

# **Traversing Disability in South Africa: Considering Social Capital in Disability Inclusive Employment Practices**

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Doctor of Philosophy in Disability Studies

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Main Author: A. Ebrahim

Co-Authors: T. Lorenzo and H. Kathard

**3. Traversing Disability: The role of employment in building social capital.**

Main Author: A. Ebrahim

Co-Authors: T Lorenzo and H. Kathard

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<sup>1</sup> These papers have been revised following feedback received from journal reviewers as well as examiners.

## DECLARATION OF CONTRIBUTION

This thesis is presented as a sandwich-based thesis in which three papers are included, along with an introduction, literature review, conceptual framework, methodology and synthesis (conclusion) chapters. The following papers can be found in this thesis:

**1. Traversing Disability: Building social capital through skills development for employment.**

Main Author: A. Ebrahim

Co-Authors: T. Lorenzo and H. Kathard

**2. Traversing Disability: Evaluating database information to inform recruitment strategies and transition to employment for persons with disabilities.**

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Co-Authors: T. Lorenzo and H. Kathard

**3. Traversing Disability: The role of employment in building social capital.**

Main Author: A. Ebrahim

Co-Authors: T Lorenzo and H. Kathard

Adèle Ebrahim is the corresponding author in all papers included in this thesis. Her contributions to these papers include:

- Developing the research questions
- Writing the protocol
- Completing data collection and analysis
- Writing of papers
- Preparation of papers for submission

The work in this thesis was conducted between January 2015 and September 2021.

Co-authors were both supervisors and assisted with reviewing and preparing the papers for publication. It should be noted that of necessity, there may be some repetition of information. The thesis as a whole, has adhered to APA referencing.

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# CONTENTS

<b><u>PLAGIARISM DECLARATION .....</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>
<b><u>PERMISSION FOR INCLUSION OF PAPERS IN THIS THESIS .....</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
<b><u>DECLARATION OF CONTRIBUTION.....</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>LIST OF FIGURES.....</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>
<b><u>LIST OF TABLES .....</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>
<b><u>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>
<b><u>DEFINITION OF TERMS .....</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>
<b><u>RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY .....</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>
<b><u>WHAT, WHY, HOW AND SO WHAT?: A SYNOPSIS .....</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>
<b><u>STUDY ABSTRACT.....</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>
<b><u>CHAPTER 1.....</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>
<b><u>INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .....</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>
<b>1.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.3 STUDY CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.4 POLICY CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>27</b>

<b>1.7 RESEARCH QUESTION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
SUB-QUESTIONS.....	28
<b>1.8 AIM OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>28</b>
OBJECTIVES.....	28
<b>1.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>1.10 PRESENTATION OF THIS THESIS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b><u>CHAPTER 2.....</u></b>	<b><u>32</u></b>
<b><u>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</u></b>	<b><u>32</u></b>
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>32</b>
2.2.1 THE RIGHT TO WORK .....	32
2.2.2 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND DISABILITY .....	34
2.2.3 WORK AND DISABILITY .....	36
2.2.4 ECONOMIC INCLUSION AND EMPLOYMENT.....	37
2.2.5 EMPLOYABILITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	40
<b>2.3 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b><u>CHAPTER THREE.....</u></b>	<b><u>43</u></b>
<b><u>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</u></b>	<b><u>43</u></b>
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>3.2 CRITICAL DISABILITY THEORY .....</b>	<b>44</b>
3.2.1 CULTURAL NARRATIVES AND DISCOURSES .....	47
3.2.2 HISTORICITY .....	48
3.2.3 SYSTEMIC AND ATTITUDINAL DISABLEMENT.....	49
3.2.4 RESPONSE TO IMPAIRMENT .....	49
<b>3.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY.....</b>	<b>50</b>
3.3.1 HUMAN RESOURCES, HUMAN CAPITAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL.....	54
3.3.2 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL .....	55

3.3.3 DISABILITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL.....	55
3.3.4 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EMPLOYMENT.....	56
<b>3.4 INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>3.5 INTEGRATING CRITICAL DISABILITY THEORY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISABILITY INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3.6 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b><u>CHAPTER 4.....</u></b>	<b><u>61</u></b>
<b><u>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</u></b>	<b><u>61</u></b>
<b>4.1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN.....</b>	<b>61</b>
4.2.1 THE INTRINSIC EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY AS A RESEARCH STRATEGY.....	62
4.2.2 STUDY SAMPLE SELECTION.....	65
<b>4.3 DATA GENERATION METHODS.....</b>	<b>68</b>
4.3.1. DATABASE AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS.....	69
4.3.2 NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION:.....	70
4.3.3 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH TRAINEES.....	71
4.3.4 CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS WITH EMPLOYERS.....	72
<b>4.4. DATA REDUCTION, CODING AND ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>4.5 ESTABLISHING SCIENTIFIC RIGOUR.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4.6. LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS OF METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>82</b>
4.6.1 SMALL PARTICIPANT SAMPLE.....	82
4.6.2 MALE VS FEMALE RATIO OF PARTICIPANTS.....	82
4.6.3. IMPAIRMENT TYPE.....	82
4.6.4 SMALL EMPLOYER SAMPLE.....	83
<b>4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>4.8 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b><u>CHAPTER 5.....</u></b>	<b><u>86</u></b>

5.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER.....	86
5.2 RATIONALE .....	86
5.3 FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER.....	86
5.4 PRESENTATION OF CHAPTER .....	86
5.5 TRAVERSING DISABILITY: BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT .....	87
5.5.1 ABSTRACT.....	87
5.5.2 INTRODUCTION .....	88
5.5.3 METHODS.....	94
5.5.4 FINDINGS: EXPERIENCES OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CONNECTIONS DURING TRAINING.....	95
5.5.5 DISCUSSION: INDICATORS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	102
5.5.6 CONCLUSION .....	107
<b><u>CHAPTER 6.....</u></b>	<b><u>109</u></b>
6.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER.....	109
6.2 RATIONALE .....	109
6.3 FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER.....	109
6.4 PRESENTATION OF CHAPTER .....	110
6.5 TRAVERSING DISABILITY: EVALUATING DATABASE INFORMATION TO INFORM RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. ....	111
6.5.1 ABSTRACT.....	111
6.5.2 INTRODUCTION .....	113
6.5.3 METHODS.....	116
6.5.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....	118
6.5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	127
6.5.6. CONCLUSION.....	129
<b><u>CHAPTER 7.....</u></b>	<b><u>131</u></b>
7.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER.....	131

7.2 RATIONALE .....	131
7.3 FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER.....	131
7.4 PRESENTATION OF CHAPTER .....	131
<b><u>7.5 TRAVERSING DISABILITY: EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES OF DISABILITY INCLUSION</u></b> .....	<b>133</b>
7.5.1 ABSTRACT .....	133
7.5.2 INTRODUCTION .....	134
7.5.3 METHODS .....	139
7.5.4 FINDINGS.....	140
7.5.5 DISCUSSION .....	147
7.5.6 CONCLUSION .....	148
<b><u>CHAPTER 8.....</u></b>	<b>150</b>
<b><u>SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY .....</u></b>	<b>150</b>
8.1 INTRODUCTION .....	150
8.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES .....	150
8.3 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS.....	151
8.3.1 AUXILIARY TRAINING OUTCOMES VERSUS EMPLOYMENT IMPERATIVES .....	151
8.3.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE TRANSITIONS FROM TRAINING TO EMPLOYMENT .....	153
8.3.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND INTERSECTIONALITY .....	154
8.3.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....	157
8.4 STUDY THESIS .....	159
8.4.1 DISPLACING THE COLONIAL HEGEMONY OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT .....	159
8.4.2 ALIGNING UBUNTU AND SOCIAL CAPITAL TO INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES .....	164
8.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	166
8.5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	166
8.5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING PROGRAMMES.....	167
8.5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS .....	168

8.5.4	IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	168
8.5.5	IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION PROFESSIONALS .....	169
8.6.6	IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, DISABLED PERSONS ORGANISATIONS AND DISABILITY ACTIVISTS .....	170
<b>8.7</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>8.8</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS .....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>		<b>174</b>

**APPENDICES .....** **198**

<b>APPENDIX A.1:</b>	<b>INFORMATION SHEET .....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>APPENDIX A.2:</b>	<b>CONSENT FORM .....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>APPENDIX B:</b>	<b>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....</b>	<b>201</b>
	<b>IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW TRIGGER QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>APPENDIX C:</b>	<b>TRAINING PROVIDER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.....</b>	<b>202</b>
	<b>IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW TRIGGER QUESTIONS: TRAINING PROVIDERS.....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>APPENDIX D:</b>	<b>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EMPLOYERS.....</b>	<b>203</b>
	<b>CRITICAL CONVERSATION GUIDE: EMPLOYERS .....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>APPENDIX E:</b>	<b>PERSONAL REFLECTIVE JOURNAL.....</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>APPENDIX F:</b>	<b>PERMISSION TO GAIN ACCESS TO QAWC .....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>APPENDIX G:</b>	<b>PERMISSION TO CONTACT TRAINEES.....</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>APPENDIX H:</b>	<b>PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT .....</b>	<b>210</b>

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 3.1	Diagrammatic representation of the tenets of Critical Disability Theory	47
Figure 3.2	Diagrammatic illustration of Social Capital Theory	52
Figure 3.3	Conceptual Framework for Disability Inclusive Employment Practices	59
Figure 4.1	Ensuring Rigour	79
Figure 5.1	Indicators of Social Capital for Persons with Disabilities Framework	85
Figure 6.1	Ethnic Categories of Trainees	120

Figure 6.2 Trainees' Mother Tongues	121
Figure 6.3 Gender of Trainees	122
Figure 6.4. Impairments of persons who undertook training between 2015-2017	123
Figure 8.1 A model for disability inclusive employment practices for the South African Context	159

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Application of Case Study Methodology	64
Table 4.2 Potential Participants identified from databases	67
Table 4.3 List of participants	67
Table 4.4 Sources of Data and Process of Data Analysis	76

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CDT</b>	Critical Disability Theory
<b>DHET</b>	Department of Higher Education and Training
<b>DIA</b>	Disability Innovations Africa
<b>DoL</b>	Department of Labour
<b>DPO</b>	Disabled Persons Organisation
<b>DSD</b>	Department of Social Development
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>NCPPDSA</b>	National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities South Africa
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OT</b>	Occupational Therapy
<b>QASA</b>	QuadPara Association of South Africa
<b>QAWC</b>	QuadPara Western Cape
<b>SCT</b>	Social Capital Theory
<b>SETA</b>	Sector Education and Training Authority
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCRPD</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

### **Disability**

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the full and efficient participation in society on an equal basis with others (CRPD, 2006).

### **Economic Empowerment**

This is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011).

### **Economic Inclusion**

Everyone has the right to work, and Governments are obliged to take progressive measures to safeguard this right. Everyone in a State is entitled to treatment equal to that enjoyed by citizens in the realm of employment and work (UNESCO, 2017).

### **Employability**

Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful (Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007).

### **Employment**

Employment is a relationship between two parties, based on a contract where work is paid for. One party may be a corporation, for profit, not-for-profit organization, or co-operative and is the employer, while the other is the employee. Persons employed in the sense of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are those who worked for any amount of time, if only for one hour, in the course of the reference week (ILO, 2016).

## **Hegemony**

Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas. Hegemony refers to the relatively dominant position of a certain set of ideas and their related propensity to become common and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the distribution and expression of alternative ideas (Rosamund, 2016).

## **Inclusion**

Inclusion means that all people, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or health care needs, have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of their communities; participate in recreational activities; be employed in work that pays competitive wages and have careers that use their capacities to the fullest (Institute for Community Inclusion, 2020).

## **Livelihoods**

A livelihood is made up of the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Serrat, 2017).

## **Participation**

Participation is about the ways in which citizens exercise influence and have control over the decisions that affect them (Devas and Grant 2003).

## **Social Capital**

Social capital is a collective asset in the form of shared norms, values, beliefs, trust, networks, social relations, and institutions that facilitate cooperation and collective action for mutual benefits (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009).

## RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

As an occupational therapist, I have always been interested in working with persons with disabilities in the realm of education, training and employment. I have spent much of my career supporting persons with disabilities in education and employment, through using inclusive education strategies, educator training and employer engagement in order to facilitate the transition of persons with disabilities from education and training institutions to employment. I graduated with a Bachelor of Social Science degree (with Majors in English, Psychology and Industrial Sociology) in 2000, a BSc. Occupational Therapy Honours degree in 2004 and a Masters in Education Degree in 2013, before embarking on my Doctoral Degree in 2015. I have been employed as a clinical educator in the Division of Occupational Therapy at the University of Cape Town, where my mandate is to train future therapists to engage with persons with disabilities in terms of work through teaching and facilitating practice learning.

Persons with disabilities continue to face major barriers to participation and inclusion when it comes to employment, despite legislative mandates that have been put in place to improve the economic inclusion of this group.

While skills development training opportunities for persons with disabilities abound, employment after training is scarce. Additionally, given the context of South Africa, where the landscape of training and employment is diverse, it has been of great concern that persons with disabilities continue to struggle to reach their potential in work and to sustain themselves.

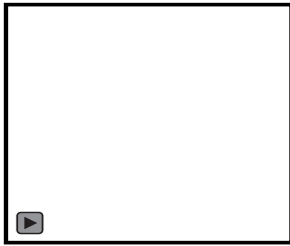
Disability Innovations Africa established a research partnership with the QuadaPara Association in 2015, supported by funding from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP). THRIP is a flagship research and development instrument of the DTI and the National Research Foundation (NRF). Through THRIP, government-academic-private sector partnerships are established to respond to the shortage of high-level technical skills required by industry and to improve the competitive edge of South Africa's industry.

This study is based on a cohort of persons who have acquired disabilities and face employment challenges, despite having undergone training. I was interested in understanding what

barriers and facilitators were faced by this group of people in terms of obtaining employment, given that they may have had a history of employment pre-disability and then further training post-disability. From a disability inclusion point of view, I believe that while offering opportunities (training, work or otherwise) to persons with disabilities is a vital part of improving societal justice, these opportunities need to be sustainable and effective in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities who endeavour to establish and sustain their livelihoods. These opportunities need to be relevant and meaningful to those who participate and should strive to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in a holistic manner.

## **WHAT, WHY, HOW AND SO WHAT?: A SYNOPSIS**

The following audio clip provides a brief synopsis of this study which was presented at a Ph.D. seminar in early 2020, in my own words:



Audio Clip 1\_ 16 April 2020

## STUDY ABSTRACT

**Background:** In South Africa and internationally, there is policy written and work done around empowering persons with disabilities to earn an income to become economically independent. Similarly, much has been written about the importance of social inclusion for persons with disabilities. However, very little is known about how persons with disabilities use education and training opportunities to advance their social capital in the South African context through being economically empowered.

The ultimate goal of education is to obtain and maintain gainful employment but historically, work and disability were mutually exclusive (Howard, 2005). Ville (2005) suggests that while there are studies around the unemployment of persons with disabilities, few examine the experiences of these persons as players in their own lives. The focus of this qualitative study is to explore how persons with disabilities advance their social capital through participation in auxiliary (non-formal) education and training programmes that prepare them for employment, or as a pathway to economic inclusion or employment. This knowledge will inform training providers providing training to persons with disabilities at various levels, potential employers as well as persons with disabilities, on how skills development can include processes that would encourage both social and economic inclusion.

**Aim:** The study aimed to critically examine the experiences of persons with disabilities who participated in the auxiliary programme to determine whether and to what extent it has strengthened and expanded their social capital to advance their opportunities for economic inclusion and/or employment.

**Objectives:** The objectives of the study were to:

- Explore how skills development programmes facilitate economic inclusion and/ or employment for persons with disabilities and why persons with disabilities engage in skills development opportunities;
- Describe the profiles of persons with disabilities who undertake skills development opportunities, exploring how database information is and can be used to inform the transition to employment or economic inclusion for persons with disabilities;

- Identify features of social capital evident in employers' perspectives on the employment of persons with disabilities.

**Methodology:** An intrinsic exploratory case study design was used. Case study design provided contextual boundedness and situatedness to the research. Data was collected from databases developed and utilised by the QuadPara Association of South Africa that contained demographic and training information of participants. In-depth interviews with eight participants who had completed skills development training contributed to the understanding of the experiences of persons with disabilities in seeking employment or economic inclusion following skills development. Critical conversations with employers of persons with disabilities contributed to the understanding of the perspectives and attitudes held in the employment sector, when considering the employment of persons with disabilities. Other methods of data collection included document analysis, naturalistic researcher observations and reflections.

The findings are presented as three separate papers. The first paper presents the voices of persons who have undertaken skills development training. This paper asserts that if training providers are able to recognize the determinants of social capital within their trainees, these determinants can be nurtured and developed alongside skills development in order to make their trainees more 'employable' as well as to facilitate the transition into the labour force more smoothly.

The second paper argues that while it is necessary that alternative, suitable and sustainable training pathways are developed and recognized, these programmes need to build and present the prospective employee's social capital. This paper presents how information, which is used to facilitate the transition into employment can be better utilised. A database containing only demographic information is seemingly insufficient in the face of the number of barriers to employment that persons with disabilities have to overcome.

The last paper in this thesis speaks to the role of employers in the development of social capital. In order to further understand and promote the employment of persons with disabilities, efforts have to be made to increase social capital in all of the factors that influence

the role of being a worker. To this end, individuals need to acknowledge and expand their own social capital, training providers need to support the expansion of networks and social capital through their engagements with trainees, and employers are required to look beyond the disability so that employment goals are shared and re-enforced.

**Synthesis and Conclusion:** This study has uncovered that current practices related to the employment of persons with disabilities works in a very colonial, top-down fashion and seem to have been uncritically exported/imported from the global North. This study has highlighted the absence of the African concept of "*Ubuntu*" - like interaction, which emphasises the self as part of others. In order to use social capital for mutual benefit, the employment of persons with disabilities must look different and have different considerations. A decolonial framework, which places less emphasis on practices used in the global North, will improve employment practices for persons with disabilities, as employers will be forced to look beyond the disability and relevant legislation only.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

Chapter One introduces this thesis by orientating the reader to the focus of this study. A rationale is provided throughout this chapter by presenting a broad background and situating this study within the South African Policy landscape.

#### 1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study is situated within the context of a well-known national, non-profit organisation that provides various services, including basic computer literacy (information and computer technology) training to persons with disabilities. The purpose of this information and computer technology (ICT) training is to provide skills development opportunities to persons with disabilities who may not readily be able to access mainstream offerings. As such, this training course could be described as an auxiliary means of obtaining marketable skills.

While marketable skills are important, many persons with disabilities do not have the same access as persons without disabilities to education and skills training, so the acquisition of such necessary skills is challenging (ILO, 2007). In the history and context of South Africa, it is vital to consider intersections of race, poverty, disability and access to education, employment and assistive resources. The picture is complex. In South Africa, living with a disability comprises suffering and ongoing socially begotten trauma (Watermeyer and Swartz, 2016). Persons with disabilities are usually found on the bottom-most rung of the socio-economic ladder and continue to endure extreme levels of exclusion in most areas of social life, such as education and employment (Watermeyer, 2019). Social accommodations are almost exclusively for the needs of nondisabled people. Watermeyer (2019) suggests that persons with disabilities, particularly in South Africa, suffer ongoing prejudice and stigmatization, in the form of patronizing and distancing, excluding sometimes odious responses from the social world. It is important to be cognisant of intersectionality, particularly when considering the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in becoming economically included or employed.

It is reported by the International Labour Organisation that, globally, there are 650 million persons with disabilities and that about 470 million of these people are of age to be employed (ILO,2007). The World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011) confirms that persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and generally earn less even when employed. Global data from the World Health Survey show that employment rates are lower for men with disabilities (53%) and women with disabilities (20%) than for non-disabled men (65%) and women (30%) (WHO, 2011). However, Kulkarni and Gopakumar (2014) comment that globally, persons with disabilities are prone to being unemployed or underemployed and subsequently generate lower incomes. It must be remembered that in South Africa, the official unemployment rate increased to 30.1% in the first quarter of 2020. It is predicted that South Africa's post-coronavirus unemployment rate will be as high as 50% (Businessstech, 2020). The rise of general unemployment is important to consider as this will directly impact the employment of persons with disabilities, who are already prone to unemployment.

Kulkarni and Gopakumar (2014) postulate that persons with disabilities face fewer opportunities for career development and success as opposed to their able-bodied peers and their skills are often underdeveloped or under-utilized. In South Africa in particular, the public education system is limited in its capacity to accommodate the range of children and disabilities manifest. This limitation restricts the choices of educational pathways and subsequently employment opportunities that are accessible to persons with disabilities (Human Rights Watch, 2015). While some development to address this challenge and increase capacity has occurred in the basic education sector, it has not fully been transferred to further or higher education sectors (DHET, 2018).

### 1.3 STUDY CONTEXT

In response to the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities, the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) was established in 1978 (QASA, 2015). Disability Innovations Africa (DIA) in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town embarked on research related to employment equity for disabled persons, made possible by a THRIP grant through the National Research Foundation, in partnership with QASA in 2015. The purpose of the THRIP project was to carry out research on projects and programmes offered by the QuadPara Association of the Western Cape (QAWC), which is affiliated with QASA. QAWC offers

programmes that prepare persons with disabilities for employment. It was agreed that QAWC would collaborate with DIA and postgraduate students in organised research activities, which in this particular study relates to the digital village programmes run by QAWC.

QASA strives to be an effective co-ordinating, policy making and supporting organisation and has important relationships with national departments such as the Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities. QASA was established in 1978 as a non-profit organisation that strives to prevent spinal cord injury through high-profile information campaigns, as well as to protect and promote the interests of mainly persons with mobility impairments (QASA,2015). Being an organisation run by persons with disabilities, QASA also has strong affiliations with similar organisations such as Disabled Persons of South Africa (DPSA) and the National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPDPSA). Under the auspices of QASA, QAWC has developed strategies and business plans that address issues of rehabilitation, advocacy and access, as well as education and skills development for employment (QASA, 2015). QAWC endeavours to assist persons with disabilities, particularly those with mobility impairments, to lead independent lives with a decent standard of living, in areas ranging from personal care and assistive devices to adequate skills development and employment. To this end, three Digital Villages in major South African centres, namely, Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town have been developed. These centres offer an ICT programme that consists of basic computer literacy training. This training course is non-accredited (auxiliary) and is aimed at any person with a disability wanting to improve their existing skills or gain new skills.

While the above-mentioned model has elements of community and open learning, it prompts the question of whether such training is contributing to enhancing the economic inclusion and/or employment prospects of those who complete it, and whether or not these prospects advance social and economic inclusion for persons with disabilities.

#### 1.4 POLICY CONTEXT

The notion of the “right to work”, as affirmed by Article 27: Work and Employment of the CRPD (UN, 2006), encompasses the view that all people should have the opportunity to earn a living or become economically independent by freely choosing or accepting work. While South Africa has several pieces of legislation related to the empowerment of persons with

disabilities, the opportunities for persons with disabilities to be employed or to obtain sustainable livelihoods, are limited.

The current South African legislative backdrop, including the Employment Equity Act (Department of Labour/DoL, 1998), Social Assistance Act (DSD, 2004), Skills Development Act (DoL, 2009) and Skills Development Levy Act (DoL, 2009) and others, have helped create a sense of awareness of the education and training needs of persons with disabilities. However, the implementation of these policies has had a marginal impact on the lives of a majority of persons with disabilities in South Africa (Van Der Byl, 2014). Non-implementation has been associated with insufficient budgetary allocations, the unfamiliarity of civil servants charged with the responsibility of implementing these policies, and procedural impasses.

Article 24: Education, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) makes key statements around the issue of education for persons with disabilities. The South African National Government Report to the CRPD Special Rapporteur states that the current system is not satisfactorily providing skills development opportunities for persons with disabilities in order for them to enter the open labour market or to become small business owners (Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, 2013). The reason for this situation is attributed to the fact that training programmes failed to achieve equal access for persons with disabilities. Another point mentioned in the Country Report is the fact that persons with disabilities generally have low levels of formal education, which preclude them from entering post-school educational or training opportunities (Department of Women, Children and Persons with disabilities, 2013).

The CPRD puts a strong emphasis on education for all and on decent work (UN, 2006). In terms of Article 24: Education (UN, 2006), parties have to acknowledge the rights persons with disabilities have to education. The Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Guidelines (WHO 2010) and Article 24: Education, of the CRPD (UN 2006), both suggest that persons with disabilities should have access to education across the gamut of provision. Educational policy has a significant effect on employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Opini (2010) asserts that in order to secure employment in any country, adequate training and education are vital. The most important goal of an education system is to provide quality education that assists people in realizing their full potential and thereby make a meaningful

contribution to the economy of the country in which they work and participate in the society in which they live (Prinsloo, 2001). Gartrell (2010) states that if persons with disabilities do not possess sufficient education, which includes basic literacy skills, they are restricted to unskilled employment. According to the ILO, in the current knowledge-based society, persons with disabilities need to have an education in order to access decent employment opportunities and to compete in the open labour market. (ILO, 2007). Additionally, research has shown that the completion of any further education dramatically improves the opportunities for an individual to secure meaningful employment (Zafft, Hart and Zimbrich, 2004).

The Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System asserts that South Africa has been in the process of building an education and training system to meet the needs of a democratic society, overcoming unfair discrimination, expanding access to education and training opportunities to improving the quality of education in the post-school sector (DHET, 2018). It is estimated that about 7.5% of the South African population is disabled, which makes disability part of the transformative agendas of higher education institutions (DHET, 2018). However, if we are to interpret the intentions put forward by the Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System from an inclusive perspective, it seems the notion of community learning, open learning and the possibility of learning through diverse modes are ideal vehicles with which to address the education and training of persons with disabilities. It is in this sphere that opportunities such as QAWC's Digital Villages will feature. A focus of this study is to explore current interventions in place that make use of tools, processes and technology that would facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities as active members of their communities in terms of becoming economically empowered or employed.

### 1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research problem identified in this study relates to the fact that something more than just 'skills' is required for persons with disabilities to become economically included or to obtain employment. This study aimed to address this problem by uncovering what it is that would enhance the preparation for and maintenance of economic inclusion and/or employment for persons with disabilities.

While some persons with disabilities do access the various skill development opportunities available to them in the non-formal sector (i.e. non-accredited skills development opportunities), there is at present no data available on the way these programmes are experienced by participants and others. There is little evidence indicating whether these opportunities aid their efforts in obtaining employment or whether the principles that advance social inclusion are maintained outside of the training period. While persons with disabilities obtain skills that would allow them to obtain employment, are these skills in themselves sufficient to facilitate the transition into employment?

There appears to be very little consideration of what persons with disabilities themselves are able to contribute to their economic inclusion or how they are able to use their own social capital to facilitate economic inclusion and/or employment. Given that this particular type of non-formal training is unaccredited and the personal contributions of persons with disabilities to their economic inclusion are not understood, one is not able to determine the value of this particular type of non-formal of training for persons with disabilities in terms of improving economic inclusion and advancing the goal of improving social inclusion.

## 1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the possibilities that auxiliary skills development opportunities could provide for persons with disabilities as a pathway to economic inclusion and/or employment. The focus of this qualitative study is to explore how persons with disabilities advance their social capital through participation in auxiliary education and training programmes that prepare them for employment. If operationalized, it can be assumed that the auxiliary training programme in question aims to prepare persons with disabilities for employment. The purpose of this study is thus to add to the existing knowledge base around skills development for persons with disabilities, with a special focus on the development of social capital. Research is needed to uncover how the interplay of relevant policy objectives, skills development objectives and outcomes of upskilling necessary for economic inclusion and/or employment, advances the development of social capital and social inclusion for persons with disabilities.

## 1.7 RESEARCH QUESTION

Whether and to what extent does the auxiliary skills development programme offered by the QuadPara Association of the Western Cape build social capital in order to facilitate pathways to economic inclusion and/or employment for persons with disabilities?

### SUB-QUESTIONS

1. What value do auxiliary training opportunities add to skills acquisition opportunities for persons with disabilities, to facilitate access to and enhanced participation in economic inclusion and/or employment opportunities?
2. What are the factors that occur during skills development opportunities that potentially build social capital?
3. How can skills development opportunities be better used in advancing the economic inclusion and/or employment of persons with disabilities?

## 1.8 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to critically examine the experiences of persons with disabilities who participated in the auxiliary programme, to determine whether and to what extent it has strengthened and expanded their social capital to advance their opportunities for economic inclusion and/or employment.

### OBJECTIVES

- To explore how skills development programmes facilitate economic inclusion and/or employment for persons with disabilities and why persons with disabilities engage in skills development opportunities;
- To describe the profiles of persons with disabilities who undertake skills development opportunities, exploring how database information can be used to inform the transition to employment and/or economic inclusion for persons with disabilities;
- To identify features of social capital evident in employers' perspectives on the employment of persons with disabilities.

## 1.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The contribution to knowledge that this study aims to make is through the elements or markers that training and employment for persons with disabilities in South Africa, should aspire to or engage with, in order to ensure that barriers to human development and social inclusion can be adequately addressed in the pursuit of securing economic inclusion and/or employment. It is hoped that this study will provide employers a better understanding of how to successfully transition, integrate and retain persons with disabilities in employment. The employment sector has the advantage of becoming more competitive by developing an inclusive and diverse workforce through research. While industries and businesses are engaging in skills development and recruitment practices, they continue to do so with no opportunity to engage in research in the area of disability inclusion, which would enhance their human resource processes.

This study will provide a unique theoretical lens through which disability inclusive employment practices could be viewed and implemented. Critical disability theory and social capital theory espouse the notion that persons with disabilities and their social networks are to be equal champions in the journey towards their economic inclusion. This viewpoint has the potential to advocate for improved disability inclusive employment practices at governmental and policy-making levels. Furthermore, this study aims to highlight contributions, other than the transfer of skill, that Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can make in facilitating the transition of persons with disabilities into employment or into other areas of economic inclusion.

## 1.10 PRESENTATION OF THIS THESIS

This study is presented using a combination of chapters and papers submitted for publication. Following this chapter, Chapter Two presents literature aimed to further substantiate the research problem and presents a review of the literature as it relates to the education and further training for persons with disabilities, as well as the value of skills development in improving the employability of persons with disability.

Chapter Three presents my theoretical positioning in terms of an interpretive social justice paradigm, using Social Capital Theory and Critical Disability Theory as bases. This chapter

unpacks key theoretical constructs from Social Capital Theory and positions these within critical disability theory.

Chapter Four presents an account of how this study was conducted and details the methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter Five is presented as a paper that presents the findings and discussion relating to the first objective of this study. This paper explores how social capital is built through training opportunities and how this can be extended into the realm of employment. This article meets the objectives of how skills development programmes facilitate economic empowerment for persons with disabilities and explores why persons with disabilities engage in skills development opportunities.

Chapter Six is presented as a paper that presents the findings and discussion relating to the second objective of this study. This article explores the usefulness of using databases as a resource for the recruitment of persons with disabilities and focusses on meeting the objectives of this study which are to describe who undertakes skills development opportunities and how database information can be better utilised to inform the transition to employment and/or economic inclusion for persons with disability.

Chapter Seven is also presented as a paper and focuses on the findings and discussion related to the third objective of this study. This paper explores the roles of employers and employment in building social capital for persons with disabilities. This paper brings to the fore the elements of social capital that are most often crucial, but most often missed in the recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities in employment. This paper identifies features of social capital evident in employers' perspectives on the employment of persons with disabilities and provides a critical reflection on the value of skill development in obtaining employment for persons with disabilities in a South African context.

The eighth chapter is the synthesis of the study. This final chapter summarises the preceding chapters and integrates the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two, thereby showing how the research question has been answered and the research aim met. This chapter shares the conclusions and implications of this study. Given the nature of the

presentation of this study, some repetition is unavoidable. However, I have tried to limit repetition as far as possible. The papers reviewed for publication and included here met with the formatting requirements of different journals and are reproduced as is.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present research that has been done nationally and internationally on the employment and/or economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. The review will also aim to further identify the gaps in research around how persons with disabilities access the various skill development opportunities available to them and how this influences their employability. Literature sources have been drawn from local and international research within the disciplinary fields of education, psychology, disability studies, human resource management and social science. In compiling this review, I followed the following steps: 1) Conceptualising of the research problem; 2) Collection of literature via scholarly peer-reviewed journals, books, internet sources and e-books, and 3) Evaluation of the literature sources regarding their aims, methods, outcomes, and their relevance to the focus of this study. The information and knowledge gained from this initial evaluation were then considered and interpreted to further rationalise and situate the problem, identifying any gaps that would emphasise the need for the study.

#### 2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The sections that follow unpack and explain the theoretical and conceptual issues that impact upon the employment and/or economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

##### 2.2.1 THE RIGHT TO WORK

‘Work’ and ‘employment’ are terms that are used interchangeably in literature (Escorpizo, Miller, Trenaman and Smith, 2014). In this study, terms such as ‘employment’ and ‘economic inclusion’ are used to refer to the notion of engaging in activities that lead to financial gain. Article 27 of the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises “the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities” (UN:19,

2006). The International Labour Organisation makes special mention of a concept called 'decent work' (ILO, 2007). Decent work involves:

...opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (ILO:1, 2007).

Employment remains one the most important topics to have been studied in the realm of disability studies. Gainful employment helps to achieve economic self-sufficiency, but it is also considered a source of personal growth and is associated with social integration, life and financial satisfaction and better health (Pohlan, 2019; Anderson, Borisoff, Johnson, Stiens and Elliott, 2007). Gainful employment also provides individuals with financial resources needed for participating in community and social activities and represents a desirable social role and an activity through which an individual may affirm his or her own identity (Burchell and Wood, 2018; Araten-Bergman, Stein and Ashley, 2014). Employment has a significant positive impact on feelings of internal political efficacy, and a positive impact on civic skills for persons with disabilities, which in turn enables a wider range of opportunities for individuals to interact with others and to develop and enhance social networks (Araten-Bergman, *et al.*, 2014). They claim that information emanating from social networks could enhance job prospects, as well as access to social groups and activities.

The landscape of employment in Africa, and particularly employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa, is distinctive in that it is influenced by a history of apartheid, colonialism, conquest, neo-colonialism, and global capitalism (Grandin, 2018; Nwagbara, 2011). This history has heavily impacted human resource practices as well as the processes and practices around the employment of persons with disabilities.

Historically, in apartheid South Africa, the experiences of persons with disabilities were also the experiences of people living in a deeply divided and unequal society (Watermeyer, 2011; Dube, 2005). Inequalities and divisions between people were longstanding and arose from a political, economic and social system that aimed to keep people subservient and to deny them access to basic rights. For the majority of persons with disabilities, life under apartheid was

about struggling on a daily basis to cope with the poverty, deprivation and violence of the colonial system. These inequalities were worsened by their disability (Watermeyer, 2011; Dube, 2005). Persons with disabilities were discriminated against and marginalised because of their disability and their access to fundamental socio-economic rights such as employment, education and appropriate health and welfare services were restricted. Discrimination and marginalisation occurred because persons with disabilities, in general, were seen as people who were sick or in need of care, rather than as equal citizens with equal rights and responsibilities (Dube, 2005).

Post-apartheid South Africa has developed and enforced legislation to prevent discrimination (DoL, 1998). Despite legislative support to assuage discrimination, persons with disabilities continue to experience poverty, poor housing, short terms of employment, unemployment, social exclusion, abuse and overt discrimination (Bartram and Cavanagh, 2019). Fujimoto (2014) postulates that these factors impact on how persons with disabilities see and evaluate themselves and how they interact with work colleagues. Finding their unique self is complex for persons with disabilities and is delimited by challenges in accessing educational opportunities and workplace exclusion (Barnes and Mercer, 2005).

Recent scholarship on disability and political activism focuses on the notion of social inclusion, especially in the labour force, to promote disability as a positive identity (Heath, 2015). Despite the thrust towards inclusion, excessively large numbers of persons with disabilities worldwide in rich, middle-income, and poor countries continue to live in deep and widespread poverty (Organisation for Economic and Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2003; OECD, 2009; World Health Organization, 2011). This situation raises the question of whether, in a capitalist society, a focus on social inclusion could end poverty experienced by persons with disabilities?

### 2.2.2 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND DISABILITY

In order to acquire decent employment, persons with disabilities need to have access to education and skills development opportunities. In a knowledge-based society, this aspect is a key ingredient if persons with disabilities are going to have a competitive advantage (ILO, 2007). The notion of social capital is important in this arena in order to make the connections that would allow persons with disabilities to join networks of further education and/or

employment opportunities. Kanbur (2020) contends that educational inequality is instrumentally relevant to economic growth and poverty. He argues that economic inequality “creates” educational inequality, which in turn sustains economic inequality. Additionally, Kanbur suggests that policy should target general economic inequality as much as specific educational inequality (Kanbur,2020). In terms of this study, Kanbur supports the notion that unequal educational systems beget unequal levels of economic inclusion, which is the reality faced by the majority of persons with disabilities in South Africa.

The South African Report to the CRPD Special Rapporteur states that the current education system is not satisfactorily providing skills development opportunities for persons with disabilities in order for them to enter the open labour market or to become owners of small enterprises (Department of Women, Children and Persons with disabilities, 2013). The reason for this situation is attributed to the fact that the available training programmes such as learnerships<sup>2</sup>, apprenticeships and formal qualifications offered by higher institutions of learning have failed to achieve equal access for persons with disabilities (Van Niekerk, Engelbrecht and Shaw, 2017; Department of Social Development, 2015 and Lorenzo and Cramm, 2012). Another point mentioned in the Country Report is that persons with disabilities generally have low levels of formal education, at both basic and further levels, which preclude them from entering further educational or skills development opportunities (Lorenzo *et al.*, 2012).

In South Africa in particular, strides have been made in the arena of basic education (Early Childhood Development phase through to school leaving certificates) with the implementation of Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (2001). Development in terms of inclusion has been considered in the post-school and higher education sectors, although implementation of change has been slow (DHET, 2015). At present, the South African Education and Training system is limited, in terms of resources and infrastructure, in its capacity to accommodate the students with different disabilities that it is faced with. This

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<sup>2</sup>A learnership is a structured learning process for gaining theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the workplace leading to a qualification registered on the NQF. A learnership is outcomes-based and not time-based and allows for recognition of prior learning (<http://www.merseta.org.za/>)

limitation constrains the choices of educational, training or re-training pathways that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

The ultimate goal of education or skills development is to obtain and maintain gainful employment, but historically work and disability were viewed as being mutually exclusive (Howard, Nieuwenhusen and Saleeby, 2008). Education, training or up-skilling for most people, including persons with disabilities, holds the prospect of obtaining or maintaining gainful employment and being able to meaningfully contribute to their communities and to the economy of the country.

### 2.2.3 WORK AND DISABILITY

While the gains of learning opportunities vary according to identity markers, class and ethnic grouping, it seems that there is more at play when considering the personal employment trajectories of persons with disabilities. These trajectories cannot easily be mapped out as there are several factors at play when considering how persons with disabilities become economically and otherwise included (Tesemma, 2014). At this juncture, it appears that there is a void in terms of economic participation for persons with disabilities, which the DPO in question in this study is attempting to address through ICT training. However, when considering the multitude of factors that contribute to the development of human capital, and especially social capital for the advancement of social inclusion, training on its own appears inadequate.

When considering training opportunities in South Africa, significant economic investment has taken place over the past decade or so. New methods of educational delivery have emerged, ranging from occupationally based skills, programmes, work-integrated learning opportunities, learnerships, as well as the recognition by qualification authorities of what is termed 'non-formal' education (Macha and Kadakia, 2017). Legislation such as the Skills Development Act (DoL, 2009) and Employment Equity Act (DoL, 1998) have been developed and implemented to address the diverse training needs of the population. These have all been established and financially supported by and large by the South African Government and in part subsidized by the private sector. In terms of disability, financial incentives have been proposed to employers to train and employ persons with disabilities— albeit in an unsustainable manner. While it is thought that training and employment are strategies to

economically uplift and include persons with disabilities, this thinking may not be realistic in the face of enormous unemployment and barriers to educational opportunities to the South African population at large.

#### 2.2.4 ECONOMIC INCLUSION AND EMPLOYMENT

There have been studies that have endeavored to identify the predictors that would lead to persons with disabilities obtaining and maintaining gainful employment. A study completed by Murphy and Young (2005) in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia, found that the best predictors were clearly gender and work attitude. Injury variables were not helpful in explaining participants' post-injury work-rate. They suggest that the results indicated that females who work post-injury do not do so at the same rate as do their male peers. This lowered rate of returning to work activities is attributed to the possibility that females are more likely to take on non-work responsibilities that are incompatible with sustained employment.

In response to the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities, DPOs have developed strategies and business plans that address issues of rehabilitation, advocacy, access as well as education, skills development and employment (ILO, 2007). These organizations assist persons with disabilities to lead independent lives with a decent standard of living, in areas ranging from personal care and assistive devices to adequate skills development and employment. While the endeavours of these DPOs are commendable, it prompts the question of whether training or skills development aimed specifically at persons with disabilities are contributing to enhancing the economic inclusion prospects of those who complete it and whether or not these prospects advance social inclusion for persons with disability.

In the area of disability employment, Hashim and Wok (2014) suggest a positive relationship between work values held prior to disability and work values following disability. These authors claim that persons with disabilities demonstrate organisational loyalty and commitment if the organization shows the desire to restructure its job design to suit to the needs of employees with disabilities. Murphy and Young (2005) conclude that while work attitude accounted for the greatest proportion of explained variance in their study, the most significant findings were that of post-injury education, pre-injury employment and locus of

control<sup>3</sup>when exercising their choice in terms of obtaining and retaining employment were found to relate significantly to labour force status.

A study conducted in the Netherlands in 2014, identified three distinct employment trajectories for persons who have acquired disabilities, namely steady employment, low employment and no employment (Ferdiana, Post, Hoekstra, van de Woude, van der Klink and Bultman, 2014). This study found that 60% of the participants displayed a low employment trajectory and only 20% had a steady employment trajectory (Ferdiana *et al.*, 2014). It was further found that the secondary education level and functional level of the individual was the discriminating factor between steady employment and low employment trajectories, where secondary education predicted steady employment (Ferdiana, Post, Hoekstra, van de Woude, van der Klink and Bultman,2014). The findings proposed that people with higher education have more employment options and are less limited by physical impairment in performing work tasks in employment (Ferdiana *et al.*, 2014). It is suggested that post-injury, persons with disabilities are more likely to be employed in occupations with less physical demands such as administrative or managerial occupations, which usually require higher education levels (Ferdiana *et al.*, 2014). It is postulated that persons with a higher educational level are also more autonomous and motivated to obtain gainful employment.

The findings of the above-mentioned study correlate with the findings of a three-year analytical study conducted in the United States, 14 years previously, by Hess, Ripley, McKinley and Tewksbury (2000). They found that education was a consistently predictive variable and participants with less than a high school education had a significantly higher unemployment rate. They explain this finding by suggesting that more education reflects a higher socioeconomic status and perhaps increases the range of jobs available to individuals.

Escorpizo, Trenaman and Smith (2014) showed the importance of ethnicity in predicting employment outcomes after acquiring an impairment. It was found that minority groups were less likely to be employed. A systematic review conducted in 2014 by Escorpizo *et al.* found 20 modifiable and 12 non-modifiable factors that had been investigated in the context

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<sup>3</sup> Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they have control over the outcome of events in their lives (Rotter, 1954)

of employment following spinal cord injuries. Among the evidence collected, there was level 5 evidence that indicated that being Caucasian, more positively influences employment opportunities after spinal cord injuries. This finding relates to the current realities of persons with disabilities from minority groups, particularly in South Africa, where the discriminatory legacies of the apartheid regime still persist.

Ottomanelli and Lind (2009) found that in the United States, African American men have experienced sociocultural barriers in returning to work. These barriers included insufficient accessible transportation and fear of losing social security and medical benefits, having no time off for health-related concerns; difficulty accessing healthcare and the perceived biases held by employers and others in the workforce about the capabilities of persons with disabilities. Other barriers such as chronic pain and the perceived poor attitude of rehabilitation professionals were also noted.

This finding could be relevant in the South African context, where minority groups had and still have enormous challenges in obtaining work due to the legislative frameworks and deeply layered climate of discrimination and disregard for intersectionality, that preceded the abolishment of the apartheid government. It can be said that these challenges still continue for persons with disabilities, who are part of a minority group.

It appears that race is found to be a significant variable with respect to returning to work. Van Niekerk (2008), Williams, Priest and Anderson (2016) and Gordon, Booysen and Mbonigaba (2020) all suggest that in the South African context, there is a correlation between race and socioeconomic status. Given the South African landscape, the socio-economically disadvantaged are discriminated against across the continuum of access to health and employment services. Oosthuizen (2019) highlights the stark and persistent racial inequalities in South Africa. These inequalities are critical to consider when considering the patterns of resource flows between the state and individuals, and between individuals and households. Oosthuizen (2019) notes that variations by race in access to jobs, the degree of reliance on social grants, and the share of income deriving from asset ownership, among other factors, influence the economic lifecycle of individuals. She suggests that the lower level of education that minority individuals have as a group indicates that these individuals were most likely engaged in jobs that were more physically demanding before injury.

Hess, Ripley, McKinley and Tewksbury (2000) also mention that the individuals' age at onset of injury is a notable variable when considering factors pertaining to return to work. It was found that the younger individuals were at the time of injury, the more likely they were to return to employment. An explanation offered for this finding is that younger individuals may be more willing to undergo retraining than older individuals. Another interesting predictor mentioned by these authors is that of marital status. The explanation offered in this instance is that a strong social network is associated with successful return to work attempts.

Persons with disabilities are able and do re-enter the world of work. Employment or re-employment continues to be a realistic goal. Krause and Anson (2009) assert that it is mandatory that public health researchers and institutions identify policies, strategies and practices that can enhance return to work opportunities for persons with disabilities in order to better position disability within a normative society.

#### 2.2.5 EMPLOYABILITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The current South African legislative backdrop, including the Employment Equity Act (DoL, 1998), Social Assistance Act (Department of Social Development, 2004), Skills Development Act (DoL, 2009) and Skills Development Levy Act (DoL, 2009), have helped create a sense of awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities. However, the implementation of these policies has had a marginal impact on the lives of most persons with disabilities in South Africa (Dube, 2005). Slow implementation has been associated with insufficient budgetary allocations, the unfamiliarity with disability of civil servants charged with the responsibility of implementing these policies, and procedural impasses. Obtaining employment poses a significant challenge to those with disabilities, despite the fact that many countries such as Australia, the USA, the United Kingdom and South Africa have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities(2006), which includes principles for inclusion and participative rights.

Much work has been done in South Africa and globally, in the sense that management processes, recruitment processes and employer attitudes are transforming and becoming more inclusive (Bartram and Cavanagh, 2019). There is also greater public awareness regarding the rights of persons with disabilities, but it is still important to know more about

how employers can promote and facilitate the transitions between education, skills development, inclusion and full participation in work, for persons with disabilities.

Given the historical data in South Africa, persons with disabilities were less likely to be employed than their non-disabled counterparts (Graham, Moodley, Ismail, Munsaka, Ross and Scheider, 2014). Graham, *et. al* (2014) established that education, health, employment and social protection are key in achieving functioning, but it has come to the fore that social capital serves to enable people to achieve desired functioning. Where people are able to access support networks, such as possibly being included in a database that is used for programme development and recruitment, these networks can be mobilized to achieve certain outcomes. However, it must be noted that persons with disabilities historically have had less access to education, suitable health care and employment (SAHRC, 2017). Their inclusion on various platforms and their ability to develop social capital has been hindered (see Chapter 3.3.4).

## 2.3 CONCLUSION

The ability of South African persons with disabilities to procure employment or economic inclusions has been limited by living in poverty, by living in a culture that denies equal opportunities and by living in a society that discriminates against them. Despite South Africa having a constitution and associated policy that guarantees equality and access to employment for persons with disabilities, many still experience enormous challenges when attempting to enter and retain employment (Potigeter, 2017, Lorenzo *et. al*, 2013). Entry and integration into employment or economic inclusion takes more than the implementation of individual and siloed policies. Fundamental issues such as access to education and training, skills development, and the persistent discriminatory legacies of apartheid South Africa, particularly in the area of work and employment, need to be considered and addressed in order to effect sustainable, positive change.

While this chapter has unpacked the challenges and limitations that persons with disabilities face in relation to economic inclusion and/or employment it has also uncovered the need to look beyond current practices and beliefs to improve the agency of persons with disabilities to become economically included and employed.

Chapter Three details the theoretical framework for this study, which focusses on looking beyond policy and legislation to consider the agency and social capital of South African persons with disabilities in obtaining and retaining employment and/or economic inclusion.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social justice refers to "justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society" (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). Putnam, Wasserman, Blustein and Asch (2019), state that the relationship between disability and social justice has received much attention because disability has been seen by many as an example of 'unchosen' disadvantage. The study of disability is innately situated in the study of social justice and the continuing melee of persons with disabilities for dignity, citizenship rights, and access to the marketplace (Pollard and Lowen, 2010). Situated within the interpretive philosophical paradigm is social justice theory. Social justice theory is ontologically situated in the belief that reality is based on power and identity, and individuals are privileged or oppressed based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or disability (Creswell, 2013). My epistemological belief in this study is that, in researching the social structures, the nature of freedom and oppression, power and control, particularly in the sphere of disability inclusive employment, the realities of how persons with disabilities become economically included can be changed.

Within the family of social justice theories lies the cohort of theory usually applied to the study of disability. I have chosen to frame this study by bringing together Critical Disability Theory and Social Capital Theory, as the latter is not often applied to persons with disabilities. By using these two theories, the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in obtaining employment and/or economic inclusion are highlighted, but in so doing, the combination of these theories also offer possible solutions to the challenges in disability inclusive employment that are explored in this study.

### 3.2 CRITICAL DISABILITY THEORY

Thomas (2004:28) conceptualises disability as a “quality and product of the social relationships between those with and those without impairment in society, or more accurately, between those socially constructed problematically different because of a significant bodily and/or cognitive variation from the norm and those who meet the cultural criteria of embodied normality”. The challenge, as Thomas indicates, is to theorise why and how it is that non-disabled individuals and groups have relative power, while those with disabilities are relatively powerless.

Hosking (2008) asserts that Critical Disability Theory adopts a version of the social model of disability that is based on the following principles: (1) disability is a social construct and not only the inevitable consequence of impairment; (2) disability is best characterised as a complex interrelationship between impairment, individual response to impairment, and the social environment, and (3) the social disadvantage experienced by persons with disabilities is caused by the physical, institutional and attitudinal (together, the ‘social’) environment which fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of ‘normalcy’. As such, critical disability theory (CDT) refers to the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and attempts to change the circumstances under which oppressed subjects live through critical, intersectional analysis (Hosking, 2008). Important in this broad approach is the notion that persons with disabilities are themselves accountable for this change, to some extent (Minich, 2016). CDT is purposely political in that it is intent on supporting societal transformation so that persons with disabilities in all their diversity are equal participants in their communities. It presents a theoretical framework to understand the relationship between impairment, disability and society and to infuse the interests of persons with disabilities into all policy arenas (Hosking, 2008).

Critical Disability Theory, as a member of the critical theory family, is a theoretical approach to the concept of disability that is synchronously explanatory, practical and normative (Hosking, 2008). This approach offsets the contributions of impairment, personal responses to impairment and the barriers imposed by the social environment to the concept of disability. Critical Disability Theory’s central concerns with peoples’ individual rights to autonomy and social rights to full participation in society are reflected in the tension between the social

welfare- and rights-based approaches to disability policy (Hosking, 2008). While CDT does not reject liberal rights, it exposes the ways in which liberal rights theory has unsuccessfully responded to the needs and interests of people individually and collectively by failing to incorporate the diversity of the disabled community within the scope of its conception of equality (Hosking, 2008). A goal of CDT is to challenge assumptions and presumptions so that persons with disabilities can participate more meaningfully in society (Devlin and Pothier, 2006). CDT privileges the stories of persons with disabilities and gives them a voice, where traditionally, the voices of persons with disabilities who contest mainstream conceptions of disability and the potential and role of persons with disabilities, have been suppressed and marginalized (Hosking, 2008).

Critical Disability Theory aspires to disturb dominant ideas and to bring about social change through emancipation from hegemonic ideologies which structure personal consciousness, representations, social relations, and practices (Egilson, Ólafsdóttir, Ingimarsdóttir, Haraldsdóttir, Jóhannsdóttir, Gibson, and Hardonk, 2021). Egilson et. al (2021) suggest that new lines of enquiry are necessary in order to consider the shared experiences of persons with disabilities and that persistent attention be directed at their historical, social, cultural, and economic contexts. Flynn (2021) also asserts that critical disability theory is trans-disciplinary and operates intersectionally. She agrees with other authors that CDT repudiates an exclusively biological, individualised and medicalised interpretation of disablement but rather questions conceptions of able-bodiedness and ableism (Flynn 2021,). The approach of CDT is complex, multifaceted and framed by a process of “becoming’ rather than ‘being’ (Flynn, 2021).

Further to the notion of CDT operating at an intersectional level, Dirth and Adams (2019) assert that using CDT as an analytical lens is a possible decolonial strategy, as it considers the intersection of disability with race, gender, class and culture. These marginalised positions have revealed the individualist constructions of people and actions that have been assumed by the Psychological Sciences and the dominant perspectives of Disability Studies. In essence, CDT can be utilised to denaturalise hegemonic understandings of ability through imputing the notion of intersectionality (Dirth and Adams, 2019). A more systemic understanding of disability allows consideration of issues beyond barriers that disable, to elucidate socially

constructed advantages, including technologies, infrastructures and human networks that ratify ableism (Dirth and Adams, 2019, Hall, 2019 and Campbell, 2012). Ableism shapes our world and produces disability (Hall, 2019). The shift from a view of disablism to a perspective of ableism allows for solutions to social inequality that move beyond increased tolerance of and access for persons with disabilities, and which expose and dislocate the ableist cornerstones of conventional institutions( Dirth and Adams, 2019).

Hall (2019) also purports that CDT is able to challenge traditional Disability Studies thereby undertaking work, which is transformative, intersectional, and coalitional. The assimilated and concealed positions of policy, culture, discourses, and institutions are revealed, through the lens of CDT. Hall (2019) further proposes that CDT examines ideologies, is suspicious of appearances and is able to identify false consciousnesses. As such, CDT is resolute to practices and inquiry that analyse the psychological foundations of oppression (Hall, 2019). Through challenging discourses of exclusion and misrepresentation, CDT proposes a direction towards a deeper understanding of disability and disablement. In describing how disability and ability are produced, rather than discovered.

Garland-Thompson (2002:4) suggests that “Disability—like gender—is a concept that pervades all aspects of culture: its structuring institutions, social identities, cultural practices, political positions, historical communities, and the shared human experience of embodiment”. As such “disability” becomes a system of social norms that classifies, grades and assigns value to ability, based on historical and cultural variables and systems (Hall, 2019, Schalk, 2017).

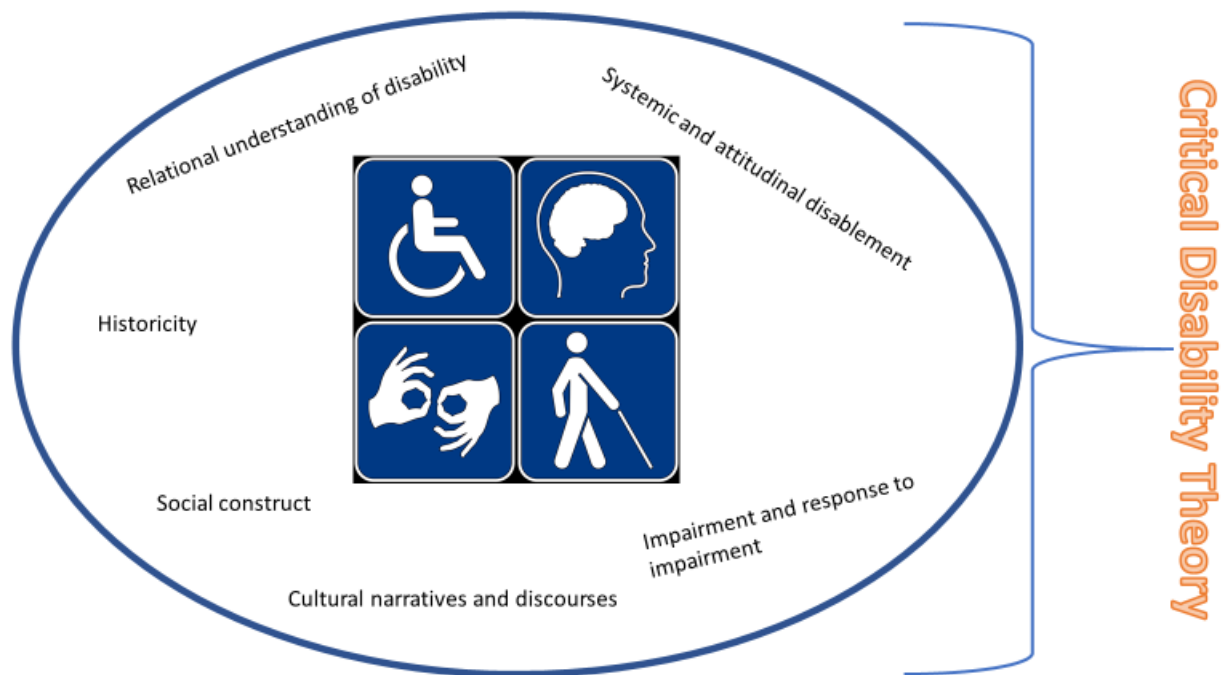


Figure 3.1: Diagrammatic representation of the tenets of Critical Disability Theory (Developed by Ebrahim, 2020)

Applying the tenets of CDT to this study, I seek to frame disability inclusive employment with the cultural narratives, historicity, systemic and attitudinal disablement, and response to impairment that has plagued endeavours to improve economic inclusion and/or employment prospects for persons with disabilities. I intend to hear the voices of the people who have experienced auxiliary ICT training with a view to employment, as well as understand the actions of their employers who purport to have the interests of persons with disabilities at heart. The following sections expound on the tenets of CDT as it may relate to the current landscape of disability employment.

### 3.2.1 CULTURAL NARRATIVES AND DISCOURSES

Hosking (2008) asserts that the words and images used to portray persons with disabilities have a direct effect on social attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Historically and currently, persons with disabilities have been and are portrayed as deficient, pitiable, wicked or malign, dangerous or valueless (Hosking,2008). Media and the culture industry still consistently reflect the negative attitude towards disabling impairments, as reflected in the

medical model (Hosking, 2008). The same negative attitude is perpetuated through other sectors, particularly the employment sector, which rates levels of productivity, for example, as a main indicator for employment. Should a person with disability not meet the desired level of productivity, they are considered deficient. Should employers not understand the nuances of mental illnesses, for example, employees can be perceived as pitiable or even dangerous. CDT examines how these negative attitudes are revealed through a discourse of personal tragedy with disability, rendering individuals powerless, vulnerable and dependent (Hosking, 2008).

### 3.2.2 HISTORICITY

Disability is a socially constructed phenomenon (Procknow, 2017). Rocco (2005) suggests that what is disabling is the historical and continuing political, social, economic, and cultural climates; the objectification of certain people, and how victimhood is conferred on perceived deficient or diseased bodies by society at large. Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) assert that because society is undergoing continual historical and sociocultural transformation, it cannot adequately be described without reference to changing social relations and cultural meanings. As such, these authors assert that CDT also recognises its own situatedness within a particular historical moment. Ever-changing social relations, cultural meanings and enactment require the awareness that terms of engagement could possibly change (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009).

Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) question the relevance to non-Western societies of history and concepts derived from the study of Western societies. The western notion of 'ableism' pervades multiple environments, not least the employment environment, that disadvantage persons with disabilities and creates the endless treadmill of unemployment, hardship, poverty and isolation that many persons with disabilities, particularly in South Africa, face (Watermeyer, 2019). Barriers created to uphold ableist attitudes interfere with the full and equitable participation of persons with disabilities (Procknow, 2017).

### 3.2.3 SYSTEMIC AND ATTITUDINAL DISABLEMENT

CDT recognises disability not as the inevitable consequence of impairment disadvantage experienced by persons with disabilities, but that disability is caused, among others, by a social environment that fails to meet the needs of people who do not match a society's expectation of 'normalcy' (Hosking, 2008). CDT is concerned with the transformation of society so that persons with disabilities, in all their diversity, are equal participants in their communities.

Procknow, Rocco and Munn (2017) contend that while persons with disabilities have a unique voice and a dissimilar way of being in the world from that of the able-bodied, their voices are silenced, ignored, and rendered incomprehensible. These authors allude to epistemic violence and point to the ways certain groups "within society are disqualified as legitimate "knowers" and where certain worldviews, knowledge and ways of knowing are disregarded (Procknow *et al.*, 2017). Systemic and attitudinal disablement promotes hegemony and renders persons with disabilities a sense of being an identity invalid. These authors further assert that epistemic violence is waged, and systemic disablement occurs when disabled knowledge is treated as something other than knowledge and other than legitimate.

CDT exposes hidden motivators and identifies how social attitudes are conditioned by the portrayal of disability. CDT advocates for the development of more effective policy responses to disability and stronger, democratic political control of social institutions, like places of work, that deal, in one way or another, with issues related to disability (Hosking, 2008).

### 3.2.4 RESPONSE TO IMPAIRMENT

Persons with disabilities have the right to autonomy and self-determination. Rocco (2005) advocates that disability must be transferred to "true minority group status, instead of viewed as an individual "anomaly". Self-determination means reclaiming control over one's life based on the choice of acceptable options that minimize reliance on others and not simply a process of "normalisation" (Procknow, 2017). When considering economic inclusion and/or employment, persons with disabilities should be allowed to make self-determined choices and have the opportunity to respond to their impairment in the way that they choose. How

persons with disabilities respond to their own impairment needs to be considered when considering the employment and/or economic inclusion opportunities that are available. At the same time, education systems, employment systems and opportunities for skills development and economic inclusion have to evaluate their response to an individual's impairment and not respond in homogenous, often hegemonic ways.

CDT's core concepts illustrate the difficulties inherent in living with disability and aspiring to be considered a multifaceted and productive person. Being considered a productive person is a step toward being offered development opportunities at work that will enhance skills (Procknow *et al.*, 2017). The expansion of social participation is regarded as a central principle of CDT. If the expansion of social networks is a central concept, then the influence of labour, social and economic development on health and well-being, require consideration.

### 3.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

In 2001, the World Health Organization developed the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), a framework for the conceptualization, classification and measurement of health and health-related domains within disability (WHO,2001). The ICF framework determines that the health of persons with disabilities is a multidimensional experience. Psychosocial influences, biological processes and environmental factors are equally enmeshed in how individuals experience their disability. The main tenet of this framework is that the ultimate goal for persons with disabilities is not merely to enhance function, but also to enhance their full inclusion and participation within their communities.

When viewing persons with disabilities through the lens of the ICF, the importance of social connections cannot be overemphasized. Social Capital Theory advocates that the support systems provided by networks of family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, acquaintances and other associations have value and offer benefits in concrete and measurable ways (Claridge, 2014). Putnam (2000) has written extensively on the concept of social capital and defines it as our relations to one another; the connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. It has been found that places of employment have been key sources of support and emotional well-being as they present opportunities for socialising and are often antecedents to the development of relationships

(Dimakos, Kamenetsky, Condeluci, Curran, Flaherty and Fromknecht, 2016). Work settings have been found to be the second most important social unit, following family (Potts, 2005). Workplace relationships have traditionally been among the most common forms of civic connectedness (Putnam, 2000). Social connections also impact career mobility: It is estimated that between 40-70% of those seeking employment find their jobs through others in their social network (Parris and Granger, 2008).

Global research has shown that persons with disabilities experience disparate physical and psychological health than persons without disabilities (WHO,2011). Disability theorists who have studied social capital and related constructs such as social support and community engagement have demonstrated the dispossession faced by persons with disabilities in these areas (Dimakos *et al.*, 2016). Absent from much of the research on the influence of social capital on persons with disabilities is any mention of skills development opportunities for persons with disabilities. Declining trends in civic engagement are especially relevant when applied to the disability community, which has historically experienced greater social isolation and lower social capital compared with the general population (SAHRC,2017). Given the importance of social relationships for economic empowerment, an exploration of the social lives of persons with disabilities is both appropriate and compelling.

There is a danger of homogenising persons with disabilities by assuming that social relationships are inconsequential to individuals with disabilities, either because they lack the ability to understand them or because they have too little in common with their able-bodied peers to develop meaningful relationships (Clever, Polatajko, Bond, Magalhaes and Nixon, 2018). However, persons with disabilities who have friends are more likely to have a positive self-concept, better communication skills, healthier emotional functioning, more positive coping strategies and a better grasp of life skills (Voight, 2009).

As a generic concept, Social Capital refers to relationships and social ties, with organizations and individuals that can expand one's choice-making opportunities, increase one's options, and lead to a more enriched quality of life (Gotto, Calkins, Jackson, Walker and Beckmann 2010). The authors explain it further as the personal and collective power of persons with

disabilities and organizations to further their full inclusion within the community, to access social support networks, and to increase their quality of life.

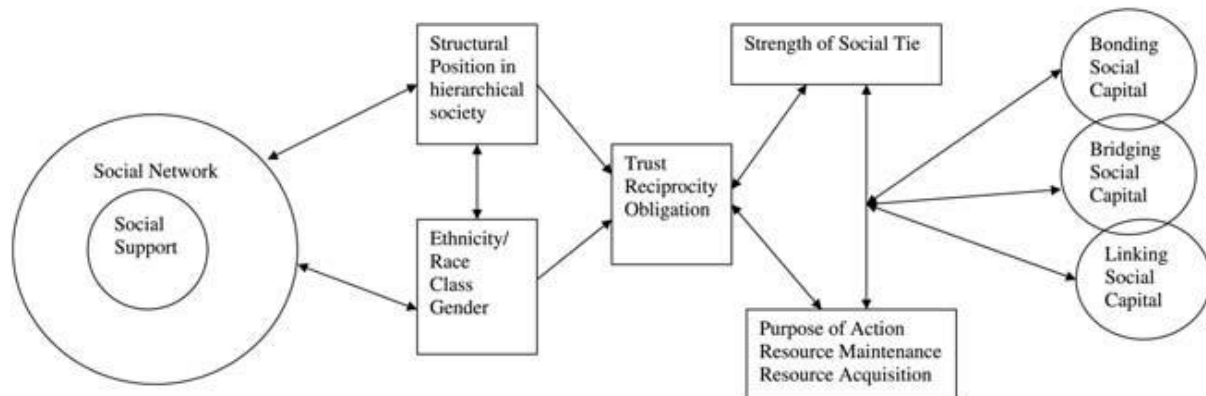


Figure 3.2: Diagrammatic illustration of Social Capital Theory (Maurer and Hawkins, 2012)

While prevalent in other disciplines (Maurer and Hawkins, 2012), social capital has been used less often in disability studies to inform practice or policy development. In this study, I would like to put forward that social capital is a useful construct for integrating the separate aspects of social networks and support as the by-product of social relationships, employment and/or economic inclusion. As can be seen in Figure 3.2, the notion of disability does not feature in the usual conceptualisation of social capital, whereas classifications of class, ethnicity and gender are highlighted.

It must be understood that the examination of social capital among persons with disabilities is a complex process, which is impacted by the considerable heterogeneity in disability type, including cause, course, and severity, as well as the wide range of different rehabilitation needs and objectives (Webber, 2005). As depicted in Figure 3.2, disability is not considered to be part of the structural position in a hierarchical society. Additionally, intersectional individual and structural factors such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status may interact to enhance or constrain access to social capital (Webber, 2005), over and above disability status.

Social capital has been found to be a multifaceted concept that is often amalgamated with constructs such as social inclusion, social support, social network, sense of community,

community connectedness, quality of life, and civic participation (Saltkjel and Malmberg-Heimonen, 2014). This conflation has resulted in considerable conceptual confusion and a general absence of consensus over what exactly constitutes social capital, and if and how it can be measured, particularly for persons with disabilities.

Zinnbauer (2007) indicates that minimal social interconnectedness is an important dimension of individual deprivation. He suggests social isolation poses risks to the health and well-being of the individual and social cohesion. He proposes that the strengthening of social capital within groups at risk of social isolation is an important aim for social inclusion efforts.

The argument for social capital can be supported in various domains (Zinnbauer, 2007). Firstly, social capital facilitates learning and skills acquisition. Learning is a social process and therefore social networks and communities of practices become spaces of informal learning which provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to share and discuss ideas to improve their work-related and other skills. Secondly, social capital creates economic opportunities and assists individuals with seeking employment, enhances their employability and generates the trust and reciprocity required for efficient markets. Thirdly, social capital can stimulate political participation and community engagement. Increased social capital allows persons with disabilities to live more self-determined lives.

From social science literature, it can be learned that it is the doings or engagement of individuals and groups (i.e. the exercise of social capital) in society that is the medium through which participation and ultimately inclusion can be attained (Howard, Nieuwenhusen and Saleeby, 2008). The authors describe social inclusion according to different constructs including social inclusion as capability, social inclusion as opportunity, social inclusion as citizenship, social inclusion as poverty reduction, social inclusion as connectedness and social inclusion as economic participation. All of these constructs show how social inclusion requires the exercise of social capital for participation and engagement. The following sections describe how social capital can be seen and identified in relation to the notions of human resources, human capital, disability and employment.

### 3.3.1 HUMAN RESOURCES, HUMAN CAPITAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

'Human resources' is a general term used to represent the 'people' element within organizations. Human capital management is an approach to employee staffing that perceives people as assets (human capital), whose current value can be measured and whose future value can be enhanced through investment (Mayo, 2012). The question is how to translate human resources into human capital and ultimately into human investment. Human capital includes the skills and knowledge we gather in formal and informal learning. Social capital, built through meaningful interactions between people, facilitates the learning and use of these skills and knowledge (Falk, 2000).

Sharma (2014) argues that the notions of human capital and social capital have garnered much attention recently. He suggests the reason for this attention is an increasing awareness of the fact that human resources and their interrelationships are crucial for the performance of any entity. From an economic perspective, capital is a purposive action, where resources are invested and returns in the market are expected. Drawing from this definition of economic capital, human capital would be, as Sharma suggests, an investment in individual knowledge and skills with expected returns in the marketplace. Following this definition, social capital would be an investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace. This link is important to note in that by investing in social capital development, the motivation for people to increase their productivity would increase and thus be of mutual benefit to both employee and employer. In so doing, employer and employee would share goals and missions, which is integral to the development of social capital.

Social Capital Theory contends that social relationships are resources that can lead to the development and accumulation of human capital (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009). The relationship between social capital and education has been explored in social theory by Coleman (1998) and Bourdieu (1986). These seminal works explore the interaction between human and social capital. Social capital as a concept is specifically defined in terms of networks, stressing the norm-laden nature of relationships within and between them. Woolcock (1998) broadly differentiated social capital in the following ways:

- bonding social capital, which refers to relations within or between relatively homogenous groups;

- bridging social capital, which refers to relationships within or between relatively homogenous groups, and
- linking social capital, which refers to relationships between people or groups at different hierarchical levels.

These categories are not mutually exclusive, but an analysis of how these categories interact within an organisation can lead to insights in determining the dynamics of knowledge creation and use (Schuller, 2007). Schuller suggests that a critical element of social capital is its deployment of trust. Trust promotes the sharing of ideas, the accumulation of knowledge by providing a normative and legal framework within which people can share ideas and the expectation so that such sharing results in improvements for the common good of the individuals within an organisation.

### 3.3.2 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital can be used to gain access to skills and knowledge in various ways and thus the relationship between lifelong learning and social capital development is mutually beneficial. Conversely, Field (2005) found that the relationship between social capital and lifelong learning could be negative. He suggests that community bonds might reinforce norms of low achievement. This consequence is illustrative of the impact of social capital in unequal societies and communities, such as those common in South Africa. Literature on schooling and social capital propose that strong networks and educational achievement are mutually reinforcing (Field, Schuller and Baron, 2000). The authors suggest that shared norms and stable social networks tend to promote both the cognitive and social development of people.

### 3.3.3 DISABILITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

In the realm of Disability Studies, the notion of social capital has the potential to play an important role in the lives of individuals with disabilities who are at high risk of being marginalized and experiencing diminished self-determination (Gotto *et al.*, 2010:9). The disability movement has consistently been working towards a notion of community living, community participation and inclusion and central to these ideals is the notion of community membership (Chenowith and Stehlik, 2004). It has become essential to create social places and spaces within communities where persons with disabilities are fully accepted and included and are furnished with the same opportunities for participation as non-disabled

people. Chenoweth and Stehlik (2004) argue that in order for this participation to occur, there has to be an accepted and shared understanding of what inclusion is and what it means.

In trying to position social capital in this study, it must be noted that physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the characters of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals. These connections include social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam, 2000: 19). Field (2005) suggests that the relationship between social capital and lifelong learning is quite complex. He argues that social capital may be defined as consisting of “social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them, and the value of these for achieving mutual goals” (Schuller, Baron and Field, 2000). By considering these ‘capitals’, it can be seen that all of these capitals are necessary in order to attain economic inclusion and sustainable livelihoods.

#### 3.3.4 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EMPLOYMENT

Few studies apply the concept of social capital to employment and economic inclusion. Aguilera (2020) studied the relationship between friendship networks and labour force participation as represented by employment and hours worked. It was found that friendship networks are generally positively related with increased labour force participation despite there being significant social capital differences based on race/ethnicity and gender. Aguilera asserts that social capital theory can be applied across a broader demographic spectrum, as the findings suggest that programmes that attempt to bring valuable labour market information to individuals and communities lacking employment-related information are likely to be effective in reducing inequality.

Brucker (2015) describes the relationship between social capital and employment as complex. She asserts that social capital can influence the attainment of employment, as increases in networks broaden opportunities for securing employment (Brucker, 2015). Employment can also increase social capital through the social ties that are created in the workplace (Trainor, Morningstar, Murray, and Kim, 2013). Participation in employment and differences in individual level earnings may be strongly affected by individual levels of social capital (Brucker, 2015). Brucker further found that disability can impact levels of social capital developed in the workplace, as workers who are ill or injured are more likely to be viewed as violating group norms and are less likely to be integrated into the workplace. While many existing policies

and practices attempt to increase employment for persons with disabilities by increasing human, built and economic capital, less attention is paid to understanding the relationship between social capital and employment outcomes, particularly for persons with disabilities. Brucker (2015) examined the interaction between employment and levels of social capital for persons with disabilities in the United States. She found that persons with disabilities have lower levels of social capital than persons without disabilities. Additionally, Brucker was of the opinion that persons with disabilities who are employed have higher levels of social capital than persons with disabilities who are unemployed.

Given that employment and education have both been proven to increase social capital and, consequently, participation for persons with disabilities, it seems necessary to explore how social capital is understood and can be applied within local employment and training contexts to increase the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

### 3.4 INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS

The theories explicated above have very significant commonalities in terms of intersectionality and interconnectedness. Crenshaw (1989) defines intersectionality as being about how certain aspects of who one is will either increase or decrease an individual's access to positive or negative things. It is suggested that "like many other social-justice ideas, intersectionality stands because it resonates with people's lives, and, because it resonates with people's lives, it's under attack" (Steinmetz, 2020:1). Meer and Müller (2017) are of the opinion that it is the intersection of multiple identities that impact upon individual worldviews and life-chances. Intersectionality is a way of understanding the divisions and hierarchies of society that may be used in various ways (Anthias, 2013).

Flynn (2021) suggests that within CDT, intersectionality features as a means to learn from other excluded groups such as minority groups. Shakespeare (2013) cautions against conflating disability with other sites of oppression, without reliable evidence, as inaccurate correlations may do more harm than good. Flynn (2021) posits that intersectionality is a central tenet of CDT in that it allows queer theory, postcolonialism, feminism and other transformative areas to be used to redress prevailing limitations of Disability Studies.

This literature review has shown that social capital provides an avenue for people to share valuable resources that benefit themselves, their families, their friends, and their communities. It has also been established that social structures influence an individual's place in society. Intersectional roles and identities have a great influence on the development of social capital (Lynn, 2003). Race, class, gender and disability as intersectional groupings, influence participation in community activities such as education and work and could influence the development of social capital.

From the perspective of the global south, Miji, Gcaza, MacLachlana and Hutton (2011) suggest that in Africa there might be a larger acceptance of diversity and social inclusiveness. These authors assert that the cultural principle of '*Ubuntu*' points to a social system of interrelatedness. As such, people's humanity is ascertained in terms of how they relate to everyone in their community as opposed to their personal qualities (Mji, et. al.,2011). The concept that 'a person is a person through other persons' well describes the ethos of '*Ubuntu*' philosophy, which contrasts markedly with northern views. In this light, the idea that persons with disabilities should aim for independence, is questionable (Mji, et al, 2011). '*Ubuntu*' is an interconnected way of being which points to people being part of a collective and who obtain their identities through being interdependent and by contributing to the development of others (Mji, et al, 2011, Mbigi and Maree, 1995).

Berghs (2017) articulates that in an '*Ubuntu*' model of disability, impairment becomes cognitive, sensory, mental, physical and spiritual diversity that has a myriad of shared meanings that society. Berghs (2017) asserts that disablement happens when that diversity becomes a difference proclaimed as atypical and can be seen, for example, when a person with a disability is seen as threatening the 'normal' social order. '*Ubuntu*' can be associated with a feeling of relatedness or interdependence, including the wider (intersectional) environment in which people exist (Berghs, 2017). Following this train of thought, disablement has to also include a diversity that is wider than just biological impairment but is also linked to understanding intersectionality and how the spiritual and ecological are connected (Berghs, 2017). Finally, Berghs (2017) asserts that it is '*Ubuntu*' that identifies African social ethical discourses and practices, which counter colonialism, disablement and oppression.

### 3.5 INTEGRATING CRITICAL DISABILITY THEORY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISABILITY INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

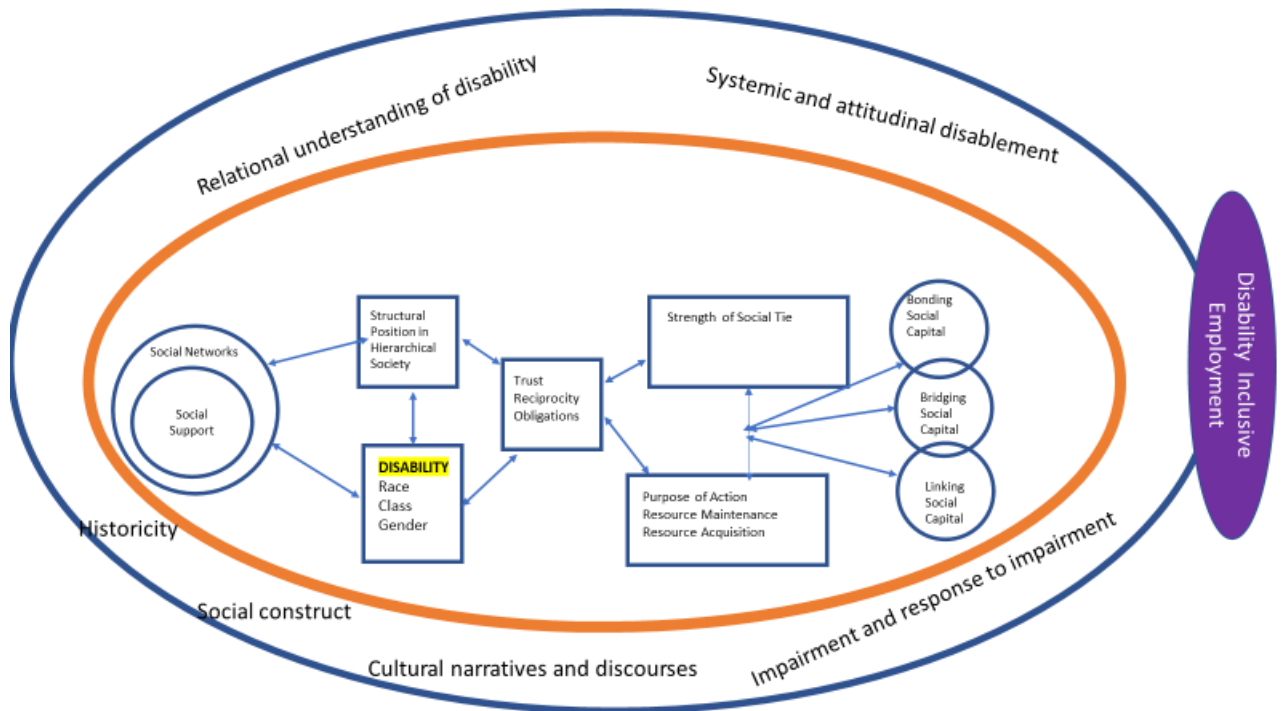


Figure 3.3: Integrating Conceptual Framework for Disability Inclusive Employment Practices (created by Ebrahim, 2020)

Figure 3.3 illustrates how I have integrated the notions of SCT and CDT in order to understand the complexities of disability inclusive employment. It can be said that CDT on its own provides context and space in which persons with disabilities' voices are foregrounded. Social Capital Theory presents a lens from which solutions to some challenges can be gleaned. In the sphere of employment, it is necessary that both the context and individualism of persons with disabilities are considered. Employing persons with disabilities inclusively requires that more than skill or infrastructure is considered.

Following the argument of Zinnbauer (2007), social capital facilitates learning and skills acquisition. However, learning and skills acquisition are subject to historicity, cultural narratives and discourses as well as systemic and attitudinal disablement. If social capital

creates economic opportunities and enhances their employability, then the influence of how disability is understood and how impairment is responded to, requires consideration. If social capital is to stimulate political participation and community engagement, a critical lens is required to expose hidden motivators and to identify how social attitudes are conditioned by the portrayal of disability. By using this critical lens, more effective policy responses to disability can be developed and there can be stronger, more democratic political control of social institutions, like places of work, which deal, in one way or another, with issues related to disability (Hosking, 2008).

This study argues that collectively, CDT and SCT demonstrate that expanding the social relationships of persons with disabilities enhances their opportunities to make choices that influence their quality of life and allows persons with disabilities to live more self-determined and interconnected lives. It uses CDT and SCT together to help identify the gaps currently present in disability inclusive practices as well as to suggest solutions to these gaps.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has unpacked the theoretical constructs that underpin the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in obtaining employment and/or economic inclusion. By situating this study in the ontological and epistemological field of social justice, nuanced by an African understanding of interconnectedness, and viewing disability inclusive employment through the lenses of CDT and SCT, this chapter has offered a deeper understanding of the continuing struggle that persons with disabilities have in bringing attention to their intersectionality, attaining dignity, citizenship rights, and access to the marketplace.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focusses on the overall methodological approach of this study. The first section explains the motivation for using an intrinsic exploratory case study design within a qualitative research approach. The second section outlines the study sample and explains the inclusion criteria for selecting participants. The data generation methods and data analysis are then described. The chapter concludes by considering issues of rigour and trustworthiness; limitations and other considerations and ethical considerations of this study and how these issues were addressed.

Disability Innovations Africa (DIA), a research grouping in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town, embarked on research related to employment equity for persons with disabilities, made possible by a Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP) grant from the National Research Foundation, in partnership with the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) in 2015. As an organisation, QASA was interested in understanding and evaluating the impact that their digital literacy programmes had on service users in terms of enabling or supporting the attainment of employment and/or economic inclusion. It was agreed that the QuadPara Association of the Western Cape (QAWC) would collaborate with DIA and postgraduate students in organised research activities. In this particular study, collaboration occurred in relation to the digital village programmes run by QAWC. It followed that the ICT programme offered by QAWC's digital village was the locale of the case described below.

#### 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research is a way in which to gather and understand information. The chosen research design is concerned with “informed decision-making that involves weighing up pros and cons and deciding what is best [methodologically] given the specific context” (O’Leary, 2004: 87). Qualitative research designs rely on ‘how,’ ‘why’ or ‘what’ questions when approaching topics

through the analysis of amorphous data. As such, qualitative research studies endeavour to understand and interpret, phenomena in relation to the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:3). I have chosen to employ an interpretive and naturalistic approach in an attempt to understand the employment of persons with disabilities, post skills development training.

The research design of a qualitative study involves four central components, which are the research strategy, the conceptual framework, who or what will be studied, and the tools to be used for generating and analysing empirical resources (Punch, 2005). Particular aspects, which include both an exploratory and descriptive focus; emergent design; data collection in the natural setting; emphasis on 'human-as-instrument'; specific methods of data collection, and early and ongoing inductive analysis are also attributed to a qualitative research study. In this study, an intrinsic exploratory case study approach was employed, as I wished to explore idiosyncratic meanings and individual ascriptions of sense.

#### 4.2.1 THE INTRINSIC EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY AS A RESEARCH STRATEGY

Yin (2014) suggests that the case study is a preferred method for investigating real-life events in their natural setting, as it captures both the phenomenon and its context. Case studies can be used in many different contexts, including individuals, organizations, programmes and community events (Yin, 2014). Case study research does not automatically set out to develop and test hypotheses. In order to conduct case study research, the researcher needs to identify the phenomenon, either as a single case or group of cases. The intention of this study was to develop an understanding of the complexities of transitioning from a specialised, ICTS based skills development programme to employment experienced by a specific group of persons with disabilities–The auxillary programme was offered by QAWC.

Central to the case study design is the 'unit of analysis', which relates directly to the source(s) of information within the research (Yin, 1994). The unit of analysis defines 'what the 'case' is' (Yin, 2003).

In this study, the case has been identified as that of an auxiliary training programme as a pathway to employment for persons with disabilities. Secondly, clear well-defined research objectives and relevant research strategy need to be established. A clear exposition of the research objectives for this study can be found in Chapter 1 (p.29) of this study. Thirdly, in order to explain the phenomenon, I used variables of social capital theory, which in this study is the influence of social capital in improving economic inclusion and/or employment for persons with disabilities. The case study design was considered to be appropriate to explore the topic in this study, as this design has proved very successful, particularly through the use of subjective accounts in the field of research pertaining to disability (Chambers, 1999).

Yin (2009:18) states that a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. An intrinsic exploratory case study design was deemed appropriate for this study. Stake (2008) describes it not only as a methodology, but a choice of what is to be studied. Furthermore, Stake suggests that case study methodology concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and pays close attention to the influence of the social, political and other contexts, with a key emphasis on boundedness. Table 4.1 illustrates how I utilised case study design in this project.

Table 4.1 Application of Case Study Design

Element of Case Study	Description of Use in this Study
The case	Auxiliary training programme as a pathway to employment persons with disabilities.
Unit of Analysis ('what' or 'who')	The value of skills development in improving social capital for increased employment and/or economic inclusion for persons with disabilities.
A bounded system	Bounded by time (2015-2020) Bounded by activity (auxiliary ICT training programme) Bounded by context (persons with disabilities affiliated to the DPO).
Studied in context	Studied in its real-life setting or natural environment, which is the DPO. Context of persons with disabilities is significant to understanding the case. Contextual variables considered include political, economic, social, cultural, historical, and/or organizational factors
In-depth study	Fieldwork in terms of naturalistic observation and interviews were intrinsic to the process of the inquiry Reflexive techniques were pivotal to the trustworthiness and rigour of the research process
Multiple sources of evidence	Multiple sources of evidence for comprehensive depth and breadth of inquiry were utilised. These included In-depth interviews, naturalistic observations, focus groups and document review Methods of analysis depended on data collection methods and data sources. Triangulation was highly valued and often employed
Case study design	Intrinsic, exploratory design was adopted

This study sought to advance social-justice initiatives that were change-oriented, to empower individuals and organisations. It is positioned within a critical exploratory framework (Creswell, 2003), as it is anticipated that the participants play an active role in the process, in order to produce results that are useful to participants, community members, stakeholders and policy makers alike. By utilizing this approach, the researcher would like to offer stakeholders opportunities to reconfigure narratives and dialogue across ideological differences (Creswell, 2013).

#### 4.2.2 STUDY SAMPLE SELECTION

The following section describes the sampling strategies used in order to recruit participants for this study.

##### 4.2.2.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

In a research study, the population is the “group” (usually of people) who have common characteristics that are of interest to the researcher and about whom we want to draw conclusions. Researchers are unable to study all the members of a population that is of interest, and researchers cannot make every possible observation of them (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). In this study, the population comprised all trainees who-completed the training between 2015 and 2017, trainers who deliver the ICT curriculum and employers of trainees who had completed the training in question. All trainees included on the organisation’s database from 2015-2017 had an equal chance of participation and inclusion and exclusion criteria were made explicit.

Participants in this study were purposefully selected, to ensure I had information-rich cases for an in-depth study. As such, my sample was tied to the objectives of the study (Palys, 2008). Informed consent was explained and received from all participants (Appendices A1 and A2). The following inclusion criteria were utilised for three distinct groups of participants:

##### Group 1: Trainees

- Must have successfully completed the training offered by the Digital Village in the preceding two years.

- They would be able to communicate independently in English or Afrikaans. I am fluent in English and Afrikaans and felt that in order to glean the most depth of understanding of the participants and their experiences, it would be beneficial for me, as the researcher, to interact with them on a one-to-one basis, without loss of meaning through interpretation when a translator is used during the interview process. Additionally, the language in which QAWC's ICTS training is delivered is English.
- They would have a self-identified impairment.
- They would be 18 years (employment age) to 65 years (retirement) of age.

#### Group 2: Trainers:

- Trainers would have been involved in delivering the training programme in the preceding two years.

#### Group 3: Employers:

- Employers would have knowledge of the ICT training programme that their employees were involved in and using.
- Employers would have trainees that have completed the training in their employ at the time of the interviews.

#### 4.2.2.2 RECRUITMENT

Given that a QAWC branch in the Western Cape was identified as the locale for this study, I was granted access to the records for those participants who are involved in training opportunities offered by the organization, as outlined in the memorandum of understanding between DIA and QAWC for the THRIP-funded project. Formal permission to gain access to a set of databases was sought and obtained from the Operations Manager of the QAWC branch. The database contained demographic and contact information of people who had completed the ICT training between 2015 and 2017. I derived information on the demographics of trainees, their impairment type, duration of training completed and contact details.

A generic informational email was sent to all 214 trainees who had completed the training between 2015 and 2017. This email provided the details of my study and invited trainees to

contact me should they be interested to be involved in the study. Following the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria detailed above, eight persons with disabilities who had completed the auxiliary ICT training course in question were selected to be part of the sample. Although there were initially nine positive responses, the ninth individual became uncontactable after the initial email was sent.

Once these eight people were selected, two individuals who trained them as well as their employers were included in the sample. Table 4.2 illustrates the process of identification of participants for this study.

Table 4.2: Potential participants identified from databases.

<b>Emails sent</b>	214
<b>Emails undelivered</b>	44
<b>Responses</b>	Nine positive responses
<b>Employment status of nine positive responses</b>	Five unemployed One had maintained employment before and during the training; Two had secured employment; One had secured contractual employment for a period of time

- **Participant Profiles**

Table 4.3 List of participants

<b>Participant Group</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Diagnosis</b>
Trainees	BS	Female	Trainee	Unemployed/ informally employed	Right Leg Amputation
	DN	Male	Trainee	Unemployed/ informally employed	Paraplegic

	ES	Male	Trainee	Unemployed	Quadriplegic
	MR	Male	Trainee	Employed	Spinal Cord injury following a motor vehicle accident
	NS	Female	Trainee	Employed	Polio
	YP	Female	Trainee	Unemployed	Spinal injury
	AM	Male	Trainee	Employed	Left leg amputation
	MM	Male	Trainee	Employed	Paraplegic
Trainers	Trainer 1 (T1)	Male	Trainer/ former Trainee	Employed	Left leg amputation
	Trainer 2 (T2)	Male	Trainer/former Trainee	Employed	Paraplegic
Employers	HR 1	Female	Representative of Employer 1		
	HR 2	Female	Representative of Employer 1		
	HR 3	Male	Representative of Employer 1		
	Employer 2	Male	Operations Manager		

### 4.3 DATA GENERATION METHODS

This section describes the various methods and procedures selected to generate data. Multiple methods are useful to generate rich data, as well as a means of triangulation (Stake, 2008), which also served as sources of evidence to ensure convergence and confirmation (Bowen, 2009). It was important that the voices and experiences of the persons with disabilities in this study were heard. It was unlikely that only current and archival documentation alone was going to be the medium through which the voices of individuals would be heard. For this reason, I selected to do document and database analysis, naturalistic

observations and face-to-face in-depth interviews with the persons with disabilities, the training provider and critical conversations with the employers who employed participants with disabilities.

#### 4.3.1.DATABASE AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis was chosen as an accompanying data generation method for this case study in data triangulation (Bowen, 2009) . The use of document analysis performed four specific functions. Firstly, documents provided data on the context, namely information related to education and training in post-apartheid South Africa, as well as marketing and advertorial information about the specific training programme in question. These provided historical insight and background information and described policy intentions. Secondly, the information gleaned from and contained in the analysis of the website, curriculum documents and databases promoted thinking around questions that needed to be asked or what needed to be observed within the training environment. Thirdly, document analysis provided supplementary research data (Bowen, 2009). The fourth purpose of document analysis in this study was to verify the findings with the other sources of data. For this study, documentary evidence was verified and a merging of information from all data sources used was done.

Data collection in this study commenced with a systematic evaluation of print and electronic documents (Bowen, 2009:27), which included the website and curriculum documents of the training programme, QuadPara Association chairpersons' reports and the QuadPara Association of the Western Cape Project Manager's reports in order understand the intention, purpose and operation of this particular training programme. Additionally, data gathered through personal communication with key stakeholders were included. The following questions were considered during the review of documents:

- What was the ultimate goal of offering this training?
- Which individuals were targeted to undertake this training?
- How accessible was this training to persons with disabilities?
- How is this training programme operationalized?

Secondary data was gathered by analysing the organisations' database of trainees, extending from January 2015 until April 2017. Biographical data was sorted and added to a spreadsheet. Categories included participants' age, race, gender, impairment type, place of residence and length of ICT training. Once data was assembled and summarised (Bowen, 2009; Dates and Schoen, 1989), the results were analysed by posing a set of questions related to:

- How many persons with disabilities were able to access this training in the defined period?
- How were they classified?
- How does the information collected and collated influence the potential employability of individuals?
- How does the information collected align with the policy mandates around the inclusion of persons with disabilities?

Data was analysed by first using content analysis (Frey, 2018; O'Leary 2014, Bowen, 2009) and then by reducing the data through thematic analysis, in order to recognize patterns and identify potential gaps (Bowen, 2009).

#### 4.3.2 NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION:

Written permission was received to observe training from the Project Manager as well as the trainer at the time. No data related to the observed trainees was utilised in the thesis. At the start of the observation session, I was introduced by the trainer, and I explained my purpose. Verbal consent from the trainees was obtained.

I observed the delivery of this programme and how the content was taught. This observer role was undertaken before conducting interviews and while awaiting access to the databases. The purpose of observation was to gain insight into how training was delivered and to observe the interactions between trainers and trainees as well as between trainees themselves (Bowen, 2008, Rebeiro, 2001). This type of observation allowed me to become familiar with training provision and to be aware of contextual factors. Through naturalistic observation, I was able to generate new ideas and research questions.

I sat in on various training sessions and observed how the curriculum was delivered, how trainers interacted with trainees and how trainees participated in the training process.

Observation took place at the training centre. Observations also included being aware of people and objects in the environment that might provide a deeper understanding of the participants' behaviour and activities in context (Rebeiro, 2001). As an occupational therapist, it was crucial to consider whether observed behaviour and activities would impact on the data generated. Informal field notes were used in order to plot out and gain an understanding of the day-to-day processes, activities and tasks that make up the actual delivery of the training. These field notes of my observations included describing aspects related to the social, structural and temporal environment-

#### 4.3.3 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH TRAINEES

Qualitative interviewing is "flexible, iterative, and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and locked in stone" (Babbie and Mouton, 2004:289). As the aim of this research was to gain insight into the experiences of persons with disabilities who have completed an auxiliary ICT training course, in-depth interviews were selected as the primary means of data generation with the trainees. An interview schedule was prepared beforehand, as a guide when the interviews were conducted so that "the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed" (Patton, 2002:3). The advantage of using an interview schedule was that it assisted making the interviews with different participants "more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored" (Patton, 2002:343). It provided a framework that I used to create and sequence questions and allowed decisions to be made concerning which information to pursue in greater depth. This interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions (see Appendix B).

Interviews began with biographical questions relating to the participant's context and background, with a particular interest in their impairment and why they had chosen to participate in ICT training. As the interview progressed, the questions probed the more specific objectives of the research in identifying their experiences related to the training and how this training contributed to them finding employment.

In order to test whether the questions that were compiled for the interview schedule were useful, interviews with two participants were conducted to pilot the data generation tool. This piloting to assist in improving the quality and efficiency of the interview questions (Thabane,

Ma, Chu, Cheng, Ismaila, Rios, Robson, Giangregorio, and Goldsmith, 2010). Piloting of the interview schedule was advantageous to the research process as a whole, as it allowed me to gain insight into previously undetermined areas of the data generation process. Piloting also assisted me in honing the interview schedule by clearly showing the need for streamlining, reducing the number of questions, and combining others (Thabane et al., 2010). These pilot interviews alerted me to the need to simplify her language usage with some participants whose first language was not English or Afrikaans. These transcripts became part of the main research sample and were incorporated into the main research study.

During the scheduling of all interviews, participants were informed that I would visit them at their place of residence and/or place of work. Interview venues were chosen by the participants and the interviews were conducted in an environment where they felt most comfortable. Face-to-face interviews were held and lasted from 40 minutes to 120 minutes in duration. All interviews were conducted in English and/or Afrikaans.

I was particularly interested in understanding how these individuals experienced the training process and their trajectories into employment. This method allowed me to gain deeper insights into the unique and important elements of individual's stories (Maple and Edwards, 2009) and provided an orientation to understanding the teller's story by identifying not only what is said and not said, but also the way in which the story is told (Maple and Edwards, 2009). While prepared questions were utilised to frame the interview, participants were able to tell me their stories of training and employment as they saw fit. Participants were able to situate their experiences of training and employment and/or economic inclusion in terms of their own understanding of context and history.

Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and were immediately downloaded onto a computer and stored as an audio file. These interviews were transcribed by an independent third party who is also fluent in English and Afrikaans. Participants were informed verbally of this process, and no objections were raised. Transcripts were stored securely on my personal computer.

#### 4.3.4 CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS WITH EMPLOYERS

Interviews in the form of critical conversations were held with the employers of some of the individuals who had undergone the training described earlier. These conversations asked the

“hard” questions around the intended outcomes of this training and the motivation behind sending their employees on this type of training (Appendix D). Critical conversations are often associated with opportunities for participants and researchers to build knowledge and awareness of socio-political issues (Wood, 2015). Critical conversations as described by Silvers (2010) lead to further knowledge development outside of the discussion event.

An official application process was entered into in order to gain access to a national governmental department, which employed two of the participants in this study. In this process, ethical clearance and protocol planning had to be provided through a centralised research application process (APPENDIX H). My application was assessed centrally through central (Pretoria-based) official processes and formal permission was received. Once official permission was received, I was able to contact the internal study guide official at the office of the government department in the Western Cape. I liaised with the internal study guide official as per the approval letter and she and two colleagues, met with me, as authorised representatives. The critical conversation guide (Appendix D) was used to frame this small group discussion. The participants of this discussion were informed of and agreed to the recording and transcription of this interaction.

#### 4.4. DATA REDUCTION, CODING AND ANALYSIS

Data production and reduction is a continuous process throughout analysis and starts with editing, segmenting and summarizing data. It refers to the “process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10). Data reduction is the first stage of the qualitative analysis process where data are coded, summarized and categorized. (Sarantakos, 2013). From the descriptive information gathered throughout the research process, data are reduced to various segments. These segments of data may comprise of words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs with each containing a unit of meaning (Sararantakos, 2013). As data are systematically reduced, or ‘broken down’ into manageable units of meaning, codes are then attached to these units of meaning (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). As similar units of meaning are linked together and attributed common codes, concepts and themes emerge from the raw data.

To begin the analysis process in the study, all the raw data from the interviews were transcribed from the digital voice recordings into a textual format. These transcripts were received from third-party transcribers in MS Word documents. I read and reread each of the interview transcripts. During this inductive process, as researcher, I began to recognize units of meaning in the data and these segments of data were highlighted, and so the method of data reduction proceeded.

The data reduction process helped me decide what further data to reduce and attribute codes to (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). This coding led to the next stage of the analysis process where I used codes to retrieve and organize data into categories (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). As similar segments of data were recognized and reduced, I inductively attributed codes to these segments and themes that emerged from the data (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). Miles and Huberman (1994:56) put forward that the organizing part will “entail some system for categorizing the various chunks, so the researcher can quickly find, pull out and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct or theme”.

A new Microsoft Word document was opened for each theme and as I read through an interview transcript, I identified segments of data that appeared to be similar. These segments were copied and pasted to the relevant document relating to a certain theme.

Data relating to similar experiences were identified and separated broadly into themes including experiences in training; during the training processes; seeking employment and employer and employees’ attitudes towards the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. These themes were then matched to the objectives of the study as a whole and three publishable articles were written, each in relation to a specific study objective (See Chapters 5-7).

During the data reduction and coding process described above, I had to decide on what level I analysed the data and how many concepts I included.

Given that case studies are multi-perspectival analyses and are known as a triangulated research strategy, this study required that not just the voice and perspective of the actors (persons with disabilities), but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction

between them (Tellis, 1997). The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes. In this study, I utilised multiple sources of data in order to establish meaning. By generating and analysing various sources of data, depth of meaning could be achieved, and concepts could be expounded upon and linked.

Both inductive and deductive approaches were used in the analysis of the data generated in this study. An inductive approach, which allowed me to look for patterns in the data in order to develop a theory that could explain those patterns, was utilised when analysing data generated through the in-depth interviews conducted with participants with disabilities. I was able to start with observations and then move from those particular experiences to a more general set of propositions about those experiences (Gabriel, 2013). A deductive approach, using existing literature around social capital theory, was employed when analysing the data generated through critical conversation interviews with employers. The rationale for using deductive analysis was to see whether or not indicators of social capital were present within the data generated from the employers and then to test the implications of indicators. Using inductive and deductive approaches to this study was useful in gleaning a more complete understanding of the topic (Blackstone, 2012).

Following categorization of identity markers, responses to interview questions were coded according to the objective of this study. The relationships between objectives, data source, method of collection and method of analysis are presented in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4 Sources of Data and Process of Data Analysis

Objective	Data Source	Method	Duration	Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To explore how skills development programmes facilitate economic inclusion and/or employment for persons with disabilities and to explore why persons with disabilities engage in skills development opportunities;</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eight participants</li> <li>▪ Two employers (HR Practitioners and Operations Manager)</li> <li>▪ Two trainers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-depth interviews</li> <li>In-depth Interviews/ Critical Conversations</li> <li>▪ In-depth Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 40-120 min per participant</li> <li>▪ 120-200 min per participant</li> <li>▪ 60-120min per trainer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inductive thematic analysis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To describe the profiles of persons with disabilities who undertake skills development opportunities and to explore how database information can be used to inform the transition to employment and/or economic inclusion for persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 36 Spreadsheets (Database)</li> <li>▪ Curriculum documents</li> <li>▪ Website</li> <li>▪ Organisational documents and reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content analysis</li> <li>Inductive thematic analysis</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eight Participants</li> <li>▪ Two Employers (HR Practitioners and Operations Manager)</li> <li>▪ Two Trainers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In-depth interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 40-120 min per participant</li> <li>▪ 120-200 min per participant</li> <li>▪ 60-120min per trainer</li> </ul>	Inductive thematic analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪To identify features of social capital evident in employers' perspectives on the employment of persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two employers (HR Practitioners and Operations Manager)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Critical conversations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 40-120 min per participant</li> </ul>	Deductive Thematic Analysis (Through the lens of Social Capital Theory)

While I was analysing the data, I found that many of the experiences shared by trainees were mirrored, regardless of their impairment type. As the aim of this study was to examine the experiences of persons with disabilities, these mirrored experiences were pinpointed in order to examine whether their experiences were shared. After repeating the process of reading and rereading, reducing the data, formulating themes, analysing and interpreting; conclusions were reached until themes were saturated. These themes are presented as findings in the following chapters. Chapter 5 discusses the role of social connections which developed over the course of the training programme and are reported on as namely: *seen and being seen, your attitude counts a lot, different and the same* and *we know where to go*. Chapter 6 provides insights into the need for the development of more holistic indicators of employability which are relevant to persons with disabilities particularly. Chapter 7 focusses on the relationships between employers and employees with disabilities and how employment and /or economic inclusion of persons with disabilities are viewed by employers and is reported on as namely: *equal but different, building up, disjuncture, disconnection and deviation and silence*. This chapter makes suggestions as to how these insights could be used to support the development of disability inclusive employment practices.

In this study, participants' own words are used to support and develop themes and categories. Participant names have been replaced by pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Participants are referred to in the quotations as 'she/he,' 'her/his,' etc. as applicable.

#### 4.5 ESTABLISHING SCIENTIFIC RIGOUR

Noble and Smith (2015) suggest strategies for ensuring rigour throughout the research process. These strategies include accounting for personal biases that may influence findings; acknowledging biases in sampling and ongoing critical reflection of methods to ensure sufficient depth and relevance of data collection and analysis; clear and transparent record keeping, the inclusion of rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts to support findings, engaging with other researchers to reduce research bias and data triangulation (Noble and Smith, 2015:35).

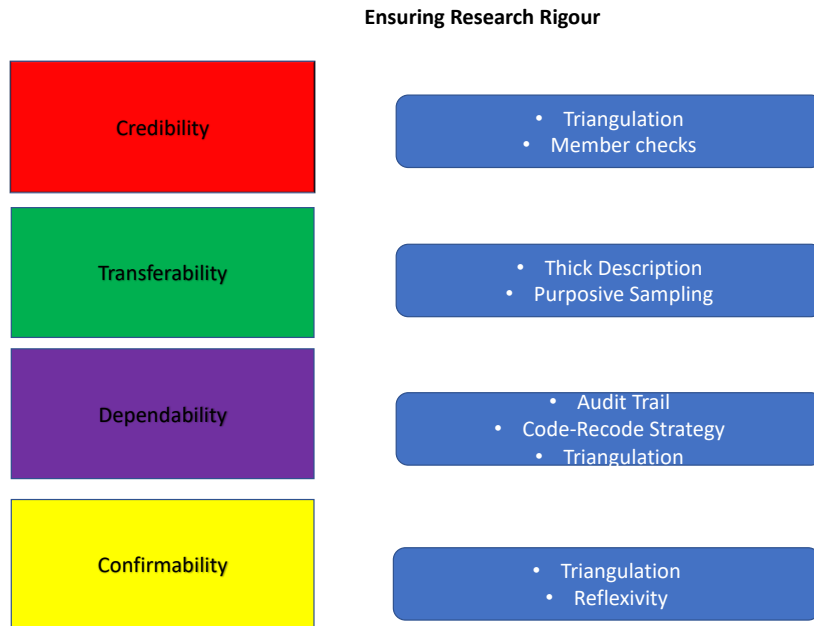


Figure 4.1 Criteria for ensuring Rigour

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is pivotal as the primary contribution of qualitative case studies is to convey the experiences, meanings and events encountered in the field (Dillaway, Lysack, Luborsky, and Kielhofner, 2006: 352). Morrow (2005) explains that data trustworthiness is enhanced through the following methodological actions. Figure 4.1 depicts the strategies undertaken in order to ensure scientific rigour and trustworthiness in this study.

Concepts and information relating to disability and employment, education, disability prevalence, discrimination, obstacles, and assets were clearly defined in the theoretical framework and the literature review chapters of this study.

Credibility was ensured by the data being represented as an accurate interpretation of what the participants believed to be credible. Credibility was achieved through member checking with participants. I was able to confirm the accuracy of the data through contacting participants to clarify findings, document analysis and the comparison of transcripts from key informants to validate specific findings. Information gleaned through observation and database analysis ensured that accuracy of information was achieved. Through the use of

multiple sources of data, I was able to provide a link between the data that was found and the chosen method of analysis.

Credibility was also ensured through prolonged engagement in the field. Trust was gained during the conducting of the interviews with the participants and during the time I spent observing the environment and day-to-day activities at the training organisation. This observation informed my field notes. Credibility and transferability were further achieved by the purposive selection of participants who were interviewed in a place that they found comfortable. The participants were allowed the time and space to express themselves, so as to allow for a thorough exploration of the themes that emerged. These thick descriptions of participants who were purposively sampled, aided in the transferability of this study.

The appropriate data sources, namely persons with disabilities who had completed a specific ICT training course, were selected. A trail of evidence was established during the data generation process, through document analysis, database analysis, in-depth interviews with an interview schedule. All data were digitally recorded and transcribed by an independent source. Drafts of the study were also reviewed by specialists in the field of disability studies.

Triangulating the knowledge gained from the in-depth interviews with participants with the data from the interviews with key informants, document analysis and researcher observation served as a way of authenticating the findings across all data and in so doing reduced the potential bias that would exist from a single case study.

Gibbert and Ruigrok (2010) explain that, as a case study researcher, it would be best to be transparent about the research process. Through using an audit trail, readers can follow the research process that was followed. I made use of an audit trail in outlining the steps I took in deciding on the case selection, data generation and data analysis, as documented earlier in this chapter. A thick description of the context has been provided in order to frame the findings within a specific context and to ensure transferability. Case study as a method allowed me to use multiple sources of data that contributed to explaining the complexities of the nature of this study. The process of triangulation aided the dependability of this study.

To ensure reflexivity, I applied Patton's (2005) reflexive questions throughout the research process. My thoughts, reflections and feelings were recorded in a personal diary during the course of the data generation period (APPENDIX E). I reflected on my own positionality and intersectionality as a researcher and questioned what I know and how I know what I know in relation to what I was witnessing and experiencing. Reflexivity proved useful in addressing any possible biases and preconceptions that might have arisen. This reflexivity involved actively engaging in a process of critical self-reflection. Through the use of critical self-reflection, I am confident that I accurately portrayed the meanings given by the participants to the research topic. At the end of each interview, I provided participants with my contact e-mail and telephone numbers, in the event that they wanted to contact me to supplement, withdraw or refine information. In general, participants were eager to share their life stories and some shared more of their experiences than what was being asked about.

Embarking on this study, I understood that I was going to be engaging in a multifarious and multifaceted research process. In order to make sense of what I uncovered; reflexivity was vital. Patton (2005) suggests a set of questions for researchers to use throughout the process. The first question I considered was: "What do I know? And how do I know what I know?"; in this study, while considering what I know and have learned through previous study, experience and current reading, I also considered how my participants know what they know. It was important to view my participants from a Critical Disability Theory standpoint and understand their historicity, cultural narratives and how they responded to their impairments. It is through this intentional point of view that I came to understand the nuances and experiences of persons with disabilities in their endeavours of up-skilling towards economic inclusion.

During the building of this thesis, I considered the reflexivity of the audience: How do those that peruse my findings understand them, given their own cultural narratives, historicity and understanding of disability? Having considered my audience, I am able to present my findings to anyone who has an interest in social justice, rehabilitation, division of labour, academic institutions as well as business environments.

By being actively reflexive throughout this process, I was able to monitor my reactions to respondents and to the way in which I constructed the research account. I was able to identify and explain the potential or actual effect of personal, contextual, and circumstantial aspects in the process and findings of the study. (APPENDIX E).

#### 4.6. LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS OF METHODOLOGY

This section considers limitations experienced in this study— Despite case study methodology being an appropriate approach, there were some key issues in the operationalisation of this study were identified. I reflect on these limitations with hindsight, in the next section.

##### 4.6.1 SMALL PARTICIPANT SAMPLE

While it is acknowledged that a larger sample of participants would have yielded richer data, the study intended to provide an understanding of and identify complexities through the experiences of a specific, small group of persons with disabilities served by QAWC, who had undergone a specific skills development programme related to employability, over a specific period of time. All trainees included on the database from 2015-2017 had an equal chance of participation and inclusion and exclusion criteria were made explicit. However, given the limited responses to the initial email sent to trainees, only eight participants were deemed suitable.

##### 4.6.2 MALE VS FEMALE RATIO OF PARTICIPANTS

While all trainees had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study and gender was not part of the exclusion or inclusion criteria—the-positive responses received yielded five trainees who were male and three were female. While I do not believe that gender impacted on the fundamental findings of this study, I do note that 60% of the cohort trained between 2015 and 2017 were male. The intersection between gender, disability and skills development is discussed in Chapter 6.

##### 4.6.3. IMPAIRMENT TYPE

It is noted that the population from which this sample was drawn was specifically those with mobility impairments. QAWC strives to prevent spinal cord injury, as well as protect and

promote the interests of persons with mobility impairments specifically, and so the occurrence of sensory or cognitive impairments in their members are limited.

#### 4.6.4 SMALL EMPLOYER SAMPLE

The small employer sample is due to only four of the eight participants being employed. The challenges of doing research in such contexts where the sample is small warrants an in-depth case study design to better understand how policy and practice need to become more inclusive. However, relevant information was still gathered, which will help DPO's such as QAWC and other employers strengthen their practices. Qualitative research does not intend to generalize to a broader context. A thick description of context has been provided to explain the representativity of the findings, which provide depth of understanding of persons with disabilities who participated in an ICT skills development programme offered by a DPO to improve their employability.

#### 4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The guidelines set out by the Helsinki Declaration of 2013 as well as the ethical principles of non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, veracity, confidentiality and social responsibility were stringently adhered to, as the researcher is bound by the Health Professions Council of South Africa's code of ethical practice for Occupational Therapists (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2008).

Fundamentally, qualitative research relies on human participants and ethical considerations that prevent abuse and misuse of these participants must be applied. In this particular study, the participant group includes persons with disabilities and as such, further consideration of their potential vulnerabilities must be implemented. In order to prevent abuse and misuse of this particularly vulnerable population, it was crucial that participants were properly informed about the nature and structure of the study, in a way that was most accessible to them.

I am of the opinion that ethical conduct must involve behaviour consistent with a knowledgeable awareness of research ethics and an underlying spirit of integrity (Workman and Kielhofner, 2006). This study adhered to their ethical principles:

- *Respect for persons:* The participants of the research study were provided with sufficient information regarding the purpose of the study before data collection began. An informed consent form was presented to each participant (Appendices A1 and A2) that allowed each participant to decide whether or not to participate in the study.
- *Informed consent and confidentiality:* An information sheet and written informed consent form (Appendix A1) were given to the participants so that they could make an independent and informed decision as to whether or not they wanted to participate in the study. The participants were asked to sign a written informed consent form (Appendix A2) and pseudonyms were used to ensure that the identities of the participants in this study were kept anonymous. The data gained from the interviews were recorded on a digital recorder transferred to the researcher's personal, password-protected computer. These files were anonymised and sent to an independent third party for transcription. The method of transcription was explained to participants and no objections were raised.
- *Beneficence:* The participants were allowed to express their views and experiences in a protected and empathic environment where they felt comfortable when engaging in the in-depth interviews. Participants were prepared beforehand via a telephone call and a written information sheet. There were no potential risks for the participants following participation in this study. However, debriefing and support after an interview were available if necessary. There were no monetary benefits for the participants.
- *Justice:* Participants had an unbiased opportunity to participate in the study, which ensured the principle of justice.
- *Autonomy:* All the participants participated in the study voluntarily and were free to withdraw at any stage of the research. The participants' views and comments were valued and appreciated, and pseudonyms were utilised to protect their identities.

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed the overall research design for this study and explained the use of an intrinsic exploratory case study as a research strategy, within a qualitative framework. It defined the study sample and explained on what grounds participants were selected. The selection of methods of data generation, data reduction, coding and analysis were then discussed. This chapter also discussed the use of descriptive quantitative analysis in order to glean objective and measurable evidence. Issues around reflexivity and trustworthiness of the study were included, and the measures that were taken to address these were described. The chapter concluded by considering the ethical implications of conducting research such as this and how these were upheld.

Each of the chapters which follow detail and discuss research findings relative to specific research objectives of the study. Each chapter views the unit of analysis from a different perspective and relies on different data sources. Chapter 5 views the value of skills development in improving social capital for increased economic inclusion for persons with disabilities from the perspective of persons with disabilities; Chapter 6 explores documents and the databases related to a training programme for persons with disabilities and identifies characteristics of social capital not usually included in demographic information utilised in usual recruitment and employment processes and Chapter 7 considers the value of skills development in improving social capital for increased economic inclusion for persons with disabilities from the perspective of the employer.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

This paper explores the experiences of auxiliary ICT training from the perspective of persons with disabilities. Data gleaned from these in-depth interviews are analysed in order to extrapolate the understanding and perceptions of social capital that are held by persons with disabilities. This paper further uncovers how social capital is built through engagement with training opportunities.

### 5.2 RATIONALE

The rationale behind this paper is to explore how a training programme facilitates economic participation and builds social capital for persons with disabilities. It also identifies the factors that influence the choice of persons with disability to undertake skills development opportunities. In seeking to understand the link between social capital and training opportunities, I aim to gain a deeper sense of how a person's impairment is responded to and how disability is socially constructed. I also strive to unpack what the indicators of social capital may be for persons with disabilities.

### 5.3 FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

This paper argues that the transfer of skills alone is not enough for persons with disabilities to gain employment. Service or training providers have the responsibility and opportunity to build social capital in their trainees, so that the transition to employment is facilitated in a more conducive manner.

### 5.4 PRESENTATION OF CHAPTER

I present the theory supporting this paper, after which the method of data generation is described. Findings and discussion are shared to provide evidence for the promotion of the development of social capital for persons with disabilities through skills development that improves the possibility of obtaining employment.

## 5.5 TRAVERSING DISABILITY: BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT

### 5.5.1 ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the influence of social capital in the training of persons with disabilities. The expansion of social networks is regarded as a central principle of the rehabilitation agenda and thus is a central concept that may influence the training experiences of persons with disabilities. This paper argues that the transfer of skills alone is not enough for persons with disabilities to gain employment. The Indicators of Social Capital for Persons with Disability conceptual framework (Ebrahim, 2020 [*in this thesis*]) could guide service or training providers and employers who have the responsibility and opportunity to recognise and build social capital in their trainees or employees so that the transition to employment and/ or economic inclusion is more easily facilitated.

#### Points of interest:

- Absent from much of social capital research is its influence on skills development and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Social capital has the potential to play an important role in the livelihoods of persons with disabilities who are at high risk of being marginalized.
- Social capital demonstrates that expanding the social relationships of persons with disabilities enhances their opportunities to make choices that influence their quality of life.
- Indicators and measurement of social capital may be different when applied to persons with disabilities.

## 5.5.2 INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities have historically faced pervasive inaccessibility that perpetuated their exclusion from community participation (Galer, 2014). Responses to the issue of disability included the segregation of individuals into residential and long-term care facilities, which ultimately left them in the care of professionals and policy makers (Galer, 2014). However, the development of policy mandates increasingly supports the expansion of community-based rehabilitation services, accommodations, and support systems and are now focussing on the capabilities and rights of persons with disabilities (Department of Women, Children and Persons with disabilities, 2016). The expansion of and participation in social networks is thus regarded as a central principle of the rehabilitation agenda (Dimakos, Kamenetsky, Condeluci, Curran, Flaherty, Fromkrecht, Howard and Williams, 2016). If the expansion of social networks is a central concept, then its influence of labour, social and economic development on health and well-being require consideration.

In South Africa and internationally, there is policy written and work done around empowering persons with disabilities to earn an income to become economically active. Similarly, much has been written about the importance of social inclusion for persons with disabilities (McConkey, Peng, Merrit, Shellard, 2019; Li, 2012; Whiteford, 2011). In 2001, the World Health Organization developed the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), a framework for the conceptualization, classification and measurement of health and health-related domains within disability (WHO, 2001). The ICF framework proposes that the health of persons with disabilities is a multidimensional experience. Psychosocial influences, biological processes and environmental factors are equally enmeshed in how individuals experience their disability. The main tenet of this framework is that the ultimate goal for persons with disabilities is not merely to enhance function, but also to enhance their full inclusion and participation within their communities. Quick and Feldman (2011) suggest that inclusion continuously creates a community involved in defining and addressing public issues, while participation emphasizes public input into the content of programs and policies.

When viewing persons with disabilities through the lenses of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2007) and the ICF, the importance of social connections cannot be overemphasised. Social Capital Theory advocates that the support systems provided by

networks of family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, acquaintances, and other associations have value and offer benefits in concrete and measurable ways (Claridge, 2014). Putnam (2000:19) defines social capital as “our relations to one another”; the “connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”. Places of employment are examples of key sources of support and emotional well-being as they present opportunities for socializing and are often antecedents to the development of relationships (Dimakos *et al.*, 2016). Work settings have been found to be the second most important social unit, following family (Potts, 2005). Workplace relationships have traditionally been among the most common forms of civic connectedness (Putnam, 2000) and social connections also impact career mobility. It is estimated that between 40-70% of those seeking employment find their jobs through others in their social network (Parris and Granger, 2008).

The examination of social capital among persons with disabilities is a complex process which is impacted by the considerable heterogeneity in disability type, including cause, course, and severity, as well as the wide range of different rehabilitation needs and objectives (Webber, 2005). Additionally, intersectional individual and structural factors such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status may act interactively to enhance or constrain access to social capital (Webber, 2005). Social capital has been found to be a multifaceted concept, often amalgamated with constructs such as social supports and networks; community connectedness, quality of life, and civic participation (Saltkjel and Malmberg-Heimonen, 2014). This conflation has resulted in considerable conceptual confusion and a general incongruity over what exactly constitutes social capital and if and how it can be measured, particularly for persons with disabilities.

There is a danger of homogenising persons with disabilities by assuming that social relationships are inconsequential to persons with disabilities either because they do not possess the ability to understand them or because they have too little in common with their able-bodied peers to develop meaningful relationships (Cleaver, Polatajko, Bond, Magalhaes and Nixon, 2018). However, persons with disabilities who have friends are more likely to have a positive self-concept, better communication skills, healthier emotional functioning, more positive coping strategies and a better grasp of life skills (Voight, 2009).

Global research has shown that persons with disabilities experience disparate physical and psychological health than persons without disabilities (WHO, 2011). Disability theorists who have studied social capital and related constructs such as social support and community engagement have demonstrated the dispossession faced by persons with disabilities in these areas (Dimakos *et al.*, 2016). Absent from much of social capital research is its influence on skills development and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, which is often latent and therefore unnoticed. Declining trends in civic engagement are especially relevant when applied to the disabled community, which has historically experienced greater social isolation and lower social capital compared with the general population (SAHRC, 2017). Given the importance of social relationships for economic empowerment, an exploration of the social lives of persons with disabilities seems appropriate.

This qualitative study aimed to explore how the social capital of persons is advanced through participation in auxiliary (non-formal) education and training programmes, offered by a Disabled Persons Organisation, that prepare them for employment or as a pathway to employment. This paper argues that the transfer of skills alone is not enough for persons with disabilities to gain employment. The more holistic Indicators of Social Capital for Persons with Disability conceptual framework (Ebrahim, 2020 [*in this thesis*]) could guide service or training providers and employers who have the responsibility and opportunity to recognise and build social capital in their trainees or employees so that the transition to employment is more easily facilitated.

A review of literature on Social Capital Theory and how this theory may support the transition from skills development opportunities to employment follows. Thereafter, the qualitative methods used for data generation from a cohort of persons with disabilities who received Information and Computer Technology (ICT) skills training are reported. Findings are presented and discussed leading to the presentation and explanation of the conceptual framework of Indicators of Social Capital for Persons with Disability developed in this paper.

## SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EMPLOYMENT

An exploration of how the notion of social capital may influence skills and development opportunities and employment highlights how social relationships may enhance economic empowerment for persons with disabilities. This review firstly expands on the theory of social capital as it relates to disability, followed by a focus on how social capital influences and is influenced by skills development and employment of persons with disabilities.

### Social Capital theory related to disability.

In the realm of Disability Studies, the notion of social capital has the potential to play an important role in the lives of individuals with disabilities who are at high risk of being marginalized and experiencing diminished self-determination (Gotto, Calkins, Jackson, Walker and Beckmann, 2010). The disability rights movement has consistently been working towards the notions of community living, community participation and inclusion, and central to these ideals is the notion of community membership (Chenowith and Stehlik, 2004). It has become essential to create social places and spaces within communities where persons with disabilities are fully accepted and are furnished with the same opportunities for participation as non-disabled persons. Chenowith and Stehlik (2004) argue that for this participation to occur, there has to be an accepted and shared understanding of what inclusion is and what it means.

Inclusion means that all people, regardless of their abilities, impairments, or health care needs, have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of their communities; participate in recreational activities; be employed in work that pays competitive wages and have careers that use their capacities to the fullest (Institute for Community Inclusion, 2020). Following from this understanding, it is evident that inclusion has an important social component that supports participation and capacity building for persons with disabilities. Whiteford and Pereira (2012) suggest that social inclusion is about increasing opportunities for all people to engage in all aspects of community life. These authors state that social inclusion is about participation as a method for achieving social justice. From social science literature, it can be learned that it is the doings or engagement of individuals and groups in society, in other words, the exercise of social capital, that is the medium through which participation and ultimately inclusion can be attained (Mishra, 2020; Howard, Fonseca, Lukosch and Brazier, 2019; Nieuwenhusen and Saleeby, 2008). They describe social inclusion

according to different constructs including social inclusion as capability, social inclusion as opportunity, social inclusion as citizenship, social inclusion as poverty reduction, social inclusion as connectedness and social inclusion as economic participation. All of these constructs show social inclusion to be an important factor in participation and engagement.

In this light, the argument for social capital can be supported in various domains. Firstly, social capital facilitates learning and skills acquisition (Smith, 2010, Zinnbauer, 2007). Learning is a social process and social networks and communities of practices become spaces of informal learning which provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to share and discuss ideas to improve their work-related and other skills. Secondly, social capital creates economic opportunities and assists individuals with seeking employment, enhances their employability and generates the trust and reciprocity required for efficient markets (Gewer, 2009; Zinnbauer, 2007). Thirdly, social capital can stimulate political participation and community engagement (Zinnbauer, 2007). Minimal social interconnectedness is an important dimension of individual deprivation of the individual and social cohesion (Clair, Gordon, Kroon and Reilly, 2021). The strengthening of social capital within groups at risk of social isolation is an important aim for social inclusion efforts.

The advantages of social capital demonstrate that expanding the social relationships of persons with disabilities enhances their opportunities to make choices that influence their quality of life. Increased social capital allows persons with disabilities to live more self-determined lives (Allan and Persson, 2020; Zinnbauer, 2007). Self-development strategies, such as accessing training opportunities, are used to create and maximize opportunities for future employment. Individuals must increasingly take it upon themselves to acquire new skills and knowledge (build their human capital) and seek out networks that possibly benefit future employment prospects (ILO, 2010).

A goal of education or skills development is to obtain and maintain gainful employment, but historically, work and disability were mutually exclusive (Howard, Nieuwenhusen and Saleeby, 2008). Education, training or up-skilling for most people, including persons with disabilities, holds the prospect of obtaining or maintaining gainful employment and being able to meaningfully contribute to their communities.

### Social Capital Theory related to employment.

The current study draws on the common themes identified in the work of Putnam (2000) and Ghaffar (2017), both of whom analysed indicators of social capital in relation to employment, particularly from the perspective of the Global North. The notion of social capital can be used within an organisation to develop skills and capabilities of employees and it can allow employees and/or employers to decide whether to focus on their personal internal social capital or external social capital (Ghaffar, 2017). To establish the value, determinants of the social capital that have an impact on the employee are identified by the employer. Generally, the indicators or elements used to measure social capital fall into four categories: social networks, trust and reciprocity, norms and values, and civic engagement (Ghaffar, 2017). The value of social capital in employment is seen when viewed through the lens of the inter-relatedness of systems within particular contexts. Social capital highlights the way in which inter-relatedness impacts on and informs socioeconomic development (Gewer, 2009).

According to Ghaffar (2017,) the value of social capital for an employee should be assessed based on its potential impact on the employee. However, Putnam (2002) exposes the decline of social capital in the Global North and avers that changes in work, family structure, age, suburban life, television, computers, women's roles and other factors have contributed to this decline. Ghaffar (2017) presents a model to illustrate the relationships of indicators of social capital. He defines social capital as the "ability to secure or obtain assets or resources, knowledge, and information by an individual, group, organisation or community for its benefit through social networks, trust, license operate and shared norms" (Ghaffar, 2017:1). This definition, as it pertains to employment, can be determined, measured, and developed through concepts such as trust and reciprocity, shared norms, social cohesion, network structures, reciprocity, civic norms, civic engagement and shared values and goals. This understanding of social capital is more easily understood when applied to able-bodied employees. However, the indicators and measurement of social capital may be different when applied to persons with disabilities, where the development of social capital becomes more difficult, especially in contexts where ableism is normative.

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore how persons with disabilities advance their social capital through participation in auxiliary (non-formal) education and training programmes that prepare them for employment or as a pathway to employment. However,

very little is known about how persons with disabilities use education and training opportunities to advance their social capital in the South African employment landscape.

### 5.5.3 METHODS

An intrinsic case study approach was utilized as it identified and described the DPO's employability related skills development programme for persons with disabilities (Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills, 2017),

In the context of this study, the DPO has developed strategies and business plans that address issues of rehabilitation, advocacy, access, and education and skills development in response to the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities. It endeavours to assist persons with mobility impairments to lead independent lives and a decent standard of living in areas ranging from personal care and assistive devices to adequate skills development and employment. To this end, they have developed and established three computer literacy training centres in major South African cities in 2012. These centres offer a basic computer literacy training programme. This training course is non-accredited (auxiliary) and is aimed at any person with a disability wanting to improve upon their existing skills or gain new skills. Digital technologies have been identified as one of the most important factors that can contribute to reducing existing social gaps and can be used to encourage and support social inclusion and increase persons with disabilities' quality of life (Manzoor and Virmalund, 2018).

Document and database analyses preceded purposive, non-probability sampling (Robinson, 2014). This strategy was used to select participants, who were involved in training opportunities offered by the organization. To be included in this study, the participants had successfully completed the training offered by the centre in the time period 2015-2017; were able to communicate independently in English or Afrikaans; were between the ages of 18 years and 65 years and have an impairment. Included in the participant sample were trainers, who themselves had completed the training course in question.

Data were generated and reported upon from document and database analysis; and semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight persons with disabilities who have undertaken the auxiliary training programme in question and two trainers on the programme. These eight

participants were drawn from the database of persons who had undertaken the training between 2015 and 2017. A more in-depth discussion of the database is considered in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

At the time of this study, four of these individuals were employed and four were unemployed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine the experiences of persons with disabilities who have received training with a view to enter or re-enter the labour market in South Africa (Jamshed, 2014). Interviews were conducted either at the homes or the places of work of these participants and lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. Interviews are conducted in either English or Afrikaans, as preferred by the participant. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed before a process of thematic analysis occurred.

The data was reviewed, and codes categories were assigned through an inductive process (Thomas, 2003). Memoing (Saldaña, 2011), which involves a process of creating short descriptive headings based on the patterns and quotations identified, was used to describe and analyse the patterns that were found. The organised descriptive statements were then interpreted. This analysis culminated in a main theme that related to the overarching motivation for accessing further training opportunities. This paper presents four sub-themes, which speak to the importance of social capital and were found to be common to all participants, from their own perspectives and everyday experiences.

This study was approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town under ethical approval number HREC740/2016 and informed consent was received from each of the participants.

#### 5.5.4 FINDINGS: EXPERIENCES OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CONNECTIONS DURING TRAINING

Participants were all of employment age and had all become disabled through the course of their lives. There were five male participants and three female participants, ranging in age from 25 to 60 years of age. All the participants are of previously disadvantaged racial groups in the South African context. Four subthemes relate to the experiences of the participants' overarching motivation for accessing and completing this training programme. The subthemes relate to the role of social connections which developed over the course of the training programme and are reported as, namely, *seen and being seen, your attitude counts a lot, different and the same and we know where to go.*

### *“Seeing and Being Seen”*

A sentiment expressed by participants was that of “seeing and being seen”. This response related to their experiences as being both able-bodied and disabled. Participants were emphatic about the changes in their own perceptions and what this meant for their ability to participate in activities of daily living. Speaking of a time before acquiring an impairment, a participant expressed a feeling with a genuine sense of incredulousness:

*... And I was talking to a woman next to her. But I didn't even take note. She was standing up and walking here in front of me. I didn't even...I'm not lying to you. I didn't take note of that girl... But when my leg is cut off, I see all the people that is disabled (BS).*

The change in “seeing” is interesting to note. It appears that the participants’ worldview and what is viewed as important changes. Similarly, what others see is noted as important, as evidenced by a participant who shared an ordinary experience of visiting a bank: *“If I am going to the bank now, someone asking ‘Hey - when you’re putting your money in - is it yours or someone else?’ Then if you say it’s yours, then people looking” (T2)*. The notion of “people looking” is indicative of the novelty of seeing persons with disabilities participating in ordinary daily activities. There is also a sense that persons with disabilities want to be seen doing what others are doing as revealed by participant T2 who said: *“I was happy, because at least I was also earning something”*. There seems to be an emphasis on ownership of what is theirs. The assumption is that the persons with disabilities don’t have money, for example, so the statement such as *“is it yours or someone else?”* illustrated the opinions and perceptions that persons with disabilities face.

There was a range of responses when asked about engaging with general training providers who provide skills development specifically for persons with disabilities. One negative comment related to a participant expressed who noted that there are some trainers who do not *“even understand what a disability is” (T2)*. This sense of ‘othering’ is evident, even within a seemingly disability-friendly environment. There is also a sense that an element of mistrust

is present. This desire for autonomy is echoed by another participant who expressed that *it's not for them to decide for me or to think that or to assume that I cannot do it. it must be me who says no, because of my disability (MR)*.

Conversely, when talking about the training offered by the DPO in this study, there was a general feeling of comfort and motivation. There appears to be another shift in worldview when one sees others engaging in tasks that are thought to be impossible. One participant shared:

*So, when I see {trainer} and she's...she's a quad, she can't use the fingers properly, so she's using a stick to...and she's fast. I said wow! She's my teacher, I can stand and she can't, and I come here or there's...this guy, he have a computer, he's working ...the things that you ask yourself, if someone who do like that why, not you?(T2).*

In looking at this theme, there are different types of “seeing”. There is how the person with a disability sees themselves and other persons with disabilities; there is the way others view persons with disabilities and the expectations that accompany this view. There is also the notion of how persons with disabilities want to be seen. Persons with disabilities want to be seen in a particular manner, which has to be self-determined. The manner in which persons with disabilities want to be seen speaks directly to the notions of attitude.

*“Your attitude counts a lot”*

The ability to be self-sufficient and sanguine is an important concept reported by participants. Participants indicated that “others” (meaning other persons with disabilities) can be lazy and diffident, but success and progress are only possible with a sense of fortitude. If an innate sense of fortitude is absent, the person is perceived as lazy, as expressed by participant MR when he said: *“First of all you need to be a positive person. You need to be positive...your attitude counts a lot” (MR)*. This sentiment speaks to internal, psycho-emotional processes that need to occur in order to develop fortitude. It is these processes that possibly need to be more supported and nurtured by those working with persons with disabilities, to enable the growth of confidence and fortitude. There is a responsibility that lies solely with the person with disability who said: *“I came because I was serious and enthusiastic” (T1)*. In addition, the motivation to improve the self was evident in T2's comment *“...the only thing*

*that was ringing in my mind is to get a job' (T2).* These comments illustrate that there is a sense of knowing that skills have to be developed to obtain employment.

There is the longing for achievement and possibly self-appraisal that comes from doing more than what others expected, which was expressed by T1 who intimated that *"at least when you're getting something more than that [disability grant] it feels like, you know what, I'm living a normal life...at least it feels like I achieve something" (T1).* Participant DN similarly articulated that ... *"[the training] actually boosted my independence, you know? My confidence? So, I doubt it if it wasn't for the training. Then I would maybe not achieve all this [the participant embarked on entrepreneurial endeavours]" (DN).*

Another interesting sentiment is that of making one's presence felt, in that people must be aware that persons with disabilities want to participate, in order for them to actually participate. MR indicated that *"Those people must know that you are here... how are they going to know that you're here? You have to tell them that I'm here"*. Some participants expressed that that relationship building should be done by persons with disabilities in order to develop relationships and support persons with disability *"... persons with disabilities should stand up for themselves because when you engage with the disability people, you should have the disability also. They hear more from you, more than the able body people"* (NS).

A concern for persons with disabilities is the need to engage with those around them, which speaks to a desire for a shared understanding and levelled hierarchy, despite differences and hierarchies of abilities.

It was noted that the participants all had a similar judgement of their disabled peers for example: *"If you were...a lazy person before your accident, that is not going to change after your accident" (T2).* The opinions expressed about themselves as well as others are that if one doesn't want to work, then one is lazy are strong and potentially controversial. Notably, these opinions of participants are quite rigid – either one wants to work, or one doesn't want to work. There doesn't seem to be room for an individual to *"opt"* out, to choose not to work but are not lazy. Participant BS was emphatic in her sentiment about this topic and said: *"I don't know. They're lazy, man. You know how lazy is a disabled now? They're very lazy... they get so swaar [life is difficult], they get so swaar. But they do nothing about their swaarkry*

*[difficulties]* (BS). This response is another clear indication of the importance of personal choice. This participant shared that choices and opportunities are available to alleviate the individuals' difficulties, but they choose not to take these opportunities. Particularly, this participant spoke about training opportunities that are offered and declined.

Examining the responses of the participants revealed the necessity of fortitude to access various opportunities, which include opportunities to develop social capital. The consensus is that advancement, of any sort, is hindered by acquiescence to one's current situation or perception of one's current situation.

### *"Different and the Same"*

When questioned about the training undertaken, participants all expressed positive sentiments and found this opportunity to be inspirational on a personal level:

*... you look at this person that is training you [the trainer], or this person is like a go-getter, it's like someone I...you feel yourself, you know what? I wish to also...to achieve something in life. Not just sitting around always looking at other people, what they have(T1).*

There is a sense of hope that arises, which is indicative of a previous sense of hopelessness and possible futility and ineptitude. It is negated when persons with disabilities see persons with disabilities engaging in activities such as training and skills development. The sense of being different, but yet able to achieve the same as their peers, is apparent.

Participant BS indicated the value of being *'around different people. And in different environments'*. This statement indicates the importance of social networks and social engagement that occurs away from their usual environments. By allowing themselves to be in different environments, persons with disabilities are exposed to a more conducive environment in which to develop their social capital.

Given that the participants in this study all acquired their disabilities, the emphasis on being the same but different on an individual level manifested. Most participants distinguished between their current situation and *"the walking years"* (ES). For example, ES said: *'Ja, some people think we're rude...Yes, I thought so when I was walking...'*. This statement is telling in that the perception that the individual once had of persons with disability, now has become

the perception people have of him as a person with a disability. ES later commented that he calls it *'the disability word- that you're disabled, but not unable.'* Thus through lived experience, it is apparent that there has been the realization that one is the same, but different – disabled but not unable.

It appears that engaging with opportunities offered to persons with disabilities has enhanced this participant's motivation to participate. This sense is substantiated by ES's comment that *'they do a lot of things, I was ashamed to do. They showed me that that there's a lot of things you can do'* (ES). By attending a training opportunity aimed specifically at the needs of persons with disabilities, it appears that the training provided has removed some form of internal stigma from the participants. There seems to be a normalization, which for persons who have acquired disabilities, is significant.

*"We know where to go"*

While this sub-theme seems to encompass or form part of the aforementioned sub-themes, it is prudent to tease out this sub-theme on its own, as the support referred to appears to be particular to this cohort of trainees.

The first significant sentiment was expressed by a participant DS who lives in a long-term residential facility who said:

*So, they [training provider/DPO] got all the resources, all the...you know? But now when they come to us, we know the whole of Mitchells Plain! So, we know where to go to for assistance, you know...So, they don't actually know how it is here in the areas that is not so affluent, you know. They are living calm and peacefully, you know. And we know what is the challenges, what is the needs, you see? (DS).*

While the intentions and outcomes of the training provider are appreciated, there seems to be a disconnect from the communities that they aim to serve and a general lack of awareness of what already exists in other communities. Additionally, the disconnect extends to a deeper level. There is a sense that while completing training, participants have access to resources but once the training is complete, these resources become scarce or unavailable. However, questions such as what if access to resources such as devices or connectivity are not available

or too expensive, reflect this incomplete appreciation of context which is the disconnect spoken about by participant DS.

In terms of garnering social capital, participants attend the training opportunity for more than just learning. T2 suggested that networks and social groups develop: *“And we are a group...if I know something, or if I hear something from you and I went and everything went well. I have to tell my friends, ‘Hey guys there’s a place there...’”* (T2). The value embedded here is that social networks are able to be developed and supportive relationships are able to grow as noted by NS: *“I’m not the only one. I’m not alone”*. These supportive relationships extend further than just networking, as expressed by MR who described his increased level of motivation through being part of a group: *“...when you are in a group, you know and what was motivating more there, the facilitator was wheelchair-bound...and then it’s a sign of I can do it...or this is where I belong...”* (MR).

Through experiencing this type of support, individuals are then able to engage with their communities, in a stronger and more positive light as intimated by MR when he said *“you are all of you in the same category, and then you talk and you even talk now in your community...about your community and how they treat you and then now...This is where you are now”*(MR). What is emerging is that the support garnered for and by each other allows persons with disabilities to embark on community engagement in a more confident and self-determined manner. MR demonstrates this increased confidence by suggesting: *Give us the opportunity to lead this [project]...Even if you go from outside your area, in your community. Invite them to come and join and all those things*(MR).

Through reflecting on this sub-theme, it appears that the support and resources referred to by participants enhance their social capital and ability to re-engage with their communities. It also provides motivation to develop fortitude from learning from their peers.

#### 5.5.5 DISCUSSION: INDICATORS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

While some persons with disabilities do access the various skill development opportunities available to them in the non-formal sector, there has been a dearth of information on the way these programmes are experienced by participants and others. The Holistic Indicators of Social Capital for Persons with Disability conceptual framework which was developed from the findings in this paper are presented in this section.

##### **Indicators of Social Capital for persons with disabilities**

To understand how training can advance social capital, it is important to understand how this possibility is understood and experienced by persons with disabilities. To this end, the Indicators of Social Capital for Persons with Disability conceptual framework was developed from the findings of this study (see Figure 5.1).

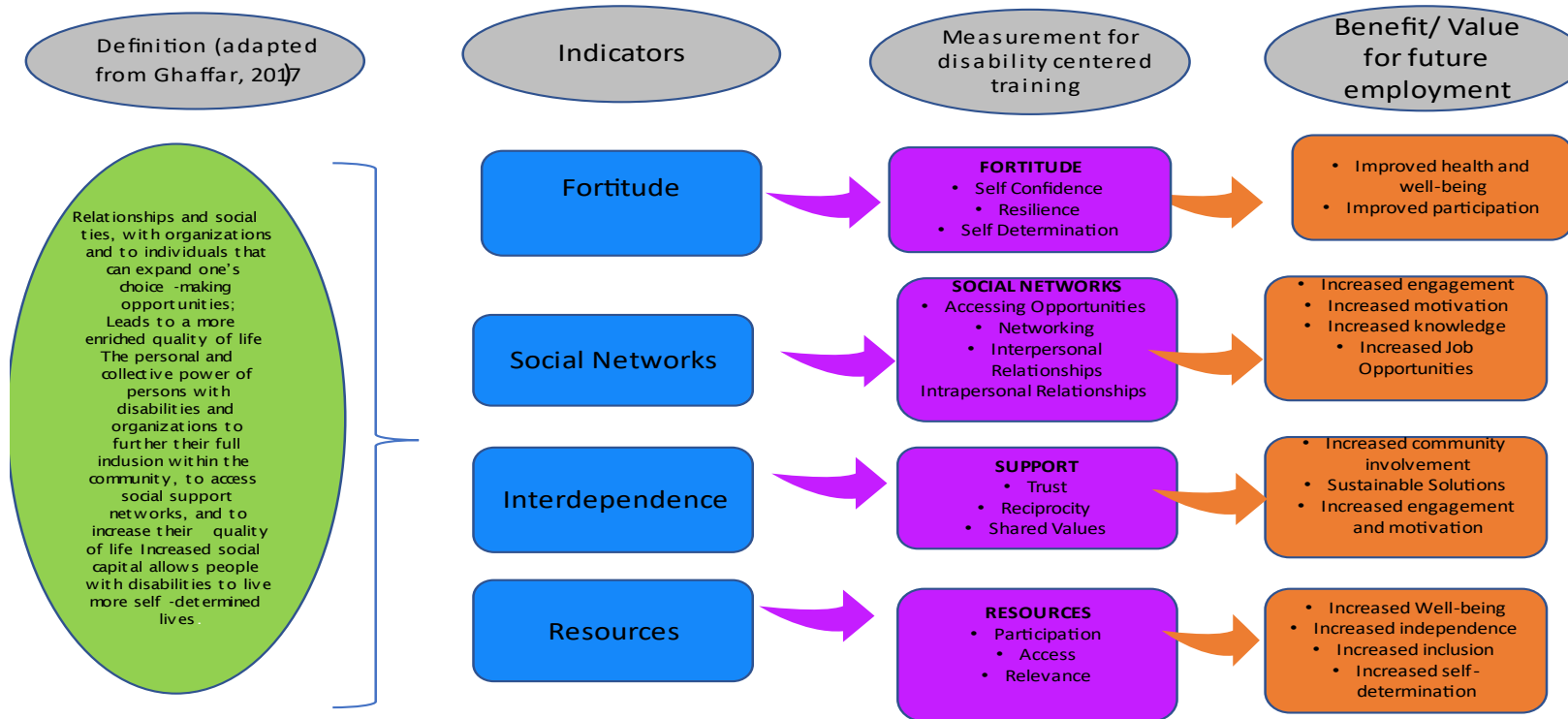


FIGURE 5.1: Indicators of Social Capital for Persons with Disability conceptual framework (Source: Ebrahim, 2020[in this study]).

This conceptual framework enriches the framework set out by Ghaffar (2017) and utilises a similar definition of social capital (left side of figure 5. 1). However, the findings of the study provide insights into the indicators of social capital for persons with disabilities, how training opportunities can identify, develop, and monitor indicators of social capital for persons with disabilities. Additionally, the benefits for future employment that may be derived for persons with disabilities are identified. The four indicators of social capital for persons with disabilities are discussed according to the monitoring and benefits of each indicator (columns 3 and 4).

- **Developing and Valuing Fortitude**

In terms of resilience, fortitude and self-determination, the findings suggest that these attributes are important components in the development of social capital for persons with disabilities. Arguably, the participants place emphasis on self-driven motivation and belief in self to access opportunities. Not accessing these opportunities is an indication of diffidence and not of an absence of available opportunities. Research tends to emphasize the absence of available opportunities for persons with disabilities (Umberson and Montez, 2010), as well as the limited ability of persons with disabilities to access available opportunities. Yet, the findings of this study suggest that it is rather the diffidence, or perhaps even the social demand to be stoic (i.e. 'normal'), even in the light of the trauma of acquiring a disability, of individuals that curtail advancement in levels of social capital. In line with Putnam's (2000) research, which revealed that levels of social capital have deteriorated over the past decades, individuals with disabilities have also become socially isolated. Umberson and Montez (2010) caution that social isolation is a cause of disease or ill-health. The findings of this paper have indicated that while the aforementioned may be true, the onus of repudiating social isolation is with the individual. Social capital can be viewed as a multiplier of other capitals, a natural motivator of human behaviour and a mechanism of health and well-being, as evidenced by participants in this study when referring to being part of a group.

- **Apposite Social Networks**

The findings of this paper indicate that participants experienced higher levels of social networking as a direct result of attending this training. They formed relationships with one another and for the most part, participants were active in family and community life. This ability to form networks is in stark contradiction to Dimakos *et al.* (2016), who suggest that persons with disabilities tend to show a marked disconnect from a number of social

institutions including marriage, parenthood, religious organizations, employment and politics. Contrary to the belief that potential agents of social support are absent, participants have found that such support is available and are aware of how to access it, which facilitates their community integration. These findings are inconsistent with previous research showing that persons with disabilities are more likely to be socially isolated (Dimakos *et al.*, 2016). Persons with disabilities are also thought to have fewer close friends and are less likely to participate in both formal and informal activities (Devandas- Aguilar, 2017; Shandra, 2017). This non-participation was not found to be the case in this study, which seems to be a result of how the training is provided. While limited social connections hinder the likelihood of employment, this training aims to increase employability, which can be utilised as an opportunity to further develop social capital.

In line with the priorities of the National Development Plan 2030 (NPC, 2012), persons with disabilities must have '*enhanced*' access to quality education and employment. To this end, effort needs to be made to ensure that relevant and accessible skills development programmes are available for persons with disabilities. As such, organizations that offer enhanced opportunities require support in order to reach more people. Interestingly, the National Development Plan (NPC, 2012) has little to say on the role of organisations working with persons with disabilities in this process. The National Development Plan fails to consider where the value of these organisations may lie in specifically supporting the training of persons with disabilities, while providing the opportunity for social networking. The findings of this research paper suggest that appropriate delivery of training opportunities enhances social networking, which develops social capital.

- **Nurturing Interdependence**

Persons with disabilities can live independent and productive lives, particularly if they have access to opportunities, resources, environments and technical aids that allow them independence, dignity, self-sufficiency and responsibility (Marumoagae, 2012). The findings of this paper reveal that participants who have completed this training have more opportunities to exercise and develop their social capital. These opportunities reflect the effectiveness of the DPO that provides training as well as the support and optimism needed to achieve community integration for this population. In addition, it is widely thought that the sources of social capital among persons with disability, or access to social capital building

opportunities, will be primarily family members, NGO's and/or rehabilitation professionals or other individuals in paid positions of care and support, rather than natural friendships (Lorenzo, McKinney, Bam, Sigenu, and Sompeta, 2018 Dimakos *et al.*, 2016). It has been found in this study that natural friendships that occur within the ambit of an organisation provide support and lead to increased levels of social capital. By virtue of the fact that the learning environment provided by the organisation is intended for persons with disability, by persons with disabilities, the chance of relevant and meaningful support is higher. Additionally, the probability of persons with disabilities engaging in help-seeking or support-seeking behaviour is markedly higher, as it is felt that their needs and wants are well understood. In other words, they are seen in a manner that is self-determined and not subject to possibly skewed assumptions.

- **Knowledge of Contextually Relevant Resources**

Participants in this study indicated that access to resources is an important consideration as they were aware of how and where to access the resources they required. This finding is interesting in that professionals and those working with persons with disabilities usually assume that this knowledge is not held by persons with disabilities. What has emerged from this study, is that persons with disabilities want to be able to share their resources or knowledge of resources with their peers. These resources need to be readily available within their communities. It seems that if persons with disabilities are afforded opportunities and resources outside of their communities, a disconnect and othering occurs. Burchardt (2003) supports this claim and adds that social support and access to appropriate resources have been associated with well-being among persons with acquired impairments.

### **Using Training Opportunities To Advance Social Capital For Transition To Employment**

Considering the limitations of the South African across the education system, Article 24: Education, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) makes key statements around the issue of education for persons with disabilities. The South African Report to the UN Special Rapporteur (Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, 2013) states that the current system is not satisfactorily providing skills development opportunities for persons with disabilities in order for them to enter the open labour market or to become owners of small enterprises. The inability for persons with

disabilities to enter the labour market [is attributed to the fact that training programmes failed to achieve equal access for persons with disabilities. Another point mentioned in the Country Report is the fact that persons with disabilities generally have low levels of formal education that preclude them from entering educational or training opportunities (Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disability, 2013). There is limited evidence showing whether these opportunities aid their efforts in becoming more employable, or whether some of the latent benefits of training that advance the development of social capital and consequently increased employability for persons with disabilities.

By recognising that the indicators of social capital are different for persons with disabilities, trainers can enhance their training strategies and employers can view their employment and recruitment strategies more equitably. Figure 5.1 illustrates how trainers can foster and develop social capital alongside their training imperatives and how fostering these determinants can benefit employers in the long run. For example, if trainers understand that fortitude can be developed within the training space by allowing opportunities for the development of self-confidence and self-determination, employers will benefit as employees with disabilities display improved health and well-being and participation, which could be interpreted as increased productivity and decreased absenteeism due to health reasons.

Furthermore, using the indicators of social capital can deepen and promote the notions of social justice and economic inclusion. From the perspective of critical disability theory, by understanding the importance of fortitude, social networks, access to resources and support, trainers and employers are able to interrogate the influence of 'historicity' (for example, what this means in terms of access to resources); they are able to understand the impact of social networks (for example, by recognising the prevailing 'cultural narratives and discourses') and one can begin to understand the importance of the notion of 'response to impairment' when considering the self-determination and self-confidence of a potential employee.

#### 5.5.6 CONCLUSION

It has been postulated that persons with disabilities face lower levels of career development and success as opposed to their peers, and their skills are often underdeveloped or underutilized. Additionally, research has shown that persons with disabilities are less involved in community groups and educational undertakings, which means that persons with

disabilities have difficulty entering the workplace. To increase the possibility of obtaining gainful employment, the influence of social capital has to be considered.

Social capital might function as a multiplier for the other types of capital. Social relations connect people to valuable resources and individuals' social capital consists of their network and all the resources that they are able to access through this network (Lorenzo, et. al, 2019; Andersson, 2017). The individuals' social resources depend both on the size of their network and on the volume of capital they possess by each of those to whom they are connected (Hoogendorn, 2017). It is suggested that training opportunities allow for this multiplication to occur and provide the space and support in which social capital can be nurtured. Efforts need to be made to increase social capital in all spheres that influence the role of being a worker to further understand and promote the employment of persons with disabilities. Further investigation into how training programmes can foster the expansion of social capital in a more targeted manner is needed. A more collective and humanistic approach needs to be adopted, especially when preparing persons with disabilities for employment. If training providers are able to recognize and build upon the indicators of social capital reflected in Figure 5.1 within their trainees, these characteristics can be nurtured and developed alongside skills development in order make their trainees more 'employable'.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

This chapter is presented as a paper written in preparation for publication. Information from a database of persons with disabilities who undertook training offered by the DPO that was compiled from 2015-2017 was extracted and analysed. The purpose of this analysis was to fulfil the second objective of this study, which was:

- To describe the profiles of persons with disabilities who undertake skills development opportunities and to explore how database information is and can be used to inform the transition into employment and/or economic inclusion for persons with disabilities

### 6.2 RATIONALE

The rationale for database analysis was to understand the potential problems or challenges faced by an organisation when facilitating the transition from training to employment for persons with disabilities. Exploring data in a meaningful way allows for the organisation, interpretation and presentation of data in a contextually relevant manner. From the point of view of critical disability theory, analysis of databases and documentation allowed me to understand the historicity and the cultural narratives and discourses present in the organisation. Additionally, I was able to understand how persons with disabilities respond to their impairment as well as how their organisation responded to impairment. By describing and understanding “who” these persons with disabilities are, I was able to understand what social capital might look like or how it might be enhanced in their context and what the possibilities are in terms of using elements of social capital to facilitate the transition into employment.

### 6.3 FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter aims to describe the profiles of persons with disabilities who had completed auxiliary information and communications technology training and to unpack how this information speaks to and relates to the notion of social capital. It uncovers the challenges of

using only demographic information to facilitate the transition into employment for persons with disabilities.

#### 6.4 PRESENTATION OF CHAPTER

This paper introduces the literature and theory supporting its argument, after which the method of data collection is described. Following this information, findings and discussion are provided as evidence for the inefficacy of using only demographic databases as a means to facilitate the transition to employment or economic inclusion for persons with disabilities.

## 6.5 TRAVERSING DISABILITY: EVALUATING DATABASE INFORMATION TO INFORM RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

### 6.5.1 ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** Improving possibilities for employability of persons with disabilities are vital to consider given the numerous factors contributing to their low employment levels. Recruitment of employees in the South African developing context is based on criteria such as level of education, competence, formal qualification, coupled with demographic information to assist with redressing the past imbalances pertaining to race, gender, socio-economic status and disability. This information is contained within centralised databases within organisations, which can be shared with potential employers. However, when considering full and competitive participation in training and employment for persons with disabilities, more than just skills, competence, and formal qualifications, require consideration.

**OBJECTIVE:** This paper analysed the documents and database related to an ICT training programme offered by a DPO which provides educational support to facilitate skills development and employment for persons with disabilities. The objective of this analysis was to understand the information utilised by the organisation to facilitate the transition to employment for persons with disabilities and to interpret this information through the lens of Social Capital Theory in order to support this transition. This paper identifies characteristics of social capital, such as shared identities, interpersonal relationships and shared norms and values, not usually included in demographic information utilised in usual recruitment and employment processes. These characteristics provide insights that could lead to a more holistic view of ways of utilising social capital to develop alternative, suitable and sustainable pathways to training and employment, faced by persons with disabilities.

**METHODS:** An intrinsic case study approach was utilized as the research design. Data was gathered through document analysis of databases, organisational reports and training

manuals to describe the skills development programme for people with disabilities, which is utilised as a pathway to employment.

**FINDINGS:** Analysis revealed social capital issues that are overlooked if only demographic information is considered. These issues include enhancing access to education and employment opportunities, intersectionality related to skills development, and accessibility of resources in a context such as South Africa.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Additional indicators that encompass social capital characteristics can be utilised by recruiters and employers alike and could better establish whether trainees are 'employable'.

## 6.5.2 INTRODUCTION

Despite growing global demands for a mandate to equalise the employment of persons with disabilities, discrepancies remain in various contexts. These discrepancies are illustrated by the 80% to 90% of persons with disabilities of working age who are unemployed in developing countries, compared to the 50% and 70% in industrialized countries (UN, 2021). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reports that, globally, about 650 million people live with disabilities and that about 470 million of these people are of age to be employed (ILO, 2018). The World Report on Disability (World Health Organisation, 2011) confirms that persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and generally earn less even when employed. Global data from the World Health Survey show that employment rates are lower for men with disabilities (53%) and women with disabilities (20%), than for non-disabled men (65%) and women (30%) (WHO, 2011). However, Kulkarni and Gopakumar (2014) comment that persons with disabilities are prone to being unemployed or underemployed and subsequently generate lower incomes. They postulate that persons with disabilities face diminished career development and success as opposed to their peers and their skills are often underdeveloped or under-utilised.

While there are various factors that contribute to this discrepancy, it is important to gain insights into the ways in which the employability of persons with disabilities can be improved. In South Africa, regarded as a developing context, recruitment of employees is based on the level of education, skills, competence, knowledge, formal qualifications, recognition of prior learning and relevant experience within a reasonable time to do the job, coupled with the need to redress the past imbalance pertaining to race, gender and disability (DoL, 1998). One of the strategies to support the employment of persons with disabilities is to share their bio-profiles via a centralised database, which is held within an organisation, with which people are affiliated. Persons with disabilities are often encouraged to connect with organisations that are able to include them on such databases in the hope of attaining employment (Disability Info SA, 2016).

One example of an attempt to improve employment and/or economic inclusion for persons with disabilities is a skills development programme offered by a branch of a national disabled person's organisation (DPO). Once trainees have completed training, they are added to a

database that is shared with potential employers(Barron, 2015). Yet, only about 4% of these trainees achieved employment over a period of three years. It appears that training and demographic information alone is not sufficient and that this shortcoming may be addressed by an increased understanding of the role of social capital. Although it has been established that education, health, employment, and social protection are key in achieving functioning, Graham, Moodley, Ismail, Munsaka, Ross and Scheider (2014) claim that social capital serves to enable people to achieve desired functioning. Where people are able to access support networks, such as being included in a database for programme development and recruitment, these networks can be mobilized to achieve certain outcomes. However, many persons with disabilities do not have the same access to education and skills training as persons without disabilities, which makes the acquisition of such necessary networking skills more challenging (Lorenzo, Cramm and Nieboer, 2014; ILO, 2007).

In the context of this study, and the developing context of South Africa in particular, strides have been made in all spheres of education. The implementation of Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001) is found in the arena of basic education (Early Childhood Development Phase through to school leaving certificates). In addition, development in terms of inclusion has been considered in the post-school and higher education sectors, although implementation of change has been slow (DHET, 2015). At present, however, there is limited capacity, resources, and infrastructure to accommodate students with different disabilities in South African Education and Training system. This limitation constrains the choices of educational, training or re-training pathways that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

When considering full and competitive participation in employment and the issue of skills development programmes development for persons with disabilities as well as recruitment and employment of persons with disabilities, Bonaccio (2019) and the Labour Relations Act (1995) advocate that more than demonstrable skills, knowledge, formal qualifications and prior learning require consideration. The notions of historicity, cultural narratives, and the understanding of disability are important to consider (Hosking, 2008). Disability is a socially, politically, economically and culturally constructed phenomenon (Procknow, 2017; Rocco, 2005), which suggests that what is most disabling is the historical and continuing political,

social, economic, and cultural climates; the objectification of certain people, and how victimhood is conferred on perceived deficient or diseased bodies by society at large. Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) assert that because society is undergoing continual historical and socio-cultural transformation, it cannot adequately be described without reference to changing social relations and cultural meanings. Ever-changing social relations, cultural meanings and enactment require the awareness that terms of engagement could possibly change (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009). Against this backdrop of critical disability theory which illuminates the social context, social capital needs to be developed and exercised.

Social capital is the set of social relationships or networks by which most people find employment (Potts, 2005). Social capital comprises tenets of effectively functioning social groups and include interpersonal relationships, shared identities, shared norms, shared values, co-operation and reciprocity. Potts (2005) believes that in addressing the high rate of unemployment among persons with disabilities, job programmes focus on making jobs accessible and building human capital but overlook the causes of non-employment and/or unemployment that are rooted in the use of social capital to match employees with jobs. Ostrom (2000) suggests that social capital is made up of the shared knowledge, norms, rules and expectations about interactions that groups of individuals bring to a frequent activity. Bhandari and Yasunobu (2009) suggest that social capital stems from the information, influence, and commonality it makes available to the individual. In this light, Sanders, Nee and Sernau (2002) postulate that the adage, *more people get their jobs from whom they know, rather than what they know*, seems true. However, it must be noted that persons with disabilities historically have had less access to opportunities to develop social capital through education, suitable health care and employment (SAHRC, 2017), compared to those with no impairment. Thus, generic information, used commonly to recruit persons with disabilities to both training and employment opportunities and consists of basic demographic information such as age, race, gender, type of impairment and contact details, might be insufficient to successfully represent the competencies of persons with disabilities.

The aim of this study was to identify how persons with disabilities are able to advance their social capital through participation in auxiliary<sup>4</sup> education and training computer literacy programmes which provide opportunities for persons with disabilities and act as a pathway to employment. This paper aims to understand the information utilised by the organisation to facilitate the transition to employment for persons with disabilities and to interpret this information through the lens of social capital theory in order to support this transition. Insights generated from this exercise could lead to a more holistic view of ways to advance the understanding and utilization of social capital in training programmes and in the transition to employment for persons with disabilities.

A description of the methods used for data generation follows, and thereafter findings related to the cohort of persons with disabilities who received training between 2015 and 2017 are presented. These findings are then discussed in light of three main aspects through which current indicators of employability are presented, imparities with existing literature and practice are identified and possible suggestions to improve indicators of employability through the use of social capital theory are provided, which can guide the development of future training programmes and inform the transition into employment for persons with disabilities.

### 6.5.3 METHODS

A Disabled Persons' Organisation, which offers training and support to persons with mobility impairments was chosen as the locale for this study. The DPO has developed strategies and business plans that address issues of rehabilitation, advocacy, access, as well as education and skills development in response to the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities. It endeavours to assist persons with mobility impairments to lead independent lives and a decent standard of living, in areas ranging from personal care and assistive devices to adequate skills development and employment. To this end, they have developed three computer literacy training centres in major South African cities, which were established in 2012. These centres offer a training programme that consists of basic computer literacy training. This training course is non-accredited (auxiliary) and is aimed at any person with a

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<sup>4</sup> 'Auxiliary' is used to describe a non-accredited training programme.

disability wanting to improve upon their existing skills or gain new skills. Digital technologies and literacy have been identified as one of the most important factors that can contribute to reducing existing social gaps and can be used to encourage and support social inclusion and increase persons with disabilities' quality of life (Manzoor and Virmalund, 2018).

An intrinsic case study approach was utilized as it identified and described the DPO's employability related skills development programme for persons with disabilities (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Hew and Hara, 2007; Stake, 1995). Data was generated by analysing the organisations' records of training participants for insight into what information was collected, collated and shared with prospective employers. Additionally, a systematic evaluation of print and electronic documents (Bowen,2009), which included the organization's chairman and project management annual reports, website and curriculum documents of the training programme in order to understand the intention, purpose and operation of this particular training programme was completed. To gauge how many of these trained persons obtained employment, an email was sent to all 214 participants in June 2017. The responses to this email were noted.

Data was gathered by reviewing the organisations' database of trainees, extending from January 2015 until April 2017. Biographical data, as included in the organisations' database was sorted and added to a spreadsheet. Categories included participants' age, race, gender, impairment type, place of residence and length of ICT training. Once data was assembled and summarised (Bowen, 2009; Dates and Schoen, 1989), it was reviewed by posing a set of questions related to:

- How many persons were able to access this training in the defined period?
- How were they classified?
- Which individuals were targeted to undertake this training?
- How accessible was this training to persons with disabilities?
- How is this training programme operationalized?
- How does the information collected and collated influence the potential employability of individuals?
- What was the ultimate goal of offering this training?

- How does the information collected align with the policy mandates around the inclusion of persons with disabilities?

Data was analysed by first using thematic content analysis (Frey, 2018; O’Leary 2014, Bowen, 2009) and then by synthesizing, in order to recognize patterns and identify potential gaps (Bowen, 2009).

This study was approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town under ethical approval number HREC740/2016 and informed consent was received from each of the participants

#### 6.5.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an analysis of the data regarding the training programme and the profiles of the participants in this study. I discuss relevant links to existing literature and interpretations in light of social capital theory and suggest recommendations for more holistic indicators that would need consideration to support and develop the employability of persons with disabilities.

##### FINDING 1: DISABILITY AND ENHANCED OPPORTUNITIES

This aspect speaks to the way in which access to training opportunities may contribute to the enhancement of employability for persons with disabilities. The website hosted by the organization revealed that computer training was offered free of charge on a weekly basis (Shane, 2013). Through communication with the management of this organization as well as the annual chairman and project manager’s reports, it was ascertained that transport was provided to those enrolled on the course (Seirlis, 2017; Barron, 2015 and Ghillino, 2015). Where transport proved too difficult to provide, a trainer was sent out to various organizations and disabled persons’ organizations to deliver training.

The details about the nature of the training that is publicly available, are sparse. Individuals who are registered with the DPO are notified as to when training programmes will be offered through personal communication. According to key stakeholders of the DPO, recruitment happened by ‘word of mouth’. Individuals who have been trained or know of someone affiliated with the training programme, inform their families, friends, and other interested

individuals. Training also takes place at major rehabilitation centres before individuals are discharged to their communities (Barron, 2015).

The training and curriculum consisted of basic computer hardware orientation where individuals were taught about the components of the computer, keyboard, mouse and screen. Individuals were introduced to the theoretical and practical components of email and internet usage. It is specifically indicated that individuals are taught to use the internet and to set up email addresses for future use (Shane, 2013; Seirlis, 2017).

The findings of the analysis of the training programmes' databases revealed that 214 people, of which 60% were male and 57% were designated as Coloured and 39% as African, most of whom presented with physical impairments, accessed this auxiliary training programme over a two-year period. If examined in comparison to the number of documented persons with disabilities in the Western Cape (222 33) in the National Census (Statistics South Africa, 2011), this amounts to 0.9% of the population of persons with disabilities. This discrepancy may be interpreted that only a small portion of the population with disabilities in the Western Cape are afforded access to this training opportunity.

As part of an overall socioeconomic development strategy, the South African Government (specifically the Department of Labour) is attempting to address unemployment and poverty through a number of acts (i.e., Employment Equity Act), policies (i.e., National Development Plan) and programmes, aimed at empowering those groups historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. The relationship between DPOs and government possibly requires exploration as it appears that these organisations are almost viewed as service providers on behalf of the government (i.e., the vehicles for meeting government agendas as the state does not offer these services directly). Persons with disabilities are included in these historically disadvantaged groups, more specifically persons with disabilities in designated groups, who have been excluded from participating in society and employment. The reasons for this exclusion are numerous but include aspects such as limited access to education, training, and employment opportunities as well as negative attitudes of society towards people with disabilities (Lorenzo, Cramm and Nieboer, 2013; Lorenzo, Motau, Van Der Merwe, Janse van Rensburg and Cramm, 2015; and Lorenzo, McKinney, Bam, Sinegu and Sompeta, 2018).

From the analysis of the documentation, it appears that this auxiliary non-formal training is more accessible because it is offered free of charge to participants (Shane, 2013; Barron, 2015), while the cost of the programme is covered by sponsorships. The classes are relatively small and pitched at a very basic, introductory level. This is noteworthy as there was no evidence that the levels of education of the trainees were recorded, neither was there any entrance requirement that was linked to education level. While this introductory-level training appears to be most appropriate in terms of access and inclusion, it may not translate into securing employment as the labour sector has its own qualification and aptitude requirements (<https://www.hrworks.co.za/>). The assumption is that only a formal accredited qualification may put one in a better position to acquire employment, which is without consideration of how an individual's social capital, including their access to networks and supports afforded by access to education and work, may have impacted on their development. The limited infrastructure of the training provider means that only a certain amount of formal training can take place. However, in this environment, there is space for increased social capital development.

While the National Government in South Africa has been successful in developing policies and passing legislation that is progressive in its scope in relation to persons with disabilities, the implementation of formal training opportunities remains problematic (SAHRC, 2017). With regard to persons with disabilities and able-bodied persons who embark on occupational skills development opportunities or learnerships, the aim is to decrease their dependence on social assistance and welfare services and move them toward meaningful employment and participation in society. Strategies aimed at targeting larger numbers of persons with disabilities are required.

In line with the priorities of the National Development Plan 2030 (NPC, 2017), persons with disabilities must have 'enhanced' access to quality education and employment. To this end, effort must be made to ensure that relevant and accessible skills development programmes are equitably available for persons with disabilities. As such, organizations that offer enhanced opportunities require support and increased networking opportunities, in order to reach more people. Additionally, equal opportunities should be available for their productive and gainful employment (DSD, 2015). There are Special Employment Programmes under the auspices of the Department of Labour that focus on persons with disabilities (DoL, 2015).

These programmes provide placements and facilitate on-the-job training, leading to qualifications and competencies that help people access employment. They also provide technical assistance to emerging and existing enterprises that promote the employment of persons with disabilities (South Africa, 2015). The database that the DPO developed is being offered to enterprises and recruiters that promote the employment of persons with disabilities. However, the way in which this information is used is unclear.

Interestingly, the National Development Plan (NPC, 2017) has very little to say on the role of DPOs in this process and where their value may lie in specifically supporting the training of persons with disabilities from designated groups before entering or re-entering the workforce. While it is mentioned that there are various pathways for persons with disabilities to acquire employment through the Department of Labour, little is mentioned about how the Departments of Education (both Basic and Higher Education and Training) link with the Department of Labour in supporting training and employment of persons with disabilities.

An important finding to note is that the majority of the cohort sampled in this study (88%) acquired their impairment during their lifespan (as opposed to being born with an impairment), based on the diagnostic information contained in the databases. They were found to have been employed or of employment age at the time of acquiring their disability and at the time of completing this training. Despite the existence of other more-well known training opportunities for persons with disabilities, this training is not linked to the labour or education departments and is situated solely in the DPO. It has been found that older people are less likely to have formal educational qualifications (Desjardins, 2019), which has implications in terms of them re-entering training programmes and ultimately re-entering the workforce. This result speaks to the importance of historicity and cultural discourses that believe that older people are unlikely or may find it harder to become employed (Neurmark, Burn and Button, 2019). Programmes targeted at this 'older' population are constrained by the current education landscape in South Africa, which requires at best a formal school leaving qualification, coupled with recognition of prior learning which is linked to NQF levels. In this light, programmes such as the one in this study provide opportunities for further development for this population; despite being unaccredited, they provide enhanced access to education, as delineated by the National Development Plan, which allows for further development of social capital.

## FINDING 2: INTERSECTIONALITY AND DISABILITY

This finding provides an overview of the demographic data included in the databases when viewed through an intersectional lens.

- **Ethnicity**

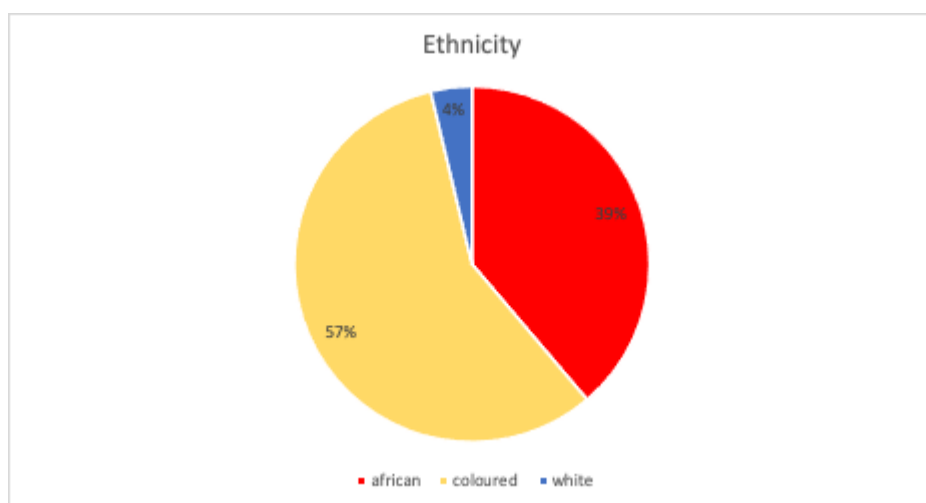


Figure 6.1: Ethnic Categories of trainees

The majority of the cohort included in this analysis belongs to formerly disadvantaged ethnic groupings. While the training is aimed at empowering previously underprivileged persons with disabilities, it must be noted that in the context of South Africa, persons with disabilities, regardless of ethnicity, experienced discrimination, and exclusion from community participation, albeit to varying degrees.

- **Language**

While the language of instruction is English, as noted from the training materials and website contents, Figure 6. 2 depicts the language diversity of mother tongue languages of trainees.

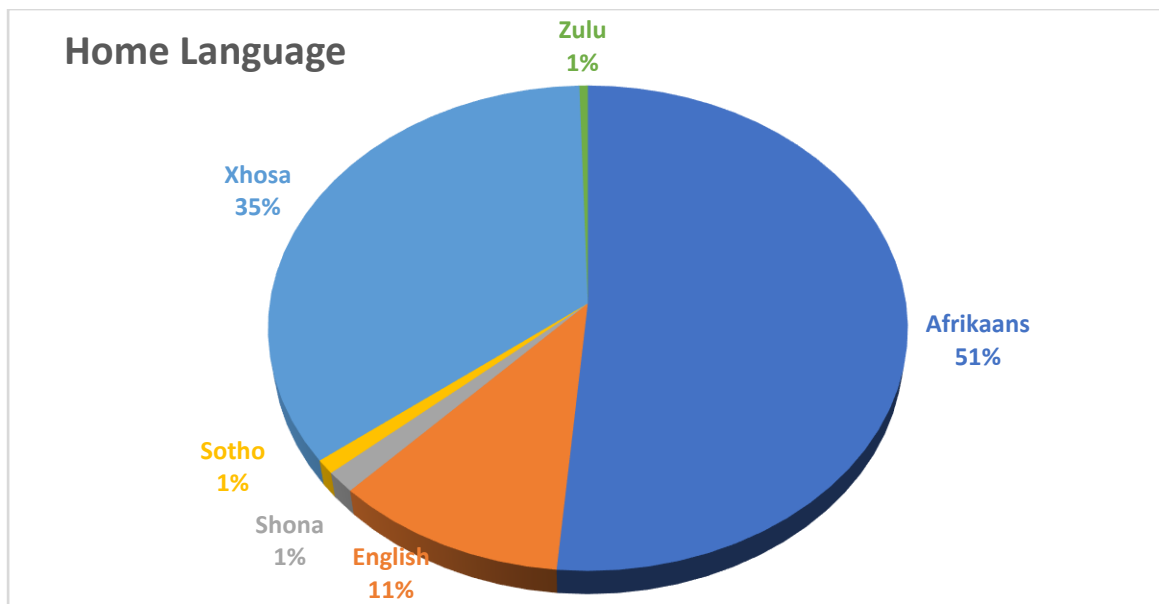


Figure 6. 2: Trainee’s Mother Tongue Languages

The use of English as the accepted *lingua franca* and which usually improves access to economic opportunities is not reflected in the linguistic diversity of the participants of this study. The 11% presumably fluent reflects the low level of English literacy skills of the trainees. Despite the language of instruction being English, there is little evidence as to how these individuals are prepared for communication in largely English-dominated workplaces. Proficiency in written and verbal communication in English is usually an important consideration when individuals are considered for employment. The appropriateness of the language of instruction can be questioned in relation to how well individuals are prepared in terms of language for the workplace and how they may be able to expand their social networks if they are unable to communicate effectively with colleagues. It may be insufficient to use language proficiency in a single language as an indicator for employability.

- **Gender**

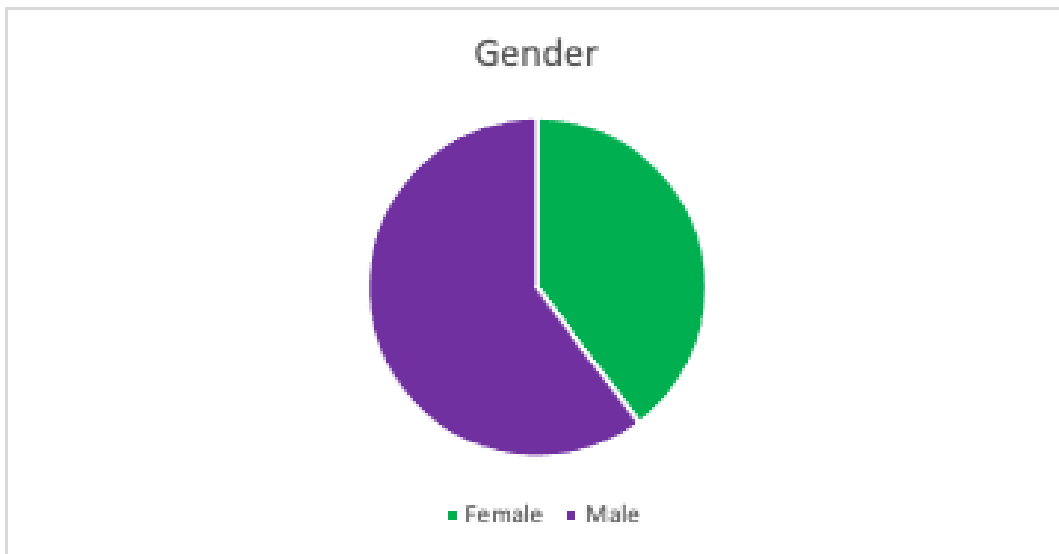


Figure 6.3: Gender of Trainees

The largest proportion of this cohort was male. It may be presumed that there are more pervasive factors at play that prevent females with disabilities from accessing training opportunities that are meant to uplift all persons with disabilities. These factors could be attributed to the socio-cultural norms and historicity associated with disability employment, particularly in the South African context. This gender bias is illustrated by census figures that indicate that in South Africa, 8.3 % of persons with disabilities who are of employment age were women and that 6.5% of persons with disabilities were men (SAHRC, 2017). As more males chose to access this training, the question as to why more females did not access this training opportunity needs to be addressed. Women and girls with disabilities, however, are subjected to compounded discrimination due to patriarchy that limits their social capital, which is also revealed when viewed through an intersectional lens (Emmet and Alant, 2006). In terms of skills development for females in South Africa, available research suggests that major strides have been made in closing the gap between men and women in accessing education (STATSSA, 2018; HSRC, 2010).

Discrimination and inequality are persistent issues for all persons with disabilities. The intersection of ethnicity, language, gender and disability still remain largely unexplored (Blanchett, Klingner and Harry, 2009). In this study, intersectionality, and its capacity to

support social capital development, is particularly evident when viewing trainees from these intersecting identity markers.

It is important to remember that the development of social capital requires effectively functioning social groups, varied interpersonal relationships, shared identities, shared norms, shared values, co-operation, and reciprocity, which may arise through commonalities and intersections of identity markers. Additionally, there needs to be a deeper understanding regarding the expectations about how these groups interact. Utilising an intersectional lens provides insight into the influence that identity markers may have on the employability of persons with disabilities as well as how intersectionality may be used to develop social capital for persons with disabilities.

### FINDING 3: ACCESS TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & RESOURCES AND DISABILITY

- **Access to Skills Development**

The organization offering this training purports to support predominantly paraplegics and quadriplegics; however, Figure 6.4 indicates the distribution of the impairments of the persons who undertook this training during the said period.

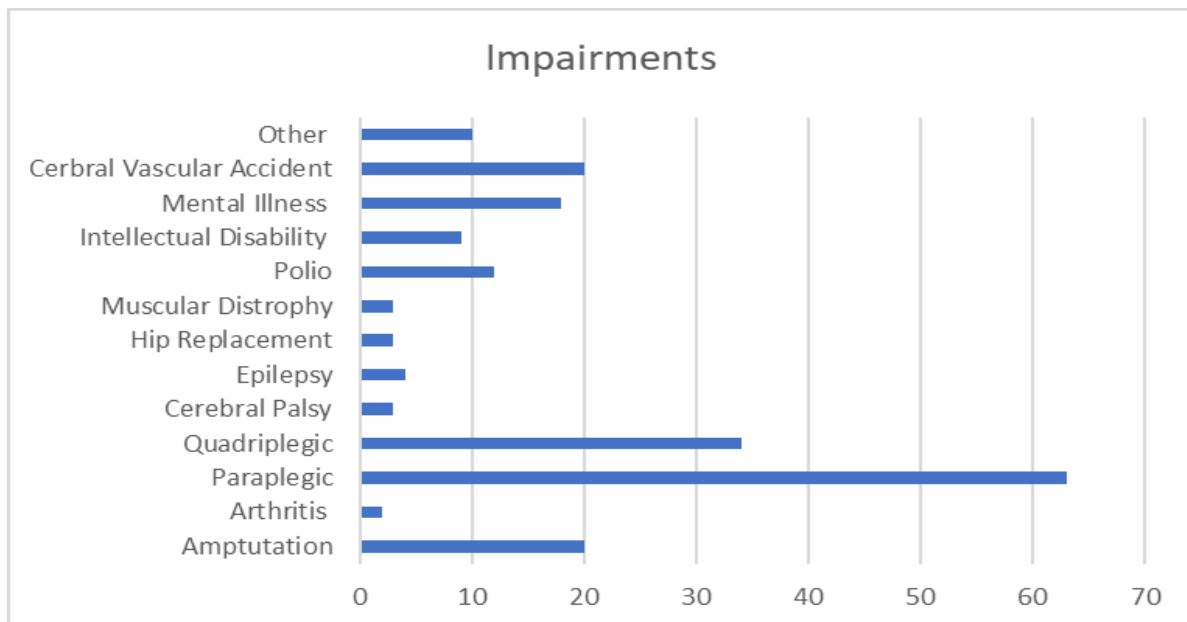


Figure 6.4: Impairments of persons who undertook training between 2015 and 2017

When considering the type of impairments that trainees presented with, the majority of this cohort acquired their impairment, before or during their ages of employment (i.e. 18-65 years).

Due to most of the cohort being wheelchair users or who presented with mobility impairments, in a context such as South Africa, where the built environment is mostly inaccessible, it can almost be predicted that there is a low likelihood of trainees finding alternate training opportunities and ultimately employment (Lorenzo, McKinney, Bam, Sinegu and Sompeta, 2018). From a critical standpoint, the influence of historicity and the relational understanding of disability becomes important to understand. The current education and training landscape in South Africa is not fully accessible to persons with disabilities and even less accessible to wheelchair users (South African Board for People Practices, 2017; Du Plessis, 2017). The mere act of getting to and into a place of training might seem an impossible task as institutions have not yet fully come on board in terms of creating universal access. The training of persons with mobility difficulties is usually characterized by unconfirmed perceptions and probabilities, many of which are not true (South African Board for People Practices, 2017). Training institutions may be reluctant to admit those with mobility impairments due to assumptions that expensive equipment may be necessary; those with mobility impairments will have higher absenteeism rates and that they would always require extra assistance (South African Board for People Practices, 2017). The training programme provided by the DPO in question has eliminated these obstacles as universal access has been provided from the outset and more importantly, it is provided for persons with disabilities by persons with disabilities. Conversely, the elimination of physical barriers may be indicative of an impairment-specific approach that may thwart progressive inclusionary practices. Additionally, there could potentially be a 'tradeoff' regarding the level, accreditation and usefulness of this programme in preparing them for entering the workforce because of the total accessibility of this programme.

- **Available resources post-training**

While the training in question focuses on digital literacy and trainees become skilled in the use of computers, the internet and emails, there is little indication as to whether trainees have access to devices and internet access once they have completed training. In an attempt

to contact trainees, the research sent 214 emails and 44 emails were undelivered, while only nine emails were received in response.

The response rate to the email enquiry sent to trainees is interesting to note as one of the objectives of this training course is to provide trainees with email addresses so that they are contactable should they seek employment. Given the response rate it may be assumed that either trainees do not use those addresses anymore, email accounts have become inactive, or that perhaps trainees are not able to access these accounts. The latter is possibly the most likely and demonstrates that even with skills, individuals are excluded from participation, or choose not to participate. Access to digital technology has been described as a facilitator for social inclusion and for the development of social capital because it allows for the delivery of real-time services that can enable individuals to learn, work, travel, socialize, shop, and interact with the community without being subject to physical barriers (Manzoor and Virmalund, 2018).

Despite evidence that developing computer literacy decreases barriers to participation and inclusion in society for persons with disabilities, there are still access barriers that impair full participation. The attempt to provide access to digital resources is particularly evident in how the DPO conducts its computer literacy training. In most instances, trainees are transported to and from a physically accessible facility and the computer hardware is adaptable to accommodate the needs of individuals. In this light, technology can be both a source of liberation and an agent of exclusion for persons with disabilities as the physical, cognitive, resource and environmental factors can contribute to exclusion as a result of technology design and implementation. Exposure to digital technology should encompass an understanding of the level of impairment of individuals and any user differences related to access, resources, gender, age, culture, socioeconomic position (Manzoor and Virmuland, 2018).

#### 6.5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The data provides a perspective of who has accessed alternative training opportunities over a two-year period. If the premise is that this training is to lead to obtaining and retention of employment and that doing this training is advantageous, it might be helpful to view the

findings in light of how information used for recruitment to employment can be enhanced by including elements of social capital.

Analysis of the database illustrates the valuable information that can be utilised by recruiters and employers alike. However, a superficial glance at such a database is not enough to establish whether or not trainees of such programmes are 'employable'. There are additional factors like access to disability-specific development opportunities; intersectionality; access to skills development opportunities; access to post-training opportunities and the multiple understandings of disability, which speak to the barriers challenging the exercise and development of social capital that trainees experience. It is important to remember that the development of social capital requires effectively functioning social groups, varied interpersonal relationships, shared identities, shared norms, shared values, co-operation, and reciprocity. While social capital gains may be made during the skills development process, these gains are organic and not targeted. Moreover, these gains may not extend into the sphere of employment and thus may contribute to maintaining the low levels of employment for persons with disabilities.

Where employment does not occur, the root of the problem may lie with the employee, with the job opportunities, or with the mechanisms that match the two sides together (Potts, 2005). One of the mechanisms that might be insufficient in the training and recruitment is that the importance of social capital is not foregrounded when considering the employability of persons with disabilities.

In matching employees with employers, existing programmes usually teach trainees how to write a curriculum vitae, improve interview skills, how to find a job, and assist in locating job opportunities, which utilises basic demographic and educational information only. What might not be recognised is how training has enhanced the possibility of equal access to and participation in employment for persons with disabilities through fostering effectively functioning social groups more effectively, supporting the development of interpersonal relationships and creating shared identities, norms and values (Ebrahim, 2020). Potts (2005) posits that a major factor in the matching aspect of employment is that very few programmes include social capital. The fundamental way in which social capital influences the possibility of employment is that social relationships are important in terms of information about the

job and the job candidates. If social relationships are influenced by issues of access, ethnicity, gender and language differences as well as limited access to technology, “‘who’ these trainees are and what they are able to deliver is lost.

#### 6.5.6. CONCLUSION

Understanding the potential positive impact that considering social capital has on the employability of persons with disabilities could mitigate the current low levels of persons with disabilities who are considered for employment through the use of basic bio-profiles to make recruitment decisions. A database containing only demographic information is seemingly insufficient to showcase the potentiality of individuals, given the barriers to employment, such as gender biases, language differences and limited access to technology that persons with disabilities have to overcome. More holistic and relevant employment indicators, which could be shared and discussed with potential employers, would prove to be more non-discriminatory.

Literature affirms that where people are able to access support networks, such as being included in a database, involved with skills development opportunities and having access to post-training support, these networks need to be strengthened and broadened so that trainees’ social capital can be utilized to achieve certain outcomes. Indicators such as levels of education and skill and prior work experiences are important, however, alternative interpretations of biographical data could shed light on the barriers mentioned earlier. In so doing, trainers, recruiters and employers will gain a depth of understanding as to “‘who” these individuals are.

This paper contributes to this body of research by acknowledging that while some persons with disabilities do access the various skill development opportunities available to them in the non-formal sector, there is at present insufficient national information available on who attends these programmes; how these programmes are experienced by participants and others or whether these opportunities aid their efforts in obtaining employment or whether the principles that advance social inclusion are maintained outside of the training period. Further research is required to examine and understand the contributions to social capital gains held by this type of training and whether these gains are maintained once the training has been completed. Robust investigation into these training programmes could contribute

to determining the value of this particular type of non-formal of training for persons with disabilities for improving economic inclusion and advancing the goal of improving prospects for employment.

## CHAPTER 7

### 7.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

In this chapter, I consider the knowledge and perceptions about the employment of persons with disabilities held by employers or employer representatives. The critical conversation interviews that were conducted with two employers are central. One employer is affiliated with a Disabled Persons Organisation that employs persons with disabilities, and the other employer is a National Governmental Department, which also employs persons with disabilities. Both of these employers have employees who had successfully completed the auxiliary training programme presented earlier.

### 7.2 RATIONALE

The purpose of engaging with employers was to unpack and uncover their attitudes towards the economic inclusion and/or employment of persons with disabilities. From the perspective of critical disability theory, this paper explores the notion of systemic disablement and the narratives and discourses prevalent in the employment of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, engagement with employers allowed the researcher to understand how policy and legislation around the economic inclusion and/or employment of persons with disabilities are understood and enacted. Through this understanding, I was able to understand how employers view the social capital of their employees with disabilities, and how employment aids the development of social capital amongst persons with disabilities.

### 7.3 FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

This paper aims to understand the views and practices of employers through the lens of social capital theory. Social Capital Theory is used to understand some of the barriers to employment faced by persons with disabilities when obtaining or maintaining employment.

### 7.4 PRESENTATION OF CHAPTER

This paper details social capital theory, after which the method of data collection is described. Following this, results and discussion are described from a deductive point of view, to provide evidence to some of the barriers to economic inclusion that are faced by persons with disabilities. These findings are viewed through the lens of critical disability theory in order to

suggest that employers re-evaluate their views on their organisation's obligations, norms, values and mission and goals as they pertain to the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

## 7.5 Traversing Disability: Employers' Perspectives of Disability Inclusion

### 7.5.1 ABSTRACT

Persons with disabilities still experience challenges in obtaining employment even though obligations associated with their employment are in place in legislative frameworks that strive to support transformation within the labour market. This paper explores employers' perspectives on the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa identified in a case study. The influence of social capital on disability inclusive employment was explored from the perspective of two employers who employed trainees who completed an auxiliary training programme for persons with disabilities, which provides opportunities to facilitate pathways to economic inclusion and/or employment. Findings reveal that despite the call for increased labour inclusivity, the development of social capital is not clearly apparent when persons with disabilities are considered for employment. Organisational attitudes and beliefs seem to stem from the obligatory standpoint of the organisations. The paper highlights the need for employers to look beyond impairments so that employment goals are shared and re-enforced by understanding and possibly re-evaluating their views on their organisation's obligations, norms, values and mission, and goals. Insights can guide employers to think more holistically about ways to facilitate the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

## 7.5.2 INTRODUCTION

While employers continually seek to diversify their workforces and acknowledge the benefits of employing persons with disabilities, ways in which employers can ensure sustainability requires attention. A diverse workforce, inclusive of persons with disabilities, is seen by many as important in terms of an effective transformation agenda. Yet, in South Africa, the national disability prevalence rate is 7.5 percent and persons with disabilities make up only one percent of the workforce. It is acknowledged that management processes, recruitment processes and employer attitudes are transforming and becoming more inclusive (Gouverier, Sytsma-Jordan and Mayville, 2003; Bartram and Cavanagh, 2019) and that there is greater awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities. However, it is still important to know more about how employers can further promote and facilitate education, skills development, inclusion, and full participation in work, for persons with disabilities.

This paper seeks to understand employers' perceptions of disability through the lens of social capital theory and to identify elements related to the cognitive dimension of social capital, such as organisational beliefs, attitudes, norms, goals, obligations, and reciprocities, that influence persons with disabilities in obtaining employment. This aim is achieved by looking at the relationships between individuals, training received and employment prospects. Given the unique historicity and systemic disablement which still pervades the South African labour landscape, the International Labour Organisations' definition of 'decent work' (ILO, 2007) seems idealistic and perhaps an exploration into other factors that could facilitate the transition from training to employment is necessary.

This paper is organised by first providing an outline regarding disability inclusion in employment, whereafter literature supporting how social capital could influence the employability of persons with disabilities is presented. This literature is followed by a description of the methods used for data generation. Findings emanating from critical conversations with two employers who have employed persons with disabilities from a cohort of trainees who received training between 2015 and 2017 are presented. These findings are then discussed in light of four themes which were generated deductively through using existing literature around the cognitive dimension of social capital theory. This deductive process provides insights into how employment and/or economic inclusion of persons with

disabilities is viewed by employers and makes suggestions as to how these insights could be used to support the development of disability inclusive employment practices.

### DISABILITY INCLUSION IN EMPLOYMENT

It is necessary to consider policy mandates as a background and to note that the terms ‘work’ and ‘employment’ are used interchangeably in literature (Escorpizo, Miller, Trenaman and Smith, 2014). Article 27 of the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises “the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities” (United Nations, 2006). The International Labour Organisation makes special mention of a concept called ‘decent work’ (ILO 2007). Decent work involves providing opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families. Decent work offers better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all (ILO 2007).

The current South African legislative backdrop, including the Employment Equity Act (DoL, 1998), Social Assistance Act (DSD, 2004), Skills Development Act (DoL, 2009) and Skills Development Levy Act (DoL, 2009), have helped create a sense of awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities. However, the implementation of these policies has had a marginal impact on the lives of the majority of persons with disabilities in South Africa (Dube, 2005). Slow implementation in the government sector has been associated with insufficient budgetary allocations, the unfamiliarity of civil servants charged with the responsibility of implementing these policies, and procedural impasses. Obtaining employment poses a significant challenge to those with disabilities, despite the fact that many countries such as Australia, the USA, the United Kingdom and South Africa have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which includes principles for inclusion and participative rights. In South Africa, however, labour market inclusiveness is relatively weak (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018).

In addition, the experiences of persons with disabilities were historically also the experiences of people living in a deeply divided and unequal society during apartheid (Dube, 2005). Inequalities and divisions between people were longstanding and arose from a political, economic and social system that aimed to keep people subservient and to deny them access to basic rights. For the majority of persons with disabilities, life under apartheid was about struggling on a daily basis to cope with the poverty, deprivation and violence of the colonial system. These inequalities were worsened by their disability (Dube, 2005). They were discriminated against and further marginalised because of their disability and their access to fundamental socio-economic rights such as employment, education and appropriate health and welfare services, was restricted. Discrimination and marginalisation occurred because persons with disabilities, in general, were seen as people who were sick or in need of care, rather than as equal citizens with equal rights and responsibilities (Dube, 2005).

Post-1994 democratic South Africa has developed and has enforced legislation to prevent discrimination (DoL, 1998). Despite legislative support to assuage discrimination, persons with disabilities continue to experience poverty, poor housing, short terms of employment, unemployment, social exclusion, abuse and overt discrimination (Bartram and Cavanagh, 2019). Fujimoto (2014) postulates that these factors impact on how persons with disabilities see and evaluate themselves and how they interact with work colleagues. For persons with disabilities, finding their unique self is complex and is delimited by learning challenges and workplace exclusion (Barnes and Mercer, 2005).

In this arena, it is thus important to note the influence of social capital for making connections that would allow persons with disabilities to join networks of education and employment opportunities and ultimately improve inclusion by considering the importance of attributes such as shared understandings, values, attitude and beliefs. To promote these attributes, it is useful to look at how existing theory on social capital may be utilised to support the sustained employability of persons with disabilities.

### **Social Capital**

As a generic concept, social capital refers to relationships and social ties with organizations and individuals that can expand choice-making opportunities, increase options, and lead to a

more enriched quality of life (Gotto, Calkins, Jackson, Walker and Beckmann 2010: 1). In positioning social capital in this study, it must be noted that physical capital refers to physical objects such as the built environment; human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, competencies, and other attributes held by individuals, and which are used to produce goods, services or ideas in market circumstances (OECD, 2001). Social capital, conversely, refers to connections among individuals. These connections include social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam 2000: 19).

As a mechanism to support employability and to support sustained enactment of disability inclusive employment practices, the notion of social capital can potentially play an important role for those who may be at high risk of being marginalized and experiencing diminished self-determination (Gotto *et al.*, 2010:9). It has become essential to create social places and spaces within communities where persons with disabilities are fully accepted and are furnished with the same opportunities for participation as non-disabled people. Chenowith and Stehlik (2004) argued that for participation to occur, an accepted and shared understanding of what inclusion is and what it means is needed. Social capital has the potential to create economic opportunities and assist individuals with seeking employment, enhances their employability and generates the trust and reciprocity required for efficient markets (Zinnbauer, 2007).

The measurement and value of social capital for business was conducted in 2014 by The Network for Business Sustainability South Africa (NBSSA). South African businesses have recognised the need to examine the impact of social capital as part of their reporting on sustainability. In a broad sense, the NBSSA (2014) summarised the components of social capital as they relate to employment into four broad categories. These categories include networks, relationships and connections; trust; civic engagement and voluntary activities (including cooperation, political participation, social participation, associational memberships and community volunteerism); and civic norms (which include expectations of behaviour that occur in public settings and consist of prohibitions of behaviours that are not tolerated in public), shared norms and values. These categories are important to consider on an individual level in terms of how they allow individuals to use or build on their own social capital.

Social capital has further been studied at individual and organisational levels and it has been found that in so doing, one should consider the context of the group. The NBSSA (2014) asserts that because groups and organisations, particularly in South Africa, are hierarchical in structure, the executive leadership of these groups or organisations creates the culture of that particular grouping or organisation. This culture forms the cognitive dimension of social capital. The culture or cognitive dimension has a strong influence on the individual actions that have productive outcomes (NBSSA, 2014). Chow and Chan (2008) suggest that the cognitive dimension of social capital refers to resources that increase understanding between parties. It is postulated that knowledge sharing requires shared understanding, and as such, shared culture and goals were important factors. The cognitive dimension comprises attitudinal and value-based elements, which include shared norms, values and obligations, reciprocity, shared goals and mission, and attitudes and beliefs. Understanding the cognitive dimension of social capital is more challenging as questions around shared attitudes and beliefs between employers and their employees with disabilities; whether goals and missions are shared and whether there is a sense of reciprocity, arise. When considering the difficulties that employers have with the concept of reasonable accommodation, for example, the value of the cognitive dimension of social capital is highlighted. The relationship between reasonable accommodations and organizational values and culture is important to examine. McNeill (2019) and Frank and Bellini (2005) comment that broken trust and betrayal between employees and an organization are one of the barriers associated with the failure to request needed job accommodations by persons with disabilities. Sustaining reasonable accommodations in the workplace may not be easily achieved without making changes in the values and culture of an organization. Changes in value systems and cultures of organisations, which typically operate in an ableist fashion, may be a direct result of the impact of social capital, which is essential to facilitate the economic inclusion of persons with disability

In addition to the cognitive dimension, structural and relational dimensions have been identified. The structural dimensions of social capital include firstly network structural characteristics (e.g. network links, network centrality, network density, network diversity, network size, network frequency, network redundancy, institutional network, network inequalities). Secondly network ties (strong ties, weak ties, government officials' ties, tie strength, bonding ties, bridging ties, linking ties and structural holes). This dimension also

includes association membership and institutional links and finally trust. The relational dimension includes social connections and ties with close acquaintances (e.g. family members, and colleagues at work), and various external stakeholders (e.g. executives from other businesses, board members, political leaders, government bureaucratic officials, and community leaders) and interpersonal trust.

While the focus in this paper is on the cognitive dimension, understanding the structural and relational dimensions of social capital in terms of employing persons with disabilities is quite perfunctory. For example, structural and relational dimensions can be addressed through businesses forging targeted relationships with persons with disabilities or organisations that work with persons with disabilities. Structural considerations may be a result of legislative mandates, policy imperatives and how committed certain businesses are to making the employment of persons with disabilities a priority. Relational aspects may be understood in terms of how businesses include persons with disabilities into their workforces and how colleagues form relationships with persons with disabilities. This paper uses the attributes of the cognitive dimension of social capital to explore employers' views on the employment of persons with disabilities.

### 7.5.3 METHODS

A training programme offered by a Disabled Persons' Organisation (DPO) is the case being reported on in this paper. The DPO has developed strategies and business plans to address issues of rehabilitation, advocacy, access, and education and skills development in response to the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities. It endeavours to assist persons with mobility impairments to lead independent lives and a decent standard of living in areas ranging from personal care and assistive devices to adequate skills development and employment. To this end, in 2012 they developed and established training centres offering a basic computer literacy training programme in three major South African cities. This training course is non-accredited (auxiliary) and is aimed at any person with a disability wanting to improve upon their existing skills or gain new skills, with a view to gaining employment. Digital technologies have been identified as one of the most important factors that can contribute to reducing existing social gaps and can be used to encourage and support social inclusion and increase persons with disabilities' quality of life (Manzoor and Virmalund, 2018).

An intrinsic case study approach was utilized as it identified and described the DPO's employability related skills development programme for persons with disabilities (Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills, 2017). This paper reports on interviews with two employers of trainees who completed this course between 2015 and 2017 as a means to understand the value of the training provided as it relates to the employability and employment of persons with disabilities. Critical conversation interviews (Wood, 2015; Silvers, 2010) were conducted with the one project manager of a non-governmental Disability Organisation and with three human resource practitioners in a department of the national government, who are involved with employment persons with disabilities from the DPO. The trigger questions, "What motivated you to employ someone with a disability?" and "What are the advantages or disadvantages of this strategy in your context?", were posed to initiate the conversations and the analysis of this data is reported in this paper.

Data were reviewed, and codes were assigned through a deductive process, which meant that analysis was based on pre-existing social capital theory (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid and Redwood, 2013). Employers' experiences and opinions were examined and coded in relation to the categories of the cognitive dimension of social capital (NBBSA, 2014). Following the analysis of the data, four themes relating to values and obligations; attitudes and beliefs; shared norms and reciprocity; and shared goals and missions were generated.

The challenge of doing research where the sample is small warranted an in-depth, albeit non-generalisable, case study design to better understand how policy and practice need to become more inclusive. Despite the small sample in this context, relevant information was still gathered, which will help employers strengthen their practices. This study was approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town under ethical approval number HREC740/2016 and informed consent was received from each of the participants.

#### 7.5.4 FINDINGS

Employer's perspectives related to categories identified from the cognitive dimension of Social Capital Theory are presented. The themes presented relate to the employer's understandings of values and obligations, attitudes and beliefs, shared norms and reciprocity and shared missions and goals.

## Theme 1: *Equal but different*- Values and Obligations

One of the points highlighted through interviews with the employers was that there are apparently specific guidelines utilised when appointing persons with disabilities to positions. A phrase such as *“It’s to ensure that we appoint accordingly”*(HR1) was utilised repeatedly during the interaction with the government department officials and points directly to the notion of having an obligation to appoint persons with disabilities. Upon probing regarding what an appropriate appointment was, responses were vague and unclear. Internal organisational policies were mentioned, but the content and location of these policies were vague. This dichotomy is quite telling in that while there is an obligation to “appoint accordingly”, the value of “appointing accordingly” is not understood.

On further probing into this notion of “appointing accordingly”, one employer responded that: *“Our advert says ‘disability’ or ‘disadvantaged’. People from disadvantaged background will be given preference”* (HR2). This response suggests that disability and the notion of being disadvantaged are either similar or interchangeable. It also suggests that if one is disabled, one is also from a disadvantaged background. Another dichotomy arises in that despite being given preference, persons with disabilities are also ‘measured with the same yardstick’ as their able-bodied counterparts. There seems to be a misunderstanding regarding the difference between persons with disabilities being treated equally as opposed to being treated equitably<sup>5</sup>. This sentiment is further evidenced by a comment from one of the employers who explained that *“if a disabled person come for the interviews, they - he had the same questions than the normal persons ... but they are treated exactly the same. And I think they wanted that. People with disability, they don’t want to be treated differently. They want to be treated the same than I am treated”*(HR2). Additionally, participants from the government department mentioned that all prospective employees need the same form or level of qualification. In this context, employers assume that they know what applicants with disabilities want. However, they continue to use the same measuring tool for every applicant.

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<sup>5</sup> Equitable: Something that is equitable is fair and reasonable in a way that gives equal treatment to everyone (Collins Dictionary, 2020).

This too indicates the obligation that employers have in terms of equitable treatment of applicants, which is most likely based on legislative mandates. Employers require the same level of qualification for all applicants despite acknowledging that persons with disabilities are disadvantaged and categorised when applying for employment. Through further discussion, evidence of an apportionment system was revealed when HR1 indicated that *“basically, whether its disabled people, whether of race, we’ve got a rate - what do you call that programme? Target [statistics]. It’s a target that we need to reach. But we do not specifically advertise the post”*.

It is construed that while there is an obligation to meet quotas in terms of equity categories, this practice is not always transparent, nor is it value-based. There seems to be an understanding that if one meets the qualification requirements and the equity requirements, then the job is almost guaranteed. This assumption indicates a murky understanding of value versus obligation. Advantaging a person with a disability may be interpreted as obligatory or it may be interpreted that the employer values the contribution of a person with a disability in the workplace. This ambiguity is further evidenced by a telling response illustrating obligation: *“usually, even if you [potential employee] go to an interview and you find a disabled person with you in the interview, you know already you are disadvantaged to get that post” (HR1)*.

Even before an interview, a screening process or job-matching process occurs, the outward appearance of equity and qualification seems to point to a better chance at obtaining employment. The resounding sentiment around how persons with disabilities experience obtaining employment is captured by one participant: *“basically it’s [employing people with disabilities ] because we need to reach the target, and in my opinion, your disability will speak for yourself” (HR2)*.

An indication of obligations to meet legislative mandates is reflected in levels of education that seem to play a large role in terms of obtaining employment. When looking through the lens of obligations and values, employers appear to be particularly aware of the challenges that potential employees face and accede that: *“ ...they go to school [basic education] but their level of education is more often than not, very low...and not enough to find employment afterwards” (E2)*. It appears that with respect to employability, obligatory factors trump

value-based decisions as evidenced by the response from a participant who explained that: *“For the internship, you must have your N5<sup>6</sup>. So, it’s a contract for 12 months. It’s no guarantee that he’ll be placed. The contract says they are not obliged to appoint you after the training”*(HR1).

Upon reflecting on the types of employment available to persons who have acquired disabilities, the employer at the DPO presented an alternate understanding regarding the employability of persons with disabilities. He intimated that: *“people may be employed [at the time of acquiring their disability] but very often the demographic of the people that get injured, would have been a builder, you know a bricklayer, a labourer, a security guard, it’s not a career that can continue [post injury]...”*(E2). The reference to the demographic of people who get injured suggests that persons with disabilities have lower levels of education to start with and had previously developed skills, predominantly in manual labour, that enabled them to find work. If they are not able to use their existing skills, it is implied their level of education also does not allow them to pursue other skills development opportunities and possibly then it is not obligatory to employ them, and career opportunities are even more restricted.

## **Theme 2: *Building Up* - Attitudes and Beliefs**

A sentiment shared by both employers in this study is that of improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and suggest that *“...the best way of improving a person with disabilities life, the quality of it, is by improving their financial situation, because everything costs money. It’s about economic empowerment. You invest in them as people as much as investing in skills development. Just build up the person”*(E2).

What is absent is how this investment in the ‘person’ is understood or how it will be undertaken. One participant expressed: *“I will say that the disabled people...they must also get a chance in life. Because to disadvantage these people is not correct. They can make a difference in the [organisation] in the office bound positions”* (HR2). This statement resembles

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<sup>6</sup> A National Diploma is an undergraduate qualification that takes three years to complete. A National Diploma is broken down into three parts. These are the N4, N5 and N6 National Certificates. To study a National Diploma, a National Senior Certificate is required.

a double-edged sword, in that while employers understand the importance of employing and empowering persons with disabilities, it is done with provisos, such as meeting the obligatory organisation mandates that are in place or only working within certain occupations. This attitude is corroborated by a participant who opined that: *“The job itself limits them. Certain disabilities cannot be accommodated. You can’t have a blind man in ‘tronk’ [Afrikaans for working in a jail]”*(HR2). This response alludes to an attitude towards disability, which believes that some occupations or jobs are outside of the capabilities of persons with disabilities. No reference to reasonable accommodation or task adjustments were made. It was interesting to note that in the context of the government department that participated in this study, appointment to positions took place under separate legislative regulations. The difference in regulations guiding the appointment of employees indicates that assumptions and beliefs about disability and function, influence how, when and if persons with disabilities obtain employment. Furthermore, depending on which regulatory body approves the appointment, persons with disabilities are afforded employment opportunities in selected and sometimes restricted job functions only as suggested by HR3: *“If they are employed under [government departments’ act], then they will be in control rooms”* (HR3).

The discussion around policies and procedures relating to the employment of persons with disabilities revealed the deep-rooted beliefs of those tasked with recruitment and appointment. HR2 indicated that: *“they [persons with disabilities ] can make a difference in the office bound positions. You know, administrative-wise. There’s nothing wrong with your brain whatsoever or your hands. You can sit at the computer and do good; you can be a good administrator”* (HR2).

It is apparent that disabilities are categorised internally within the organisation and that certain disabilities preclude one from engaging in certain job tasks. The researcher was interested to see if this belief extended beyond the participants’ understanding of physical disability and posed the question: “What other kinds of disabilities do people have who are employed here? Psychiatric conditions, depression? The response received was: *“When it comes to depression, usually we don’t categorise it as a disability. It’s not openly talked about”* (HR1). This response speaks to how organisational attitudes and beliefs influence the employment experience of persons with disabilities. If one’s disability is not categorised or understood, it is essentially not recognised, and stigma and discrimination leading to

workplace exclusion are promulgated. The researcher was directed to the organisations' website to view the policies relating to disability. However, only policies related to service users were found as opposed to policies related to employees with disabilities. This finding has highlighted the continuing influence of the attitude of others on the development of persons with disabilities. The contention between personal beliefs and regulatory mandates remain, as employers attempt to implement disability inclusive practices.

### **Theme 3: *Disjuncture; Disconnection and Deviation*- Shared norms and Reciprocity**

As noted by Claridge (2014) common values and beliefs provide the concord of interests that improve connection and reciprocity between individuals. The response to a question about other possible reasons, other than equity mandates, that would allow persons with disabilities to obtain employment was: *"Uhm, it's a very difficult question that you ask"* (HR1). This response suggests that regulations are not always obvious and that those who implement the regulations do not have a clear understanding of why the regulations are as they are. The connection between policy and implementation thereof is indistinct. Further evidence of this uncertainty was expressed through HR2's response: *"I know they [top management] discuss disabilities there, but those kind of information don't come down to our level"* (HR2). It might be that Information and policy processes are diluted or misunderstood, and implementation of policy may not be successful due to miscommunication or even non-communication. The disjuncture between decision-makers and decision- implementors makes it clear that norms are not shared. Different understandings of organisational norms possibly have an influence on persons with disabilities who are trying to obtain employment. It is evident that there is a distinction and disjuncture between "them and us" with respect to the levels of hierarchy within the organisation, which may very well filter down to a distinction between "them and us" in terms of recruitment of persons with disabilities.

Further probing around disability-specific policies or how decisions are made or how disability is understood in the organisation, revealed that: *"The thing is there is an equity [policy], but the person who is in charge is on temporary incapacity leave, so that policy is not available"* (HR1). This admission provides an indication that disability inclusion is not necessarily ingrained into general institutional operations and organisational norms within the

organisation in question. In this instance, there is one individual who holds knowledge and decision-making power.

Participants were questioned about the training received by some of their employees with disabilities due to an interest in the reasons why certain individuals were afforded the opportunity to do the auxiliary ICT training offered by the DPO in this study. The response to this enquiry was: *“Remember every year there’s a skills gap identified in your performance management [review]”(HR1)*. This response was interesting in two ways. The fact that persons with disabilities are “performance managed” and upskilled within this organisation is positive and bodes well in terms of career progression. However, there is also a sense that employees with disabilities were sent to a training provider that was “suitable” for them. The researcher questioned why that particular training programme was chosen (as opposed to the myriad of other accredited ICT programmes available) and no response was offered. Without shared understandings, disconnection and disjuncture between policy and policy implementation becomes apparent and the persons responsible for implementing these mandates may find navigating disability inclusive employment practices challenging.

#### **THEME 4: SILENCE-shared goals and missions**

Shared goals and mission of social capital is the “force that holds people together and lets them share what they know” (Chan and Chow, 2008: 460). Upon reflection on the findings from the interactions with the employers, it was clear that the human element of employing persons with disabilities is absent or ill-considered by both employer participants. In analysis of the data, no codes relating to a shared mission or goal between the employer and the persons with disabilities were located. Even references to employers and employees sharing a common understandings and approaches to the achievement of tasks and outcomes were absent. There was no evidence in the data collected from employers that persons with disabilities were consulted with in terms of what their needs or requirements were; knowledge sharing was absent and there seemed to be a distinction between ‘them’ [persons with disabilities ] and ‘us’ [employers]. Instead, policies, procedures and expectations of persons with disabilities were discussed. The types of impairments the skills possessed and what benefits employment can bring to persons with disabilities were foregrounded. So,

while both employers hope to achieve employment for persons with disabilities, it appears to be all about persons with disabilities, without them.

#### 7.5.5 DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper have highlighted that integral elements of social capital are absent or limited. An obligation to the implementation of policy has meant that shared goals and missions between employers and their employees with disabilities are unexplored, discriminatory attitudes still exist in employment processes, and value is not ascribed to the employment of persons with disabilities.

Of significance are the legislative frameworks that govern, support, and contextualise the employment of persons with disabilities. These policies and procedures, while instituted to increase the accessibility of the labour market, are open to interpretation and might require consideration of the influence that social capital has on employing persons with disabilities. These mandates often influence organisational attitudes and emphasise the obligations associated with employing persons with disabilities, without recognising the differences in practices required when employing persons with disabilities. While legislative frameworks relating to the obligations associated with the employment of persons with disabilities are in place and have filtered down to employers from policy makers, institutionalised and deeply sedimented beliefs and practices of what persons with disabilities can do or cannot do, still influence whether or not persons with disabilities obtain employment. A deeper understanding of social capital might provide insight into policy effectiveness, unintended effects of policy as well as the equity goals that are to be achieved by emphasising the value gained by employing persons with disabilities. These insights may deter employers from viewing potential employees as only disabled and thus defined by their impairments.

Organisational attitudes and beliefs are apparent and seem to stem from the obligatory standpoint of the organisations and factors such as quotas, impairment-type and qualifications are foregrounded. Instead, one's impairment is given more consideration than one's ability. Persons with disabilities are not seen as 'workers' but are seen only through the narrow lens of their impairment. Despite advances in diversity and inclusion practices in workplaces, the entry and progression of persons with disabilities in the workforce remain challenging, especially when employers hold stereotypical beliefs which are fuelled by

insufficient information (Bonaccio, Conelly, Gellatly, Jetha and Ginis, 2019). Social capital is integral to an individual's career path as it supports employment goals by re-enforcing and increasing the number of people who may be willing to provide support to persons with disabilities, while at the same time creating a sense of competence within the job seeker or employee (Demirkiran and Gencer, 2017). This notion suggests that shared goals and missions (between employer and employee) are imperative in terms of increasing reciprocity between employees with disabilities and their employers. In particular, persons with disabilities may benefit from the social capital of others in their networks, provided that stakeholders share the same goal in terms of employment and/or economic inclusion. Mentorship, employee-employer relationships, and social networks are important aspects of career building (Putnam, 2019).

Should employers understand the social networks, the vocational themes and the importance of sharing knowledge, norms and goals with persons with disabilities, they can then provide valuable knowledge about work, job tasks, skills needed, ideas, business leads, and insight into where the individual's skills would be a good fit, in terms of both skill and value. This approach would then eliminate the focus on the inability of the jobseeker with a disability and rather focus on matching existing skills. A shift in focus from impairment to a focus on value has the potential to improve labour market inclusivity.

#### 7.5.6 CONCLUSION

The employment of persons with disabilities is complex. Beyond legislation and process, there are many factors that require consideration when viewing the employment of persons with disabilities through the lens of social capital theory. Consideration of the structural and relational dimensions of social capital are commonplace and often unconsciously inherent in employment planning for persons with disabilities. What is absent is a sense of mutual and shared understanding between employers and employees with disabilities.

Social capital allows access to privileged information, provides job opportunities, and enhances skills. The value of social capital for employers and businesses includes gains in efficiency, increased market share and enhanced productivity and performance. However, these gains are of little value if persons with disabilities are viewed only in terms of these gains, and not as a full member of a workforce. The current study has revealed disconnection

between employees with disabilities and their employers. There is an absence of shared discourse and understanding that would facilitate the development of better connections between employer and employee, which in turn decreases the possibility of increasing networks that would facilitate increased economic inclusion for persons with disabilities. To further understand and promote the employment of persons with disabilities, employers require an understanding of how to increase social capital in all of the factors which influence the role of being a worker. The need to use structural, relational and cognitive capital in a manner that is supportive and mutually beneficial.

To this end, persons with disabilities need to acknowledge and expand their own social capital. Furthermore, training providers need to support the expansion of networks and capital through their engagements with trainees. Employers are encouraged to look beyond the disability so that employment goals are shared and re-enforced by understanding and possibly re-evaluating their views on their organisation's obligations, norms, values and mission, and goals as it pertains to the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

## CHAPTER 8

### SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

#### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter presents a brief overview of the thesis and integrates and synthesises the outcomes presented in the three papers on findings. These outcomes are supported by Social Capital Theory and Critical Disability Theory as the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Three. Finally, this chapter puts forward implications for further research, training programmes, employers, employees as well for interdisciplinary stakeholders involved in supporting the transition disability inclusive employment practices.

#### 8.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

The research problem that was identified in this study was that while persons with disabilities access the various skills development opportunities available to them in the non-formal education sector, there is at present minimal understanding of how these opportunities aid their efforts in obtaining employment or whether the principles and practices that advance social inclusion are maintained outside of the training period. Resultantly, it is difficult to determine the value or contribution of this particular type of non-formal training for persons with disabilities in terms of improving economic inclusion and/or employment and advancing the goal of improving social inclusion.

The aim of this qualitative research approach was to explore whether and to what extent persons with disabilities advance their social capital through participation in auxiliary<sup>7</sup> education and training computer literacy programmes that aim to prepare them for employment. This study examined the possibilities that specialized, non-accredited<sup>8</sup> computer literacy training opportunities could provide a pathway to employment for persons

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<sup>7</sup> 'Auxiliary' is used to describe a non-accredited training programme.

<sup>8</sup> In this context, non-accredited training has no connection to an external or professional body. Non-accredited course focus on equipping the student with a specific skillset.

with disabilities. An intrinsic exploratory case study approach was utilised, as it provided insight and understanding into the influence of social capital that exists in the particular context of auxiliary training opportunities and the transition into employment. The complexities and the impact of an auxiliary form of training were explored, from the perspectives of the training provider, trainees with disabilities and employers, to determine whether the development of social capital in persons with disabilities is understood and supported.

Data was collected and analysed according to research objectives, which were:

- To explore how the auxiliary programme facilitates or advances social capital.
- To describe learner profiles of persons who have undertaken such training.
- To explore the multiple factors that influence the choice of persons with disabilities to undertake skills development opportunities, and to critically interrogate the aspirations and vision of the training providers and employers of persons with disabilities who participate in the auxiliary programme.

### 8.3 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

This section summarises and synthesises the findings and discussions presented in Chapters Five to Seven. This section aims to draw parallels and highlight gaps in the literature that were uncovered during the process of doing this study.

#### 8.3.1 AUXILIARY TRAINING OUTCOMES VERSUS EMPLOYMENT IMPERATIVES

Based on the sample and findings of this study, a small percentage of persons with disabilities access training programmes. While attempts to address unemployment and poverty of persons with disabilities are part of the national governments' socio-economic development strategies, these attempts have been limited in their success to date.

Despite their limited capacity, QAWC has been able to offer the opportunity to at least 214 persons with disabilities to develop skills over a two-year period. Success factors relating to the preparation for employment have been highlighted, particularly in the delivery of this auxiliary training programme. Success factors include that the course is fee-free, transport is

available and accessible and that the classes are small and pitched at a basic, introductory level. This type of training, therefore, appears to be appropriate for persons with disabilities, despite its non-accredited status. However, this type of training may not translate into securing employment as the labour sector has its own qualification and aptitude requirements.

It is a common human resource practice that databases containing basic demographic information are used to source and recruit potential employees. According to the DPO that participated in the study, the database that has been developed is being offered to enterprises and recruiters that promote the employment of persons with disabilities. However, a superficial glance at such a database is not enough to establish whether or not trainees of such programmes are 'employable'. There are many barriers relating to social capital that persons with disabilities experience. Where employment does not occur, the root of the problem may lie with the employee, with the job opportunities, and/or with the mechanisms that match the two sides together (Potts, 2005).

From the perspective of employers, training and skills development are regarded as important and necessary, but the scope of these opportunities is limited for persons with disabilities. In line with the priorities of the National Development Plan 2030 (NPC, 2015), persons with disabilities must have '*enhanced*' access to quality education and employment. To this end, effort must be made to ensure that relevant and accessible skills development programmes are available for persons with disabilities. Organizations that offer such enhanced opportunities require support in order to reach more persons with disabilities. Therefore, equal opportunities for the productive and gainful employment of persons with disabilities need to be available (NPC, 2015). There are Special Employment Programmes under the auspices of the Department of Labour that focus on persons with disabilities, provide placements for persons with disabilities, and facilitate on-the-job training that lead to qualifications and competencies that help people access employment (Maja, Mann, Sing, Steyn and Naidoo, 2011). Notwithstanding disability status, employers still expect a certain uniform standard of qualification level for those whom they employ.

The consideration of social capital is absent when persons with disabilities are considered for employment. This finding was highlighted in the theme "SILENCE", in chapter 7.

Organisational attitudes and beliefs are skewed in favour of preconceptions about disability and seem to stem from the obligatory standpoint of the organisations. Factors such as quotas, impairment-type and qualifications are foregrounded. Consequently, one's impairment is given more consideration than one's ability.

Job-matching efforts between employers and employees, in many instances, do not consider social capital (Potts,2005). As social relationships are important in terms of information about the job and the job candidates, social capital is a fundamental way that influences the possibility of employment. Using databases as a tool for the recruitment of persons with disabilities, particularly, does not do justice to what these potential employees have to offer. It stands to reason that recruitment tools and processes require re-evaluation and re-alignment given the many barriers to employment faced by persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities cannot be assessed as "workers" as uniformly as persons without disabilities. Therefore the unique personal attributes and contributions that persons with disabilities have to offer, have to be considered.

### 8.3.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE TRANSITIONS FROM TRAINING TO EMPLOYMENT

The majority of the cohort sampled in this study acquired their impairment and were found to have been previously employed, or of employment age at the time of acquiring their impairment and at the time of completing this training. Older people might be less likely to have formal educational qualifications, and they are also more likely to become disabled, which has implications in terms of them re-entering training programmes and ultimately re-entering the workforce. Despite having less formal education, it may be assumed that older people are more likely to have more experience and therefore higher levels of social capital in that they have wider and more enduring social networks. Programmes targeted at this 'older' population are severely constrained by the current education landscape in South Africa that requires a formal school-leaving qualification at best. In this light, the programme such as the one in this study provided opportunities for further skills development for this population, despite that it is unaccredited, thereby enhancing access to education as delineated by the National Development Plan (NPC, 2015). Perplexingly, employers continue to insist on a uniform standard of education for entry into employment, despite the complexities of inequality and the demand for increased equity in the context of South Africa. A system of exclusion is thus created due to restricted access to education that leads to

restricted access to employment. While legislative mandates encourage enhanced access to education as well as enhanced access to employment, there are no guidelines as to how these two “enhancements” complement each other or facilitate economic inclusion, particularly for persons with disabilities, particularly from an equity standpoint. I propose that more thought be given to how these guidelines are developed, and that emphasis is placed on issues such as recognition of prior learning experience and the capability to acquire skills relevant for employment, as opposed to attempting to force persons with disabilities to match the education levels of their non-disabled counterparts to obtain employment. By considering how social capital enhances the employability of persons with disabilities, employers may view employing persons with disabilities in a more favourable light. By recognising that social capital is different for persons with impairments, employers can view their employment and recruitment strategies more equitably. Employers will benefit as employees with disabilities display improved health and well-being and participation, which could be demonstrated through increased productivity and decreased absenteeism due to health reasons(Lindsay, Cagliostro, Albarico, Mortaji, and Karon, 2018).

Based on the findings presented in Chapter Seven, it is apparent that while legislative frameworks relating to the obligations associated with the employment of persons with disabilities are in place and have filtered down to employers, deep-rooted beliefs of what persons with disabilities can or cannot do, still influence whether or not persons with disabilities obtain employment. From an ableist perspective, Cherney(2011) suggests that ableist culture sustains and perpetuates itself via rhetoric in the way that disability is interpreted. The interpretation of disability and assumptions about people with disabilities are learned and the previous generation teaches it to the next (Cherney, 2011). There is still much work to be done amongst employers to decrease stigma and change personal belief systems. It is not enough to only have legislative imperatives, as these mean nothing if they are not implemented sincerely.

### 8.3.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND INTERSECTIONALITY

In light of the existing literature on social capital and disability, Dimakos, Kamenetsky Condeluci, Curran, Flaherty, Fromkrecht, Howard and Williams (2016) assert that persons with disabilities demonstrate greater deficits in their social capital levels compared with the

general population. In South Africa, understanding these deficits is complex. Before one can assess social capital 'deficits' associated with being disabled, one has to consider that, alongside this disadvantage, is a dimension of inequality, which is determined by the extent to which an individual has access to social capital (Cook, 2014). In South Africa, particularly, there is a pervasive and ongoing sense of inequality in all spheres, including race, gender, religion, class and sexuality. These factors are important in terms of who can access social capital and to what extent this capital is accessed. Often, the intersectional factors mentioned earlier supersede the 'factor' of disability. Persons with disabilities and, particularly persons of colour with disabilities, have faced inequality on all fronts, ranging from healthcare to education, and employment. As a result, their levels of inequality have negatively influenced their access to social capital.

The findings of this study reveal that the social capital of persons who have completed the auxiliary training programme was built upon and improved through engaging with others and forming networks. This finding reflects the effectiveness of the DPO which provides training. The latent benefits of training advance the development of social capital, which in turn could lead to the increased employability of persons with disabilities.

It is widely thought that the sources of social capital among persons with disabilities, i.e. access to social capital building opportunities, are primarily family members and/or rehabilitation professionals or other individuals in paid positions of care and support, rather than natural friendships (Lorenzo, McKinney, Bam, Sinegu and Sompeta, 2018; Dimakos *et al.*, 2016). This study found that natural friendships that occur within the ambit of an organisation lead to increased levels of social capital. The chance of relevant and meaningful support is higher by virtue of the fact that the learning environment provided by the organisation is run for persons with disabilities, by persons with disabilities. Additionally, the probability of persons with disabilities engaging in help-seeking or support seeking behaviour is higher, as it is felt that their needs and wants are well-understood by others. In other words, they are seen by others in a manner that is self-determined and not subjected to possible skewed assumptions. The findings presented in Chapter Five suggest that the attributes of resilience, fortitude and self-determination are important components in the development of social

capital for persons with disabilities. Importantly, there is an emphasis on self-driven motivation and belief in self to access opportunities. Not accessing these opportunities is an indication of a hesitancy by persons with disabilities to access opportunities and not an indication of an absence of available opportunities. Research tends to emphasize the limited amount of education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (Kett, 2012), as well as the limited ability of persons with disabilities to access available opportunities. Yet, the findings of this study, presented in Chapter Five indicate that it is rather the diffidence of individuals that curtail the advancement of social capital. In other words, the onus of repudiating social isolation is mainly the responsibility of the individual, through trying to engage with others and other networks. Agency is vital as it takes the individual together with other systems to advance social capital.

Persons with disabilities are thought to have fewer close friends and are less likely to participate in both formal and informal activities (Dimakos *et al.*, 2016). This situation was not found to be the case in this study, which seems to be a direct result of how the training is provided. While limited social connections hinder the likelihood of employment, this training has increased the possibility of obtaining employment that can be utilised as an opportunity to further develop social capital.

Literature emphasises making resources available and accessible to persons with disabilities. In this study, persons with disabilities were aware of how and where to access the resources they required. This finding is interesting in that professionals and those working with persons with disabilities assume that this knowledge is not held by persons with disabilities. What emerged from this study is that persons with disabilities want to be able to share their resources or knowledge of resources with their peers (see Chapter Five).

Persons with disabilities can live independent and productive lives, particularly if they have access to opportunities, resources, environments and technical aids that allow them independence, dignity, self-sufficiency and responsibility (Marumoagae, 2012). These personal attributes are fundamental elements that need further consideration by prospective employers, with the view to improve the notion of shared norms and goals, which is an important contributor to the advancement of social capital.

It has been postulated that persons with disabilities enjoy less career development and success as opposed to their peers and their skills are often underdeveloped or underutilized (Verdonschot *et al.*, 2009). Additionally, research has shown that persons with disabilities are less involved in community groups and educational undertakings (Carroll, Witten and Calder-Dawe 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2015). The limited involvement in community living and limited skills have meant that persons with disabilities have had difficulty entering the workplace. The influence of social capital, particularly relating to shared norms and goals, has to be considered to increase the possibility of obtaining gainful employment.

#### 8.3.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In summary, the findings of this study have concluded the following:

- i. The use of databases as a recruitment tool does not do justice to the actual capabilities of persons with disabilities and does not consider elements of social capital that encompass their intersectional identities.
- ii. Auxiliary training opportunities foster greater levels of personal social capital and assist in expanding the social networks of persons with disabilities. In so doing, this expansion of social capital allows for the multiplication of other capitals, which include economic inclusion. Moreover, expansion of individual social capital develops an appreciation for self-determination, fortitude and resilience in and for persons with disabilities;
- iii. Employers readily consider the structural and technical aspects related to employing persons with disabilities but do not include persons with disabilities in their planning, recruitment or implementation strategies. As a result, employers and prospective employees with disabilities do not have a shared understanding of goals, missions and purposes of the relationship between employees with disabilities and the employer.

The findings of the study suggest that the approach to the employment of persons with disabilities is viewed from a top-down and colonial fashion, which relies heavily on the practices of the global north. Coloniality is produced by colonial cultures and structures in the

modern, capitalist, and patriarchal world-system and refers to the longevity of colonial forms of control, despite the conclusion of colonial administrations (Grosfoguel, 2007). While colonialism is understood as a period of oppression that has ended, coloniality refers to the essential logic which assigns places, persons and knowledge into a classification system that values all that is European or associated with the global North (for example, employment practices; Zembylas, 2018). In contrast, decoloniality refers to the continued efforts to challenge persistent forms of coloniality (Zembylas, 2018). Decoloniality contests social categories such as race, gender, sexuality and disability as inventions of colonial capitalism that hold significance for how individuals and groups experience the world (Zembylas, 2018). As such, decoloniality favours practices that move away from the categories of thought fostered by Europe and the global North and to engage with thoughts and ideas that have emerged from other parts of the globe, and which have been thought of as uncivilised and barbaric (Zembylas, 2018). The governments of Africa are still bound by the colonial and racial contracts that legislate the most vulnerable, such as persons with disabilities, out of mainstream social life (Mpofu, 2017). Decolonisation of Africa has not necessarily led to liberation but has sustained coloniality and opposition to social justice initiatives (Mpofu, 2017).

The battle for social justice is inseparable from the struggle for the recognition of knowledge and the degree of its validation (Santos, 2014). In the South, we have been subjected to critique, silencing and delegitimizing of Southern knowledge, which has been part of the struggle against capitalism, colonialism and imperialism (Santos, 2014). Essentially, the decolonial project needs to be understood as a political, social, and epistemic process that implies a critical examination of dominant structures of knowledge (Zembylas, 2018). The relationship of this process to power, in terms of how it operates and how it is reproduced, and the hegemony that is produced, needs closer scrutiny, particularly as it relates to making disability inclusive practices equitable. Perhaps it is useful to consider that limited success in disability employment is due to the use of a hegemonic, colonial approach. This study suggests that the training and employment of persons with disabilities has to be approached from a collective and mutually beneficial point of view.

## 8.4 STUDY THESIS

The impetus for pursuing this study was to ascertain whether and to what do auxiliary skills development programmes build social capital in order to facilitate pathways to economic inclusion and/or employment for persons with disabilities. What has emerged is that while these programmes have the potential to advance social capital and facilitate the use of social capital in the transition to work, there are greater, systemic issues that require consideration in order to develop disability inclusive employment practices.

### 8.4.1 DISPLACING THE COLONIAL HEGEMONY OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

*We believe in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationship. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa - giving the world a more human face.*

*Steve Biko (in Coetzee and Roux, 1998: 30)*

Hegemonic frames of employment management and leadership emphasise practices based on countries from the global north (Grafton-Whyte, 2018; Adeoti, George and Adegboye, 2013; Inyang, 2008; Nwagbara, 2011). However, many of these concepts do not necessarily apply to the nature of employment in Africa, and particularly not the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa. The history of Africa and South Africa in particular, is unique in that it is shaped by apartheid, colonialism, conquest, neo-colonialism and global capitalism (Nwagbara, 2011:76). This history has heavily impacted African management practices. Researchers such as Oghojafor, Alaneme and Kuye (2013) have shown that Africans have their own management philosophies and practices, which have allowed them to survive slavery, colonialism, and economic exploitation. Notwithstanding, northern management concepts that were introduced became recognised as standard management practice (Solansky *et al.*, 2017; Duze, 2012 and Low, 2011). Management and employment theories and concepts were, and still are, based on studies of employment practices of the global north (Horwitz and Jain, 2008). The influence of northern hegemonic capitalist practices and principles is particularly evident in the employment of persons with disabilities, where factors such as

reasonable accommodation, apportioned appointment, and emphasis on productivity carry more value than interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, shared understandings, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity.

Current practices that support the drive towards economic inclusion for persons with disabilities include increased training and skills development opportunities, regulatory and obligatory legislative and employment mandates, and quite extensive monitoring and evaluation of how persons with disabilities participate in the economy (NPC, 2015, DSD, 2016 and SAHRC, 2017). These approaches are not, however, participative nor mutually empathetic to persons with disabilities, their employers or trainers.

The World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011) outlines the strategies that have been implemented to enable persons with disabilities to address barriers to economic inclusion. These strategies, which appear to be decidedly hegemonic, include the implementation of legislation and regulations; tailored interventions; vocational rehabilitation and training; social protection and efforts at changing attitudes. Viewing these strategies through the lens of social capital, it can be inferred that the structural and relational elements of social capital are well considered. The cognitive element of social capital, however, is not well considered. Very little emphasis is placed on what employers and persons with disabilities share in terms of identity, values, norms as well as attitudes and beliefs towards the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

It is necessary to implement or consider approaches to improved economic inclusion that debunk colonial hegemonies and support the shared goals of training providers, employers and employees with disabilities. I would like to propose that we look to existing theories, not usually considered in the realms of Critical Disability Studies and the employment of persons with disabilities. One such theory is that of '*Ubuntu*'. The word '*Ubuntu*' is derived from a Nguni (isiZulu) aphorism: "*Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*", which can be translated as "a person is a person because of or through others" (Moloketi, 2009: 243; Tutu, 2004: 5-26). *Ubuntu* is used to describe the human capacity to acknowledge compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring (Khoza, 2006:6; Luhabe, 2002:103; Mandela, 2006:xxv; Tutu, 1999:34-35). '*Ubuntu*' embodies a Southern African humanist and collective ethical

philosophy and practice (Bergh, 2017). *Ubuntu* could provide the lens that Bergh (2017) asserts is necessary to engage with disability studies due to the need to engage with concepts and frameworks that are usually reduced in importance by mainstream academia. It is necessary to consider how decolonisation supports the rethinking of (dis)ableism through collaborative work (Bergh, 2017). *Ubuntu* thus implies an approach that emphasises teamwork, attention to relationships, mutual respect and empathy between leader and followers, and participative decision-making.

At the core of the disability rights movement and the labour rights movement, is social dialogue and participation (ILO, 2020). During the current COVID-19 crisis, a range of views from governments, worker and employers' organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities will bring a multiplicity of solutions (ILO, 2020). This response suggests collective engagement and networking to facilitate the reimagination of labour practices. At present, the world at large faces increased unemployment rates and even those who do not directly depend on capitalist models and processes, such as those involved in informal trade, have been left with limited sources of income. Economist Mariana Mazzucato (2020) believes that the COVID-19 pandemic will shed light on the inequality of societal and economic systems globally. The COVID-19 crisis is exposing still more flaws in economic structures, especially in the increasing instability of work, partly due to the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the deterioration of workers' bargaining power (Mazzucato, 2020), both of which have significant consequences for persons with disabilities.

Considering the current health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic collapses, it can be seen that the most vulnerable members of communities are most affected. The global COVID-19 crisis is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing the extent of exclusion, and highlighting that work on disability inclusion is imperative (UN, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exposes and deepens the divide between the few haves and the many have-nots in South Africa, particularly persons with disabilities who are the most marginalised and disenfranchised. A policy brief released by the United Nations mentions the impact on employment and social protection for persons with disabilities (UN, 2020). This brief suggests that while already facing exclusion from employment opportunities, persons with disabilities

are more likely to lose their jobs and experience greater difficulties returning to work during recovery, during a pandemic such as COVID-19 (UN,2020).

It has been highlighted in this study that learning and skills acquisition are subject to historicity, cultural narratives and discourses, as well as systemic and attitudinal disablement. I would suggest that elements of social capital are important and that employment related decisions cannot be made without sharing goals, missions, and understandings. Social capital has to be framed within a larger framework that critically considers what disability is, in the context of the global south and its pervading levels of inequality.

If social capital is to be used to create economic opportunities to enhance the employability of persons with disabilities, then the influence of how disability is understood and how impairment is responded to, requires in-depth and critical consideration. If social capital is to stimulate political participation and community engagement, a critical lens is required to expose hidden motivators and to identify how social attitudes are conditioned by the portrayal of disability. By using this critical lens, more effective policy responses to disability can be developed. There can be stronger, more democratic political control of social institutions, like places of work, which deal, in one way or another, with issues related to disability (Hosking, 2008).

There are great similarities that can be drawn between social capital and the notion of *Ubuntu*. While not the same concept, an *Ubuntu* approach will allow persons with disabilities to exercise, develop and expand their social capital. Claridge (2004) suggests that an important consideration in the conceptualisation of social capital is the social setting, or culture, which dictates how one should act in any given setting or situation. It is the shared versions, interpretations, and systems of meaning among parties in an organisation that predisposes people to collective action. Collective action requires that the norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs involved in social capital rationalise and create environments in which co-operative behaviour is expected (Claridge, 2004). *Ubuntu*, similarly, requires human engagement that allows for critical thinking, non-domination and the optimal development of human relationships (Letseka, 2011). Mbigi (1997) claims that the notion of *Ubuntu* is a concrete manifestation of the interconnectedness of human beings.

In South Africa, we find ourselves within a neoliberal socio-economic structure, which is based on macro-economic policies that promote individualistic growth, stability, and privatisation (Mwipikeni, 2019). Our policies cluster wealth and income in an economic oligarchy which leads to extreme poverty for the majority of the population and as such, are in stark opposition to the ethos of Ubuntu (Mwipikeni, 2019). However, Mwipikeni (2019) postulates that the rights of people can be protected in postcolonial states, provided that socio-economic institutional order is reconfigured. This notion is key in reorganising the social order based on values and principles that are different from a colonial system. Grosfoguel (2011) claims that knowledges are epistemically located in the dominant side of a power relationship. Non-Western knowledge is dismissed and thus a “colonial power matrix” is created. This matrix affects all dimensions of social existence such as sexuality, authority, subjectivity and labour (Grosfoguel, 2011). This matrix is an organising principle that involves exploitation and domination which is prevalent in various dimensions of social life. Grosfoguel (2011) suggests that the interruption of this matrix would allow communities, enterprises, schools, hospitals and all of the institutions that currently regulate social life to be self-managed by people with the view to extending social equality and democracy to all spaces of social existence.

In his article, Letseka (2009) cites authors who blame apartheid as an instrument that prevented social cohesion, hindered development and supported discrimination in all spheres, including disability. All the aforementioned characteristics are entirely divergent from the values of *Ubuntu*. Letseka (2009) postulates that the principles of *Ubuntu* uphold the ideologies of non-racialism, non-sexism, non-discrimination, and respect for freedom, human rights promotion and dignity of people, inter-dependence and a deep rootedness of a collective community. There have been gains, post-apartheid, in terms of the promotion of human dignity, the promotion of non-racialism, decreased discrimination and increased freedom. Yet we continue to struggle with disability inclusion. It is my opinion that this struggle continues because the same colonial values and principles are applied to disability, particularly in employment and economic inclusion. Until these values and principles are changed, progress in disability inclusion will continue to be slow.

I wish to suggest that we re-imagine the employment of persons with disabilities with these ideologies (i.e. *Ubuntu* and decoloniality). In understanding the responsibilities that come with our interconnectedness, the realization is that, in promoting the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, we must rely on each other to dispel outdated preconceptions, and our archaic, capitalist and mostly, the northern influence of employment practices. The principles of '*Ubuntu*' need to apply to personal, professional, organizational, and governmental management of policy implementation. Bhengu (2014) suggests that to implement '*Ubuntu*' principles for leadership and management, notions of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, compassion, caring and good citizenship are to be considered.

#### 8.4.2 ALIGNING UBUNTU AND SOCIAL CAPITAL TO INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

This study has uncovered three distinct findings. By considering these findings through the lens of *Ubuntu*, alternative recruitment strategies, which consider how one person is connected to others and how this connectedness builds a sense of reciprocity and trust, can be developed. Recruitment could then be accomplished in a fair and compassionate manner, which considers more than just policy imperatives, formal qualification, and functional status. This study found that the auxiliary training programme in this study fostered the expansion of social capital as it expanded the networks that trainees have. This expansion appears to have happened organically, so I suggest that the nurturing of social capital needs to be more targeted. The diagram below illustrates how the use of social capital theory, in conjunction with ubuntu and intersectionality, can be used to develop disability inclusive employment practices in a South African context.



Figure 8.1: A model for disability inclusive employment practices for the South African Context

An *Ubuntu* approach in training programmes will allow for a deepened sense of interdependence and a shared understanding of a collective community, who support and respect each other. Teamwork and attention to relationships, mutual respect and empathy between trainer and trainee will only enhance participative learning opportunities. These attributes will enhance an individual's sense of self-determination as they are a 'person' because of or through others. Some persons with disabilities have low self-expectations about their ability to be employed and may not even try to find employment. The social isolation of persons with disabilities restricts their access to social networks, especially of friends and family members, which could help in finding employment (Lamichhane, 2015). Additionally, individuals with disabilities themselves need to acknowledge and expand their own social capital.

The notion of *Ubuntu* in employment offers an understanding of the employment of persons with disabilities in relation to the world. Using *Ubuntu* principles may aid the movement away from the "us and them" mentality so prevalent in the current employment landscape in South Africa, to a language and way of doing and being that encompasses "all of us". Shared understandings of disability, as well as the narratives, discourses, responses to and the systemic, mostly disabling, attitudes towards disability, will facilitate the implementation of a new way of being and doing where the economic empowerment or employment of persons with disabilities is concerned. Misconceptions about the ability of persons with disabilities to

perform jobs are an important reason both for their continued unemployment and for their exclusion from opportunities for promotion or progression in their careers (WHO, 2011). Such attitudes may stem from prejudice or from the belief that persons with disabilities are less productive than their non-disabled peers (WHO, 2011). There are multiple prejudices and influences of racism and sexism that exist in the workplace. There may be ignorance or prejudice about mental health difficulties (Brohan and Thornicroft, 2011), for example, and about adjustments to work arrangements that can facilitate employment.

An *Ubuntu* approach cultivates collaboration in economic, social and environmental situations and seeks to facilitate possibilities that increase opportunities (Mbigi, 2005). Mbigi further asserts that incorporating *Ubuntu* principles in management holds the promise of improved approaches to managing organisations. Organisations infused with humaneness, a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness, will enjoy a more sustainable competitive advantage (Mbigi, 2005, Bodiat, 2017). This study encourages employers to look beyond disability in order that employment goals are shared and re-enforced by understanding and possibly re-evaluating their views on their obligations, norms, values and mission and goals as it pertains to the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

## 8.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following section draws on the findings of the study and associated literature to present implications for various stakeholder groups concerned with improving the disability inclusive employment practices.

### 8.5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Persons with disabilities experience challenges in preparing for and maintaining employment. Research needs to be done to improve the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. Further investigation needs to be conducted into the limitations in the relationships between

the education systems (Basic, TVET, <sup>9</sup>Higher and Auxiliary) and the extent to which these systems prepare persons with disabilities for entrance into the open labour market. Research into ways for deeper and more holistic engagement with employment practices and how the various education systems understand and engage with these practices needs to be conducted.

Given that the participants with disabilities in this study all presented with acquired impairments, it is suggested that further research be conducted into how the onset of impairment has impacted this cohort's education, integration and retention in employment.

Engagement with persons with disabilities through research around their expectations, experiences and barriers regarding employment needs deeper consideration. Understanding their agency in obtaining and maintaining employment will provide insights to improve the transition to disability inclusive employment practices.

#### 8.5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Training programmes need to aim for accreditation, while still presenting their learning material in a manner that is most suitable for persons with disabilities. A more targeted approach could be taken in terms of acknowledging and developing social capital as a viewpoint that is brought to the attention of employers. Additionally, it is suggested that training providers form partnerships and connect with employer networks to develop mutual goals and missions in the endeavour of improving disability inclusive employment practices. Disabled person's organisations (DPOs) and other organisations could provide training opportunities to assist and support both potential employees with disabilities and employers. They need to facilitate transitions between education, skills development and employment to ensure that the goals and mission of economic inclusion of persons with disabilities become mutually shared and mutually beneficial.

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<sup>9</sup> TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) is an education and training system which provides knowledge and skills for employment. It is recognised to be a crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusion and sustainable development.

### 8.5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers need to treat existing and potential employees with disabilities equally by fully considering the merits of employees or potential employees with reasonable accommodation, so that they are able to garner the full potential of the workforce. Employers, together with persons with disabilities or disabled persons' organisations could work towards amending recruitment and appointment strategies that are rooted within the SA context and not impose strategies that maintain the hegemonic status quo of practices of the global North. Employers are encouraged to understand the social networks, the vocational themes and the importance of sharing knowledge, norms and goals with persons with disabilities. Such understanding may provide insight into where the individual's skills would be a good fit. This approach would then eliminate the focus on the inabilities of the jobseeker with disabilities.

### 8.5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The current policy landscape appears to favour employees who acquire their disabilities during employment. The rights of employees with existing disabilities entering the workplace should be urgently addressed and included in policy. Policy ought to take into consideration the needs of persons with disabilities across the gambits of education, training and employment and not separate legislative mandates in these areas. Policy development and implementation require a more compassionate and collective approach so that it considers more than just functional status and functional supports that may be required to economically include persons with disabilities. Policies like the Basic Conditions of Employment (DoL, 1997), Employment Equity Act (DoL, 1998), the Skills Development Act (SAQA, 1998) as well as policies in the sphere of education could be reviewed in line with a more compassionate emphasis to be more inclusive to the broad scope of disability, which goes beyond ability or inability. Re-imagined policies should take into account the nature of systemic disablement, the construction of disability, the response to disability and the cultural discourses that prevail. Collective, inclusive planning is required to improve the prospects of economic inclusion for persons with disabilities and more radical shifts are needed so that the notion of social capital can be used as a vehicle for transforming systems thinking. Transformation can only be supported if all role players, including rehabilitation professionals and service providers, contribute to the shifts in systems thinking.

#### 8.5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION PROFESSIONALS

It is interesting to now view the positions and philosophies of our rehabilitation professions such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. Rehabilitation professionals should be encouraged to understand, that even through our practices, we are promoting the hegemonic practices of the global North. An example is an extract from the World Federation of Occupational Therapy which “*affirms that occupational therapists have the expertise in the work-related practice including occupational health and safety to enable their participation*” (WFOT, 2016). Like many occupational therapists in the realm of work practice, I believed that to advance the employment and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, we need to encourage appropriate and accredited forms of up-skilling or re-skilling so that the transition into employment can be as easy as possible for persons with disabilities: in essence – to get persons with disabilities “to fit in”. I now realise that despite being an occupational therapist, who at the core of my profession believes in the “rights of people, regardless of their ability, to participate in productive occupations such as work” (World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2016), I was actually enabling and promoting hegemonic capitalist and colonial processes.

Our positionality as occupational therapists have been instituted by powers beyond us and we unknowingly perpetuate and promote hegemony, in the guise of inclusion. I say ‘guise of inclusion’ because we believe we are acting inclusively and in the best interests of and with our clients, yet our methods and theoretical practice frameworks are not shared or understood by our clients. We implement and lobby for legislation and regulations, we tailor interventions, we offer vocational rehabilitation and training, and we attempt to change attitudes. Yet we forget that we are therapists or professionals because there are persons with disabilities, just as we are a person because of others.

We cannot expect systemic and meta-systemic changes to occur in the realm of inclusive employment if we as ‘experts’ see ourselves as such. Persons with disabilities know what they need, and they know where to go. We are not the experts; we need to be the affiliates and to allow our practices to be infused with humaneness. A pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness, will achieve much more.

As rehabilitation professionals, we need to reflect on how we are complicit in maintaining the *status quo*. Rehabilitation professionals need to view disability through a critical lens to deeply understand the impact of historicity, the impact of systemic disablement, how disability is responded to by the person themselves, as well as how we respond to it and how to possibly debunk the current narratives and discourses. In this way, we could provide the space and context for our clients to develop and exercise their social capital, so that they lead more self-determined lives.

#### 8.6.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, DISABLED PERSONS ORGANISATIONS AND DISABILITY ACTIVISTS

Literature and experience demonstrate that expanding the social relationships of individuals with disabilities and connecting them to important social structures enhances their opportunities to make choices and decisions that influence their quality of life (Gotto *et al.*, 2020). Social capital puts persons with disabilities in contact with the supports and networks that enable them to live more self-determined lives. It follows that their ability to live self-determined lives is relinquished if they do not have adequate social capital. I wish to encourage persons with disabilities and disability activists to extend the exercise of their social capital into the realm of employment and economic inclusion, as observed by a person with a disability in this study: “...*you know what you need, you know where to go and your attitude counts a lot.*” (Chapter Five). Persons with disabilities understand the narratives that surround them, particularly in the sphere of employment and/or economic inclusion and are aware of their and others’ responses to disability. Persons with disabilities need to exercise their social capital to disrupt hegemonic employment practices, so that they are equitably trained and recruited. In order to change the social order, it is necessary that disability activists, disability specialists, disability training providers, employment equity resource personnel and persons with disabilities themselves, reach out to the networks around them to fully understand what persons with disabilities can do and want to do, regardless of the limiting narratives and responses that they are used to in the world of work. To progress in the endeavour of effective transitions to disability inclusive employment practices, understanding the individual for who he or she is and what he or she is able to contribute is imperative.

## 8.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A number of limitations were present in this study. Firstly, there was insufficient reliable, up-to-date statistical information on the number of persons with disabilities in South Africa. Secondly, there is a dearth of research regarding the training and employment outcomes of persons with disabilities in the South African context. To address this limitation, I attempted to incorporate the research that was available into the study and maintained an awareness of gaps in research in the South African context so that these gaps could be explored within the study where possible.

An important methodological limitation pertaining to the study is subjectivity. Qualitative data gathering, analysis and interpretations are subjective and prone to the researcher's biases (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It is unavoidable that I would bring my personal values into the research process. To minimise this bias, I triangulated interviews with documents and databases to double-check and confirm the evidence. Another potential methodological limitation of this research is the inherent retrospective bias of interviewees concerning past events. I attempted to minimise these biases by triangulating interview data with documents, but future research might address this issue by examining participants' perceptions across a longer period of engagement or across a longer period of time.

Despite the aim of this study being to explore the experiences of persons with disabilities entering into and remaining in employment following a specific training programme, many issues relating directly to the intersectionality of persons with disabilities, such as health care, social services and others were touched on, as participants made links to these issues when describing their training experiences. During the conceptualization of this study, I planned to interview all the immediate family members of all participants to explore their experiences of the integration and training of persons with disabilities. However, most of the participants in this study presented as autonomous and independent individuals and even upon probing did not mention the impact of family involvement on the training experience.

## 8.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The central question that this study aimed to uncover was whether an auxiliary training programme builds social capital and advances economic inclusion for persons with disabilities. This question can only be answered when looking at the relationships between individuals, the training received and employment. This study has uncovered that there needs to be a transactional relationship between individuals, the training they receive, as well as the employment opportunities which they wish to pursue in order for social capital to be expanded and built upon.

Social capital supports employment goals by re-enforcing and increasing the number of people who may be willing to assist with obtaining employment, while at the same time creating a sense of competence within the job seeker. This notion strongly suggests that shared goals and missions (between employer and employee) are imperative. In particular, persons with disabilities may benefit from the social capital of others in their networks, provided that stakeholders share the same goal in terms of employment and/or economic inclusion.

Being integral to career development, social capital functions as a multiplier for the other types of capital. It is believed that training opportunities allow for this multiplication to occur and provide the space and support in which individual social capital can be nurtured. Social resources are second-order resources, which means they do not only consist of someone's own resources but also of the resources of others they know, including the sharing of knowledge, norms and goals.

An important aspect to consider is that of the legislative frameworks that govern and support the employment of persons with disabilities. These policies and procedures are open to interpretation and require scrutiny in light of the impact that social capital has on employing persons with disabilities. These mandates often influence organisational attitudes and impact on the values and obligations associated with employing persons with disabilities. A deeper understanding of the effectiveness, unintended effects as well as equity goals that are to be achieved, may deter employers from viewing potential employees as only disabled and defined by their impairments. Considering the individual as an equal player in the preparation and maintenance of employment and/or economic inclusion endeavours, which is based on

a shared mission, may allow for more appropriate and fair consideration when faced with recruiting and employing persons with disabilities.

The findings of this study suggest that there are many factors that require consideration when viewing the employment of persons with disabilities through the lens of social capital theory. In order to further understand and promote the employment of persons with disabilities, efforts have to be made to increase social capital in all spheres that influence the role of being a worker. A more collective and humanistic approach needs to be adopted to decolonise the way in which human resource practices are crafted, especially when preparing persons with disabilities for employment.

To this end, individuals with disabilities need to acknowledge and expand their own social capital, training providers need to support the expansion of networks and capital through their engagements with trainees. Employers are required to look beyond the impairment in order that employment goals are shared and re-enforced by understanding and by possibly re-evaluating their views on their obligations, norms, values and mission and goals as they pertain to the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A.1: INFORMATION SHEET

To whom it may concern,

I am Adele Ebrahim and I am an Occupational Therapist, employed in the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences in the Faculty of Health Sciences, at the University of Cape Town. I am currently a part-time student at the University of Cape Town and completing my doctoral thesis in the Division of Disability Studies. I am exploring skills development opportunities directed at persons with disabilities. I would appreciate your participation in this study.

This study aims to explore the meaning and value of skills development opportunities for persons with disabilities, for preparation for employment in the South African context. Employment rates of persons with disabilities continue to be very low and currently little is known about how training opportunities assist persons with disabilities in advancing the employment of persons with disabilities in South Africa. I am doing this study to understand this area from the point of view of persons with disabilities, training providers and employers. This knowledge will be useful to the disability sector and employers as well as other stakeholders such as the government and educational institutions.

This study requires participants from three groups of stakeholders of the training organisation namely 1) persons with disabilities who have completed the training course offered by the Digital Village, 2), training providers who train persons with disabilities and 3) employers of persons with disabilities who have undergone the training offered by the training provider. Participants with disabilities need to be 18 years or older.

In order to be part of this study, you will need to participate in 1-2 interview sessions (individual or focus group) of approximately 1 hour each to share your views, knowledge and experiences regarding the training and employment of persons with disabilities. Venues and times will be arranged at your convenience. You will be required to give permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded, which will enable the researcher to later have the interview transcribed. These interview transcripts will aid the researcher in analysing the interviews accurately.

You are free to choose whether or not you would like to participate in this study, and you are under no obligation. Should you choose to be part of this study, you will be required to give written consent. This means that you have understood what is required of you and that you give your permission for the information you provide to be used in this study. You can choose to leave the study at any time.

Participants will remain completely anonymous and all identifying information will be excluded from any reporting of the research. All interview audio-recordings and interview transcripts will be kept safe on the researcher's computer and home desk. After this research project has been completed all audio-recordings will be destroyed. The only other people who will have access to these documents are the researcher's supervisors

There are no risks linked to being a participant in this study and no remuneration is offered for being part of this study. If you experience any emotional or psychological difficulties related to the interviews the researcher will arrange for you to receive additional help and/or counselling from relevant professional(s).

The benefits of taking part in the study may include gaining a clear perspective on your personal experiences and you will have access to the findings of the research.

If you require further clarity, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher via telephone (0825159915) or email (adelefelix@gmail.com). The researcher will be supervised by Theresa Lorenzo and Harsha Kathard, professors at the University of Cape Town.

This research has been approved by the UCT Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC740/2016). If you would like more information on the approval of this research or have any questions or concerns about your rights and/or welfare as a research participant, please contact Professor Marc Blockman, the Chairperson of the HREC on (021) 406 6626.

If you agree to participate in this study, please fill in the consent form on the following page.

Yours sincerely,

---

**Adele Ebrahim**

**RESEARCHER**

## APPENDIX A.2: CONSENT FORM

### Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research study "*Traversing Disability in South Africa: Considering Social Capital in Disability Inclusive Employment Practices*".

I have read the information letter and I understand what is required of me. I understand that I have the right to leave the study at any stage and that it will have no negative consequences for me. I understand that my name will not be used in any reporting of the research unless I choose to have it included. I have had the chance to have all my questions answered and I understand that I will not receive payment for participating in the study.

Signed:

I give permission for my interviews to be recorded

I **do not** give permission for my interviews to be recorded

---

Participant's Name.

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date & Place

---

Researcher's Name

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date & Place

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW TRIGGER QUESTIONS

- What led you to embark on the training course offered by QAWC's digital villages?
- What did you envisage happening after the training period?
- What was it like being a "student" in this context?
- What did it feel like to complete this training?
- What have you learned from this training?
- What critical incidents occurred while you were being trained?
- Where do you find yourself now and what are you doing?
- Could the process of training be done differently? If yes, how?

## APPENDIX C: TRAINING PROVIDER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW TRIGGER QUESTIONS: TRAINING PROVIDERS

- What led QAWC to offer the training course at digital villages?
- What critical incidences occur or have occurred while you are training persons with disabilities?
- What did you envisage happening after the training period?
- What are the expected outcomes once someone has completed this training?
- Could the process of training be done differently? If yes, how?

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EMPLOYERS

### **CRITICAL CONVERSATION GUIDE: EMPLOYERS**

- What motivated you to employ someone with a disability?
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of employing a person with a disability in your context?

## APPENDIX E: PERSONAL REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

### Excerpts from a personal reflective journal:

December 2016

*Today was the initial introduction to QASA. A long trip to Durbanville to meet with the CEO and Ops Manager of QASA- both of whom are wheelchair users. My impression is that they have good intentions – but also what do they expect to happen? Two weeks of training and then people are ok to get a job? Really? But then again some people do?*

*X and Y are completely passionate- but I can't help but wonder about the bubble they live in?*

August 2017

*Today was interesting. I visited the DV and had the chance to see how training happens. What a scenario. A completely upper-class environment and then trainers and trainees who do not necessarily fit- felt a bit like a charity vibe. The work being done is good. Not sure about the level of content and how this is supposed to increase the chances of finding a job- but perhaps it's a stepping stone. X and the intern are great teachers -calm, supportive and interactive. Nobody is left behind.*

*Had some great chats with members of staff- like the receptionist. She is very involved and quite knowledgeable about some things – just wonder that as the face of the organisation if she is knowledgeable about the right things?*

May 2018

*Met with DS at the home in gugs. What a character. So motivated and determined – and what a story he had! But also he hasn't moved "physically" from where he was – he strikes me as a big thinker – a mover and shaker.... He knows what he wants ... but can he get there? How much did his involvement in the DV help? Was it just a place to go? Wouldn't he go places anyway? Then again- he took people along with him.... So maybe it's not only about him....?*

June 2018

*BS, BS. I 've never been made to feel more welcome in a stranger's house. I heard EVERYTHING.... The level of sharing and understanding of other PWD- is refreshing. There is no sense of victimhood- it is what it is- deal with it....! Another person who is motivated and wanting to be and do and become- regardless. Supports her family and extended family with her "own businesses", looks after children is a peer supporter – is opposed to laziness! What a point of view- quite refreshing... quite clear to see the importance of relationships and connections with BS. Her door is open and people come in and out her phone rings – she is in the know and wants to share with others*

August 2018

*ES.. this was definitely a lesson in life. A dignified and forthright man – told me straight that he wouldn't talk to me if he didn't like my face.*

*A proud man – but sincere in his devotion to his family and in his devotion to his carer – he knows he needs them... cannot be himself without them – especially his carer. I sense a deeper connection -more than a worker – a confidante, a support, a link to other things... ES doesn't take drama! Spoke his mind and heart- doesn't tolerate laziness. So old school – one must work!*

*I wonder though, now that this is the second person to tell me about the laziness of PWD... what is the alternative? Is it laziness? Is it a lack of opportunity? Is it a lack of will? What happens if someone just doesn't want to work? Is that also laziness? Is work some sort of badge? Medal of honour- without it people like you look down on you? Or is it a point to be proven.. a capacity that is hidden? Is it a thing PWD want known? Do they want it known that they can work? In ES's case – he would work – but on his terms? Is that a bad thing? In his case he refused work because being at home getting his "payout" made more sense than earning a pittance in an adapted job? Is he lazy for not accepting a job?*

August 2019

*I've never been so frustrated! At least I spoke to two very inspirational people. Doing their thing in their way – staying their lane but making their voices heard. Again – it was not about them alone- there's this thing about doing for others like them.. for leading the way... for involving others in opportunity.... For taking chances to connect with others – like at the training? These two did not necessarily need ICT training -they were already working with PC- they could have gotten training from an accredited place- but they didn't? what is that about? Is it because the org saw it was free and for PWD and so took advantage, or did these two decide to be part of a group experience?*

December 2019

*Ok I have been this frustrated. First, the person I made an appointment with didn't arrive and then I had to think on my feet. What conversation- as much as they try and be PC – personal thoughts and values slip out how does this affect people they interact with? The people they interview, the people they employ. What are the boxes and who decides where people are put? The intention ( according to the law/ policy ) is there – the understanding and empathy is not.....*

## APPENDIX F: PERMISSION TO GAIN ACCESS TO QAWC

Good evening Adele

I unexpectedly spent most of today out of the office so did not speak to Anda about this. I will discuss with him again on Tuesday morning and he has not been forwarded information to you will ensure that he does before the close of business.

Apologies for the

delay.Regards

Anthony

**From:** Adele Ebrahim [<mailto:adele.ebrahim@uct.ac.za>]

**Sent:** 10 April 2017 10:58 AM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** QAWC <

**Subject:** Re: PhD Research - Disability Studies

Good morning [REDACTED],

I hope that you are both well . Thank you once again for meeting with me last week!  
I'm excited to start this research journey!

Please could I remind you about sending me the following please:

- training material for both basic and advanced courses
- database of D.V students since the beginning of 2015
- database of students followed up on last year - in terms of whether employment was obtained or not
- any marketing material used to promote the

dv.Thank you for all your assistance!

Warmest  
Adele

---

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 03 April 2017 09:30 AM

**To:** Adele Ebrahim <

**Subject:** RE: PhD Research Disability Studies

Good morning Adele

Thursday afternoon is convenient to both myself and [REDACTED]. Please can we make it for 1:30 PM?Regards

Project  
Manager

QuadPara Association of the Western Cape (QAWC)

*Assisting Quadriplegics and Paraplegics to reach their full potential*

**From:** Adele Ebrahim [<mailto:adele.ebrahim@uct.ac.za>]

**Sent:** 02 April 2017 05:42 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: PhD Research - Disability Studies

Dear Anthony,

Thank you for your reply. Please could we do Thursday afternoon? Please tell me what time would be convenient? Also it would be great if I could meet with Anda too?

Thank youAdele

**From:** [REDACTED] [<mailto:dvtrainer@qawc.org>]

**Sent:** 30 March 2017 09:46 AM

**To:** Adele Ebrahim <[adele.ebrahim@uct.ac.za](mailto:adele.ebrahim@uct.ac.za)>

**Subject:** RE: PhD Research - Disability StudiesDear Adele

I trust that you are well. Sorry about the delay I was not in the office, can you please come in the afternoon at 13pm.

Have a great day!

**From:** Adele Ebrahim [<mailto:adele.ebrahim@uct.ac.za>]

**Sent:** 29 March 2017 09:08 AM

**To:** [dvtrainer@qawc.org](mailto:dvtrainer@qawc.org)

**Subject:** Fw: PhD Research - Disability Studies

Hi [REDACTED]

I would like to follow up on the mail below please? If it could be early afternoon please it would be great as I am traveling from the southern suburbs.

Thank  
you  
Adele

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## APPENDIX G: PERMISSION TO CONTACT TRAINEES

Good morning Adele

Thank you for your  
mail.

We are happy to give you permission to contact the people who have attended the training in order to gauge whether or not they have been employed since they completed our training. I can also confirm that we are training at the moment and that you're more than welcome to come to and observe for a day or 2. Please indicate which day/days you would like to come through.

Regards

Project  
Manager

**From:** Adele Ebrahim [<mailto:adele.ebrahim@uct.ac.za>]

**Sent:** 04 July 2017 08:40 AM

**To:** Anda Henderson Mthulu; Anthony Ghillino

**Subject:** Research

Dear [REDACTED]

I hope that you are both keeping well and warm!

Thank you both for your support during this process. I am writing to request permission to perhaps contact the trainees on the databases that you have sent me in order to gauge whether or not they have obtained employment after having completed their training with you? I will do this via email to get a sense of who has and who hasn't been employed.

Also, I was wondering if there will be training happening in the next few weeks and whether or not it would be possible for me to come and observe for a day or two?

Thank you, Warm regards, Adele

