'persons with and without disabilities' for ease of reading.

Black African: This term is used in this thesis to describe people with African ancestry (www.statssa.gov.za).

Black people: When using the term **'**black people', I use it as per the South African legislation as "a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians" (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003, p. 4).

Coloured: The term "coloured" is a South Africa racial classification coined during apartheid as a means to collectively identify individuals of "mixed race" descent. It is still used in South Africa as per the legislation where coloured people are included in the generic term 'black people' (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003).

Disablism / ableism: Both terms describe disability discrimination and I use both terms in this thesis because the emphasis is different. Disablism emphasises discrimination against persons with disabilities (the other). Ableism emphasises

structures, systems and environments favouring able-bodied persons (the norm) (Goodley, 2017).

Disabled People's Organisation: Disability organisations can be classified as 'for' or 'of' organisations, though at times there are overlaps. An 'of' disability organisation is traditionally an organisation founded and managed by persons with disabilities themselves and which traditionally has a strong advocacy focus. These organisations are referred to as Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) (World Health Organization, 2010a).

Disability Non-Government Organisation: This is used in this thesis to describe an organisation founded and managed by able-bodied persons based on funding from the government and other development funding organisations and agencies. The organisation is a service organisation offering services to persons with disabilities (World Health Organization, 2010a).

Formal economy: This is regulated by the government and includes both the public and private sectors. Workers in the formal economy are employed on contracts with a salary and receive benefits such as pension schemes and health insurance as per the national labour legislation (World Health Organization, 2010c).

Formal employment: This is used to described "wage employment in a public or private organisation or firm in the formal economy" (World Health Organization, 2010c, p. 4).

Global South: This phrase broadly refers to the regions of Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania. The phrase refers to regions outside of Europe and North America, which are mostly low-income countries and often globally politically and culturally marginalised. The use of Global South, instead of for example Third World or developing countries, also marks a shift from a focus on development or cultural difference towards an increased emphasis on geopolitical relations of power (Dado & Connell, 2012).

Informal economy: This is unregulated and includes small-scale agriculture, petty traders, home-based enterprises, small businesses employing a few workers, and a multitude of similar activities (World Health Organization, 2010c).

National Qualification Framework (NQF): This is the South African formal framework for the credits assigned to each level of learning achievements to ensure that the skills and knowledge that have been learnt are recognised throughout the country (National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008). NQF Level 1 is equivalent to grade 9 in the South African primary education system and Level 4 equivalent to grade 12, the National Senior Certificate. NQF Level 7 is equivalent to a Bachelor's Degree, Level 9 is equivalent to a Master's Degree, and NQF Level 10 is equivalent to a Doctor's Degree.

Open labour market: Labour market refers to the supply of and demand for labour. Workers provide the supply and employers provide the demand. As a major component of any economy, it is intricately linked to markets for capital, goods, and services. The term 'open labour market' emphases a labour market where workers (including persons with disabilities) compete on an equal basis for competitive paid employment (International Labour Organization, 2015).

Persons with disabilities: Persons with disabilities "include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006, p. 4). I use 'persons with disabilities' in this thesis, based on the terminology used in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Protective workshops: These **"**are spaces which provide for safe, accessible and development-oriented environments where persons with severe disabilities are able to socialise, learn basic skills, engage in basic work and earn some additional income to supplement their social grant" (Department of Social Development, 2016, p. 26). These workshops are most often funded by the government and either run and managed by disability NGOs or structured as 'self-help groups' run and managed by

persons with disabilities themselves. In this thesis, the protective workshops are not regarded as being part of the open labour market.

Sheltered employment: “These spaces offer short to long term employment to persons with disabilities who wish to participate in the development of the economy, but who lack sufficient work and technical skills and productivity levels. These programmes must focus on developing, facilitating and strengthening initiatives to advance access to gainful and sustainable work for persons with disabilities, who require disability-specific vocational training” (Department of Social Development, 2016, p. 16). Sheltered employment initiatives are often offered by disability NGOs. Sheltered employment and protective workshops are often used interchangeably and the interventions often overlap. In this thesis, sheltered employment is not regarded as being part of the open labour market.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA): SAQA is a statutory body with members appointed by the Minister of Education in consultation with the Minister of Labour. SAQA is mandated by legislation to oversee the development and implementation of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (https://www.saqa.org.za/).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Focus of Study

> In addition to providing income, work can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement, strengthening individuals, their families and communities. Such progress, however, hinges on work that is decent (International Labour Organization, 2015, p. V).

The quote shows the significance of work – that work is not just about providing an income, important as that is, but also about strengthening and empowering individuals, families, and communities. Work is, in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda, situated as a human rights and social justice issue which is central to people's well-being (ILO, 2008).

The benefits of decent work apply across the world, across an intersectional nexus of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and for persons with and without disabilities. However, the majority of persons with disabilities of working age still experience low participation rates in the open labour market. If they are employed, they are less likely to be in full-time jobs, and more likely to be in low-paid jobs with poor working conditions and poor promotional prospects as compared to their able-bodied peers. Persons with disabilities have lower relative income levels and have a higher likelihood of living in poverty (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021). In turn, impoverished conditions influence people's social and financial capital negatively making it difficult for them to navigate complex education and training environments and ultimately influence their access to a competitive open labour market (Blustein, Kenny, Di Fabio, & Guichard, 2019, p. 15). As such, for many persons with disabilities who work, it is often precarious instead of decent which affects their overall well-being.

This research focuses on one type of work, namely formal employment and specifically formal employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa. Although there are similarities in employment within the formal and the informal sectors, factors

influencing the two sectors differ significantly in terms of the legislation, socio-economic aspects, and organisational cultures. I found it beneficial to study employment in the two sectors separately to get a more in-depth understanding and analysis of the area. Given the background on how persons with disabilities struggle to access formal employment, my study focuses on interventions aimed at preparing persons with disabilities to transition into formal employment. Specifically, I focus the study on how Disability Employment Support Services (DESS) provided by disability non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in South Africa facilitate the transition into formal employment.

General unemployment rates are high in South Africa, but unemployment rates for persons with disabilities in the formal sector are still considerably higher than those of able-bodied persons, although specific data is extremely limited within this area (Commission for Employment Equity, 2021). Research has identified several barriers which hinder the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the open labour market. These barriers include poor quality education and health care, a lack of sufficient accessible infrastructure and information, a lack of appropriate knowledge of and access to reasonable accommodation, and attitudinal barriers in society including a narrow belief that equates disability with the inability to work (Engelbrecht, Shaw, & van Niekerk, 2017; South African Human Rights Commission, 2015)[1].

DESS are provided by various organisations and institutions beyond primary education[2] to address the barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing formal employment. The services vary between organisations and may be offered as job-matching, recruitment services, and disability training and sensitisation.

[1] The barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing formal employment will be explored in more detail in the literature review in chapter 2.

[2] Basic education in South Africa includes grade R (grade 0) to grade 12. Primary education is compulsory through grade 9. The National Senior Certificate (NSC) exam, also referred to as matric level, is taken upon completion of Grade 12 and grants access to higher education.

Common for the services are a focus on preparing persons with disabilities through training, skills development, life skills development, and in some cases through practical work experience. The services also often have a focus on employers with activities such as disability sensitisation, review and development of policies, accessibility and job audits, and support in the recruitment phase. In South Africa, different terms have been used for such interventions but the term Disability Employment Support Services (DESS) is used by a number of Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), disability NGOs, and companies, and therefore this term will be used in this study.

Due to the range of factors and stakeholders influencing persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment, I chose a qualitative case study as this would give me the opportunity to do an in-depth investigation of the topic. The study site was a disability NGO which provides DESS in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Using the disability NGO as my site gave me the opportunity to get an in-depth understanding of the intervention through multiple perspectives. The service providers' perspectives and experiences in facilitating employment opportunities, and the perspectives of persons with disabilities participating in the DESS and how they experienced the services. The added perspective of employers hosting persons with disabilities for work preparation through the DESS was included. Their inclusion gave me the opportunity to explore the employers' experiences of the DESS as well as their views on the formal employment of persons with disabilities.

While the case study being located in South Africa generates a contextualised understanding, I believe that the findings from this study can contribute to knowledge and discussions of persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment in Africa, the Global South, and internationally.

1.2. Problem Statement

In this section, I present the scale and scope of social problems facing persons with disabilities and focus on the research problem being addressed in this study.

1.2.1. Social problem

South Africa's post-1994 legislative framework is often viewed as progressive, with policies that were designed to address the historical inequality in the country through a focus on fairness and social justice. However, after more than 25 years of a democratic South Africa, Diaz Pabon, Leibbrandt, Ranchhod, and Savage (2021) find that inequality in South Africa is still one of the highest in the world, and that in parts of the society the inequality has even increased. They argue that the labour market is the dominant contributor to income equality and remains a key factor influencing inequality in South Africa because access to the world of work is still unequal and influenced by race and generational poverty (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021).

The general unemployment rate in South Africa was recorded at 29,1% in the last quarter of 2019, and for youth 15-34 years old, a staggering 40% were not in employment, education, or training (NEET) (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The unemployment rates for persons with disabilities in the formal sector are still considerably higher than those of able-bodied persons in South Africa, although the official unemployment rate is not disaggregated by disability. In 2020, 1,3% of the employed workforce in South Africa were persons with disabilities as reported by employers, falling short of the 2% target set by the government (Commission for Employment Equity, 2021). With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting South Africa and its economy hard, the general unemployment rate increased to a reported 32,5% in the last quarter of 2020 and the NEET rate for youth 15-34 years old increased to 41,8% (Statistics South Africa, 2021). The data on employment of persons with disabilities is still limited from when the pandemic hit South Africa, but it can be reasonably assumed that this crisis has impacted persons with disabilities significantly and probably harder than the able-bodied work force as is seen across the world (Hillgrove, 2020).

As formal unemployment rates are high, informal work is often promoted as an alternative, for persons both with and without disabilities. In South Africa, unlike other African countries, the informal sector is small compared to the formal sector in terms of the number of people employed. Furthermore, barriers such as a lack of effective infrastructure and inadequate access to credit facilities have been identified as making entry into employment in the informal sector a further challenge (Festus, Kasongo,

Moses, & Yu, 2016). As these challenges are found for able-bodied South Africans, it must be assumed that persons with disabilities face the same challenges in addition to their compounded barriers related to their disabilities. Work in the informal sector is therefore not necessarily an easier route for persons with disabilities in South Africa as compared to the formal sector, each sector having its own contextual factors.

In examining general youth employment, Patel, Graham, and Chowa (2020) found that in countries with large and growing rates of youth unemployment, such as South Africa, the underlying causes include an expanding youth population with new entrants to the labour market outpacing the number of jobs created. Causes also include the demand for higher skills levels due to the impact of technology, the digitisation of economies, and automation. These factors limit employment prospects for young people, especially for black people and those from poor socio-economic backgrounds with limited skills.

Patel et al.'s (2020) findings do not include a focus on youth with disabilities, but youth with disabilities are faced with the same severe challenges on top of their challenges associated with their impairment and disability. Persons with disabilities are faced with disadvantages early in their lives for various reasons, which set them back even before they reach working age as compared to their able-bodied peers. Low levels of education and poor-quality education are often cited as central in the reasons for persons with disabilities' struggle to access formal employment. Amongst the barriers to accessing quality education for persons with disabilities are the lack of adequate accessible learning material, the fact that teachers are not adequately equipped to teach learners with disabilities, and a common attitude that persons with disabilities will not be able to enter the job market so there is no need to focus on career options (Engelbrecht, Shaw, et al., 2017).

For black persons with disabilities, the challenges are further compounded due to South Africa's past of spatial segregation based on race during colonialism and apartheid. Diaz Pabon et al. (2021) find that the spatial segregation with systemic inequalities in the allocation of education, health, and services during apartheid continues to be a central mechanism reproducing inequalities. The deepest poverty and deprivation in contemporary South Africa are still found in the rural areas where

black people were forcefully relocated to, and the townships established at the outskirts of the larger cities for black people under apartheid. “All in all, White South Africans continue to have better access to opportunities in relation to health, incomes, employment, education and living conditions, which enables them to develop capacities that serve to maintain their privileged positions in South Africa” (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021, p. 113). Patel et al. (2020) also found that it is still particularly complex for disadvantaged young black people to transition to the labour market as compared to their white peers, as black young people are faced with historical disadvantages due to South Africa’s past of apartheid (Patel et al., 2020).

With participation in the labour market identified as one of the dominant factors of inequality, and because persons with disabilities, and especially black persons with disabilities, in South Africa continuously struggle to access formal employment, we continue to reproduce the inequality in the country for persons with disabilities. The DESS are promoted as a way to address the challenges and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in transitioning into formal employment. It therefore becomes essential to understand how these services are able to address the disadvantages experienced by persons with disabilities and how they support the transition into formal employment. In this, it is important to understand how the services are experienced by their target group, especially black persons with disabilities from low socio-economic backgrounds, as they are identified as a group faced with severe challenges in transitioning into formal employment. My research will investigate the DESS’s facilitation of the transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment to contribute to the knowledge on the wider social problems of income inequality in South Africa for persons with disabilities and how to address these circumstances.

1.2.2. Research problem

Accessing formal employment in South Africa is challenging for all in the current economic environment and especially for young people seeking to enter the labour market for the first time. Patel et al. (2020) argue that it is an urgent priority to find evidence-based solutions to facilitate young people’s transition into employment. To add to the evidence-base, they have studied youth employability programmes in South Africa, considering both economic and non-economic indicators as markers for

success of these programmes. In the study by Patel et al. (2020), the participants came into the programmes with high levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and education, despite numerous socio-economic disadvantages. As such, the authors find that there is still a need to experiment with and test new and additional programmes which are responsive to the needs of youth with less formal education and a different personal profile than participants in their study (Patel et al., 2020). Such programmes would be the DESS and such participants would be persons with disabilities.

DPOs, NGOs, governments, employers, and other organisations are increasingly focusing on formal employment for persons with disabilities and offering DESS to facilitate the transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities. The increased focus on formal employment has however not been followed by efforts to establish the outcomes of DESS. This gap is the case globally (Fremlin, 2016, p. 12) and especially in the Global South (Wiggett-Barnard & Swartz, 2012). In other words, we do not know how programmes such as DESS, which are currently offered to facilitate the transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities in the open labour market, are benefitting persons with disabilities and employers and how the services are actually succeeding in facilitating transition into formal employment.

Currently there is a relatively good understanding of what the barriers and challenges are for persons with disabilities in accessing formal employment, but we lack an in-depth understanding on how these barriers and challenges are or can be addressed. The official employment rate provided by the formal sector (Commission for Employment Equity, 2021) is only one indicator of how persons with disabilities are currently struggling to access formal employment in South Africa. There is a need to investigate in depth the factors influencing persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment and how the DESS (aimed at addressing factors that challenge access), are benefitting both persons with disabilities and employers.

This study will contribute to the knowledge gap on the transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment in three areas. Firstly, it will contribute to research from the Global South on disability and formal employment broadly, which is currently still very limited. Secondly, it will contribute specific knowledge on the effects of

interventions aimed at facilitating persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment. Thirdly, the research will foreground the voices and experiences of persons with disabilities, especially black persons with disabilities from poorer socio-economic backgrounds. The research gaps will be approached within a qualitative case study that provides the opportunity for in-depth investigation and understanding to contribute to addressing the wider social problems of income inequality for persons with disabilities in South Africa and the Global South.

1.3. Rationale for the Study

The importance of work for financial independence for persons with disabilities as well as for their participation in other parts of society was clear to me very soon after I started working with DPOs and their members in Africa. What has since become increasingly clear to me is the importance of factors influencing persons with disabilities' participation in the open labour market and the wide range of factors at play. To a large extent, we are aware of external challenges and barriers related to inaccessible and poor health services and formal education, inaccessible infrastructure, and society's negative attitudes and misconceptions towards persons with disabilities. What I have come to realise is the equal importance of the effects of these challenges and barriers on persons with disabilities in a psycho-social sense and their overall well-being, and in turn the influence that psycho-social factors have on persons with disabilities' access to the labour market. This insight is where my interest for this study started as I wondered why we have not been able to make any real advancement for persons with disabilities in formal employment. In this study, I intend to investigate and understand the interplay of factors influencing persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment and especially to understand the role of psycho-social factors in the interplay with other factors.

The rationale for my study is also grounded in how I have seen persons with disabilities being positioned in the labour market and how employers often see persons with disabilities as workers (or rather 'non-workers'). I found these experiences explained by Thomas (2002), as she examined the relationship between disability and modes of production. She argues that with the emergence of industrial capitalism, persons with

disabilities began to be systematically excluded from direct involvement in economic activities and increasingly socially positioned under the category of the 'non-productive' and the dependant (Thomas, 2002). This view has partly meant that, in most parts of the world, persons with disabilities are seldom found in formal employment but predominantly work in the informal economy, are self-employed, or work in sheltered workplaces specifically for persons with disabilities (Fremlin, 2016).

In the current global economy with a predominant neoliberal agenda, working people end up becoming mere resources and sources of wealth. Human well-being is, in this economy, linked to the production of profit, wealth, and power. With a label of 'non-productive' and dependent, persons with disabilities still struggle to access the open labour market, and sustainable decent formal employment is not a reality for many persons with disabilities (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021). Falling into the category of 'non-productive' and dependent in a capitalist labour market excludes people not only from getting an income but also from other aspects of well-being such as active participation in one's community, and it denies people the opportunity to realise their basic human rights and human dignity (Soresi, Nota, Ferrari, & Scott Solberg, 2008, p. 414). Essentially, people's perceived human worth diminishes. In the current labour market, it seems that we are continuing to reproduce the inequalities and labels of the past for persons with disabilities.

Due to persons with disabilities' exclusion from formal employment, there is a tendency to focus on the informal economy and subsistence self-employment as avenues for income (Sefotho, 2014). These areas are of utmost importance for persons with disabilities, especially in the Global South and in the current ever-changing economy and competitive labour market. However, like with able-bodied persons, not all persons with disabilities are interested in or have the disposition to pursue self-employment.

Furthermore, I find that when it comes to work for persons with disabilities, a prevalent sentiment is that persons with disabilities must be happy and appreciative of any opportunity available to them, regardless of their interest and talent. Challenging the labels of 'non-productive' and dependent and creating an inclusive labour market for all are essential to addressing the current inequality, which leaves persons with

disabilities at the bottom of society, both in terms of material assets and perceived human worth.

My research is based on the premise that there is a need to broaden the range of income opportunities for persons with disabilities and to create a more inclusive labour market across sectors to address the inequality in South Africa. The knowledge generated from this research can hopefully generate changes in practice to ensure that persons with disabilities can equally and freely choose from a variety of career options in the same way as their able-bodied peers within the formal and informal economies and between self-employment and formal employment.

My research will hopefully contribute to opening the range of work and free choice for persons with disabilities, specifically focusing on persons with disabilities' access to formal employment. There is an increasing understanding of the types of barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing formal employment, but the employment rates for persons with disabilities in the open labour market are still not improving. Through an in-depth case study of DESS and how such services facilitate persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment, I have with this study sought to understand why South Africa is still struggling to make real advancements for persons with disabilities in formal employment. Through analysing the nature of the DESS and the services they offer, I wanted to understand how they address the barriers and challenges to formal employment for persons with disabilities as currently this is largely unknown. In my case study, I wanted to include the main stakeholders' perspectives, namely persons with disabilities, the DESS providers, and host employers of the DESS, as well as their perspectives on the broader context in which the formal employment of persons with disabilities is situated.

1.4. Study Context

Growing up in Denmark, one of the most equal societies in the world, at least as measured by the Gini coefficient, and the third happiest nation according to the World Happiness Report 2021 (Helliwell et al., 2021), and now living in one of the most unequal countries in the world puts a magnifying glass on my own life as well as the global inequality. Living in South Africa, the inequality hits me every day, in small and

larger shocks, constantly reminding me of my inherent privilege given to me by the mere fact of where I was born and the colour of my skin. Due to my background, I will never be able to fully comprehend what the inequality means for the diverse peoples of South Africa or what the immense changes the country has seen mean for people's lives. Living, working, and studying in Africa and South Africa have, however, given me some insight into the South African context (historically, politically, economically, socially, and culturally) which is fundamental in seeking to do justice to this study.

The previous sections have focused on the context in terms of the specific problems of persons with disabilities' transition into the formal labour market, especially in South Africa. This section widens the scope to look at the national policy and governance context as well as the macro-economic context in which persons with disabilities and the DESS are situated.

Firstly, I give an overview of how the approach to disability has developed over time within a national political context. This is followed by a section detailing more specifically how South Africa has included disability into economic and employment policies and guidelines, and some macro-economic indicators for how persons with disabilities are positioned in the labour market. A section also focuses on the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) learnerships, as they are a main strategy in the government's programmes for workforce upskilling and a core component in many DESS, including the DESS used as the case site in this study.

1.4.1. Disability in South Africa

South Africa's history is unique compared to the rest of Africa, with the onset of apartheid in 1948 and the racial segregation system only being abolished in 1994. South Africa's past of colonisation and apartheid continues to have a profound effect on today's society and although South Africa was the largest economy in Africa until very recently, it is also one of the most unequal societies in the world with an enormous gap between the richest and the poorest in the country (Miyajima, 2021). South Africa is at the same time regarded as having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world based on a rights-based approach to protect all South Africans against unfair

discrimination. The constitution specifically mentions the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

With the first democratically elected government in 1994, persons with disabilities were given high priority as South Africa developed a legislative framework which, over the years, has moved from being based on a medical model of disability to a social model. In 2007, South Africa was amongst the first countries in the world to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations, 2006), signalling a commitment to a rights-based approach to disability[3].

In 2007, the Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities was established to act as a coordinating department for mainstreaming disability across the different ministries and departments. In 2014, this department was dissolved, and disability was moved to the Department of Social Development. By many in the disability sector, this was seen as taking a step backwards and reducing disability to a purely social development issue, seeing persons with disabilities as passive recipients of social services and grants – that is, as dependents. After the national election in 2018, disability was moved again, this time in what seemed like a re-prioritisation of disability, back into the Office of the Presidency under the Department for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. The Presidential Working Group on Disability, which includes disability sector stakeholders, was established in 2019 to advise the Presidency on the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities in South Africa.

To me, the fact that disability has moved across different ministries and levels of the government illustrates how complex the issue of disability is and how it does not fit into one governmental portfolio or budget. That disability has not had a stable home within the government also means that on a regular basis disability has been re-prioritised, upwards or downwards, and that the overarching disability legislative framework and domestication of the UNCRPD are still a work in progress. This work

[3] Different models and approaches to disability are included in Chapter 3 outlining the conceptual framework of this study.

in progress is illustrated by the fact that the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 2016 (Department of Social Development, 2016) is just that: a White Paper still waiting to be passed into law. The signal the government sends with resituating disability on a regular basis and not passing the White Paper into law likely also influences the prioritisation of disability across ministries and departments as well as the labour market. For example, where does the responsibility for ensuring access and opportunities for active participation for persons with disabilities in the economy lie if disability is viewed as a social issue? An open labour market based on a capitalistic economy is naturally not concerned about social issues but rather focused on the production of profit and wealth based on high-productive workers. Further, in a country which since 1994 has moved from apartheid to democracy, but which also has severe challenges of corruption within government (Von Holdt, 2019), a struggling economy with limited growth, and an education system still battling the past of race segregated education and still struggling to deliver quality education for all (Diaz Pabon et. al., 2021), the issue of disability easily falls between the cracks.

The open labour market in low- and middle-income countries, including South Africa, is often described as dualistic, that is, composed of two sectors: the formal and the informal sector. Unlike other African countries, the formal sector in South Africa employs the majority of workers. In the South African formal sector, including both public and private employers, the financial and business services sectors have become the main drivers to create economic growth in terms of value added and employment. The sectors of agriculture, mining, and manufacturing, which previously employed large numbers of workers, on the other hand have collapsed (Bhorat, Lilenstein, Oosthuizen, & Thornton, 2020). This means that the demand side of the labour market is skills-intensive whereas the supply side of labour is characterised by low- or un-skilled workers. Bhorat, Naidoo, Oosthuizen, and Pillay (2015) argue that “Essentially, the mismatch between labour demand and labour supply goes to the heart of what is wrong with the structure of South Africa’s growth pattern” (Bhorat et al., 2015, p. 18). This mismatch is seen in an oversupply of labour amongst the low-skilled majority, a majority which many persons with disabilities fall within.

With limited economic growth, insufficient numbers of jobs are created to include the increasing number of new entrants into the labour market. To address the persistently high unemployment rates, the South African government has implemented a number of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) in the form of job retaining schemes, public employment schemes, and firm-based wage subsidy interventions (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021). The public sector employs about a quarter of the South African workforce and has in recent years been responsible for the majority of new jobs created in South Africa due to the public employment schemes (Bhorat et al., 2015). Despite the substantial growth of ALMPs in South Africa over the last decade, the effects of these programmes and policies are still unclear and they may not have had the desired impact on the labour market (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021). Bhorat, Steenkamp, and Lilenstein (2019) therefore call for evaluations to be built into the implementation of the ALMPs and employment schemes to determine the different outcomes, especially in terms of job creation.

There is a general lack of reliable and up-to-date data and information about persons with disabilities in the South African open labour market. There is no doubt though that, as in any society, persons with disabilities in South Africa are amongst the most marginalised and poorest people in the country and severely affected by the income inequality in the country. What is regarded as the most reliable data available comes from the 2001 census, which estimated that 5% of the South Africa population have a disability (Statistics South Africa, 2005, p. 11). This is still regarded by many as a low estimate and the World Health Organization's World Report on Disability estimated that the disability prevalence rate in Africa is 15% (World Health Organization, 2011, p. 30). Having reliable data of how many persons with disabilities live in South Africa is one of the basic pillars of being able to design, plan, budget, and implement, for example, ALMPs, which will also include persons with disabilities as a target group. Currently, South Africa is still missing reliable data disaggregated for disability for most areas, including for the labour market.

The next section takes a closer look at the policy context as it specifically pertains to formal employment and persons with disabilities.

1.4.2. Policy context on disability and formal employment

The rather depressing data on the employment of persons with disabilities mentioned previously is a reality, even though overall in the literature the South African legislation on disability and employment is shown to be progressive and to serve as a good framework for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the economy. In analysing the South African legislation, the ILO found that South Africa has made tremendous progress since the first democratic election and could serve as a model for other African countries (International Labour Office – Skills and Employability Department, 2007, p. 26).

The South African legislative framework has had an increased focus on transformation in the labour market to ensure equal access to work and employment for all focusing on 'previously disadvantaged groups' – the legal term including black people, women, and persons with disabilities. As such, persons with disabilities are included specifically in the legislative framework on skills development, employment, and economic development, which includes initiatives of affirmative action. At the same time, using the term 'previously disadvantaged' implies that the factors causing disadvantages for these groups have been addressed, which the literature on persistent inequality in South Africa clearly shows is not the case.

The legislation which influences the employment of persons with disabilities directly is the Employment Equity Act (EEA) (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998), with the supporting Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects on Employment of Persons with Disabilities (Department of Labour, 2015) and the Technical Assistance Guidelines on Employment of Persons with Disabilities (Department of Labour, 2007). The Skills Development Act (Skills Development Act 97 of 1998) and the Skills Development Levies Act (Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999). also support the EEA by making provision for skills development of disadvantaged groups.

The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act[4] (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003) and the related scorecard likewise include a section on the employment of persons with disabilities. The B-BBEE scorecard awards private companies points for ownership, management control, and employment equity in terms of the percentage of black people overall and with a specific focus on black women and black persons with disabilities. The scorecard also includes points for skills development, affirmative procurement, enterprise development, and socio-economic development (Corporate Social Responsibility) related to these population groups. These points translate into companies' B-BBEE levels, which are a determining factor for awarding government tenders. Many companies therefore have a continuous focus on ensuring that they have a high B-BBEE level. Public employers are likewise subjected to the focus in the B-BBEE Act and are, like private companies, supposed to meet a target of 2% employees with disabilities.

[4] In the B-BBEE Act and in the South African legislation generally, the term 'Black people' is used to describe people who were previously discriminated against during the apartheid era due to their race. This includes black people, coloured people, and Indians.

Figure 1: South Africa legislative framework in disability and formal employment

(Created by Fischer Mogensen for this study, 2021)

In Chapter 2, I examine the policy landscape, further looking at how or whether the South African legislation on disability and employment is implemented, and to what extent the policies are enablers of formal employment for persons with disabilities.

One of the initial central legislative pieces on disability in South Africa is the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS) (Office of the Deputy

President, 1997). The INDS lists a number of factors which, at the time, influenced the high levels of unemployment amongst persons with disabilities:

- 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 menial labour is often the only option for poorly skilled jobseekers
- Inadequate access to information
- Ignorance in society

(Office of the Deputy President, 1997, p. 7).

Since 1997, policies and interventions have identified challenges and barriers faced by persons with disabilities to access employment, and yet these challenges and barriers have not been addressed and persons with disabilities still struggle to access the labour market.

The following section will describe one of the central initiatives established by the South African government to address one of the main challenges also identified in the INDS, namely, the low skills level found amongst persons with disabilities.

1.4.2.1. Policy implementation on skills development

One of the driving initiatives for addressing the challenges within the primary education system and low skills level in South Africa is the SETAs, established under the Department of Labour. The SETAs are aimed at increasing investment in skills development in order to improve productivity and competitiveness of industry, business, commerce, and services, and to address the challenges of social development and the eradication of poverty (Skills Development Act 97 of 1998).

There are currently 21 SETAs covering different industries and occupations. The larger SETAs include:

- Education, Training and Development Practices SETA
- Services SETA
- Wholesale and Retail SETA
- AgriSETA
- Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA
- Health and Welfare SETA
- Local Government SETA

(Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018)

The SETAs offer skills development through learnerships, internships, unit-based skills programmes, and apprenticeships, with learnerships having the highest number of enrolments. The SETA programmes are especially targeted at 'previously disadvantaged groups' and youth under 34 years.

Within the disability sector, the SETA learnerships have also increasingly become part of the services disability NGOs and disability-focused recruitment agencies offer to persons with disabilities and employers, such as the DESS. For example, the national umbrella DPO, Disabled People South Africa (DPSA), offers SETA learnerships in partnership with the Services SETA (Services SETA, n.d.).

Disability NGOs such as Disability Workshop Development Enterprise (DWDE) (www.dwde.co.za) and Epilepsy SA Western Cape Branch (Epilepsy South Africa, n.d.) offer SETA learnerships across different SETAs. Private recruitment agencies such as Bradshaw Le Roux – Disability Inclusion Specialists (BradshawLeRoux, n.d.). and Altitude Skills Development (https://altitudeskillsdevelopment.co.za/) focus specifically on supporting persons with disabilities to enter into employment and supporting employers in hiring persons with disabilities, amongst other services through SETA learnerships.

As such, the SETA learnerships have become a significant opportunity in seeking to upskill the South African workforce with disabilities. The SETAs provide both

substantial funding and business opportunities for organisations and private companies in providing services to persons with disabilities and employers.

The SETA learnership programmes are implemented by these various organisations with funding from the SETAs for both learners with and without disabilities. The skills development programme is a combination of classroom teaching and workplace experiences, and spans a period of 12-18 months. The learners are paid a stipend to cover transport and basic needs. Employers receive a tax rebate and a grant per learner. Organisations who include learners with disabilities get an additional disability grant per learner to provide for reasonable accommodation. The learnerships including persons with disabilities are implemented either with a mainstreaming approach, including persons with disabilities in learnership with able-bodied learners, or by implementing learnerships specifically for persons with disabilities, with the latter approach being the most common. Organisations implementing SETA learnerships are eligible for points in the B-BBEE scorecard under the category of skills development. As such, organisations benefit in terms of B-BBEE points if they include black people and further points for black persons with disabilities.

The learnerships give the participants who pass a qualification within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on NQF Level 1-10. The qualifications through the SETA learnerships are therefore often used as a supplement for incomplete or poor-quality primary education for persons with disabilities or for those who acquired a disability and therefore need to be reskilled.

The number of learnerships offered through the SETAs has increased over recent years. Table 1 shows the number of people registered and certificated on the SETA learnerships across all SETAs in the years 2011-2017.

Table 1: Number of SETA learnerships registered and certificated 2011-2017

Year	Registered	Certificated
2011/2012	43 871	29 197
2012/2013	50 885	37 158
2013/2014	75 782	38 796
2014/2015	77 931	40 891
2015/2016	94 369	43 332
2016/2017	101 447	58 080
Total	444 285	247 454

(Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018, p. 81)

The number of people registered and of those certificated are not directly related within the same years as some may register in one year and only finish the following year. The numbers do give an indication of the certificated rates from the SETA learnerships. Over the total reporting period of 2011-2017, of the number of registered, 55,7% were certificated. This means that just more than half of the people who entered the SETA learnerships left with a certificate of accredited skills. The data reported on by the Department of Higher Education and Training (2018) for the SETAs is not disaggregated on disability and the report does not specify how many of the people registered or certificated are persons with disabilities. The Services SETA, as one of the larger SETAs, reported that in the period 2016-2018, of the people registered for learnerships, between 3% and 7% were persons with disabilities (Services SETA, 2018, pp. 32-38). The report does not provide data on how many of the enrolled persons with disabilities completed the learnerships or got certified, testifying to a lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes. The implementation and the impact of the SETAs learnerships are explored in the literature review in Chapter 2.

1.5. Study Site

The Disability NGO used as my study site is situated within the broader policy and employment context as described above. Further, the Disability NGO is influenced by the specific local community context in which it operates. Therefore, this community context is important to include in the study context.

The Disability NGO is located in the City of Cape Town municipality, servicing predominantly the Cape Flats area, southeast of the Cape Town metropole. During apartheid, the government passed the Group Areas Act (1950) which enforced racially segregated residential areas. With this Act, the government forced the black African and coloured populations out of the central and western areas of Cape Town and into areas at the outskirts of the city, many to the Cape Flats, which at the time was practically uninhabited and characterised by deep sand areas and very little infrastructure.

The Cape Flats consists of a number of suburbs, and today is still the home for mostly black African and coloured South Africans. The Cape Flats is highly diverse in its population with all 11 official South African languages being spoken in the different suburbs. However, the suburbs are largely characterised by being either predominantly coloured or black African, with Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English being the most common languages spoken (Statistics South Africa, n.d.-a). The inequality created with the apartheid segregation in residential, educational, and employment areas is still reflected in the Cape Flats, with high levels of poverty, gang violence, and poor infrastructure (Galvaan, 2014).

Table 2 shows examples of two of the largest suburbs in the Cape Flats: Mitchells Plain, a predominantly coloured suburb (90,8% coloured), and Khayelitsha, which is the largest of the informal settlements with a predominantly black African population (98,6%).

Table 2: Socio-economic indicators of Mitchells Plain and Khayelitsha

Indicators	Mitchells Plain	Khayelitsha
Matric as highest level of education	43%	40%
Lower than matric	51%	55%
Youth (15-35 years) NEET	37%	42%
Youth (15-35 years) employment rate	44%	33%
Female headed households	40%	42%
Formal dwellings (Youth 15-35 years)	96%	52%
Households living below or near the national upper-bound poverty line[5]	23,3%	48,9%

[5] National upper-bound poverty line: R1 227 a month (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

(Statistics South Africa, n.d.-b, n.d.-c; Youth Explorer, n.d.-a, n.d.-b)

Both suburbs are significantly impacted by socio-economic factors related to education and poverty. While the primary education indicators are similar for the two suburbs, Khayelitsha with a predominantly black African population bears the largest burdens of poverty and youth unemployment.

Access to disaggregated up-to-date data in South Africa at local level and especially for persons with disabilities is still limited. The above gives a sense of where my study site is located and some of the socio-economic factors characterising the context.

The problem statements, the rationale of my study, and the context as described above gave rise to the following research question and objectives.

1.6. Research Question and Objectives

Research question:

How are Disability Employment Support Services provided by a disability NGO facilitating transition into formal employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa?

Research aim:

The aim of the study is to explore how persons with disabilities and employers are benefitting (or not) from Disability Employment Support Services and how the Disability Employment Support Services address barriers to transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities.

Research objectives:

1) Describe and analyse Disability Employment Support Services offered by a disability NGO in the Western Cape Province in South Africa.
2) Explore how persons with disabilities and employers experience the Disability Employment Support Services offered to them.

3) Explore how the Disability Employment Support Services address barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in transitioning into formal employment.

1.7. Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of eight chapters. The next chapter, chapter 2, reviews the existing literature on disability and employment in a broad sense and homes in on formal employment and interventions for transitions into formal employment. First, I review the literature on the South African legislation and the effects of policies for formal employment of persons with disabilities. This is followed by literature examining challenges and barriers to formal employment for persons with disabilities, and then what factors and support facilitate transition to formal employment – or what potentially can facilitate transition. This will also include research on the SETA learnerships and the impact of these. The literature specifically on formal employment for persons with disabilities in the Global South is limited and especially on what facilitates formal employment. Literature from the Global North is therefore included, and I will make some considerations of how it can be applicable to the Global South.

Chapter 3 builds on the literature review as I put together the conceptual framework for my study, first examining the key concepts of disability and work, including formal employment. This is followed by exploring the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), including the concepts of decent work and well-being, as it may apply to persons with disabilities and how it connects to my study specifically. In this chapter, I also make some considerations about how the conceptual framework applies to the Global South context.

Chapter 4 outlines my research methodology. In this chapter, I describe my approach to the research as a qualitative case study. I firstly position myself and my study within the constructivist paradigm and consider the ontology and epistemology within this. I describe my research design and the reasoning for conducting a qualitative case study. This is then followed by how I identified the study case site as well as my engagements with my research participants, participant selection, and the data collection process. I also outline my analysis process in detail and how I have sought

to ensure scientific rigor and trustworthiness. The research includes human participants, and ethical considerations are essential. These considerations are described in chapter 4.

Chapter 5 presents the research findings. The chapter addresses research objectives 1 and 2 and presents the case (the DESS provided by the Disability NGO) as well as the first level of the analysis exploring the experiences of learners with disabilities and employers. This chapter presents the findings in four overarching themes. The themes are related to the chronologically unfolding processes offered by the DESS which I describe as phases. Under each theme I present the processes in the specific DESS phase followed by sub-themes exploring the DESS experiences further.

Chapter 6 addresses research object 3 of how the DESS addressed the challenges and barriers faced by persons with disabilities in transitioning into formal employment. In this chapter I synthesis my findings across the four themes presented in chapter 5, the literature review and my conceptual framework. This integrated discussion is structure in three main sections i.e., the supply side of the labour market, the demand side of the labour market and the transition gap. In the discussions I use the literature and conceptual framework to further the findings from my case study to highlight the new knowledge my study brings to the case of transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment.

In chapter 7 I present the theory-building. I present how my study has added to the conceptual framework, especially the Psychology of Working Theory and I present a new approach to transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities.

In chapters 5-7 I highlight certain **words and sentences in bold** to draw specific attention to key findings and arguments.

Chapter 8 concludes my thesis where I outline the implications from my study. I consider implications in the areas of future research, theory, policy implementation, the disability sector, curricula, and finally in times of COVID-19. The last section outlines the limitations I had within my study. I end the thesis with some reflections on my personal PhD journey.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents the literature review including literature on both policy and practice. The literature included is primarily focused on the Global South and especially on South Africa as I find it important to acknowledge the context specific factors influencing my study, which may be considerably different from the Global North. The literature review consists of three main sections which review key areas of my study. While I explained in the previous chapter that South Africa's legislation is viewed as progressive and inclusive, the first section of this chapter will examine the influence of the legislation on the formal employment of persons with disabilities. The challenges and barriers for persons with disabilities in the current situation are then discussed. Lastly, I review literature on the facilitators of the transition into formal employment, splitting this section into two sub-sections, one focusing on research done on interventions for persons with disabilities (the labour supply side) and the other focusing on research done on interventions with employers (the labour demand side).

Literature was reviewed from published articles in the English language. Using the Boolean system, I searched for keywords such as: (employability* OR preparation*) AND (transition* OR access*) AND (persons with disabilities* OR person with disability OR people with disabilities* OR *disabled people) AND (employment* OR work OR livelihood*) AND (skills* OR development* OR guidance) AND (formal* OR wage*) AND (employer* OR co-worker*) AND (South Africa* OR Africa OR Global South* OR World*). Guided by the University of Cape Town (UCT) Health Sciences Library regarding relevant electronic databases, I searched on the following databases hosted on the EBSCOHost platform: MEDLINE, Academic Search Premier, Africa-Wide Information, and ERIC. I also used the UCT Google Scholar site as well as did specific searches on the African Journal of Disability.

I have included grey literature in the literature review through searching primarily on the websites of the South African government departments of Labour, Social Development, and Higher Education and Training, and international development organisations such as the International Labour Organization and World Health

Organization. This literature is not peer-reviewed but it brings important insights to the study and all literature has been referenced to show its origin and source.

2.1. Influence of the South African Legislative Framework on Employment

In the early years of democracy in South Africa, the disability movement was able to successfully put disability high on the political agenda which meant that the new Constitution and legislative framework adopted in 1996 acknowledged that persons with disabilities had been, and still were being, discriminated against due to their disability. Dube (2005) found that the inclusion of disability in the Constitution and the legislative framework has in fact positively impacted on the lives of persons with disabilities in South Africa. The legislation has contributed to the awareness of issues around disability and to creating opportunities to address the inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities in the past and presently. According to Dube (2005), the legislation created a positive political environment to address the issues of poverty, poor education, high levels of unemployment, and access to housing, transport, social security, and assistive devices for persons with disabilities.

Despite the positive view on the South African legislation in terms of the inclusion of disability in the open labour market, the general view found in the literature from South Africa is that the implementation of the legislation is slow in both the private and public sectors. Wiggett-Barnard and Swartz (2012) find that the problem in South Africa is that the legislation only provides guidelines and not criteria which are enforced on employers. According to them, it seems that progress to integrate persons with disabilities into South African society has only been on a policy level (Wiggett-Barnard & Swartz, 2012, p. 2).

The failure to implement a good legislative framework is pointed out by Van Niekerk et al. (2011), who found that the situation has not changed for persons with disabilities several years after the adoption of the EEA, suggesting that legislation alone is not sufficient to achieve equity. As a way to implement the EEA, they call for affirmative programmes focused on facilitating entry and sustained participation of persons with disabilities in formal employment (Van Niekerk et al., 2011). Likewise looking at the

EEA, Maja, Mann, Sing, Steyn, and Naidoo (2011) point out that it is ultimately the decision of the employer to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities, as failing to observe the EEA has no real consequences (Maja et al., 2011, p. 25). As the legislation provides guidelines but not actual enforceable criteria, Maja et al. (2011) argue that South Africa has developed appropriate policies to overcome barriers faced by persons with disabilities in terms of employment, but they also point out that there are still practical challenges relating to the implementation of these policies. This is in keeping with what Engelbrecht, Shaw, et al. (2017) found in a literature review on youth with disabilities' transition into formal employment. They found that youth with disabilities remain marginalised and excluded from the open labour market because disability supportive laws are not enforced or implemented.

Wiggett-Barnard and Swartz (2012) conducted a survey with 86 Human Resources (HR) managers in South African companies and found that only 40% of the companies had policies and/or procedures for disability accommodation (Wiggett-Barnard & Swartz, 2012, p. 5). The lack of policies and procedures was also identified by Gida and Ortlepp (2007) and by Maja et al. (2011). Gida and Ortlepp found that most of the organisations participating in their research did not have a strategy or policy document specifically on the employment of persons with disabilities, although most of them indicated that they were working on such documents (Gida & Ortlepp, 2007, p. 139). In the case study of two companies by Maja et al., they found that one company did not have any internal specific disability policy, which they found was a significant barrier. In the other company case, the company did have an internal disability policy, but targets were not met, and it appeared that although the policies and guidelines were in place, they were not implemented effectively (Maja et al., 2011, p. 27). These findings show the challenges on various levels. Despite a good and comprehensive legal framework, national policies and strategies on disability are not carried through within employing organisations and are not making a real change in the employment rates of persons with disabilities (Wiggett-Barnard & Swartz, 2012).

The lack of implementation does not mean that the legislation does not play a facilitating role in the employment of persons with disabilities. Companies in the study by Maja et al. (2011) commented that had it not been for the legislation, these

companies would not have focused on employing persons with disabilities in the first place (Maja et al., 2011, p. 29). This finding is in line with the argument made by Koopman (2013), who identifies the legislation and legal compliance as the main motivator for businesses to include persons with disabilities in their workforce. In her book “The Successful Employment of People with Disabilities: The Business Case” (Koopman, 2013), Koopman studied South African corporates where employees with disabilities had been successfully integrated into the workplace. She found that most of the participating employers referenced compliance with the B-BBEE Act as the main motivator for employing persons with disabilities.

Horwitz and Jain (2011) assessed the legislative framework of the EEA and the B-BBEE Act and the effectiveness of the legislation as mechanisms to address past unfair discrimination and diversity in the labour market. They found that the legislation has had a positive impact on black people and women’s entry into the labour market and their advancement. They also found that the advancement had been for a limited group of elite black people and that most black people are still marginalised in the formal labour market in South Africa. Similar findings came from Diaz Pabon et al. (2021), who assessed policies and reforms aimed at transforming the South African economy and labour market. They found that the inequality of the past is continuously being reproduced as white South Africans continue to have better access to quality health services, quality education, and more opportunities in relation to income and employment (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021). Although neither Horwitz and Jain (2011) nor Diaz Pabon et al. (2021) included perspectives on disability, black persons with disabilities would certainly be faced with this racial marginalisation on top of their marginalisation due to their disability.

Despite the incentives related to the B-BBEE scorecard and the related target of 2% black employees with disabilities for both public and private companies, the 2% target has never been met. The number of employees with disabilities has fluctuated between 1% and 2%, with no sign of sustained improvement overtime through an upwards trajectory. In the 2021 report from the Commission for Employment Equity (2021), employers report that of South Africans in formal employment, 1,3% are employees with disabilities (including all races). The report shows that of the 1,3%

employees with disabilities, white males with disabilities are most prevalent in top management in the private sector. In national government black African women with disabilities are most prevalent in top management and at provincial government level black African males with disabilities is most prevalent in top management. Across all sectors, black African employees with disabilities are mostly found in unskilled and semi-skilled positions, whereas very few white employees with disabilities are found in these positions (Commission for Employment Equity, 2021).

Although the South African history of apartheid makes it quite distinct from other African countries, there are still several similarities regarding disability and the formal employment of persons with disabilities in terms of legislation and the implementation thereof. Countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, and Uganda have developed legislation on disability and employment, which in varying degrees addresses issues of discrimination, recruitment and hiring practices, and reasonable accommodation, and includes incentives and quotas or targets for companies employing persons with disabilities. However, in all three of these countries, issues of providing clear guidelines and enforcement and monitoring mechanisms of the legislation are identified as limited or completely missing (Aldersey, 2012; Disabled People's Organisations Denmark, 2016a, 2016d).

One could get the idea that the implementation of the legislation and low employment rates for persons with disabilities are challenges predominantly found in the Global South due to limited resources. The South African legislation is based on and has borrowed from American and Canadian policies in developing the EEA and affirmative action provisions (Horwitz & Jain, 2011, p. 297). These two countries also still experience relatively low employment rates of persons with disabilities. Despite the Americans with Disabilities Act being adopted in 1990, the USA still experiences a large gap in employment rates between working-age people with and without disabilities (Markel & Barclay, 2009, p. 305). Likewise, the gap in employment rates between persons with and without disabilities is approximately 25% in Canada despite employment equity policies, human rights laws, and disability policies (Gillies, 2012, p. 2 & 3).

There is no doubt that the principles and values of the South African legislation embrace the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the open labour market. Great strides have been made in policies to address social injustice issues and in developing disability inclusion incentives. The implementation of the legislation emerges in the literature as being where South Africa falls short, and therefore the legislation has not had the intended impact. The challenges of implementing affirmative and non-discrimination disability legislation are not unique to South Africa but found across Africa and the Global North.

The EEA (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998) and the B-BBEE Act (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003) are focused on the demand side of the labour market and incentivising employers to employ persons with disabilities. The other side of the labour market, the supply side, is the focus of the Skills Development Act (Skills Development Act 97 of 1998). The influence of this Act will be explored later in this chapter when examining facilitators to formal employment.

Apart from the challenges of implementing the legislation, practical challenges and barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities are evident in the literature. These challenges and barriers are explored in the following section.

2.2. Challenges and Barriers to Employment

The labour legislation was developed to address the inequality experienced by South Africans and to address the challenges faced by many in accessing equal opportunities in the labour market. As described in Chapter 1, the INDS (Office of the Deputy President, 1997) recognised a number of challenges and barriers specifically faced by persons with disabilities to accessing work and employment. In the above section, it is evident that the legislation has not had the desired impact 20+ years later for a transformed inclusive labour market. This section will look at the challenges and barriers still faced by persons with disabilities in accessing employment on a practical level.

The literature looking at challenges and barriers as voiced by persons with disabilities is very limited in South Africa. One such study was done by Cramm, Nieboer,

Finkenflugel, and Lorenzo (2012), who compared the barriers to employment faced by youth with and without disabilities in South Africa. The study found that both youth with and without disabilities were faced with challenges associated with a lack of skills and of local job availability. Youth with disabilities were faced with additional barriers associated with social attitudes about persons with disabilities and poor health (Cramm et al., 2012). The study by Stemela (2020) amongst D/deaf learners in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa also showed that D/deaf people have limited opportunities to obtain employment in professional occupations. The study identified financial, social and systemic contextual factors which consistently resulted in insufficient resources and opportunities for career construction, especially for the minority population of D/deaf black people. The effects of colonialism were still evident in resource availability and opportunities for career construction.

A study by Soeker et al. (2018) included persons with disabilities in sheltered and protective workshops in the City of Cape Town, South Africa. The study focused on persons with disabilities' experiences and perceptions of work skills development for transition into the open labour market. One of the main challenges identified by the participants with disabilities was that they had no official documentation to show for their skills. One participant felt that if they had proof of their training and skill development, it would be easier to enter the open labour market. Another main challenge identified in this study related to the views held by society about persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are often seen as not being able to do the same type of work as persons without disabilities, and Soeker et al. found that persons with disabilities often internalise these feelings of inadequacy. This may manifest in individuals stagnating. In the case of the protective workshops, they did not feel as though they could advance within the workshop or transition into the open labour market. The study found that the workshop staff did not motivate the workers to advance, which further influenced the workers' stagnation within the workshop. In the cases where workers from the workshop did get employment in the open labour market, they often ended up back at the workshop shortly after. Soeker et al. suggest this is an indication that society and workplaces are still not fully accessible to persons with disabilities. They found that the integration process facilitated by the workshop

was not sufficient and therefore the transition to the open labour market failed (Soeker et al., 2018).

Education has been identified as a central barrier especially for persons with congenital impairments and persons with impairments acquired in childhood and adolescence as educational barriers affect them from the early stages of their lives. To address the inequality created with the apartheid system's educational system for black people as well as persons with disabilities, the South African government published the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) (Department of Education, 2001) in 2001 as the South African inclusive education policy. Despite the intentions with the EWP6, research shows that there are still significant challenges in the implementation of an inclusive education system. These challenges include a lack of adequate resources and infrastructure, insufficient institutional capacity amongst both teaching and administrative staff, as well as low morale amongst teachers to implement the EWP6. Like the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EWP6 is still a White Paper which has not been adopted as a legislative Act and thereby only serves as guidelines which are not enforceable by law (McKinney & Swartz, 2020).

According to Bornman and Heard (2020), the challenges in the South African education system also mean that special schools are still the default option for many learners with disabilities regardless of their learning needs, which then limits their access to a full cycle of basic education. Accurate published data on learners with disabilities is very scarce but Bornman and Heard (2020) estimate that 600 000 children with disabilities of school-going age remain out of school in South Africa, while 119 500 children were enrolled in special schools in 2015. The challenges of inclusive education in South Africa have resulted in persons with disabilities on average having 2,5 years less education than their able-bodied peers. The racial inequality further means that white persons with disabilities in South Africa have approximately five more years of education than black persons with disabilities (Fish Hodgson, 2018). The ramifications of the South African educational system's inability to provide quality education means that especially black persons with disabilities are continuously disadvantaged when it comes to formal employment even before they reach working age.

The challenges identified above are confirmed by research done from the employers' perspectives. Gida and Ortlepp (2007) conducted an empirical study in South Africa where human resource management practices associated with the employment of persons with disabilities were investigated. The study included 19 organisations listed in the Financial Mail's Top 100 Organisations in South Africa. Gida and Ortlepp found that most of the participating organisations identified employers' negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities as the biggest challenge to be overcome. The second most frequently mentioned challenge was to find persons with disabilities with the right skills for the job (Gida & Ortlepp, 2007). Similar findings were identified by the South African Human Rights Commission in the Toolkit for the Private Sector on the employment of persons with disabilities (2015). The Toolkit states that "Multiple barriers hinder the capacity of persons with disabilities to obtain employment and enjoy full and active participation in the labour market on an equal basis with others" (South African Human Rights Commission, 2015, p. 8). The barriers highlighted in the Toolkit include barriers to education, a lack of reasonable accommodation, a lack of accessibility to infrastructure and to information, and attitudinal barriers in society including the notion that disability is equated with an inability to work (South African Human Rights Commission, 2015). Although Koopman's book (2013) on the employment of persons with disabilities does not detail the number or types of employers participating in her survey, the book gives some insights into the challenges employers experience regarding the employment of persons with disabilities. Koopman lists the following responses given by employers and HR practitioners when asked about their challenges:

- The definition of disability and its interpretation and application
- How do we change the attitude in our organisation and combat the fear of disability?
- Where do we find suitable candidates? How do we recruit?
- How do we remove built and systemic barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities?
- Where do we find guidance regarding the development or inclusion of human resource policies and procedures that will guide us in our transformation?
- How do we train?

- How do we support?
  (Koopman, 2013, p. 7)

The literature from international studies supports the findings from South Africa to a large extent and although the contexts are different both to other African countries and to so-called developed countries, the literature review identified several similarities between these varying contexts. In a survey conducted by the Tanzania Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers (TUICO) (Aldersey, 2012) amongst 216 companies in the capital of Dar es Salaam, employers cited several reasons for their failure to comply with the quota of 3% employees with disabilities as stated in the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2010. The reasons given by the employers were a lack of available appropriate information and advice about disability, a perception that employing persons with disabilities would mean an additional financial burden to the company, and that additional support was required to ensure employees with disabilities could perform their work tasks. Some employers were worried that persons with disabilities would not be as productive in the workplace or that they may need ongoing workplace support (Aldersey, 2012). Similar reasons were found in the mappings done by Disabled People's Organisations Denmark in Ghana and Uganda when employers were interviewed in the capitals Accra and Kampala (Disabled People's Organisations Denmark, 2016b, 2016e).

Again, the findings from the literature review do not differ significantly when looking at studies from the Global North – the so-called developed world. The South African legislation has borrowed from the USA legislation on affirmative action, and the two countries also share similar reasons for why persons with disabilities are not employed in the open labour market, despite a vastly different context. In examining factors that contribute to the underemployment of persons with disabilities in the USA, Markel and Barclay (2009) identified factors related to discrimination against persons with disabilities in the broader society and within recruitment processes, such as negative perceptions and stereotyping of persons with disabilities as people with diminished capacities, a fear of high costs in employing persons with disabilities, for example, in relation to reasonable accommodation, and the courts' varying interpretation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Markel & Barclay, 2009).

Much of the literature on challenges and barriers focuses on external factors as described above. Reviewing literature on career guidance for persons with disabilities also reveals how external factors such as perceptions about persons with disabilities in general society, amongst teachers, and within families influence persons with disabilities' self-perceptions and self-efficacy – persons with disabilities internalise these societal perceptions. Sefotho (2014) and Soresi et al. (2008) find that educators and family members often hold stereotyped and negative beliefs of what persons with disabilities can do and of their occupational future, and hold beliefs that they are not able to make choices or decisions on their own. Therefore, persons with disabilities are seldom encouraged to pursue further education or provided with actual career guidance. They are seldom given the space to express their wishes, preferences, or interests when it comes to their own career paths. Thus, Soresi et al. argue that persons with disabilities often have unrealistic and uninformed beliefs about their occupational future which may make it difficult for them to adjust to opportunities. Persons with disabilities are often afraid of failure and can be highly influenced by others. Therefore, they often resort to an external locus of control and experience great difficulties in setting future goals which also influence their independent decision-making skills (Soresi et al., 2008).

Further, as persons with disabilities are often found to lose their job more frequently than able-bodied persons, this can also lead to high levels of frustration and disappointment and a lower tendency to look for new work opportunities (Soresi et al., 2008). As such, persons with disabilities often have limited self-determination and self-efficacy, which are seen as a major barrier for them in accessing and remaining in work and employment (Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016; Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011; Soresi et al., 2008). These findings from the literature on career guidance also support the findings from Soeker et al. (2018) described above about how persons with disabilities in protective workshops had difficulties in transitioning into sustainable jobs in the open labour market as they internalised feelings of inadequacy.

The challenges and barriers associated with environmental factors, including access to quality education, low levels of skills, general society and employers' negative

perceptions about persons with disabilities as employees, have been well recognised over the past two decades in South Africa. What has received less focus is how these challenges and barriers affect persons with disabilities psycho-socially and in turn influence their disposition towards seeking employment. Some literature in this regard was identified and reviewed in this section.

As a society, we are still struggling to make real advances in terms of formal employment for persons with disabilities despite having identified environmental barriers and developed a progressive affirmative legislation. I find a need to strengthen the focus on the psycho-social factors at play, how the different layers of factors are interlinked, and how barriers even enhance each other if the formal employment of persons with disabilities is not approached in a holistic manner. It is with this in mind that I redesigned my research focus and methodology to address these gaps in the literature around the range of stakeholders and the psycho-social factors influencing persons with disabilities.

Having reviewed literature on challenges and barriers, I turn to explore facilitators which have been identified to counter challenges and barriers and to what extent such facilitators have been found effective.

2.3. Facilitators of Employment

As described above, barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities are influenced by a range of factors, which again influence each other. To this end, the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) for disability inclusive development introduced by the World Health Organization (2010b) outlines a 'twin-track' approach. To achieve the goal of disability inclusive development, the two tracks focus on:

- Working with persons with disabilities to develop their capacity, address their specific needs, ensure equal opportunities and rights, and facilitate them to become self-advocates.
- Working with the community and society at large to remove barriers that exclude persons with disabilities and ensure the full and effective participation

> of all persons with disabilities in all development areas, on an equal basis with others (World Health Organization, 2010b).

This section, which focuses on the facilitators for transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities, is structured along these two tracks. The first part includes literature on facilitators and interventions focusing on the empowerment of persons with disabilities and preparing them for the labour market – the supply side of the labour market. The second part includes literature focusing on facilitators to address societal barriers and especially barriers found in the workplace – the demand side of the labour market.

2.3.1. Preparing persons with disabilities for the labour market

The first track of disability inclusive development, focused on developing the capacity of persons with disabilities, is explored in two sub-sections. The first sub-section is skills development through the SETA learnership, focusing especially on hard skills. The second sub-section focuses on career guidance for persons with disabilities, which includes a focus on soft skills development.

2.3.1.1. Skills development to increase employability

One of the continuous challenges identified on the supply side of labour when it comes to the formal employment of persons with disabilities is the low hard skills levels associated with persons with disabilities. As described in Chapter 1, the SETAs were introduced to improve the employment prospects of persons designated as 'previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination', including persons with disabilities, and to redress the disadvantages through training and education (Skills Development Act 97 of 1998). Limited research has been done on the SETA learnerships and the data available from the SETAs is predominantly quantitative and seldom disaggregated on disability.

I identified a few qualitative studies about the SETA learnerships. One such study was conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa. The HSRC undertook research to assess and evaluate the progress made in skills development since the implementation of the National Skills Development Strategy II

2005. As part of this research, the HSCR conducted a survey amongst people who had enrolled in a learnership or apprenticeship[6] in 2005 and then interviewed them again in 2007 and 2010. The survey found positive performance and potential of the learnerships, and based on the survey the HSRC developed a policy brief proposing policy interventions for further expansions of enrolment, access, and success (Kruss et al., 2014).

The survey showed that of the participants enrolled in a learnership or apprenticeship in 2005, 65% had completed it with certification by 2007, and 86% by 2010. The survey also found positive evidence in terms of the learnerships and apprenticeships leading to employment, as 70% of the participants in the apprenticeship and 85% of the participants in the learnership experienced a smooth transition directly into stable employment. The policy brief states: “In general, it is evident that these skills development systems are producing employable individuals – or at least, equipping individuals to enter employment” (Kruss et al., 2014, p. 2).

The more detailed findings of the HSRC survey show that the outcomes of the learnerships vary significantly between different groups. Of the learners at the low-skills qualifications (NQF 1-3) level, only 43% found employment compared to 76% of the learners in the medium-skills level (NQF 4) and 64% for the high-skills level (NQF 5-8). The enrolment numbers at the low-skills level were considerably higher than for the other levels. The researchers on the HSRC survey state that this low conversion rate for the low-skills level is a significant failure of the learnerships as the aim is to upskill the workforce. The high numbers of enrolment at the low-skills level and related low conversion rate to employment is even more problematic as the survey found that many individuals taking part in learnerships at lower skills levels already had attained qualifications at these levels (Visser & Kruss, 2009, pp. 369-370).

The HSRC policy brief states that the socio-economic status of participants in the learnerships was found to be a strong predictor of employment success. It was found

[6] The difference between the learnership and apprenticeship programmes is mainly found at the skills (NQF) level. Learnerships are an integrated learning programme across all skills levels and occupants, while the apprenticeship programme is a specific mechanism meant to produce intermediate level artisanal skills (Kruss et al., 2014, p. 1).

that positive employment outcomes of the learnerships were least likely and more complex trajectories were most likely for women, those with low socio-economic status, black Africans, those with low educational levels, and those in low-status occupations and sectors. Participants in high-level skills learnerships were more likely to be white and male (Kruss et al., 2014, pp. 3-6).

These findings show that the groups found to be disadvantaged in the South African education system and who continue to be disadvantaged as they seek to enter the open labour market are the groups the SETA learnerships are supposed to support in the transition into employment, but they are also disadvantaged in the SETA learnership structure. Black Africans from poorer socio-economic backgrounds with low education levels have limited access to SETA learnerships, complete them at lower skills levels if they do complete, and have fewer chances of transitioning into employment than other groups. The HSRC policy brief does not include a focus on persons with disabilities (which in itself is telling), but these findings are also highly relevant for persons with disabilities' transition to formal employment. The majority of persons with disabilities in South Africa will be found in the demographic groups identified to have less likelihood of a positive employment outcome of the learnerships and a more complex career trajectory.

Another study from South Africa by Rankin, Roberts, and Schöer (2014), which followed a group of youth over a period of four years from 2009-2012, had similar findings. The study sought to determine the impact of the SETA learnership programme by matching youth who took part in a learnership with youth with observably similar characteristics who did not take part in a learnership. The study found that the learners in the learnerships were predominantly youth with school-leaving certificates (matric) and that youth with lower levels of education or skills were left out of the programmes. Rankin et al. (2014) suggest various reasons for this: organisations implementing the learnerships want the types of skills requiring at least secondary school education, youth with matric have other characteristics such as motivation to apply for opportunities, or implementing organisations use a matric qualification as a sorting mechanism for applications. Rankin et al. argue that regardless of the reason, these results suggest that people with low education levels

are less likely to benefit from the programme. This finding is in contradiction with the very aims of the learnerships. Again, this is unwelcome news for youth with disabilities as they are found to often have low levels of formal education (Fish Hodgson, 2018). They therefore might be at risk of not being able to access the SETA learnerships, which could be a way for them to improve their formal education levels.

Another main finding from the Rankin et al. study was that the learnerships did seem to facilitate the transition into jobs. Those who completed the learnerships were more likely to be in employment directly after completion than those who did not enrol in a learnership. However, this advantage faded with time. One year after the completion of a learnership, the youth completing a learnership was also not found to be more likely to be in formal employment compared to others. The study concludes that this indicates that learnerships have no impact on employment probabilities except for during and potentially immediately after completing a learnership (Rankin et al., 2014, pp. 9-10).

The SETA learnerships cater for both employed and unemployed people. A study including a sample of 50 unemployed and 50 employed learners was conducted by Grewe, Ukpere and Rust (2012) with the purpose of comparing the difference in the performance of employed and unemployed learners in a learnership. The study utilised questionnaires with closed-ended questions for all learners, and semi-structured interviews with selected learners and subject matter experts in the field of learnerships.

The unemployed learners were found to be more motivated to participate in the learnership as they saw the learnership as an opportunity for potential job security and being able to earn a more permanent salary to support their families. The researchers found that the unemployed learners were generally optimistic of the opportunities the learnership could lead to, and the researchers linked this to the higher success rates of the unemployed learners in completing the learnership as compared to the employed learners. For both the employed and unemployed learners, it was found that the support by the workplace hosting the learners played a vital role in their success during the learnership. Likewise, the family support influenced the performance of the

learners, especially the unemployed learners, where 86% found that the support from the family positively influenced their learning (Grewe, Ukpere, & Rust, 2012, p. 11142).

The literature review overall revealed limited research done on the SETA learnerships and their actual impact on employment transition. Recent research is especially lacking. This is important as the learnership programmes have continued to expand considerably in terms of numbers of registration in recent years. The literature revealed further that research on the learnerships for persons with disabilities is almost non-existent.

One example of a skills development programme implemented by a disability NGO is described by Ariefdien (2016). Ariefdien (2016) outlines how Epilepsy South Africa Western Cape Branch (ESA WCB) facilitates employment through the Epilepsy Disability Employment Support Service (eDESS) programme. According to the paper the, eDESS programme provides persons across all disabilities access to skills development and supports them into gainful employment. This is done through working with and supporting employers to prepare the workplace for the employment of persons with disabilities and providing support to the employer and employee (or learner) at the workplace. A large part of the eDESS is implemented through the SETA learnerships, as ESA WCB has realised that in order to address the minimal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, skills development is imperative (Ariefdien, 2016).

The paper mentions some of the challenges in terms of skills development programmes specifically targeting persons with disabilities. One challenge is the ‘learnership hopping’ where, after completing one learnership, participants hop to another learnership if they are not employed. If a learner progresses from one NQF level learnership to another one at a higher level, this should not necessarily be discouraged. However, according to Ariefdien, this is often not how learners or employers use the learnerships. Often the employers see the learnerships as a once off intervention rather than one spanning over several years with a focus on an upwards trajectory. Ariefdien finds that this ‘learner hopping’ becomes counterproductive and a waste of resources if learners jump to alternate learning pathways or to a lower NQF level than they have previously completed (Ariefdien,

2016, pp. 78-79). This finding of learners going to a lower skills level does not only apply to persons with disabilities as a similar finding was made in the survey by the HSRC described above (Visser & Kruss, 2009).

Ariefdien states that skills development programmes are clearly an enabler for persons with disabilities to enter the workplace and to be economically empowered (Ariefdien, 2016, p. 79). However, the literature review did not identify to what extent the skills development programmes in general or the SETA learnerships provide access to sustainable decent work for any participants, let alone for persons with disabilities. Data from these programmes focuses on registration and completion but lacks information on dropouts and trajectories of learners across all demographics, including learners with disabilities. Although the official employment rate for persons with disabilities provided by the Department of Labour is only one indicator, it does show that persons with disabilities are not increasingly being included in the formal labour market and therefore also questions the effectiveness of the skills development programmes if measured on increased employment. The research on skills development for the transition into formal employment predominantly focuses on the economic outcomes in terms of programme participants' direct transition into employment. Perspectives from the programme participants themselves are very limited in the literature, as is the focus on non-economic outcomes of the skills development programmes.

The literature on the hard skills development programmes for persons with disabilities is inconclusive in terms of how and if they facilitate the transition into formal employment. Another potential facilitator to support the soft skills development for persons with disabilities is explored in the following section.

2.3.1.2. Career guidance for persons with disabilities

Career guidance for persons with disabilities in primary education has been found to be very limited because, amongst other reasons, persons with disabilities are not seen as potential productive workers for the open labour market. This is especially prevalent in special schools, which many children with disabilities still attend despite legislation on inclusive education (Bornman & Heard, 2020). Career guidance has been identified

as important for youth with and without disabilities to navigate the transition into the labour market. Soresi et al. (2008) argue that in working with youth with disabilities, a career guidance programme should focus on building skills apart from the hard skills, as is, for example, the primary focus of the SETA learnerships.

According to Soresi et al. (2008) a career guidance programme should focus on exploring interest and occupational self-efficacy beliefs to establish goals that considers people's skills and interest. The programme should develop people's skills to understand different occupational options available and their advantages and disadvantages so people can find the most advantageous options for them. As such, career guidance programmes should support people's own rights to choice and self-determination. Further, Soresi et al. state that the incorporation of educators, health care professionals, co-workers, employers, and especially family members is important to build support networks and establish social connections. For this, programmes need to actively target and involve family members, educators, and employers to reduce any negative attitudes they may have and for them to contribute to building persons with disabilities' self-determination and self-efficacy (Soresi et al., 2008, pp. 412-413).

In a case study examining the process of career development for young adults with disabilities in the USA, Lindstrom et al. (2011) argue for developing individual knowledge and skills such as self-determination, self-advocacy, and communication. Such skills can enhance personal attributes and bolster persistence and self-efficacy to enable persons with disabilities to cope with the constant changes and demands of the world of work (Lindstrom et al., 2011). Lindstrom et al. (2011) also identify family as being important in the career development of persons with disabilities. The importance of the family for persons with disabilities is also found by Diale (2020) in a South African context, where she examined the role of the families of learners with visual impairment. She argues that families need to understand their own roles in the learners' educational trajectory to support the learners in successful inclusion into the economy.

Sefotho (2014), writing from South Africa, focuses on career choice and career construction for persons with disabilities. Sefotho is focused on what he terms

hephapreneurship., which “is a process of fostering positive and meaningful existence that is anchored on subsistence entrepreneurship by differently abled persons and underprivileged persons, founded on the ethos of career choice/construction towards transformative social justice and change” (Sefotho, 2014, p. 303).

Sefotho proposes a career construction pathway to hephapreneurship. This pathway allows people to identify a career personality and find their own talents and abilities. As an entrepreneur, individuals would need to develop their entrepreneurial and business management skills as well as their technical/hard skills for the work they would be doing. Sefotho also identifies the acquisition of soft/people skills as important in career construction, including soft skills such as creative thinking, communication, decision-making and problem-solving. Sefotho sees communication and networking skills as central for persons with disabilities to enable them to communicate with the world about their talents and interests, express their needs and to claim their space in society as part of the human race, deserving of human dignity (Sefotho, 2014, pp. 307-308).

Although Sefotho (2014) focuses on hephapreneurship, which is primarily based in the informal labour market and falls primarily under self-employment, his research and framework for career construction are still interesting for this research. Not only is he one of the few Global South-based researchers within the career construction for persons with disabilities, but his focus is also on identifying people’s competences and development of soft skills, which is important across the labour market and different sectors.

Literature on career guidance for transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities is still dominated by literature from the Global North. Career guidance research and practice are traditionally and to a large extent continue to be focused on people with further education and the middle-class populations (Blustein, 2014; Soresi et al., 2008). However, relevant literature is starting to emerge from the Global South, such as by Stemela (2020), Diale (2020) and Sefotho (2014). With these authors specifically focusing on persons with disabilities as well as the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) (Duffy, Blustein, Diemer & Autin, 2016) being focused on marginalised

groups, valuable insights are emerging and therefore shifting the focus of career guidance.

The above has focused on preparing persons with disabilities for formal employment and making them more employable through hard skills development and career guidance focused on soft skills development. The literature shows that despite an increased focus on hard skills development, especially through the SETA learnerships, we still do not know if these efforts have a long-term sustainable impact. The indication is that the hard skills development is not enough of a facilitator to enable persons with disabilities to transition into formal employment. Career guidance for persons with disabilities includes a focus on the development of soft skills also associated with psycho-social factors. I see the potential in an integrated approach to facilitating persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment, which includes both hard and soft skills development addressing both environmental and psycho-social challenges.

Upskilling and preparing persons with disabilities for formal employment is only one side of the labour supply and demand equation. It is equally important to look at the employers whose attitudes and behaviours are a determining factor for the actual inclusion of persons with disabilities into formal employment. The demand side of the labour market is explored in the following section.

2.3.2. Working with employers for inclusion

The other track of the WHO (2010b) twin-track approach to disability inclusive development focuses on addressing barriers in society, including structural, systemic, and attitudinal barriers. Employers who broadly include business owners, executives, directors, management, HR practitioners, and general staff are key stakeholders who can act either as a barrier or as facilitators for persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment.

The literature review on the studies done in South Africa identified activities, which from employers and HR practitioners' point of view positively influence employers to employ persons with disabilities. These include partnering with specialised recruitment agencies, the development of a targeted recruitment plan, disability awareness

training for staff, a specific budget for reasonable accommodation, commitment from the leadership to set an example, the appointment of a 'Disability Equity Champion' within the senior management, the establishment of a Disability Equity Forum within the company, and the development of company disability policies and strategies (Gida & Ortlepp, 2007, pp. 140 & 148-149; Wiggett-Barnard & Swartz, 2012, p. 5). How initiatives for addressing barriers in the workplace can be approached is explored in more detail in the next sections, which focus on employers' attitudes and behaviours as well as the business case for employing persons with disabilities.

2.3.2.1. Employer attitudes and behaviours

One of the main barriers identified in the literature both from the Global South and the Global North is negative attitudes and misconceptions about persons with disabilities held by employers.

Doolabh and Khan (2020) examined private sector employers' perceptions and experiences with the employment of persons with hearing impairments in KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa. They found that employers lack knowledge and experience with disability and the associated legislation, which results in stereotypes of persons with disabilities as poor workers and being incapable of working independently. Bam (2018) likewise emphasises the attitudes of HR staff, management, and co-workers as one of the central barriers or facilitators for persons with disabilities in accessing formal employment in his study focusing on the experiences of employees with disabilities in Western Cape Province in South Africa.

Bredgaard and Salado-Rasmussen (2021) and Nota, Santilli, Ginevra and Soresi (2014) studied the attitudes and behaviours of employers in Denmark and Italy, respectively. Both studies found that information and knowledge are crucial factors to facilitating the employment of persons with disabilities. Bredgaard and Saldo-Rasmussen (2021) found that when employers knew persons with disabilities, and thereby had more knowledge about disability, they were more likely to have positive attitudes and behaviours towards persons with disabilities in general. The same higher levels of positive attitudes and behaviours were found when employers had knowledge of public compensation schemes (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021, p. 8).

Public compensation schemes in Denmark and South Africa will look significantly different, but in South Africa affirmative public programmes and frameworks such as the B-BBEE Act and the SETAs have been seen to make a difference in employers' behaviours regarding the employment of persons with disabilities. Nota et al. argue that greater knowledge of the problems persons with disabilities experience can remove stereotypes and support a higher degree of personal interaction, thereby facilitating a more positive attitude and behaviour towards persons with disabilities (Nota, Santilli, Ginevra, & Soresi, 2014, p. 517).

Bredgaard and Salado-Rasmussen (2021) found that in general the literature (from the Global North) on attitudes of employers finds that most employers express positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities and considers them as valuable and productive employees. They also found, however, that this positive attitude was often not followed by a positive behaviour to actually employ persons with disabilities. They therefore distinguish between attitude and behaviour and, with this, propose an analytical framework with four different types of employers:

1) The committed employer (positive attitudes and positive behaviour)
2) The dismissive employer (negative attitudes and negative behaviour)
3) The sceptical employer (negative attitudes and positive behaviour)
4) The passive employer (positive attitudes and negative behaviour)
   (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021)

Bredgaard and Salado-Rasmussen conducted a study with a web-based survey and telephone interviews with a sample of 1901 workplaces in Denmark regarding persons with mobility impairments. They found that most employers could be characterised as 'passive employers' (54%), 22% were 'dismissive employers', 20% were 'committed employers' and 4% were 'sceptical employers' (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021, p. 5).

Committed employers were mostly found in larger workplaces (50+ employees), although relatively to their size, small workplaces employ more persons with disabilities in Denmark. The study also found that the accessibility of the workplace did not influence the attitude of employers negatively or positively but rather

significantly influenced their behaviour, meaning that employers in an accessible workplace were more likely to actually employ persons with mobility impairments (positive behaviour). If the employers found that their workplace had job functions which persons with mobility impairments could carry out, they were found to have a significantly higher level of both positive attitude and behaviour.

The study found that public sector workplaces displayed a more positive attitude towards employing persons with disabilities as compared to companies in the private sector. The positive attitude of the public sector workplaces did however not reflect in their behaviour as there were no differences in behaviour between public and private employers. Overall, the authors caution that surveys of employer attitudes are exposed to social desirability bias, which may result in over-reporting of positive attitudes. This bias may explain the discrepancy between the reported positive attitude and a more negative behaviour, with only a minority of employers employing persons with disabilities (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021). Studies done in South Africa on employer-related barriers tend not to distinguish directly between attitude and behaviour, but it may be valid to consider that the same discrepancy between attitude and behaviour persists in South Africa. From my work in South Africa, I personally also have the impression that most employers would fall under the category of “passive employers”. Seldom have I met employers who would outright talk negatively about persons with disabilities but still employers do not employ persons with disabilities.

The literature indicates that information and a deeper understanding of disability and persons with disabilities’ capabilities as workers would change the attitude and behaviours of employers. I believe that the labels of ‘non-productive’ and ‘dependent’ (Thomas, 2002) stick to persons with disabilities and make it exceedingly difficult to convince employers to employ persons with disabilities. Van Niekerk (2016) and Jammaers and Zanoni (2021) explored how labels and identities of persons with disabilities are constructed in the workplace. Van Niekerk (2016) explored the work lives of persons with a psychiatric disability in South Africa. She found that persons with psychiatric disabilities experienced tension as they had to balance different identities such as worker versus patient. The construction of people’s identities was intricately linked to their occupation. Similarly, Jammaers and Zanoni (2021) argue

that the identities of persons with disabilities at the workplace are constructed and regulated within a dichotomy of able-bodied/disabled. In their study of three workplaces in Belgium, they found that ableism operated in several ways to organise the workforce, and workers with disabilities' identities were regulated against the identity of the ideal worker. An ideal worker was constructed as able-bodied and the 'norm' in contrast to a worker with a disability, who became 'the other'. These identities reenforce the labels of persons with disabilities as less valuable workers.

Literature on the business case for the employment of persons with disabilities argues that the business case could be a way of challenging these labels and influencing employers' attitudes and behaviours. This will be explored in the next section.

2.3.2.2. Business case for employment of persons with disabilities

The beliefs and perceptions held by many employers often lead to the idea that hiring persons with disabilities would mean a loss of productivity and have negative impacts on the financial results of companies. This is despite increasing information, for example, from the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) showing that more inclusive companies achieve higher revenue, double net income, and show a higher economic profit margin on average (ILO Global Business and Disability Network & Fundación ONCE, 2021, p. 10). In the mapping done by Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (2016c), the Head of Group Inclusion of Standard Bank, South Africa was interviewed. She stated that in dealing with the company's departments and branches across Africa, she believed that if companies cannot see a direct effect on the business' bottom line, they will have no incentives to employ persons with disabilities. This is especially in times of general high unemployment where companies can choose from a large pool of candidates. To her, employing persons with disabilities is a matter of good business and she believed that the business case will be a principal factor influencing the employment of persons with disabilities in Africa (Disabled People's Organisations Denmark, 2016c).

The ILO has an increased focus on work and the employment of persons with disabilities, including the business case for employing persons with disabilities. In 2017, the ILO and UN Global Compact published a "Guide for business on the rights

of persons with disabilities – How business can respect and support the rights of persons with disabilities and benefit from inclusion" (UN Global Compact & International Labour Organization, 2017). This guide was developed based on desk research, a review of publicly available information, literature, and case studies, consultations with an international multi-stakeholder expert group, good practice examples submitted by companies across the world, and an extensive global consultation with interested businesses and other stakeholders. The guide presents the below business case for disability inclusion.

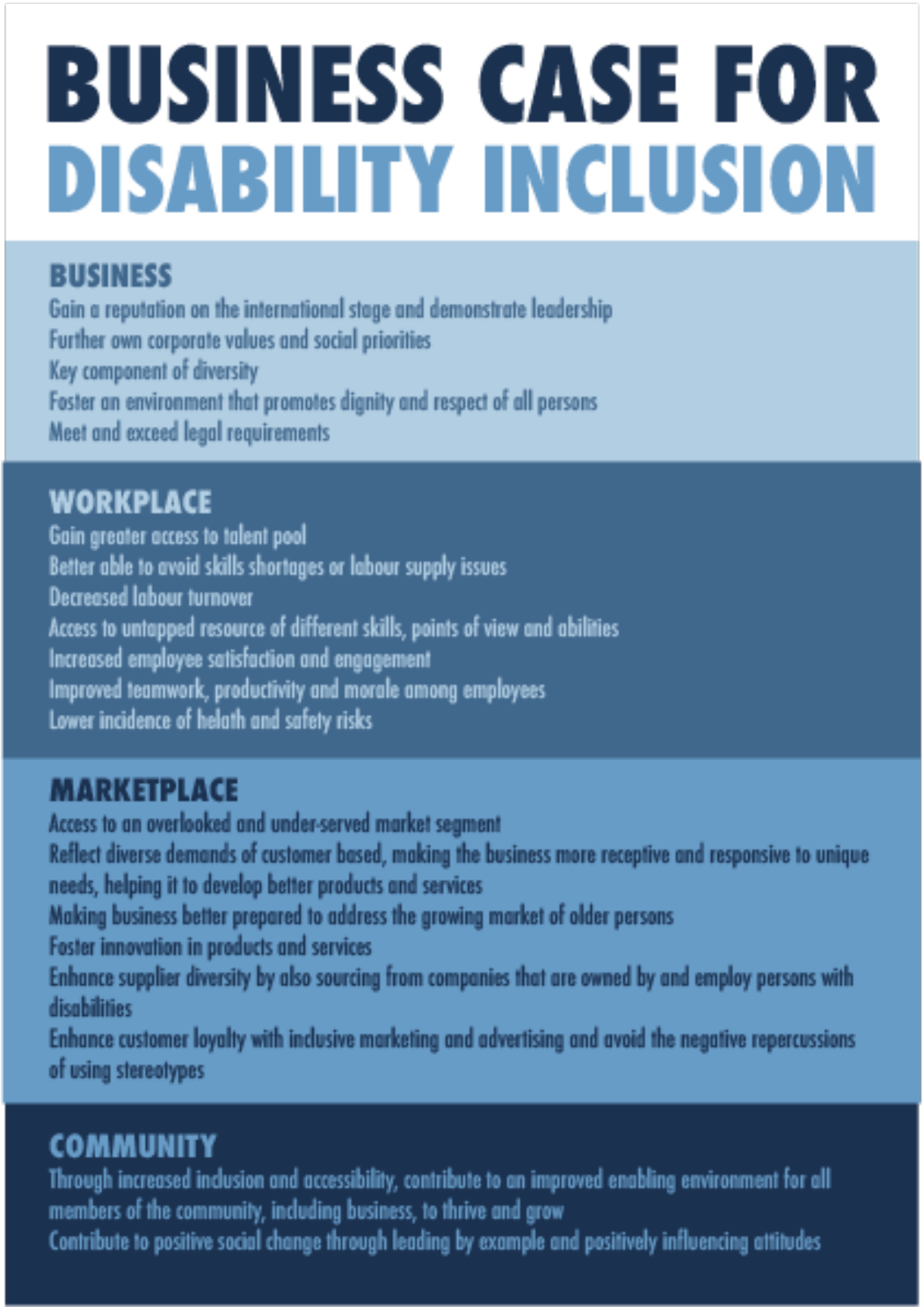


Figure 2: ILO business case for employment of persons with disabilities

(Adapted from UN Global Compact & International Labour Organization, 2017, p. 19)

The mapping done by Disabled People's Organisations, Denmark and the ILO guide fall under grey literature. The two references are still included here because the mapping represents one of the few identified publications on findings from the Global South regarding the business case and because of the ILO's global influence on labour policies and development interventions.

In similar arguments, Lindsay, Cagliostro, Albarico, Mortaji, and Karon (2018) argue that bringing attention to the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities may help build the case for employing them and for providing proper accommodation in the workplace, that is, that showing the benefits of disability inclusion for the companies will help change the attitudes and behaviours of employers. To this end, Lindsay et al. conducted a systematic review of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities on publications in peer-reviewed journals from 1997 to May 2017. In all, 39 studies were identified which met their inclusion criteria of a focus on persons with disabilities, an empirical study with at least one outcome focusing on a benefit to hiring persons with disabilities, and a focus on competitive employment. The large majority of the 39 articles was from the USA (24). Five studies were from Australia, five from Canada, and one each from Brazil, Israel, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Turkey (Lindsay et al., 2018, p. 637). The geographic location of the identified studies in the systematic review reconfirms the dearth of studies and literature from the Global South within the topic.

The systematic review by Lindsay et al. confirms some of the points made in the ILO business case for disability inclusion. They identified three areas of benefits from hiring persons with disabilities which are interlinked. Figure 3 outlines the three areas of benefits and includes examples from the review study.

Figure 3: Benefits of employing persons with disabilities

(Lindsay et al., 2018).

Lindsay et al. also found that most of the studies focused on perceived benefits according to employers' self-reports and anecdotes rather than actual benefits proved through rigorous evidence. They therefore argue that there is a strong need for more rigorous research on the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities to firmly establish the business case. They call for the inclusion of persons with disabilities themselves and their experiences in this research, as well as for more attention to employees with disabilities' level of education, training, employment experiences, types and level of jobs, type of disability, and other demographics.

2.4. Conclusion

Concluding the literature review chapter, I find the need to add another research element to the ones given by Lindsay et al. (2018) in their call for more research on the formal employment of persons with disabilities, namely a call for more research from the Global South. This is not only on the business case for employing persons with disabilities but also on how we ensure the implementation of an affirming legislation, how we effectively capacitate and empower persons with disabilities, and how we change the attitudes and behaviours of employers and thereby establish the facilitators for sustainable formal employment for persons with disabilities in the Global South.

Besides establishing the call for research from the Global South, which my study will respond to, the literature review also informed the methodology for my study, especially in identifying my participants. Firstly, limited literature was identified with a focus on persons with disabilities and how they voice their individual experiences and feelings regarding the transition to formal employment. This confirmed my initial idea that persons with disabilities needed to be at the centre of my study. Secondly, most literature focuses on one stakeholder group, either employers, HR practitioners, or persons with disabilities. I wanted to include a broader perspective in my research, and I therefore included persons with disabilities, employers, and disability NGO representatives and trainers. This was done seeking to include the wider complexities influencing the transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities and to highlight how stakeholders and varied factors are interlinked.

The literature review also informed my conceptual framework. From the study context described in Chapter 1, the literature review confirmed the importance of the contextual factors. This includes being situated both in the Global South and in the unique South African context with its historical, political, economic, and social factors influencing the labour market, and especially how these factors influence my participants with disabilities and employers. The literature review also drew my focus to the need for an interdisciplinary approach, which I partly sought to address with the range of study participants but also through the conceptual framework. What especially influenced me was the more recent development in the work on career development, guidance, and construction, which call for both an interdisciplinary approach and the inclusion of marginalised groups who traditionally have had limited access to career guidance. The literature on career development furthermore reconfirmed my belief that access to formal employment is not only a matter of hard or technical skills but is also largely influenced by personal variables such as soft skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. These variables are, to a large extent, influenced by contextual factors. These findings from the literature led me to the conceptual framework presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

As found in the literature review, the formal employment of persons with disabilities has received increased attention in recent years, especially exploring the barriers and challenges for persons with disabilities in accessing formal employment. In order to go beyond exploring these barriers and challenges, this research puts forward a conceptual framework that is transdisciplinary, including economic, social, and psychological aspects. The transdisciplinary focus is useful because the literature review also showed the importance of the study context which is influenced by various historical, economic, social, and psycho-social factors.

The context of South Africa as described in Chapters 1 and 2 has informed the conceptual framework I present in this chapter. Firstly, the concept of disability needs to be explored through the different models of and approaches to disabilities to show the complexity of disability and how different approaches are used in different contexts. As seen in the previous chapters, different models of disability are present appear in the South African legislation. I expected the complexity of disabilities to be clear in my study findings and therefore I found it important to include the different models of disability in my conceptual framework to understand how these views and understanding of disability possibly influence my study focus.

In exploring models of disability, I also felt that confining disability to one specific box or model is too limiting. My own starting point in disability is the social model and the rights-based approach, viewing access to work as a human right. This is still my grounding but learnings from Critical Disability Studies and the discussions of the concepts of disability, human rights, and decent work in a Global South context have made it very clear to me that a critical approach to these concepts is needed – to examine what disability, human rights, and decent work mean to people in the Global South and, within this understanding, to understand how to facilitate the transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities.

Exploring disability theories in this chapter helped me to position disability broadly and specifically see how persons with disabilities have been positioned in the open labour market, resulting in marginalisation and oppression. Establishing the positioning of

persons with disabilities as a highly marginalised group, I found the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) very useful in exploring how marginalisation and oppression affect people's access to work and what work means in this context. Limited research within the PWT has focused on persons with disabilities, and with my study I add disability as a dimension to the PWT.

In building my conceptual framework, I will firstly explore the two key concepts of my research question, namely, disability and formal employment as part of the umbrella term 'work'. This is followed by presenting the PWT, and relating it to my study and the concepts of disability and formal employment.

3.1. Approaches to Disability

My study on the transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities is set within the South African labour market, framed in an industrialised capitalistic society with a progressive and affirmative disability legislation aligned with the UNCRPD. Within this context, I found the social model and the rights-based model to be relevant for the research. In addition, the medical model is also prevalent in the implementation of the legislation as an assessment from a medical doctor is required to certify a person as disabled. These models and approaches to disability are therefore explored in this section. In order to get a more nuanced approach to disability, I also explore the learnings from Critical Disability Studies, which include aspects such as intersectionality, found to be missing in the other mentioned models of disability. Set within Critical Disability Studies, I also look at how disability is framed in the Global South in response to the decolonisation debate. Outlining the different approaches to disability helped me to understand the approaches in the DESS as they will be explored in the findings chapters and to get to a deeper understanding of my study participants' views and actions as persons with disabilities and as stakeholders.

3.1.1. The medical and social models of disability

In broad terms, the medical model equates disability with the impairment – "'the disability' is the impairment" (Thomas, 2002, p. 39) – and disability is viewed as the result of some physiological impairment due to damage or disease. The medical model

primarily sees disability as a condition which needs treatment (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000, p. 158). The model places disability within the individual and focuses on the individual deviations of body and mind from socially recognised norms (Thomas, 2002, p. 39). In the 1960s when this medical model was dominant, the individual with an impairment was widely regarded as a helpless victim and their life as a personal tragedy (Barnes & Mercer, 2005, p. 528).

These views on disability were prevalent amongst service providers, policy makers, and the general public, which also meant that the focus was on the medical and rehabilitative treatment of persons with disabilities. In this setting, politicians, professionals, and practitioners viewed persons with disabilities as a 'problem' who were dependent and in need of either a cure or care (Thomas, 2002). According to Barnes and Mercer (2005), this further legitimised excluding persons with disabilities from labour market participation – a capitalistic industrialised labour market which defined work in terms of paid wage labour and profit maximisation. As a participant, the wage-based capitalist society provided income, citizenship rights, and a sense of identity for workers. Those who did not work would then in turn experience hardship and diminished social standing. Persons with disabilities would experience this diminished social standing as they were seen as being less productive than their able-bodied counterparts and unable to contribute significantly to the most valued areas of life, that is, profit maximisation and income-generation (pp. 530-532).

According to Thomas (2002), persons with disabilities began to be systematically excluded from direct involvement in economic activities in Britain in the late eighteenth century where long hours of labour in factory environments required a standardised dexterity, speed, and intensity of work. Many persons with disabilities were unable to sell their labour power under such conditions and they were increasingly socially positioned as dependants and in need of care and charity, excluded from the economy of generalised commodity production. With this exclusion of persons with disabilities from the economy, disability was positioned firmly within the medical model and as a charity case (p. 44).

In the early 1970s, a contrasting approach to disability started to develop, countering the medical model (Barnes & Mercer, 2005). With the experiences and activism of

persons with disabilities, a social model of disability developed in the UK influenced also by the independent living movement in the US. The social model was based on the position that it is societies which 'disable' persons with impairments, and that it is environmental and cultural factors that are the primary cause of disability, imposing limitations on and marginalising persons with disabilities (Oliver, 1983). With the social model, disability is understood as a form of social oppression generated by a (dis)ableist society (Berghs, Atkin, Graham, Hatton, & Thomas, 2016, pp. 35-36).

Focusing on work within the social model, Barnes (2000) argues the importance of the following points:

1. The social model is a collaborative effort to shift focus away from the real or imagined functional limitations of the individual with perceived impairments to focus on the difficulties and barriers caused by disabling physical and social environments.

2. The social model rejects the notion that the unemployment and underemployment of workers with disabilities can be understood without considering factors such as education, infrastructure, accessibility, and culture.

3. Using the social model does not mean that individually-based medical, rehabilitative, educational, or employment interventions do not have any value or are always counter-productive.

4. Using the social model in the analysis of work recognises that within the present context, policy developments in the employment field can only have a limited impact on the employment challenges of persons with disabilities. As a consequence of this, meaningful change is only likely through a radical reformulation of the meaning and organisation of work (pp. 444-445).

As reflected in point 4 and as argued by Thomas (2002) (mentioned previously), the traditional social model included Marxist concepts of radical economic reforms as a challenge to capitalism, which was seen as a main cause of oppression of persons with impairments (Harpur, 2012, p. 3). The social model of disability retains access to meaningful work at its centre as it argues that when persons with disabilities are not

able to contribute or sell their labour in a capitalist system, they are often excluded from social life (Berghs et al., 2016, p. 36).

According to Berghs et al. (2016), the strength of the social model is that it is socially and politically located in the persons with disabilities' movement and activism for change and it puts persons with disabilities in control of their own lives. The social model is based on using people's experiences of marginalisation and exclusion to empower them to fight for the removal of barriers, for equality and social justice. With the social model, research is encouraged to follow paradigms of participation, coproduction, and/or emancipatory research (p. 36).

One of the main critiques of the social model has been that it fails to explain the role that impairments have upon individuals. One argument states that even if society removed barriers, people would still be impacted by their impairments to varying extents (Harpur, 2012, p. 4). Another part of the critique is the conceptual difference between impairment and disability. A strict distinction between the impairment and disability can be seen as an outdated ideology and the distinction may reinforce the views from the medical model that impairments are situated only with the individual and purely biological. The critique here is that impairments are also socially constructed, personal, and limiting, and the social model is struggling to explain how social and medical aspects intersect and overlap. The social model is also seen as missing aspects of intersectionality as it does not deal with other aspects of a person's identity, such as ethnicity, sexuality, race, and culture, which may also be factors in the construction of a person's identity and experiences (Berghs et al., 2016, pp. 37-38; Degener, 2016, pp. 63-64). The missing aspects of intersectionality could be seen as being linked to the development of the social model from the perspective of the Global North and therefore the model misses factors of intersectionality which are important in the Global South.

The rights-based approach to disability is the basis of the UNCRPD and underpins the South African legislative framework on disabilities. It is explored in the next section.

3.1.2. The rights-based approach to disability

Persons with disabilities' rights are protected in the general human rights conventions established following World Word II. However, these conventions have to a large extend failed to ensure the right of persons with disabilities in real life across the world. In the 1980s, disability emerged as a global issue and 1981 was marked as the International Year of Disabled Persons. In 1982, the UN published the global disability strategy 'World Programme of Action' (WPA) to enhance disability prevention, rehabilitation, and equalisation of opportunities as pertaining to full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and national development (United Nations, 1982). With the WPA, disability was on the UN agenda and was starting to get mentioned specifically in UN conventions (Berghs et al., 2016, p. 32). A decade later, the strategy was reviewed, and it was found that equalisation was still not addressed sufficiently. The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities was then formulated in 1993 (United Nations, 1993).

One of the defining international documents for the disability movement in recent years is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006 (United Nations, 2006). The UNCRPD was the first human rights convention to expressly protect the human rights of persons with disabilities. Researchers and activists involved in the development of the UNCRPD promoted it as a new rights framework and disability rights paradigm (Berghs et al., 2016; Harpur, 2012).

In a critique of the social model, Degener (2016) argues that it does not seek to provide moral principles or values as a foundation for disability policies whereas this is exactly what the UNCRPD does. This sentiment is found in the purpose of the Convention: "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity" (United Nations, 2006, p. Article 3). The UNCRPD follows the International Bill of Rights, which established human rights as fundamental and unconditional (United Nations, 1948). This means that rights cannot be gained or taken away from an individual or a group, and human rights do not require a certain health

status or a condition of functioning – that is, human rights do not require the absence of impairment (Degener, 2016, p. 53).

The view of persons with disabilities within the medical model and in the capitalist ideology described above, as unproductive and dependent and therefore of little worth to society, is countered by the human rights model. With the human rights model, Degener (2016) states that each individual is deemed to be of inestimable value, and nobody is insignificant. People are valued not because they are economically or otherwise useful but because of their inherent self-worth. Human dignity is the anchoring norm of human rights. The UNCRPD demonstrates the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights as it includes both sets of human rights i.e., civil and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights (pp. 51-52 & 55).

The UNCRPD builds on the social model and as such is not seeking to replace it. It rather introduces the disability rights paradigm. Degener (2016) sees the UNCRPD as going beyond and as an improvement of the social model of disability, establishing the human rights model of disability. Degener (2016) argues that the UNCRPD builds on the premise that disability is a social construct and it values impairment as part of human diversity (pp. 50-61), in contrast to the social model which is criticised for neglecting the experiences of impairment. She further writes that, “The human rights model of disability clarifies that impairment does not derogate human dignity nor does it encroach upon the disabled person’s status as rights-bearer” (p. 63).

The UNCRPD has been seen as one of the most essential victories of the disability movement in recent times. Despite this, a variety of challenges around the UNCRPD and the rights-based approach have been argued. The UNCRPD has been championed as a tool for and roadmap to the implementation of the rights-based approach on disability (Degener, 2016). However, the enforcement of the UNCRPD has been identified as a problem. For example, states who have signed and ratified the Convention are still struggling with the domestication and implementation of it. National and regional legislation is still found to use a welfare model in viewing persons with disabilities in terms of ‘needs’ aligned with the medical model. The lack of implementation of the UNCRPD shows that acknowledged rights does not necessarily lead to social or political change (Berghs et al., 2016, p. 35). Although not speaking

specifically on disability rights, the same and relevant sentiment is stated by Diaz Pabon et al. (2021). In examining inequality in South Africa, they find that despite progressive legislation and economic reforms, “South Africa illustrates that rights are not realities. Rights remain promises that need to be developed and enacted by institutions, policies and programs that need to account for the barriers that limit the realization of such rights” (p. 120).

As a member of the UNCRPD Committee and involved in reviewing states parties’ reports, Degener (2016) finds that states are struggling to establish national monitoring mechanisms that are independent from government, and which work in collaboration with civil society organisations and especially DPOs. States are challenged in understanding the scope and content of state obligations and do not understand the paradigm change to a rights-based approach in disability (pp. 47-48).

Apart from the challenges of implementation and monitoring of the UNCRPD, an underlying critique of the rights-based view is that rights can be viewed as the responsibility of others, which gives it a paternalistic overtone. Although the UNCRPD can be used to advocate for individuals, it can also be interpreted as saying that individuals with disabilities must be protected and safeguarded rather than focusing on creating enabling environments. This approach of focusing on protection and safeguarding could lead back to the approach of framing disability as a problem of the individual similar to the prevalent view in the medical model (Berghs et al., 2016, p. 35).

The medical and social models and the rights-based approach are all prevalent in South African legislation and society. There is a tendency to simplify disability within these models and approaches one way or the other, and I find that disability needs to be explored more critically to capture the complexity in my study case. For this, in the next section I will include learnings from Critical Disability Studies in my conceptual framework.

3.1.3. Learnings from Critical Disability Studies

The models and approaches to disability described above predominantly originate from the Global North, especially Britain and North America (Barnes, 2000). The

rights-based approach to disability is based on the human rights claimed to be universal. This universality can also be seen as rooted in a narrative emerging from the Global North. Meekosha and Soldatic (2011) write: “Human rights discourse is seen as part of the continuation of colonialism, whereby the hegemonic North determines the constitution of human rights, ignoring the inherent global power imbalances” (p. 1388). Meekosha & Soldatic argue that the language of universalism implies that developing countries (the Global South) will evolve to a higher standard as per the human rights developed from the Global North. Human rights which especially focus on the individual’s rights. Meekosha and Soldatic argue against the human rights with a focus of individual rights as universal concepts. Such human rights reflect the dynamics of an industrialised society whereas many communities in the Global South are based on agriculture and subsistence farming (Meekosha & Soldatic, 2011, p. 1388).

Despite the critics of human rights seeing it as a concept of the Global North, the UNCRPD has had significant support from the Global South. The UNCRPD was initiated by Mexico in 2001 and supported by many in the Global South (Meekosha & Soldatic, 2011, p. 1384). South Africa was amongst the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention and its optional protocol in 2007. The South African White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Department of Social Development, 2016) is aligned with the UNCRPD and based on the principles and values of the Convention, stating the South African state’s principle position to disability within the rights-based approach.

However, Berghs (2017) argues that across countries, the UNCRPD is never seriously enforced. She argues that the focus with the UNCRPD is primarily on the state level or on examining institutions and services for lack of inclusion and leaving communities and families much to their own devices when it comes to persons with disabilities. In line with the critique by Meekosha and Soldatic (2011), the UNCRPD, based on principles of the individuals’ human rights, may be in conflict with African values based on the collective. Values and principles as encapsulated in the cultural principle of Ubuntu.

Ubuntu is the linguistic variation used in South Africa, but the cultural principle exists in various linguistic variations throughout Africa. Ubuntu refers to a social system of interconnectedness where people are situated not as independent individuals but as part of a collective and of their community. People's humanity and their identity is recognised in terms of their contributions to the development of others and common good for everybody in the community (Mji, Gcaza, Swartz, MacLachlan, & Hutton, 2011). Ubuntu asserts that, "If I am, because we are, then ensuring your well-being, dignity and rights as a citizen, will also ensure mine" (Berghs, 2017, p. 4).

Berghs (2017) examines decolonising disability through an African model of disability grounded in Ubuntu. In Ubuntu, disability is part of human diversity, a shared humanity and part of what makes us human. Berghs views Ubuntu as a social ethics with roots in collective social action against oppression and injustice. In this sense, the oppression and injustice experienced by persons with disabilities, for example, in the open labour market, become situated in the collective, and it is the responsibility of the collective to act against it. Berghs (2017), however, also points out that decolonising disability is not without risk because certain structures in society may benefit from oppressed groups. I see this argument relevant to my study in terms of a capitalistic economy, which profits from the labour of oppressed groups, and hence employers may not be interested in raising consciousness of any form of oppression as this can disrupt the current labour market.

Ubuntu's values of the collective and respect for diversity as part of an inherent humanity stand in contrast to the Global North's more individualised views (Mji et al. 2011) and humans being valued in terms of productivity (Barnes and Mercer, 2005). However, Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018) draw attention to research on the exclusion and oppression of persons with disabilities in African contexts, which are incompatible with the notions of humanness as expressed in Ubuntu. They argue that it could be counter-productive to include complex traditional cultural philosophies uncritically in disability studies without acknowledging their context-dependent nature. In arguing for decolonising inclusive education in Africa, Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht (2018) argue that all actors should constantly interrogate, question, and challenge their own positionality and how particular values, beliefs, understandings,

and practices have power to limit or advance an inclusion agenda. They argue that a social justice lens would enable a reflexive and transgressive stance towards inequalities, oppression, and exclusion.

The important discussions on how disability is perceived and defined and the dynamics of the north/south emerge from Critical Disability Studies. The theorising of disability developed at the end of the twentieth century and Critical Disability Studies developed as a transdisciplinary space across psychology, social work, education, and the humanities. Critical Disability Studies situates disablism alongside other forms of social oppression, including hetero/sexism and racism. Critical Disability Studies highlights the intersectionality of disability and sees disablism fundamentally as a socio-economic problem. Marginalisation is recognised as a relational concept, emerging in the routines of and interactions between persons with disabilities and able-bodied people, and is often experienced in deeply psychological ways (Goodley, 2017, p. 83).

Critical Disability Studies recognises the importance of the impairment and the body. In opposition to the social model of disability, one argument is that the impairments are important because some are static, episodic, degenerative, and/or terminal, and this influences the individual's experiences. Other arguments emphasise the impaired body as a social body, theorising the body as the place where self and society interact. Persons with disabilities, like women, children, queer people, people of colour, and poor people, often become 'the other' as they differ from the 'norm', which is an able-bodied, heteronormative, white, adult European and North American male in a high-income nation (Goodley, 2017, pp. 84-85 & 88).

Keeping in mind the traditional community and family structures in South Africa, the concept of Ubuntu, and the specific context and history of South Africa, the complexity of my study is further highlighted. This is because South Africa is also characterised as an industrialised society with a labour market operating on a capitalist economy similar to economies in the Global North (Herbst & Mills, 2016).

Exploring the concept of disability also highlights the complexity of definitions and terminology. The social model seeks to make a clear distinction between the

impairment and the disability, which helps to understand how society and not the impairment disables people. The critique of the social model argues that this distinction is not always clear as impairments differ and are socially constructed. I also found this complexity in my study in the language of my participants who almost exclusively used the word disability although they were at times clearly referring to the impairment. Likewise, in presenting my findings, it was also sometimes difficult to distinguish between the impairment and the disability as the lines between the two are blurred and overlap, as argued in Critical Disability Studies. In my findings, I therefore use 'impairment' if it clearly refers to medical conditions, but I use 'disability' more broadly in cases which might include both the impairment and the disability.

Having now explored one key concept of my study, in the next section I turn to another key concept, namely, formal employment.

3.2. Work and Employment: The Right to Decent Work

The importance of work and what work means for the individual and the collective is widely recognised within diverse disciplines. Work as a fundamental human right is stated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). Work is viewed as an integral aspect of human rights and the Declaration enshrines, amongst others, the following: 1) the right to work, 2) the right to free choice of employment, 3) the right to protection against unemployment, 3) the right to equal pay for equal work without any discrimination, 4) the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring an existence worthy of human dignity, and 5) the right to realisation of the economic, social, and cultural rights essential for human dignity and free development of the personality (Macnaughton & Frey, 2018, p. 47).

The ILO, a UN affiliate and the oldest international organisation focused on improving employment and working conditions (established in 1919), was founded on an ideology of social justice, recognising that improved employment and working conditions are necessary for sustained peace. In 1999, the ILO launched the Decent Work Agenda, which refers to work of all kinds, including formal employment, unregulated wage work, self-employment, and home work. Based on the perspectives

of work as a human right and a social justice issue, the ILO recognises that work is central to people's well-being (International Labour Organization, 2015, p. V).

Decent work entails fair and equitable access to work for all persons who want to work, and access to work that empowers and offers social protection for the individuals and their families. Workers should be free of discrimination or harassment, and they should have opportunity to exercise voice and participation. Working conditions should be safe and secure, include adequate free time and rest, respect family and social values, and provide adequate compensation and benefits such as health care (Blustein et al., 2019; International Labour Organization, 2008).

With a neoliberal agenda prevailing since the 1970s, governments and businesses have sought to respond to the effects of globalisation, growing global competition, rapid technological advances, and a changing labour force, with governments increasingly adopting policies aimed at the deregulation and support of corporate flexibility. This move has for a great part resulted in eroded employment standards. With policies aimed at promoting corporate flexibility, the world has seen a rise in precarious work and employment which shifts risks away from the employers and places them instead on the workers, their families, and their communities (Blustein, Olle, Connors-Kellgren, & Diamonti, 2016). This tendency continues with labour market conditions undermining decent work opportunities (Blustein et al., 2019).

Blustein et al. (2016) see this as a troubling development considering how neoliberalism historically has influenced the labour market. The economist Piketty (2014) has presented how evidence has shown that if markets are left to their own devices, as is the goal of neoliberalism, they will serve to elevate inequality. The shifts in the market have seen increased unemployment rates, a rise in precarious work, and inequality (Blustein et al., 2016; Piketty, 2014). These trends are also identified in the South African economy and labour market, with high unemployment rates and high inequality still prevalent and increasing (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021).

With ILO's Decent Work Agenda stating that decent work is a human right, the universality of the notion of decent work has been questioned just like the concept of human rights itself. Massoudi et al. (2018) describe the ILO Decent Work Agenda as

a commendable political initiative and a necessary framework to promote decent work. The agenda provides guidelines which highlight the advancement of sustainable and equal opportunities for dignified and just employment conditions. Massoudi et al. (2018) argue for national public policies and international agreements to define some rules and standards on decent work because of the impact of contextual constraints on personal and career trajectories especially in unstable environments.

However, it is also argued that decent work in the ILO Decent Work Agenda is rather an objective definition based on macro level economic indicators and does not acknowledging subjective factors of the individual's experience of work. To complement the ILO position on decent work, the importance of considering people's subjective needs and experiences of work should be highlighted (Massoudi et al., 2018). Likewise, Ribeiro, Silva, and Figueiredo (2016) argue that the paradigm of decent work is useful as a universal concept, but it requires contextualisation, and each country must identify how to deliver on decent work. This is especially important in the north/south debate as decent work in the Global South may be viewed differently in the Global North. Further relating to the need for diversity in the concept of decent work and what it means for persons with disabilities, Santilli, Ginevra, Nota, and Soresi (2018) write that the concept of decent work should be focused on the uniqueness of individuals, especially of those who are more at risk of being excluded from the world of work, for example, persons with disabilities.

Although the UNCRPD does not use the term 'decent work', its adoption in 2006 refocused the international agenda on the need to combat discrimination and to positively promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the world of work. With the UNCRPD, work and employment were specified as a human right for persons with disabilities and Article 27 of the Convention states that:

> States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2006).

For me, the discussions around work and, in this, formal employment as one aspect of work, and what it means to the individual, have been important to include in my conceptual framework to ensure that my study is framed within constructivism, acknowledging that there are multiple realities and perspectives of employment. Despite the contestations, human rights are still a core part of how I approach my work and the world around me, as I believe in its universalism. In exploring human rights in relation to disability and employment in my study, my view of human rights has also become more nuanced. I find it important to acknowledge not only the north/south debate but also what these concepts of human rights and decent work mean to the individual, and what they mean to the individual with a disability. Article 27 in the UNCRPD embodies my approach to my study with its focus on work freely chosen in a labour market which is open, inclusive, and accessible.

Having explored key concepts of my study above, I turn now to the PWT. I find that the PWT aligns with the principles found in the social model and the rights-based approach to disability, as well as its critical approach to access to work focusing on marginalised people. As such, I find that the PWT brings together many of the factors and principles found in my case.

3.3. Psychology of Working Theory

Based on the above exploration of disability, I found that the PWT encompasses aspects very useful for critically examining persons with disabilities' transition to formal employment. The PWT developed from career theories such as industrial/organisational and vocational psychology and counselling psychology, and includes aspects from disciplines such as economy, social work, and the humanities.

The PWT argues this intersectionality contributes to understand how privilege and marginalisation determine access to resources, which people need to manage educational and career development in the current labour market. Focusing on oppressed groups' access to decent work, the theory can include the marginalisation of persons with disabilities in society in general and in the labour market specifically. The PWT also aligns with Critical Disability Studies in recognising how marginalisation is often experienced in deeply psycho-social ways.

The PWT foregrounds the influence of contextual and structural factors and in this aligns with the social model of disability. The PWT also aligns with the UNCRPD in the theory's perspective on decent work as a human right and situated within the social justice framework. In the focus on social justice, I also see the PWT aligning with Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht's (2018) arguments for using a social justice lens in decolonising disability in Africa and Berghs' (2017) use of Ubuntu to challenge the Global North on views of human worth. I found that these aspects make the PWT very useful to include in my conceptual framework as I find it brings many of my study's factors and key aspects together.

3.3.1. The Psychology of Working Theory Model

Traditional career theories predominantly focus on people who have some individual control over their career choices, and the theories focus on internal and individual factors such as self-efficacy beliefs and individual interests. The traditional theories foreground the concerns of the middle class and exclude the voices of poor and working class people (Blustein et al., 2016; Duffy et al., 2016). The PWT developed as an alternative perspective to traditional career theories with the goal of the theory to be inclusive of all workers, and it aims to understand the work lives of everyone who works and who would like to work regardless of their financial and social capital. The PWT specifically focuses on understanding the work experiences of people living near or in poverty, who face discrimination, marginalisation, and challenges in access to decent work (Duffy et al., 2016).

With the PWT, a model was formulated to understand how to reduce barriers and strengthen psychological resources to increase access to decent work for all. The model shows the predictors for access to decent work, the moderators of this, and how access to decent work enhances well-being and work fulfilment (Blustein et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2016).

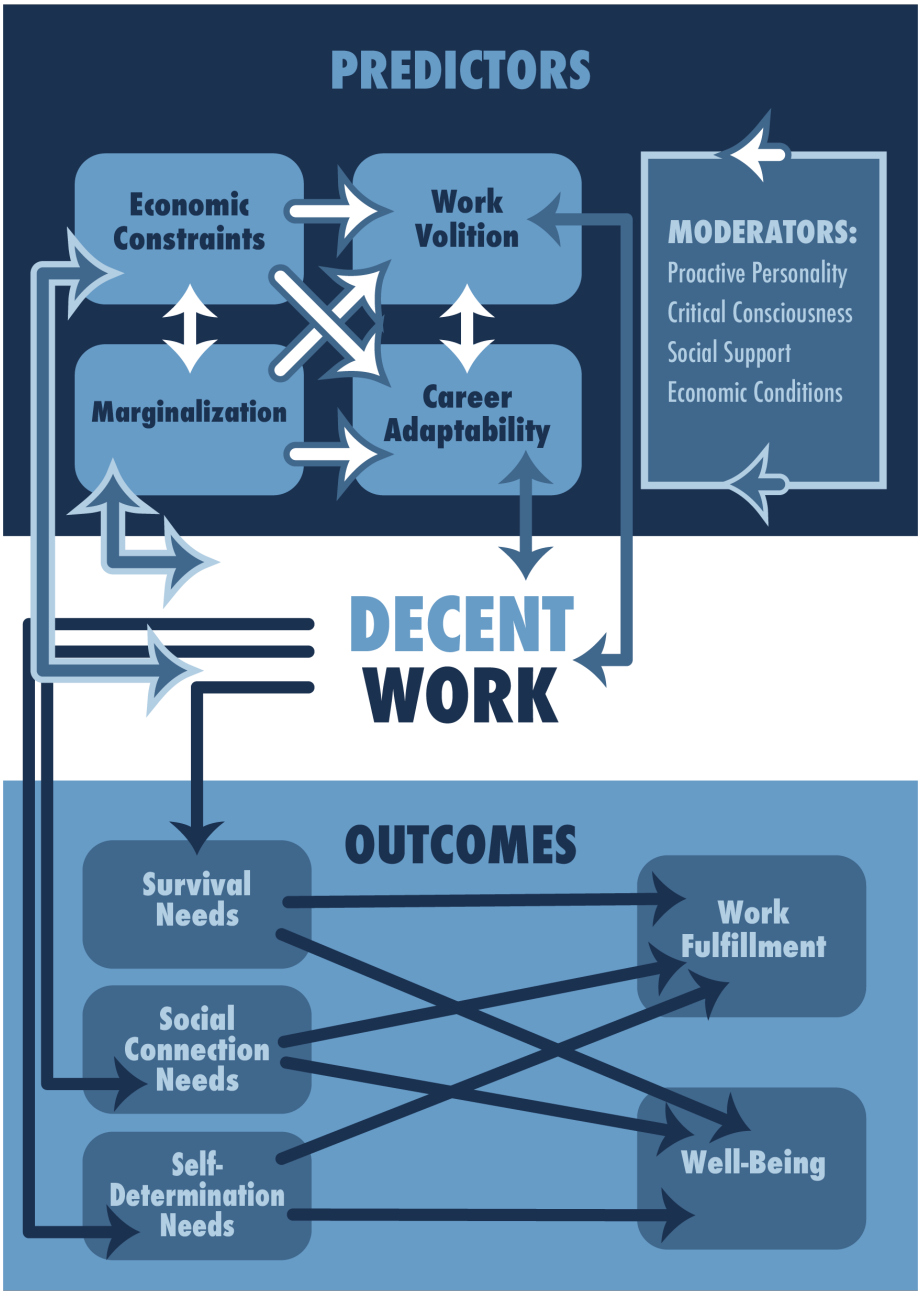


Figure 4: Psychology of Working Theory model

(Adapted from Duffy et al., 2016, p. 129)

In the following sections, the PWT model's key concepts will be described and connections made to my study.

3.3.2. Decent work and well-being in the Psychology of Working Theory

The PWT centres around the concept of decent work as originated with the ILO Decent Work Agenda. With the PWT, Blustein et al. (2016) argue that access to employment and work not only provides for a financial income but importantly that working is associated with psychological health and well-being. Work is viewed as a human right central to mental health and well-being. The PWT incorporates a social justice perspective, rejecting the view of working people as economic commodities, much opposed to the neoliberal agenda (Blustein et al., 2016, pp. 4-6).

The PWT argues that decent work should help all workers attain a sense of self-respect and dignity, and workers should experience freedom and security at their workplaces. As far as possible, workers should be able to choose and execute productive, meaningful, and fulfilling work which will also enable them to make social contributions (Blustein et al., 2019, p. 11). These sentiments are very much aligned to the overall principles of the UNCRPD of human dignity and the right to participation, specifically Article 27 emphasising the right to work which has been freely chosen.

The PWT advances a view of work as a human right central to mental health and well-being through its ability to meet three basic needs, namely, survival needs, social connection needs, and self-determination needs (Blustein et al., 2016; Duffy et al., 2016). At the same time, work can also serve as a platform for oppression, marginalisation, and exploitation, as seen in the rise of precarious work. Hence, it is important to specify that it is access to decent work which shows the potential for work to provide a pathway to meaningfulness, fulfilment, happiness, and overall well-being (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 138).

The PWT includes psychological health as an outcome of access to decent work in accordance with well-being. The PWT aligns with the WHO's definition of psychological health as not just the absence of mental health problems but as a state of well-being where people are able to work productively and contribute to their communities, as they realise their own potentials and are able to cope with normal stresses of life (Blustein et al., 2016, p. 4).

Research conducted on persons with disabilities, work, and what it means for their personal well-being and development has been very limited. The dearth of literature is especially notable in the Global South. Likewise, research has generally not focused on the characteristics of work such as in terms of the concept of decent work. The absence of the discussion on the types and conditions of work for persons with disabilities was also noticeable in the literature reviewed. Rather, the notion that any work is better than no work for persons with disabilities is implied.

These sentiments are found by Fabian (2014), who argues that traditional vocational rehabilitation programmes for persons with disabilities have been and still are exclusively focused on getting a job, with little attention on choice for the person with a disability. She finds that the current predominant perspective in vocational programmes is about matching people's employment skills with available jobs. Fabian (2014) argues that for persons with disabilities, work is more complicated than just finding any work, and she calls for research that seeks to understand the costs and benefits of work to the individual. Research has shown that work (when chosen) positively affects the lives of persons with disabilities as it has an important role in empowering persons with disabilities in creating an identity and expanding possibilities beyond 'the sick role' (Fabian, 2014, p. 192 & 194).

One of the key aspects of the PWT is the foregrounding of contextual and structural factors and their influence on people's capability and access to employment. These aspects are explored in the next section.

3.3.3. Predictors of securing decent work

Social and economic factors are relevant to consider for all people who want to work, but such factors are acknowledged as especially salient in impacting those whose lives are most constrained by societal marginalisation and labour market transformations. In the PWT, economic constraints and marginalisation are at the foreground as barriers in explaining access to decent work. The PWT states that "barriers are not random in their impact on people and communities; those who have been historically marginalized continue to struggle in gaining access to the resources that promote decent work" (Blustein et al., 2019, p. 15). This sentiment is clearly seen

in South Africa where black people are still struggling to access decent work (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021; Patel et al., 2020) and where persons with disabilities continue to be marginalised due their disability and disability's intersection with race and poverty (Commission for Employment Equity, 2021; Engelbrecht, Shaw, et al., 2017).

Marginalisation is described as the lowering of people (or groups of people) to a less powerful or included position within a society. Within the PWT, Duffy et al. (2016) propose that greater levels of marginalisation diminish the ability to secure decent work. In this proposition, marginalisation is linked to negative career development and workplace outcomes. Social marginalisation and oppression are based on race, sexuality, immigrant status, and disability, which often create real and very harsh barriers for people (pp. 132-133). As such, some social identities confer privilege (e.g., male, affluent, or able-bodied) and others confer marginalisation (e.g., Latino, gay, disabled) (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 131). This is similar to the discussion in Critical Disability Studies on the social body and 'the norm', which carries privileges, versus 'the other', which often experiences marginalisation (Goodley, 2017). In South Africa, we also see how being white and male carries privileges in access to education, health, and the labour market (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021; Commission for Employment Equity, 2021). My study participants with disabilities would fall into the category of 'the other', being black and disabled, and are likely to have experienced social marginalisation and oppression in their pursuit to transition into the open labour market.

The PWT likewise describes how the experiences of societal marginalisation can lead to heightened oppression through a process of psychological internalisation. Kenny et al. (2018) write that social identities and experiences related to, for example, disability influence individuals' experiences in the labour market. They find that these identity-based experiences can complicate people's understanding of themselves and their position in society. It is important to understand and address the complexities of privilege and oppression, how they are internalised, and how they limit people's capacities to realise work and career dreams for their future (Kenny et al., 2018, p. 60). These sentiments align with the findings of Soeker et al. (2018) and Soresi et al. (2008) around how persons with disabilities internalise rejections and disappointments

in the world of work, which may lead to demotivation and stagnation in continuing to pursue career goals.

In the PWT, economic constraints are primarily defined as limited economic resources, for example, household income and family wealth. The PWT proposes that economic resources play a key role in educational outcomes already from early childhood and the impact of economic constraints on access to decent work is found throughout people's lives. Duffy et al. (2016) find that youth living in or near poverty tend to attend schools with lower quality of learning and have limited access to career development elements. This includes limited access to, for example, internships and vocational exploration activities, and limited access to role models and career guidance (Duffy et al., 2016, pp. 133-134).

As marginalisation and economic constraints are seen to impact access to decent work, the PWT notes that decent work may be a way out of poverty for marginalised people and, from an economic viewpoint, decent work is seen as a key area for social interventions. The PWT, however, argues that the context and conditions seen as making the pathways to decent work smoother are often missing from the lives of many poor and marginalised people (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 135). With these constructs, I find that the PWT provides a highly relevant framework for examining how a social intervention such as the DESS facilitates access and transition to formal (and decent) employment as a way out of marginalisation for persons with disabilities, thereby addressing the income inequality experienced by many persons with disabilities.

The contextual predictors in the above are primarily determined by external social and economic factors which influence the individual. How the predictors are experienced and influence the individual are described in the section below on mediator variables.

3.3.4. Mediator variables

With the proposal of contextual predictors of marginalisation and economic constraints which limit a person's ability to secure decent work, the PWT also proposes that contextual experiences play an important role in securing decent work. The PWT calls this 'mediator variables', using the concepts of 'work volition' and 'career adaptability'.

Work volition is defined as an individual's perception of choice in career decisions, and *career adaptability* as the development of self-regulatory career strengths (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 135). Work volition is a perception by the individual. The PWT explains that this perception is developed from real structural, environmental, and personal barriers. Work volition as a sense of choice in career decision has been linked to a range of positive outcomes such as increased career maturity, sense of control, increased work meaning, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction amongst adults. As influenced by contextual factors and as a perception, work volition is malleable and could be an important target for interventions (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 135). Through interventions, a person may be able to change how he/she perceives having a choice in career decisions. This positive perception may create more individual agency, which in turn will have a positive influence on securing decent work.

Likewise, career adaptability is an individual attribute affected by contextual factors and is also malleable. Career adaptability includes factors such as concern and curiosity for one's vocational opportunities and having a sense of control and confidence to overcome obstacles. Like work volition, career adaptability – feeling adaptable – is found to be linked to several positive vocational outcomes, such as increased work fulfilment for those who are employed and increased self-efficacy for those searching for work. The PWT proposes that individuals with higher levels of career adaptability will be more likely to engage in decent work, while marginalisation experiences and economic constraints will negatively influence career adaptability (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 136).

The concepts of work volition and career adaptability resonate with me in relation to the literature on persons with disabilities and formal employment. I can see how low levels of work volition and career adaptability could be part of the challenges experienced by persons with disabilities in transitioning into formal employment. At the same time, a programme like DESS could support the development of agency through the focus on work volition and career adaptability.

As the PWT proposes that work volition and career adaptability are malleable, the theory also proposes moderator variables which can influence these mediators. The moderator variables are described in the following section.

3.3.5. Moderator variables

The PWT proposes that there are psychological and economic moderators that can buffer the impact of marginalisation and economic constraints and support the development of work volition and career adaptability. The PWT argues that the psychological moderators can be addressed in counselling or through interventions. In describing the psychological moderators, Duffy et al. (2016) make it clear that the development of the characteristics of the moderators is encapsulated within a societal context. The influence of context means that overcoming marginalisation and challenges cannot be put down to particular personal psychological attributes. For example, we cannot say that if a person with a disability was just more resilient or more persistent, they could access formal employment. The PWT argues rather that "people can exercise some agency in their lives, particularly with some viable proximal and distal supports, which can affect the capacity to negotiate contexts and also help them challenge social barriers" (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 136).

The first moderator described is proactive personality, defined as a disposition toward taking personal initiative to influence one's environment. Literature has linked proactive personality with increased job search behaviours when unemployed, career success, job performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being (Duffy et al., 2016, pp. 136-137).

Critical consciousness, as another moderator, has its roots in Paulo Freire's (1970/2007) theory on facilitating oppressed peoples' capacity to overcome structural constraints and attain their desired outcomes. Critical consciousness emphasises using one's awareness of societal and structural causes of social inequality to take action against unfair systems and can potentially serve as an antidote to marginalisation and oppression (Kossen & McIlveen, 2017, p. 476). Kenny et al. (2018) suggest that critical consciousness represents a means for resisting the internalised oppressions from experiences of social marginalisation. "As a result of developing critical consciousness, individuals may adopt an assertive and self-determined stance that can help them connect to society and reshape their lives in the face of scarcity, marginalization and oppression" (p. 60).

The development of critical consciousness is seen as a twofold strategy. On the one hand, working with marginalised groups can enhance their psychological resources and coping strategies in accessing decent work. On the other hand, critical consciousness can be a strategy to work with dominant group members who contribute to oppression through interpersonal interaction and who contribute to maintaining the oppressive system to reduce discrimination and prejudice (Kenny et al., 2018). In the case of formal employment for persons with disabilities, such a strategy would work with persons with disabilities to develop their understanding of their situation and the contextual factors which have oppressed and are oppressing them and creating barriers to accessing formal employment. The strategy would then also work with dominant groups in the labour market including employers, HR management and staff, and co-workers to likewise develop an understanding of the reality of persons with disabilities and the dominant groups' influence on persons with disabilities' access to employment. Although not writing on critical consciousness, Thomas (2002) displays similar sentiments in advocating for the social model on disability, as she writes: "When disabled individuals encounter the social model, the effect is often revelatory and liberatory, enabling them, perhaps for the first time, to recognize most of their difficulty as socially caused" (p. 39).

The third moderator introduced in the PWT model is social support, which is defined as the degree to which a person feels support from his/her family, friends, significant others, and broader community. This social support can act as a buffer against the effects of marginalisation and economic constraints (Duffy et al., 2016, pp. 137-138).

The last moderator proposed in the PWT is economic conditions, which argues that access to decent work is shaped by contemporary economic conditions. The economic conditions represent a broader contextual variable impacting access to work, namely experiences at a macro level versus experiences on an individual level (economic constraints). One of the most obvious ways to assess economic conditions is to consider unemployment rates. Other ways are the growth in new full-time jobs, access to training, accessibility of living wages, and job advancement opportunities. The PWT proposes that strong economic conditions, such as low unemployment levels, will buffer the effects of marginalisation and economic constraints (Duffy et al.,

2016, pp. 137-138). In a South African context, economic conditions which negatively influence the employment of persons with disabilities would include a struggling economic with a very high unemployment rate. Potential positive economic conditions would be South Africa's progressive and affirmative labour legislation and the ALMPs, including the SETAs learnerships.

With the moderator variables, the PWT argues that interventions, such as the DESS, can buffer the impact of marginalisation and economic constraints through targeted interventions for the development of a proactive personality, social support, and a critical consciousness by both persons with disabilities and employers. At the same time, the PWT also recognises that it is not a matter of persons with disabilities being born with certain characteristics which will enable them to secure work. These moderator variables can be developed through support to enable persons with disabilities to show agency in their own lives.

3.4. Conclusion

In building my conceptual framework, I have found the PWT very useful to hold my case study holistically, acknowledging the complexity through the inclusion of historical, social, economic, and psychological factors. I have not been able to identify a nuanced and critical perspective on disability within the theory and very limited research has been done with the PWT focusing on persons with disabilities. The PWT, however, aligns well with the learning from Critical Disability Studies. With the different models and approaches to disability and the exploration of work and employment, I believe this chapter provides me with a conceptual framework which will help me to explore and investigate the DESS and how the services advance formal employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa.

The previous chapters have informed my research scope, methodology, and methods, especially how I have approached the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the research and strived for a holistic approach to my study case. My research methodology is described in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology I used in my study. I start by outlining my philosophical standpoint, then I introduce the qualitative case study and the justifications for its use as a methodology for the study. In this chapter, I also include reflections on my own positionality and what considerations I had in this regard as a researcher. I describe the methods followed in conducting the study, including the data gathering, management, and analysis processes, and outline issues of rigor and trustworthiness. I conclude the chapter with ethical considerations.

4.1 Research Paradigm

Both Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Creswell (2013) explore a researchers' paradigm through interrelated questions about the researchers' beliefs. The questions include 1) beliefs of the nature of reality (ontology), 2) beliefs about what can be known and how knowledge claims are justified (epistemology), and 3) beliefs about the process of research (methodology).

Putting words to and describing my belief system, how I perceived reality, and how knowledge is produced initially felt very overwhelming. It somehow felt easier to start by determining what I am not and what I do not believe. After reading Guba and Lincoln (1994) on competing paradigms in qualitative research, it was very clear to me that I am not a positivist or a postpositivist as I do not believe that there can be an assumption of an objective reality within my study focus.

Creswell and Miller (2000) write that constructivists' perspectives on reality are pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualised. In constructivism, social reality is relative to the individuals involved and to the particular context in which they find themselves (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). This way of viewing reality resonates with me partly for the reason I rejected positivism, as I believe that each person's reality is contextualised and interpreted by the person.

In constructivism, the aim of research is to understand particular situations or phenomena. To understand the situation or phenomenon under investigation, the

researcher and the research participants work together to co-create knowledge and a shared understanding and reality. Within this epistemology, the relationship between the researcher and research participant is very person- and context-specific, and knowledge is not discovered but rather created. Knowledge exists only in the time and space (context) in which it is generated (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Research within the constructivist paradigm looks for the complexity of views and, in this, the research relies on the participants' views of the situation or phenomenon. Constructivism focuses on understanding the lived experiences of the research participants (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

I found that the philosophical assumptions in constructivism very much spoke to how I had initially approached my study. It was important to me to hear the experiences of my study participants, and to understand their experiences within the DESS and how they understood the phenomenon of transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities. I knew that it was not something that could just be measured in inputs and outputs, but it was much more complex and influenced by the historical, political, economic, social, and cultural context. Initially, I had followed my own interest and understanding of the issues from prior work experiences. Delving deeper into the literature around the transition into employment as well as paradigms around qualitative research made me think about my research on another level. The importance of my research design and methodology to achieve an in-depth understanding of my phenomenon became clearer.

As I was reading around disability and formal employment in the open labour market, I also found myself starting to think differently about how my case study should be understood and addressed. I got a deeper awareness of the structural oppression of marginalised groups within the labour market which are historically situated in political, economic, and social structures. This awareness drew me to literature on issues of oppression, inequality, and social justice which in turn developed my understanding of my research focus and influenced my conceptual frameworks, including learnings from Critical Disability Studies, the Global South, and the PWT. While developing my research, I realised I was transitioning towards a critical theory paradigm. While still exploring the current context, various perspectives, and realities of my study

participants as per constructivism, I also seek to understand the historical realism in which my case study is situated and to critique the social, political, and economic structures in the labour market which still oppress persons with disabilities as per critical theory (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

As the researcher, I also understood the importance of making my own assumptions and position clear to myself as well as to my readers. Because the researcher is a co-creator of the knowledge in research, my values and position must be uncovered and made transparent (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). I have started to uncover my values and position in my prologue and in the above. I will continue this uncovering in this chapter as I include a section on personal positioning and reflection.

Both the constructivist and the critical theory paradigms have influenced my research design as described in the following section.

4.2 Research Design

To address my study phenomenon of transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities, I decided to conduct a qualitative case study. I found this methodology would allow me to focus on, for me, important aspects – aspects such as the complexity factors of my study and being able to include multiple data sources, particularly multiple stakeholder voices, through different data gathering methods. I found these aspects in the definition of a qualitative case study research approach by Creswell (2013), who writes that this research design allows the researcher to explore a real-life, current and specific case. The researcher collects detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources of information and presents a case description and case themes.

I used the analysis by Yazan (2015) to understand different approaches to case study and to help me to decide on my research approach. While I found useful aspects in the different approaches, I found I aligned more to the approach by Stake (1995). Case study in the viewpoint of Stake (1995) aligns with constructivism, as qualitative case study researchers are interpreters and gatherers of interpretation, and knowledge is constructed rather than discovered. I also found Stake's considerations of what he terms 'issues' important. Stake (1995) states that issues are complex and linked to

political, social, historical, and personal contexts. These contexts are central in studying cases. In the literature review and my own prior work experiences, I found issues of barriers and facilitators for transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities closely bound to a complex context. Using a case study design would allow me to explore these issues from different perspectives. The issues influenced the development of my research question and objectives as well as my conceptual framework (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

I chose to use an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) as I wanted to understand the specific concern of transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities. In a single instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illuminate this issue or concern (Creswell, 2013). According to Stake (1995), the instrumental case plays a supportive role in facilitating the understanding of the concern, and the case is often looked at in depth, the case context studied, and its activities detailed to help the researcher explore, analyse, and understand the concern. My concern was the transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment and I selected the case of the DESS implemented by a disability NGO. I found that the DESS would provide me access to multiple stakeholders and activities directly aimed at persons with disabilities and their transition into employment. The disability NGO and the DESS also operated in the current context clearly influenced by the historical, political, economic, and social context of South Africa and the local communities. The case was bounded by the following:

- Place: a disability NGO in the Western Cape Province
- Activity: the DESS
- Time: the DESS implemented in 2017 and 2018 (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Following Stake's approach to case study allowed me some flexibility in the case study design as the study unfolded. As study participants brought up experiences related to the transition into formal employment of persons with disabilities outside the DESS being researched, I could explore these experiences as well and include experiences from similar DESS or from DESS implemented previously by the disability NGO. Using

multiple data gathering methods further enriched my data, enabling me to address and understand my case at a deeper level.

Before I describe the details of my research methodology further, I will share some reflections on my own positionality. Some of my positionality is already evident in my prologue, my research paradigm, and my choice of research approach, but I will explore more personal reflections in the following section.

4.3 Reflections on my Positionality

> To generate (…) a holistic understanding, we rely on ourselves as instruments: watching, listening, questioning, probing, and interpreting the case (Abma & Stake, 2014, p. 1152).

Abma and Stake (2014) highlight the position of the researcher in qualitative research. In acknowledging that the researcher is part of the knowledge generation and co-creator with the study participants, it is important to reflect on my own positionality – to be aware of my subjectivity and biases, and how they can potentially influence the interpretation of the case. Willig (2001) urges qualitative researchers to be and remain aware of the impact of factors such as gender, class, culture, and language on our interpretation of participants' responses. Peshkin (1988) argues that the researcher should systematically seek out her subjectivity while the research is in progress to be aware of how subjectivity may shape the inquiry and its outcomes.

Reflecting on my positionality in this section has helped me to become and remain aware of my subjectivity and factors influencing me as a researcher. The discussions within the writing and reflection circles organised regularly as part of the Disability Studies PhD programme have also helped me in this regard, as I could openly share my reflections and just as importantly listen to the reflections of my peers coming from very diverse backgrounds.

I have worked as a development worker and as an evaluator on interventions for income-generation, work, and employment, including on DESS and SETA learnerships. This has given me a good background to and understanding of these interventions, which have influenced my research question as well as the direction of

the research. I have at the same time been aware that these prior experiences could become biases in my interpretation of the data and my findings. To ensure that I was guided by my participants and the data collected for this study, I continuously checked my presuppositions I did this primarily in two ways: 1) through voice notes recorded during and after walks in natures, which was my way of creating a space both for reflection and for resetting my mind, and 2) continuous discussions with my supervisors and PhD peers, some who had worked with me on evaluations or other employment interventions.

From working with Danish and African disability NGOs and especially DPOs, my grounding is in a rights-based approach to disability. This also means that as an able-bodied researcher, it is of utmost importance for me to include the voices and lived experiences of persons with disabilities in my research to give it authenticity. I do not believe that you can address any issue related to disability without including persons with disabilities. At the same time, being an able-bodied researcher may make it easier to maintain a level of objectivity in the research, as experiences of disability are very personal and differ from one person to the next. Likewise, being an able-bodied researcher engaging able-bodied research participants may be encouraging in terms of openness and honesty as interviewees may be guarded in expressing attitudes and perceptions on disability in the presence of a person with a disability. In seeking to develop a trust relationship with all my study participants, I acknowledged to them that talking about disability is complex and that we are still learning together, which was why I was doing this study. In emphasising that there were no right or wrong responses to my questions, I encouraged the study participants to be open about their experiences and insecurities around the topic.

Chesney (2001) examines the criticism of cross-cultural research and found both advantages and disadvantages to being an outsider. I could be perceived as an outsider as an able-bodied researcher, as described above, with both advantages and disadvantages. I must also acknowledge that coming from a real and perceived background of privilege in Denmark, the Global North, and from a culture which is considerably different from the context of the research participants, I could be perceived as an outsider far removed from the research context and with minimal

understanding of people's experiences. Risks associated with cross-cultural research could not only be in the data gathering phase but also in the design of the research and analysis of the data. In cross-cultural research, Chesney (2001) argues for continuous self-reflection and the importance of inputs of local advisors for the research. I had the valuable support of my South African supervisors and the Disability Studies PhD reflection sessions with colleagues from across Africa giving input as local advisors to my research. The self-reflection was a continuous process for me, starting with the development of my research proposal and continuing throughout the research process, and I am sure it will continue after this thesis has been completed. The research process pushed me to be honest and open with myself as well as with my supervisors and PhD colleagues, and at times made me feel very vulnerable, specially about my own reflections as an outsider from the Global North. The research process and my exposure to disability and Africa have surely changed me over time, with each experience contributing to how I position myself as a researcher. I am initially grounded in constructivism but through my research process, I have engaged and moved towards a critical theorist position.

Having lived and worked in Africa since 2004, I have had daily contact with some of the most marginalised persons with disabilities in rural, urban, and informal settlements, and I have had the opportunity to learn from and understand the African disability sector. While I am learning every day, I do believe I have a growing understanding of the African context and of disability in Africa on different levels, and specifically of the South African context where I have lived, worked, and studied since 2009. Without putting myself in the centre of focus, I explained my background to research participants at the beginning of engagements to give them a sense of my understanding of their context in order to be seen less as an outsider to the participants.

Being able-bodied, white, and from the Global North, I might be seen as being in a position of power, especially in engaging with persons with disabilities from a disadvantaged socio-economic and educational background. This could be a risk as the participants could perceive me as someone with influence and connections, and that in exchange for their participation I could transform their lives in some way. This

risk was minimised by making sure that the participants understood the purpose of the study and making them fully aware that their participation in the research was unlikely to bring about immediate change in their lives.

The current and very relevant discussions about decolonisation of the curriculum and in research taking place around the world, including South Africa and including at the University of Cape Town, also need to be considered in this research and in my position as a researcher. I have been very conscious about my voice in the research. Having lived in Africa for 16 years has given me a deep admiration of the continent and understanding that it is a continent of great diversity and strength. It has been important for me to ensure that the voices in this thesis represent both Africa and diversity. I have strived to ensure this, especially in the research participants, the presentation of the data, and in the literature used. It has been a challenge regarding literature as most research done within this field has its origin in the Global North or has been done by researchers from the Global North. I have sought to include literature as close to my study focus both in terms of the subject and geographically. Disability studies is a growing field in Africa, and I found some critical articles from African authors and dissertations from my colleagues in Disability Studies and related fields. Although my main theoretical framework, PWT, originates from the Global North, I still found it relevant for my study context as it foregrounds the influence of the context and focuses on access for marginalised and oppressed groups, making it relevant for my key study participants (e.g., persons with disabilities in South Africa). Combining the PWT with learnings from Critical Disability Studies and the literature on inequality in South Africa, I sought to develop a literature and conceptual framework relevant for the Global South.

I next turn to my study case site and a brief description of the Disability NGOs implementing the DESS.

4.4 The Study Case Site

The selection of the case site was, amongst other factors, made based on previous engagements between the Disability NGO, my supervisors, and myself, and I therefore had some prior understanding of the DESS provided by the organisation. In

discussions with the NGO's management and my supervisors, I found that the NGO's DESS were similar to services provided by other disability organisations in South Africa. The Disability NGO recognised their participation in the research as a way to gain further knowledge about their own DESS as well as about the wider issue of transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities. They could thereby build and develop their DESS based on the research findings, and were therefore also willing to provide me with relevant documents and access to staff, management, and the DESS participants.

According to Yin (2013), having the necessary access for data gathering is a necessary and acceptable criterion for case site selection because, without the right access, a study will be at risk of not being able to address the research question adequately and the researcher may need to select a new site where the necessary access is available (Yin, 2013, p. 28 & 52). Abma and Stake (2014) refer to the 'learning potential' of a case, highlighting the importance of considering what and how we can learn from the case. The DESS had the characteristics of employability interventions for persons with disabilities as described in Chapter 1 (Fremlin, 2016). Further, with the access to the DESS beneficiaries and information, I found that the case site of the Disability NGO and its DESS would bring significant learnings of the case and enable me to address my research question. Based on this, I was very comfortable in selecting the case site.

The Disability NGO is the Western Cape provincial branch of a national single disability NGO, which has its national office in Cape Town. The Western Cape branch was established in the 1960s. In an introduction letter to potential host employers, the Disability NGO describes itself as providing disability services through its regional office, its protective workshops, and its project. With these services, the organisation has developed into "a beacon of hope for people with disabilities" (Disability NGO, Letter for practical placement, 2017).

The Disability NGO has expertise within a specific neurological disability and provides services to people with this neurological disability as well as raise awareness about the disability in the wider community in the Western Cape province. The social development services focused specifically on this neurological disability include:

- Individual and family counselling and support
- Support groups providing educational and emotional support to people and their families
- Awareness raising and advocacy interventions for inclusive education, workplaces, and communities
- Protective workshops and engagements with other NGOs and the Department of Social Development, especially in rural areas

The Disability NGO also provides some of these services across all types of disabilities for a disability inclusive development agenda in South Africa. This means that the organisation does not only include persons with the neurological disability the organisation historically has been servicing but includes persons with all types of disabilities in the DESS. The Disability NGO can be classified as a 'for' disability organisation, providing services to persons with disabilities.

Through the case site, I had access to the study participants, who are described in the following section.

4.5 Study Participants

My study had four study participant groups: the Disability NGO, the Training Provider, learners with disabilities and host employers. This section describes the inclusion criteria and the recruitment process for each of the participant groups.

4.5.1 Inclusion criteria and recruitment

In identifying and selecting study participants, I mainly used purposeful selection. The selection was guided by how and to what extent I anticipated the participants to be able to share information and experiences to address my research question. In my selection, I followed the approach that "Participants and documents for a qualitative study are not selected because they fulfil the representative requirements of statistical inference but because they can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.

139). This approach also aligns with the characteristics of an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995).

4.5.1.1 Disability NGO

Together with the Disability NGO Director, I first identified key DESS staff and management as study participants. Inclusion criteria for this group of study participants was that they were working in the DESS and with the beneficiaries, i.e., persons with disabilities and/or host employers. I would exclude DESS staff if they had fewer than six months of working experience with the DESS as it was important for me to get an in-depth understanding of the thinking behind the DESS and experiences from the implementation thereof. Three study participants from the Disability NGO were identified and all agreed to participate in the study. They were:

- The Disability NGO Director
- The DESS Social Worker
- The DESS Employment Project Manager

In the presentation of findings, the participants from the Disability NGO are not referenced according to their positions to ensure anonymity for the participants. They are referenced as Disability NGO 1-3 (not according to the above list).

4.5.1.2 Training Provider

The Disability NGO had engaged a training company as training provider to teach the in-classroom curriculum. This Training Provider's involvement in parts of the DESS was quite significant and I therefore, in agreement with the Disability NGO, found it important to include the Training Provider in the study. The same criteria for inclusion and exclusion as for the Disability NGO staff was used for the Training Provider study participants. Two study participants were included from the Training Provider:

- Administrator
- Facilitator

Like the Disability NGO participants, the participants from the Training Provider are not referenced according to their position. They are referenced as Training Provider 1 and 2 (not necessarily according to the above order).

4.5.1.3 Learners with disabilities

It was important to me to include persons with disabilities in particular in my study to ensure that their voices are central in the knowledge coming from this study. Persons with disabilities therefore constitute the largest participant group in the study. I refer to my study participants with disabilities as 'learners with disabilities' as this was how they were referred to in the DESS by the different stakeholders. The term 'learners' comes from the SETA learnership terminology.

The study participants with disabilities were identified in collaboration with the Disability NGO and the Training Provider. In discussions with the Training Provider, I came to understand that the DESS learners were divided into two groups based on the pre-assessments done in the enrolment process for the DESS. One group was the so-called 'stronger group', which was assessed to be stronger in their English literacy and numeracy and would need less support in the learning. The other group was also enrolled in the DESS but was assessed to need more support in the learning and a more practical approach, especially in the final assessments.

As I was interested in understanding key factors contributing to the facilitation of transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities, I decided to focus on learners from the stronger group. By doing purposeful selection from this group, I believed that the learners would be less challenged by a lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills. These challenges should not be ignored for persons with disabilities but was not a specific focus to be addressed in the DESS and was essentially an enrolment measure for the DESS. As my research question focused on the facilitation into formal employment for persons with disabilities, I wanted to take the knowledge generation a step further than the challenges of basic literacy and numeracy skills and look at key factors within the DESS which potentially contributed to successful employment outcomes. As such, I believed that learners from the stronger group

would be more likely to transition into formal employment and be able to provide me with richer data to address my research question.

My inclusion criteria for the learners with disabilities were that they belonged to the stronger group of learners, that they had the required attendance rate to pass in the DESS, and that they had been placed at a host employer for their practical work placement.

I was initially presented to the whole DESS group, and I talked briefly about myself and my study. The learners were then asked by the Training Provider if they wanted to participate in the study. I had an initial short engagement with the potential study participants to tell them more about the study, to give them the consent form, and for them to ask questions about me or the study. Out of the initial list suggested by the Training Provider, one DESS participant was absent in the period of data gathering. Another participant declined as she had previously participated in research and she had not found it worth her time. Essentially, she had felt used by the researcher of the study. I obviously accepted her declining to be part of my study, and it emphasised for me the need to ensure that my study participants would not feel this way.

I sought to address the risk of participants feeling 'used' by the research by being very careful from the initial engagement with all study participants to explain the purpose of the study and highlight that there would no immediate benefits for them to participating. That allowed the participants to opt out if they felt this was not for them. To further lower the risk of participants feeling used, I paid travel expenses to thank them for their time and to ensure that they would not have any financial cost to participating.

After the first meeting with the potential study participants with disabilities, I followed up with a phone call a few days later and we agreed on a date for the interviews. A few of the interviews were later rescheduled as the participants' plans changed and they would not be at the premises of the Disability NGO where we did the interviews. All eight participants who I interviewed were also part of the one-day Collage Life Elicitation Technique (CLET) workshop. The workshop and the other data gathering methods are described in a later section.

As the learners with disabilities were the key study participant group and the main target group of the DESS, Table 3 provides an overview of the learners with disabilities and some core background information relevant to the study. All the learners resided in the Cape Flats, on the outskirt of Cape Town, where the majority of the Disability NGO's participants came from. The study participants likewise represented a typical picture of the DESS participants in terms of race, gender and age (as per list of DESS learners with name, age, sex, and race provide by the Disability NGO) and in terms of education level as per the SETA learnership requirement and the Disability NGOs assessments.

The names presented in Table 3 are pseudonyms used to protect the privacy of the learners. The pseudonyms used have been kept in the same language and culture as the real names of the learners.

Table 3: Study participants with disabilities

Name	Gender	Age at interview	Race	Education level	Work experience	Impairment	Onset of impairment
Lennart	Male	29	Coloured	Grade 12	First learnership/ work opportunity after onset of disability	Neurological	Young adult
Kwezi	Male	27	Black	Grade 10	Did a previous learnership in construction	Physical	Teenager
Robert	Male	37	Coloured	Grade 12	Did a learnership in ECD, previously had casual / unskilled jobs	Psycho-social	Teenager
Achmat	Male	26	Coloured	Grade 12	First learnership/work opportunity after onset of disability	Psycho-social	Young adult
Mahmood	Female	28	Coloured	Grade 12	Did previous learnership in administration	Psycho-social	Not disclosed
Bernard	Male	50	Coloured	Grade 11	Runs own business from home	Physical	Young adult
Pumeza	Female	30	Black	Grade 11	Previously had casual / unskilled jobs	Physical	From birth
Patricia	Female	29	Black	Grade 10	Not disclosed	Neurological	Young child

4.5.1.4 Host employers

The DESS learners are placed at host employers for a period in the DESS. An inclusion criterion for the host employers was that they must have hosted DESS learners for the whole DESS period. Another criterion was that the placement of the DESS learners was going well, as reported by the Disability NGO. This criterion was used as I was focusing on facilitators for the transition into formal employment. There were no exclusion criteria. Three employers were identified who represent typical host employers engaged in the DESS, as were three different workplace environments, namely a local government organisation (public nature reserve management office), a mainstream public primary school, and an NGO. All three workplaces were located in the Cape Flats.

I was initially introduced to the host employers through an e-mail from the Disability NGO. I then followed up with e-mails, which included information about the study, and telephone calls. All three employers who I initially identified agreed to participate in the study.

From each host employer, I wanted to include a manager and a workplace colleague of the DESS learners, making it a total of six study participants from the host employers. The inclusion criterion for this group of study participants was that they worked with or had regular contact with the DESS learners at the workplace. There were no exclusion criteria. In the presentation of findings, the employers are not referenced according to their position to ensure anonymity. The employers are referenced as Employer 1-6.

4.6 Data Gathering Methods

Baxter and Jack (2008) write that a key trait of case study research is the use of multiple data sources and gathering methods, which also enhances data credibility. I used multiple data sources in order to address the research question critically and holistically, and data was collected using a variety of methods. Collecting data using different methods from different sources ensured diversity, enabled triangulation of

data, and increased the trustworthiness of the study. In the section below, I outline the data gathering methods used from the different sources.

4.6.1 Document review

Document analysis is regarded as especially suitable to qualitative case studies where non-technical and grey literature, such as reports, programme documents and internal correspondence, are sources of data assisting the researcher to develop understanding and discover insights relevant to the case (Stake, 1995). The purposes and functions of the document analysis included 1) providing data on the context in which the case is situated, 2) providing supplementary research data, and 3) being a way to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources (Bowen, 2009).

I reviewed documents provided by the Disability NGO and the Training Provider. These documents included the agreement with the SETA, the Disability NGO psycho-social assessment form, the introduction letter to the host employers, meeting minutes, and training manuals (a full list of documents is included in Table 4). These documents were reviewed to add to the understanding of the DESS and its implementation. As such, the documents provided supplementary research data and allowed me to verify certain findings or corroborate evidence from other sources.

In conducting the document review, I considered the original purpose of each document, its context and the intended audience to establish authenticity and usefulness (Bowen, 2009, p. 38). With the Disability NGO's willing engagement in the study, I was able to obtain consent from the organisation to use certain documents in the study which were not necessarily in the public domain. I initially had included a review of quantitative data documents to understand the number of people with and without disabilities enrolled and getting accredited through the SETA learnership as well as data specifically on the DESS. However, as will be discussed in the findings chapters, such comprehensive data was very limited.

4.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

The mostly widely used approach to collect qualitative data is interviews with participants (Curry, Nembhard, & Bradley, 2009; Yin, 2011). The aim of semi-

structured interviews is to understand participants on their own terms and how they make meaning of their own lives and experiences. Such interviews support the fulfilment of one of the fundamental objectives of qualitative research, that is, to depict a complex social world from a participant's perspective (Yin, 2011, p. 135). For semi-structured interviews, interview schedules are developed but, in contrast to structured interviews and questionnaires, semi-structured interviews allow deviation from the sequence of the questions and the interviewer can probe further if answers are not rich enough. Semi-structured interviews are used to allow for the interviewees to reply as freely and extensively as they wish (Flick, 2011, p. 112).

For this study, the main method of the data gathering was interviews with all the participants. The interviews were done in the form of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. As this case study focused on critically examining the DESS and the facilitation of transition into formal employment of persons with disabilities from the viewpoints of the participants, it was important to get their interpretation of the case and their experiences related to this. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews were particularly valuable for gaining multiple perspectives.

Interview schedules were developed for each of the participant groups (Appendix A) based on the literature and document review. As the participants with disabilities were at the core of the study, pilot interviews were conducted with three persons with disabilities involved with another disability NGO which had similar DESS. A few adjustments were made to the interview schedules after these pilot interviews. Access to employers and especially to directors and management for pilot interviews was difficult due to their time schedules, and the interview schedules were therefore adjusted on an ongoing basis as data was collected from this group of participants. Because the interviews were semi-structured, I was able to adjust and add questions during the interviews depending on the interviewee and his/her responses.

Interviews with the Disability NGO, the Training Provider, and the learners with disabilities were all done at the premises of the Disability NGO in a private office. As all of these study participants were regularly at the Disability NGO's premises, this was the most convenient for the participants and it worked well. For the host employers, I set up convenient times for them at their workplaces and the interviews were

conducted in private office spaces. (See Appendix B for details of interviews conducted.)

4.6.3 Collage Life Elicitation Technique

With the voices of the learners with disabilities being particularly important for me in the study, I wanted to engage them further than the one-on-one interviews. I have previously used the Collage Life Elicitation Technique (CLET) as an arts-based method in my evaluation work, and I find this method very suitable for participants who may not have strong verbal communication skills and for getting rich reflective data. The CLET uses language and non-linguistic actions in the process of narrating life experiences supports the (Van Schalkwyk, 2010, p. 676). Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) also find that visual inquiry approaches, such as collage making, are very useful means for formulating ideas and articulating relationships to help understand phenomena and to help represent them to others. The data from the CLET workshop provided me with particularly rich reflective data regarding the learners with disabilities' personal development through the DESS and their hopes and dreams. The CLET gave a deeper level of data, complementing and adding to the data from the semi-structured interviews with the learners with disabilities.

I invited all eight learners with disabilities to a one-day CLET workshop one to two weeks after their interviews. All eight learners participated in the workshop which was held at the Disability NGO's premises.

The CLET process consisted of two main parts. In the first part, learners used pictures and words from magazines and newspapers I supplied or their own drawings to make a collage. I randomly gave the participants one of two open-ended questions to reflect on in their collages:

1) What do you feel you got from being part of the DESS?
2) When you think about work, where do you see yourself going now?

Having finished the collages, I then asked the learners to describe the six main points from their collages. These six reflection points were then used to make a poem. All the eight learners made a collage but only six learners finished a poem as well. All the

learners were highly engaged in the process but two of them were not comfortable in sharing their reflections with the group. I allowed learners to share what they wanted. I took pictures of all the collages, the written collage reflections, and the poems. Two of the learners were comfortable with me doing a video recording of them describing their collages and reading the poems. The learners got to keep their collages and poems while I used the electronic versions for data analysis and inclusion in this thesis.

One of my fellow PhD students assisted me in the CLET workshop and, following the workshop, the two of us had a debriefing and reflection session. It was important for me that I got a clear sense from the learners that they really enjoyed the workshop and that it was a welcome space for them to reflect on their own situation. Some got very emotional when they presented their collages and poems, and they were looking forward to also sharing them with their families and colleagues.

4.7 Summary of study participant groups, data gathering methods, and data types

Table 4 gives an overview of the data gathering methods and data type per study participant group.

Table 4: Data gathering methods and data type per study participant group

Study participant group	Data gathering method	Type of data	Data details
Learners with disabilities 8 participants	Semi-structured interviews	Audio recording and transcript (primary data)	Total time of interviews: 4hrs 36min
	CLET workshop	Photographs of collages and poems (primary data) Videos of collage presentations (primary data)	8 collages 6 poems 3 videos
	Documents	CVs	6 CVs
Disability NGO 3 participants	Semi-structured interviews	Audio recording and transcript (primary data)	Total time of interviews: 2hrs 49min
	Documents	Electronic documents of DESS design and implementation (secondary data)	• 8 Operational minute of meetings (August-October 2017) • Training Schedule (n.d.) • Psycho-social report of DESS learners (n.d.) • Contract agreement for the learnership between the SETA and the Disability NGO (September 2017) • List of DESS learners with name, age, sex, and race (n.d.) • Introduction letter to potential host employers (November 2017)
Training Provider 2 participants	Semi-structured interviews	Audio recording and transcript (primary data)	Total time of interviews: 2hrs 47min
	Documents	Electronic and hard copy documents of DESS curriculum and learner	• SETA Agreement for learnerships: unemployed. Qualifications: further education and training certificate: Administration management NQF4 (July 2017)

		workbooks (secondary data)	• Facilitator Guide - Business Administrative Services NQF Level 4 (n.d.) • Learner workbook - National Certificate: Business Administration Services (n.d.) • Summative assessment (part one) - Learner Portfolio of Evidence Assessment Document (n.d.)
Host employers 6 participants	Semi-structured interviews	Audio recording and transcript (primary data)	Total time of interviews: 2hrs 40min
All interviews			**Total time of all interviews: 12hrs 52min**

Because my data came from multiple sources and was in different formats, it was important to ensure a high quality of data management. My data management process is described in the section below.

4.8 Data Management

All the participants agreed to their interviews being digitally recorded. This allowed me to replay the interviews and transcribe them verbatim after they had taken place for use in analysis. An electronic version of each interview, the CLET video recordings, and the electronic pictures of the collages and poems were safely saved on my computer and on Dropbox, both with a password.

Data in the form of documents received from the Disability NGO and the Training Provider were kept in electronic format as much as possible. I kept records to identify which documents were in the public domain and which were confidential. The ownership of these documents lies with the Disability NGO and the Training Provider and no documents received as part of the study, public or confidential, were distributed or shared. They were only used for the purpose of the study. All hard copies of documents were locked safely in my home desk drawer.

Due to time constraints, I used a transcriber for the transcription of the interviews[7]. Easton, McComish and Greenberg (2000) highlight the importance of high-quality transcription for the analysis and point out several risks associated with the verbatim transcription of interviews, such as inaccurate punctuation, mistyped words which change the meaning of the sentence, or misunderstanding of a word. I addressed these risks through a close collaboration with the transcriber, who I knew well from previous work on disability, and I knew her high quality of work. The transcriber had a good background understanding of disability, and I briefed her on the specific focus of this study for her to understand the context of the interviews. We made an agreement

[7] The South African Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) (Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013) came into effect from 1 July 2020. As such, my data and transcriptions of the interviews were done prior to the implications of the POPIA. In research, strict compliance with ethical and legal frameworks is essential and going forward I will ensure that I also comply strictly with the POPIA and ask specific consent from study participants in the case of a third-party transcribing interviews.

for the confidentially of the interviews. She transcribed the interviews verbatim and following this, I listened to the interview recordings while reading the transcripts and cleaning where necessary. This process both ensured the accuracy of the transcripts and helped me to stay close to the data, allowing for meaning to start emerging. I used Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software programme, to organise the audio files and transcriptions.

My analysis process had already started while collecting and managing the data. In the following section, I describe my data analysis process.

4.9 Data Analysis

Within constructivism, researchers are interpreters and gatherers of interpretation, and knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This approach to knowledge development also underpins the data analysis. Merriam (1998) describes data analysis as a process of making sense out of the data, which involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read.

Stake (1995) describes two strategic ways of analysing data in case studies: direct interpretation and categorical aggregation. In direct interpretation, the researcher analyses individual instance or members of the case and draws meaning from each instance. Categorical aggregation clusters complex data into categories or themes and the researcher searches for relevant meaning about lessons to be learnt about the case. For my case study, I aligned with the approach of categorical aggregation, as I wanted to look at the case holistically and identify lessons learnt across all my study participants.

4.9.1 Familiarisation with the data

The data analysis started while I was doing my data gathering (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). The data analysis process also started with my ongoing journaling as well as with debriefing and reflections with peers during the data gatering period. As the data was collected, I listened to the audio recordings, and as I was doing quality checking and cleaning the interview transcripts, I got more and more familiar with the data. All

the data was loaded into the Dedoose analysis software, and I re-read the transcripts in an active way by starting to search for meanings and patterns. I read through the entire data set several times before beginning to code to get a sense of the interviews as whole entities before starting to break them up (Creswell, 2013). During this phase, I started taking notes of my ideas about and reflections on the data that I would go back to in the subsequent phases of the analysis.

4.9.2 Generating initial categories

Creswell (2013) describes the process of coding as aggregating the text into small categories of information. Using Dedoose for my coding, I worked systematically through the data sets, tagging and naming sections of the text within each interview. I started with the interviews with the learners with disabilities, followed by the data sets from the Disability NGO and the Training Provider. The coding of these data sets was data driven and inductive, and I coded more or less the entirety of the interview transcripts to ensure I was guided by the data. Some of the data extracts had multiple categories, some of which overlapped. In many cases, I kept a little of the surrounding data of the interview extracts to not lose the context of the extract.

Table 5: Example of initial coding

Interview transcript	**Categories**
Yes. So, I make deliveries there and then the patients want their folders they ask me hey man, can you please check the folder of this patient? So, I will say to the patient can you please give me your card? And then he gives me his card and I check him on the computer. I'll do all those things and get the patient a folder. And if I'm needed to do something I will go there and do that. I've been working with a lot of people. You remember like I said I was staying at home and feeling stressed. But now since I've done this Learnership, I am able to communicate to all kinds of people. So, it is less stressful now.	Hard skills development Work placement Staying at home Feeling stressed Self-development
Yes, I've learnt quite a lot from them. To be more, how can I say, strong in myself and keep my confidence. Yes. Because you know if I'm with people that's abled all the time it's like I'm not like them. I'm not good	Learning in the classroom

enough. But if I'm with the others – the disabled – it's like I can be what I want to be.	Peers with disabilities Relationship with able-bodied persons Self-confidence

I also coded the learners with disabilities' collages and poems. These were in electronic picture form, and I printed all the data in hard copy and coded it manually by writing on the hard copies. I then cut up the poems and collages and made new collages using all the collages and poems in a reflective process and as a way of conceptualising ideas (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010) and starting to generate themes.

4.9.3 Generating themes

In this phase, I collapsed codes into categories and started searching for potential themes and sub-themes. In this process, I looked both for descriptions of my study case (the DESS), individual experiences, and the context of those experiences, and for processes, actions, and interactions (Creswell, 2013). I did this initially per data set, keeping in mind not to treat the sources of data independently but as pieces of my case puzzle, and I collated themes and sub-themes across the data sets (Baxter & Jack, 2008). At this point, the amount of data I had collected felt quite overwhelming and I was struggling to keep a clear picture of it all. I used Dedoose for the coding but went back and forth between a mind map on my wall and the electronic collations. This process allowed me to continuously engage my data and see the patterns and emerging themes. The process helped me to also focus on data responding to my research question and understand what data was interesting but not directly related to my study focus.

With initial themes and sub-themes, I went back to the interview transcripts and started coding the data set from the employers. My analysis process was an iterative process, using the initial themes and sub-themes derived from the other data sets and still allowing for new codes to be included. This phase ended with the collection of potential themes and sub-themes across all data sets.

4.9.4 Reviewing, defining, and naming themes

In reviewing themes and sub-themes, I found that I had very much structured them in a chronological order. This helped me in understanding the data, the case, and the background of my participants, but it did not get me to a deeper level of my analysis in understanding their experiences. In reviewing my themes, I therefore split my data into 'puzzle pieces' again across all the data sets and worked with a mind map. Apart from my supervisors, in this phase I also made great use of my peer PhD students, who I discussed my themes with in length and during multiple sessions. They also read some of my initial writing around my themes. This helped me to consider the validity of the individual themes and if they were responding to my research objectives. From this, I started defining and naming themes and sub-themes.

I defined my themes by identifying the essence of each theme and then determining what aspect of the data each theme captured – that is, "identifying the 'story' that each theme tells" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). I continued to use a mind map to see the connections between the themes.

4.9.5 Writing up the findings

As I was writing up my findings, I continuously reflected on each theme and sub-theme, and it was in the actual write-up of chapter 5 that I finalised my themes and sub-themes. As such, chapter 5 presents the first level of my analysis.

In writing up my findings, I related wholeheartedly to the sentiment of how reporting a case study can be a difficult task due to the amount of data and the complexity of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). In reporting on a case study, it is important to describe the context in which the phenomenon is occurring as well as the phenomenon itself (Baxter & Jack, 2008). At the same time, it is important to be cognisant of the amount of description of the study case versus the amount of analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). I structured my findings chronologically (Yin, 2011) as per the DESS structure and how the learners with disabilities moved through the phases in the programme. Chapter 5 includes the description of my study case and relevant context as well as the experiences my study participants had as part of the DESS. In chapter 5, I respond to research objectives 1 and 2.

4.9.6 Discussing, synthesising, and theory building

Chapter 6 presents the level 2 analysis as I respond to research objective 3. In this chapter, I discuss and synthesise the findings using my conceptual framework and the literature review. I explore how the DESS addressed barriers and challenges experienced by persons with disabilities in transitioning into formal employment.

The PWT (Blustein et al., 2016; Duffy et al., 2016) proved to be very useful as a framework for understanding where the learners with disabilities came from and the contextual and psycho-social factors influencing their transition to formal employment. It allowed me to engage with deep issues of marginalisation and oppression, which permeate the lives of persons with disabilities.

For a deep level of understanding and as part of ensuring trustworthiness in my study, I used theory triangulation to understand how my findings were affected by different assumptions and fundamental premises (Patton, 1999). I found that the literature on career guidance and development (Lindstrom et al., 2011; Soresi et al., 2008) was very valuable in adding to the PWT to analyse the DESS in general as well as its strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator for the transition into formal employment. The conceptual framework on disability especially helped me in understanding the context, how persons with disabilities are positioned in the labour market (Barnes, 2000; Thomas, 2002), and how this influences persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment. The literature from Africa on disability, Ubuntu, and social justice (Mji et al. 2011; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018) added a critical lens to my findings and helped me to situate my findings in the Global South. I was struggling to get to a satisfying level of interpretation of some of my findings pertaining to the actions of the learners with disabilities. In reading further at that point, I found the study by Galvaan (2014) and the concept of practical consciousness very helpful to get to a deeper level of analysis of the findings related to the hopes and dreams of the learners and their actions.

Using a qualitative case study allowed me to explore the complexity of my research phenomenon through multiple voices and perspectives. My conceptual framework enabled me to engage the underlying issues of inequality and marginalisation and the

layered contextual factors influencing my study. As such, the interpretation of my findings involved abstracting to the larger meaning of the data and linking my interpretation to the larger research literature developed by others. With the synthesising, comparing, and contrasting, I established the new knowledge emerging from my study.

As a qualitative study case, the aim of my study was not to generalise my findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Rather, in the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports on the meaning of an instrumental case constituting the lessons learnt from the case (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher provides enough description of the context so that the reader can determine whether the findings of the case apply to her context (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). However, as I also developed my critical thinking and interpretation of my findings, I found that, in my study, I focused on a critique and transformation of the structures constraining and oppressing persons with disabilities and especially black persons with disabilities in the labour market. In the exploration of my case study, my understanding of the transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities developed in a critical interpretation of the phenomenon, which developed my theory building. My theory building is presented in chapter 7.

My final chapter presents implications of the new knowledge and lessons learnt from my study from my point of view.

Next, I present the steps I took to ensure rigor and trustworthiness of this study.

4.10 Establishing Scientific Rigor and Trustworthiness

A qualitative research study's strength depends on its trustworthiness. Based within constructivism. I adopted Guba and Lincoln's (1994) criteria for qualitative research, that is, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4.10.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to establishing "confidence in the findings and interpretations of a research study" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). I ensured credibility though the triangulation of data gathering methods and data sources so my research phenomenon was viewed

and explored with multiple perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For the triangulation of data gathering methods, I used semi-structured interviews, the CLET, and document reviews from the four different participant groups. I also used my fieldnotes and reflections to compare and contrast my findings as I did my data gathering and analysis.

Another central aspect of ensuring the credibility of my study was member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). I used the CLET workshop with the learners with disabilities for member checks and I had a meeting for member checking with the Disability NGO after the initial data analysis. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the meeting took place online. I presented my preliminary findings to the Disability NGO to identify any gaps in the findings, unclarity, or conflicts. The Disability NGO agreed with my preliminary findings and had a few new insights, and we had good discussions which also helped my further analysis process. The member checking meeting was also important for me to be able to share my findings with the Disability NGO as they had initially expressed a desire to learn from the study and use it for further development of their DESS. We also agreed to engage after I had finalised the study to discuss how to further use the study findings. The member checking gave me the opportunity to discuss and clarify findings, and the study participants had the opportunity to contribute new or additional perspectives to my study (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

I used peer debriefing continuously throughout the study through my supervisors as well as the PhD student's platform and monthly seminars for debriefing, feedback, and discussion of ideas and concepts. My M&E colleague and fellow PhD student also provided opportunities for regular and ongoing peer debriefing, and she also assisted me in the CLET workshop, which was very valuable for debriefing as well as reflexivity.

Reflexivity is another way of establishing credibility (Creswell, 2013), referring to a continuous process of reflection on how the researcher's and participants' principles, values, beliefs, perceptions, behaviour, morals, or presence can affect the data collected. I kept a research journal (both written and audio) in which I recorded my reflections, feelings, and reactions towards the participants during the data gathering period, and all of these were taken into account in the analysis and in the writing

process. The peer debriefings described above were likewise an important part of my reflexivity.

Writing the prologue for this thesis and the process of reflexivity of my own positionality described earlier in this chapter were also important processes in addressing the credibility of my study. One of the main questions which has continuously been with me on this journey is how I do justice to my study participants as I have the privilege of being a voice for them and telling a story which I think has not been told in its entirety. Establishing credibility through a thick, rich description, doing member checks with study participants, and the continuous peer debriefings and self-reflexivity have helped me to feel confident that it is their story that this thesis tells with knowledge I have co-created with them.

4.10.2 Transferability

The aim of a qualitative case study is not generalisability, but rather transferability. Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings and interpretations as determined by those who want to apply the findings. In transferability, thick and rich description is necessary where the researcher provides enough description of the context and case so that the reader can determine whether the findings apply to his/her context (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). I have described the context of my study in chapter 1 both on a macro and a micro level to contextualise the study phenomenon and the case and include demographics of the learners with disabilities as key study participants (see Table 3). In presenting my findings, I have also described both the study case and the experiences, actions, and interactions of my study participants in detail, giving me a thick description for my further interpretations (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

4.10.3 Dependability

Dependability addresses how the findings and interpretations could be determined to be outcomes of a consistent and dependable process, and relates to establishing the value of the data. Dependability is established through an auditing of the research process (Creswell, 2013).

To ensure the dependability of my study, I gave an in-depth and detailed description of the research design, the methods used in the data gathering, the process of analysis, and the findings presented through providing direct quotations from the participants. I also used my journal to document the data gathering and analysis process as an audit trail for my study process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, my supervisors reviewed the inquiry process as well as the data, findings, interpretations, and conclusions to check for consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

4.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is there to establish the confidence in the research findings as shaped by the study participants' experiences and narratives rather than the researcher's biases. Confirmability as such refers to how the findings and interpretations are a result of a dependable process of inquiry and data gathering (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

To ensure confirmability and minimise the effect of my bias, I went through a process of reflexivity and reflections on my own positionality as described previously in this chapter. I started this process pre-data gathering and I continued throughout the data gathering and analysis. I used my journal, debriefing sessions and presentations to my PhD student peers and supervisors. My supervisors were also important in the process of counterchecking and confirming the themes and sub-themes in my analysis process, and I used the member checks with the learners with disabilities and Disability NGO to ensure confirmability.

Striving to put my participants at the centre of my study to let their voices be heard has been essential throughout my study. Working with human participants also warrants ethical considerations in research. These are described in the following section.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

Whenever research includes human participants, special ethical considerations must be applied to ensure that participants are protected from abuse and misuse and that they participate in an informed and voluntary way. In this, I was guided by the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH) (World Medical Association, 2013) which is a set of

ethical principles developed for the medical community and widely regarded as the cornerstone document on human research ethics. The fundamental principles of the DoH are respect for the individual and their rights to self-determination and to make informed decisions about research participation, both before and during the research. The researcher's duty is solely to the participant, and while the DoH acknowledges the need for research, the participants' welfare must always take precedence over the interests of science and society, and ethical considerations must always take precedence over laws and regulations (World Medical Association, 2013).

The study took careful consideration of these factors and as an assurance of this, ethics approval to conduct this research was received from the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in January 2017 and was renewed to cover the enter research period[8].

With persons with disabilities as study participants, further consideration should be taken as some participants may be especially vulnerable due to their disability and past experiences. It was therefore very important that the participants with disabilities were properly informed about the nature and structure of the study and what it would mean to participate in the study. Participants with disabilities were first given a general introduction to my research as a group and following this, I had one-on-one sessions with potential participants where I went into more detail about the study and they had the opportunity to ask questions.

With all participants, it was important to ensure that they understood the reasons for the study and what their participation would entail, respecting the autonomy of all participants. An information sheet and informed consent forms were developed and given to all participants before the interviews (Appendix D). Participants all had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary, before signing the informed consent form. With the participants with disabilities, I gave them the opportunity to read first and then went through the form verbally with them to ensure that the informed consent was

[8] HREC ref: 766/2016. See Appendix C for HREC approval letter.

clear to them. It was made clear to all participants that they could withdraw at any time from the research without repercussion.

Data from the participants was all anonymised, and personal details which could identify a person were left out. Pseudonyms have been used for the participants with disabilities, and the other participants have only been identified according to their participant group and not by job title. The description of the Disability NGO does not include direct references from the organisation's website and has been checked for direct online identification for the Disability NGO to also remain anonymous.

4.12 Conclusion

My research methodology was guided by various aspects but first and foremost by the need to ensure that all participants were engaged with in an ethical manner and that their privacy and confidentiality were protected. This chapter has described the process of engaging my participants as well as the approach and methods chosen to ensure that I was able to address my research question. For this, I conducted my research as a qualitative case study underpinned by the notions of constructivism and critical theory. This ensured that I was able to include multiple data sources and perspectives for a holistic and critical approach to exploring the transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities through DESS.

I have outlined the background and context for my study through the introduction, the literature review, the conceptual framework, and the research methodology, and I now turn to the presentation of my findings.

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter presents findings responding to research objectives 1 and 2, which are as follows:

1) Describe and analyse Disability Employment Support Services offered by a disability NGO in the Western Cape Province in South Africa.
2) Explore how persons with disabilities and employers experience the Disability Employment Support Services offered to them.

I respond to research objective 3 in Chapter 6.

This chapter presents the findings in four overarching themes. The themes are related to the chronologically unfolding processes offered by the DESS which I describe as phases. Under each theme, I present the processes in the specific DESS phase followed by sub-themes exploring the DESS experiences further.

This chapter uses data from all the study participant groups that is relevant to the themes. To highlight the voices of the study participants with disabilities in particular, their quotes are presented in a different font: *Times New Roman*. I have also highlight key findings under each sub-theme in bold.

Table 6 shows the four themes, the DESS phases, and related sub-themes.

Table 6: Themes, DESS phases, and sub-themes

Themes	DESS Phases	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Access to a new opportunity	DESS Phase 1: Pre-enrolment	Sub-theme 1.1: Providing access for a marginalised group Sub-theme 1.2: From misery to starting a new journey
Theme 2: Support to navigate learning with a disability	DESS Phase 2: In and around the classroom	Sub-theme 2.1: Family as enabling or disabling Sub-theme 2.2: Health system: facilitator and/or barrier Sub-theme 2.3: A space for social connections with peers
Theme 3: Work placements with insufficient support	DESS Phase 3: Work placements	Sub-theme 3.1: Feeling like a qualified professional or a glorified copy boy Sub-theme 3.2: Learning how to behave in formal employment Sub-theme 3.2: Disability confident co-workers but unchanged workplaces
Theme 4: Graduating into a transition gap	DESS Phase 4: Assessment and graduation	Sub-theme 4.1: Graduating with confidence but limited hard skills Sub-theme 4.2: Hopes and dreams for the future Sub-theme 4.3: Formal employment still not an open pathway

5.1. Theme 1: Access to a New Opportunity

Under theme 1, I describe and analyse phase 1 of the DESS. This section describes and analyses the preparations for the DESS, the Disability NGO's approach to enrolment in the DESS, and what access to a new opportunity means for the learners with disabilities.

5.1.1. DESS Phase 1: Pre-enrolment

5.1.1.1. Disability NGO community engagements for promotion of DESS

The Disability NGO was situated and working in local communities and had relationships and networks in the communities with other NGOs, mainstream and special schools, government departments, and community members in general, which they had developed over years. Regarding the DESS, the Disability NGO found that it was an advantage that they had this community presence, rather than using traditional recruitment methods as done by mainstream consultancies or recruitment agencies:

> *…we don't recruit people. I think that is the advantage of an NGO, because we work in communities and we're responsive to people's needs. So, the strategy was how best do we access people in communities (Disability NGO 3, interview 23 Jan 2019).*

The community engagements worked with the different structures in a community and were one of the central strategies to make people aware of the DESS. Disability NGO 3 explained: "*So that means identifying all the different role-players in the communities and working with those communities to link and to provide access" (Disability NGO 3, interview 23 Jan 2019).*

The organisation's social workers raised awareness through their engagements with community members and hung posters for the DESS and SETA learnerships. Social media was another strategy to reach out to people. These different strategies enabled the organisation to engage persons with disabilities for participation in the DESS.

The learners with disabilities came to know about the DESS in different ways, which shows how the Disability NGO's community engagements worked to reach persons

with disabilities. Table 7 shows the different sources from which the learners with disabilities in this study got information about the DESS.

Table 7: Sources of information about the DESS

Sources of information about the DESS	Study participants with disability
Through friends	Kwezi, Achmat, Pumeza
Advert posted at the Disability NGO	Lennart
From other disability NGO	Bernard
From DESS Training Provider	Patricia
From other SETA learnership training provider	Fatima
From newspaper advert	Robert

With the information about the DESS, the learners with disabilities then took their own initiative to apply to be part of the DESS. The next step in the process was the pre-assessment of applicants to be accepted into the DESS.

5.1.1.2. Pre-assessment for enrolment into the DESS

The pre-assessment of the candidates for enrolment into the DESS had three purposes: 1) to assess if the candidates met the requirements of the SETA for enrolment into the accredited learnership, 2) assessment of the candidates to assess their academic level and needed academic support, and 3) assessment of their disability related needs and reasonable accommodation during the DESS. The Disability NGO's pre-assessments rarely resulted in candidates not being able to enrol in the DESS.

In terms of the SETA requirements, candidates needed to meet the education level requirements of the specific learnership. The SETA learnership in this study case was at NQF Level 4 which meant that learners should have NQF level 3, equivalent to grade 11, to qualify. As this learnership was specifically for persons with disabilities,

candidates also needed to provide a proof of their impairment in the form of a certificate from a medical doctor.

The Disability NGO had designed its own pre-assessment. One part of the pre-assessment was an English literacy and numeracy assessment. Even though the applicants may have had the needed educational certificate, they were still assessed on English literacy and numerical skills. One reason for this was that they may have acquired their disability after they left school. Disability NGO 1 explained: "*So they're not the same person any longer. So, we need to assess if the qualification and the person match up, in order to put the person into the learnership*" (*Disability NGO 1,* interview 13 September 2018). Training Provider 1 also explained:

> *We find there's huge gaps, because even though the learners sometimes have matric certificates, they're doing maths at a much lower level. And some of our learners are from different backgrounds and they haven't actually engaged that much in English as a first language. And all of our training material is in English (Training Provider 1, interview 18 June 2018).*

The need for doing this additional literacy and numerical skills assessment shows the influence of often poor-quality education for persons with disabilities. Situated in the context of the Cape Flats of Cape Town, the low levels of English literacy and numerical skills were a common issue in the DESS.

The other part of the Disability NGO pre-assessment process focused on psycho-social aspects. Disability NGO 2 explained this part:

> *The idea is to ensure holistic development and not only focusing on the economic development. Because what we find is that particularly with persons with disabilities, there are financial barriers, and social well-being. So, doing a psycho-social assessment in the very beginning allows us to gather information so we are able to assist that person throughout our programmes (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

Appendix E includes an overview of the areas focused on in the psycho-social pre-assessment.

The Disability NGO often saw traumas coming to the surface during the psycho-social assessments due to the influences of the historical, socio-economic, and psycho-social context of the candidates' lives. Disability NGO 1 said: *"Because growing up was sometimes very challenging (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).*

The different aspects of the psycho-social assessment were an important tool to gain insights into the type and level of support needed for each learner, both in terms of learning skills and of psycho-social factors. The pre-assessment considered the impact of not only the learners' impairments but also of the contextual factors on learners' capabilities for skills development.

All the learners with disabilities interviewed in the study stated that they had found the assessment process straightforward and had had no challenges in joining the project. However, Robert had found the waiting time between the pre-assessment and the start of the DESS stressful. The absence of communication about delays in the start of DESS made him worry if it was even going to happen: *They tell you the learnership is starting in January. Then it only comes in March. And you have to wait. And for the two months you think the people forgot about you (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

Robert did not find other opportunities while he was waiting for the DESS to start. The waiting time and not knowing if the DESS would happen would surely be stressful for many people, especially as the DESS for many of the persons with disabilities was a change from an everyday life being at home and often feeling isolated. The DESS provided an opportunity to persons with disabilities which they might otherwise have challenges accessing. These aspects are explored in the two sub-themes.

5.1.2. Sub-theme 1.1. Providing access for a marginalised group

With the community engagements and the psycho-social pre-assessment, the Disability NGO recognised the influenced of several factors impacting persons with disabilities. The Disability NGO also recognised that the formal school certificate was only one indicator of whether the applicants with disabilities would be suited for the

DESS. With the psycho-social pre-assessment, a wide range of factors specific to persons with disabilities were considered in the enrolment to the DESS.

By making concessions in the formal educational requirements of the SETA learnerships, the DESS provided access for a group marginalised in the South African education system. The education challenges for persons with disabilities were also reflected in the learners with disabilities' stories. The eight learners with disabilities had all attended secondary school but only four had completed Grade 12. None of the learners had any tertiary education. The learners were to a large extent representative of the education level of people in their residential areas of the Cape Flats (Chapter 1). Two of the learners did not meet the formal education level requirements of the SETA learnership of having grade 11 but they were still enrolled in the DESS. Training Provider 2 explained why they still included people who did not meet the SETA requirements:

> *There is such a huge gap in the disability sector. We generally take on learners that – sometimes they just left primary school. But it's the NGO which decides. The social development is a priority. So, they tell us that we really don't want to discriminate against anybody. They have already been discriminated against previously. We want to give them the opportunity (Training Provider 2, interview, 4 July 2018).*

The Disability NGO operated with the understanding that persons with disabilities are faced with challenges of discrimination in the education system and that one of their main challenges to accessing skills development opportunities and employment is their low level of education. By making allowances regarding the formal education requirements, the DESS were addressing a major barrier for persons with disabilities in accessing formal skills development opportunities on their way to formal employment.

The marginalisation of persons with disabilities did not only show in the learners' education levels. The learners with disabilities talked of previous work experiences and how they at times had struggled with employers and their stigmatisation of

persons with disabilities. This also means that persons with disabilities have limited access to work experiences to build their skills for further employment pursuits. Patricia talked about some of her previous experiences with employment. She had felt that she had to hide her disability out of fear of being discriminated against.

> *I also worked in a mall in a boutique shop for six months. It was fine, but it was a small shop. So, I was on my own. I quit because it was too stressful. They didn't know that I had epilepsy. I don't tell them, because then they will not hire me. I have had previous experience where people do not want to hire me when they hear about my epilepsy. Maybe they'll think that I'll mess up things. So, I keep quiet about having epilepsy (Patricia, interview 23 March 2018).*

The SETA learnerships are predominately targeted at youth (18-34 years) but 18 out of the 75 initial DESS learners were above 34 years of age. Not excluding people based on their age was also a way of addressing challenges often faced by persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities often face delays as compared to their able-bodied peers, for example, in the education system as they may have a learning disability or the system is not able to accommodate them and therefore their schooling is interrupted. Likewise, persons with disabilities may be delayed in their development due to their impairment either in the diagnosis process or due to struggles with impairment management. Robert talked about how he had 'lost years' when he was first diagnosed with his impairment and how it took him years to accept his impairment:

> *In all honesty, I didn't want to accept that I had a disability. So, I used recreational drugs. It took me quite a while to come to the realisation that I can't do that, and it affects me negatively. I was 16 years old. So, it was five years of being in between having a good six months and then having a bad six months and the recurring of my illness. I would say it gave me a couple of lost years (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

All but one of the 75 learners in the DESS were black and, as per the South African legislation, characterised as 'previously disadvantaged'. As described in Chapter 1, being black in South Africa often means that you are still disadvantaged. Most of the

learners in the DESS were female (44 female learners out of a total of 75). With this gender distribution, the DESS also provided access to women with disabilities who often experience layered discrimination due to their gender and their disabilities.

As the DESS primarily included black people, ensured enrolment of women, allowed for people of older ages to enrol, and included learners with lower levels of education into a formal skills development programme, **the DESS strategy acknowledged and sought to address the marginalisation faced by persons with disabilities in South Africa**. As a first step in supporting persons with disabilities to transition into formal employment, providing access to a programme like DESS must be regarded as essential.

5.1.3. Sub-theme 1.2. From misery to starting a new journey

Many of the learners with disabilities had stories about times at home where their psycho-social health and overall well-being were seriously compromised. Achmat said, *"it felt like I've hit rock bottom or something" (Achmat, interview 22 March 2018).* Lennart talked about the time right after being diagnosed with his impairment: *"And in that time it was misery. I was at home all the time and I thought my life was coming to an end" (Lennart, interview 15 March 2018).* Kwezi was very distraught when he became disabled, especially as he thought he could now no longer do one of the things he really loved, namely play soccer.

> *Because at the time I was doing nothing. I was staying at home and stressing because I'm in a wheelchair. Before I used the wheelchair, I played soccer a lot. I was stressing thinking: "how will I be able to play soccer again? I will never play". I think negative things (Kwezi, interview 16 March 2018).*

Despite the personal challenges with impairments and the psycho-social impact of their impairment and disability, the learners found ways of pursuing opportunities, and showing resilience and agency. They had all taken initiative to apply to join the DESS, motivated by the skills development, the financial benefits in terms of the stipend, or because they simply saw it as better than sitting at home. No matter the reason, they all sought to change their situation for the better with this opportunity. Joining the

DESS gave the learners a feeling of hope. Lennart said that joining the DESS *"...was like I started all over, I knew it's a new journey" (Lennart, interview, 15 March 2018).* Robert said, *"it's at least better than sitting at home with your head in your hands saying the world is caving in" (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

The Disability NGO also saw the different reasons for learners joining the DESS. Some reasons related to the actual purpose of the DESS, i.e., upskilling and preparing for employment. Other reasons showed the sentiment that it was not really for the skills development, but rather an opportunity better than the alternatives, which would often be doing nothing. Disability NGO 1 described some of the reasons given in the pre-assessment:

> *Some people say I'm bored. I have nothing else to do. Some people will say I want to upskill. I need to sustain myself. I need to make myself more employable out there. And some will tell you: I'm doing it for the money (Disability NGO Interviewee 1, 13 September 2018).*

Having taken the initiative to join and then being accepted onto the DESS must be seen as quite the accomplishment considering the feelings of misery and isolation the learners with disabilities expressed having prior to joining the DESS. My study showed that getting access to the DESS was seen as an opportunity for something better, at least better than sitting and doing nothing at home, which was the alternative for many. **The DESS was seen as the start of a new journey and gave the learners hope of getting another chance**. These findings show the importance of the DESS to the individual with a disability and what having access to such an opportunity means for persons with disabilities.

Theme 1 has focused on the DESS experiences happening before the learners with disabilities enrolled in the DESS, and I have considered how the experiences of marginalisation influence persons with disabilities and their access to opportunities. Theme 2 describes and analyses the next phase of the DESS journey as the learners with disabilities were enrolled in the DESS. In Theme 2, I explore the DESS, the learning, and related experiences in and around the classroom.

5.2. Theme 2: Support to Navigate Learning with a Disability

Theme 2 focuses on DESS phase 2, which includes the DESS learning and support to learners with disabilities in and around the classroom.

5.2.1. DESS phase 2: In and around the classroom

5.2.1.1. SAQA curriculum

The DESS was structured around a Business Administration Services NQF Level 4 learnership. The learnership was "designed to meet the needs of those learners both employed or unemployed, who are already involved or wish to become involved in the field of Administration" (South African Qualifications Authority, 2015, p. 2). Appendix F includes an overview of the SAQA curriculum for the learnership.

The curriculum's fundamental, core, and electives units were all taught in classroom style at the premises of the Disability NGO by a contracted SETA-certified training provider (the Training Provider).

The SETAs do not give any guidelines on the teaching and learning and do not give any framework for teaching the required curriculum to persons with disabilities. How to approach the teaching and learning of persons with disabilities for them to meet the SAQA standards is left to the discretion of the implementing organisations. How the DESS approached the classroom learning is presented below.

5.2.1.2. Approaches to teaching and learning of persons with disabilities

Due to the marginalisation many of the learners with disabilities had faced prior to joining the DESS, the Disability NGO and the Training Provider found that many of the learners were struggling with the formal learning in the classroom. The Training Provider developed their own learning material within the SAQA curriculum, and they were able to make accommodations in their teaching and learning approaches, mixing theory and practical exercises. The Training Providers teaching on the DESS were not exclusively focused on SETA learnerships for persons with disabilities and were not disability experts but had experiences from prior DESS programmes.

In terms of supporting the learners' English literacy and numeracy learning, the DESS had taken the approach of dividing the learners into two groups. Training Provider 1 explained this approach:

> *…we split the group up: These guys have done particularly well with maths and communications. They will be able to cope with the normal layout of the content. And then with the other group we said, these guys are really going to struggle. Let's look at more practical teaching (Training Provider 1, interview 18 June 2018).*

Training Provider 2 further explained their teaching and learning approach and how they continuously sought to accommodate the learners' learning needs.

> *…they interact more if they are working group-works, having to research things, then they show more interest. Whereas if we're just going to go full-on facilitating; here's your content and go with the full content of what the qualification is, it's going to break them (Training Provider 2, interview 4 July 2018).*

The teaching and learning approaches taken in the DESS were very much appreciated by the learners with disabilities. The learners all highlighted the Training Providers and the classroom learnings as something they really enjoyed, and they felt that they learnt new things in a positive and accepting learning environment. Pumeza said about the classroom learning: *"I don't waste my time here and my energy, and it is something that I enjoy" (Pumeza, interview 23 March 2018).* Reflecting her appreciation of the Training Provider, Pumeza put *"a understanding facilitator"* in her collage.

(Pumeza, collage excerpt, CLET workshop 6 April 2018)

Robert talked about his learning experiences in the classroom:

> *... you're learning new things and – ok, you're not exactly doing it, but you will be able to implement it at work. The facilitators were good because they were friendly. They weren't like a professor will be at a technicon or university where some professors just give you the material, speak a little bit and you must go on. It was a good experience. They made us play out some scenarios. They made the work as much functional as possible (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

The DESS clearly provided a learning space in the classroom which considered and addressed learners' prior educational marginalisation and learning challenges. The learners felt comfortable in the classroom and felt that the formal teaching and learning of the curriculum was made easier by the Training Providers. In this environment, they felt that they were gaining new skills which they could use in the labour market, such as filing, working with a computer, maths, and English, as well as communication and problem-solving skills.

The formal learning following the SAQA curriculum was supported by capacity building sessions which focused on skills development outside the technical hard skills taught for the Business Administration degree. These sessions were not a required part of the SETA learnership structure but designed by the Disability NGO. Findings on these sessions are presented in the following section.

5.2.1.3. Capacity building sessions for soft skills development

The capacity building sessions took place at the Disability NGO's premises with all the learners with disabilities in one group. The sessions focused on job seeking skills and on soft skills relevant to a formal working environment. The capacity building sessions were either done by the Disability NGO staff or guest speakers brought in to talk on specific topics. The sessions included topics such as:

- CV writing
- Preparation for job interviews
- Organisational governance, policies, and procedures
- Workplace etiquette and manners
- Personal financial management including opening bank accounts

- The South Africa Revenue Services (SARS)
- Disability management

Many persons with disabilities have not had the opportunity to get real work experience and they may not have learnt the etiquettes and manners of a workplace. The DESS sought to address this challenge through the capacity building sessions. Disability NGO 1 spoke about the need for the capacity building sessions: *"I think it's because they've been at home for so long and not being involved in society. So, we need to teach them all these things" (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).* Overall, the capacity building sessions' purpose was to *"increase their employability" (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

Apart from elements directly related to formal employment, the capacity building sessions were also aimed at developing the participants' interpersonal social skills and understanding. South Africa has a highly diverse population and the racial segregation implemented during apartheid is still very visible in the residential demographics in the areas in which the Disability NGO worked. Disability NGO 1 explained:

> *You must remember that it is different races coming together. It's different cultures coming together. So, you need to teach them the respect for each other's culture. The respect for the different races and beliefs and all of that (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).*

The learners with disabilities also highlighted how much they had learnt from other learners in the DESS and developed their skills in working together with respect for each other. Achmat and Robert talked about how much they had learnt about diversity and respecting colleagues:

> *To respect other people's cultural differences and how to deal with the differences between me and them. Body language and language wise. That's very important. Now I understand what kind of respect I must have for the others and attitude I must have to adapt to that (Achmat, interview 22 March 2018).*

> *We learn about different cultures and stuff like that. For example, there were black guys and us. And we just spoke to each other and spoke about stuff that we didn't know about each other. Like how you live and what is this? (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

The data clearly shows that the learners with disabilities appreciated the learning taking place in the classroom, both the formal learning as it was taught by the Training Providers and the more informal learning happening in the capacity building sessions and in the interpersonal connections, building social cohesion between the learners and across race and culture. These learnings are essential both to the workplace and in general society.

As also found in Theme 1, the Disability NGO acknowledged that the DESS did not happen in a vacuum but that persons with disabilities and the DESS took place in a context where factors outside the classroom influenced the learning in the classroom. The DESS therefore also included a focus on the learners with disabilities' lives outside the DESS. One such focus was family interventions.

5.2.1.4. Family interventions to remove barriers to participation

Apart from the challenges of education levels directly influencing the learners with disabilities' learning and skills development in the DESS, the Disability NGO also found that many of the challenges learners faced in participating in the DESS were related to their situation at home. Staying with parents or other family members was common for the DESS learners in general, which was reflected in the family interventions taking up a large part of the support provided by the Disability NGO's social worker. Persons with disabilities may stay longer with their parents than their able-bodied peers due to needing help with managing their impairments and/or due to financial limitations and not being able to sustain themselves independently.

The Disability NGO found that if the person's family did not understand the person's impairment and the challenges he/she faced, they might not be able to support the person and might not let him/her attend the DESS. Disability NGO 1 explained:

> *We make the household aware of what the person's disability is. How to be sensitive towards the person. How to work through the challenges that the person is going through. And some of them see the disability first. And to sensitise them that the person is first a person and then you see the disability (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).*

Disability NGO 1 also gave her perspectives on cultural views of disability, how culture influences families' approach to disability, and, based on that, the importance of family interventions:

> *A lot of people that have a disability in the African culture – it is seen as being demon possession. So, instead of using Westernised medication, they will use traditional and Sangoma advice and education, which sometimes make it worse for the person and not helping. So, this person is just being more traumatised because of that (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).*

The study participant was not from an African cultural background, which may have influenced her perspectives of the practices she described. In her view, the Sangomas and traditional approaches to disability were seen as less preferred and she privileges westernised practices. Her perspective highlights that the cultural diversity in South Africa is not only at play between the learners with disabilities, but also within the Disability NGO and potentially also between the Disability NGO staff and the learners and their families. Such negative construction of disability occurs in multiple domains, including the cultural and the medical domains.

The DESS sought to engage families to create a more supportive environment for the learners with disabilities. The direct family interventions by the social worker happened predominantly when the DESS learners had high levels of absenteeism or expressed other problems in participating in the DESS, and if the families directly interfered with the learners' participation or performance in the programme. The DESS focused on addressing families as barriers, which was clearly important. However, the DESS did

not engage the families as potential co-facilitators to strengthen the DESS skills and personal development or to prepare the learners for the transition into formal employment.

5.2.1.5. Support and accommodation for health and impairment management

The DESS included some health and impairment support and accommodation, which was mainly done by the social worker. The Disability NGO kept a record of medical referral contacts of the learners with disabilities in case of emergencies. For example, if a learner had an accident, a psychotic episode, or a seizure and could be a danger to him/herself or to others, the Disability NGO would then support the learner in that moment and take him/her to the hospital or home (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).

As a conscious choice, the DESS did not include support for ongoing impairment management or in direct dealings with the health system outside emergencies. The DESS did make reasonable accommodation in terms of time for medical appointments or if learners were not able to attend the DESS due to impairment problems (Disability NGO 3, interview, 23 Jan 2019).

None of the learners with disabilities participating in this study reported having any medical emergencies during the DESS, although their impairments still influenced their participation in the DESS and their lives in general. The health system played a central role in how the learners were able to deal with their impairments, and their experiences in dealing with and managing their impairments are explored in sub-theme 2.2.

The first sub-theme is ‘Family as enablers or disablers’, exploring the role of the family outside the DESS family interventions.

5.2.2. Sub-theme 2.1. Family as enabling or disabling

All the learners with disabilities in this study lived with their parents, except for Bernard who lived with his girlfriend. The eight learners with disabilities reported that their families were supportive in general and of their participation in the DESS. **The family support might have been a positive factor in the high attendance rate for these**

learners and why they were in the stronger group of the DESS. That these DESS learners had not had any family interventions did not mean that the learners' families did not play a role in their lives and in how they were able to pursue opportunities.

When talking about the time when he was diagnosed with his impairment, Lennart said of his family: *"They were very supportive. My parents. My siblings also" (Lennart, interview 15 March 2018).* However, as reflected in the following stories of Achmat and Robert, parents may not always be able to actively support their children in acknowledging and managing their impairment and in how their impairments may turn into disabling conditions. Achmat said that when he was diagnosed with schizophrenia, his parents did not understand his impairment. They learnt how to deal with his symptoms when he went into hospital. He described his parents as follows: *"They're lenient and very understanding. So, they are helping me" (Achmat, interview 22 March 2018).* Robert said that when he was diagnosed with bipolar, his parents also did not know how to deal with his diagnosis or how to support him. He said of his parents: *"They were lost, and I was lost, and it was a learning curve for all of us" (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).* Robert continued:

> *So, it was a little bit of an effort for me to get up in the morning. I would just say: "No, not today. I'm gonna lay in bed and do nothing ever". My mom and my dad were so worried that I'm going to get into trouble. They just left me to my own devices (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

That Achmat and Robert's impairments were psycho-social impairments may also have made it harder for them and their families to initially understand and manage, as these generally invisible impairments tend to be less commonly understood in society and people have less knowledge about them.

Another aspect found in both Achmat and Robert's stories is how parents became *"lenient"* or left Robert *"to my own devices".* In Achmat and Robort's cases, this was probably due to their parents not understanding their impairments and not knowing how to help them. Pumeza gave the same sense of passive support from her parents as she said that *"They are fine" (Pumeza, interview 23 March 2018)* but they did not talk about her disability in her family. This passive and sometimes misguided support from

parents and families may contribute to impairments becoming disabling and mean that persons with disabilities are left without support and encouragement to, for example, actively participate in work or employment opportunities. **Family may not understand what persons with disabilities are capable of or they try out of good intentions to protect their children with disabilities, but instead they contribute to creating disabling conditions.**

As such, families are important enablers or disablers in the learners with disabilities' personal journeys of dealing with their disability and in them engage in society and accessing opportunities.

The learners' impairments were something they had to deal with and manage, usually on an ongoing basis and often with support from their parents and family. As the impairments are also medical conditions, the health system should ideally be another support network for the learners with disabilities. The learners' experiences with the health system are explored in the following sub-theme.

5.2.3. Sub-theme 2.2. Health system: facilitator and/or barrier

The DESS did not include active support in terms of impairment management or dealing with the health system. My study highlighted that having an impairment influenced the learners with disabilities' personal lives and their participation in the labour market. The learners with disabilities spoke about how they themselves had been dealing with their impairment, how it had affected their daily lives and still did, and the support or lack thereof from health practitioners and the health system.

Five of the learners were diagnosed with an impairment as a teenager or as a young adult. These learners all had stories about how they had to deal with an impairment and how they initially had found it very difficult to accept and manage their impairment. They expressed feelings of isolation and despair in the initial period of getting a diagnosis and how their impairments became disabling.

As explored above, the families of the learners played an important role in their lives but often the parents did not know how to deal with and manage their impairment and actively support their children. As part of being diagnosed and managing their

impairments, most of the learners went for regular check-ups at a clinic or hospital and all were making use of public health services. Lennart explained how the doctor who diagnosed him had also helped him and his family to come to terms with his disability and how to deal with the impairment. He explained: *"My doctor explains everything for me. She's trying her best in every way to help me to cope with it" (Lennart, interview 15 March 2018).*

Most of the learners got limited support from the health system or felt neglected or ignored by health practitioners. Patricia and Robert talked about their experiences with the health system:

> *I used to have a doctor when I was a teenager. He used to at least control it, but these days the doctors or nurses simply hand me the medicine without considering alternative medicines or methods. They don't care (Patricia, interview 23 March 2018).*

> *There are government hospitals to go to. But they don't have the framework because there's too little people who are helping. Because there's one psychiatrist working at that hospital that I attend. Every day she's seeing about 20 and the psychiatrist need that one-on-one to see the small differences (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

Fatima saw a doctor every six months for renewal of medication for her depression. When discussing the government's disability grant, she explained that she had not applied for the grant because of the doctor she initially saw: *"He said I'm fine I can go work. At that time, I just had stress. He said there's nothing wrong with me. I can go and work" (Fatima, interview 22 March 2018).* Later, Fatima was diagnosed with depression. Fatima's story also raises questions about how the health system is diagnosing impairments, which professionals do the diagnosis, and their understanding of impairments and disabilities. In a case like Fatima's, one doctor did not see her depression as a disability, which would then influence her access to, for example, a programme like the DESS, which required a proof of impairment issued by a medical doctor. Due to her (undiagnosed) disability, Fatima may not have been able to access

and complete a mainstream employment preparation programme without added support services.

The stories above show the importance of the health system as a support network for persons with disabilities. Being undiagnosed, not knowing how to deal with an impairment, or not getting appropriate and sufficient support from health practitioners influences people's immediate health and impairment management. It also influences their capabilities, physically and psychologically, to participate in and contribute to society and the labour market. DESS learners often had to take time off due to impairment management and problems. If a health system is not available as a positive support network in the lives of persons with disabilities to manage their impairments, the health system becomes a barrier to persons with disabilities' access to formal employment because people end up having unnecessary high levels of absenteeism from their workplaces. This in turn will play into the labels of persons with disabilities as being less productive than their able-bodied co-workers because they must spend time managing the health system as well as their impairments, time that could be reduced if the health system would play a facilitating role for persons with disabilities to manage their impairments more efficiently. My study indicated that **the health system at times became a barrier and a contributor to people's impairments becoming disabling and thereby excluding them from the open labour market**.

The two sub-themes above explored factors outside the DESS which influenced the learners with disabilities' participation in the DESS and potential future formal employment opportunities. The next sub-theme explores what happened in the classroom between the learners and how the social connections made between peers in the classroom could influence learners' DESS participation and performance.

5.2.4. Sub-theme 2.3: A space for social connections between peers

With the DESS being exclusively for persons with disabilities, the programme provided a space where learners could connect with other learners with disabilities, something that many of the learners had not previously had the opportunity to do. The connection

with other persons with disabilities helped the learners on their own journey in accepting and understanding their disability. This is reflected in the quote below:

> *I've learnt quite a lot from them. To be stronger in myself and keep my confidence. Because if I'm with people that's abled all the time, it's like I'm not like them. I'm not good enough. But if I'm with the others – the disabled – it's like I can be what I want to be. Relax more. Yes, it helped me to cope with others and with my own disability (Lennart, interview 15 March 2018).*

Bernard, who was a bit older than the other participants, also found that he was able to encourage his younger peers with his experiences: *"It's like I'm an example for them. It makes me feel good, man" (Bernard, interview 23 March 2018).*

Most learners highlighted being in a classroom with other persons with disabilities as something positive for their skills learning as well. They felt comfortable in the group and they felt understood by the other learners with disabilities. Patricia said:

> *The learnership was fun because we were working as a group. You felt free to ask the person next to you how something is done if you don't know. Group work and sharing views. And good friends. Different disabilities (Patricia, interview 23 March 2018).*

Fatima had a different experience though to the rest of the group. When talking about the other learners, she said about them that: *"I don't really have friends. Just people that I talk to" (Fatima, interview 22 March 2018).* She clearly did not feel the same sense of community as the other learners. This experience may have had something to do with her impairment, depression, or it was part of Fatima's personality as possibly an introvert. Either way, Fatima did not talk about any experiences of feeling peer support. Fatima had not had any sessions with the Disability NGO social worker, and she had not discussed her experiences with anybody else. She was on her way to finishing the DESS project period and might not have felt the need to be part of the peer community.

The supportive community the learners found in the DESS as persons with disabilities clearly had a positive effect on most of the learners' individual journeys in terms of

their disability and their learning. They found they were not alone, that they were not the only ones with a disability, and they saw how others were dealing with their disability.

That the DESS only included persons with disabilities had advantages. However, it had the disadvantage that the DESS created a space separated from the general society and, when in the classroom, the engagement with able-bodied persons was limited to the Training Providers, who were sensitised to disability. The DESS learners did not have an opportunity to, for example, build a network with able-bodied peers in the classroom, which could also have been very influential in the development of their soft skills for navigating life outside the DESS, for building social cohesion, and for transitioning to formal employment, among other things.

I do think that having a safe space for the learners with disabilities was important for their development. The learners all came to the DESS with experiences of marginalisation and oppression, which in some cases had been internalised, and learners had feelings of isolation and despair. The sentiments expressed by most of the learners with disabilities showed **the importance of a space shared with other persons with disabilities for their mental health, how they were dealing with their own disability, and ultimately for their learning in the DESS**.

In the DESS, the work placements gave the learners with disabilities an opportunity to be part of a real workplace environment with able-bodied colleagues. The interpersonal engagements at the work placements are part of the next theme as it explores experiences from the workplace.

5.3. Theme 3: Work Placements with Insufficient Support

Theme 3 will present findings from phase 3 of the DESS where the learners are placed at host employers for workplace experiences.

5.3.1. DESS phase 3: The work placements

5.3.1.1. Finding willing host employers

During the DESS period, each learner was placed at a host employer for a total of 14 weeks but only for one week at a time, meaning that the learner would alternate between the classroom and the workplace. The purpose of the work placements was to give the learners workplace experience and the opportunity to implement what they had learnt in the classroom to further develop their skills.

The Disability NGO was responsible for identifying employers who were able and willing to host the DESS learners. The Disability NGO tried to identify employers in or close to the learners' local communities to minimise the challenges related to transport, including its inaccessibility and cost. A staff member of the organisation worked specifically with employers and the negotiations about work placements. A formal agreement was signed between the Disability NGO and the host employers for the work placement.

The host employers in the DESS included local NGOs, primary and secondary public mainstream schools, government health clinics and day hospitals, libraries, and nature reserve management offices. As such, all of the learners were placed in the open labour market, but host employers were all either in the public or civil society sector, not in the private sector.

In this DESS, the host employers were not the contract holders of the learnership with the SETA. This meant that the implementation or incentives of the B-BBEE Act were not relevant to the employers (Chapter 1 outlines the B-BBEE Act). Since the B-BBEE Act was not applicable, the Disability NGO said that they had to use other strategies to engage employers to host the DESS learners. Disability NGO 2 explained:

> *The way that we try to convince people is that we are trying to make a difference or trying to give a person with a disability a chance – but other than that it is extremely difficult convincing the host sites. Some people are open to making a difference and making sure that people with disabilities are included while others are: "It's too much time, too much effort" (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

She said that some employers would say that persons with disabilities would be unable to cope within their environment. Other employers said that they did not have the time to manage or supervise the learner. She elaborated further on the challenges in finding host employers for the learners, which often related to employers' misconceptions and limited knowledge of disability:

> *For example, somebody with a physical disability who only has one hand. Our perception is that this person through the years has learnt to do things differently. It's not that the person cannot do it. It's that the person does it differently. But when they see that they say "No. How can this person with no hands be working at the reception? They need to answer the phone and write at the same time and so on" (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

Due to these challenges of misconceptions and lack of accurate knowledge found amongst employers, the Disability NGO added a focus on preparation and support for the host employers. The preparation and support elements are presented in the following section.

5.3.1.2. Preparing and supporting employers to include persons with disabilities

The preparation and support of the host employers was developed to address employers' struggles in understanding and accommodating persons with disabilities in their workplaces. Disability NGO 3 explained: *"What I'm finding now is that corporates are having challenges, because there's a lack of support programmes*

when they recruit through other ways. There's absolutely no support systems that goes with it" (Disability NGO 3, interview, 23 Jan 2019). Disability NGO 2 further explained: "*…we do whole workplace management to ensure minimal conflict between the learner and the host employer" (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

As part of the workplace preparation, the Disability NGO provided disability awareness and sensitisation workshops for the host employers, including directors, managers, and staff. Disability NGO 1 explained:

> *I think, firstly, employers don't know where to start. They don't know what to expect. We have a person allocated just for training going out to schools, to corporates. The minute they are sensitised, their eyes open and they have a completely different view about people with disabilities (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).*

Out of the six employer interviewees from the three workplaces participating in the study, only one explained that she had participated in a disability sensitisation workshop held by the Disability NGO. This workshop had taken place some time back on how to handle a neurological disability and had not been in connection with the current DESS. Employer 6 worked at a mainstream school, and she remembered that workshop as "*A workshop on how to handle children in the classroom" (Employer 6, interview 28 January 2019).* The employer said the workshop was very useful for her work at the school. The reports from the employers mean that none of the three workplaces participating in this study had received disability awareness or sensitisation related to hosting the learners with disabilities.

In the DESS, the Disability NGO had structured ongoing engagements with and support for the host employers. Disability NGO 2 explained the intended process in the following way: "*Ideally this is what should happen: there is first a* negotiation *for placement. Thereafter, once a quarter there needs to be a meeting… between the organisation and the host site" (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

She explained that the first meeting was orientation around the DESS programme, and the second meeting was the disability awareness and sensitisation training. The

third meeting was a follow up to see if things were going well, and the last meeting was to end off the work placement.

The interviews with the employers showed that the process did not always happen as planned by the Disability NGO. The three host employers reported that they had only had the initial meeting with the Disability NGO when agreeing to host the DESS learners. The host employers generally expressed the sentiment that they had very limited engagements with and support from the Disability NGO before and during the placement period. This meant that the host employers were not always sure of how to deal with the learners' impairments and their need for accommodation. It also meant that the skills development of the learners with disabilities which was supposed to take place during the work placement varied in structure and quality.

The experiences of the learners with disabilities and the host employers of the work placements are explored in the following sub-themes.

5.3.2. Sub-theme 3.1: Feeling like a qualified professional or a glorified copy boy

The work placements give the learners with disabilities the opportunity to develop and use the skills which they had learnt in the classroom in a real workplace environment. When Kwezi talked about his work placement at a local day hospital, he was very positive about how he had learnt and used new knowledge and skills. He talked about his work duties in the following quote:

> *So, I make deliveries there and when the patients want their folders, they ask me. And I check him on the computer. I'll do all those things and get the patient a folder. And if I'm needed to do something I will go there and do that (Kwezi, interview 16 March 2018).*

Patricia, who was based at an NGO, positively highlighted both the skills she got from working in the reception and the workplace environment: *"They taught me how to e-mail, bring papers, make photocopies and welcome visitors. I enjoy working there. People there are nice" (Patricia, interview 23 March 2018).*

In the CLET workshop, Robert reflected on what being part of the DESS meant to him and he said in his poem that it was an ***"opportunity to feel like qualified professional"*** *(Robert, poem 6 April 2018).*

(Robert, collage excerpt, 6 April 2018)

At the same time, Robert and other learners had fewer positive experiences of their skills development in their work placements. Robert said he felt like ***"a glorified copy boy"*** *(Robert, interview 22 March 2018).* He did not feel that he was taken seriously and had higher expectations from the work placement than just doing copying. The feeling of not being taken seriously was enhanced when an able-bodied learner came to the same workplace in the same type of learnership: *"But he was taken with more zest. They let him be on the computer; they were telling him about the filing. It just felt that I was taken less seriously than this guy" (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

Pumeza explained how she was just sitting in the office at the school where she was doing her work placement and not doing anything:

> *They are not helping us. We are just sitting there doing nothing the whole day. They only told us to copy things. Only that. Nothing more. Sometimes we do answer the phones, but we are doing nothing with the computers. They are not helping us (Pumeza, interview 23 March 2018).*

Pumeza told the Training Provider and the Disability NGO about the challenges at her work placement and a letter was written to the school. Nothing changed though and she ended up not going to the workplace as she felt it was a waste of her time. Pumeza said of her workplace experience that ***"I'll have a qualification of a Business Admin, but I don't have experience"*** *(Pumeza, interview 23 March 2018).*

That the host employers were largely left to manage the skills development of the DESS learners with disabilities without support or guidance from the Disability NGO is reflected in how the host employers then dealt with the DESS learners' skills development. Employer 4 from the NGO where Patricia was placed explained her approach to learning and development in the following way:

> *As her supervisor I wanted her to be busy. Not to focus on one thing. Sometimes I would put her in the admin area. But I wanted her to learn to do some other things. To multi-task. So, we gave other tasks to her, like the registers, like making tea for the visitors. And welcoming people as face of [the NGO] (Employer 4, interview 30 July 2018).*

Another employer from a government organisation talked very positively about Lennart, who was placed at her organisation. She found his writing and communication skills were very beneficial to the organisation and Lennart was very involved in the organisation's work. Employer 1 said:

> *He wrote the most amazing stories. He's got such a talent for telling a story. And he was able to do a lot of talking to schools. The essential message of our work is to get in touch with nature. And he did a lot in communicating that message to schools for us. He was very good at it (Employer 1, interview 10 July 2018).*

The third host workplace, a mainstream school, interviewed for the study had a different experience of how the learner with a disability contributed and developed during his placement at the school. Employer 6 said it was a relief when the learner was not at the workplace because "*We can get some things done" (Employer 6, interview 28 January 2019).* Employer 5 said:

> *Yes, it was a bit tiring for me because I can't do my work and look after him also. So, you see, it was a bit difficult, actually. That's why we gave him the duty of copying most of the time (Employer 5, interview 28 January 2019).*

The employers from the third workplace expressed difficulties in understanding the learner's impairment and how his medication possibly affected his ability to do his work. They found that he was often very tired, and they allowed him to take regular naps in the sickbay at the school. The specific administrative skills development and the broader professional development of the learner were not structured, and Employer 5 found that he would need more training before he could enter formal employment.

The learners' development depended to a large extent on the employers' understanding and willingness to understand disability and how the host employers saw the DESS learners – **host employers saw the learners either as contributing workers or as disruptions to their own work.** The limited formal structure in the DESS regarding the learners' development at the workplaces meant that the learners had very different experiences and the benefits from the work placements varied.

5.3.3. Sub-theme 3.2. Learning how to behave in formal employment

As many persons with disabilities have often not had the opportunity to get real work experiences, they may not have learnt the etiquette and manners of a workplace. Disability NGO 2 spoke about the need for the focus on how to behave as a professional employee:

> *…because some of them doesn't know processes. We need to teach them the process of governance, policies and procedures. So we have sessions where we teach them how to behave in the workplace (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).*

One of the most common challenges mentioned by the Disability NGO and the Training Provider regarding the work placements was learners' absenteeism. They explained that sometimes they found out that the learners simply did not attend at the workplaces and did not call in beforehand or give any reasons for why they stayed away. This shows that some learners did not follow commonly accepted behaviour in a formal workplace setting. According to the Disability NGO, the learners did not always inform the employer or the Disability NGO about their absenteeism, even though they had a legitimate reason. They might not have stayed absent without giving

notice purposely, but simply because they did not know the expectations at the workplace.

Interviewees from the Disability NGO and the Training Provider and meeting minutes from operational meetings gave various reasons for absenteeism, which cut across a wide range of issues. The reasons included a wide range of factors related to health and socio-economic situation:

- Impairment and health related
- Collection of government social grant
- Transport challenges due to cost and accessibility
- Lack of support at home to attend the DESS
- Violence and abuse at home
- Expectations to travel to attend family events in other provinces

The complexity of personal challenges the learners with disabilities were dealing with influenced their attendance and performance at the workplaces and in the DESS in general.

The eight learners with disabilities in this study had low levels of absenteeism and showed understanding of how to behave in the workplace. Robert talked about how he managed challenges with his impairment when at the work placement. He said: "*Some days I come late or if it was a very bad week, I will not come one day in the week. But I'll phone and I'll communicate" (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

Patricia showed her learnings about how to behave as a professional employee in her collage by including a picture of work colleagues in a conflict with the words: *"You don't have to like your co-workers but you have to learn to get along with them".*

(Patricia, collage excerpt, 6 April 2018)

The findings from the DESS show that learners' soft skills were often limited in terms of behaving as a professional employee coming into the programme. Having to deal with complex and compounded challenges because of one's disability while being a professional employee calls for advanced skills, not just technical ones but also a range of soft ones. **The learners needed skills to navigate the rules and etiquettes of a formal workplace they may not be familiar with.** They needed problem-solving skills and agency to deal with the personal challenges of impairment management and effects of marginalisation because of compounded layers of challenges and stigma around disability, race, and socio-economic background.

5.3.4. Sub-theme 3.3: Disability confident co-workers but unchanged workplaces

The findings from my study show that the employers' understanding and knowledge about disability and the capabilities of persons with disabilities developed through the direct engagements with the learners with disabilities. Either the learners with disabilities had directly told them what their impairment was and what their accommodation needs were, if any, or the managers and staff had figured it out as they went along. The employer hosting Patricia said:

> *… from Patricia I learnt a lot, because as young as she was, as disabled as she was - I noticed that though she was like that, everything was possible for her. Ja, everything was possible for her. Because she was active (Employer 4, interview 30 July 2018).*

Another employer gave her reflections on what she had learnt as a host employer of learners with disabilities and the development she herself went through in understanding persons with disabilities:

> *What we've learnt is that every person is different. It's better to meet the person and understand the challenge before you can make a judgement. But you know we did have preconceived notions. That is where the worry came from. I think with disability we've learnt that even a disability is unique to a person. It just depends. Cause we've learnt now – every case is different (Employer 1, interview 10 July 2018).*

Employer 1 felt that the learning the workplace went through was due to the positive work environment and how workers embraced learning about disability as a team. She said:

> *So, if I had worked with a team that had been like: "No, I don't want to get to know the person. They must just do whatever I tell them to do". Then I think we would still have kept that idea that those people are limited and no, they can't do this. They can't do anything. I think that idea that disability limits you, is crazy. Now I know it's crazy (Employer 1, interview 10 July 2018).*

The employer highlights the importance of the workplace environment and the attitudes of the staff. In her workplace, the staff clearly had an attitude of collegiality which meant that interpersonal connections were made with the DESS learners with disabilities. **The staff's understanding of disability increased on a personal level.** This was confirmed by Lennart, who talked very positively about his work placement at this employer. He felt welcomed as a colleague and was comfortable in the

workplace. He also reported that he was able to develop and gain new skills while at the work placement.

The data also shows a much less enabling organisational culture from some of the host employers. Training Provider 2 explained how he at times got feedback from frustrated learners who reported that they were not actually working and getting the agreed upon experiences, but were just sitting idle at the workplace (Training Provider 2, interview 4 July 2018).

One of the employers said that after they had hosted DESS learners, they had also accepted an application from a person with a disability as a volunteer. The employer explained how she had approached the organisation's director and he had given the go ahead to accept the volunteer. She said confidently: "*Yes, we can work with disability – with disabled people here" (Employer 4, interview 30 July 2018).*

For most employers, hosting the learners with disabilities gave them a much better understanding of persons with disabilities and their capabilities as workers. A very positive outcome of the DESS was disability confident able-bodied co-workers which resulted from the direct engagements with persons with disabilities and the personal connections between the learners with disabilities and their able-bodied co-workers. This outcome addressed challenges related to employers' misconceptions and ignorance about persons with disabilities and how to include them in the workplace.

However, besides the example of the NGO accepting a volunteer with a disability, none of the employers had taken initiatives to further actively pursue the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace, even though they reported generally positive experiences from the DESS learners. These findings indicate that, despite the importance and positive impact of interpersonal positive connections between persons with disabilities and able-bodied colleagues at the workplace, these **interpersonal connections are not enough to create organisational changes at the workplace**. Creating organisational and systemic changes in the open labour market seems to be a lot to put on the shoulders of persons with disabilities and their capabilities of developing positive interpersonal connections at the workplace.

5.4. Theme 4: Graduating into a Transition Gap

Theme 4 focuses on the DESS Phase 4, which included the assessment for competency within the NQF for a SAQA-accredited qualification of the learners graduating from the DESS. Theme 4 also explores what happens after the graduation from the DESS.

5.4.1. DESS Phase 4: Assessment and graduation

5.4.1.1. Completion and competency assessment for SAQA accreditation

To graduate with a SAQA-accredited certificate from the SETA learnership, the learners needed to pass assessments for competency at the end of the learnership period. Learners got assessed in two ways: a formative assessment which was a group assessment taking place in the classroom, and an individual summative assessment. Four weeks were scheduled for learnership assessments and reassessments (Training Provider 1, interview 18 June 2018). If a learner passes the assessment, the SETA will issue the SAQA-accredited certificate to the learners. The final assessment and the certification signify the end of the SETA learnership.

Table 8 gives an overview of the number of learners initially enrolled in the DESS and pass rate for the SAQA assessment.

Table 8: Number of learners enrolled and learners passing final assessment

Number of learners initially enrolled	Total number of learners completing the DESS	Number of learners passing assessment for SAQA qualification
75	51	15
100%	68%	20%

(Training Provider 1, interview 18 June 2018)

These numbers mean that only 15 of the 75 learners would have an accredited qualification which they could use to pursue a career in business administration.

The learners who passed the SAQA qualification faced another challenge, however. The Disability NGO and the Training Provider described how the learners often waited a very long time for the certificate from the SETAs. They showed their frustration about this and how they find that this delay impacts on the learners' transition to formal employment:

> *The problem is that people finished a business administration course in April and learners have been coming back and asking when are they going to get their certificates? So, what happens is, it's difficult for them to get a job, because they'll go and be asked, "ok, where's your certificate"' No, they don't have it. Frustration. And then they'll just join another learnership. And so, it goes on and on (Training Provider 2, 4 July 2018).*

Kwezi had also had this experience from a previous SETA learnership he had participated in. His CV showed that he had achieved the different Unit Standard of the learnership in October 2014, but the certificate from the SETA had only been issued in September 2015, one year later.

The numbers in Table 8 also show the completion rate of the DESS. Reasons for not completing the programme include health problems, challenges at home such as family or care duties, finding other opportunities including other SETA learnerships, or learners losing interest in the programme. Training Provider 1 talks about his experiences of the completion rate in SETA learnerships, including the DESS:

> *On average on the abled-body side we tend to have 80 to 90% completion rate in terms of finishing the programme. On the disability side, 50 to 60% is really a good number. Not competent but finishing; actually staying on the programme. So, our retention on the DESS, was 51, which is quite good for our standards (Training Provider 1, 18 June 2018).*

The Training Provider found that the completion rate for the DESS study case was good relative to other similar programmes. That 80% of the enrolled learners did not receive an accredited certificate and 32% dropped out of the programme must still be

regarded as a challenge for a programme designed to give persons with disabilities an opportunity for transition into formal employment which they might struggle to access in a mainstream setting.

5.4.1.2. Reasonable accommodation in assessment for competency

The Training Provider had adjusted the assessment methods, especially when doing assessments with learners with disabilities. In the experience of Training Provider 1, it was the written assessment in particular that many of the learners struggled with.

> *We are still sticking to the SETA requirements. But we're trying to do it more practically. It's an internal decision. It comes from the experience of knowing that we don't want to set our learners up for failure (Training Provider 1, interview 18 June 2018).*

Training Provider 1 further explained how they made accommodations in the assessments, for example, when they are testing communication skills:

> *How we test - we need to change the way we think. So before we would say, read this article and do a presentation for us. Now we say go and research an article. You're living in Mannenberg. What's happening there at the moment? What is something that they can speak about? You are still testing the language. How they are communicating in the language. You can still assess them on that (Training Provider 1, interview 18 June 2018).*

As seen in the above section on the pass rate, despite the accommodations made in the assessments for competency, the learners still struggled to pass the final assessment.

5.4.1.3. Limited DESS exit and tracking strategies

The SETA learnership and funding end with the assessments for the SAQA qualification. There are no further obligations in the contract with the SETA, and host employers and organisations are not required to provide further support, training, or employment for the learners. However, at the end of the DESS period, the Disability

NGO had a work preparation workshop aimed at: *"…preparing them for the world of work. So, making sure that their CVs are okay, that they know where to look for employment and so on" (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).* The Disability NGO then organised a Job Fair to which they invited companies, organisations, and institutions as well as recruitment agencies. At this workshop, employers presented their organisation and what jobs they had in their organisations. The learners could then link with employers and submit their CVs.

Kwezi talked about the Job Fair organised by the Disability NGO, but he did not seem to put a lot of hope in the event: *"So those guys were taking CV's. But they were not promising anything. But they were saying if there was a space available, they were going to contact us. So, I will see" (Kwezi, interview 16 March).* Robert also talked about the Job Fair without much expectation. He said: *"So then the one guy stood up in my class and said: 'yes, but you let us bring the CV's and nobody is really going to take the CV's'" (Robert, interview 22 March).*

When I went through the CVs with the learners with disabilities in the study interviews, none of them had updated their CVs. The CVs did not include the current SETA learnership/DESS and some of them had gaps and missing work experiences and training. So as the DESS was coming to an end, the learners did not have a good CV to include in job applications. None of the learners with disabilities reported that they had had any sessions in the DESS specifically focusing on what would happen after the DESS or discussing their further career development. Pumeza said: *"They didn't ask us questions like: 'what do you want to do after this?'" (Pumeza, interview 23 March 2018).*

The Disability NGO interviewees all voiced their concerns about the learners exiting the DESS and raised the issues of limited exit and tracking strategies. Disability NGO 2 had the following reflections:

> *The challenge is a proper exit strategy and a constant follow up - where is this learner going? Is this learner being employed? Because ultimately my personal opinion going from learnership to learnership doesn't work, because then the person is in it for the*

> *money basically and not the qualification. For example, they've got a Business Admin NQF Level 4, but then they come to a Business Admin NQF Level 2 Learnership (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

Both the Disability NGO and the Training Provider identified the missing tracking and follow-up strategies as a major challenge. The Disability NGO stated that they currently did not have data on what the learners do after the DESS. The organisation did not have the needed resources to do the tracking and follow-up with learners, but found it essential to be able to measure the further impact of the programme. The organisation called on the SETAs to provide the resources to do so: "*SETA must make provision for every learnership allocation. There must be an in-built fund so that everybody who runs learnerships, will be able to track the SETAs learners" (Disability NGO 3, interview, 23 Jan 2019).*

The Disability NGO and the Training Provider provided some anecdotes on learners after they had left the DESS and how they had come to find out about these past learners:

> *There was a girl here that came here two weeks ago. She was one of those learners that was on our 2014 Business Administration Learnership. And she was actually working at a gym. We'll only find out once we see the learner. If she comes back to tell us: "I'm working now. I've got a job". Other than that, we do not know (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

> *We started with 100 learners on this other project. Only 42 got the full accreditation. Out of that 42 we haven't heard of a single person getting a job. There was a gentleman that was on this Business Administration project that ended in Feb 2017. He was fully accredited. Also never heard from him. When this New Venture Creation Learnership started in November, he was there (Training Provider 2, 4 July 2018).*

Monitoring and evaluation are only part of the SETA structure in terms of short-term outputs on how many people are enrolled and how many complete a learnership. The Disability NGO was clearly frustrated by not being able to focus on the longer-term impact of the SETA learnerships and the DESS as they did not have the capacity to follow up with past learners. With no real exit strategy from the DESS, the learners graduate into a transition gap as they are left much to their own devices. Further, the gap in the structure of both the SETAs and the DESS, with no monitoring or tracking of learners, means that we have very little information about the actual impact of the DESS.

The following sub-themes explore the experiences of the learners with disabilities as they were graduating from the DESS and their future plans.

5.4.2. Sub-theme 4.1. Graduating with confidence but limited hard skills

One of the strongest findings when it comes to the outcomes of the DESS was how the learners felt about themselves and how being part of the DESS had a positive influence on their personal development. As persons with disabilities, the learners had experienced various forms of marginalisation and discrimination, and these experiences continued to influence them in the DESS and in how they would be able to transition into formal employment. The employers also noticed the impact of the internalised oppression, and the manager at the workplace where Lennart was placed shared her experiences:

> *My colleague worked with him, and she got him to write one thing for us. And she's like: "You must read what Lennart wrote. It's so amazing. It's so expressive". And when we told him that, he didn't believe us. It took long for him to understand that he's actually got a talent or a skill (Employer 1, interview 10 July 2018).*

The employer thought that not believing in oneself is a large challenge in general when it comes to persons with disabilities. She said: *"To be told your whole life that you can't. And then you come into an employment and then people also believe that you can't"* (Employer 1, interview 10 July 2018).

Having the experiences in the DESS with the learning in the classroom, the exposure to the workplaces, and the interaction with peers had a **significant positive influence on most of the participants' self-confidence, self-perception, and self-efficacy**. They expressed it in the following statements about what they got from being part of the DESS:

> *I would say more self-confidence. Just being in a community with others that's like me. It gives me more confidence to uplift myself (Lennart, interview 15 March 2018).*

> *I learnt that when I am committed to doing something, I do it (Kwezi, interview 16 March 2018).*

Working on their collages in responding to the question on what the learners felt they had gotten from being part of the DESS, they included pieces reflecting self-confidence, a sense of personal growth, and feeling empowered:

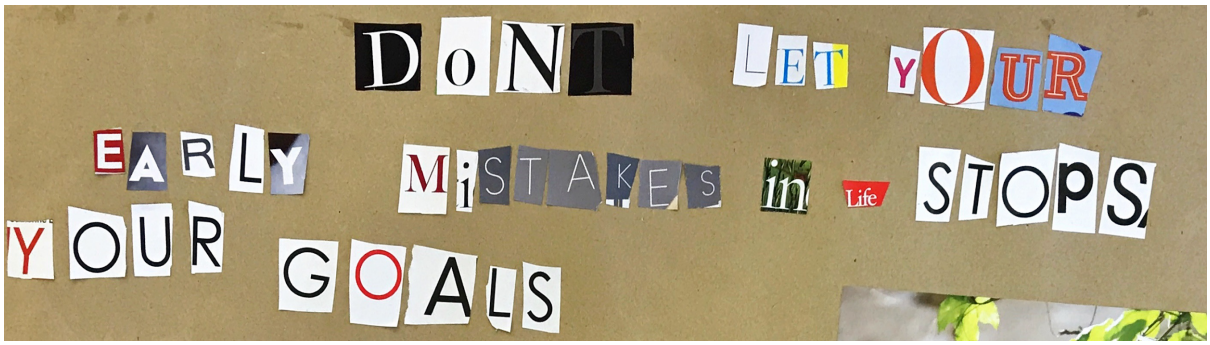
Become CEO of your own life (Pumeza, collage 6 April 2018)

The power to choose (Robert, collage 6 April 2018)

Journey to confidence (Achmat, collage 6 April 2018)

Be the best you can be (Achmat, collage 6 April 2018)

Don't let the early mistakes in your life stop your goals (Kwezi, collage 6 April 2018)



Robert translated his collage into this poem exhibiting his sense of empowerment:

> *Learners' ideas shared everyday*
>
> *Physical disabilities, live, enjoy, no matter what obstacle*
>
> *Assist choice, with confidence*
>
> *Opportunity to feel like qualified professional*
>
> *(Robert, poem 6 April 2018)*

The Disability NGO also explained how they could see the growing self-confidence of the learners in how they behaved and engaged in the activities of the DESS:

> *That is because they had access to information. They had access to their rights. They had access to all of this. And people had a voice. They could talk. And arguing with you, which for me is a positive output (Disability NGO 3, interview, 23 Jan 2019).*

Being part of the DESS had clearly influenced the learners with disabilities' self-confidence and self-perception positively. Getting the opportunity to gain new skills, be exposed to a mostly positive workplace environment, and engage peers and colleagues in an inclusive space which understands disability are not common experiences for many persons with disabilities. The DESS provided this space that developed the learners' soft skills. Patricia put the words *"The Power of Positive*

Affirmation" in her collage, reflecting the positive sentiments she experienced in the DESS.

(Patricia, collage excerpt 6 April 2018)

My study did also find examples of how learners struggled to navigate challenges, especially at their work placements. In Pumeza's case, the challenges at the workplace were not resolved and she ended up not going to the workplace. Pumeza's soft skills were not adequate to solve her challenges and the DESS did not manage to support her in developing these needed skills. Another aspect of Pumeza's story is that the workplace may have been generally unsupportive of persons with disabilities, and no matter how much Pumeza had tried, the result would have been the same.

My study found that the development of the learners' soft skills, especially in terms of their self-perception and self-efficacy, was a strong outcome of the DESS, which would surely positively influence their transition into formal employment. However, this positive development was not supported by the development of accredited hard skills, which was the core intended outcome of the DESS. The limitation of the hard skills development was reflected in how only 20% of the learners with disabilities passed the final assessment of their hard skills. **The learners with disabilities would graduate and exit the DESS with a strong sense of self-confidence but only a few of them would exit with actual accredited hard skills**.

The learners' experiences of the DESS are further explored in the next sub-theme focusing on their hopes and dreams for the future.

5.4.3. Sub-theme 4.2. Hopes and dreams for the future

Having taken the initiative to join the DESS and being accepted onto the programme must be seen as quite the accomplishment considering the feelings of misery and isolation the learners expressed having had prior to being part of the DESS. Kwezi told me at several points in our interview how nervous he had been about joining the DESS and especially about going to the work placement. His story also strongly showed the changes he experienced and how he not only felt comfortable in the workplace but how it also influenced his overall well-being positively. The quote below shows some of Kwezi's reflections:

> *The first day I go there I was like "what am I doing here?" But as the days goes on, it was ok for me. And it's good for me, because I'm no longer stressing and feeling sorry for myself. I don't feel like that anymore (Kwezi, interview 16 March 2018).*

A sense of well-being also came through strongly in the CLET workshop when learners worked with their collages and reflected on their time in the DESS and their future. Kwezi's reflections from doing his collage included feelings of well-being through the following words: *"being positive about myself", "Staying away from bad habits" and "I'm happy being surrounded by caring people who understand me" (Kwezi, collage reflections 6 April 2018).* In her collage, Fatima showed well-being in her collage through *"the happy you project"* and *"I love the shape I'm in"*.

(Fatima, collage excerpt 6 April 2018)

Robert sums up some of his feelings about being part of the DESS in this quote:

> *Mainly finding out when I came to [the Disability NGO] that there's more than one type of disability and that there are people out there that can network with you and they can give you an opportunity to live your life as normal as possible (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

The collages, the reflections, and poems as well as the interviews with **the learners with disabilities show hopes and dreams of a 'normal life' like any other person**, and they show overwhelmingly positive feelings about being part of the DESS and about both their professional and personal futures. Patricia included these sentiments in her collage and in her collage reflections. She reflected on how the DESS could lead to a professional career and how she would like her personal and family life to look with a family of her own and with a nice house.

I see myself working for a big company since I am doing business administration.

I think admin job will be suitable for me.

When I do get the job my first priority is to buy myself a nice house.

(Patricia, collage and collage reflections 6 April 2018)

The learners with disabilities had dreams and hopes for the future like any other person. However, the data also showed that the learners did not have spaces to reflect on their situation and their future. **The learners did not have guidance in how to turn hopes and dreams into realistic career paths.** The limited opportunities to reflect on their achievements and on career hopes and dreams for the learners with disabilities was evident in the CLET workshop as it provided them with such a space. Employer 1 had this sense as she reflected on how Lennart had talked about the CLET workshop:

> *I think it gave him a time to reflect on his experiences here. And I don't think they do that often. He never speaks about what they do at* [the Disability NGO]. *That was the first time that he came back and showed us that. He loved it (Employer 1, interview 10 July 2018).*

The DESS did not have a formalised outcome focused on increased well-being, but my study clearly shows that being part of **the DESS increased the learners' well-being** which was also reflected in their increased self-confidence and their hopes and dreams for the future. As found in Theme 1, many of the learners came from feelings of misery and having hit rock bottom, which would undoubtedly influence their agency and act as a barrier for them in pursuing formal employment. In the CLET workshops, they instead showed feelings of excitement and hope for their future. Hope is a significant outcome of the DESS which would influence the learners' agency in transitioning into formal employment.

I find that Robert sums up some of these sentiments of what the DESS means for persons with disabilities, not only as a skills development opportunity but for their personal well-being and hope, in the following quote:

> *In all honesty they pay us a stipend but it's not that much, but it gets you somewhere and it's at least better than sitting at home with your head in your hands saying the world is caving in. I wish I could just say a personal thanks to everybody here for giving an opportunity for people out there. Because there's a lot of lost people out there (Robert, interview).*

With these hopes and dreams for the future, I explore the learners' actual plans and options after the DESS in sub-theme 4.3.

5.4.4. Sub-theme 4.3. Formal employment still not an open pathway

Talking about what would happen after the DESS, the eight learners with disabilities had mixed feelings of excitement, anxiousness, and frustration, or showed sentiments of not really worrying about what would happen next. None of the eight learners knew what they were going to do next, but they all had some ideas of what they wanted to do, and some were making plans, some more concrete than others.

Lennart said that he was quite nervous about the time after finishing the DESS. When I asked him, what would happen next, he said, *"That's the scary part. I don't know" (Lennart, interview 15 March 2018).* He did however plan to apply for some vacancies at

his work placement, although he had not talked to anybody at the workplace about it. He said he would really like to be employed with a real salary. His next best option would be to start his own company within advertising and animation.

Bernard and Kwezi also mentioned starting their own business as an option. Bernard already had a small tuck shop at the premises of the Disability NGO, and he would like to work more with upholstery. Kwezi said:

> *So, this business administration – I see it can help me. If I'm not getting a job, I can start my own job, because I have a computer at home. So, I can do stuff on my own if I don't get a job. This learnership has been very helpful. It has taught me a lot of things (Kwezi, interview 16 March 2018).*

Kwezi was hoping he could join a computer course when he finished DESS. He also planned to apply for a job with the government as he had gotten a SMS about this from a government database for persons with disabilities. The SMS said he had to get the local community newspaper, where he could then find the application form. He was not sure what the job was about.

Pumeza, Patricia and Robert were planning to apply for another SETA learnership in business administration at NQF level 5, meaning it would be a further development from the current level 4. The level 5 learnership would also be offered as a learnership specific for persons with disabilities, although it would not be with a disability NGO.

Lennart, Benard, Kwezi, Pumeza, Patricia and Robert expressed sentiments that the DESS had given them skills and experiences that they could and would like to use in future work and employment. The DESS could be a steppingstone for these six learners.

For Fatima and Achmat, the situation looked a bit different. Fatima told me she was pregnant at the time of the interview, and she expected to stay at home after she finished the DESS until she had given birth. She was thinking of doing a long-distance math course while at home. She explained:

> *It's mostly that they want people with experience or maybe qualifications. Mathematics and problem solving. So maybe this year while I'm still pregnant I can do my maths. Then it can be easier to find a job (Fatima, interview 22 March 2018).*

When asking Achmat about his plans after the DESS, he said, *"I don't know yet. I still have to find out if I'm going to work or if I'm going to study. I don't know yet. I must still decide" (Achmat, interview 22 March 2018).* Achmat wanted to work with something practical and would have liked to join a woodwork course, but he could not find any. He had enquired with the Disability NGO and the training provider offering the level 5 SETA learnership, but none of them offered woodwork courses, so now he did not know what he wanted.

It seems overall that the learnership in business administration was not really the right fit for Fatima and Achmat. Fatima felt she still needed experience and a qualification and to have further mathematics and problem-solving skills, skills which the DESS should have given her. Achmat wanted to do woodwork, and business administration did not seem to catch his interest.

None of the learners had been offered jobs at their DESS work placements. When asked if they themselves had asked at the workplaces if there would be any opportunities for them to work there, none of the learners had taken the initiative. Most of the learners said that they knew there would not be any vacancies at their work placements, but they had not actually inquired about it. These findings mean that besides the level 5 SETA learnership, none of the learners with disabilities had any concrete opportunities that looked likely to materialise in the immediate future. Besides the three learners having applied for another learnership, the learners had yet to take active steps to pursuing further work or training opportunities.

Two of the interviewees from the Disability NGO had some reflections on the learners in terms of them pursuing work and employment opportunities. Disability NGO 1 said:

> *I can say commitment is a big thing. Some of them don't want to work. They want to be in another learnership. So down the line*

they will be here again doing another assessment, be in another learnership (Disability NGO 1, interview 13 September 2018).

Her colleague had a different view of why the learners would join another SETA learnership instead of going into the open labour market. She said, *"…it is a reflection of the desperation of people. And you can't blame the learner in the sense that this is the only opportunity available for them currently" (Disability NGO 2, interview 13 September 2018).*

Disability NGO 1 put the lack of forward and upwards work trajectories on the shoulders of the learners. She saw it as lack of commitment and limited agency from the learners with disabilities. Disability NGO 2 acknowledged the challenge of 'learnership hopping', but saw it as a response to the desperation and marginalisation experienced by persons with disabilities, and acknowledged that there were very limited opportunities for the learners in the current labour market.

I find that Robert's story reflects many of the challenges and barriers that persons with disabilities are faced with in trying to access the open labour market for some stability, and it also reflects Robert's frustration in his situation. Robert said he would have preferred to continue with the current Disability NGO to further his business administration skills with a level 5 SETA learnership. He explained that he would not be able to go into a Technicon for his further learning in part because he would then have to pay for it. He said, "*The one thing I've struggled with is that I haven't really found myself yet" (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

Robert expressed his frustration of 'not having found himself' as we went through his CV, even though he had quite a lot of experience. He said:

Because I think someone should be established in something by now. Look at my CV for example. That's the educational background here. Employment history. We're going from forwards to backwards. So, I did that learnership. Then I worked at the construction, which is actually physical labour. And then I did the welding where I worked at two welding companies. Then I did the assisting at the café. And then I did the bakery. So now bakery and welding don't go together. That's quite

> *different. It's an advantage and a disadvantage on my CV because they see you have the experience on different things, but you're not really committing. But I did commit for a couple of years (Robert, interview 22 March 2018).*

Robert had previously talked about another SETA learnership he had done, also at the Disability NGO. The learnership was focused on Early Childhood Development (ECD) and he had really enjoyed it, but he also experienced great disappointment as it did not materialise into anything.

All the learners with disabilities had more or less concrete and realistic ideas and plans for life after DESS, and they still reflected hopes and dreams. Robert's story, however, reflects the lack of clear direction for a career and the frustration after continuously trying to break through into sustainable employment with limited success. Aspects of Robert's story were found in all the learners with disabilities' stories. **At the end of the DESS, none of the learners with disabilities were about to enter into formal employment or for that matter any income-generating activities,** except for Bernard, who would continue running his business as he had done before joining the DESS.

My study finds strong positive outcomes from the DESS in terms of the learners' personal development, their well-being, their increased self-confidence and soft-skills, and, for some learners, accredited hard skills. My study also exposes a transition gap as the DESS struggled to facilitate the learners' immediate transition into formal employment.

In four themes, this chapter has explored the study case in detail through describing and analysing the four phases of the DESS to address research objective 1. The chapter also addressed research objective 2 exploring the experiences of the study participants on the DESS. The next chapter will continue to explore the study findings through addressing research objective 3.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Having presented and explored the study findings in chapter 5, in this chapter I discuss the findings in relation to existing literature and my conceptual framework. In chapter 6 I respond to my third research objective:

3) Explore how the Disability Employment Support Services address barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in transitioning into formal employment.

With the second and deeper level of analysis (as described in chapter 4) I synthesise my findings across the four themes presented in chapter 5. This integrated discussion is structured in three main sections: the supply side of the labour market, the demand side of the labour market, and the transition gap. In the discussions, I use the literature and conceptual framework to further the findings from my case study to highlight the new knowledge my study brings to the concern of the transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment. Table 9 gives an overview of the three sections and the respective discussion headings.

Table 9: Discussion overview

Discussion themes	**Discussion sub-themes**
The supply side of the labour market	Integrated support structures for persons with disabilities Well-being as a driver for agency in jobseekers with disabilities The skills gap persists for persons with disabilities
The demand side of the labour market	Employers' positive attitudes and unchanged behaviours Tools for workplace transformation
The transition gap	Hopes and dreams transition into a void Evidence-base for radical disability transformation

6.1. Supply Side of the Labour Market

This section focuses on the supply side of the labour market, in this case, persons with disabilities. The section discusses and explores how the DESS addressed challenges and barriers for persons with disabilities through working with them to develop their capacity, address their specific needs, and ensure equal opportunities and rights as per one track of the CBR twin-track approach to disability inclusive development (World Health Organization, 2010b). I explore the study findings on how the capacity of the learners with disabilities was developed and discuss how persons with disabilities can be capacitated to supply the labour in demand from employers for formal employment.

6.1.1. Integrated support structures for persons with disabilities

The study shows the importance of an *integrated* support structure for persons with disabilities in and around the classroom and the workplace including family, peers, work colleagues, and a health system for impairment management.

The importance of various forms of support was very clear in my study findings, not only in the formal learning related to hard skills development (as will be discussed later in this section), but also social support in and around the classroom to enhance the learners with disabilities' participation and performance in the DESS. The PWT identifies social support from family, friends, significant others, and the broader community as a moderator to facilitate access to decent work (Duffy et al., 2016). The literature within the PWT identified in this study does not focus on what social support or how social support as a moderator can buffer the marginalisation experienced by persons with disabilities. With this study, I add to the PWT body of knowledge specifically on the importance of an integrated support structure as a moderator for persons with disabilities to access the labour market.

The family's role, in particular, was acknowledged in the DESS, which aligns with the findings of Grewe et al. (2012) who found that family support positively influenced unemployed learners in SETA learnerships both in terms of their learning and their

overall performance in the learnership. Both Diale (2020) and Stemela (2020) found that families of learners with disabilities play an important overall role in the lives of the learners. Stemela (2020) specifically highlights the role of families in career construction for D/deaf learners and Lorenzo, McKinney, Bam, Sigenu, and Sompeta (2019) identified the family as an anchor and catalyst for social and economic inclusion for youth with disabilities.

The DESS family interventions predominantly focused on cases where the learners with disabilities had challenges attending the DESS and the family was part of these challenges. The interventions in such cases were of utmost importance. My study found that although families may not have been barriers for participation, they were also not necessarily active facilitators for the learners with disabilities. The learners were often left to their own devices or families were being misguided in terms of the learners' behaviour and commitment. This is similar to findings by Diale (2020) who found that families may become overindulgent which can be disabling as it may prevent learners with visual impairments' independence and hinder their transition to different stages of learning and development. In other cases, Diale (2020) found that parents may be negligent in terms of the learner's impairment.

This last finding of Diale (2020) also links to my study finding on the role of impairment management for the learners with disabilities and how families at times are not able to support the learner in this. This challenge links to the importance of the health system in playing a supportive and facilitating role, rather than being a barrier for persons with disabilities' participation in the open labour market. Cramm et al. (2012) found that youth with disabilities are faced with barriers associated with poor health, amongst others, when seeking access to employment. My study further shows that for persons with disabilities, health and employment cannot be dealt with as separate issues. The effects of an unsupportive health system which potentially contributes to high levels of absenteeism from the workplace plays right into the negative assumptions of workers with disabilities and reproduces the labels of persons with disabilities as being less productive than their able-bodied peers (Doolabh & Khan, 2020; Thomas, 2002).

The DESS classroom and the work placements provided spaces for social connections with peers with disabilities and with able-bodied colleagues respectively,

both playing an important supportive role for the learners. Social connections with peers played an important supportive role for the learners with disabilities in the DESS for their personal and skills development. Similar findings were made by Lorenzo et al. (2019) as they found peer networks to foster self-esteem and provide protection from isolation. At the workplaces, some DESS learners experienced supportive able-bodied colleagues who played a positive role for the learners, while others made no meaningful connections at the work placements. In his study from South Africa, Bam (2018) found attitudes about disability of the staff and management to be central either as a barrier or facilitator for persons with disabilities to enter into and stay in formal employment. Likewise, in their study in Italy, Nota et al. (2014) found that knowledge about disability and personal interaction between persons with disabilities and able-bodied workers were important to create an inclusive workplace environment.

In the literature review, I found a growing body of literature focusing on the importance of the family in supporting persons with disabilities into employment, some literature focusing on workplace environments, and limited literature focusing on the link between the health system and employment. The advantage of a case study is that I was able to take a holistic view on the case and the context of transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment. In doing this, I found the need for an ***integrated*** **support structure for facilitating persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment**. Situated in Africa, the principles of interconnectedness and collective responsibility for the common good of all as found in Ubuntu would align with an integrated support structure for persons with disabilities (Diale, 2020, Mji et al., 2011). My study findings show the importance of the family, peers with disabilities, workplace environment, and a supportive health system which acknowledges its role in persons with disabilities' transition into and inclusion in the open labour market. These various stakeholders all play a role and have a responsibility (as argued within Ubuntu) to ensure equal access to the open labour market for persons with disabilities. The DESS had an essential element of family interventions but missed the benefits of an integrated support structure where multiple stakeholders could play a facilitating role in the transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment.

6.1.2. Well-being as a driver for agency in jobseekers with disabilities

The study found well-being to be a driver of agency for jobseekers with disabilities in addition to well-being being an outcome of decent work.

The learners with disabilities came to the DESS with experiences of compounded marginalisation due to their disability, their race and socio-economic background, and feelings of isolation and demotivation after struggling to enter the open labour market. The PWT argues that such experiences of societal marginalisation and oppressive circumstances can be internalised and limit people's capacity to realise work and career dreams and lead to further oppression (Kenny et al., 2018). Coming from oppressive circumstances, the learners saw the opportunity to join the DESS as the start of a new journey. The learners with disabilities' well-being undoubtedly increased as they joined the DESS and, for most of the learners, the sense of increased well-being continued throughout the programme.

The link between work and well-being is widely recognised. The ILO states that work is central to people's well-being (International Labour Organization, 2015). In the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), work is viewed as an integral aspect of human rights and essential for human dignity and the free development of personality (Macnaughton & Frey, 2018). Mitra (2018) finds that well-being is a dynamic interaction between personal factors, resources, and the environment, and that employment is an important factor influencing well-being for persons with disabilities.

Seeing the DESS as a form of work in the broader sense of the concept (International Labour Organization, 2015), my study confirms that work positively influences people's sense of well-being as argued in the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016). The positive influence is however dependent on the work being decent through meeting the needs for survival, social connections, and self-determination (Blustein et al., 2016). For the learners, the social connection needs were met through the connections with peers and for some at the workplaces as discussed above. Survival needs were met to some extent through the stipend, and some learners had a feeling of self-determination as they joined the DESS and felt hopeful for the future with this new opportunity.

My study also indicates that there should be an **expanded relationship between well-being and work**. With well-being being established as an outcome of decent work, I also find in my study that **well-being can be a driver for agency for jobseekers**. Coming from feelings of isolation and 'misery' and experiencing increased well-being from being part of the DESS, the DESS learners expressed self-confidence and motivation to seek opportunities after the DESS.

I found that a focus on well-being for jobseekers with disabilities and what well-being means for persons with disabilities' capabilities to access decent work is very limited in the literature. The study by Bam (2018) exploring employment experiences of persons with disabilities in South Africa had some aspects of the influence of well-being on jobseekers with disabilities. He found that when people accepted their personal disability and they felt better about themselves, it had a profound positive impact on their attitudes to seeking employment. He also found that previous experiences of rejection in job applications negatively influenced people and lowered their motivation to actively seek employment (Bam, 2018).

The PWT links a proactive personality to increased job search behaviours amongst unemployed people (Duffy et al., 2016). A proactive personality is defined as a disposition toward taking personal initiative to influence one's environment. The PWT believes in people's agency which, with proximal and distal support, can be enhanced (Duffy et al., 2016). Another moderator in the PWT is the development of critical consciousness where people understand the social inequalities and their own situation within a broader context which is influenced by history, politics, economics, and social factors. With critical consciousness, individuals believe in their own capacity to make changes and they adopt an assertive and self-determined stance, which can help them connect with society and reshape their lives (Kenny et al., 2018). A similar argument is made by Thomas (2002) with the social model on disability, as she finds that by understanding this model of disability, persons with disabilities recognise most of their difficulties as socially caused.

I further the arguments of the PWT moderators because I find an integrated support structure, as discussed previously, is important for persons with disabilities' agency. I also suggest positioning **well-being as a predictor or driver for persons with**

disabilities' capabilities to access decent work in the PWT model and not only as an outcome of decent work. I find that the relationship between work and well-being is not a one-way relationship but rather a reciprocal or circular relationship. As a driver, subjective well-being needs to be contextually defined by the individual person with a disability where they are conscious of their own abilities, are able to manage the normal stresses of life and contribute to their communities (World Health Organization, 2003). My study participants with disabilities' sense of well-being came through strongly in their collages and poems as they reflected on meaningful social connections, increased self-confidence, and hopes and dreams for the future. I believe the importance of well-being for persons with disabilities is not sufficiently acknowledged in the current literature and that increased well-being through access to opportunities and hope can be an important factor to retain and build on to develop agency and facilitate persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment.

To me, Sen's concept of well-being becomes very relevant with a strong focus on freedom to choose (Sen, 1999) which further links to the UNCRPD Article 27 emphasising the right to freely chosen work in a labour market which is open, inclusive, and accessible (United Nations, 2006). In work preparation interventions, persons with disabilities should be capacitated to freely choose what career they want to pursue through career guidance and developing key factors for accessing employment, including soft skills (Santilli et al., 2018), self-efficacy and self-esteem (Duffy et al., 2016; Lindstrom et al., 2011), and proactive personality and critical consciousness (Duffy et al., 2016). Interventions should not only be about matching persons with disabilities with available work opportunities as is often seen (Fabian, 2014), but capacitating persons with disabilities to ensure equal access to a range of opportunities for them to choose freely from. This will in turn increase persons with disabilities' well-being for them to work productively and to contribute to their communities (World Health Organization, 2003).

A continuation of this discussion leads me to the importance of considering people's own experiences of work and what constitutes decent work in the Global South, and the fact that well-being should be defined by people themselves. From my study, I find the need to define the concepts of decent work and well-being in a Global South

context. In this context, decent work might not mean the same as defined by the ILO and as seen in the Global North (Massoudi et al., 2018; Santilli et al., 2018). Decent work needs to be defined in the historical, political, economic, and social context of the Global South. Likewise, subjective well-being needs to be contextually defined by the individual person with a disability. In the Global South, this also means **contextualising well-being within Ubuntu with an emphasis on the common good where ensuring well-being and dignity for others will ensure one's own well-being and dignity** (Berghs, 2017).

6.1.3. The skills gap persists for persons with disabilities

The study found that the DESS struggled to close the hard skills gap with substantial work experience or accredited qualifications for persons with disabilities.

The DESS provided an important opportunity for persons with disabilities to access hard skills development opportunities which they might have struggled to access in mainstream training environments. According to Ariefdien (2016), such opportunities are imperative for persons with disabilities to address the challenge of minimal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. However, the DESS struggled to deliver on providing persons with disabilities with sufficient hard skills both in terms of the practical workplace skills development and in terms of a hard skills accredited qualification. This finding reflects the sentiments found in Diaz Pabon et al. (2021) that South Africa in general may have increased access to training and education but still struggles to improve the quality of education for the majority of South Africans.

Despite a core focus on hard skills development through the SETA learnership structure, only 20% of the learners with disabilities would exit the DESS with an accredited qualification proving their hard skills acquisition. In this sense, the DESS fell significantly short of the exit rate of 55,7% for all SETA learnerships (including both learners with and without disabilities) (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018). The limited studies on DESS and SETA learnerships identified in this study did not provide findings on the outcomes of DESS (Ariefdien, 2016; Fremlin, 2016) or the SETA learnerships in terms of learnerships with disabilities (Kruss et al., 2014; Rankin

et al., 2014). As such, my study provides new knowledge indicating that the DESS and the SETA learnerships struggle to meet the core outcome of providing persons with disabilities with the necessary accredited hard skills to meet the demands of the labour market.

The Disability NGO and the Training Provider acknowledged that without the accredited qualification, the learners would be struggling to access the formal labour market. This sentiment was also found amongst persons with disabilities in the study by Soeker et al. (2018), where persons with disabilities voiced the need for proof of their hard skills for them to transition into the open labour market from a protective workshop setting. Likewise, Gida and Ortlepp (2007) and Koopman (2013) found that employers identified the low levels of hard skills of persons with disabilities as one of the reasons why they did not employ persons with disabilities.

The work placements were meant to give the learners an opportunity to develop their hard skills and their understanding of workplace etiquette, policies, and procedures. The findings from the workplace, however, suggest that the DESS structure was not strong enough to ensure the same development for all learners. In their study on SETA learnerships, Grewe et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of support at the workplace for learners' performance. While their study was focused on able-bodied learners, my study highlights the same importance of proximal support to the learners with disabilities at the work placements for them to develop their skills adequately.

As long as persons with disabilities are still marginalised in the South African basic education system (Bornman & Heard, 2020; Stemela, 2020), upskilling and employment preparation programmes need to focus on providing persons with disabilities with accredited hard skills. However, my study found insufficient understanding of disability in government ALMPs such as the SETA learnerships. The SETAs have no framework for accommodation in teaching or assessing learners with disabilities to ensure they are given the right support for them to graduate with an accredited qualification, and the teaching and assessment strategies are left to the discretion of the implementing organisations. In my study case, the teaching and assessments were accommodative of the learners as they were provided by a disability NGO with disability expertise and specifically focused on persons with

disabilities. SETA learnerships which include learners with disabilities are also implemented by organisations without disability expertise or experience, and it cannot be assumed that these organisations are able or willing to accommodate the learning needs of learners with disabilities adequately. At the same time, my study findings suggest that despite the disability expertise within the Disability NGO, it did not translate sufficiently into the DESS to buffer the marginalisation experienced by persons with disabilities (Berghs, 2017; Goodley, 2017) prior to joining the DESS and to upskill the learners to meet the requirements for a SAQA accreditation.

The DESS pre-assessments of the learners highlighted the challenges of English literacy, and with English being the instruction language in the DESS, this challenge persisted throughout the DESS. The challenges of English as instruction language were further stressed as a practical approach to teaching the curriculum was found to be beneficial. My study emphasises the need for teaching of the formal curriculum in hard skills development to accommodate both the disadvantages that persons with disabilities carry from an education system which has not provided them with a quality education as well as the learning challenges they may have in terms of their impairments (Fish Hodgson, 2018; Stemela, 2020). These study findings reveal a knowledge gap. In the literature and document review, I found a general lack of focus on the teaching and assessment of persons with disabilities within the SETA learnerships structure (Grewe et al., 2012; Kruss et al., 2014; SETA and training documents review listed in Table 4).

Teaching and learning approaches targeting persons with disabilities in other education and training settings have been explored. For example, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as an instructional design framework considers the wide range of variations in skills, abilities, and needs in learning across all learners, and McKenzie and Dalton (2020) argue that it could serve as a strategy to link policy imperatives with classroom practice. It could be considered in formalising the teaching and assessment approaches in the DESS instead of relying on a training provider's individual experiences and knowledge. Using UDL as a teaching and learning framework would not only benefit persons with disabilities but all marginalised and oppressed groups, and it could be the strategy to link the Skills Development Act (Skills Development Act

97 of 1998) with implementation through the SETA learnership to upskill 'previously disadvantaged groups' in South Africa.

The PWT (Blustein et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2016) has a strong focus on how marginalisation and economic constraints influence people's access to decent work. Duffy et al. (2016) point out that people living in or near poverty tend to have limited access to quality education which in turn limits their access to career development. The foregrounding of the context and the focus on marginalisation and economic constraints as predictors of how people are able to access decent work were some of the main elements which drew me to the PWT. My study findings clearly align with these arguments of the PWT. I find, however, that the PWT model's moderator variables suggested to buffer the impact of marginalisation and economic constraints leave out how to address the consequences of the marginalisation within the educational system. The PWT focuses on important psycho-social and economic moderators. With my study findings, I argue for the need to further include a **moderator focused on addressing the hard skills gap for persons with disabilities to enhance their access to formal employment.**

6.2. Demand Side of the Labour Market

This section focuses on the demand side of the labour market as I discuss the engagements with the employer in the DESS and the barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing formal employment. This relates to the second track of the CBR disability inclusive development approach, which argues for working with society stakeholders to remove barriers that exclude persons with disabilities (World Health Organization, 2010b).

De Lannoy et al. (2020) found that ALMPs in South Africa predominantly focus on the supply side of the labour market, with little attention paid to the behaviours and transformation of the employers, i.e., the demand side of the labour market. This was also evident in my study as the DESS worked predominantly with the learners with disabilities and had little focus on the employers.

6.2.1. Employers' positive attitudes and unchanged behaviours

The study found that host employers became disability confident through interpersonal connections with persons with disabilities. The disability confidence, however, did not translate into significant changes to workplace inclusivity.

The work placements were not only an important opportunity to address challenges for persons with disabilities in getting work experience but were also important for engaging employers and addressing their attitudes and perceptions, often cited as a barrier to employing persons with disabilities (Bam, 2018; South African Human Rights Commission, 2015).

Most of the host employers showed more understanding of disability and became more disability confident through their engagements with the learners with disabilities. This finding is similar to the findings from Bredgaard and Salado-Rasmussen (2021), who found that employers often become more positive about persons with disabilities when they have direct engagements and get to know persons with disabilities. The host employers overall had mostly positive experiences hosting the DESS learners, and they displayed positive attitudes about persons with disabilities. However, their behaviour did not change as they had made no organisational changes to their workplaces in terms of disability. Bredgaard and Salado-Rasmussen (2021) term such employers 'passive employers' as they display a positive attitude but negative behaviour in not actually employing persons with disabilities. In their research, passive employers were found to be the most common type of employers when looking at the employment of persons with disabilities in Denmark. The challenge is then to ensure that the positive attitude translates into positive behaviour, i.e., that employers become 'committed employers' and actually employ persons with disabilities (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021).

The occasional or once-off DESS disability awareness-raising sessions and the one-on-one engagements with persons with disabilities at the workplace were not enough to create committed employers. Nota et al. (2014) argue that greater knowledge of the problems persons with disabilities experience can remove stereotypes and facilitate a

more positive attitude and behaviour towards persons with disabilities. This relates to the PWT moderator of critical consciousness, which the theory defines as a twofold strategy (Kenny et al., 2018). One side works with marginalised groups (in this case, persons with disabilities, as discussed previously in this chapter) and the other side works with the dominant group members, i.e., employers. Employers should not only be aware of the capabilities of persons with disabilities and how to manage reasonable accommodation in the workplace. They also need to become critically conscious of historical, political, economic, and social factors influencing persons with disabilities' life situation and specifically their access to the labour market. Importantly, employers need to understand and acknowledge their and other employers' own role in limiting persons with disabilities' access to the labour market – i.e., how employers contribute to maintaining an oppressive system in the current labour market. In becoming critically conscious, employers can actively work to reduce discrimination and prejudice in the labour market (Kenny et al., 2018) and become disability equity conscious.

In order to develop inclusive workplaces, **ableism in the labour market needs to be addressed**. As found by Jammaers and Zanoni (2021), workplaces construct and regulate workers within a dichotomy of able-bodied/disabled, where the identity of the ideal worker is able-bodied. This relates to Thomas' (2002) argument that the labels of persons with disabilities as non-productive and dependent are continuously being reproduced. To challenge these labels and the ableism in the workplace in a Global South context, the principles of Ubuntu continue to be relevant. Sefotho (2021) argues that the ontology of disability of the Southern African Basotho ethnic group provides **an alternative and positive regard to disability through Ubuntu**. The Basotho ontology of disability portrays an Ubuntu cultural acceptance of persons with disabilities as equally human as all human beings.

The interpersonal connections at a workplace are important for persons with disabilities and their able-bodied colleagues alike. They cannot, however, be expected to facilitate sustainable organisational changes for transformed inclusive workplaces. Further tools are needed to facilitate this transformation, as discussed in the following section.

6.2.2. Tools for workplace transformation

The study found that the DESS opened doors to the world of work for the learners with disabilities for temporary work placements, but lacked effective tools for sustainable transformation of the workplaces.

The South African legislation on disability and employment is often regarded as progressive and an important tool to advance the formal employment of persons with disabilities and transform the labour market (Bam & Ronnie, 2020; Wiggett-Barnard & Swartz, 2012). Koopman (2013) found that the legislation, especially the B-BBEE Act (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003), is the main key to opening doors to the world of work for persons with disabilities. The incentives in the South African labour legislative were not a factor mentioned by the host employers in my study. The absence of the legislation as a driver for the host employers may be due to the structure of the agreement with the SETA, as the Disability NGO was the contract holder for the learnership and therefore the host employers would not benefit from, for example, the B-BBEE points. The host employers would, however, benefit from the legislative incentives if they employed persons with disabilities at their workplaces.

Another argument for not seeing the influence of the legislation in my study can be found in the study by Bam and Ronnie (2020), who found that deeply embedded beliefs and attitudes about the capabilities of persons with disabilities hinder the implementation of the legislation in South Africa. The legislation has not been enough to move employers to formally employ persons with disabilities. The limited implementation of the legislation can also be seen in the annual reports by the Commission for Employment Equity as the government's target of 2% of workers in formal employment being persons with disabilities has never been reached (Commission for Employment Equity, 2021). The implementation of disability legislation is not only a challenge in South Africa, as Berghs (2016) finds the domestication and enforcement of the UNCRPD are a challenge across the world.

As the Disability NGO found that the legislation was not an effective tool to open the doors to the host employers, the Disability NGO ended up presenting the hosting of

learners with disability as an opportunity for the employers to do something good. Essentially, both the Disability NGO and the host employers ended up acting within the medical and charity models of disability. Within these models, persons with disabilities are described as victims, and able-bodied persons are encouraged to assist individuals with disabilities in any way possible as they need special services (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Bornman, 2020). Botha (2020) found a similar use of the charity view on disability in reviewing websites of South African organisations supporting persons with visual impairment. Organisations appealed for charitable donations and called on employers from a social development perceptive instead of promoting persons with disabilities as productive workers contributing to the workplace. In positioning persons with disabilities as a charitable case, persons with disabilities are still viewed as dependents who need to be taken care of and not as productive workers (Thomas, 2002). Using the charity model might provide organisations with some quick gains in terms of finding temporary host employers, but in the long-term it will work against building transformed and inclusive workplaces.

In the literature review, the business case was presented as a tool to encourage employers to employ persons with disabilities. The business case presented by the UN Global Compact and International Labour Organization (2017) and Lindsay et al. (2018) is primarily based on benefits to employers as seen in the Global North. Some grey literature looks at the business case in the Global South (Disabled People's Organisations Denmark, 2016c; International Labour Organization, 2014), but Lindsay et al. (2018) found that peer-reviewed literature on the business case is scarce and for the Global South almost non-existent. Still, the business case as presented in chapter 2 may have valid points for the Global South, including equal or increased productivity, strong work ethic amongst persons with disabilities, an inclusive workplace culture to the benefit of all workers, innovation and creativity, improved company image, and a more diversified customer base (Lindsay et al., 2018).

My study highlights other points in the traditional business case which are questionable when applied in South Africa, and shows the struggle to close the hard skills gap between labour supply and demand for persons with disabilities. With this finding and a general high unemployment rate in South Africa, one of the main points

in the traditional business case, namely that employers have access to a previously untapped skilled workforce with persons with disabilities, becomes inapplicable. Employers in South Africa already have a large pool of workers to choose from because of high unemployment rates, and persons with disabilities are often not able to compete with their able-bodied peers on skills level and type (Cramm et al., 2012; Fish Hodgson, 2018). My study also highlighted that unskilled or low-skilled persons with disabilities, who constitute the large majority of workers with disabilities in South Africa, tend to change jobs on a regular basis for various reasons. This is not necessarily of the workers' own decision, but it does challenge the claim of low turnover and high retention amongst persons with disabilities as one point of the traditional business case. These points of the traditional business case may be applicable to persons with disabilities with high-level or scarce skills and high education levels, which is the minority of persons with disabilities in South Africa. However, university graduates with disabilities also struggle to find formal employment (Bam, 2018) and negative perceptions held by employers do not tend to distinguish between low- and high-skilled persons with disabilities.

The historical and continuous marginalisation of persons with disabilities (Goodley, 2017; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018) led me to the other aspect of my challenge with the current business case. A business case for the Global South cannot predominantly be built on a for-profit argument because of a colonial past and the continuous reproduction of oppression and marginalisation of black persons with disabilities in particular (Patel et al., 2020; Sefotho, 2020). I argue for an expansion of the business case to include the concept of social justice, according to which human beings have a sense of responsibility not only towards themselves but also towards others and to society. Social justice is concerned with a fair and equitable distribution of resources and representation for marginalised people and communities (Ohajunwa & Mji, 2021). Social justice is part of the principles and values of the South African Constitution and of a transformed South Africa post-1994 and a post-colonial Global South. It also aligns with the PWT's concept of decent work based in a human rights and social justice framework (Blustein et al., 2016). In an African context, the elements of social justice are also found in Ubuntu, in which the respect for diversity is deeply rooted (Berghs, 2017; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018). I have not seen an

endeavour to use **Ubuntu to frame a business case for formal employment of persons with disabilities in Africa**, but with my study, I add such a business case to the tools to be developed to transform the labour market in Africa.

The link between work and social justice is not new as it is also found in the original agenda of the ILO's Decent Work based on the principle of social justice (International Labour Organization, 2015). Within a social justice agenda, much focus has been on gender and race, and within these areas the labour market is still struggling to reach equity (Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Patel et al., 2020). I find that disability has not really been engaged with within the social justice agenda in South Africa, also in light of other major structural, governance, and economic challenges post-1994 (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021; Von Holdt, 2019). However, the intersectionality of disability makes it an integral part of the discussions around gender, race, and poverty, especially in a South African context where spatial segregation with systemic inequalities in the allocation of education, health, and services during apartheid continues to be a central mechanism reproducing inequalities (Diaz Pabon et al.,2021), and where youth, especially young black people from poor socio-economic backgrounds with limited skills, have limited employment prospects (Patel et al., 2020).

I do believe that a fully inclusive labour market with committed and critically conscious employers will allow us to establish a clear profitable business case for the employment of persons with disabilities. In an inclusive labour market, persons with disabilities will be allowed to perform to their full potential and contribute fully to workplaces, which are inclusive for all workers, with innovation, creativity, high work ethics, and high productivity. To realise such a labour market, however, we need to reject the common assumption that improvement in the supply of labour and training would be enough to change the labour market. According to Diaz Pabon et al. (2021), such an assumption ignores the structures that create a bimodal job market, a job market which fuels and reproduces income inequality as black people in particular are still struggling to access decent work. My study adds to these findings in showing that, for persons with disabilities, the income inequality is further compounded by disability in the current labour market structures. Current ALMPs such as the DESS and the SETA learnerships in and of themselves are not facilitating the necessary radical

transformation of the open labour market to become inclusive of persons with disabilities. The **programmes predominantly focus on the supply side of labour, that is, on the upskilling of persons with disabilities, and do not engage the labour market structures sufficiently to facilitate needed change**.

6.3. The Transition Gap

The above sections have discussed findings on both sides of the labour market, focusing on persons with disabilities and employers/workplaces respectively. My study found that there is a large gap between the two sides which is not being addressed to facilitate the transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment. This section discusses this transition gap.

6.3.1. Hopes and dreams transition into a void

The study found that learners with disabilities graduate from the DESS with hopes and dreams for their future careers, but they are then left to their own devices with limited capabilities to transition into formal employment.

The learners with disabilities had dreams of working in a big corporate, earning a salary, and buying a house or starting their own business. However, the only concrete opportunity any of the learners had at the end of the DESS was to join another learnership. Ariefdien's (2016) sentiment of 'learnership hopping' being counterproductive and a waste of resources may be a valid argument in terms of the aim of getting people into employment. The negative aspects of 'learnership hopping' cannot, however, be seen as the responsibility of persons with disabilities as there may be no real alternative for them. Persons with disabilities cannot be blamed for choosing an opportunity which improves their immediate well-being if the alternative is sitting at home with possibly negative influences on their psychological health.

Another perspective on why persons with disabilities join several learnerships one after another is that they can continue their skills development for higher qualifications if they join learnerships at higher levels. The learnership in my study case was an NQF Level 4 (equivalent to grade 12), which for most formal employment is a minimum requirement. Bhorat et al. (2015) argue that one of the major challenges in the South

African labour market is a mismatch between the demand for high skills and the oversupply of low- and unskilled labour. As the DESS was a once-off opportunity without an upwards trajectory for further skills development, the learners with disabilities who left the DESS with an accredited qualification would still fall into the large majority of low-skilled South Africans struggling to supply the labour in demand.

The low skills level of the learners with disabilities is a very tangible challenge which continues after the DESS. In my study, I also identified challenges on the psycho-social level for the learners in transitioning into formal employment. Despite the positive development in the DESS which increased the learners' agency through well-being and soft skills, this personal development was not sufficient to translate into taking concrete actions to pursue employment opportunities. Kenny et al. (2018) argue that marginalised people internalise experiences of oppression, which limits their capacities to realise work and career dreams for their future. Similarly, Soeker et al. (2018) argue that persons with disabilities often internalise feelings of inadequacy as they are seen as less adequate than able-bodied workers. In their study, they found that this internalisation resulted in people stagnating in protective workshops as they did not feel that the open labour market was a real option for them. My study indicates that the DESS intervention was inadequate to buffer the effects of marginalisation and oppression on a psycho-social level for the learners with disabilities to create agency, enabling them to transition into formal employment.

The study by Galvaan (2014) on occupational choice of marginalised youth in South Africa was useful to further understand the limited display of agency of the learners with disabilities. In her study, Galvaan (2014) found that although the youth were aware of different occupational choices, they did not conceive that these occupations were actually possible for them. Rather, they followed the "taken-for-granted ways of living and doing" (p. 47) in their community and made decisions within a limited range of occupational choices. They operated within a practical consciousness. As such, in their choices the youth reproduced intergenerational patterns of occupational choices and engagements, reflecting the social environment and the colonial and apartheid influences in that community.

Considering Galvaan's (2014) findings in relation to my study, negative perceptions of the capabilities of persons with disabilities and their historic role in the labour market as 'non-productive' might also have influenced the DESS learners in how they chose to pursue career opportunities. They knew of a range of options, but they ended up choosing what they saw as the 'norm' for persons with disabilities, namely, another SETA learnership or training course. If the learners with disabilities operate within a practical consciousness (Galvaan, 2014) and they feel that they do not really have choices in their career decisions – i.e., having low levels of work volition (Duffy et al., 2016) – then, not surprisingly, it is difficult for them to transition into the world of work without proximal support. The DESS did not include an exit strategy with such support to help the learners to transition into the labour market after the DESS.

The discussions above have helped to analyse and understand my study findings regarding how oppression can be internalised on a deeply psycho-social level (Kenny et al., 2018) and how collective and contextual histories develop into practical consciousness (Galvaan, 2014), which limits the learners with disabilities' career choices and agency. Developing a critical consciousness and a proactive personality to buffer the effects of oppression and to develop agency as proposed in the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016; Kenny et al., 2018) are plausible avenues to support persons with disabilities to transition into formal employment in South Africa. What I am missing in these discussions, including in the PWT, is a focus on the actual transition into formal employment – or to any work in the open labour market.

Sefotho (2020) finds that there are currently no transition programmes in place in South Africa for persons with disabilities. Sefotho (2020) defines transition for young adults as life changes, adjustments, and experiences which happens as they move from schools to independent living and work environments. Learners with disabilities may be supported in their academic development but career trajectories are generally not targeted, which leave many learners not knowing what to expect and how to transition into the world of work.

My study shows that currently **nobody is taking responsibility for supporting persons with disabilities' *transition* into formal employment**, not the Disability NGO nor the government (SETAs) or employers. This gap means that DESS learners

with disabilities graduate (with or without accredited hard skills) and are then left to their own devices, and their hopes and career dreams often end in a void. To close the gap between the supply and demand side of the labour market, I argue for a **radical disability transformation for a fully inclusive labour market**, which can only happen within a collective of multiple stakeholders taking responsibility.

The notion of radical comes from the social model on disability where Barnes (2000) argues that, in the present context, policy development can only have limited impact on the employment challenges of persons with disabilities. Meaningful change is therefore only likely to happen through a **radical reformulation of the meaning and organisation of work**. South Africa has the policies in place but still struggles to implement these and achieve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Barnes' (2000) argument relates to economic conditions being seen as a moderator in the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016). PWT relates economic conditions to new full-time jobs, access to training, accessibility of living wages, and job advancement opportunities. These economic conditions are situated at a macro level, and I find that the PWT is missing a focus on the meso level, which would include employers and change in the workplace.

In discussing radical transformation, I take points from Dietz and Engels (2021), who argue that eroding capitalism for radical transformation includes, but is not confined to, a profound disruption of the existing political and economic system. Radical transformation is also facilitated through changing discourses and reference frames, and the improvement of access to and control over the means of production. For radical disability transformation in the South African open labour market, **the discourse and reference frames for persons with disabilities as workers need to change** and **persons with disabilities need to be seen and included both as employees and employers.** A shift in discourse will also support the transition from a practical consciousness to a critical consciousness, both for persons with disabilities and for employers.

Transformation implies **transformative *action***. The development of critical consciousness by both persons with disabilities and employers to understand the historical and contextual layers of oppression of persons with disabilities in the labour

market (Kenny et al., 2018) needs to lead to a consciousness of how to translate this understanding into actual transformative action. Currently, persons with disabilities and employers operate in a practical consciousness (Galvaan, 2014), where persons with disabilities continue to be positioned as the 'other' opposed to the 'ideal able-bodied worker' (Jammaers & Zanoni, 2021) and labelled as non-productive (Thomas, 2002). Further, a radical disability transformation can only happen within a collective of multiple stakeholders acknowledging the **collective responsibility** for the common good of all. In a Global South context, **radical disability transformation is framed by decolonising disability and, specifically in Africa, also by Ubuntu** (Berghs, 2017; Sefotho, 2021).

Stakeholders would include the disability sector, the government, employers (public and private), educators, the health system, parents, and persons with disabilities working within an integrated approach. The radical disability transformation needs to focus on both the supply and demand side of the labour market for **upskilling persons with disabilities *and* systemic changes** in how employers and society view workers not merely as resources or sources of wealth (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Berghs, 2017). In a radical disability transformation, employers take equal responsibility for social justice and workers' dignity and well-being.

I do take note of Berghs' (2017) concern that decolonising disability is not without risk because of how a capitalistic labour market profits from marginalised groups. However, new economic perspectives are moving away from this capitalistic labour market structure, based on a neoliberal agenda, and instead of profiting from marginalised groups, these new perspectives have an increased focus on decent work and the rights and well-being of workers (Bregman, 2020; Piketty, 2014). This could contribute to rethinking and transforming work in the Global South (and the Global North). Fioramonti (2017) argues that an opportunity for a new economic paradigm is emerging, a well-being economy: an economy designed to promote well-being and which will be adaptable, integrative, and empowering. Disrupting the current neoliberal agenda may even be a positive outcome of an otherwise tragic COVID-19 pandemic. How the labour market has adjusted to various strict societal lockdowns because of the pandemic may contribute to radical disability transformation as employers see the

importance of workers' mental health and well-being, a work-life balance, and how work can be organised outside the physical space of the workplace.

To bridge the current transition gap for persons with disabilities to formal employment and inform a radical disability transformation, there is a need for research on the lessons learnt and evidence of what works and what does not work. I discuss this aspect in the following section.

6.3.2. Evidence-base for radical disability transformation

The study contributed new knowledge to almost non-existing evidence on the outcomes of DESS in terms of persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment.

In reviewing literature on employment preparation programmes for persons with disabilities in South Africa and internationally (Ariefdien, 2016; Fremlin, 2016) and specifically the South African SETA learnerships (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2018; Kruss et al., 2014; Rankin et al., 2014), it was no surprise that I was unable to find published comprehensive data on the trajectory of learners after such programmes. The Disability NGO and the Training Provider in my study case could provide anecdotes of past learners' trajectories but no comprehensive data.

Despite several ALMPs implemented by the South African government to address the continuously high unemployment rates in the country, the impact of these programmes is still uncertain (Diaz Pabon et al., 2021). Bhorat et al. (2019) and Patel et al. (2020) call for urgent evaluation of these programmes and for an evaluation structure to be built into these programmes to determine the outcomes as well as to find **evidence-based solutions to facilitate young people's transition into employment**. These calls for evaluations were made focusing on programmes for the general youth of South Africa, but the call is echoed by the Disability NGO in my study to the SETAs to enable the organisation to track learners with disabilities after the DESS.

With the amount of resources channelled into the SETA learnerships as one of the government's main drivers for addressing injustices in accessing the labour market, it is remarkable that there is literally no focus on the impact of these programmes. I

strongly support the call made by stakeholders for evaluations of the SETA learnerships and other ALMPs (including DESS), and further to **ensure that data and findings are disaggregated by disability and the intersectionality of factors such as race, gender, and socio-economic background**. The recommendation made by the Disability NGO to **build a monitoring and evaluation structure into the SETA learnerships** is a plausible and highly relevant place to start.

6.4. Conclusion

In addressing my third research objective on how the DESS address barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in transitioning into formal employment, I find that exploring this cannot happen in the vacuum of the disability NGOs offering the services. The responsibility to address these barriers and challenges cannot only be the responsibility of the disability sector. Facilitating transition into formal employment of persons with disabilities should be positioned within the broader context of the South African agenda to transform the labour market and include a range of stakeholders. Addressing barriers and challenges to the formal employment of persons with disabilities is not a matter of just 'fixing persons with disabilities' and increasing their skills and capabilities. The transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities is situated within complex layers with multiple stakeholders who either represent facilitating or oppressive practices and systems. Addressing barriers and challenges is not about once-off interventions such as the DESS but about sustained, integrated, and inclusive practices for a transformed inclusive labour market. Inclusive employment is ultimately about human dignity, the freedom to choose, and well-being for persons with disabilities. It is about addressing the systemic barriers that continue to marginalise and oppress persons with disabilities found in the educational and economic systems influencing the labour market.

My study findings also leave me with some further concerns. Can the South African disability movement and sector be content with offering services which are 'better than sitting at home'? Can the sector be content that the interventions which disability NGOs are offering often do not lead to entry into the formal labour market in a sustainable way, let alone an upwards career trajectory for persons with disabilities, and are not sustainably changing the lives of persons with disabilities? Can the South

African society be content when government programmes are not transforming the South African labour market to become inclusive and address social injustice as per the values of the legislation – especially when so many resources are spent alone within the SETA learnership structure?

With these concerns in mind and building on my study findings, I present the theory building in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: Theory Building

Being a qualitative single case study, the aim of my study was not to generalise my findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Rather, my instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) provided me the opportunity to take an in-depth look at the study case of the DESS and the case context to understand the transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa and report lessons learnt from the case study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In addressing my main research question, my study provides new knowledge to an area where currently very little exists, namely on:

How are Disability Employment Support Services provided by a disability NGO facilitating transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa?

I find the need for broadening the thinking around the transition for persons with disabilities into formal employment beyond the DESS. Building on my study, I offer **an integrated inclusive employment approach enabled by a radical disability transformation of the formal labour market**.

7.1. Building on the Psychology of Working Theory

The PWT has been an essential framework for my study and for building an Integrated Inclusive Employment Approach (IIEA). Through my study, I have identified areas to build on in the PWT model (Duffy et al., 2016) when focusing on persons with disabilities' transition to decent work. I summarise these points here:

1) Moderators need expansion in the following ways:
    a. Inclusion of accredited hard skills to close the hard skills gap.
    b. Expansion of 'social support' to an 'integrated support' including a structure where families, health practitioners, peers with disabilities, and workplace mentors and colleagues actively support persons with disabilities in skills development, transition, and at the workplace.
2) Well-being should be positioned as a predictor or a driver for access to decent work for jobseekers with disabilities and not only as an outcome of decent work.

3) Inclusion of a meso level which emphasises a focus on employers and the need for systemic and cultural transformation at the workplace.
4) There is a need for a transition bridge which actively supports persons with disabilities' transition to formal employment. This transition bridge builds on the proximal and distal support in developing moderators but also includes active career guidance (Lindstrom et al., 2011; Sefotho, 2014; Soresi et al., 2008).

7.2. An Integrated Inclusive Employment Approach

In building my theoretical argument for an IIEA, I focus on three levels and related stakeholders: 1) the micro level, which focuses on persons with disabilities and the supply side of the labour market, 2) the meso level, which focuses on employers and the demand side of the labour market, and 3) the macro level, which focuses on the government and legislation.

Cutting across all three levels is a decolonialisation of disability framed by Ubuntu. This reframing will change the negative discourses and reference frames of persons with disabilities as workers and emphasise the collective's responsibility for dignity and well-being for all (Berghs, 2017; Sefotho, 2021). The integrated approach is transdisciplinary, including theory and practices from psychology, economics and labour studies, social and health sciences, and Critical Disability Studies.

7.2.1. Supply side of the labour market

Persons with disabilities continue to leave the basic education system with lower levels and quality of education than their able-bodied peers, and they continue to be stigmatised in their everyday lives. Therefore, an IIEA needs to be cognisant of the marginalisation and oppression experienced by persons with disabilities to buffer and address the effect of these experiences, both on a skills development level (hard and soft skills) and on a psycho-social level. As such, foregrounding the context and acknowledging the predictors of marginalisation and economic constraints (Duffy et. al., 2016) are important for an IIEA to ensure persons with disabilities' transition into formal employment.

To address the challenges and barriers persons with disabilities face, and to buffer the effects of the marginalisation and oppression on a micro level, an IIEA includes proximal and distal support for persons with disabilities in the following areas:

1) Relevant accredited hard skills to close the hard skills gap. Relevant skills relates both to type of skills and skills level.
2) Integrated support:
    a. Job coaches, e.g., occupational therapists, educators, career guidance counsellors, social workers
    b. Family to be supported and to be included as active supporters
    c. Health practitioners: impairment management focused on facilitating transition and inclusion in the labour market
    d. Workplace mentors and colleagues for hard and soft skills development at the workplace
    e. Peers with disabilities for psycho-social support and personal development
3) Critical consciousness to understand social structures and positioning of disability in the labour market
4) Proactive personality for agency to deal with social marginalisation and imagine a way forward

These elements support persons with disabilities' sense of both agency and well-being. From my study findings, the increased sense of well-being the learners with disabilities experienced installed hopes and dreams for their future which in turn is a powerful driver for agency. Hence, the IIEA is about increased well-being for the person with a disability – and well-being both as a jobseeker and as an employee (well-being as subjective to the individual and as freedom of choice).

In order to bridge the transition gap, the development of persons with disabilities' capabilities and agency through the above elements needs to be supported by career guidance. The career guidance will support people to identify their career personality, finding their special gifts, talents, competences, and abilities (Sefotho, 2014) as well as analysing advantages and disadvantages of different career options. It will also support people to find the most advantageous options for themselves, further

supporting their rights to choice and self-determination (Soresi et al., 2008). This career guidance would thereby move away from a common approach of guiding people to available opportunities (Fabian, 2014) and towards focusing on people's capabilities, well-being, and choice.

7.2.2. Demand side of the labour market

Critical for an IIEA is the demand side of the labour market, which has not responded sufficiently to calls for transformation. The structures and discourses of the capitalistic economy driving the labour market have not been seriously challenged when it comes to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in formal employment. Hence, I argue for the need for a radical disability transformation to build the transition bridge from the employers' side. To drive the radical disability transformation, an IIEA includes:

1) Development of employers' critical consciousness of disability marginalisation and oppression in the current labour market and their own role in this oppression. This will lead to a disability equity consciousness.
2) Development of a business case for the employment of persons with disabilities for the Global South framed by the principles of Ubuntu and social justice (Berghs, 2017; Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018) as well as profitability, competitive advantages, and inclusive work culture for all workers (Lindsay et al., 2018).

I propose that these two tools will contribute to developing employers from passive employers to committed employers (Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021). Committed employers who not only display a positive attitude but also take transformative actions to consciously contribute to closing the transition gap for persons with disabilities into formal employment. The development of these two elements is a close collaboration between the employers and the disability sector.

7.2.3. Government and legislation

Despite incentive-driven policies (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003) and demands for employment equity plans (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998) in the South African legislation, the policies are not being sufficiently enforced

to drive the changes intended (Commission for Employment Equity, 2021; Díaz Pabón et al., 2020).

Dietz and Engels (2021) argue that radical transformation of a capitalistic economy includes a profound disruption of the existing political and economic system. I argue that a place to start is by implementing and enforcing South Africa's progressive legislation on disability and employment with the principles of social justice. Hence, I find that the government has an important cross-cutting role to play in an IIEA, which includes:

1) Enforcing transformative legislation for enabling economic conditions to address historical inequality and social injustice
2) Funding integrated inclusive employment programmes
3) Building monitoring, tracking, and evaluation structures to establish the impact of ALMPs and IIEA programmes, and building evidence on what works for the formal employment of persons with disabilities – as opposed to currently where it is predominantly data on skills development which is being recorded and with limited disaggregation on disability.

I propose that the South African government fund the IIEA because it aligns with the mandates in the legislative framework on disability and employment of inclusion and social justice to address inequality. This funding proposal is further based on the study by Engelbrecht, Van Niekerk, Coetzee, and Hajwani (2017), who did a cost calculation of services for supported employment for persons with mental disabilities in South Africa. According to their study, the cost of supported employment services is substantially lower than the current government investments in disability grants and protective workshops subsidies. Hence, they argue that not only is it a social justice concern but investing in supported employment is also cost-effective for the government. The study by Engelbrecht, Van Niekerk, et al. (2017) focused on workplace support components using occupational therapists. Adding the SETA learnership investments to the calculations by Engelbrecht, Van Niekerk, et al. (2017) would provide significant funding of an IIEA for both the upskilling of persons with disabilities and workplace support. Developing disability equity consciousness amongst employers and establishing a business case for formal employment of

persons with disabilities for the Global South would further encourage private employers to invest in an IIEA working in collaboration with the government and the disability sector.

Figure 5 illustrates the IIEA.

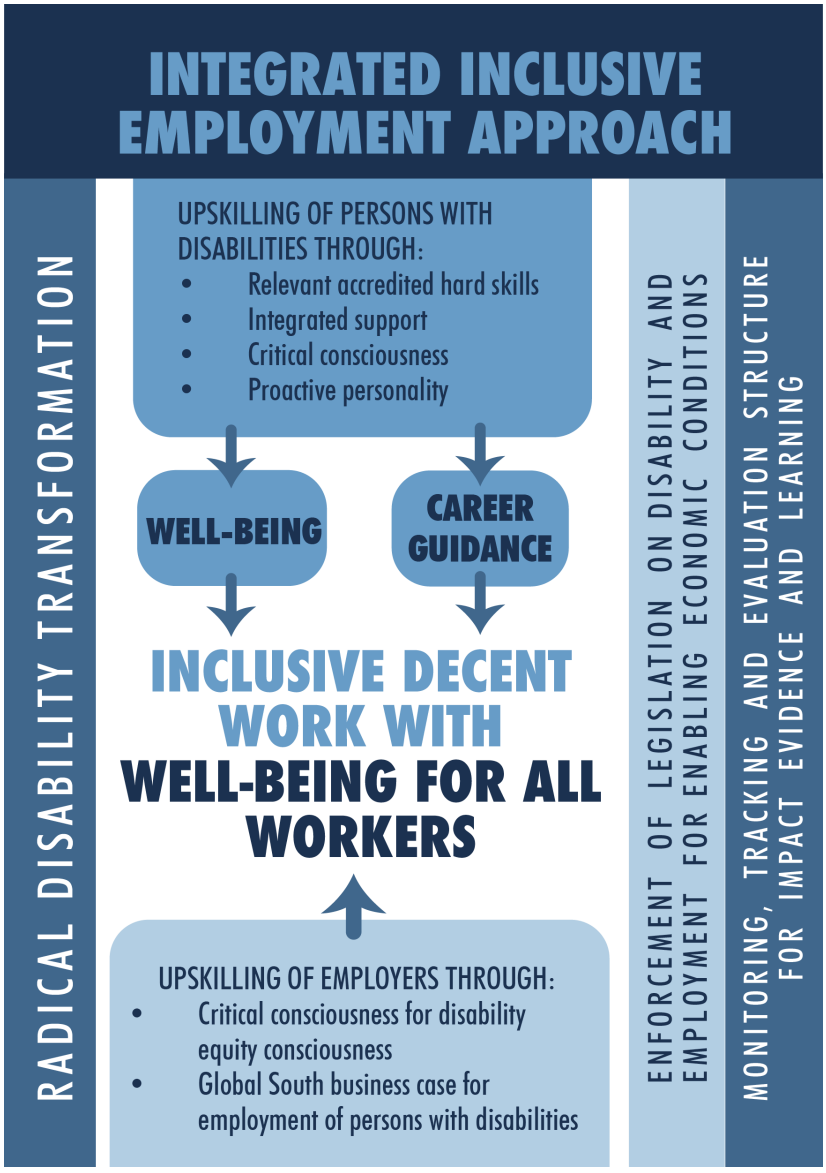


Figure 5: Integrated Inclusive Employment Approach

(Created by Fischer Mogensen for this study, 2021)

In investigating my research question of how DESS provided by a disability NGO are facilitating the transition into formal employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa, I found that the DESS and the disability NGO are indeed a key opportunity for

persons with disabilities. However, the DESS are not enough to bridge the transition gap into formal employment. With my study, I therefore offer a new **Integrated Inclusive Employment Approach** enabled by a **radical disability transformation** in the labour market for the formal employment of persons with disabilities and emphasising **well-being for jobseekers and employees with disabilities**.

As I have presented the new knowledge and offer a new approach to the formal employment for persons with disabilities, in the next and final chapter I will outline the implications from and limitations of my study.

Chapter 8: Study Implications and Limitations

The IIEA is built on existing knowledge and incorporates the new knowledge generated from my studies contributing to the body of knowledge on the transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities. My study has also identified areas which still need attention. These study implications are presented in this chapter. This chapter also includes some brief considerations of my study in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the study limitations. The chapter concludes with some reflections and a collage of my PhD journey.

8.1. Study Implications

Research focused on and with persons with disabilities in the Global South is still limited. Although the focus on formal employment of persons with disabilities is increasing, research specifically within this area is still scarce. In the following section, I have identified areas for further research coming from my study as well as implications for theory, the disability sector, policy implementation, and curricula development and teaching.

8.1.1. Research

I have emphasised the need for research based in the Global South on the transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities throughout this thesis, as has much other literature reviewed in this study. While all researchers' contributions on disability should be welcomed to generate new knowledge, it is particularly important to ensure that research is done by Global South researchers as well as researchers with disabilities. Due to various reasons related to disablism, the colonial past, and a continuous academic hegemony by the Global North, research by and with persons with disabilities in the Global South is very scarce. If this scarcity is to end, a concerted effort needs to be made to create spaces and platforms for such research. This research should be open access as much as possible to enable access for a wide audience of not only academics but also practitioners, advocates, decision-makers, educators, and employers, amongst others.

Specifically related to my study, research is needed in the following areas:

- Tracer or trajectory studies on persons with disabilities who have participated in SETA learnerships, DESS, IIEA, and other employability programmes to establish evidence on the long-term impact of such programmes and the transition into the labour market
- Career guidance and construction for persons with disabilities in the Global South
- A business case for the employment of persons with disabilities in the Global South, including profitability and social justice aspects done in collaboration with persons with disabilities, the disability sector, and employers
- The reciprocal relations between well-being and decent work, and what both concepts mean for persons with disabilities in the Global South

8.1.2. Theory

I have used the PWT as a framework in my study and have found it increasingly interesting for the transition to formal employment for persons with disabilities. The PWT is relatively new within the literature on career development and work, and I have not found the theory being applied in research in Africa with persons with disabilities. I do think that the PWT, with its interdisciplinary approach, focus on oppressed people and foregrounding of contextual and psycho-social factors, potentially has a lot of value for the case of formal employment of persons with disabilities in Africa.

Using the PWT for persons with disabilities, I believe it will strongly benefit from learnings from Critical Disability Studies with aspects pertaining specifically to persons with disabilities as well as aspects of intersectionality, discourse, and power relations. As it is a theory which was developed in the Global North, a decolonial lens will provide the PWT with valuable insights for research in the Global South.

8.1.3. The disability sector

The case site of my study was that of a disability NGO implementing DESS. In my study, I strongly acknowledge the historical, political, economic, and social environment that disability NGOs operate within in South Africa, which means that the

organisations cannot be in full control of the design, implementation, and outcomes of the DESS. I do believe that the disability sector, including persons with disabilities themselves, has an all-important role in DESS and in the proposed IIEA, as advocates for transforming employment practices and how formal employment for persons with disabilities is viewed, and as implementers of interventions. Disability NGOs have the disability expertise, and because they work with multiple stakeholders including employers, training providers, career guidance counsellors, and parents, I believe disability NGOs should be the custodians of interventions.

This argument means that disability NGOs must acknowledge that the current DESS need redesigning, as found in my study, and need to take on a more active role in addressing the systemic barriers and social injustices in the labour market as well as in the current SETA structures. Disability NGOs should not just see themselves as passive recipients of SETA funding but should actively influence government spending and interventions through evidence-based advocacy.

8.1.4. Policy implementation

The SETAs are one of the South African government's main vehicles for upskilling the country's workforce and to address the inequalities in society and specifically in the labour market. Currently, we have little information on how the SETAs are actually impacting the transformation of the labour market. My study has found clear indications that the SETA learnerships have limited long-term impact for persons with disabilities. As I have said above, the SETA learnerships need to include monitoring, tracking, and evaluation structures which enable the implementing organisations to establish the employment impact of the learnerships.

Related to the above implications, the SETA learnerships need to be restructured to respond to the lived reality of persons with disabilities in South Africa and to close the transition gap between labour supply and labour demand. While I am not calling for a new policy framework, one implication from my study is a call for rethinking the funding structure and implementation of the policy framework. As found in my study, giving people access to hard skills training is, in itself, seldom enough to facilitate the transition into the open labour market, especially for the groups who are the SETAs'

main target groups, i.e., black people, women, and persons with disabilities from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, the SETAs need to be restructured to be able to respond to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities (and persons without disabilities) and to allow for the funding of activities on a broader scale than just the specific hard skills training. The findings from this study will contribute to rethinking and redesigning the SETA learnerships within an IIEA.

8.1.5. Curricula

My study found that career guidance and development for persons with disabilities are very limited. This is amongst other reasons due to perceptions amongst educators, career guidance counsellors, and vocational psychologists of persons with disabilities as not being capable of pursuing and holding a career in the open labour market. Including a focus on persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups in the curricula of higher education across disciplines and in career guidance sessions for learners at the basic education level will address some of the challenges faced by these groups in their youth and help them to take ownership of their own career construction.

8.2. In the Time of COVID-19

My study data was collected before the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has also hit the South African economy and labour market hard. Although the pandemic has certainly impacted the formal labour market as every other aspect of our lives, I still believe my findings are relevant and applicable for the case of transition to formal employment of persons with disabilities going forward. At the end of my study, I have made a few reflections on this research in the time of COVID-19.

Research on the long-term socio-economic and psycho-social impact of the pandemic is still emerging but indications are that persons with disabilities are amongst the population groups most severely negatively hit. The pandemic could undo the previous slow but still steady progress for disability inclusive development, as persons with disabilities have seen a sudden loss of access to education and employment, failed businesses, and inaccessible information and services both in terms of regular health

services and services related to COVID-19 (Wickenden, Thompson, Rohwerder, & Shaw, 2021). A survey done by CBM Global Inclusion Advisory Group in low- and middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific found that persons with disabilities faced a severe reduction in employment and income due to the COVID-19 restriction and at a higher rate than the general population (Hillgrove, 2020).

In considering aspects which could potentially positively impact the formal employment of persons with disabilities, an inclusive digital economy is a strong option. The pandemic has accelerated the online job market. As such, digital tools can enable persons with disabilities to gain access to employment through online recruitment platforms, and digital tools can support them in their daily tasks at the workplace. Remote work has also become more common and acceptable, which could take away challenges of transport to work for persons with disabilities. Conversely, if people do not possess the required skills and if access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is limited due to costs and accessibility, persons with disabilities will still not benefit from these opportunities and are then at even greater risk of being left behind (ILO Global Business and Disability Network & Fundación ONCE, 2021). Again, I find that the advantages in a digital economy would be more likely for persons with disabilities in the Global North, whereas the majority of persons with disabilities in the Global South are at risk of being left behind by further digitalisation in the formal labour market.

I do share the sentiment of the ILO GBDN in the following quote:

> Finally, the pandemic crisis has shown our ability to change structures and attitudes rapidly, which is evidence that these changes can be made. Businesses and societies have demonstrated their potential to change and to change rapidly. It can therefore be concluded that inaction is not an option (ILO Global Business and Disability Network & Fundación ONCE, 2021, p. 40).

As discussed previously, the COVID-19 pandemic may be a contributing catalyst for radical disability transformation.

8.3. Limitations of the Study

From the beginning of my study, I had to make some decisions regarding the scope of the research, the case site, and the study participants, which also put some limitations on my study. During the study, I became aware of other limitations and some of my pre-identified limitations were amplified.

One of the main limitations for my study was the lack of published comprehensive data on the SETA learnership, especially in terms of persons with disabilities. I have not been able to identify data on how many persons with disabilities are being accredited through the SETA learnership. This lack of data was confirmed by the Disability NGO, which also did not have data on DESS learners exiting the project or their trajectory from there. My own data in this regard was likewise limited by the time factor of data collection as I could not follow the learners with disabilities after they had finished the DESS.

This has limited the conclusions that I have been able to make in terms of the long-term impact of the DESS. Still, I do believe that my study has given some clear indications on the impact of the DESS as well as the SETA learnerships. These will need to be further researched as I call for further research in the implications above.

My sample size of participants with disabilities and employers was limited by the scope and methodology of the study. As I wanted to have a holistic sample of stakeholders represented in the study and to have in-depth data, especially from participants with disabilities, it limited the number of participants I was able to include. I believe the holistic aspect and the in-depth data strengthen the qualitative aspects of my study, but they also limited my study in other areas. For example, I did not have any significant results related to the possible difference between men and women with disabilities as well as in terms of the different types of disabilities. The number of employers participating in the study was also limited and although the study gave clear indications of employers' role in formal employment for persons with disabilities, this area also needs further investigation.

8.4. My PhD Journey Collage

This study has brought me on my own journey of not only immense learning about my case but equally about myself. It has also been a journey of learning, and skills and career development for me. I have learnt so much from my participants, especially my participants with disabilities, and they have changed my perspectives and outlooks on life, my own and others', with their stories of struggles and joy. My participants' journeys were very different to my own journey, merely by the fact of where I was born. Still, some of the learners with disabilities' stories of disappointment and demotivation from rejections of job applications definitely resonated with me, thinking back on my own short time of unemployment as a new graduate. This small space of shared experiences with the learners confirms to me the importance of the focus on human dignity, well-being, and choice across the Global South and North, and for persons with disabilities and able-bodied persons alike. However, the space also confirms the continued inequality persisting between the Global North and South, and between persons with disabilities and able-bodied persons. Unless political and economic systems are radically transformed, we will continue to reproduce these inequalities, and addressing them with progressive legislation and socio-economic development interventions (as in government programmes or development aid) will only serve as a band-aid and not actually change people's lives, giving them equity, dignity, well-being, and choice.

Throughout my study, I have continued to think of my director at the Ghana Blind Union as I am reminded of the importance of the youth and their role in creating new ideas and disrupting the established structures. I hope my call for a radical disability transformation will resonate with his views as we both work for youth with disabilities to have their space in the open labour market.

I have made my own collage using some of the pictures from the learners with disabilities' collages and images which resonate with me, depicting my PhD journey up until this point of writing my last words.

Figure 6: My PhD journey collage

(Created by Fischer Mogensen for this study, 2021)

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Schedules

Disability NGO Management

1) Name
2) Position
3) Role and responsibilities related to the DESS provided.
4) In your view what is 'disability'?
5) Describe the DESS your organisation provides:
    a. To persons with disabilities
    b. To employers
    c. Other services / activities
    d. Is the organisation working / partnering with other organisations to provide the services? Who and in what way?
6) Describe the principles on which the DESS are based (how was the DESS designed?)
7) Have the DESS changed since the organisation started providing these services? How and why?
8) What are the successes with DESS? Please explain why you see this as a success.
    a. Regarding persons with disabilities
    b. Regarding employers
    c. Other
9) What have been the challenges?
    a. Regarding persons with disabilities
    b. Regarding employers
    c. Other
10) Why do you think these challenges are present? Have these been addressed?
11) Is there anything you would like to change or add to the DESS provided currently?
12) Why do you think the employment rates of persons with disabilities have not changed significantly over the last 12 years in South Africa?
13) In your view what external factors (nationally and internationally) influence the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa?

DESS Implementation Staff

1) Name
2) Position

3) Role and responsibilities related to the DESS
4) In your view what is ‘disability’?
5) Describe the DESS your organisation provides:
    a. To persons with disabilities
    b. To employers
    c. Other services / activities
    d. Is the organisation working / partnering with other organisations to provide the services? Who and in what way?
6) Describe the principles on which the DESS are based and how that relates to how you implement the services.
7) Have the DSS changed since the organisation started providing these services? How and why?
8) What are the successes with DESS?
    a. Regarding persons with disabilities
    b. Regarding employers
    c. Other
9) What have been the challenges?
    a. Regarding persons with disabilities
    b. Regarding employers
    c. Other
10) Is there anything you would like to change or add to the DESS provided?
11) Why do you think the employment rates of persons with disabilities have not changed significantly over the last 12 years in South Africa?

Training Provider

1) Name
2) Position
3) In your view what is ‘disability’?
4) Role and responsibilities related to the DESS:
    a. Related to learners
    b. Related to the Disability NGO
    c. Related to employers
5) Describe the DESS (learnership) provided:
    a. To persons with disabilities
    b. To employers
    c. Other services / activities
    d. Are you or the Disability NGO working / partnering with other organisations to provide the services? Who and in what way?

e. Do you work with other service providers than the Disability NGO on learnerships to persons with disabilities?

6) Describe the principles on which the learnership is based (how was the DESS designed?)
7) Have the DESS changed since your organisation started providing these services to learners with disabilities? How and why?
8) What are the successes with the DESS? Please explain why you see this as a success.
    a. Regarding persons with disabilities
    b. Regarding employers
    c. Other
9) What have been the challenges?
    a. Regarding persons with disabilities
    b. Regarding employers
    c. Other

    Why do you think these challenges are present? Have these been addressed?
10) Is there anything you would like to change or add to the DESS provided currently?
11) Why do you think the employment rates of persons with disabilities have not changed significantly over the last 12 years in South Africa?
12) In your view what external factors (nationally and internationally) influence the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa?

DESS Learners with Disabilities

1) Gender:
2) Age:
3) Disability:
4) Can we go through your CV?

a. Education
b. Work experience

5) Can you tell me about your living situation?
    a. Family

b. Transport
c. Assets (house, car, phone, etc.)
d. Community (supportive, discrimination)

6) When did you join the DESS programme?
7) How did you hear about the DESS programme?
8) Why did you join the DESS programme?
9) When do you finish the programme?
10) What training, activities etc. did you participate in at DESS? (What support did you get? By who, how, when etc. – detailed description)
11) Has the DESS tried to help you find employment? If yes, how?
12) What have you done to find employment? (including formal employment, informal employment, self-employment) Why do you think you have not been able to find employment?
13) What elements did you find particularly good / useful about the DESS?
14) What elements of the DESS programme did you not find very useful?
15) Have you been in contact with any employers in the time you have participated in the DESS?
    a. If yes, who and how?
    b. If no, why not?
16) What do you think will help you find employment?
17) What further support would you like to have in order to help you find employment?
18) How do you think more persons with disabilities can be employed in private companies? (What support is needed for both persons with disabilities and employers?)

Host Employer – Management and Human Resource

1) In your words what is “disability”?
2) What is the company’s policy on disability? Is it formally or informally (written down – included in HR policies or separate policy, targets?)? (if informally go to question 5)
3) If formal policy: when and how was it developed (what and who was driving the process?)

4) If formal policy: how is it implemented and who are the main responsible?
5) If informally: How is the “policy” expressed?
6) How does the company recruit – in general and specifically persons with disabilities? (internally, recruitment agencies, DPOs?)
7) Has your employee(s) had a need for reasonable accommodation?
    a. If yes, what and how was the process around getting the accommodation in place?
    b. If no, how was it established that there was not a need for accommodation? What are the procedures for reasonable accommodation?
8) How did the engagement with the Disability NGO and DESS come about? Why did you see the need for DESS?
9) What DESS have you received from the Disability NGO?
10) How did you find these services?
11) Have your company used other DESS providers?
    a. If yes, who and what services were provided? (Why did you engage another DESS provider?
12) What have been the experiences with having an employee with a disability in your company? (positive/negative)
    a. On work environment
    b. Productivity
    c. Other employees
    d. Costumers/clients
13) What would you like to do differently regarding disability in your company?
14) How do you think that more persons with disabilities could be employed in the private sector? What support is needed for:
    a. Persons with disabilities?
    b. Employers / at the workplace?
15) What external factors (nationally and internationally) influence your company’s employment policies and procedures?

Host Employer – Direct Manager of Employees/Learners with disabilities

1) In your words what is “disability”?
2) What is the company’s policy on disability? Is it formally or informally (written down)? (if informally go to question 5)
3) If formal policy: when and how was it developed (what and who was driving the process?)
4) If formal policy: how is it implemented and who are the main responsible?
5) If informally: How is the “policy” expressed?
6) Describe your engagement with employee(s) with disabilities on a daily basis. (including number of employees, types of disability and gender)
7) How was this/these employee(s) recruited into your department?
8) Has your employee(s) had a need for reasonable accommodation?
    a. If yes: what and how was the process around getting the accommodation in place?
    b. If no: what was it established that there was not a need for accommodation?
9) What have been the experiences with having an employee with a disability in your company? (positive/negative)
    a. On work environment
    b. Productivity
    c. Other employees
    d. Costumers/clients
10) What are the challenges experienced in the company regarding disability?
11) How did the engagement with the Disability NGO come about? Why did you see the need for DESS?
12) What ESS have you received from the Disability NGO?
13) How did you find these services?
14) What would you like to do differently regarding disability in your company?
15) How do you think that more persons with disabilities could be employed in the private sector? What support is needed for:
    a. Persons with disabilities?
    b. Employers / at the workplace?

Host Employer - Colleagues of Employees/Learners with Disabilities

1) Name and position.
2) In your view what is “disability”?
3) What are your experiences with persons with disabilities?
    a. Personally
    b. At the workplace
4) How do you see the employment of persons with disabilities at your workplace? (remind participants that this is anonymous and a safe space to talk)
    a. Positive impact
    b. Challenges
5) How do you think that more persons with disabilities could be employed in the private sector? What support is needed for:
    a. Persons with disabilities?
    b. Employers / at the workplace?

Appendix B: Overview of Interviews Conducted

Study participant	Length of interview	Date of interview
Learner with disability - Lennart	39:43	15/Mar/18
Learner with disability - Kwezi	46:35	16/Mar/18
Learner with disability - Robert	51:39	22/Mar/18
Learner with disability - Achmat	26:42	22/Mar/18
Learner with disability - Fatima	30:54	22/Mar/18
Learner with disability - Bernard	28:18	23/Mar/18
Learner with disability - Pumeza	27:11	23/Mar/18
Learner with disability - Patricia	25:07	23/Mar/18
Disability NGO - Interviewee 1	40:59	13/Sep/18
Disability NGO - Interviewee 2	45:01	13/Sep/18
Disability NGO - Interviewee 3	1:23:46	23/Jan/19
Training Provider - Interviewee 1	1:36:18	18/Jun/18
Training Provider - Interviewee 2	1:10:46	04/Jul/18
Employer - Interviewee 1	37:22	10/Jul/18
Employer - Interviewee 2	21:39	10/Jul/18
Employer - Interviewee 3	20:27	30/Jul/18
Employer - Interviewee 4	36:48	30/Jul/18
Employer - Interviewee 5	20:55	28/Jan/19
Employer - Interviewee 6	23:30	28/Jan/19

Appendix C: Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
Faculty of Health Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee

Room E53-46 Old Main Building
Groote Schuur Hospital
Observatory 7925
Telephone [021] 406 6626
Email: lamees.emjedi@uct.ac.za
Website: www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms

04 January 2017

HREC REF: 766/2016

Prof H Kathard
Education Department
E52 Room 26
Old Main Building

Dear Prof Kathard

PROJECT TITLE: EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES: A CASE STUDY ON FORMAL EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA (PhD-candidate K Mogensen)

Thank you for submitting your study to the Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

It is a pleasure to inform you that the HREC has **formally approved** the above-mentioned study.

Approval is granted for one year until the 30th January 2018.

Please submit a progress form, using the standardised Annual Report Form if the study continues beyond the approval period. Please submit a Standard Closure form if the study is completed within the approval period. (Forms can be found on our website: www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms)

The HREC acknowledge that the student Karina Fischer Mogensen will also be involved in this study.

Please quote the HREC REF in all your correspondence.

Please note that the ongoing ethical conduct of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

Please note that for all studies approved by the HREC, the principal investigator **must** obtain appropriate institutional approval before the research may occur.

Yours sincerely

pp T Burgess

PROFESSOR M BLOCKMAN
CHAIRPERSON, FHS HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Federal Wide Assurance Number: FWA00001637.
Institutional Review Board (IRB) number: IRB00001938

Appendix D: Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
Faculty of Health Sciences
Department of Health and Rehabilitation Science
Divisions of Disability Studies

F45 Old Main Building, Groote Schuur Hospital,
Observatory 7925
Tel: +27 21 406 6401

25 October 2017

Dear Madame/Sir,

I am Karina Fischer Mogensen, a Ph.D. student doing study at the University of Cape Town. I invite you to join my study and I would highly appreciate your contributions.

The title of this study is “Employment Support Services: a case study on formal employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa”. Employment rates of persons with disabilities continues to be very low and currently little is known about how persons with disabilities and employers can be supported in advancing the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa. As a researcher I am doing this study to understand this area from the perspectives of persons with disabilities, employers and employment support service providers. This knowledge will be useful to the disability

sector and employers as well as other stakeholder such as the government and educational institutions.

This study requires participants from four groups of stakeholders namely 1) persons with disabilities; 2) service provider of employment support services; 3) employers of persons with disabilities; and 4) colleagues of persons with disabilities. Participants need to be 18 years or older.

In order to be part of this study we are kindly asking you to participate in 1-2 interview session of approximately 1 hour each to share your views, knowledge and experiences regarding employment of persons with disabilities. As a person with a disability your inputs will be highly valuable and your experiences of the Employment Support Service programme and employment will be an essential part of this study together with that of your colleagues with disabilities. We would also like to use statistics such as your gender, race, disability and education for the research.

A venue and time for the interview will be chosen that is convenient for you. We are requesting permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded, which will enable the researcher to later transcribe the interview word for word. These interview transcripts will aid the researcher analysing the interviews accurately and compare across the different participants. All recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed when the study is completed.

It is your choice as to whether or not you would like to participate in this study and no one can force you to do so. If you choose to be a part of this study we will ask you to give written consent. When you do this it means that you understand what is required of you and that you give your permission for the information you provide to be used in this study. You can choose to leave the study at any time with no negative consequences.

Your name, name of company or other personal identifying information will not be used in any reporting of the study. All interview audio-recordings and interview transcripts will be kept safe on the researcher’s computer and home desk. All electronic data will be protected with password protection and hard copies will be locked away to ensure their security. Data will be kept for the full research process including dissemination

with a maximum of 5 years where after all audio-recordings will be destroyed. The only other people who will have access to these documents are the researcher's supervisor and co-supervisor.

There are no known risks linked to being a participant in the study, but it is possible that the interview/s may trigger an emotional or psychological response. Should this happen, the researcher will arrange for you to receive additional help and/or counselling from the relevant professional(s). You will not receive anything for being a part of the study. The researcher will cover possible transport costs related to the interviews.

The benefits of taking part in the study may include gaining a clear perspective on your personal experiences as well has you will have access to the findings of the research.

If you have any questions that you need answered, the researcher will be available to you in person, via telephone or e-mail. The researcher can be contacted on cell number: 072 486 2670 or on e-mail: karina@bfm.org.za The researcher will be supervised by Prof. Harsha Kathard, a professor at the University of Cape Town. If you have any questions for her you can contact her on 021 406 6041.

This study has been approved by the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (FHS HREC) and its reference number is 766/2016. The UCT FHS HREC can be contacted on 021 406 6338 in case participants have any questions regarding their rights and welfare as research subjects on the study.

If you agree to participate in this study please fill in the consent form on the following page.

Yours sincerely

Karina Fischer Mogensen, Researcher

Contact information

Researcher:

Karina Fischer Mogensen

Telephone: 072 486 2670

E-mail: karina@bfm.org.za

Supervisor:

Prof. Harsha Kathard

Telephone: (021) 406 6041

E-mail: harsha.kathard@uct.ac.za

Chairperson of the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences HREC:

Prof. Marc Blockman:

Telephone: (021) 406 6626

Email: marc.blockman@uct.ac.za

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
Faculty of Health Sciences
Department of Health and Rehabilitation Science
Divisions of Disability Studies
F45 Old Main Building, Groote Schuur Hospital,
Observatory 7925
Tel: +27 21 406 6401

Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research study "Employment Support Services: a case study on formal employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa".

I have read the previous information letter and I understand what is required of me. I understand that I have the right to leave the study at any stage and that it will have no negative consequences for me. I understand that my name or any other identifying characteristics will not be used in any reporting of the research. I acknowledge that the researcher has offered to cover necessary transport costs that arise as a result of the interviews. I have had the chance to have all my questions answered and I understand that I will not receive any remuneration for participating in the study.

Signed:

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Name	Participant's Signature	Date & Place
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's Name	Researcher's Signature	Date & Place

Appendix E: DESS Psycho-Social Assessment Areas

Assessment area	Focus points
Family relations	● Parents and siblings' presence and support ● Childhood and upbringing ● Household set-up ● Family attitudes on disability
Financials	● Social grant recipients ● How finances were manages and by whom
Community	● How they feel treated in their community ● Role models
Impairment	● Their functional level terms of vision, hearing, perceptual functions, speech and communication ● Meeting developmental milestones through childhood
Well-being	● Sleep and self-care ● Interests and hobbies ● Fears ● Unusual habits ● Sexuality and sexual experiences including traumatic experiences

Appendix F: SAQA Curriculum Overview for Business Administration NQF Level 4

In the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)'s overview of the Business Administration learnership it states that the qualification offers the learner the below knowledge and skills through fundamental and core units:

- Management of Records
- Comprehension of written and verbal tests
- Business Writing
- Problem Solving
- Ethics
- Cultural Awareness
- Self-Management and Self-Development
- Project Teamwork
- Business Policies and Procedures

(SETA Agreement for learnerships: unemployed. Qualifications: further education and training certificate: Administration management NQF4, July 2017)

The DESS further included the following electives units:

- Monitor and control reception area
- Process incoming and outgoing telephone calls
- Monitor customer satisfaction
- Maintain a preventative maintenance programme (Facilitator Guide - Business Administrative Services NQF Level 4, n.d.)