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**DEVELOPING QUALITY OF WORK LIFE (QWL) DETERMINANTS
FOR SKILLED EMPLOYEES WITH CONGENITAL MOBILITY
DISABILITIES: AN EXPLORATORY APPRAOCH**

BY

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Title Page	
Table of Contents	
References	
Appendices	
List of Tables	
List of Abbreviations	
Acknowledgements	
Declaration	
Abstract	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER ONE:	1
THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES	
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM	1
1.3 REASONS FOR STUDYING QUALITY OF WORK LIFE	6
1.4 NATURE OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH	9
1.5 SUMMARY	10
CHAPTER TWO	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 INTRODUCTION	11
2.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING SOCIETY'S UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY	12
2.2.1 Assumptions about Disability	12

2.2.2	Models Influencing the Definitions of Disability	15
2.2.2.1	The Economic Model of Disability	15
2.2.2.2	The Medical Model of Disability	15
2.2.2.3	The Social Model of Disability	16
2.2.2.4	The Socio-political Model of Disability	17
2.2.3	The implications of the 'Fragmented Understanding' of Disability	18
2.3	OPERATIONALISATION OF THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE	18
2.3.1	Adequate and Fair Compensation	21
2.3.2	Safe and Healthy Working Conditions	23
2.3.3	Immediate Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacities	24
2.3.4	Future Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security	26
2.3.5	Social Integration in the Workplace	27
2.3.6	Constitutionalism in the Workplace	29
2.3.7	Work and the Total Life Space	30
2.3.8	The Social Relevance of Work Life	30
2.4	THE RELEVANCE OF WALTON'S (1973) WORK TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONEXT	31
2.5	OPERATIONALISATION OF THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES	35
2.6	SUMMARY	38
	CHAPTER THREE	39
	RESEARCH DESIGN	
3.1	INTRODUCTION	39
3.2	PARTICIPANTS	39
3.2.1	Sampling Procedures	40
3.3	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	42

3.3.1	Characteristics of Delphi Technique	44
3.3.2	The Appropriateness of the Delphi Technique for this Research	47
3.3.2.1	Previous Similar Research	47
3.3.2.2	The Delphi Criteria	48
3.3.2.3	The Pilot Study	50
3.3.2.4	Other Data Collection Methods	54
3.3.2.5	Limitations of the Delphi Technique	54
3.4	DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES	55
3.5	DATA ANALYSIS: CONTENT ANALYSIS	57
3.6	USING THE DELPHI TECHNIQUE AND CONTENT ANALYSIS: A CRITIQUE	59
3.7	SUMMARY	60
CHAPTER FOUR		61
RESULTS		
4.1	INTRODUCTION	61
4.2	RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 1	61
4.3	RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 2	63
4.4	RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 3	64
CHAPTER FIVE		68
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS		
5.1	INTRODUCTION	68
5.1.1	Advancement Opportunities	68
5.1.2	Accommodation	69
5.1.3	Integration	71
5.1.4	Supportive work environment	72
5.1.5	Recognition	74
5.1.6	Job variety	75

5.2	CONCLUSIONS	76
5.3	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	77
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	78

REFERENCES	80
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APPENDICES	87
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APPENDIX A	Questionnaire # 1	87
APPENDIX B	1 st Letter to Research Participants	88
APPENDIX C	Questionnaire # 2	89
APPENDIX D	2 nd Letter to Research Participants	92
APPENDIX E	Questionnaire # 3	93
APPENDIX F	3 rd Letter to Research Participants	95

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 2.1	QWL Determinants for Developmental Disabilities	37
Table 3.1	The Delphi Criteria	48
Table 4.1	QWL Thematic Categories and their Frequency	62
Table 4.2	Additional QWL Thematic Categories and their Frequency	63
Table 4.3	Voting Results	65
Table 4.4	Importance Attached to Thematic Categories	66

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

QWL	Quality of Work Life
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade unions
cf.	compare

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Declaration

I, Tabakenna Mashilwane hereby declare that the contents of this thesis, unless otherwise stated, are my original work.

Signed:

(Tabakenna Mashilwane)

Signed by candidate

Abstract

South Africa is a country in transition from an oppressive past to a democratic dispensation. The democratic process began with the first democratic elections in 1994. Since then, a number of steps have been taken to democratize society and the workplace. In terms of workplace democratization, certain measures have been implemented to provide opportunities for those who were previously disadvantaged. Among these are people with disabilities. Foreseeing the consequences of these measures to the organization in terms of increasing the number of employees with disabilities, this research sought to develop quality of work life (QWL) determinants from the perspective of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities, which would then be compared primarily with Walton's (1973) quality of work life determinants. In order to develop these determinants, ten (10) participants participated in the study. Three (3) of these were females and seven (7) males. The average age of the participants was 32.9 years and they had spent an average of 4.06 years in their respective organisations. None of the participants owned an organisation. In terms of ethnic origin, all participants were Africans or so-called Coloureds. For data collection, the Delphi technique was used. For data analysis, content analysis was used. Using both these techniques, six (6) quality of work life determinants were developed. These were advancement opportunities, accommodation, integration, supportive work environment, recognition and job variety. When comparing the quality of work life determinants developed in this study and those developed by Walton (1973), the study concludes that with a few exceptions, there are no significant differences between the two groups of quality of work life determinants.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study aims to develop quality of work life (QWL) determinants from the perspectives of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. These will then be compared primarily with Walton's (1973) quality of work life determinants. This research is exploratory in nature and thus attempts to offer new insights and input into the existing body of knowledge with regard to congenital mobility disability and quality of work life. This chapter addresses the background to the research problem, the reasons for studying quality of work life (QWL), the nature of the study and will conclude with a summary of the chapter. The background to the problem is presented next.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

With the ushering in of a new democratic dispensation in South Africa in 1994, certain legislative actions have since been taken to democratise and eliminate all forms of discrimination in society and in the workplace. As for workplace democratisation, such deliberate actions included (but not limited to) the passing of the Employment Equity Act in 1998. The Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 is one of the measures aimed at ensuring equitable demographic representation in the workplace. The purpose of the Act is to:

- Promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination, and
- To implement affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, specifically African,

Coloured and Indian people, women and people with disabilities, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and at all levels in the workforce (Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, p12).

This Act defines 'unfair discrimination' as an employment policy or practice that directly or indirectly unfairly discriminates against an employee on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, social or ethnic origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth. The elimination of unfair discrimination in the workplace is aimed at ensuring that every employee in the organisation is treated with respect and that no employee will be subjected to an evaluation criteria that bears no relevance to the job. The implementation of affirmative action measures is aimed at ensuring that members from designated groups are equitably represented in organisations. Among other measures, affirmative action includes measures to identify and eliminate employment barriers that adversely affect people from designated groups, measures to further diversity in the workplace and measures to ensure equitable representation of suitably qualified people from designated groups in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace (Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998). In terms of the latter, the Act stipulates that designated employers need to implement measures that include preferential treatment and numerical goals, but exclude quotas.

Within the South African context, these measures essentially mean that organisations would have to increase the number of people from designated groups not only in the organisation per se, but also at all levels of the organisation, thereby furthering diversity in the workplace. The Act defines 'designated groups' as black people, women and people with disabilities. In turn, the term 'black people' is defined as Africans, Coloureds and Indians. People with disabilities are defined as 'people who have a long-term recurring physical or mental impairment that substantially limits their prospects of entry into, or

advancement in employment'. Bearing in mind that this research focuses on employees with disabilities, it is instructive to provide a definition of an 'employee with a disability'. According to the Act, an employee with a disability is defined as:

Any person, other than an independent contractor, who has a long-term recurring physical or mental impairment that substantially limits his or her prospects of entry into, or advancement in employment and who works for another person or who works for the state, and receives remuneration and in any manner assists in conducting the business of the employer.

Four years after the Act was promulgated, it is interesting to note that while the representation of members of the designated groups in organisations has increased, the number of employees with disabilities has shown no upward movement (Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report, 1999-2001). Of the 8,250 employers who submitted Employment Equity Reports as required by the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, 4,905 reported on 31,082 employees with disabilities. As a percentage of the total number of employees, employees with disabilities represent less than one percent (1%) of the employees reported on under the Act (Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report, 1999-2001). In terms of occupational level, employees with disabilities constitute 1% of top management, 1% of senior management, 1% of professionally qualified, experienced specialists and mid-management; and 1% of semi-skilled workers (Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report, 1999-2001). Furthermore, while the Annual Report makes mention of the number of African, Coloured and Indian employees recruited, promoted and whose services were terminated, it is silent on the number of employees with disabilities who were either recruited, promoted or whose services were terminated during the last three years. One of the possible reasons for this state of affairs is that either an insignificant number of employees with disabilities were recruited or promoted or they were not recruited or promoted.

Considering the objectives of the Act and the general drive towards democratisation and inclusivity, the Annual Report does not paint a positive picture of employers' contribution towards increasing the number of employees with disabilities in the workplace. Both the spirit and the letter of the Act expects employers to play a proactive role in enhancing workforce diversity (i.e. recruiting and retaining employees from designated groups) and creating an environment within the organisation that actually promotes workforce diversity at all levels in the organisation and affords all employees the opportunity to grow and advance in their respective careers.

It is important to note however that the implementation of employment equity measures could be hindered by a number of factors. The Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report (1999-2001) lists corporate culture, recruitment and selection processes, performance and evaluation systems, job classification and grading, succession and experience planning as barriers to employment equity. This research contends that in addition to the above factors, resistance to change is one other barrier that will hinder the implementation of these measures and manifests itself in various forms. Previous research conducted by Stone and Colella (1996) and Dovey and Graffam (1987) has found that because of certain employment practices, employees with disabilities tend to be treated differently from their able-bodied counterparts. Consequently, the quality of work life experiences of employees with disabilities tends to be different compared to their able-bodied counterparts (Goode, 1992). Such difference in quality of work life experiences is said to range from lack of opportunities for advancement to lack of challenging and meaningful work for employees with disabilities (Stone & Colella, 1996).

One of the reasons for enacting legislation such as the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998, is to stimulate change in areas such as employment practices, attitudes and culture of the organisation (Silver & Koopman, 2000). Whether the Act will achieve its objectives remains to be seen. It is however evident from the

Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report (1999-2001) that much work still needs to be done in the areas of employment practices and attitudes. Considering that at the moment, there 2,5 million people with disabilities in South Africa, 88% of whom are unemployed and seeking work (Silver & Koopman, 2000), more work still needs to be done in order to ensure that the number of employees with disabilities in the workplace and at all levels in the organization is increased. In order to assist organisations to be in a position to accommodate a diversifying workforce, this research aims to gain an understanding of the work life experiences of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. This will be achieved by developing quality of work life determinants from the perspective of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities.

The term 'congenital' refers to a condition with which a person may be born, or which has occurred immediately after birth. In this study, employees with congenital mobility disability are defined as "those whose physical differences compel them to achieve physical activities in a variety of alternate ways" (Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1999, p82). In a sense, this definition refers to the physical characteristics that a person may have and which impacts on his/her mobility. A person who is quadriplegic, for example, may achieve personal mobility by using a wheelchair, as opposed to someone who is using his or her own feet to achieve mobility. This definition has its foundation in the social model of disability (to be discussed in the next chapter), which assumes interplay between the person/s in question and the different social worlds with which they interact. In the light of the above definition it is appropriate to mention the types of congenital mobility disabilities that participants of this study were found to have. These included quadriplegia, cerebral palsy, tri-plegia, paraplegia and hemiplegia.

This study takes a cue from those researchers who propose that organisational members should participate in defining quality of work life in their own language and meaning (cf. Levine, Taylor & Davis, 1984). While the concept of quality of

work life has been a subject of many research endeavours, it could essentially be divided into two schools. First, quality of work life could be regarded as a strategy aimed at improving the performance of employees. Second, quality of work life could be regarded as an evaluation of the work environment as experienced by employees (Lawler & Ledford, 1989). This research is concerned with the latter and takes the view that 'work environment' encompasses the physical, social and organisational settings within an organisation. Against this background, the following section provides reasons for focusing on quality of work life.

1.3 REASONS FOR STUDYING QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

According to Nzimande (1983), there has not been enough research in South Africa on the experiences of the South African labour force. A comprehensive research focus therefore on the experiences and perceptions of the South African labour force in terms of their quality of work life would not only create an industrial psychology that is socially responsible (Nzimande, 1983), but would also assist in eradicating the problems that beset South African organisations (Reid, 1992). In this study, quality of work life is defined *operationally* and is illustrated by the following efforts:

- Restructuring the basic nature of the work that the individuals do, and the work systems that surround them, to make those working arrangements more consistent with individual needs and with the social structures in the work setting;
- Improving the work environment, with emphasis on the physical work and the tangible conditions that surround the individual. This includes (but is not limited to) changes in working hours, conditions, rules and procedures or the physical environment (Nadler & Lawler, 1983).

A closer look at the above definition reveals three basic features. First, the definition is practical and is aligned with the principle of evaluating the work environment as experienced by workers. It allows for the restructuring of a particular job so that the job could offer some fulfilment to the individuals and be more consistent with their needs and the social structures within the work setting (Kerce & Booth-Kewley, 1993). Second, the definition is useful in dealing with issues that affect employees, particularly employees with disabilities. Third, the definition encompasses initiatives such as reasonable accommodation to deal with barriers for employees with mobility disabilities in the workplace. The Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998 defines reasonable accommodation as 'any modification or adjustment to a job or to the working environment that will enable a person from a designated group to have access to, participate or advance in employment. Essentially, reasonable accommodation is meant to allow persons with disabilities to have the same access to opportunities as their able-bodied counterparts in the organisation.

Kerce and Booth-Kewley (1993) point out that QWL is assumed to affect job effort and performance, organisational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement and personal alienation. One of the major challenges facing South African organisations is meeting the needs of its workforce. While the gap between what employees want and what is available seems to be widening (Ngambi, 1999), organisations need to determine how to improve working conditions and jobs for a better and productive environment. The more that jobs and organisations are able to meet employee needs, the more the quality of work life of employees is improved, which in turn affect effort and performance, organisational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement and personal alienation. On the one hand, improved effort and performance is more likely to lead to increased productivity in the workplace (Ngambi, 1999). On the other hand, the satisfaction of needs through organisational membership is associated with self-assertiveness and self-expression, while the failure to have needs satisfied may lead to alienation (Efraty & Sirgy, 1990).

Considering the perceptions certain sections of society have of people with mobility disabilities in terms of being passive, submissive and unintelligent (see Stone & Colella, 1996), the satisfaction of their particular needs could prove to be profitable exercise for the organization. For employees with disabilities, the satisfaction of their needs could mean improved self-confidence and self-esteem (Dovey & Graffam, 1987). It is also important to note that the costs associated with employee alienation are high (Gray, *et al* cited in Ngambi, 1999). Therefore, attempts by organisations to improve the relationship between work and human needs through quality of work life efforts could alleviate those costs and improve employee job involvement. According to Siegel & Ruh (1973) and Rabinowitz & Hall (1977), employees who are highly involved in their jobs are less likely to quit their jobs or to be absent. Job involvement is said to be brought about by actions such as employee motivation and need satisfaction. With an increasingly diversifying workforce, South African organisations are faced with the challenge of ensuring that employees do not come to work merely to earn a living but come to a place where they could experience professional and psychological growth as well. This means that organisations need to adapt to the needs of its workforce in order to avoid effects such as increased absenteeism, increased labour turnover and alienation.

Adapting to employee needs also means changing unproductive organisational tendencies, attitudes, perceptions and stereotypical tendencies directed at people with disabilities. According to Stone and Colella (1996), one of the most prevalent organisational tendencies is to place employees with disabilities in jobs that do not offer much intellectual stimulation. Most of these jobs are repetitive, carry little or no responsibility and do not require much movement within the workstations. The opportunity to exercise discretion and to be involved in the planning and implementation of job activities is denied to employees with disabilities. The assumption is that individuals with disabilities have some kind of a dependency syndrome and are incompetent. However, one of the important

consequences of implementing quality of work life is that it provides for occupational self-direction. This means that changing the nature of work in order to afford employees the opportunity to be able to use discretion, initiative, thought and independent judgement in their work, leads to intellectual flexibility and self-concept (Kohn & Schooler, 1978).

With particular reference to employees with disabilities, this will not only dispel the stereotypes associated with disability, but will also afford employees with disabilities the opportunity to be involved in self-directed work. However, it is important to note that the concept of quality of work life is fairly new within the field of disabilities (Goode, 1992). Thus, any attempts to implement quality of work life specifically to address the work life experiences of employees with disabilities, will require both a theoretical and an empirical foundation. At the theoretical level, this research hopes to provide new insights into the quality of work life experience of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. At the empirical level, this research aims to provide researchers, scholars and organisations with determinants that could potentially improve the quality of work life of employees with disabilities in South Africa.

1.4 NATURE OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

A closer look at the available and applicable literature within the South African context revealed a dearth of basic information in the area of disability and quality of work life. For this reason, it became apparent that research of an exploratory nature would be an appropriate paradigm to follow. By its very nature, exploratory research is characterised by generating new ideas and the frequent use of qualitative data (Neuman, 1997). This means that while this research will be generating tentative quality of work life determinants of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities, it will at the same time be laying the foundation for future in-depth investigation of disability in the workplace and the quality of work life of employees with disabilities, particularly employees with congenital mobility

disabilities.

1.5 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the problem under investigation. The political transformation, particularly on the labour front, was addressed as the background against which the study is conducted. This chapter went on to provide reasons for studying quality of work life. The last section of the chapter focused on the nature of the research and the implications of such research. The following chapter focuses on the literature review, which aims to explore the factors that characterise the manner in which disability is understood and to focus on attempts to operationalise the concept of quality of work life.

disability and the various models that influence the definition of disability. The chapter will also explore the work that has been done by Walton (1973) and others in attempts to operationalise quality of work life. This will be followed by a critique of Walton's (1973) work in terms of its applicability to the South African context. The last part of the chapter will explore recent attempts to operationalise quality of work life within the disabilities field.

2.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING SOCIETY'S UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY

According to Oliver (1993 p.49), "the category of disability is not fixed and absolute, but can be, and has been defined in a variety of different ways throughout history, within particular societies and in any given social context". This means that definitions of disability are relative. The existence of a myriad of definitions of disability could thus be attributed to the context under which disability is understood and defined. In addition to contextual influences, there are certain models that have been used to define disability. Needless to say, these models introduce certain dimensions to the manner in which disability is defined and understood. The definitions and understanding ascribed to disability is further influenced by certain assumptions. According to Schlaff (1993), these assumptions help to keep persons with disabilities isolated and lead to segregation both on personal and societal levels.

2.2.1 Assumptions about Disability

According to Fine and Asch (1988), there is a tendency to assume that disability is located solely in biology and thus disability is accepted uncritically as a variable. Influenced by this assumption, disability is seen as the cause of the manner in which people behave towards and perceive people with disabilities. The negative attitudes and treatment directed at people with disabilities could not therefore be blamed on anyone else but on people with disabilities themselves.

In addition, disability is seen as predictive of outcomes in social interaction, rather than the social context predicting those outcomes (Fine & Asch, 1988 & Schlaff, 1993). By implication, this means that it is justifiable for able-bodied people to act in the manner they do (towards people with disabilities) for they are not responsible for those actions.

Almost similar to the above assumption, another assumption relates to the cause of the problem. That is to say, it is assumed that when a disabled person is experiencing a problem, the impairment is the cause of such problem(s). The 'unavailability' of employment opportunities is, for example, thus seen as the result of functional limitations on the part of the person, rather than overt and covert discriminatory practices and prejudicial organisational practices. The inability to view disability as a socially created problem has led to social and architectural tendencies that inhibit independent living on the part of people with disabilities. The result of this is that people with disabilities become dependent on assistance from others like friends and relatives and for this dependency, people with disabilities have themselves to blame. One of the consequences of being dependent is that either as a group or as an individual, people with disabilities become marginalised and isolated from the mainstream.

Furthermore, it is often assumed that people with disabilities are victims. This being the case, it then follows logically that disability will be seen as a personal tragedy (Fine & Asch, 1988; Schlaff, 1993 & Quinn, 1998). This perception will not only permeate everyday interaction, but will also influence the type of social policies that are aimed at alleviating the plight of the 'victims' (Oliver, 1990). Compounding the situation are certain fundraising techniques that are used by some charitable organisations, the prime objective of which is to generate income irrespective of the image presented (Schlaff, 1993). One such technique is to emphasise the 'victim view' in order to arouse guilt on the part of potential contributors. For some reason, these organisations believe that "contributors give money because they want to make the persons with disabilities like themselves –

not disabled anymore" (Schlaff, 1993, p94). This means that the funds donated are then directed at finding 'cures' for the person with disabilities, rather than assisting the person to live independently. Without the 'cure', the consequences are that the person will remain indebted to others, will not work and will continue to have a negative self-image and a poor self-esteem.

Moreover, while generating funds, these organisations are at the same time implanting the 'victim mentality' within people with disabilities. By so doing, a culture of entitlement is being encouraged and more importantly, opportunities for self-reliance are being severely curtailed (Fine & Asch, 1988). Unfortunately, this tendency feeds into another assumption, which equates disability with needing help and social support. Equating disability with needing help has led society to believe that persons with disabilities are helpless, dependent and passive. Consequently, persons with disabilities are not viewed as providers of help and support. Instead they are viewed as those at the receiving end of a helping transaction (Schlaff, 1993). Furthermore, it is often assumed that disability is central to the disabled person's self-concept, self-definition, social comparison and reference groups (Fine & Asch, 1988 & Schlaff, 1993). For some, disability is presumed to define the person having the disability. Taken a step further, this view suggests that the person thus first sees himself or herself as disabled, before they see themselves as individuals. In order to maintain high self-esteem, persons with disabilities are thought to compare themselves with persons below or similar to them – a process known as downward social comparison (Schlaff, 1993).

The above assumptions play a very important role in how disability is understood. The influences of these assumptions on the conceptualisation and definition of disability means that society's understanding of disability will be characterised by negative connotations and perhaps oppressive tendencies towards people with disabilities. Moreover, certain models of disability have these assumptions as their foundation (Fine & Asch, 1988 & Schlaff, 1993). As service provision and

policy formulation tends to be influenced by these models (Fine & Asch, 1988 & Schlaff, 1993), this means that the provision of services to people with disabilities may not be meeting the needs of the intended recipients. The following section looks at these models in more detail.

2.2.2 Models Influencing the Definitions of Disability

2.2.2.1 The Economic model of Disability

In terms of this model, disability is seen as a health-related limitation in the amount or kind of work that could be performed by persons with disabilities (Hahn cited in Schlaff, 1993). Thus, instead of emphasising the physical functioning, this model focuses on whether the person with a disability could be productive in the workplace in the light of his or her particular disability. In other words, this model views the ability to work as dependent on the person's functional capacities (Hahn cited in Schlaff, 1993). In this way, this model ignores the limitations imposed on the individual with a disability by the work environment. This model also ignores the process of reasonable accommodation. On the one hand, this model discourages persons with disabilities from seeking employment in the sense that once aware that employers equate disability with inability, they may not see the need to work, despite the fact that they are functionally capacitated to perform the work. On the other hand, this model discourages organizations to make the necessary investments in infrastructure in order to accommodate employees that need to attain physical activity in a variety of alternate ways.

2.2.2.2 The Medical model of Disability

The point of departure for this particular model is that disability is an 'illness'. According to Quinn (1998), the medical model is partly grounded in the 'illness model', which was proposed by Parson (cited in Quinn, 1998). In terms of this model, the sick person is not expected to perform certain social obligations. However, the person is somewhat entitled to some kind of special treatment

(Quinn, 1998). In this model, persons with disabilities are identified as ill, different from their able-bodied peers and in need of care. The emphasis of this model is on the medical needs of the person(s) with a disability. There are several implications inherent in this model. First, the emphasis on the medical needs neglects the social needs of people with disabilities. Second, this model implies that people with disabilities are a group of people who constantly need to be cared for as part of the 'deserving poor' (White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997).

The assumption underlying the medical model is that to deal with the problems associated with disability, some form of medical intervention at the individual level is required. It is interesting to note that South Africa has not been immune to the influences of the medical ideology in that disability is regarded as a health and welfare issue and as such, State intervention is channelled through welfare organisations (White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997). Due to the limitations of this model (i.e. neglecting of social needs), the social model of disability was mooted (see Fine & Asch, 1988; Oliver, 1990; Schlaff, 1993; White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997 & Quinn, 1998).

2.2.2.3 The Social Model of Disability

The social model is based on the belief that the circumstances of people with disabilities and the discrimination they face are socially created phenomena and have nothing to do with impairments of people with disabilities (White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997). This model is characterised by the following principles: First, it recognises and acknowledges that people with disabilities are equal citizens and should therefore enjoy equal rights and responsibilities. Second, this model recognises that the needs of every individual are of equal importance and that those needs should serve as a basis for planning. Third, the model suggests that people with disabilities should be given the necessary support to enable them to exercise their responsibilities. Fourth, it

suggests the removal of all kinds of barriers to equal participation and the elimination of discrimination based on disability.

Based on the above principles, 'disability' is defined as "the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairment and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities" (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation cited in Oliver, 1990, p11). Similarly, Finkelstein and French (1993) define disability as "the loss or limitation of opportunities that prevents people who have impairments from taking part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others, due to physical and social barriers". Influenced by the social model, these definitions focus on the physical and the social environments as central components in the conceptualisation of disability, rather than on the individual. Within the South African context, the social model implies that the reconstruction of South African society will be incomplete without the recognition of and the intention to address the developmental needs of people with disabilities within the framework of inclusive development (White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997). Related to the social model is the socio-political model, which is the focus of the next section.

2.2.2.4 The Socio-political model of Disability

In a number of ways, the socio-political model shares similar characteristics with the aforementioned social model. For both these models, the social context plays an important role in the conceptualisation of disability. However, the socio-political model posits that in addition to being social beings, persons with disabilities are also political beings. The point of departure for the socio-political model is therefore the inequality that exists between persons with disabilities and those without. The argument posited by this model is that the inequalities stem from the inability of the social environment to adapt to the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities. It is thus not surprising that institutions, including work organisations, tend to pay little or no attention to the infrastructural needs of

people or employees with disabilities. For such institutions, such changes are either not a priority or not their responsibility, but the responsibility of the persons who have a disability.

2.2.3 The Implications of the 'Fragmented Understanding' of Disability

The above discussion has highlighted a variety of influences on the manner in which disability is understood and defined. As a result of these influences, the possibility exists that first; people with disabilities will continue experiencing some form of differential treatment from society. Second, people with disabilities will continue to bear the consequences of unfavourable expectations. Third, the provision of services to people with disabilities will remain an uncoordinated activity with the result that the distribution of resources will remain skewed even among people with disabilities. Fourth, the environments within which people with disabilities live and work will continue to be different to those of their able-bodied counterparts. Fifth, people with disabilities will continue to be objects of interventions and at the receiving end of the 'helping transaction', unless deliberate actions are taken to arrive at a common understanding of disability and the needs of people with disabilities.

The above section has explored the factors that influence society's understanding of disability and the implications of such an understanding. The following section focuses on the attempts undertaken to operationalise the concept of Quality of Work Life, both within and outside of the disabilities field.

2.3 OPERATIONALISATION OF THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

More than four decades have past since the phrase 'quality of work life' was introduced. To this day, quality of work life continues to be the subject of academic papers and experiments in different settings (Nadler & Lawler, 1983). Throughout its existence, the concept of Quality of Work Life has acquired

different meanings. It has also evolved quite significantly during its existence. At some point in its evolution, QWL was regarded as a variable. In this case it was seen as employees' reaction to work. The focus was on individual outcomes such as job satisfaction or mental health. Influenced by the rapidly changing labour force and changing attitudes to work, there was concern about the impact work was having on the individual. During this period, suggestions were made that organisations be evaluated on the quality of work life they provide to their employees (Nadler & Lawler, 1983).

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, issues of industrial democracy became a concern for both labour and management. Consequently, certain projects were initiated with the primary aim of inducing a collaborative working relationship between labour and management. Quality of work life was thus regarded as an approach. During this period, management in different organisations started adopting approaches such as the participative management style. Quality of work life then became synonymous with joint labour/management co-operative projects. Again, the focus was on individual outcomes, more than on organisational outcomes (Nadler & Lawler, 1983). During the same period, the *Topeka Project* in the *Topeka General Foods* plant and certain projects within *Procter and Gamble* gained prominence in the media. These projects were aimed at changing the workplace and its impact on the individual and thus led to quality of work life being seen as a set of methods. In this instance, quality of work life was seen as referring to methods such as autonomous work groups, job enrichment and the design of new plants as integrated social and technical systems (Nadler & Lawler, 1983).

According to Nadler and Lawler (1983), there was a sharp decrease in interest in QWL during the late 1970's. In order to avoid the disappearance of QWL and to keep up the momentum, interested parties collaborated to form coalitions with the express intention of continuing QWL activities. It is during this period that QWL became known as a movement. Terms like participative management and

industrial democracy became ideals of the QWL movement. There was thus renewed interest in QWL, despite the divisions that existed between those who preferred to use the QWL label and those who used other labels to describe their efforts in enhancing organisational health and effectiveness. With this renewed interest, QWL acquired yet another face. In this case quality of work life amounted to everything. In other words, anything that had to do with organisational development or organisational effectiveness was labelled as QWL. According Nadler and Lawler (1983, p24), quality of work life became a 'panacea for coping with foreign competition, grievance problems, quality problems, low productivity rates, and just about everything else'. Without doubt, if quality of work life is seen as referring to everything, it could as well be seen as amounting to nothing.

It is interesting to note that during this process of evolution, few attempts were undertaken to operationalise the concept. There were also few attempts to understand the meaning of this concept from the perspective of employees (Nadler & Lawler, 1983). In those attempts where employees' perspective was sought, it was sought only from blue-collar workers and not from white-collar employees, largely because QWL has been described as "something the top tells the middle to do to the bottom in the organisations" (Nadler & Lawler, 1983, p25). According to these authors, Walton (1973) is one of the first to have operationalised the concept of quality of work life. A look at the available literature on quality of work life reveals that Walton's (1973) contribution to the operationalisation of quality of work life remains one of the most comprehensive and a source of reference for many researchers. As the discussion below will show, it would appear that most endeavours aimed at operationalising this concept either draw from the work of Walton (1973) or do not deviate significantly from it. For this reason, the discussion will demonstrate that recent attempts to operationalise the concept of quality of work life are heavily influenced by the initial work of Walton (1973) and that this study draws mostly from the work done

by Walton (1973). In operationalising the concept of quality of work life, Walton (1973) identified the following determinants:

2.3.1 Adequate and Fair Compensation

The issue of compensation can be understood from two angles - one from the perspective of the organisation and the other from the perspective of the individual. According to Henderson (1979, p2)

"An organisation is formed to accomplish a specific mission. To accomplish its mission, it must attract and hire people who have certain knowledge, skills, aptitudes and attitudes. To attract and retain such people, the organisation provides rewards. The organisation designs and implements a reward system to focus worker attention on the specific behaviours the organisation considers necessary to achieve its desired objectives and goals"

From the above quote, one is able to deduce that essentially rewards are used to direct the behaviours of organisational members toward the achievement of set goals and objectives and that these behaviours are pre-determined by the organisation. More often, these behaviours include timeous arrival for work, meeting set performance standards and contributing to efforts directed at increasing the productivity of the organisation. From the perspective of the individual, compensation serves as the impetus for employment. In exchange for the services rendered, the employee then receives some kind of a reward. The manner in which the individual dispenses the rewards determines the extent to which the individual's quality of life will improve (Walton, 1973). Of critical importance for this discussion is that compensation serves as a motivational factor (Nadler & Lawler, 1983; Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 1994).

The extent to which employees are motivated by and satisfied with the pay they receive will affect the manner in which they execute their tasks. In other words, if

compensation is to serve a useful purpose it must meet the demands of the employees it intends to influence. However, meeting the demands present problems for organisations in the sense that while the organisation may regard the pay as adequate, employees may not see it as such. It is for this reason that Orpen (1981) and Walton (1973) regard the adequacy of compensation as a relative concept that cannot be properly defined without engaging in the individual's actual work situation and his/her past history regarding compensation. The consequences of this perceived discrepancy have serious implications for both the organisation and the employee(s).

If compensation is perceived to be adequate, employees are more likely to be satisfied, not only with the pay received, but also with the work they are doing and vice versa (Orpen, 1981). In his attempt to operationalise the concept of quality of work life, Stein (1983) also identified pay as a determinant of quality of work life. It is important to note, however, that in this case pay (compensation) was identified as part of external rewards, which included promotion, position, rank and status and other visible benefits. In a study conducted by Reid (1992) to evaluate Walton's (1973) quality of work life determinants, it was found that compensation did indeed play a critical role in determining quality of work life, although such compensation was not perceived to be fair and adequate by the employees surveyed. In this case, employees expressed unsatisfactory levels of quality of work life. This means that, over and above other workplace factors; compensation plays a critical role in affecting employee quality of work life. In addition, remuneration has been identified as a critical element in attempts to maintain a balance between employee performance and quality of work life (Management Today, 2001). In other words, remuneration is one of the elements that organisations need to consider if they want to improve employee performance. Intrinsically linked to this would be a simultaneous improvement in quality of work life.

2.3.2 Safe and Healthy Working Conditions

People spend more than half of their working lives in some kind of an organisation. In contemporary society, it is widely expected that working conditions in these organisations should not present threats to the physical, social and psychological well-being of its members (Walton, 1973). Because of legislation, changing societal norms, values and particularly trade union pressure, many organisations have had to adhere to set standards of health and safety in organisations. These standards relate to issues of work hours, safety regulations, noise, illumination, workspace and the prevention of accidents (Walton, 1973). According to Orpen (1981), there has been a shift in emphasis on the prevention of physical injury and illness to promoting comfort and ease in the work situation. In a sense, the shift in emphasis is in line with the notion that health should not only refer to the absence of illness but also to a state of positive physical, psychological and social well-being.

Like Walton (1973), Stein (1983) also identified decent working conditions as a determinant of quality of work life, subject to the particular setting, task or technology. While ensuring that safe and healthy working conditions could be implemented quickly, it is important that a long-term view is taken in order to build and maintain quality of work life (Stein, 1983). Deviating significantly from Walton's view on safe and healthy working conditions, is a view which postulates that it is not only the organisation's responsibility to ensure safe working conditions, but that of individual employees as well. According to this view, individual employees need to adopt safe behaviours in order to improve the quality of their working life (Harrison, 2000; Management Today, 2001). This view represents a departure from traditional thinking that organisations are solely responsible for the safety of their employees. It places a responsibility on employees to take an active role in improving the quality of working life, at least in terms of their working conditions. In a unionised environment, this means that unions should also be concerned with the contribution of employees to safe and

healthy working conditions, rather than focusing only on what management is doing or not doing in terms of safety in the workplace.

2.3.3 Immediate Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacities

Walton (1973) proposes that because work has tended to be fractionated, deskilled and tightly controlled jobs have thus tended to differ in how they enable employees to use and develop their skills and knowledge. Despite this, the author goes on to propose that jobs, whatever their nature, should have certain fundamental qualities, which will in turn provide employees with the opportunity to fully exploit their capacities. These qualities include:

- *Autonomy*: In terms of this quality, work should be such that it allows employees to exercise some kind of discretion. Employees should be in a position to decide what is to be done and how it is to be done (see also Orpen, 1981; MacEachron, Zober & Fein, 1985). Autonomy or control is one of the qualities also identified by Stein (1983) as inseparable from high quality of work life. The capacity to influence one's own environment and some reasonable freedom of action on the job contribute significantly to employees' intellectual flexibility. Coster (1992) refers to this quality as 'authority to do things'. While it is expected that employees will perform their work with certain parameters and procedures, the ability to influence the direction of events pertaining to one's job could have positive, affective and emotional responses to the job in question (Coster, 1992).

In evaluating Walton's (1973) quality of work life determinants, Reid (1992) found that seventy percent of the workers surveyed felt that they did not have control over their work or the autonomy to challenge managerial prerogative. While these employees were found to be content with work, they felt alienated due to lack of control (Reid, 1992). This finding, together with the work done by Stein (1983) and Coster (1992), confirms Walton's (1973) finding that the development of human capacities is closely associated with certain job

qualities and opportunities, which in turn contribute to high quality of work life.

- *Information and perspective (feedback)*: In order for employees to be aware of the impact they are making (or not making) on the organisation, they need to have access to accurate information regarding their performance. Feedback is crucial if employees are to contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives. More importantly, feedback should be delivered as speedily as possible if it is to have any significance (see also Orpen, 1981; MacEachron, Zober & Fein, 1985). Feedback allows for constant comparison between actual performance and the objectives set out in the strategy of the organisation. Through feedback, deviations are then corrected in line with set objectives. According to Coster (1992), this quality – referred to as performance feedback – is crucial if performance is to be improved. Improved performance in turn contributes to improved quality of work life. However, it is important that such feedback happens within a context where communication is one of the behaviours expected of employees (Management Today, 2001).
- *Planning*: Employees in a job should have the opportunity to plan and implement the activities that go with the job. Planning involves devising a method according to which a particular goal is to be achieved and, more often, planning is done with the goal in mind. Related to this quality is Coster's (1992) 'freedom to work own way' and 'authority to do things'. When employees are able to determine the manner and pace at which a particular job is to be performed and have the ability to make decisions pertaining to that job, it becomes easy to take ownership of that task and this contributes significantly to quality of work life (Coster, 1992).

According to MacEachron *et al* (1985), the above qualities are core facets of job design. Job design is defined as a process of defining the way work will be performed and the tasks that will be required in a given job (Noe *et al*, 1994). This process has three characteristics. The first of these is *job range*, which is

the number of tasks a person will have to do while doing the job. In effect, *job range* determines the extent to which a person will be able to exercise a variety of skills while performing the job at hand. The second of these is *job depth*, which is the degree of influence or discretion an individual has in terms of deciding how the job is to be done. Not only does this characteristic determine the autonomy a person has in the job, but also the extent of involvement with the job. The third relates to *job relationships*, which involves the interpersonal relationships made possible on the job (Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1991). Since organisations are also social entities, it is important that there is contact with fellow members of the organisations. This contact is important for employees in terms of sharing their experiences and frustrations in the organisation. If 'bottled up' these frustrations could affect the achievement of organisational goals. The above qualities and the accompanying characteristics affect the ego involvement, self-esteem and challenge obtained from the work itself (Walton, 1973; Reid, 1992).

2.3.4 Future Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security

In the case of future opportunity for continued growth and security, there is a shift from the job to career advancement opportunities (Walton, 1973). If the job itself is designed in such a way that opportunities exist for applying a variety of skills in its execution, it allows for autonomy, planning and implementation, then possibilities for advancement are increased. In addition, attempts should be made to offer employees responsible and challenging jobs. One way of achieving this is to make available promotion opportunities for employees. It should, however, be borne in mind that in many organisations promotion is not something that occurs on a regular basis. It is for this reason that the job should be structured in such a way that it allows employees to perform as expected by the organisation. In turn, such performance, other than training only, should afford the jobholder the opportunity to be promoted.

According to Walton (1973), opportunities for continued growth and security would be increased if attention is paid to development and advancement opportunities as aspects of working life. Development refers to the extent to which one's current activities (work assignment and educational pursuits) contribute to maintaining and expanding one's capabilities, rather than leading to obsolescence. Stein (1983) refers to this quality as 'progress and development' while Coster (1992) refers to it as 'learning opportunities'. Both authors are of the opinion that providing challenging jobs to employees and creating a space for them to learn contributes to growth. Advancement opportunities refer to the availability of opportunities to advance in organisational or career terms recognised by peers, family members or associates. Coster (1992) refers to this quality as 'promotion opportunities'. Both Walton (1973) and Coster (1992) believe that the presence of these qualities contribute to continued growth which in turn impact positively on quality of work life.

As can be seen from the above, the opportunity for career advancement is partly a result of work assignments and partly a result of formal and/or informal educational pursuits. Ideally, the tasks and duties accompanying any work assignment should contribute to jobholders' interests and capabilities. If employees continue to be given repetitive and unchallenging work, chances of advancing in one's career are virtually non-existent.

2.3.5 Social Integration in the Workplace

Organisations are social entities in which, apart from the human-machine interaction, there is also interaction among humans. According to Walton (1973), the nature of the human-human interactions constitutes one of the important determinants of quality of work life. The interactions in the organisation can be divided into four parts. The first part has to do with the employee interacting with co-workers and peers. The second part constitutes the employee interfacing with management. The third part includes the interaction between the employee and their immediate supervisor/s and the fourth part of interaction can and does take

place between the employee and the organisation itself.

Within all these forms of interaction, each individual brings with him or her certain expectations and affective responses. In turn, these affect the relationships formed and the climate in the organisation. The challenge thus lies in how these relationships are managed by the individuals themselves and by the organisation. Walton has identified the following attributes that are important for social integration in the organisation.

- *Freedom from prejudice:* In terms of this attribute, workers should feel accepted in the workplace. Their work-related traits, skills, abilities and potential should not be judged in terms of their race, religion, national origin, creed, life styles or physical appearance. Stein (1983) refers to this attribute as 'dignity' and contends that everyone in the organisation deserves to be treated with respect under all circumstances and irrespective of their standing within the organisation.
- *Egalitarianism:* This attribute relates to the absence of stratification in work organisation in terms of status symbols and/or steep hierarchical structures.
- *Mobility:* This attribute relates to the availability of opportunities for upward mobility within the organisation.
- *Supportive primary groups:* This attribute relates to membership in work groups, which are characterised by reciprocal help, socio-emotional support and affirmation of the uniqueness of each individual.
- *Community:* This relates to the sense of belonging that goes beyond the parameters of work groups in the organisation. Stein (1983) refers to this attribute as 'belonging' which means being part of a social unit and having shared goals and values.

- *Interpersonal openness:* This relates to the manner in which members of the organisation, whether in work groups or as individuals, relate their ideas and feelings to one another.

2.3.6 Constitutionalism in the Workplace

The power differential between senior management and employees brings with it imbalances in the relationships between the two groups. Consequently, management, by virtue of its standing, is empowered to make decisions on behalf of employees. To protect employees from arbitrary and unfair decisions, organisations largely at the instigation of trade unions, have developed a set of constitutional requirements with which employers will have to comply. These requirements essentially confer certain individual rights to members of the organisation.

According to Walton (1973), employees have a right to privacy. In terms of this right, employees are entitled to have what they regard as private to remain private and that such privacy will not be interfered with without their informed consent. Employees are also entitled to equitable treatment in areas such as compensation, status, security and advancement opportunities. This means that the expectations employees have of fair treatment should not be jeopardised by factors that bear no relevance to the job itself or performance on the job. It is also suggested that employees should have the right to disagree with whoever holds a different job-related view from theirs, without fear of reprisal or victimisation. In the case of a dispute or any matter that will require the intervention of a third party, employees are within their rights to expect to be treated in terms of the 'rule of law', rather than by capricious actions of particular individuals (Walton, 1973 & Orpen, 1981). Without doubt, constitutionalism in the workplace is meant to ensure that discrimination among other injustices is eliminated in the workplace.

2.3.7 Work and the Total Life Space

Most individuals spend more time in their work than in other spheres of their lives. The experiences at work could therefore have a serious negative or positive impact on the non-work lives of individuals. According to Walton (1973), the key is to find a balance between the demands of work and the total life space of the individual. Balance is defined by "work schedules, career demands and travel requirements that do not take up family and leisure time on a regular basis" (Walton, 1973, p16). Balance also refers to advancement and promotion that does not require constant geographical relocation. It is interesting to note that Walton cautions about the applicability of balance as some people may intentionally spend more time at work at the expense of family life. At the same time, the organisation may demand much from the individual, to an extent that other life roles are compromised. Regardless of whether the balance is struck or not, work has a 'spill-over effect' to the life outside of work. The psychological and social costs of particularly negative work experiences are immeasurable. For any individual, work can be a major source of self-esteem, self-confidence and individual dignity (Dovey & Graffam, 1987). For this reason, a balance needs to be struck between work life and non-work life.

2.3.8 The Social Relevance of Work Life

Organisations do not operate in a vacuum. In fact, organisations are part of the communities in which they are located. For this reason they carry the responsibility of being involved in the life of the community inside and outside of the organisation. Internally, organisations have a responsibility to make sure that employees are able to recognise the benefits of working for that particular organisation. The provision of recreational facilities, medical aid schemes, housing subsidies, pension funds and gain/profit sharing schemes for employees represents the myriad of initiatives an organisation could take to make its employees feel valued.

Externally, organisations need to make sure that they support community-driven

projects by way of sponsorships, advertising etc. More importantly though is that employees of the employing organisation should be able to perceive the organisation as socially responsible in its products, waste disposal, marketing techniques, employment practices and relations to underdeveloped countries (Walton, 1973). Organisations perceived to be socially responsible would most likely enjoy the support of both organisational members and the surrounding communities.

2.4 THE RELEVANCE OF WALTON'S (1973) WORK TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

South Africa's past has been characterised by political, economic and social injustices both in society and in the workplace. Black people and people with disabilities (as defined in the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998) were subjected to unfair labour practices compared to their white counterparts and were also denied rights both within the workplace and in the broader South African society. As employees, there was a lack of concern for the quality of their lives (Reid, 1992). The advent of trade unionism in South Africa in the early 1920's was thus necessitated by the need to have political and industrial democracy (Du Toit, 1976). From inception, black trade unions in particular were concerned about the political, organizational, economic and social well-being of employees in the workplace despite the fact that they were not recognized until 1979. To this day, the general well being of employees continues to be the major concern of South African trade unions individually and collectively through a federation such as COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions). COSATU is the largest federation in South Africa with 16 affiliates (S.P.A. Research Team, 1996). Notwithstanding past labour practices, it is important to mention that to a large extent, management is also concerned about the well-being of employees largely due to trade union pressure (Reid, 1992).

More specifically, both management and trade unions are concerned with the rewards that are due to employees in recognition of their services to the organization (*cf* adequate and fair compensation proposed by Walton (1973)). Whether these rewards are perceived by employees to be adequate and fair is secondary. Of primary importance is that these rewards have a significant bearing on employee quality of work life. COSATU lists competitive wages, above inflation wage increases and improved social benefits for South African employees as challenges that need to be addressed by labour, capital and government (S.P.A. Research Team, 1996). Undoubtedly, these are challenges that also have an impact on employee quality of work life.

Similarly, working under safe and healthy working conditions continues to be a concern for both labour and capital (*cf* safe and healthy working conditions proposed by Walton (1973)). For South African trade unions, health, safety and the basic conditions of employment remain important bargaining issues (S.P.A. Research Team, 1996). In terms of legislation, the concern with employee health and safety is encapsulated in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993 which seeks:

"To provide for the health and safety of persons at work and for the health and safety of persons in connection with the use of plant and machinery; the protection of persons other than persons at work against hazards to health and safety arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work..."

Like Walton (1973), both the trade unions and the above Act concerns themselves with health and safety standards that need to be maintained by organizations in order to improve employee quality of work life. As indicated earlier on, these standards relate to issues such as work hours, safety regulations, noise, illumination and the prevention of accidents (Walton, 1973; Orpen, 1981; Stein, 1983). While it is not the sole responsibility of management to ensure safety in the organization, the benefits accruing from a safe working

environment are more likely to be enjoyed by both the organization and its employees. For the organization, a decrease in accidents means a decrease in compensation for injuries sustained at work. For the employee, a safe working environment means an improved quality of work life.

Another concern of both trade unions and management is the continued growth of employees within the organization. In this regard, Walton (1973) supported by Coster (1992), mentions qualities such as autonomy, planning and implementation as critical in terms of employee growth which in turn leads to improved quality of work life. At the moment there is a huge number of grades in each industry in South Africa (S.P.A. Research Team, 1996). These grades are regarded as responsible for preventing employees from exercising authority regarding their jobs. To this end, there are attempts to reduce the number of grades to a more manageable number. According to the S.P.A. Research Team (1996), the resulting benefits include identifying potential and developing career paths for employees and rewarding employees for new skills, knowledge and behaviour (*cf* immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities and future opportunity for continued growth and security proposed by Walton (1973)).

The issues of social integration in the workplace and constitutionalism in the work place proposed by Walton (1973) revolve around relationships in the workplace. Such relationships could occur at different levels between workers themselves, between workers and management or between workers and the organization. According to Walton (1973), these relationships should ideally be characterised by freedom from prejudice, egalitarianism supportive primary groups, community and respect for the rule of law. The implementation of workplace forums in South Africa is aimed precisely at facilitating non-confrontational and co-operative relationships between workers and management. The intention is to increase the participation of employees in decision-making and decision-making structures. It is through forums like these that employees would be able to contribute in terms of fair labour practices (*i.e.*

constitutionalism in the workplace) and the democratisation of the workplace (i.e. elimination of stratification in the workplace).

Organizations operate within certain communities. For this reason, they have a responsibility to uplift the communities around which they operate. According to Walton (1973), organizations need to contribute to community-driven projects in order to improve the living conditions of the community. Such contributions could take the form of sponsorships. Many South African organizations are already involved in such community-driven projects, ranging from the construction of clinics and schools to providing sporting facilities in under-privileged areas. In the eyes of employees, initiatives like these indicate an organization's social responsibility and commitment to community development (cf social relevance of work life proposed by Walton (1973). Lastly, the concern with the spill-over effect that work has on life outside work (i.e. work and total life space proposed by Walton (1973)) is dealt with within the framework of basic conditions of employment. In this regard, South African trade unions through COSATU believe that workers should be involved in matters dealing with provident funds, leave and housing (S.P.A. Research Team, 1996). It is believed that these matters have a significant impact on employees' life outside work.

The above discussion has demonstrated the relevance of Walton's (1973) work to the South African context. Considering that South Africa is a developing economy, the issues raised by Walton (1973) and confirmed by the findings of the S.P.A. Research Team (1996) are indicative of the path that South African organizations will have to follow in order to truly recognize the importance of positive work life experiences for both the organization and its employees. The following section focuses on the attempts to operationalise the concept of quality of work life within the disabilities field.

2.5 OPERATIONALISATION OF THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

According to Goode (1992), the study of quality of work life is new within the disabilities field. However, experiments have been conducted using progressive management techniques that recognise that the quality of work life of employees directly affects their quality life as well as the recognition of the need for proactive, participatory management in the disabilities field (Karan & Berger-Knight, 1986; Powers & Goode, 1986; Tjosvold & Tjosvold, 1983; MacEachron & Fein, 1985 cited in Goode, 1992). It is a generally accepted assertion that work constitutes a major part of a person's life. The manner in which individuals respond to their jobs is thought to have important consequences for their personal happiness, the productivity of their organisations and even the stability of society (Sheppard, 1975 cited in Goode, 1992). Furthermore, work has been described as a key source of self-respect, self-esteem, social status and *the* most central life activity (Fineman, 1987). As more employees with disabilities join the workforce, the need for organisations to be proactive and accommodative becomes paramount.

One of the most important formulations of the significance of quality of work life in the disabilities field is found in the Quality Principle:

'This principle postulates that the quality of life of a person with disabilities will vary directly and significantly with the quality of life of those 'significant others' surrounding him or her' (Powers & Goode, 1986 cited in Goode, 1992, p 340).

In line with the definition of QWL proposed by Nadler and Lawler (1983), this principle conceptualises quality of work life in terms of the social system approach. This approach emphasises the positive relationships between the elements (persons). According to Goode (1992), the relationship between these

elements constitutes a Quality-Set and may be expressed axiomatically through statements such as 'The QWL of a person with disabilities will vary directly and significantly with the QWL of his or her co-workers'.

The significance of this principle lies in the fact that the possible increase in the number of employees with disabilities, particularly employees with congenital mobility disabilities, will necessitate an approach that recognises the particular needs that such employees bring to the workplace. For both management and employee representatives in non-governmental organisations, in public or private sector organisations and within the context of disability, this principle has certain important implications.

First, and as mentioned above, organisations need to begin to adopt management styles that recognise the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse workforce. In so doing, organisations would not only be contributing in correcting past injustices, but would also be assisting in utilising all the country's human resources for the betterment of the living conditions of South Africa's citizenry. Second, organisations would have to deliberately remove all the structural and non-structural barriers that inhibit successful integration of employees with disabilities within organisations. While it is important for organisations to adopt management styles that recognise individual employee talent irrespective of colour, race, gender or physical characteristics, the challenge is for organisations to educate the workforce in the need to appreciate diversity. Taking employees to diversity training programs, making use of assistive technologies or being more open and realistic about reasonable accommodation, could assist in the speedy integration of employees from diverse backgrounds, particularly employees with disabilities. To embrace change, actions such as these would require a total commitment from both labour and management.

In order to ensure such commitment, it is important that the concept of QWL is conceptualised and operationalised. In this regard, available literature points to

attempts within the developmental disabilities to conceptualise and operationalise QWL (Goode, 1992). The table below displays some of the determinants (or indicators) of QWL that have been developed in the developmental disabilities field.

Table 2.1

QWL Determinants for Developmental Disabilities	
1.	Decreased training and supervision.
2.	Increased company of other persons with developmental disabilities.
3.	Integrated work, lunch and break areas.
4.	Marketable skills learned.
5.	Same work schedules as other employees.
6.	Absence of negative stereotypes.
7.	Variety of jobs.
8.	Accessibility to promotions.
9.	Increased decision-making re: job.
10.	Increased productivity.
11.	Job satisfaction.
12.	Pride in the workplace and job.
13.	Satisfaction with relationships at work.
14.	Career satisfaction.
15.	Satisfaction with participating in a 'team' process on the job.

Whether the above determinants are adequate or not, the point being made is that some work is being done to contribute to the conceptualisation of QWL for disabilities and this is perhaps the first step in positively contributing to the working lives of employees with disabilities. Similar attempts covering the different types of disabilities are needed. The intention should ultimately be to produce QWL determinants that are applicable to all the different types of disabilities. A common understanding of the concept of QWL could arguably result in an integrated approach in terms of continuously improving the working conditions of all workers. In turn, such improvements would have positive consequences for both the organisation and its employees (Nadler & Lawler, 1983; & Kerce & Booth-Kewley, 1993).

2.6 SUMMARY

The above discussion sought to achieve two objectives. First, it sought to explore the factors that influence society's understanding of disability. In this case, the discussion revealed that the understanding ascribed to disability tends to be influenced by certain assumptions, most of which seem to bear negative connotations of disability. The role of these assumptions on the models used to define disability was also explored. Since some of these models are used as a basis for service delivery or policy formulation, it was argued that the delivery of these services might not be meeting the needs of the intended recipients.

Second, this discussion sought to explore the attempts undertaken to conceptualise the concept of quality of work life both within and outside the disabilities field. In this case, the argument posited was that the work done by Walton (1973) remains one of the most comprehensive attempts and one that is constantly referred to in quality of work life literature. Furthermore, it was argued that the work done by Walton (1973) still remains relevant within the South African context. It is for this reason that this present study will draw from Walton's work while acknowledging other attempts as well. The discussion also showed that within the disabilities field, the study of quality of work life is still new and more work still needs to be done although some groundwork has been done particularly within the developmental disabilities field.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter focused on the factors that have been found to influence the manner in which disability is understood. In this regard, certain assumptions and models forming the basis for the understanding of disability were explored. In this chapter, the purpose is to provide details of the methodologies that were used to conduct the present research. More specifically, the chapter will focus on the participants of this study and the sampling procedures that were employed to identify the participants. It will also focus on the data collection method used to collect data. In terms of the data collection method, the chapter will specifically focus on the characteristics of the Delphi technique and the appropriateness of using this technique in this study. This will be followed by focusing on the Delphi procedures used to collect the data. Content analysis as a method used to analyse the data collected will also be explored. The last part of the chapter will critique the use of the Delphi technique in conjunction with content analysis.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study were all skilled employees who are living with different types of congenital mobility disabilities. The mobility disabilities experienced by the participants are all congenital (i.e. the disability occurred at birth or early in life). In all, there were ten participants, three (3) females and seven (7) males. The average age of the participants was 32.9 years and they had spent an average of 4.06 years in their respective organisations. The participants' occupations include one (1) director, two (2) human resources coordinators, two (2) human resources officers, one (1) estate controller, one (1) radio assembler, one (1) psychologist, two (2) administrative officers. None of the

participants owned an organisation. In terms of ethnic origin, all participants in the study were Africans or so-called Coloureds. As will be explained below, all participants in this study are considered experts. For the purposes of this study, the term 'expert' is used to refer to a person with a mobility disability who has a high degree of knowledge in matters concerning mobility disability and who is proficient in whatever they are involved whether in arts, crafts, trade or profession. This study argues that because of the daily experience of living with a mobility disability and having spent a considerable amount employed in the open labour market, participants have gained a considerable amount of knowledge in terms of what it means to be working in the open labour market and being disabled. This study also argues that as all participants have a post-matric qualification and have spent at least an average of four years in their respective organisations, this qualifies them to be regarded as proficient in their respective careers.

As indicated above, the study focuses on skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. For this reason, it is necessary to define each of the following terms: *skill* and *skilled employee*. In this study the term *skill* is defined as a 'proficiency in any practice whatever, whether in arts or crafts, trade or profession (Lasswell Value Dictionary Categories cited in Weber, 1990). Therefore, the concept *skilled employee* refers to any person who is proficient and demonstrates mastery of the tools or skills used for that purpose. Defined in this way, the concept excludes the concern with professional or vocational categories (i.e. whether someone is a psychologist or a radio assembler) and puts more emphasis on the application of a particular skill or the use of a particular tool to accomplish a task.

3.2.1 Sampling Procedures

Gaining access to employees with disabilities employed in the open labour market is difficult compared to employees with disabilities in sheltered or protected employment. This is because they are few and dispersed. For this

Based on these criteria, ten (10) participants were identified for the study. All ten (10) participants were subsequently contacted telephonically by the researcher about their required participation in the study. This was followed by individual briefing sessions in which each participant was briefed about the research and afforded the opportunity to ask any questions about the research project. It is important to indicate that none of the participants were either given, or promised monetary incentives for participating in the study. However, it appears that the fact that the participants were informed of the importance of this kind of research and that they possessed special expert knowledge about their workplace experiences and mobility disability, was a motivating factor for agreeing to participate in this research.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The Delphi technique will be used as a data collection method for this study. The Delphi technique is a data-collection instrument that has, over the years, been used for various purposes. It has also been adapted and modified to suit the particular circumstances under which a particular study is conducted. In this study, the Delphi technique will be used to collect data out of which quality of work life determinants, as seen and understood by skilled employees with congenital mobility disability, will be developed. In other words, the intention in this study is not to predict or forecast the occurrence of a particular future event, as is normally the case when the Delphi technique is employed. Rather, the intention is to solicit a group response/opinion of skilled employees with congenital mobility disability about quality of work life determinants.

As a scientific method of inquiry, the Delphi technique has its foundation in the Lockean theory of the convergence of group consensus. Basic to this theory is the lack of formal analytical truths and a complete reliance on empirical data to determine the validity of the system (Corotis, Fox & Harris, 1981). The truth is

thus experiential in the sense that the truth content of a system or communication is associated entirely with its empirical content. In this way, the truth of the model therefore does not rest on any theoretical considerations but on the 'raw data' itself. Such data could be amassed through direct observations and sensations (Mitroff & Turoff, 1975). According to Lockean inquiring systems, the truth of the empirical model is measured in terms of our ability to:

- (i) Reduce every complex proposition down to its simple empirical referents (i.e. simple observations) and to
- (ii) Ensure the validity of each of the simple observations (referents) by means of a widespread, freely obtained *agreement* between different human observers (Mitroff & Turoff, 1975, p 21).

In the final analysis, the Lockean approach epitomises systems of inquiry that are experimental and based on consensus. This means that for any problem or phenomenon being studied, its empirical and inductive representation should be built first. The point of departure thus becomes the set of empirical judgements obtained through the raw data, observations and sensations. On the basis of these judgements, a network of factual propositions is then built. To all intents and purposes, the Delphi technique falls within the inductive research paradigm. Reber (1985, p 352) defines *induction* as a "logical operation which proceeds from the individual to the general". Thus, what is assumed true of class elements is assumed true of the whole class. This means that any conclusions come to by the researcher may (have to) emanate from the researcher's understanding of the meaning attached to a particular phenomenon. In the inductive mode of research, the objective of the researcher should therefore be to provide an explanation or a description of a phenomenon, more than to test or verify a particular theory. This, however, does not mean that through this mode, one cannot generate a particular theory.

In fact, in terms of the inductive research paradigm, the theory that emerges during the data collection and analysis phases should serve either as a foundation for further exploration, comparison with other theories, or as the end-product of the study. It is for this reason that the inductive research paradigm is widely regarded as the precursor to grounded theory (Lancy, 1993). One of the striking characteristics of inductive research is that the researcher becomes an active participant in the data collection and analytic stages of the research (Creswell, 1994). Unfortunately, this characteristic has led to the criticism that inductive research is too subjective in that not only is the researcher a data collection instrument, but also because the researcher maintains close personal contact with the participants and the situation under study (Lancy, 1993). On the other hand however, the inductive mode of research fosters creativity on the part of the researcher as new patterns of explaining a phenomenon are generated instead of adhering to old ones (Creswell, 1994).

3.3.1 Characteristics of the Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique is a technique designed to elicit opinions from a group with the aim of generating a group response from expert panellists (Smedley & Human, 1979; Saayman, Phillips & Kok, 1991 & Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, 1997). More specifically, the Delphi technique is a group process, which utilises written responses (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, 1997). It uses a systematic approach in terms of which the responses are collected, refined and organised into forming a single response. These responses are collected by using a series of questionnaires. The number of questionnaires used in a particular study can range from two to ten (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, 1997).

The technique is characterised by the following:

- Total and partial anonymity;
- Multiple iterations and controlled feedback;

- Statistical group response.

- **Total and partial anonymity:** When using the Delphi technique, anonymity can be achieved in different ways and for different reasons. Usually, participants in a Delphi study are not informed of other participants in the study. This means that the source of individual responses to the questions remains a mystery to all the participants. Concealing the identity of participants serves a number of purposes. First, it prevents other participants from matching a particular response to a particular participant. Second, anonymity eliminates the unwillingness to contradict certain participants in the study. Such participants could be superiors and/or respected individuals in the group. Third, anonymity prevents the unwillingness to abandon a popular opinion held by other participants. Fourth, anonymity eliminates the possibility of a face-to-face discussion by participants of the responses that they gave to a particular question or any other issue pertaining to the study. Fifth, anonymity eliminates possible bias that could be introduced by certain personalities and domination by influential individuals. Lastly, anonymity helps to avoid the pressures that could be exerted by majority participants over minority participants in the study (Saayman, Phillips & Kok, 1991). It is important to mention however that the researcher will unavoidably be known to the participants in view of the role played by the researcher during iterations and feedback provision stages of the process.

The advantages of concealing the identity of participants lie in the fact that the accuracy of responses is enhanced. However, this could lead to low compliance and thus low response rate. It is for this reason that the idea of partial anonymity was suggested. In other words, although participants do not know each other, the researcher, through indirect interaction, could still identify them. It is believed that once participants are *aware* of the fact that they are known by the researcher and have been chosen for their particular 'expert contribution', the likelihood of completing the study is increased. In turn, this realisation motivates

participants and, as such, possibilities of a satisfactory response rate are increased (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, 1997).

- **Multiple iterations and controlled feedback:** The characteristic of multiple iterations and controlled feedback of individual responses was introduced into the Delphi technique by Dalkey and Helmer in 1953 (Saayman, Phillips & Kok, 1991). These iterations and controlled feedback occur between rounds and carry the possibility that participants could alter their initial opinion on the basis of the feedback. Feedback is thus important in the technique as, without it, participants will not be in a position to engage with the issue in question and this may result in them being unable to reach consensus on the issue. The multiple iteration could go on as long as no consensus has been reached. At the same time, it could be terminated as soon as it is clear that additional iterations "would not yield a closer approximation of the 'true' value" (Baumann, Ervin & Reynolds in Saayman, Phillips & Kok, 1991) or when sufficient information exchange has been obtained (Delbecq, Van den Ven & Gustafson, 1975).

The importance of these iterations lies therein that they allow the researcher(s) to tease out areas in which participants show some disagreement and to evaluate the underlying reasons for such disagreements (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, 1997). It is important to note that 'consensus' does not necessarily imply that participants are in total agreement (Dalkey, Lewis & Snyder, 1972; Delbecq, Van den Ven & Gustafson, 1975; Saayman, Phillips & Kok, 1991; Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, 1997).

- **Statistical group response:** Usually the Delphi technique uses statistical techniques to analyse the results obtained from the study. Such techniques could involve measures of central tendency, measure of dispersion or an entire frequency distribution of responses for each item (Saayman, Phillips & Kok, 1991).

3.3.2 The Appropriateness of the Delphi Technique for this Research

In order to determine the appropriateness of the Delphi technique for this study, the researcher looked at previous similar research in which the Delphi technique was used as a data collection method. The researcher also used the Delphi criteria. Furthermore, a pilot study was also conducted not only to determine the appropriateness of the technique but also to expose the researcher to the practicalities of using this technique. Lastly, the researcher also investigated other data collection methods, which could have been used, but were rejected for various reasons.

3.3.2.1 Previous Similar Research

In terms of previous similar research, the Delphi technique has been found appropriate for use in studies of an exploratory nature (Fiedeldey-van Dijk, 1997). For example, Smedley and Human (1979) used this technique in their exploratory study of quality of life in Mitchell's Plain (a township in Cape Town, South Africa). The Delphi technique has also been found appropriate in studying constructs such as the quality of life (QOL) and quality of work life (QWL). In this regard, Dalkey, Lewis and Snyder (1972) used it in their study of measuring and analysing quality of life while Levine, Taylor and Davis (1984) used the technique when defining quality of work life within a particular corporation. The construct of quality of work life is complex, subjective and relative and it is only those experiencing it who can have realistic and meaningful insight into it. For this reason, employing the Delphi technique would ensure access to the subjective experiences of the participants. As indicated earlier, the Delphi technique uses experts to generate a response. In line with this requirement, this study argues that employees with disabilities are 'experts' in matters that concern their

disability and their particular work experiences. Therefore, in order to gain such expert opinion, it is appropriate to employ the Delphi technique.

3.3.2.2 The Delphi Criteria

Within the social sciences and psychology in particular, the appropriateness of using the Delphi technique for a particular study is determined by applying the Delphi criteria (Fiedeldey-van Dijk, 1997). Table 3.1 below shows the Delphi criteria used to determine the appropriateness of using the Delphi technique for this research. The shaded areas in the right hand column indicate the level of applicability assigned to each criterion.

Table 3.1: The Delphi Criteria

Delphi Criteria To what extent do the following apply to the study?		Level of Applicability					
1	A single assessment, decision, estimation, policy or prediction must be obtained.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	Ultimately, the level at which action must be taken is not simple, nor complex, but intermediate.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	The Delphi results are not needed for use in a crisis situation requiring quick action (the minimum required time to use Delphi is approximately 45 days).	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	The planned questions asked about the phenomenon under study fit into a series of questionnaires (at least two) involving indirect, controlled interaction over time.	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	The planned questions asked about the phenomenon under study in the questionnaire series reveal a medium level of uncertainty.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6	The nature of the phenomenon under study allows for the content of subsequent questionnaires to shift from being broad to becoming increasingly more specific.	0	1	2	3	4	5
7	The quality of the instructions given to the participants is aimed at optimal accuracy, rather than conformity to one common opinion.	0	1	2	3	4	5
8	In general, the level of questions that the researcher plans to ask the participants is not simple, nor complex, but intermediate.	0	1	2	3	4	5
9	The planned structure of the questionnaire series meets the paradigmatic and/or epistemological stance of the researcher that underlies the specific study.	0	1	2	3	4	5

10	The planned structure of the questionnaire series is co-dependent on set target dates that have to be met.	0	1	2	3	4	5
11	Participants in the study are experts.	0	1	2	3	4	5
12	The planned medium of indirect interaction is accessible to the participants.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13	Participants should be fluent and able to express and explain themselves through written or typed responses.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14	Invited participants will have good reason to be interested, motivated and committed to hold out throughout the Delphi survey.	0	1	2	3	4	5
15	The opinions of participants over a large geographical area are sought.	0	1	2	3	4	5
16	Domination by certain participants must be prevented.	0	1	2	3	4	5
17	Apart from ensuring anonymity pertaining to participants' responses, participants must remain anonymous to each other.	0	1	2	3	4	5
18	Apart from ensuring anonymity pertaining to participants' responses, some identifying particulars of the participants must be known to the researcher.	0	1	2	3	4	5
19	The necessity for depth in responses will be met by asking participants to respond to controlled feedback in subsequent questionnaires.	0	1	2	3	4	5
20	Non-critical feedback to the participants in subsequent questionnaires should include agreement, the extent of agreement and motivation of disagreement.	0	1	2	3	4	5
21	Results from completed questionnaires should be structured to ease subsequent feedback - possibly statistical and narrative in nature.	0	1	2	3	4	5
22	Strict control and structure during data analysis must ensure accurate interpretation of the results fed back in subsequent questionnaires.	0	1	2	3	4	5
23	Research funding does not allow for high expenses in terms of consultation and/or logistics.	0	1	2	3	4	5
24	Research funding allows for a series of three questionnaires, with a possibility of more (not fewer) questionnaires.	0	1	2	3	4	5
25	Time and/or set target dates allow for a series of three questionnaires, with a possibility of more (not fewer) questionnaires.	0	1	2	3	4	5
26	A minimum sample size of seven to twelve participants can be accommodated financially.	0	1	2	3	4	5
27	It is desirable to cumulatively use either more or fewer structured questionnaires to minimise analysis costs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
28	The researcher is knowledgeable on Delphi and can administer the procedure.	0	1	2	3	4	5
29	The researcher has access to sufficient infrastructure to meet the demands of Delphi.	0	1	2	3	4	5
30	The researcher has no vested interest in the results.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Each criterion is in turn rated by means of the following five-point scale, which rates the level of applicability of each item or criterion:

- 0 = Do not know (yet), or is irrelevant
- 1 = No applicable at all
- 2 = Tolerably, moderately applicable
- 3 = Equitably, fairly applicable
- 4 = Adequately, abundantly applicable
- 5 = Extremely applicable

Using the above scale, a total score must be obtained and the following formula must be computed in order to arrive at a percentage of appropriateness:

$$\text{Total score}/1.5 = __\%$$

According to Fiedeldey-van Dijk (1997), the calculated percentage can be interpreted as follows: 0% and 1 – 20% = not appropriate at all;; 80 –100% = extremely appropriate. For this study, the total score obtained was 134. Therefore $134/1.5 = 89,3\%$.

In terms of interpreting the scores, the above results indicate that using the Delphi technique for this particular study is extremely appropriate.

3.3.2.3 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in order to achieve the following objectives:

- To determine whether the use of the Delphi technique would be appropriate for this study,
- To familiarise the researcher with the practicalities and procedures of the Delphi technique, and

- To determine whether the question asked by Levine *et al* (1984) in their quality of work life study could also be used in this study.

It is important to indicate that the pilot study was conducted only for the purposes mentioned above and the results thereof would not form part of the final analysis in this study. The pilot study was conducted on one female and two male participants. One participant was cerebral palsied and the remaining two were hemiplegic. The study was conducted at the premises of *Altitude Workforce Solutions* (a private enterprise dealing with the employment/outsourcing of services offered by persons with disabilities). This location was convenient for all the participants as two of them were employed by the organisation and it was close to the home of the other. The study was conducted after working hours, as all participants are employed full-time. The sample size of three participants was considered sufficient to determine the appropriateness of the Delphi technique for the actual study, to justify any alterations that may be highlighted by the results, and to familiarise the researcher with the practicalities of using the Delphi technique.

Although the essence of the Delphi technique is to avoid the influence that group dynamics may have on the responses of participants, it had not been possible to have participants respond to the question at a convenient place and time. For this reason, the boardroom of the above company was used. The seating arrangement was such that the researcher was able to observe the participants to ensure that there was no communication between them. In the first questionnaire the participants were asked to respond to the following question:

"In the spaces below and working on your own, could you please provide a list of aspects that you consider to be *contributing positively to your work life experiences*, either in this organisation, your own organisation or an organisation you have worked for previously. On another page and in the spaces provided, could you please provide a list of aspects

which you consider to be *contributing negatively to your work life experiences*, either in this organisation, your own organisation or an organisation you have worked for previously" (Levine, *et al*, 1984).

In addition, participants were asked to comment on the layout of the questionnaire. Based on their feedback, the above question was rephrased and modified as follows:

1. As a person with a disability, could you please provide a list of aspects/factors which you consider to be contributing positively to your work life experiences, either in this organisation, your own organisation or an organisation you have worked for previously (use separate sheet provided).
2. As a person with a disability, please provide a list of aspects/factors which you consider to be contributing negatively to your work life experience, either in this organisation, your own organisation or an organisation you have worked for previously (use separate sheet provided).

In terms of the questionnaire layout, participants indicated that the questionnaire was well constructed and was easy to respond to. According to Delbecq *et al* (1975), completing any one of the Delphi questionnaires in the series should take no more than thirty minutes. However, in the pilot study it took approximately forty-five minutes for the participants to complete the first questionnaire. This could be attributed to the fact that in the pilot study, participants, in addition to responding to the broad question, had to comment on whether they understood the question and on the layout of the questionnaire. It is envisaged that in the actual study, the time frame would be shorter. After modifications to the broad question were made, participants were again asked to respond to the questionnaire at a convenient time and place. This questionnaire was then hand delivered to the participants and they were given a date on which the questionnaire was to be collected. Content analysis was then used to develop

QWL thematic categories. These QWL thematic categories formed content items for the second questionnaire.

In the second questionnaire, which was also hand delivered, participants were asked to indicate whether any of the developed QWL thematic categories and their definitions (i.e. thematic statements) captured any of the responses they gave to the broad question in the first questionnaire. Participants were required to complete this task by either agreeing and/or disagreeing with any of the thematic statements, should they have recognised any discrepancy. In addition, participants were required to make any additional comments. These comments were also content-analysed. In the last questionnaire, participants were asked to rank the QWL thematic categories in terms of the *importance* they attach to each. For the purposes of ranking the QWL thematic categories, a Likert type scale of 1 to 7 was developed, with 7 being regarded extremely important and 1 least important.

Overall, conducting the pilot study highlighted certain issues. First, the pilot study demonstrated that at least a series of three questionnaires would be necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Second, the nature of the responses received from the study indicated that the type of information sought would be solicited by the broad question. This meant that using the question, as it stood would assist in achieving the objectives of the study. In terms of familiarising the researcher with the Delphi technique, the pilot study indicated that certain modifications would be necessary. For example, instead of using cards as suggested by Delbecq *et al* (1975) to identify responses, the content analysis method would be appropriate. Lastly, the ease with which the pilot study was conducted indicated that this technique is appropriate to use in the actual study and that the study will be conducted and completed within the set time frame.

3.3.2.4 Other Data Collection Methods

In addition to investigating previous similar studies, using the Delphi criteria and conducting a pilot study, all of which support the use of the Delphi technique for this study, other data collection methods were also considered. These were, however, found to be inappropriate for a number of reasons. For example, using *observation* or *ethnography* as a data collection technique for this study would have been costly and time-consuming. Both these techniques would have introduced researcher bias and the social desirability effect into the data collection process (Neuman, 1997). While the *non-scheduled interview* is appropriate for exploratory research, a major limitation of this method is that the presence of the researcher tends to prevent interviewees from expressing their real opinions or true feelings (Neuman, 1997). Considering that participants' honest and candid responses are key to identifying their work life experiences, the use of this method would have defeated the purpose. Lastly, as with the non-scheduled interview, the *focus group* approach is also appropriate for exploratory research. However, a major flaw of this technique is that it too introduces the social desirability effect into the process, as some participants may not freely express themselves (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995), or may agree with the rest of the group for fear of being the only person not conforming to the dictates of group dynamics. On the basis of the above considerations, therefore, the Delphi technique will be used, despite its limitations.

3.3.2.5 Limitations of the Delphi Technique

Despite the support for the appropriateness of the Delphi technique for this study, this technique has certain limitations. One such limitation relates to whether the concept of 'expert' is scientifically tenable and whether it represents valid expert opinion. As a response to this criticism, this research sought the participation of individuals who had knowledge and interest in issues of disability. Moreover, these participants themselves have a mobility disability. Another criticism of the

Delphi technique relates to the issue of 'forced consensus'. While this is indeed a potential problem, in this research care was taken to give participants the opportunity to disagree (and give reasons for disagreeing) with (a) particular response(s) from any of the participants. Against this background, the discussion will now focus on the actual Delphi procedures employed in collecting data from the participants.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

It has already been indicated that the Delphi technique uses a series of questionnaires. The first questionnaire of this study (Appendix A) contained two sections. The one section required participants to provide their biographical details. The other contained the broad question, which was modified during the pilot study phase of the research. This questionnaire was hand delivered to the participants and was accompanied by a letter that briefly explained the aim of the research, its objectives, the purpose for which the results are to be used and the date by which the researcher was going to collect the completed questionnaire (see Appendix B). All the participants responded to the first questionnaire at a time and place convenient for them. This is in keeping with Delphi requirements that there should be no contact among participants. Not only will this prevent participants from discussing their responses, but will also make sure that participants do not exert any influence on each other. Responses from the first round were then content-analysed in order to develop QWL thematic categories. As the Delphi technique uses iteration and controlled feedback, the QWL thematic categories formed content items for the second questionnaire.

In the second questionnaire, which was also hand delivered (see Appendix C), participants were asked to indicate whether any of the developed QWL thematic categories and their definitions (i.e. thematic statements) captured any of the responses that they provided to the open question in the first questionnaire. It is important to note that as with the thematic categories, the category definitions or

thematic statements were also inferred from participants' responses. Participants were required to complete this task by either agreeing or disagreeing with any of the thematic statements, should they have recognised any discrepancy. In addition, participants were required to make any additional comments. A letter thanking participants for agreeing to continue with the study (see Appendix D) also accompanied this questionnaire.

The purpose of the study is to develop quality of work life determinants for skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. To this end, factors that contribute positively and negatively to the work life experiences of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities were identified (Questionnaire 1). These were then subjected to content analysis to arrive at thematic categories. In Questionnaire 2, participants were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with any of the themes drawn from their responses to the initial question. In addition, participants were asked for additional comments, which were also content-analysed. In the last questionnaire (i.e. Questionnaire 3), participants were asked to rank the QWL thematic categories in terms of the *importance* they attach to each (see Appendix E). In other words, participants were asked to pass individual judgements as to the importance of each of the thematic categories developed. The rationale for Questionnaire 3 is that it provides closure to the study, allows for the identification of areas where diversity of judgement exists and for the aggregation of judgement (Delbecq, Van den Ven & Gustafson, 1975). For the purposes of ranking the QWL thematic categories, a Likert type scale of 1 to 7 was developed, where 7 is regarded as extremely important and 1 as least important. As with the other two questionnaires, this questionnaire was also accompanied by a letter explaining the tasks to be performed for the questionnaire (see Appendix F). The next section provides details of the content analysis procedures of the data/responses collected.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS: CONTENT ANALYSIS

As in the case of the Delphi technique, content analysis could be used for various purposes - as a data collection method or as a method to analyse data. It could also be used qualitatively, quantitatively or both. In this study, content analysis has been used to analyse the data collected and encompasses both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The definitions below are illustrative of the purposes for which content analysis could be used.

Neuman (1997) defines content analysis as a:

“...technique for gathering and analysing the content of text” (p272).

Weber (1990) defines content analysis as a:

“...research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text” (p9).

Holsti cited in Berg (1995, p175) defines content analysis as:

“...any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of message.”

The basic procedure involves making inferences from text by counting themes, words, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts, semantics, or whatever category of information is of interest to the study (Berg, 1995). For this study, *theme* categories of the information are developed and counted. According to Berg, thematic content analysis is a process of decomposing data in order to identify and categorise the main themes. Manifest content coding was used to in identifying and categorising the main themes. Manifest content coding refers to those elements of the data that are physically present and countable (Lemert,

1989; Berg, 1995). The unit of analysis was participants' responses from which thematic categories were developed. In developing these categories, an inductive approach was followed. According to Berg, an inductive approach to category development allows for the presentation of the perceptions of the producers of the message in a manner that is immediate and direct. In other words, this approach allows the researcher to ground the categories to the data from which they emerge. Having been developed, these thematic categories were then counted to determine their frequency of appearance in participants' responses. Category count constitutes one of the seven major elements of written messages that could be counted (Lemert, 1989; Weber, 1990 & Berg, 1995).

In coding and subsequent development of the thematic categories, care was taken to ensure that there was stability in the coding process. Stability is a type of reliability pertinent to content analysis and involves the content being coded more than once by the same coder (Weber, 1990). While it has not been possible, due to resource constraints, to ensure intercoder reliability, providing participants with the opportunity to verify the thematic categories developed, increased internal consistency. Validity in content analysis relates to the correspondence between the category and the abstract concept that it represents (Weber, 1990). In this study, it has been ensured that there is correspondence between the definition of the concepts (themes) and the categories. Finally, the response statements provided by participants were also used to check the clarity and appropriateness of each category.

One of the most important advantages of using content analysis is that it is practically unobtrusive. It is also a cost effective method for data analysis and one person could effectively undertake it. However, one serious weakness of content analysis is that the technique may be limited to examining already recorded messages. According to Berg (1995), this weakness tends to be present when content analysis is used as a complete research strategy, rather

than as an analysis tool. Lastly, content analysis, either as a research tool or analysis tool, has been found to be appropriate for exploratory or descriptive studies (Berg, 1995) - hence, its use in this study.

3.6 USING THE DELPHI TECHNIQUE AND CONTENT ANALYSIS: A CRITIQUE

Originally the Delphi technique had been used for technological forecasting and priority determination purposes. It has also been used to set goals, to identify problems and problem solutions (Delbecq, Van den Ven & Gustafson, 1975). The above examples point to the wide range of uses to which the Delphi technique could be put. In this particular study, the technique has been used to solicit a group response from expert panellists. In order to make sense of the data generated, content analysis was employed as a data analysis method. A critical review of both these methods has shown that they are methodologically compatible. Depending on the objective of the study in question, both these techniques could be used to reduce the data collected into simple and qualitative observations. There exists, however, a potential shortcoming in combining these two methods as the inherent meaning in the communication messages could be lost due to data reduction.

This study is exploratory in nature. To this end, employing both the Delphi technique and content analysis enhanced the achievement of the research objective, as both these techniques are appropriate in studies of an exploratory nature. In view of the complexity and the subjective nature of the construct of quality of work life and for the purposes of this study, it was important to employ data collection and analysis methods that would largely capture the subjective experiences of the participants. To this end, it is argued that by employing these methods in combination ensured that participants' work life experiences were captured. This is because of the inductive qualities shared by these methods.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter began by providing details of the characteristics of the participants in this study. In this regard key terms pertaining to the research participants were defined. The manner and strategy employed in gaining access to skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities was also described and explained. It was indicated that the participants in this study are regarded as those presenting special circumstances such that a special sampling procedure was employed. The strengths and weaknesses of employing this particular method were also explored. The chapter further explored the data collection method employed in this study. This included focusing on the characteristics of the Delphi technique, its weaknesses and strengths and its appropriateness for this study. This was then followed by an elaborate explanation of the Delphi procedures employed to collect the data. Content analysis was also explored and it was explained how this particular method was used to analyse the data collected. This was accompanied by an explanation of its strengths and weaknesses. The last part of the chapter focused on the compatibility of the Delphi technique and content analysis as employed in this study and on the possible shortcomings of both methods.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Owing to the procedures followed and the fact that all questionnaires were personally hand delivered and collected by the researcher, a 100% response rate in all of the various questionnaire rounds was achieved. The results reported in this section are therefore inclusive and a reflection of the opinions and sentiments of the participants. As the research was conducted in a round-robin format, the reporting of results will follow the same sequence, beginning with the quality of work life thematic categories developed in Questionnaire 1 and their frequency, followed by the quality of work life thematic categories developed in Questionnaire 2 and their frequency. Reporting the results will end with the voting results in the third and last questionnaire.

4.2 RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 1

In response to the open-ended question asked in the first questionnaire and using content analysis, recognition, supportive work environment and advancement opportunities were identified as QWL thematic categories. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the thematic categories developed and their frequency.

Table 4.1: QWL Thematic Categories and their Frequency

Thematic Categories	Participants										Total	No. of participants
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10		
Recognition	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10 (100%)	10
Supportive work environment	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	7 (70%)	10
Advancement opportunities	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9 (90%)	10

Note: P = Participant (e.g. P1 or Participant 1)

Recognition

Hundred percent (100%) of the participants in the study indicated a strong need for fair recognition of the input they make in contributing to organisational success. There exists a perception among the participants that because of their disability, recognition of the efforts they put into their work is not fairly done or if done, it is generally below expectation. Participants indicated that they rarely receive merit or performance awards in their respective organisations. Although participants did not divulge their salary details, they perceived a salary disparity between themselves and their able-bodied counterparts.

Supportive work environment

Seventy percent (70%) of the participants indicated that the work setting is important in order to perform optimally in their different tasks. In this regard, participants pointed out that there is a need to be accepted the 'way we are'. Participants believe that acceptance, respect and tolerance for diversity is a key to a supportive work environment. Once co-workers and management learn to accept that employees with mobility disability bring with them certain requirements (just like everyone else), they will be able to lend the necessary support needed.

Advancement Opportunities

Ninety percent (90%) of the participants indicated that they believe that they have limited chances of advancement in their respective careers. Participants believe that their *disability*, rather than their *ability* is a consideration when promotion or access to training is considered. Among the reasons provided by the participants for this belief is that employers do not have the same level of trust in them as they have in other employees. While access to training was raised as a concern, participants believe that access to training seemed to be dependant on the type of task/job one performs in the organisation.

4.3 RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 2

In their responses to the second questionnaire, participants indicated that indeed the QWL thematic categories were a reflection of the responses they gave in the first questionnaire. This means that no participant disagreed with the QWL thematic categories developed. There were, however, additional comments made by respondents in relation to the QWL thematic categories developed. These additional comments were also content analysed and the following additional QWL thematic categories were developed (see Table 4.2 below).

Table 4.2: Additional QWL Thematic Categories and their Frequency

Participants												
Thematic Categories	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	Total	No. of participants
Accommodation	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	9 (90%)	10
Integration	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	6 (60%)	10
Job variety	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	5 (50%)	10

Note: P = Participant (e.g. P1 or Participant 1)

Accommodation

As in the case of advancement opportunities, ninety percent (90%) of the participants identified 'accommodation' as a QWL thematic category contributing

to positive work life experiences. Participants indicated a strong need to have smooth access to their workplace. Examples provided by participants in order to effect reasonable accommodation include adequate space for wheelchairs (i.e. unhindered access to workstations), unhindered access to organisational resources (i.e. easy access to the cafeteria) and unhindered access to policies (i.e. being made aware of organisational policies relating to disability in the organisations).

Integration

Sixty percent (60%) of the participants indicated that increased contact between themselves and other workers would have positive results for the organisation and its employees (i.e. integration). Among the reasons given by participants for the lack of contact is that *'some of my colleagues seem to be afraid of me'*, *'some people treat me like a child'* and *'some people try to be too sympathetic and end-up being patronising'*. Participants indicated that this kind of behaviour and these tendencies contribute to unpleasant feelings towards work.

Job variety

Fifty percent (50%) of the participants indicated that the work they do is characterised by routine and monotony. One participant said that *'I have been doing this type of work since I joined the company while other people have continued to do other work.'* These participants believe this to be more because of their disability than the absence of other types of work. For this reason, participants indicated that there seemed to be work or jobs that are 'suitable' for them while certain jobs are suitable for other employees.

4.4 RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE 3

Having completed the first two questionnaire rounds, participants were asked to rank the QWL thematic categories in terms of the *importance* that they attach to each by using the rating scale developed for this purpose. The ten (10)

participants could vote for six (6) thematic categories. Individual votes were ranked in order of importance. The highest possible total is 70. An analysis of Questionnaire 3 involved adding individual ranks assigned to categories to arrive at a total vote (Delbecq *et al*, 1975). The results of the voting process conducted in this questionnaire are contained in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Voting Results

Thematic Category	Number of participants voting for a thematic category	Individual votes ranked in order of importance	Total votes
1. Recognition	5	4-4-5-7-6	26
2. Supportive work environment	6	5-5-7-6-4-4	31
3. Advancement opportunities	9	7-7-6-5-5-7-4-5-6	52
4. Accommodation	7	7-7-7-7-6-5-7	46
5. Integration	8	6-7-5-4-6-7-5-5	45
6. Job variety	4	5-4-4-7	20

The above voting results indicate that all the participants voted for none of the thematic categories at once. However, 90% of the participants voted for QWL thematic category number 3 (i.e. advancement opportunities). Eighty percent (80%) of the participants voted for 'integration'. 'Accommodation' as a QWL thematic category was voted for by 70% of the participants. 'Supportive work environment', as a QWL thematic category, was voted for by 60% of the participants, while 50% of the participants voted for 'recognition'. Only forty percent (40%) of the participants voted for 'job variety' as a QWL thematic category. It is important to indicate that the percentage of voters who voted for a particular thematic category does not necessarily translate into the degree of importance attached to that category. On the contrary, it is the total number of votes cast for a particular item that determines the degree of importance. Table 4.4 represents the order of importance participants attached to the developed Quality of Work Life thematic categories/determinants.

Table 4.4: Importance Attached to Thematic Categories

Thematic Categories	Order of Importance
Advancement opportunities	52 votes
Accommodation	46 votes
Integration	45 votes
Supportive work environment	31 votes
Recognition	26 votes
Job variety	20 votes

The importance of the voting results lies therein that they indicate the degree to which certain factors at work affect skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. It is important to note that grouped together, the QWL thematic categories and their definitions constitute Quality of Work Life Determinants. Overall, therefore, the results of this study indicate that participants have identified the following QWL Determinants as contributors to their work life experiences:

QWL Determinants

Advancement opportunities

An employee's disability should not be a factor when promotion and/or access to formal training courses are considered.

Accommodation

Employees with congenital mobility disabilities need to have unhindered access to their place of work. Such access includes and not limited to access to workstations, organisational policies and resources.

Integration

Employees with congenital mobility disabilities should not be separated from able-bodied co-workers. Integration promotes acceptance and tolerance of each other in the workplace.

Supportive work environment

Employees with congenital mobility disabilities would like to work in an environment in which there is respect for each other, acceptance and tolerance for diversity and respect for individual private space.

Recognition

The input that employees with congenital mobility disabilities make in the workplace needs to be fairly recognised. Such recognition could include salary increments or merit/performance awards.

Job variety

Just like able-bodied employees, employees with congenital mobility disabilities would also like to be given challenging assignments and not tasks 'suitable' for persons with mobility disabilities.

4.5. SUMMARY

The above discussion has reported on the results of the study. Reporting the results was done by following the questionnaire series. The results indicate the percentage of participants who have identified a particular QWL in each of the questionnaire rounds. The results are also indicative of the importance attached by participants to each of the QWL determinant developed. Overall, the above results indicate the agreement reached by participants on the QWL determinants that were developed. In the following chapter, the focus will be on discussing the results in more detail with a view of understanding their implications for work life experiences of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to develop Quality of Work Life determinants from the perspective of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. This has been achieved by using the Delphi technique as a data collection method. Content analysis was used to develop the QWL determinants. Overall, the above results indicate that participants agree on two issues. First, participants agree that the QWL determinants as developed represent their work life experiences. Second, there is agreement on the level of importance attached to each of the QWL determinants developed. In this chapter, the focus will be on discussing the results in more detail and will be compared to the QWL determinants developed by Walton (1973) and others.

5.1.1 Advancement Opportunities

It is interesting to note that 90% of the research participants have indicated that a person's disability should not be a factor when issues relating to promotion and/or access to training are considered. Participants have also allocated 52 votes to advancement opportunities as a QWL determinant making it the most important QWL determinant. This result is a direct challenge to the assumption that when a person with a disability experiences a problem, the impairment is the cause of the problem (Fine & Asch, 1988). The lack of or the unavailability of advancement opportunities therefore could not be blamed on the impairment or functional limitations but on unfavourable organisational practices. One such practice is the lack of trust on the side of management. One participant indicated that 'my manager does not trust that I can perform much more at the next level than at this level'. Another participant said that 'because I am disabled, people at work do not trust that I am capable of being productive at any level in the

organisation'. Overall, participants believe that employers do not have the same level of trust in them as they have in other employees.

The lack of advancement opportunities could also be explained by focusing on the influences of the economic model of understanding disability. In most instances, advancement in one's career is accompanied by an increase in responsibility. In terms of the economic model of understating disability, a person with a disability is limited in terms of the kind of work that he or she could do and limited in the productivity levels that could be achieved. This model focuses on the person's disability rather than on his/her ability to perform and be productive. According to Walton (1973), jobs should be designed in such a way that allows for autonomy, planning and implementation. This in turn increases the jobholder's opportunities for advancement. Given that participants have placed the highest level of importance on 'advancement opportunities' as a QWL determinant, it becomes important that organisations are sensitised to the fact that disability does not automatically translate to inability. Rather, organisations need to design jobs in such a way that the ability to plan and execute a task autonomously is inherent in those jobs. It should therefore be on the basis of the person's ability to effectively execute a task that issues relating to promotion (i.e. career advancement) are considered. Lastly, it is interesting to note that this result is similar to Walton's (1973) future opportunity for continued growth and security, Stein's (1983) progress and development, and Coster's (1992) learning opportunities QWL determinants.

5.1.2 Accommodation

Considering that participants have various congenital mobility disabilities, it is perhaps not surprising that 90% of them have identified 'accommodation' as a QWL determinant. Interestingly, it has been voted the second most important QWL determinant with 46 votes. In this instance, participants have identified the need to have unhindered access to their workplaces, organisational resources and policies. In order to effect reasonable accommodation, participants pointed to

the need to have adequate space for wheelchairs, improved doorways, and the availability of and access to organisational policies focussing on disability in the workplace. This result means that for skilled employees to have an improved quality of work life or positive work life experiences, there is a need to improve the work environment. From participants' perspective, accommodation that encompasses the above initiatives would result in making employee individual needs more consistent with the physical and the social structures in the work setting. More importantly, these initiatives would comply with the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998 in relation to reasonable accommodation.

In a number of ways, this finding challenges the all-pervasive view that the employee with a disability must adapt to the environment (Oliver, 1990 & Nagler, 1990), rather than adapting the environment to the employee. While there are arguments against the concept and intentions of 'accommodation' in terms of cost to the organisation (Collignon, 1989), it surely has certain benefits for both the individual and the organisation. As an example, the creation of a barrier-free environment could facilitate movement and communication within a particular unit or department with the result that tasks are done efficiently (Collignon, 1989). Therefore, although this may be seen as special treatment for employees with mobility disabilities, the reality is that, in the final analysis, the entire organisation also benefits. Without doubt, this finding is in line with the social model of understanding disability in the sense that the identification of accommodation as a QWL determinant is an indication that the circumstances of people with disabilities and the discrimination that they face are socially created phenomena and have nothing to do with the impairment of people with disabilities (White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997).

Two of the most important principles of the social model are that people with disabilities should be given the necessary support to enable them to exercise their responsibilities by the removal of all kinds of barriers to equal participation and the elimination of discrimination based on disability. By implementing

accommodation 'measures' as suggested by 90% of the participants in this study, organisations will not only be contributing to positive work life experiences for skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities, but will also be affording these employees the opportunity to work in an environment in which they could fully utilise their talents and which would discourage discrimination on the basis of disability. In terms of the socio-political model, this finding strengthens the argument that the inequalities that exist within an organisation stem from the inability of the social environment to adapt to the needs and aspirations of employees with disabilities. One way of addressing these inequalities involves implementing measures that will ensure that the needs and aspirations of employees with disabilities, particularly congenital mobility disabilities, are addressed.

5.1.3 Integration

'Integration' has been identified by 60% of the participants as another QWL determinant. Integration has also been voted the third most important QWL determinant with 45 votes. Participants have identified 'increased contact' as one of the facets of integration. The fact that participants see 'integration' as contributing to positive work life experiences could be interpreted as a response to the assumption that people with disabilities are victims (Fine & Asch, 1988, Schlaff, 1993 & Quinn, 1998). As they are seen as 'victims', employees with mobility disability tend to be treated differently by their colleagues. One participant said that 'some of my colleagues seem to be afraid of me'. Another participant said that 'some people treat me like a child. Another said that 'some people try to be too sympathetic and end up being patronising'.

Through increased contact it is possible that such treatment as demonstrated by the above comments could be eliminated. One of the possible outcomes of increased contact is the opportunity for employees to learn more about each other (Oliver, 1990). It is interesting to note that Walton (1973) refers to this QWL determinant as 'Social Integration in the Workplace'. Social integration in

the workplace is characterised by different types of interaction. In all types of interaction, the human-human interaction is critical to employee quality of work life (Walton, 1973). Among other attributes of social integration, Walton has identified 'freedom from prejudice'. Stein (1983) refers to this attribute as 'dignity'. Inherent in both attributes is the requirement for workers to feel accepted in the workplace. Therefore, a person's physical appearance, race, religion or creed should not be used to judge a person, either for work-related purposes or social belongingness.

For organisations employing skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities, the result poses a challenge to their social environments. For a start, this means that organisations would have to endeavour to create an environment that is free from prejudice. This in turn will ensure that employees with congenital mobility disabilities would feel accepted by both the organisation and their peers. Furthermore, this result acknowledges that disability is a socially created problem and thus needs socially derived solutions. It is important to note that increased contact and freedom from prejudice may not, however, be sufficient to change certain behavioural tendencies towards skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. For this reason, it is crucial that the job itself is considered when issues of integration are discussed. According to Gibson et al (1991) and Noe et al (1994), one of the characteristics of job design is the interpersonal relationship made possible by the job. This means that the opportunity to interact with other workers in the organisation should be at the core of every job.

5.1.4 Supportive work environment

'Supportive work environment' has been identified by 70% of the participants as a QWL determinant. This QWL determinant has also been voted the fourth most important quality of work life determinant with 31 votes. In more ways than one, supportive work environment, as a quality of work life determinant, complements integration as discussed in the previous section. Both QWL determinants have acceptance as the core foundation. The question of working in an environment in

which there is respect for each other, acceptance and tolerance for diversity, supports the principles of the social model of understanding disability; namely that employees with disabilities (e.g. mobility disability) should be provided the necessary support in order to exercise their responsibilities and that all kinds of barriers to equal participation in the workplace should be removed (White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, 1997). There seems to be two ways in terms of which this finding could be explained. First, this finding could be explained by Walton's (1973) 'safe and healthy working conditions' and Stein's (1983) 'decent working conditions'. Given the fact that most people spend a considerable amount of their lives in some form of an organisation, it is crucial that the environment in such organisations does not pose a threat to the physical, social and psychological well-being of employees (Walton, 1973). The concern therefore with safe working conditions should not be limited to the potential hazards inherent in one's task, setting or technology, but should extend to potential hazards that could emanate from co-workers, particularly regarding issues of disability. For skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities, a supportive work environment would contribute to a state in which there is positive physical, psychological and social well-being. The existence of a supportive work environment or safe working conditions is therefore a responsibility that should be shared between the organisation and its members (Harrison, 2000; Management Today, 2001).

Second, the question of a supportive work environment could be explained by Walton's (1973) 'constitutionalism in the workplace' QWL determinant. In terms of this QWL determinant, employees are entitled to respect and their rights to privacy upheld by management. The power that management has by virtue of its standing in the organisation should not be used to create an environment that suppresses diversity (either in the form of opinions or physical appearance), but an environment in which there is tolerance and support for diversity and is based on the rule of law. It is important to note however that the establishment of a supportive work environment would require that certain conditions be created for

it to be successful and sustainable (Cook, 1978). First, the point at which employees interact within the organisation should be characterised by high acquaintance potential. This point could be the unit in which all employees share leisure activities, work assignments or workstations. Such intensive contact and interaction will allow employees to learn from each other and about each other's background, strengths and weaknesses. Second, attempts need to be made that the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy is eliminated within the organisation. In other words, a new set of social norms that 'favour group equality and equalitarian intergroup association' would have to be developed (Cook, 1978). Arguably, a supportive work environment is also an environment that gives recognition where and when it is due. The next section looks at recognition in more detail.

5.1.5 Recognition

'Recognition' has been identified by all participants (i.e. 100%) as of the QWL determinants. Ironically, it has been voted the fifth most important quality of work life determinant with only 26 votes. It is interesting to note that 'recognition', as developed and agreed upon by participants in this study, has to do with acknowledging the input of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities in the organisation. All participants note that such recognition could include salary increases based on performance, merit or performance awards or being given more challenging work assignments. Related to 'recognition' as a QWL determinant is Walton's (1973) 'adequate and fair compensation'. Recognition in the form of payment or compensation serves as a motivational factor (Nadler & Lawler, 1983; Noe et al, 1994). To this end, the extent to which employees are motivated by their payment, affects the manner in which they execute their task. In addition to being a motivational factor, Stein (1983) has identified payment as an important determinant of quality of work life. Payment has also been identified as a critical element in attempts to maintain a balance between employee performance and improved quality of work life (Management Today, 2001). Thus it would appear that of the many forms of recognition, pay plays a critical role in enhancing quality of work life.

5.1.6 Job variety

According to Oliver (1990), organisations tend to assume that there are jobs that are 'suitable' for employees with disabilities. Consequently, these employees tend to perform tasks that are repetitive and monotonous (Oliver, 1990). In the light of the above assertion, it is interesting to note that 50% of the participants are of the view that their work is characterised by routine and monotony. In this regard participants have indicated that they would like to be given challenging assignments. One participant said that 'I have been doing this type of work since I joined the company while other people have continued to do other work'. This result is essentially a challenge to the assumption that equates disability with inability (Fine & Asch, 1988; Stone & Colella, 1996). Moreover, this result seeks to indicate that not only are skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities capable people, but that they would like to have challenging assignments as well. This result could be explained by Walton's (1973) 'immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities' QWL determinant. In terms of this QWL determinant, jobs should be designed in such a way that that inherent in them are qualities such as autonomy, feedback and planning. These qualities are said to contribute to employees' intellectual flexibility (Stein, 1983; Coster, 1992). Against this background, this result seems to place a responsibility on management to have not only confidence in the abilities of its skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities, but also to seek to enrich the jobs/tasks given to these employees.

Adding variety to a job could be done through job enrichment and job rotation. Job enrichment is normally directed at jobs that are 'malnourished' or low in scope and complexity (Noe et al, 1994). Job rotation involves periodically moving an employee from one functional task to another or from one department to another. Together with job rotation, job enrichment essentially creates 'multi-dimensional' employees, rather than maintaining 'one-dimensional' employees. That is, it is to the benefit of both the organisation and the employee(s) in question to have versatile employees. On the one hand, having multi-skilled or

versatile employees with mobility disabilities would ensure that the assumption that equates disability with inability is eliminated. In turn, this is likely to improve the confidence that these employees have on their ability to perform. On the other, the organisation would benefit by having a pool of employees from which a variety of skills could be acquired.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

This study has sought to develop quality of work life determinants from the perspective of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. To this end, advancement opportunities, accommodation, integration, supportive work environment, recognition, and job variety were identified as such. Each QWL determinant was assigned a rating indicating the level of importance attached to it. In terms of these ratings it would appear as though the availability of advancement opportunities, accommodation and integration are more important to skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities than anything else. In comparing the results of this study and those of Walton (1973) and others, there seems to be no significant differences between the QWL determinants developed in this study and those of Walton's (1973) and others. In fact, with few exceptions, many commonalities have been found to exist between the two groups of QWL determinants. Some commonalities have also been found to exist between the QWL determinants developed in this study and those specific to developmental disabilities. These include job variety, integrated work, lunch and break areas, accessibility to promotion and the absence of negative stereotypes.

Against this background, this research draws the following conclusions. First, it appears that there are no major differences between the QWL determinants as developed in this study and those developed by Walton (1973) and others, and those developed within the developmental disabilities field. Second, the importance attached to the QWL determinants (particularly advancement opportunities, accommodation and integration) suggest that skilled employees

with congenital mobility disabilities have identified these determinants as critical to positive work life experiences. Third, the Quality Principle which "postulates that the quality of life of a person with disabilities will vary directly and significantly with the quality of life of those 'significant others' surrounding him or her" (Powers & Goode, 1986 cited in Goode, 1992 p 340) could not conclusively be ascribed to people with disabilities only. This is because the QWL determinants developed in this research are almost identical to those developed by Walton (1973) and others.

However, the significance of these results lie in the fact that with the foreseeable increase in the number of employees with disabilities (i.e. mobility disability) as envisaged in legislations such as the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, South African organisations would need to adopt approaches and management styles that truly embrace workforce diversity. The QWL determinants as developed in this study would require organisations to take deliberate steps to remove all social and physical barriers that could potentially inhibit skilled employees from realising their full potential. In many ways these results are closely related such that organisations have the opportunity to implement integrated strategies that will potentially enhance the work life experiences of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the major limitations of exploratory research is that the results obtained cannot be generalised to a population. This shortcoming is compounded by the sample size in this research. Exploratory research also has certain disadvantages. One such shortcoming is that it scarcely produces definitive answers to research problems (Neuman, 1997). Due to limited financial, time and human resources, it was not possible to make use of a "team of analysts" or a workgroup for purposes of jointly analysing participants' responses. Having such a team would have allowed for a significant or complete reduction in the

possible bias and consequent subjectivity the researcher may have on data analysis. In addition, having such a workgroup would have made it possible to collectively agree on the appropriateness of the QWL thematic categories and statements. However, in order to deal with this shortcoming, care was taken to ensure that the feedback to participants reflected their initial opinions and sentiments. The process of allowing participants themselves to verify the authenticity of the quality of work life thematic categories increased internal consistency. According to Fielding and Fielding (1986), this process is called 'member checks' or 'respondent validation' (p 43). This process essentially gives respondents an opportunity to provide feedback on interpretations.

Since this research is conducted largely within the social sciences paradigm, it cannot be entirely 'value free'. More often, the values, beliefs and past experiences of the researcher influence the choice of the research field, the formulation of a hypothesis, the collection and the subsequent interpretation of data (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). The extent to which these factors have influenced this research is unknown. It would however appear that they have been most influential in the development of the QWL thematic categories that eventually influenced the QWL thematic statements (descriptions).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The context within which skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities experience work has not been comprehensively covered in this research. Therefore, it is suggested that studies need to be conducted in which the participants' experiences with work and mobility disability in various contexts, the strategies used to remain an active participant in each setting and the consequences of those interactions are investigated. One of the major contributions of this study to the body of knowledge has been the identification of quality of work life determinants specific to skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. This data has, however, been collected largely from the

Western Cape region. It is therefore suggested that the information gathered in this study could be used as a foundation for a thorough national study. In such a study an increase in the sample size and perhaps the composition of the sample population would be appropriate to allow for generalisation. The information that has been gathered in this study could also be used to compile a questionnaire for a more comprehensive quantitative study.

It is further suggested that such studies focus exclusively on the open labour market. This suggestion does not mean that QWL in sheltered or supported employment is not important, but rather that, in the light of the new labour legislation, it is appropriate to focus on the open labour market with the aim of assisting private sector organisations to deal with the inevitable increase in workforce diversity.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE #1

Biographical details (Please note that this information will be used for analytical purposes only)

Name:.....

Age:.....

Gender:.....

Race:.....

Name of employer:.....

Position in the organisation:.....

Number of years in the organisation.....

Type(s) of disability:.....

Origin of disability:.....

Would you like to have your name listed in the appendix of the report (circle) YES or NO?

QUESTIONS

On the blank sheets provided, please answer the following questions.

1. As a person with a disability, could you please provide a list of aspects/factors which you consider to be contributing **positively to your work life experiences** either in this organisation, your own organisation or an organisation you have worked for previously. (use separate sheet provided)
2. As a person with a disability, please provide a list of aspects/ factors which you consider to be contributing negatively **to your work life experience** either in this organisation, your own organisation or an organisation you have worked for previously. (use separate sheet provided)

APPENDIX B

University of Cape Town
239 Liesbeeck Gardens
Mowbray
7700

Dear.....

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research which aims to assess the quality of work life determinants of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. Specifically, I need your help in identifying the aspects in your working life which you consider to be contributing to both positive and negative experiences in the organisation or an organisation you have worked for previously.

The results of the study will be used by me to develop a model of quality of work life to be used by organisations employing or intending to employ persons with congenital mobility disabilities. At the end of the research each participant will receive a copy of the findings of the study.

I am attaching the first in a series of questionnaires designed to seek your assistance in developing the proposed model. Please complete the attached and I will collect it for analysis on the.....

Again, thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Peter Mashilwane

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE #2

INSTRUCTIONS

The following is a summary analysis of the responses you gave in the first questionnaire. The responses are attached to refresh your memory. In this questionnaire, please do the following:

1. **Tick** the statement/s that capture at least one of your initial responses to the first questionnaire.
2. Use the spaces provided to **comment** on whether you:
 - Agree with a particular statement and why.
 - Disagree with a particular statement and why.
 - Add any statement/s you have in mind.

1. Recognition:

The input that employees with congenital mobility disabilities make in the workplace needs to be fairly recognised. Such recognition could include salary increments or receiving merit/performance awards.

Agree and Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Disagree and Why?

.....

.....

.....
.....

Additional comments

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Supportive work environment

Employees with congenital mobility disabilities would like to work in an environment in which there is respect for each other, acceptance and tolerance for diversity and respect for individual private spaces.

Agree and Why?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Disagree and Why?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Additional comments

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Advancement opportunities

An employee's disability should not be a factor when promotions and/or access to formal training courses are considered.

Agree and Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Disagree and Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Additional comments

.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX D

University of Cape Town
239 Liesbeeck Gardens
Mowbray
7700

Dear

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for agreeing to continue to participate in this research which aims to assess the quality of work life determinants of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. Herein find enclosed a copy of the second questionnaire that has been constructed from the initial responses you gave in the first questionnaire. Those responses are attached at the back to refresh your memory. In the second questionnaire you are asked to do two things:

1. To tick the statement/s that captures at least one of the responses you gave in the first questionnaire.
2. Use the spaces provided to **comment** on whether you:
 - Agree with a particular statement and why.
 - Disagree with a particular statement and why.
 - Add any statement/s you have in mind.

Please feel free to respond to the statement/s at the place and time that is convenient for you. It would however be appreciated if the completed questionnaires could be ready for collection by the 1999. I will personally collect the questionnaires from Altitude Workforce Solutions on the date specified above.

For more information, I could be contacted at 083 735 2052 or email me at mshpet006@mail.uct.ac.za.

Again, thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Peter Mashilwane

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE #3

INSTRUCTIONS

Using the scale below, please rank the QWL thematic categories in terms of the importance you attach to each. Please use the space provided to place the number corresponding to the degree of importance you attach to a category.

RATING SCALE

Please use the space provided to place the number corresponding to the degree of importance you attach to a category.

Very least important	Least important	Not important	Important	Very important	Most important	Extremely important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rank	Thematic Categories
.....	1) Recognition The input that employees with mobility disabilities make in the workplace needs to be fairly recognised. Such recognition could include salary increments or receiving merit/performance awards.
.....	2) Advancement opportunities An employee's disability should not be a factor when promotions and/or access to formal training courses are considered.
.....	3) Integration Employees with congenital mobility disabilities should not be separated from able-bodied co-workers. Integration promotes acceptance and tolerance of each other in the workplace.
.....	4) Accommodation Employees with congenital mobility disabilities need to have unhindered access to their place of work. Such access includes and

APPENDIX F

University of Cape Town
239 Liesbeeck Gardens
Mowbray
7700

Dear

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for agreeing to continue to participate in this research which aims to assess the quality of work life determinants of skilled employees with congenital mobility disabilities. Herein find enclosed a copy of the third questionnaire. In this questionnaire you are asked to rank order the statements according to the importance you attach to each. Please make use of the ranking scale that has been developed for this purpose.

Please feel free to complete the task at the place and time that is convenient for you. It would however be appreciated if the completed questionnaires could be ready for collection by the 1999. I will personally collect the questionnaires from you on the date specified above.

For more information, I could be contacted at 083 735 2052 or email me at mshpet006@mail.uct.ac.za.

Again, thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Peter Mashilwane

University of Cape Town