

**TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO THE WORLD OF WORK:
EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES
FROM A SPECIAL SCHOOL IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

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ABSTRACT

With the move in South Africa towards equal employment opportunities in the open labour market, schools as well as business face the challenge of preparing individuals with disabilities for successful transition from school to work. This study examined the extent to which schools and business are working towards helping with this transition process for the disabled. The study explored how individuals with physical disabilities, who have moved into the open labour market, have experienced vocational transition planning at school level, and whether or not these programmes have adequately prepared them for the workplace. The study used a qualitative research methodology. The sample comprised 5 learners who had attended a special needs school in KwaZulu-Natal. The data collection techniques used were semi-structured interviews, which were audio-taped, and transcribed. The findings indicate that the principles of human rights and social justice for all citizens enshrined in policy documents that have emerged in South Africa since 1994, have not been translated into practice. The rights of individuals with disabilities to achieve equality of opportunity and equal access to service in society and their right to full citizenship continues to be violated. The results also revealed that, although the special needs school was concerned with developing relevant curriculum for students with disabilities, very little is done to prepare students for transition from school to the work environment. The study has revealed that students with disabilities require a far more structured, needs driven vocational transition programme, that will enable them to compete more favourably with their able bodied colleagues in the work place. Legislation must be developed to protect and guarantee the vocational transition services of students with disabilities. This legislation must be augmented by an administrative framework to ensure the smooth management and running of a national vocational transition programme.

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of Vocational Transition Programmes for the Physically Disabled

Although society places a great emphasis on a person's ability to work, it has only been in recent years that career or vocational education has become a priority for students in most schools in South Africa, including those in schools which cater for learners with disabilities. However, South Africa has not yet reached this stage, as there is no comprehensive vocational transition education for students with disabilities. In South Africa, a disparity exists between societal expectations of what the disabled are capable of, and services available to students with disabilities. Although society places a great emphasis on a person's ability to work, it has only been in recent years that career or vocational education has become a national priority for all students, including those with disabilities. Society often regards success in terms of being employed, earning high salaries and being in professions which are socially valued. People with disabilities, especially those with physical disabilities are not always afforded equal employment opportunities, due to their restricted work experience, and lack of general exposure to the labour market. This situation has led to students with disabilities being in a much compromised position. Transition from school into the work environment has been challenging for individuals without disabilities, let alone those with disabilities, and especially those with physical disabilities.

In South Africa motivation for much time, efforts and money is invested on students with disabilities who are placed in special schools during their school life. Yet there is no official national transition planning system in special needs education to facilitate transition into the workplace and community post-school environment. Currently, the inadequacy in provision for learners with disabilities is extreme. Despite the fact that a new government is in place in South Africa, the education of learners with disabilities continues to be low priority in many Departments of Education throughout the country (Department of Education, 1997). In many countries, transition programmes are an

integral part of the school curriculum, and local government departments have taken steps to ensure, that these programmes are enforced at school level, and monitored (Department of Education, 1995).

The education system in South Africa has been criticised for its weakness in preparing learners with disabilities for life and the world of work. According to the Report of he National Committee on Further Education and Training, (Department of Education, 1997), learners historically categorized as having "special needs," particularly learners with disabilities have had little access to further education and training facilities. One of the reasons for this is that Further Education and Training (FET) has catered largely for learners at secondary schools from which many learners with disabilities have been excluded. However, the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) were appointed by the Minister and the Department of Education to investigate and make recommendations at all levels and on all aspects of 'special needs and support services' in education and training in South Africa. The recommendations included taking into account the commitments of the government to the realization of equity and redress to ensure equal employment opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities.

The transition from school to community life is a dynamic process that needs to begin early in the adolescent years and ends with either a transfer of support for the individual with a disability to another service system or with independence as an adult. Transition is obviously much more than the mere transfer of administrative responsibility for an individual from school to an adult service agency. It is a process that involves many agencies and the family in developing activities and services that are appropriate to the needs of each individual. Transition planning therefore involves a series of choices focusing on appropriate educational opportunities that establish a relationship between the individual's preferences and abilities, and the requirements of the community environment in which he or she will live as an adult. Transition planning and vocational transition programmes are used synonymously in this study. Vocational transition programmes include: vocational guidance, vocational training and work experience.

They involve the personal, social and vocational development of students. Such programmes prepare them for their role as autonomous, participates responsible members of society. Further more, vocational transition programmes provide individuals with a broad educational experience with a view to the attainment of increased maturity, before proceeding to further study and/or vocational preparation. The programmes should provide a bridge to help young people make the transition from highly structured environment to one where they will take greater responsibility for their own learning and decision-making.

In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA), defines transition services as: a coordinated set of activities for a student, contained within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities (section 101, (d) 19). Post school activities include post secondary vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. Section 101 (d) (19) also states that "the coordinated set of abilities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests. The activities include instruction in: community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living activities, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Transition should be seen as multi-faceted and should include vocational education, community transition, and residential transition. Transition should be seen as a process that empowers students, families, and communities.

Many young people with disabilities clearly show the need for a properly thought-out programme to help them to overcome the gap between compulsory schooling and work (Fish, 1990). Fish (1990) points out that successful transition to adulthood should result in a satisfactory life style and a sense of personal value in the family, neighborhood and the community. The same opportunities for independence, access and choice should be available to all.

Education for students with disabilities does not automatically end at age eighteen. For most of these students, leaving school is an extremely important yet often daunting stage of their lives. At this stage, the student with disabilities must transition out of the somewhat 'protective' environment of the school into the broader community. Vocational transition education facilitates this process. In South Africa, special education teachers, parents, and students alike are concerned that so much time, effort and money is invested in students with disabilities during their school career. Yet, when they leave school, there is little support to ensure transition to the world of work (Department of Education, 1997).

Since 1994, the South African Government has been committed to providing quality education for all learners (The South African Schools Act of 1996). The Report emerging from the investigation of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (Department of Education, 1997), reflects an attempt to identify barriers and needs arising out of the education system, and provides guidelines for transformation of all aspects of education to ensure that all learners have access to quality education (Department of Education, 1997). Some of the key recommendations in the Report are:

- All learners would have access to lifelong learning.
- The education process would prepare learners for work and life.
- A range of learning contexts offering diversity in terms of curriculum and mechanisms to address barriers to learning and development would be available (Department of Education, 1997).
- Schools must be encouraged and assisted to provide more meaningful and varied opportunities to young people to acquire useful and relevant knowledge and skills (Department of Education, 1998, p.28).

However, a challenge facing educational institutions in South Africa is the fact that not enough is done to prepare individuals with disabilities for the work place. Secondary school students with disabilities do receive informal counselling with regards to their vocational ambitions. (However, there is no comprehensive vocational transition programming incorporated into their school curriculum. Likewise, institutions providing further education and training lack a comprehensive vocational transition programme for learners with disabilities (Department of Education, 1997). Countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America have taken steps towards integrating the disabled into vocational training and equal job opportunity, as reflected in the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) of 1990. However, research done by Corbett (1999), reveals that in England, whilst there is lip-service paid to inclusive further education and training and to equality of opportunity, this is not always put into practice. These institutions do not recognise that some learners require considerable additional support (Brown & Lauder, 1995). In the USA, many young people whose disabilities have led them to be placed in special schooling or on special training programmes, there has developed a system of supported employment in which the transition into employment is supported at every stage by professional intervention. Recent research in the United Kingdom on the actual experiences which people with a range of disabilities have had in supported employment suggests that because they tend to have few marketable skills, they are usually placed in peripheral labour force (Hyde, 1998).

The present study attempted to explore the extent to which the educational curriculum experienced by a group of school leavers at a school for learners with physical disabilities has prepared them for transition to the workplace. The study attempts to gauge what recommendations the individuals would make with respect to curriculum transformation process at school level to increase employment opportunities for individuals with physical disabilities. In addition, the perceptions of selected staff at the school on the effectiveness of vocational transition programmes offered at the school will be ascertained.

The following were some issues that were investigated:

- How do individuals with physical disabilities experience their transition from school to the workplace?
- The extent to which the educational curriculum at school level prepares individuals with physical disabilities for transition to the workplace.
- Challenges faced by individuals with physical disabilities currently in the workplace.
- The perceptions of individuals with physical disabilities on how the school curriculum may be transformed to facilitate transition from school.
- Perceptions of individuals on the complexities of life experience for individuals with physical disabilities experiencing transition from school to work.

CHAPTER 2 : PERSPECTIVES ON VOCATIONAL TRANSITION PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on international and national perspectives on vocational transition programmes for students with disabilities. Firstly, it will attempt to explore the various discourses on disability and their relevance to transition programmes for the disabled. Secondly, it will look at international trends on transition programmes for individuals with disabilities. Here, specific policy, legislation and transitional programmes will be discussed. Thirdly, the current status of vocation transition programmes in South Africa for individuals with disability will be examined, including: present status of employment of the disabled in South Africa, current provision, and emerging policy and practices with respect to vocational transition.

2.2 Discourses on Disabilities

To gain a better understanding of some of the problems and practices in educating children with special needs, a theoretical framework is necessary to provide insights into societal attitudes and expectations towards persons with disabilities (Peters, 1993). Education involves experiences, partnerships, and interactions through individual life spans. These are processes that take on meaning within the life and work of the society which surrounds it. Therefore, a theory that takes into account societal values and expectations is especially important in an approach to understanding the structure and function of education programmes for students with disabilities.

A theory of disability that takes into account political, economic, ideological, and cultural spheres of influence is necessary not only to understand the circumstances of people with disabilities, but to add to our understanding of an emerging "world polity" (Peters, 1993). Ramirez & Boli (1987) cited in Peters (1993) defines "world polity" as a system of creating value through collective conferral of authority cross-nationally. Education has, therefore, become an important element of the world polity as education is institutionalized at the world level and acts as a social imperative for nation states.

According to Peters (1993), societal ideologies shape the definition, structure and legitimacy of education and also the definition of disability. Peters (1993) defines ideologies as "sets of lived meanings, practices and social relations, that are often internally inconsistent, but which are used by professionals, educators, policymakers, and parents in their approach to the meaning and experience of disability" (p. 22). Peters (1993), therefore, emphasizes the need to shift the focus from the individual to the social context, allowing one to understand the experiences of individuals with disabilities within a broader social perspective. With respect to the issue of transition to work for individuals with disabilities, these influences have a direct impact on provision in that they influence the mind set of those in authority.

2.2.1 Cultural Paradigms of Disability and Education

Paradigms are explanations of the ways in which cultural values determine how disability is constructed at the societal level through diverse forms of producing knowledge about disability (Peters, 1993). These models, images or prototypes try to explain the causal relations that help to explain the treatment of and the attitude towards individuals with disabilities.

2.2.2 The Medical Paradigm

Disability in the medical model is considered to be a personal affair and a tragedy for the individual concerned. Individuals are considered to have a disease or impairment, that makes them innately different from "normal" individuals. This prototype has a profound effect on the provision and implementation of services for disabled people, especially at the school level, where educational goals for those who adhere to this paradigm become focused on health needs to effect a cure (Peters, 1993). Where a cure is not possible, as is the case with most disabilities, especially physical, then goals are developed that conform to prescribed expectations. This paradigm, lends itself to denying the social roles of these individuals and thereby, making them powerless in the face of their disability.

2.2.3 A Charity Discourse

According to Fulcher (1993) individuals with disabilities are defined, "as in need of help, as objects of pity and personally tragic" (p.28). This discourse emphasizes themes of benevolence and humanitarianism, and it expects individuals with disabilities to be grateful for services proved. It promotes the view that experts know what is best for the individual, and ignores the wants and needs of individuals with disabilities. The education system is a perfect example of the influence of this discourse in that teaching staff and other professionals determine the needs of the individuals.

2.2.4 The Social Paradigm

The social model of disability suggests that the collective disadvantage of disabled people is due to a complex form of institutional discrimination. This discrimination is fundamental to the way society thinks and operates. The social model is based on the belief that the circumstances of people with disabilities and the discrimination they face are socially created phenomena and have little to do with the impairments of disabled people. The disability rights movement believes, therefore, that the 'cure' to the 'problem' of disability lies in restructuring society.

The social model, therefore, emphasises two things: the shortcomings of society in responding to and accommodating disability, and the abilities and capabilities of people with disabilities themselves. This results in an approach that requires that resources be made available to transform so-called 'ordinary' amenities and services to cater for a more diverse population. The social model, therefore, implies that the reconstruction and development of a society involves a recognition of and intention to address the developmental needs of disabled people within a framework of an inclusive society (Integrated National Disability Strategy, White Paper, 1997).

In South Africa, the rights of people with disabilities are protected by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, but in practice, the disabled continue to be marginalised. They do not have the same access to the world of work, therefore, government departments and state bodies have a responsibility to ensure that, in each line function, concrete steps are taken to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access the same fundamental rights and responsibilities as any other South African. The goal must be the right of people with disabilities to play a full, participatory role in society (Integrated National Disability Strategy, White Paper, 1997). In addition, South Africa has recently implemented the Equal Employment Equity Act of 1998, which relates to issues mentioned within the political model. It includes the disabled as part of the designated group, which means, that employers

are compelled to include the disabled in their Employment Equity Plan, which is to be submitted to the Department of Labour by the 1 June 2000.

2.2.5 The Political Paradigm

This paradigm emphasises conflict, specifically social and cultural factors in conflict. Disabled people are seen as an oppressed minority, and the central argument is that "disability is a socially constructed and historically mediated category of experience"(Harris & Wideman cited in Peters, 1993, p.31). Disabled people experience obstacles to education, employment, and social relations because of social and political influences in society, and not their impairments. This paradigm stresses the rights of disabled people to equal access to opportunities including access to education and employment. With respect to education, disabled students and their families are not seen as passive recipients but active participants in decision making. The paradigm stresses that pressure groups must be constantly vigilant to ensure that rights are upheld, since legislation does not always translate to implementation.

In South Africa, historically disability tended to be couched within a medical and welfare framework, identifying individuals with disabilities as ill, different from their non-disabled peers, and in need of care. This had a great impact on educational provision in South Africa, where historically education provision for individuals with disabilities in South Africa was largely the responsibility of churches and other welfare organisations who worked to reposition disability as a human rights issue . Their aim was to provide treatment, or to create alternatives to begging or 'hiding away'. The philosophy was that disabled people were not to be hated or feared, but rather to be pitied or helped as part of the 'deserving poor'. The social attitudes which resulted from the perception of disability as health and welfare issue have invaded all areas of society. The result is that disabled people and their families have been isolated from their communities and mainstream activities. Dependency on state assistance

has disempowered people with disabilities and has seriously reduced their capacity and confidence to interact on an equal level with other people in society (Department of Education, 1995).

However since 1994, the current legislation reflects a notion of a civil society with a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity , which is firmly entrenched in the rights model and articulated throughout other key policy documents of the new Government. (Department of Education, 1995; Office of the Deputy President, 1997; Department of Education, 1995). An understanding of a human rights and development issue lead to a recognition and acknowledgment that people with disabilities are equal citizens and should therefore enjoy equal rights and responsibilities (Integrated National Disability Strategy, White Paper, 1997)

The move from policy to implementation is, however, extremely slow, and the area of transition from school to work is particularly neglected in most policy documents.

2.3 International Trends in Vocational Transition Programmes for Individuals with Disabilities.

2.3.1 Introduction

Corbett & Barton (1992) argue that within society, work is not only the central means by which people earn a living, but also an identity shaping process. For individuals with disabilities, in particular, to be out of work involves social exclusion from one of the dominant forms of identity creation. Corbett & Barton (1992) explain that training individuals with disabilities for work, supporting and sustaining them in finding and keeping employment, is an empowering process, and should be a critical component of the curriculum.

In order for vocational transition programmes to become more acceptable as an appropriate way forward for young people with disabilities, both the programmes themselves and the agencies or schools that are responsible for them need to consider the overall framework or policy for equal opportunities at institutions . It is not only by placing an emphasis on equal opportunities in employment and vocational education activities that discrimination will be challenged, but also by providing students with disabilities with real knowledge and information about realistic jobs and training opportunities. The opportunities for realistic work experience will not be met if students participate only in token experiences where the real choice is taken by the teacher or instructor (Corbett & Barton, 1992). Students with disabilities need to be consulted with regards to their future needs. In many countries, the lack of interface between special education schools and the working world, has been expressed as a growing concern for individuals with physical disabilities who feel that society fails to identify their strengths and their abilities (Tomlinson, 1985).

Studies conducted in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, have directly linked employment following school with an effective transition planning process that includes opportunities for the student to work while still in school. In an eight-year follow-up study on school experiences that relate to successful employment as an adult, researchers at the University of Vermont conducted a study involving 22 men and 15 women with disabilities. The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between educational background, work experience and employment outcomes of people with disabilities (Hasazi, 1989). Work is important, not only for financial incentives but personal identity, status, and contribution to the community as well (Hasazi, 1989). The researchers found that students who were employed prior to leaving school were more likely to be employed as adults, and that participation in vocational education was related to eventual employment and higher wages.

The following section will look at the different government policies and legislation within the United States, United Kingdom and India. To-date, there is no documented literature in South Africa on transition programmes for the disabled. Therefore, I will explore available international literature in the USA, UK and India, to gain insight into legislation for the disabled with regards to school to work transition programmes.

2.3.2 Policy, Legislation and Programmes in the U.S.A.

Since the early 1980's, the school to work transition of youth with disabilities has been a major emphasis of the federal government and state agencies. Since that time, these agencies have stimulated the development of transition programmes and services through research, model demonstration and training projects (Michaels, 1998). Several federal laws directly impact transition services for youth with disabilities. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1993 requires that federal

government contractors and approved federal subcontractors^{are} to maintain Affirmative Action Plans for individual with disabilities. According to the Rehabilitation Act of 1993, Section 503, an individual with a disability is defined as any person who has a record of, or is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, speaking, breathing, learning and working. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides qualified individuals with disabilities with basic civil rights protection in programmes and activities that receive federal financial assistance. It states that 'no otherwise qualified disabled individuals in the United States shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any programme or activity receiving federal financial assistance'(p. 93-112).

The Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act of June 1999 states that formula grants are provided to states for promoting through systemic change, capacity-building, and advocacy activities, the development of a consumer family-centered, comprehensive system and a co-ordinated array of culturally competent services, supports, and other assistance designed to achieve independence, productivity and integration and inclusion of the disabled into the community.

In 1990, Congress passed amendment to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, requiring that transition planning and services becomes an integral part of the special education process. The IDEA defines transition services as a 'coordinated set of activities designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities'.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 extends civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities. The Act guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodation, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. Title 1, of the ADA prohibits discrimination because of disability with regard to application procedures, hiring,

promotion, discharge, compensation, training and other terms conditions, and privileges of employment.

The purpose of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 was to establish a national framework for the development of School-to-Work Opportunities systems for the disabled in all States, and for other purposes. The School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 provides seed money to State and local partnerships of business, labour, government, education, and community organisations to develop school-to-work systems. With its passage came a vision to shape an educational system that would help build promising futures for America's youth by expanding career options for all young people, including those with disabilities. The School to Work Opportunities Act ensures the equal access and full participation of all youth, including those with disabilities, in programmes and services. It is the intent and purpose of the Act that all youth, regardless of race, colour, national origin, gender, disability, or characteristics, have the same opportunities to participate in all aspects of school to work initiatives and are not subject to discrimination as participants in such programmes.

The Act guarantees that every interested young person receive an equal opportunity to explore and experience various careers first hand. It is envisaged that as a result of emerging school to work programmes, all youth will be prepared to be self-supporting, contributing members of society. According to the Act, "career guidance and counselling," means programmes that pertain to the body of subject matter and related techniques and methods organized for the development in individuals of career awareness, career planning, career decision making, placement skills, and knowledge and understanding of local, State, and national occupational, educational, and labour market needs, trends, and opportunities. The programme assists individuals in making and implementing informed educational and occupational choices. It helps students to develop career options with attention to surmounting gender, race, ethnic, disability, language, or socioeconomic impediments to career options, and it encourages individuals to explore careers in nontraditional employment. It integrates academic and occupational learning, integrates school-

based and work-based learning, establishes linkages between secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, prepares the student for employment in a broad occupational cluster or industry sector, provides the student with strong experience in and understanding of all aspects of the industry the student is planning to enter.

In the above section, an attempt was made to provide insight into policy and legislation in the USA, that will hopefully create mechanisms to ensure effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of services, and programmes for the disabled. Despite the fact that recent legislation in the USA protects the rights of people with disabilities, individuals need to be informed about this legislation in order to be effective self-advocates (State Employment & Training Commission, 1999).

2.3.2.2 Innovative Programmes to Support transition to Work for the Disabled in the U.S.A.

The Work Incentives Transition Network (WITN) is a four year collaborative project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programmes. The purpose of the Network is to increase educators, family members', and advocates awareness of Social Security Work Incentives for school-aged youth with disabilities. The Work Incentives Transition Network (WITN) promotes the use of work incentives, increased utilization of work incentives, and the employment of transition aged youth through a variety of activities.

The National Transition Network (NTN), housed at the Institute on Community Integration (UAP), University of Minnesota, provides technical assistance and evaluation services to states with grants for Transition Systems Change and School-to-Work Implementation and Development. The general mission of the National Transition Network (NTN), is to strengthen the capacity of individual states to

effectively improve transition and school-to-work- policies, programmes, and practices as they relate to youth with disabilities.

The National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities (NTA) was jointly funded in October 1995, by the United States Department of Education and United States Department of Labour to promote the transition of youth with disabilities toward desired post school experiences, including gainful employment, postsecondary education and training, and independent living.

Another innovation is the Transition Practices Framework that emerged from years of research conducted by the Transition Research Institute at the University of Illinois. The framework features five broad categories of practice:

- **Student-Focused Planning and Development**, which includes practices that focus on planning and developing educational programmes for each individual student.
- **Career Pathways and Contextual Learning**, which features school-based and work-based curricula and activities that relate to career exploration and development.
- **Family involvement**, highlights practices that involve parents and families in planning and delivering educational and transition services.
- **Business, Labour and Community Involvement**, includes practices that encourage business, labour unions, community services agencies, youth development organisations, government agencies, and other community resources to participate in all aspects of school to work systems.
- **Structures and Policies**, which represents programme practices and characteristics that relate to the effective and efficient delivery of school to work transition services.

The above strategies, are offered to schools and education providers as guidelines against which to evaluate their present school-to-work programme.

Historically, in the USA, connections between service providers and advocates have evolved through the efforts of individuals who work in this field. While these connections are important in providing services to persons with disabilities, too often they exist in an environment which lacks a comprehensive policy and planning framework. This is reflected in both governmental as well as privately sponsored programmes, resulting in a less than efficient use of resources available to individuals with disabilities.

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w/ disab*

However, measures have been taken to address this problem. The State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) created the Workgroup on Persons with Disabilities. The purpose of the Workgroup is to expand the dialogue among public officials, advocates, parents, customers and practitioners concerning philosophical and policy differences about the appropriate role of the employment, training and education system for people with disabilities. It is generally agreed by many stakeholders, that persons with disabilities need to have access to a broader spectrum of employment and training opportunities than they have traditionally. The Workgroup agreed that restructuring of the system was essential for persons with disabilities to successfully participate in the workplace readiness system and for all potential workers to be fully utilized at the workplace. The Workgroup, therefore, focused its recommendations on addressing the connections and coordination of programmes and policies needed to improve the system. They identified three critical programme linkages which are necessary to afford ease of access and informed choice to all customers of the system. These linkages or connections form the basis for the following recommendations and actions steps:

- Connection of special education to vocational education - this should include more support for special education students to explore careers and vocations; joint planning between elementary and secondary programmes of employability strategies for these students; equal access with other students to in-school and after-school workplace skills programmes, job placement support and options for an integrated school environment.

- **Connection of special education students after graduation with services providers.**
- **Connect the business community to the system that serves people with disabilities: Provide a menu of services to businesses to facilitate the employment and accommodation of persons with disabilities and to assist businesses to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1992.**

The USA Government recognises that persons with disabilities must be provided with a full opportunity to take advantage of a revitalized workforce readiness system. Increased earning potential, along with full integration in the workplace, will empower individuals with disabilities. Mainstream workplace experiences will help to increase their knowledge about the level of social and interpersonal skills needed to succeed in the open labour market.

The focus on the equal opportunities and transition programmes in the United States, is aimed at gaining a better understanding by both schools and business on how to adopt practical and achievable solutions to improve access to the growing market for facilities and services for people with disabilities. It is the belief that the road to equal opportunities, lies in full participation of all persons involved in the rehabilitation of the individual with the disability that is, individual, family, school and all other service providers, and agencies. Government has taken a strong stand to ensure that the necessary legislation has been put in place, as well as seeing to it, that mechanisms are in place to ensure that all the relevant legislation is adhered to.

2.3.3 Responding to Change in Youth Training for the Disabled in the United Kingdom

In an eight-year follow-up study on school experiences that relate to successful employment as an adult in the United Kingdom Hasazi, Gordon and Roe (1995) found that students who had experienced some form of workplace employment prior to leaving high school were more likely to be employed as adults, and that participation in vocational education was directly related to eventual employment and higher wages being paid. Hasazi, Gordon and Roe (1985) also indicate a significant association between current employment status of individuals with special needs and vocational education in the United Kingdom. Students who had vocational education were more likely to be employed, compared to those students who had no vocational education. Findings showed that past work experience also impacted on the student's success rate of employment.

This section will explore the relationship between policy, legislation and vocational transition programmes for individuals with disabilities. It will further explore whether these programmes have been successfully implemented with regards to supporting the philosophy of the British Government of equal opportunities.

2.3.3.1 Disability Policy and Legislation in the United Kingdom

(1st World)

Disability-related issues have gained prominence during the past decade in the UK. This has been due in part to campaigning by a vigorous disability movement which has increasingly looked to the experience of anti-discrimination legislation in other countries. Although the United Kingdom has eschewed an all-embracing civil right approach, the passage of anti-discrimination legislation in 1995 marked a significant break with tradition. Until this time, UK policy had sought to tackle discrimination with regards to employment opportunities against disabled persons through voluntary measures and initiatives (Department of Social Security Press Release, 1996). Since

the late 1970's, there has been encouragement to employers to adopt good practices in recruitment, backed by codes of practice and schemes to acknowledge 'good employers'. There have been campaigns to raise public awareness of the abilities of disabled people and to persuade employers of the 'business need' of recruiting them (UK Employment Department, 1994).

Ensuring full and fair access to employment opportunities is a key element in the UK Government's stated policy of enabling disabled people to be fully active and independent members of society. The wider aim is approached on three broad fronts:

- changing attitudes
- legislation to ensure that individuals are treated fairly and;
- practical supports and services where required.

The UK has introduced a Minister with responsibility for disability issues, who holds office with the Department of Social Security, and the National Disability Council, and acts in an advisory capacity on all issues relating to disability. The Minister for Disabled People stated that: "We have to widen our concept of discrimination if we are serious about helping disabled to live to the full (Department of Social Security, Press Release, April 1996, p. 2).

The National Council for Vocational Qualifications was established in 1986 by the Department of Employment in order to create a coherent framework for the development of vocational qualifications across the UK. Its drive was towards an employment-based reform of further education and training for all youth, including those with disabilities. The National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) is a job specific, competence based qualification to meet required outcomes of performance and learning not determined by an education syllabus. These qualifications range from routine and predictable work, such as machine operations (level 1, entry level), through to competence in decision making roles in unpredictable situations, (level 5). They are primarily designed to be delivered within the work environment (The British Council, 1999).

The rights of persons with disabilities are protected by a combination of special and general legislation. The general legislation applies to all categories of disabled persons with respect to: education, employment, the right to marriage, the right to parenthood, political rights, access to court-of-law and the right to privacy.

The Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 was enacted after the adoption of the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993). The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1995, makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with employment. The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, also allows the Government to set minimum accessibility standards for disabled users of taxis, and new public service and rail vehicles. It proposes, in relation to educational institutes, new policy making and reporting obligations to encourage recognition of the need of disabled people wishing to study. It also recommends the provision of better information for parents, pupils and students. The measures in the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, are to be implemented over several years. However, the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 falls short of the aspirations of disabled persons and organisations providing services to the disabled. Criticism includes the inadequacy of education and transport provisions and the lack of an investigatory commission empowered to take action on behalf of aggrieved persons (Department of Social Security Press Release, 1996).

2.3.3.2 Transition Programmes in the United Kingdom : An Analysis

In the United Kingdom, mainstream training is delivered through a network of local Training and Enterprise Councils referred to as (TECs). Within these institutions, a wide range of services is made available to enable people with disabilities to benefit from vocational training programmes. Training and Enterprise Councils have the responsibility of planning and delivering training opportunities for their local areas. They are encouraged to give priority to individuals with disabilities, and to provide

additional support in the form of job placement, and monitoring of the disabled in mainstream programmes.

Youth Training (YT) programmes in the UK offer young people vocational training in related work experience to assist them to compete for jobs. Youth Training is available to all individuals aged 16 to 18 years. Disabled persons are eligible for a guaranteed place beyond the age of 18 if they have been unable to take up or completed Youth Training because of a disability or health-related problem.

Training for Work(TfW) programmes help unemployed individuals to acquire skills and experience in order to obtain jobs. Disabled people have priority to access and can join the programmes at any stage. A criticism of policy and legislation with regards to these programmes is that although there are financial incentives to providers to take on disabled people, screening out of those with the greatest needs is suspected (Davoud, 1996). The emphasis on employment as an outcome of training puts pressure on providers to offer training to the most job-ready candidates. This may discriminate against people with disabilities and those with special training needs who may require more intensive support or rehabilitation to enter training programmes (Employment Gazette, April 1994).

Corbett and Barton (1992) point out that unless vocational education and training schemes can begin to incorporate an explanation and examination of the socio-political discourses and contexts from which they have emerged, they will fail to alter the levels of disadvantage experienced by many young people with disabilities. The creation of disadvantage in society is a complex and multi-faceted process. If teachers and training providers continue to focus solely on the learning needs of individuals rather than challenging the social inequalities that are factors in the creation of disadvantage, they will tend to perpetuate the image of vocational failure as individual inadequacy.

Sheldon (1994), believes that people with special needs should be given purposeful activities that will enable them to become part of the wider community. In his research,

which focused on management and delivery of vocational training for people with disabilities, Sheldon (1994) emphasized the need for activities teach individuals with disabilities about planning and delivery of business products and services. Most of the training should take the form of on-the-job-training, encouraging individuals to make decisions about which of the businesses they wish to work in, and to negotiate what role they wish to play.

The outcome of Sheldon's research was that school, colleges and other learning institutions need to make more provisions with regards to curriculum design and vocational transition programmes, for people with special needs. Furthermore, the findings suggest that learning institutions need to work closer in trying to identify the needs of organisations in order to prepare learners with special needs for equal opportunities. X

Vocational education programmes in both the USA and the UK suggest that education facilities have been ever increasingly mandated to provide services to students with disabilities. Although vocational education is mandated, one needs to consider whether it can adequately provide for students with special education needs within the existing system. Special education caters to a very heterogeneous population. It is crucial that the system understand their differences in order that they might be able to appropriately plan their general educational and vocational transition education programmes (Sheldon, 1994).

2.3.4 Policy and Legislation for People with Disabilities in India (Edwald)

The human rights movement in India, has boldly and categorically shifted the attention of policy makers from the mere provision of charitable services to vigorously protecting their basic right to dignity and self-respect for individuals with disabilities. According to the Rights of People with Disabilities Act of 1999, the disabled are viewed as individuals with a wide range of abilities and each one of them willing and capable of

utilising their potential and talents. Society, on the other hand continues to put numerous barriers for individuals with disabilities as seen in education and employment.

In a country such as India, where the population of the disabled is so large, their problems are complex, available resources are scarce and social attitudes in service provision are damaging. It is only legislation which can eventually bring about a substantial change in a uniform manner. It creates formal procedures which hasten the process of integration of the disabled in the society (Rights of People with Disabilities, 1999).

Disabled people in India, as elsewhere, deserve comprehensive legislation to cover all aspects of their lives. They need legal power to directly tackle the blatant, and more importantly, the discreet discrimination against them.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights & Full Participation Act) of 1995, represents the culmination of years of hard work by the Government of India and persons working towards the full integration of the disabled into society. The Government of India, through its comprehensive legislation, has taken a lead to support the large community of people with disabilities in India and has provided a framework for the implementation of legal, progressive and economic activities, to help monitor and evaluate legislation with regards to the disabled. The Indian Parliament, for the first time, has legally endorsed the right of access for the disabled people to education and vocational training and employment practices.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995, became enforceable on the 7 February 1996. The Act establishes responsibility on the society to make adjustments for disabled people so that they overcome various practical, psychological and social hurdles created by their disability. The Act declares that the State shall progressively ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education until the age of 18 years. The Act also makes provision for equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation of disabled people in mainstream activities of the society. The Act emphasises that the

States must create a barrier-free environment for the disabled, remove any discrimination against them which prevents them from sharing the development benefits, counteract any abuse or exploitation, lay down strategies for comprehensive development of programmes and services and for equalisation of opportunities. The Government in India, through its legislation, has taken a lead to support the large community of people with disabilities. Unlike the United States and the United Kingdom, India has still to overcome the social stigma attached to disability. Therefore, the greatest achievement is to convince people, ordinary men and women as well as politicians, that disability is a civil rights issue and that discrimination against disabled must be recognized and addressed.

Summary: On International Policy and Legislation Pertaining to Disability

It is apparent, that in all the countries discussed above, that the principle of social rights of the disabled is of paramount importance. The need for total inclusion of people with disabilities into the community, and the right to equal access of all resources.

Studies done on the disabled show, that in all countries of the world people with disabilities are the largest minority group (Asia & Pacific Journal on Disability, 1997). As a group they are deprived of services and facilities available to the non-disabled and consequently, are the least nourished, the least healthy, the least educated, the least employed. They are subjected to a long history of neglect, insolation, segregation, poverty, deprivation, charity and even pity. The plight of the disabled in India is not dramatically different. The immense responsibility for the care of the disabled is generally left to their families and a few institutions managed by voluntary organisations and government. Since the disabled, do not as yet have economic or political or media power in India, they tend to be mostly ignored by society. To-date, India has done very little with regards to instituting vocational transition programmes for the disabled (Rights of People with Disabilities, 1999).

2.4 The Current Status of Vocational Transition programmes in South Africa for Individuals with Disability.

2.4.1 Introduction

Major policy changes, and initiatives emerging within education in South Africa, are supporting the development of a system that is more responsive to the needs of all learners. Within the context of curriculum, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the outcomes-based-education (OBE) approach to education, and Curriculum 2005, are examples.

Outcome-based education comprises (1) competency-based education, and (2) mastery of learning. Outcomes-based education (OBE) is a learner centered, result-orientated approach premised on the belief that all learners can learn and succeed. OBE learning focuses on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes as opposed to syllabus content only, which for individuals with disabilities is more beneficial, as they are given the opportunity of performing the same or similar task as their able-bodied colleagues, but according to their own rate and pace. It is the outcome of the task that is important, and not how the outcome was achieved ~~measured~~; that is measured (Department of Education, August 1998).

Given the above broad description of OBE, the one key feature of OBE that informs learning, teaching and assessment is the notion of competence. The ultimate intention of any education and training should be the development of individuals who are competent citizens - competent as learners and competent as individual persons - as social-political beings and as participants in economic activity. Competence as defined by advocates of OBE is about demonstration of ability, performing or acting, demonstration of understanding of the knowledge underpinning performance or action, and demonstration of the ability to integrate understanding of underpinning knowledge and performance or action. The above definition of OBE has direct implications for this study, in that vocational transition programmes need to focus on the attainment of

competencies necessary for successful transition from school to the work environment (South African Qualifications Authority, 1999).

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF), has been specifically designed to promote the integration of education and training, it offers multiple entry and exit points to learners and so ensures learner mobility and portability of credits. As with OBE, it is a learner-centred approach, in which its assessment is based on the competency achieved by the individual at the end of a task. It is argued that, this form of education will encourage a more flexible curriculum that will accommodate the needs of individuals with diverse learning needs. It is flexible in that it allows for multiple pathways to achieving the same learning ends.

The South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act no.58 of 1995) established the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), on which national standards and qualifications will be registered, and which the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) will oversee. The NQF is therefore a framework for providing lifelong learning opportunities utilising nationally recognized levels. The NQF consists of eight levels grouped into three bands:

- Level 1 (General Education and Training Band)
- Levels 2 to 5 (Further Education and Training Band)
- Levels 6 to 8 (Higher Educations and Training Band)

The underlying principles of the NQF, are defined as follows:

- Education and training should form part of a system of human resources development which provides for the establishment of a unifying approach to education and training.
- provide ease of entry to appropriate levels of education and training for all prospective learners in manner which facilitates progression

- ensure that the framework of qualifications permits individuals to move through the levels of national qualifications via different appropriate combinations of the components of the delivery system (Lifelong Learning Through a National Qualifications Framework, February 1996).

In order to foster access to life long learning, it will be necessary to permit learners to 'pick up' learning they have left earlier in their lives and to transfer credits for learning from one institution to another. The NQF has been established to facilitate this process. The need for access to life long learning is not a South African phenomenon and, in developing a qualifications framework, South Africa is simply following international trends.

Outcomes-based learning and the NQF therefore make it possible to credit learners' achievements at every level, whatever learning pathway they may have followed, and at whatever rate they may have acquired the necessary competence. It also makes provision for the recognition of prior experiential learning, which is relevant to learners with disabilities, many of whom have not had access to formal education and training. Secondly, the existence of agreed upon learning outcomes, which can be met at different rates by learners, facilitates the recognition of the achievement of learners who may need a longer time to achieve certain outcomes than the average learner. It also enables learners to demonstrate their competence in whatever manner may be most appropriate to their needs.

Outcomes-based learning and the NQF encourage experiential training/learning. This is important for a successful vocational transition programme, that advocates that individuals go out and gain work experience in related fields of interest, before leaving the formal school environment.

2.4.2 Legislation and Policy Developments in South Africa since 1994

This section will examine policy development in South Africa. It will look at legislation and policy development prior to the Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) (November, 1997). Secondly, it will critically examine policy initiatives for learners with special needs. It will look specifically at recommendations that impact on vocational education for learners with disabilities.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1994, guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens. It includes in Section 8, the equality clause,

“the right to freedom from discrimination based on a number of social criteria, such as: the right to ensure human dignity, to promote self-reliance (freedom) and to facilitate the child’s active participation in the community (equality)”.

Discrimination based on disability is specifically mentioned. Section 9 of the Constitution relates specifically to the issue of equality of rights. Section 9 (1), (2), (3), (4) commits the government to ensuring that all individuals, including those with disabilities have the right to;

‘equal benefit and protection of the law’.

It extends to all persons, including the disabled, protection from discrimination, and guarantees the right to have measures designed to achieve the adequate protection and advancement of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. The Governments responsibility to bring about equalization will be to create an awareness in society with regards to persons with disabilities, their needs, their potential and their contribution as well as relevant information on services and programmes related to disability.

One of the key provisions in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (November, 1996), sections 9 (1),(2),(3),(4) , states, that the government is committed to ensuring that all individuals, including those with disabilities have the right to equal benefit and protection of the law". Section 9 (3) reads:

"The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, social origin, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth".

This exact statement is reinforced in the Employment Equity Act 1997, section 5 (1). Both these documents emphasis the equality of rights provision, which includes disability, together with other social categories that have previously been overlooked in society.

Section 29(1) states:

"Everyone has the right to
(a) basic education, including adult basic education, and
(b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible "

The White Paper on Education and Training (March 1995, p.21) states that:

'Education and training are basic human rights. The State has an obligation to protect and advance these rights, so that all citizens irrespective of race, class, gender, creed or age, have the opportunity to develop their capacities and potential, and make their full contribution to society'.

It is important to note, that this statement does not specifically make mention of the rights of individuals with disability.

The South African Schools Act (November, 1996 p.6) endorses this principle of equal access to education opportunities, in section 5(1):

'A public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way'.

This endorsement for equal opportunity will have a great impact on those with physical disabilities, as it will allow equal opportunity to the experiential work experience curriculum offered at mainstream schools, but it does not guarantee entry into the workplace or institutions for further or higher education. It is also stated in the South African Schools Act of 1996, that the governing body of a public school must: promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners (section 20 (1),p.14). With the emphasis on quality education for all, it is hoped, that all schools including both mainstream and special needs schools, will meet the diverse needs of all learners, including learners with physical disabilities. In support of this statement, the Integrated National Disability Strategy Document, White Paper, 1997 stresses that,

" Every learner has unique interests, abilities and learning needs and respect for diversity should be promoted and that emphasis should be placed on – curriculum development to ensure flexibility, addition, and adaptation", (3.2)

This statement suggests, that all learners regardless of their disability are entitled to participation in the curriculum, therefore ensuring, that adaptations be made to the curriculum to accommodate the needs of a diverse population.

It is clear from the above policy documents, that the emphasis on quality education for all learners, will require that schools meet the diverse needs of all learners, including individuals with disabilities. Hopefully, these clauses will protect the interests of individuals with disabilities, and ensure that schools work towards true equality.

2.4.3 Legislation and Policy Pertaining to Transition to Work for Individuals with Disabilities

This section will discuss the most recent policy initiatives with regards to policy development for learners with disabilities pertaining to transition from school to the workplace. Firstly, legislation and policy development with regards to the Report of the NCSNET and the NCESS, will be discussed, followed by a discussion on the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy(Office of the Deputy President, November 1997) and finally an examination of the Education White Paper 4, (Department of Education, August, 1998) will be provided. The Education White Paper focuses on further education and training which is relevant to this study, and will therefore be discussed in-depth.

The Report of the(NCSNET) and the (NCSNET) (Department of Education,1997) stresses the need for a link between education and the world of work for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. The Report suggests that the members of the business community and the general community should be involved in the various aspects of institution and curriculum development to ensure that relevance to the world of work is ensured. The Report further suggests that mechanisms and programmes that facilitate the transition of the learners from school to work need to be provided.

The Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), make the following recommendations with regards to transition to work:

Recommendation 5.8 (p. 77).

- Strategies should be pursued to ensure successful transition of learners who have experienced barriers to learning and development, to an active working life.

- Partnerships should be formed between education departments, health departments, the Department of Labour, unions, business and community resources to facilitate curriculum development, the implementation of training programmes and the development of transitional programmes.
- On-going career education should be provided to all learners at all bands of education.

It is interesting to note that the Report emphasizes the need for mechanisms and programmes that facilitate the transition of learners from the centre of learning to work, and that these mechanisms need to be provided for within centres of learning. The Report stresses full participation and social integration, thereby enforcing, that all educational and other services must promote and ensure full social integration. Following on from this statement, the Report stresses "education must be relevant and meaningful to the lives of all learners, Learners must be prepared for successful integration and transition into the community"(p.77). These statements have particular implications for students with disabilities in preparing them for transition from school to work.

Another very relevant recommendation in the Report is that students with disabilities be given, "Equal access to a single inclusive education system"(p. 41). This means that learners must be given access to an integrated education system, regardless of differences of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, language or other differences. Therefore, the education system must meet the needs of a diverse population with regards to vocational transition programmes.

The Report stresses the importance of "Life Orientation" or Life skills Education", in the curriculum. The World Health Organisations definition of life skills includes abilities for adaptive, positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the challenges and demands of everyday life"(p. 75). To be successful in the challenging world of work, all individuals including those with disabilities need life skills training. The specific outcomes to be demonstrated by learners in the learning area of 'Life Orientation, are:

- An understanding of themselves and others as unique and worthwhile human beings
- An ability to use skills and display attitudes and values that improve relationships in family, group and community..
- Respect for the rights of people to hold personal beliefs and values.
- Value and respect for human rights as reflected in Ubuntu and other similar philosophies.
- Ability to practice life and decision making skills.
- Assessment of career and other opportunities and setting goals that would enable them to make the best use of their potential and talents.
- Demonstration of the values and attitudes necessary for a healthy and balanced lifestyle.
- Evaluation and participation in activities that demonstrate effective human movement and development (Department of Education, 1997).

The Report makes mention, that career education and vocational guidance should also be provided to all learners within the context of life skills education. Life skills education is viewed as a necessity, not a luxury. It should be an aspect of the curriculum at all levels of education.

"All aspects of the curriculum should be reviewed and developed to ensure that issues pertaining to diversity and barriers to learning and development are addressed. There should also be a strong emphasis on life skills education and vocational orientation. "(8.3.3)

This statement is reinforced in recommendation (8.4.3), which emphasises the need for life skills education, with a particular focus on vocational skills, career education and guidance.

The Report goes on to state that there needs to be collaboration between the Departments of Education and Labour in order to facilitate an effective vocational orientation in the general curriculum. Furthermore, this would provide career information and guidance where necessary, facilitate effective partnerships between schools and the private sector, and facilitate the development of programmes aimed at addressing needs relating to the transition from school to work. (Department of Education, November, 1997).

The Report of the NCSNET/NCESS in its recommendations on curriculum and institutional development stresses the importance of a curriculum that provides learners with disabilities with the necessary skills to equip them for transition from school to work. It is evident from the following recommendation:

"As the transition from school to work and life constitutes a major aim of further education and training, it is crucial that the challenge to learners with disabilities and other learners who experience barriers to learning and development be addressed to ensure that they eventually find a meaningful place in the community. Programmes aimed at facilitating this transition should form a priority for education provision for these learners" (8.4.3).

The Report of the NCSNET and NCESS (Department of Education, 1997), suggests that major barriers to learning and development for learners with disabilities are negative attitudes in society. The Commission and Committee found that negative attitudes, lack of awareness and labeling resulted in the needs of individuals with disabilities not being met. The Report of the NCSNET and NCESS proposes recommendations that if translated into practice can have a positive influence on the lives of individuals with disabilities. However, nowhere in the Report is there mention of strategies and monitoring mechanisms for transition programmes.

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2.4.3.1 Education White Paper 4: A Programme for the Transformation of Further Education and Training, 1998

The Education White Paper 4 (Department of Education, August, 1998), clearly states, that the existing provision for Further Education and Training (FET) in South Africa is inadequate (p.32). Furthermore, it recognizes that the learners categorised as having 'special needs', particularly those with disabilities, have had little access to further education and training facilities. One of the reasons for this is that, FET provision catered largely for learners at secondary schools from which many learners with disabilities have been excluded.

The shortcomings of the current provision are highlighted in the following the statement:

"Our country still lacks a coherent, integrated strategy for human resource development. Education and training policies still operate largely along separate tracks, despite the unifying influence of the NQF. Despite the existence of some excellent institutions and innovative programmes, FET provision today is characterized by fragmentation, poor co-ordination, inefficiency and inequality" (section 3:1).

The lack of capacity to respond to diversity in this band of education is also evident from a recent study by Ferreira cited in Department of Education (November, 1997). The study looked at the transition of students with disabilities to institutes for further education and training. Of the sixty colleges for further education and training, it was found that, none had any formal support structure to accommodate diverse needs of students. In addition, none of the colleges provided for learners with disabilities, and none had a formal policy in place to address barriers to learning and development with regards to assisting individuals with disabilities in their transition from school to further education.

The purpose of the FET system is to promote the integration of education and training, and to enhance learner mobility and progression, which are at the heart of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The FET will include learning programmes that will be registered on the National Qualifications Framework from levels 2 to 4, and that will correspond with present (grades 10 to 12 in the school system and N1 to N3 in the technical college system). Once fully established, the FET system will provide access to high-quality education and training within a differentiated system, which will offer a wider range offering options to a diverse range of learners, including school-going young people, out-of-school youth, young adults and the larger adult population (Department of Education, 1998) (Section 2 (2.1)).

Nowhere in the White Paper 4, is there direct mention of accommodating the needs of the disabled, although mention is made of a "diverse population". A concern is that unless specific mention is made of the governments commitment to meet the needs of the disabled in all aspects of education and social life, education providers and business will once again fail to include them. The need for business partnerships is evident from the following statement in section (2.12);

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"The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour have a joint responsibility for providing education and training pathways for young people and adult workers, and for developing more effective linkages between training and work. "

However, no specific mention is made of how the Government plan to accommodate the disabled within this framework, and thereby ensuring equality of opportunities.

Reference to learners with special needs is made once in the document.

"Provision for Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) will also be integrated into the new funding arrangements once LSEN policy has been determined. The Ministry will develop and support initiatives that aim to include as many learners with special education needs as is practically possible within the ordinary system of education and training provision (section 5 : 38).

According to the Education White Paper 4, young people and adults will be able to access an increasing variety of education and training opportunities within the enabling environment of the NQF. Open learning approaches and a system increasingly orientated towards life long learning and responsiveness to the needs of learners, and communities, will strengthen participation, promote equity and social mobility, and improve the quality of life of all people. The Paper neglects to make direct mention of the programmes, resources and other possibilities for the inclusion of the disabled into the FET system. Unless direct mention is made, and a system put in place for the monitoring of the inclusion of the disabled in the system, then the system has failed in achieving its target of an education for all.

2.4.3.2 The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, November, 1997

White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Office of the Deputy President, November, 1997) states in its opening statement;

"The concept of a caring society is strengthened and deepened when we recognise that disabled people enjoy the same rights as we do and that we have a responsibility towards the promotion of their quality of life. We must stop seeing, disabled people as objects of pity but as capable individuals who are contributing immensely to the development of society. We must play an active role in working with them to find joy and happiness and the fulfilment of their aspirations"(p. 4).

This statement makes a very strong commitment to the full inclusion of the disabled in all spheres of society. The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (1997), states, that the government is committed to the upliftment and improvement of the conditions of those members of our society who are disabled. This document, therefore, stresses a human rights and development approach to disability, that would in turn lead to the creation of equal opportunities. It states;

'Disability tends to be couched within a medical and welfare framework, identifying people with disabilities as ill, different from their non-disabled peers, and in need of care. Because of the emphasis on the medical needs of people with disabilities, there is a corresponding neglect of their wider social needs. This has resulted in severe isolation for people with disabilities and their families'(November, 1997 p. 4).

According to this White Paper an estimated 99% of disabled people are excluded from employment on the open labour market. The contributing factors are as follows:

- low skills levels due to inadequate education;
- discriminatory attitudes and practices by employers; + Fear
- past discriminatory and ineffective labour;
- lack of enabling mechanisms to promote employment opportunities;
- inaccessible and unsupportive work environments;
- inadequate and inaccessible provision for vocational rehabilitation and training;
- generally high levels of unemployment;
- inadequate access to information, and
- ignorance in society.

Despite the fact, that the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, emphasises a humans rights and development approach to disability, There is little mention of vocational transition programmes or vocational curriculum that would aid in the successful transition of individuals with disabilities to the world of work. The following statements are the only mention with regards to the vocational/occupational needs of the disabled:

“Special attention should be given to vocational training in all schools in order to equip learners with special needs” (p. 40).

“ People with disabilities should be provided with a range of employment opportunities aimed at meeting differing needs and offering real possibilities for occupational choice” (p. 42)

The Paper fails to mention how these identified needs are to be meet, which may result in a failure to address the needs of the disabled with regards to equal opportunities. Unless strategies for the implementation of policy recommendations is included in a framework that is monitored and evaluated, the chances of these recommendations being adhered to is questionable.

2.4.3.3 Critical Analysis of Legislation and Policy Governing the Disabled in South Africa

It is not only societal ignorance that has led to high percentage of the disabled being unemployed, but legislation has also contributed to the social exclusion of people with disabilities. According to the White paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, (Department of Education, November 1997), legislation has failed to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

Although there has, since 1994, been some attempt to identify and eliminate discriminatory legislation, many aspects of past discriminatory legislation remain. Although the rights of people with disabilities are enshrined in the Constitution, there is, as yet, no disability specific legislation (Office of the Deputy President, November 1997).

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The Government has made an attempt in the following documents, towards the inclusion and equal opportunities of the disabled, in society. The Employment Equity Act, of 1998, The Labour Relations Act, of 1995, The Human Rights Act, of 1996, The Education White Paper 4, for Further Education and Training (Department of Education, 1998) all make reference to the importance of inclusion of the disabled into the workplace, but very little is mentioned on how this process of inclusion is to be monitored or enforced. It recommends that resources must be employed in such a way as to ensure that every individual has equal opportunities for participation in society. The document stresses that disability that the circumstances of people with disabilities and the discrimination they face are a socially constructed category, and has little to do with the impairments of disabled people. Based on this assumption, the disability rights movement believes, therefore, that the cure to the problem lies in restructuring society. Examples cited in the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Office of the President, November 1997) are thus:

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- it is the stairs leading into a building that disable the wheelchair user rather than the wheelchair.
- it is defects in the design of everyday equipment that cause difficulties, not the abilities of people using it.
- it is society's lack of skill in using and accepting alternative ways to communicate that excludes people with communication disabilities.
- it is the inability of the ordinary schools to deal with diversity in the classroom that forces children with disabilities into special schools.

The governments awareness of such inequalities have resulted in the following measures being implemented in order to redress the above. The government have outlined the following, as policy objectives for public education and awareness raising within the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Office of the President, November 1997):

- Raising of awareness of disability as a human rights and development issue, and that every component of government and society at large should be targeted.
- Decreasing discrimination against people with disabilities based on archaic beliefs and customs.
- Creating a positive and accommodating environment in which diversity is respected and valued (p. 26).

In the section titled "Human Resources Development" it is stated:

"The provision of opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain the highest possible educational and vocational qualifications"(p. 45)

But fails to provide strategies for the implementation of the above objective.

Under the sub-heading 'Vocational Rehabilitation' in the same section on Human Resources, the following statement is of relevance to this study:

" Vocational rehabilitation is an essential component in a national HRD strategy. Vocational rehabilitation includes vocational guidance, vocational training and selective placement. Its focus should be the transformation of mainstream vocational training services to provide more accessible and inclusive training to people with disabilities. This should include the making available of the necessary support services" (p. 45)

The policy fails to mention implementation strategies and techniques, or to highlight the necessary support services deemed necessary for successful vocational training of the disabled.

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2.5 Conclusion

Both the Report of the NCESNET/NCSNET (Department of Education, November, 1997), and the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Office of the President, November 1997), indicate, that the main barrier faced by individuals with disabilities, is societies negative attitude towards them, as well as a lack of understanding of the needs of the disabled. It is this general lack of awareness and labeling by society, that have resulted in the exclusion of the disabled from full participation in community and school life. However, Government has seen the need to redress the neglect of the past, and in so doing, have began to put in place policy to help with this redress of inequality. The various government documents mentioned in this study are intended to have a positive impact on the lives and mobility of the disabled, if the recommendations proposed in them are implemented accordingly. X X X

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Equity, associated with a concern for access to employment opportunities, has gradually assumed a key status in the policy documents of South Africa. Equality of opportunity has become a policy priority within education and training, not only in South Africa, but throughout the world.

odel / It is clear that all the above legislation and policies are set within the rights discourse. They protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, and clearly emphasis the principles of the : right to basic education, the right to curriculum access, the right to protection from discrimination, and the right to quality education to enable learners to develop to their fullest potential.

The low level of economically active disabled people with no formal further education and training in South Africa, raises questions about the existence and effectiveness of vocational transition programmes at both school level and at institutions for further education. As standards for the workplace readiness system and competencies for specific occupations are established and maintained through policies such as OBE and the NQF, programme options within secondary schools for persons with disabilities must hold to the same basic standards applicable to students in the general school population. Therefore, closer vocational assessment, monitoring of standards and outcome measures are necessary. The challenge to the public and private sector, as well to educationalists, and to all those interested in an integrated workforce readiness system is to identify:

- the specific needs of the population
- availability of resources
- the skill requirements of the future

An equal challenge is the empowerment of persons with disabilities to enable them to achieve economic self-sufficiency and independent living, along with inclusion and integration into all aspect of society.

However, policy and legislation becomes meaningless, unless enforced and monitored. Unless government institute measures to evaluate the effectiveness of these policies and legislation, and to take a stronger stand with regards to protection of the disabled, they will continue to be marginalised in society.

CHAPTER THREE : RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research

3.1.2 Introduction

This study used a qualitative research methodology, it focused on special education vocational transition programmes in special needs schools within KwaZulu-Natal. The aim was to explore to what extent these programmes have helped to facilitate transition into the workplace for individuals with physical disabilities. In qualitative research, experience is studied holistically. Patton (1990), explains that the qualitative researcher searches for totality and complexity, that is, the unifying nature of particular settings. It involves a detailed study and understanding of the subjects social environment as a whole – in its temporal, geographical, political, socio-cultural context. In other words, the focus of qualitative research is to understand experience as unified within certain boundaries. The aim, therefore, is to try and understand experience as participants feel it or live it as far as possible. According to Sherman and Webb (1998), the qualitative aspect is found in experience and is not disengaged from it. He goes on to mention that experience is 'bound' in a specific value context, therefore, events cannot be fully understood if isolated from their context.

In qualitative research, the researcher does not, however, attempt to change or manipulate the research setting in any way, nor does the researcher attempt to establish any kind of predetermined course (Patton, 1990). Glen & Peshkin (1992) contend that the openness of the qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity and to respect it its own right. Throughout the entire research, the assumption made is that social interactions are complex, and that the research will uncover some of the complexity. The qualitative researcher is able to enter the research area without placing value judgement and pre-

conceived hypothesis. He or she is able to interact with the situations as they present themselves (Patton, 1990). As human beings living in societies our value system and things we believe in are to a greater extent socially constructed. Realities about phenomena in different social settings could differ or may even be similar. Gen & Peshkin (1920) explain that qualitative research opens a gateway for the researcher to learn about social phenomena from a variety of perspectives. The qualitative researcher deals with multiple socially constructed realities.

In the present study, it was believed that as a qualitative researcher one is afforded the opportunity to encounter multiple socially constructed realities about phenomena. This would mean, that the experience of disability could be viewed from different perspectives. It was hoped that through interaction with the various individuals in the study, the researcher would have the opportunity to explore various realities. Furthermore, it is hoped that the present study would produce valuable information on the complexities of life experiences for individuals with physical disabilities experiencing transition from school.

3.2 Design of the Study

3.2.1 Research Methods

The research methods selected for the present study had to be consistent with the aims of qualitative research explained above. It was felt that the semi-structured interview would be the most effective strategy for data collection. Interviews allow for the exploration of complex issues. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher the latitude to tailor questions to the responses of the subjects and perspectives not contemplated by the researcher. Thus, the research tool is open and flexible (Bannister, Parker Taylor & Tindal, 1994). The use of semi-structured interviews does not bind the researcher to standardized questions. This was of particular importance in the present study, where the researcher needed to interact with individuals, and encourage open, honest discussion. With regards to questioning techniques, it is always important for the researcher using this method, to be aware not to conduct the research 'on' the subjects, but 'with' them

(Banister et al., 1994). The purpose of the study was to reveal the perceptions of people with physical disabilities on their educational experience and how these experiences have impacted on their transition to work. Bannister et al., 1994, warns, that the interview schedule has to be treated flexibly since if adhered to too rigidly, the researcher may fail to probe the subjects perspectives effectively, and may serve to intimidate them.

In addition to the interviews, two questionnaires were drawn up to provide additional information (appendix 2). One questionnaire aimed at examining the transitional needs of individuals with disabilities. It explored questions that were directly relevant to the individuals vocational transition preparedness. It aimed at gaining a better understanding of what the school had done to assist in preparing the individuals for transition from school to the workplace. The second questionnaire was designed to gain a better understanding on what the school curriculum is currently doing to prepare the individual for transition. This questionnaire was administered to teaching personnel and professionals. It was important to discover what the views were of the staff on what they felt were the positive and negative aspects of the school curriculum with respect to transition from school.

For the semi-structured interview, an interview schedule (refer to appendix 1) was drawn up and the questions asked focused on broad areas of concern around the key research questions or issues in the study. The interviews with all subjects, including teaching staff and professionals were conducted in English and audio-taped. These were then transcribed for the purpose of this study, and submitted to the subjects concerned for verification.

3.2.2 Research Process

During the interview process, the researcher had to take care that the various questions including probes were open-ended in order to ensure that subjects are not led to a particular perspective or formulation. This was the most difficult

aspect of the research, as the researcher had to constantly be aware of this, and try to reflect on this role and experience throughout the research.

Since the present study was a qualitative study, the fieldwork was considered the central activity. Going into the field meant having direct, personal contact with the subjects in their own environment. The first stage in the research process involved selection of the subjects: a group of five students with varying degrees of physical disability were used in the study. A form of purposive sampling was employed. Due to the fact that this study focused on individuals with physical disabilities, it was decided to use only one special needs school in Kwa-Zulu Natal that catered for the physically disabled. Based on that, a written request was made to the school principal by the researcher, to obtain permission to conduct a research using pupils from that school. Once permission had been obtained, the following requirements for the research had to be met. The researcher needed to interview students with physical disabilities, who had matriculated from the school within the last ten years. A further requirement was that the individual must have either gone on to study in an institution for further education, or gone into the open labour market. The school principal provided the researcher with a list that contained thirteen names of students that might possibly fit the requirements. The researcher then randomly selected subjects from the list.

The Principal arranged for the researcher to meet with all relevant support staff at an informal meeting in order to provide them with a brief background to the research. The researcher was then given permission to interview the following staff members in order to establish relevance and degree to which the curricula has been adapted to assist in the successful transition of such students:

school psychologist, whose role is to provide life skills training, and general psychological support to the students

physiotherapists, who as with the occupational therapist, were there to assist in maintaining the general health and well being of the individuals, and to help prepare them to cope with their disability once they left school.

class teachers, to gain a better understanding of the teachers role in preparing the student for transition from school.

The staff interviewed were selected by the principal, who felt, that they were the best persons that would be able to assist in providing the researcher with a comprehensive background to the individuals and the school. The Majority of the staff interviewed had worked at the school for longer than 10 years, except the school psychologist, who had only joined the school earlier in the year. This presented a problem as she did not have an in-depth understanding of the pupils at the school.

The researcher interviewed four class teachers, all of whom taught the individuals selected for this research and had known the individuals for their entire stay at the school until they matriculated. The physiotherapist had also worked directly with the subjects over the past ten years.

The subjects, both teaching personnel and students, were required to evaluate the present vocational transition programme at the school. Recommendations were elicited from the subjects with regards to possible future goals for vocational transition education at the school.

The researcher needed to observe one of the subjects in his natural working environment, in order to gain a better understanding of the adjustive demands placed on individuals with physical disabilities in the workplace. The findings of which would be included in the study in an attempt to help improve vocational transition programmes at special needs schools. For this, the researcher had to obtain permission from his employer.

3.2.3 Selection of Subjects

3.2.3.1 Selection of Individuals with Physical Disabilities

Five individuals with varying degrees of disability were randomly selected from a list provided to the researcher by the school principal for participation in the study. The principal did however, take into consideration criteria suggested by the researcher as stated above. The subjects consisted of two white males, one

African male, one white female, and one Indian female. All subjects have experienced transition from a local special needs school to either further education or to the workplace.

Subject one, a white female had attended the same special needs school since class one, and was recently dismissed from a permanent position with a large organisation. She has a formal qualification in Human Resources Management, and was the first physically disabled student in a wheelchair to attend Technikon Natal.

Subject number two, an Indian female, is currently self-employed and competing against able-bodied persons in the open market. This individual has no formal qualification, but was given computer training at a computer-training center. This centre offers computer training to all persons interested in gaining a better understanding of computers. The staff who offer computer instruction are physically disabled. The centre was started as a project, by the Kwa-Zulu quadriplegic association to facilitate employment opportunities for the disabled. *her disab.*

Subject number three, a white male, has a Bachelor of Commerce degree, which he obtained through the University of South Africa. He is currently doing private work from home. *his disability?*

Subject four, an African male, currently employed by ABSA Bank, was offered a job with the company, whilst still at school, and has remained with them for the past three years. He is currently studying for a Bachelor of Commerce Degree through the University of South Africa. *disability*

Subject five, a white male, currently employed as a bookkeeper for a firm in Kokstad. He has no formal qualifications. Although he did not study accounting in school, he was offered a job at the firm and has been employed for the past 4 years with the same company. *disability*

3.2.3.2 Selection of Staff Members

As stated, the researcher was not at liberty to select staff at the school. This decision was taken by the principal of the school, who selected relevant staff, and then presented them to the researcher for interviews.

Teacher one, taught biology and science, and had been at the school for the past twelve years. She had an in-depth understanding of the school and its pupils. She had taught all five of the subjects, as biology is a compulsory subject for students at the school.

Teacher two, taught mathematics and business economics, again subjects taken by majority of the student population. She had been at the school for eight years, and had a thorough understanding of the school and its pupils.

The physiotherapist has been at the school for six years, but had done locum practice the school for three years prior to joining as a full member of staff. Her long standing involvement with school and its pupils, has enabled her to gain a vast background of knowledge with regards to the needs of the physically disabled. Her role as physiotherapist includes preparing individuals with physically disabilities to cope with their disabilities in the community or work environment.

The occupational therapist has been employed at the school for the past 10 years, and has been directly involved with all the subjects selected for the study. As with the physiotherapist, the occupational therapist role, is to assist in the successful transition of the individual from school to either the work environment or to community living.

The School Principal has been with the school for three years, but had come from another special needs school in Kwa-Zulu Natal, and is, therefore, familiar with the needs of the physically disabled. She had a very good background knowledge of both present and past pupils of the school.

3.2.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

Interviews were audio-taped, and transcribed. The transcriptions were then compared to the information provided to the researcher in the questionnaire which was administered to all subjects, including teaching staff (see appendix 2). Triangulation of data was done to ensure validity of data, as qualitative research relies on the direct interpretation of a situation by the researcher. The analysis of the data involved using both narrative reconstruction of the subject's accounts and experiences and categorization of personal accounts into themes that emerged. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the life experiences of the individuals and to identify commonalities or differences, which are discussed in chapter five. A similar analysis was done with regards to staffs perceptions on the effectiveness of the school vocational transition programme, and its effectiveness in preparing individuals for transition to work or to further education.

CHAPTER FOUR : RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4. Introduction

The findings in the study will be presented in accordance with the broader research questions, as articulated in chapter one. Firstly, the experiences of subjects from school to work will be presented. Secondly, the experiences of two of the subjects on transition to further or higher education will be discussed. Thirdly, the relevance of the curriculum at the school for transition to the workplace from the perspective of subjects with disabilities and the staff at the school. Finally, the workplace experiences of three of the subjects with disabilities will be examined.

4.1 Experiencing Transition from School to the Workplace

4.1.1 Subjects Views on Role of the School in Preparing them for Transition to the Workplace.

Transition from school to further education or directly to the workplace is a dynamic process that involves a series of choices focussing on appropriate educational opportunities. These choices help to form a relationship between the preferences and abilities, of the individual, as well as the requirements of the environment to which he or she wish to transcend. This section will focus on the individuals experience of school to workplace transition.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to mention, that all individuals attended the same special needs school, and all matriculated within the past ten years. The individuals have varying degrees of physical disability, and are all confined to a wheelchair.)

None of the subjects had experienced work experience, during their formal schooling. All of them indicated that this would have been beneficial as it would have helped to create an awareness of the capabilities of the physically disabled in the open market, and to provide the physically disabled with an opportunity to experience first hand, workplace demands.

The following were some of the responses received from subjects, when asked what the school had done to prepare them for transition, either to further education, or the workplace

" We received vocational guidance from our school counsellors, from standard seven to matric. From standard nine to matric, very little was done with regards to the above, because we are generally slower than the average pupil due to our disability, therefore the staff spend more time helping us with our academic work.

(Miss CG)

" We received vocational counselling just like other students, but I would have liked to have been given the opportunity to do work experience like students in regular schools. No! I do not feel, that we were really given all the options available to us in the workplace. I personally feel, that the staff almost decide what was the correct career option for us, according to our disabilities. (Miss DN)

"We were given various aptitude tests, to see where our strengths were, with regards to possible career options. However, whenever the option did not meet the approval of the staff, they would clearly explain our limitations, instead of encouraging us to overcome those hurdles, and go for the career we would have liked to pursue. (Mr SM)

In general, the individuals all felt that very little was done during their vocational guidance lessons that had helped to prepare them for transition to the workplace.

They had all been given career orientated aptitude tests whilst at school but felt, that these did not prove beneficial in their final career choice. The general feeling was that the school had done a good job in preparing the individuals to cope with changing life situations and demands, from a medical perspective. However, there was limited preparation for vocational situations and demands.

4.1.2 Environmental and Social Barriers to Transition

When asked if they had been adequately prepared for their transition to further education, the general response was "No." All of the individuals interviewed agreed that inaccessibility for the physically disabled was the biggest problem that they had to face, whether at work or in an institution for further education. The subjects all felt that their biggest barrier to full inclusion, was the general attitude in society, that individuals with physical disabilities were not able to cope in the open labour market.

All the subjects mentioned that the school had informed them of tertiary institutions which were accessible for individuals in wheelchairs. The majority of the students felt that their parents had played a greater role in helping them with their transition process than what the school had done.

"I have been discriminated against in the workplace due to my disability, that is why I am currently unemployed. Businesses are just not prepared to make adjustments for the physically disabled. I really think they are afraid to employ us.(Miss CG)

"I have travelled overseas, as an exchange student, and experienced very few social and environmental barriers. However, once back in South Africa, there are just so many, that it would be difficult to mention just one or two". (Mr MN)

"I was shot during unrest in the township. The bullet lodged in my spine, making me paralysed. I was 10 when this happened. I was not able to attend school for nearly one and half years. My parents, eventually found a school for the disabled, but unfortunately, it did not have the facilities that the Open Air has, and I really struggled. I was very fortunate in that ABSA Bank offered me a job once I completed my matric. They really made me feel welcome. They did a number of alterations to their offices with the help and guidance of our school personal acting in an advisory capacity. My biggest problem is with transport. The school never really teaches you how to cope with these types of setbacks. (Mr TN)

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"I am a quadriplegic, and have never known any different. Has my disability affected job opportunities? Yes! I think so. I am working as a bookkeeper now, and I never even took accounting at school. I really wanted to do something in advertising or marketing. Unfortunately this was an area that I was advised to stay away from by my counsellors. I suppose they meant well, but I regret it today. I should have had the guts to follow my dream not my disability. A firm in Kokstad offered me a job as a bookkeeper, and gave me all the necessary training. They have been very good to me, but I must say, that I really do not believe that I was meant to do books all day". (Mr SM)

"I was shot during an attack on my parents business in Stanger. I was sitting in the car, when the robbers drove past, and opened fire on the car. The bullet lodged in the top of my vertebra paralysing me. I have very little use of my hands, and even my speech has been affected. Open Air were fantastic to me, but no, I do not feel that I has adequately prepared for my transition from school. I moved straight into a home for the disabled, and it was there, that I was given the opportunity to learn computers. I work from my room at the home, as I am unable to get in and out of buildings, due to them not being disabled friendly. Companies are interested in what I can do, but are not really prepared to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate me. Therefore, I work from the home". (Miss DN)

"What social barriers have I had to endure? Plenty! Despite the fact, that I was one of the top accounting students both in my final year, and in my honours years at university. Whenever companies phone to set me up with an interview, and they hear my voice, and then realise that I am disabled, they apologise, and tell me straight, that their facilities are not designed to accommodate the physically disabled. One company told my mother straight, that they would have a problem with me trying to communicate with their clients". (Mr MN)

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4.2 Experiencing Transition to Institutions for Further or Higher Education

Two out of the five students interviewed, attended institutions for further education. Student number one, was determined to attend as a full time student at a local Technikon. Whereas student number five felt that his best option was to study through the University of South Africa, which is a distance learning institution and to attend lectures through Varsity College in Durban. Varsity College is affiliated to the University of South Africa, and offers students full time lectures on a number of degree and diploma courses that are offered at the University of South. Student number five chose to attend as a full time student at

Varsity College, due to accessibility of facilities for individuals in wheelchairs. Both students found it very difficult to adjust to the demands of the external environment.

"I have been a quadriplegic since birth, and have had more operations than I wish to talk about. However, this has not stopped me from living my dream of being in Human Resources. I would never have been able to cope at a normal school, because of the time spent in hospitals, and the special care needed each time I came out. I was the first disabled student from Open Air School in a wheelchair to attend an institution for further and higher education. I went to the Natal Technikon, and I must say, that my teachers (from Open Air) made this possible. It was very awkward trying to move around an institution that is not wheelchair friendly. The Technikon eventually build special ramps for me to use. They were not too happy to do this, but I am quite a determined young lady. Not all the lecturers were understanding and tolerant of my disability, and I personally think, that I put a number of them under tremendous pressure, with my demand for attention, something that they are not used to having to deal with. Exam time was a further problem. I had to get permission for a scribe, and extra time. I personally do not think, that these institutions are adequately prepared for inclusive education.

(Miss CG)

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"I am a quadriplegic, and have been at the school for physically disabled, since my first day at school. After matric I decided to study through University of South Africa (UNISA), but had to attend Varsity College, because they had a lift, and their lecture venues were wheelchair friendly. The lecturers and students in general were very helpful, and made my years at the College very memorable. I am a very independent person, and therefore tried where possible to do everything for myself. I

had to rely on a number of students to help me with the note taking side of things, as my ability to write is virtually nil. I would get someone to tape the lecture for me, and then I would either type it out on my computer at home, or my friend would type them for me. Exam time, I was given extra time, and was allowed a scribe, but opted to use a computer to do my answers. I studied a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in accounting, but have been unable to get a job, due to my disability, and the fact, that my illness has affected my speech. I have now completed my honours in accounting, but will have to consol myself to working from home, as people in general seem reluctant to want to employ someone as disabled as what I am. Despite the fact, that I received one of the highest marks in accounting in my final and in my honours year, I have not been able to secure a job in a company". (Mr MN)

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The following were comments made by the school counsellor and school principal, who played a major role in getting student number one access into a tertiary institution.

"I must be honest, I did try to convince her, that attending an institution for further education, that was not wheelchair friendly, was not a very good idea. However, she is a very determined young lady, and so the principal asked me to visit the necessary heads of departments and discuss with them the possiblity of allowing a student in a wheelchair to attend full time lectures. This was not an easy task. The management staff were not really that interested in trying to accommodate our student. It took a lot of persuasion and determination to get the final approval for her to attend. I do realise that a number of major architectural changes had to be done in order to accommodate her in a wheelchair. At first, we were told that it was virtually impossible to make the necessary changes, but I must say, that we all supported one another and eventually,

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they gave in, and decided to make the minimal changes necessary" (school counsellor/school principal at the Open Air School).

4.3 Vocational Transition Curriculum

4.3.1 Perceptions of the Subjects with Disabilities on the Effectiveness of School Curriculum

All educational institutions are involved in a social practice. The curriculum they offer is selected from a range of existing knowledge. It is organised in particular ways and employed for pre-defined purposes. As such, it is not divorced from the perceived needs of society. Curricular knowledge, therefore, involves values, priorities and moral commitments (Apple, 1990). The curriculum at schools for the disabled are no different, they follow the same basic principles, with one or two minor adaptations. As with most school curricular programmes, the curriculum should provide individuals with disabilities with the skills deemed necessary in their future adult life. These basic needs relate to the nature of their prospective employment or occupational activities, their role in society and the contribution they are expected to make as a citizen,

The definition of 'transition to work' according to the Report (Department of Education, 1997)

"Transition to work involves the process of preparing learners for life and the world of work. In order for the curriculum to facilitate effective transition for all learners, it is important that it equips learners with the knowledge and competency to move successfully into the open labour market and be productive. The transition to work is enhanced through the relevance of what is taught as well as through effective interaction between centres of learning and wider community". (p.viii)

Despite the fact, that the department of education recognises the importance of vocational transition programmes in all schools, this study has shown a definite (flaw in the school curriculum for the disabled with regards to preparing them for transition to the workplace. crit

According to the Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS), (Department of Education, 1997).

The Report explains that:

"As the transition from school to work and life constitutes a major aim of further education and training, it is crucial that the challenge to learners with disabilities and other learners who experience barriers to learning and development be addressed to ensure that they eventually find a meaningful place in the community. Programmes aimed at facilitating this transition should form a priority for education provision for these learners".(p.124)

In this study, career guidance and vocational transition programmes are used synonymously. Both refer to programmes that pertain to the body of subject matter and related techniques and methods organised for the development in individuals of career awareness, career planning, career decision making, placement skills, and knowledge and understanding of local and national occupational, educational and labour market needs, trends and opportunities. Career or vocational transition programmes means a coherent sequence of courses or field of study that prepares a student for a first job and that integrates academic and occupational learning, integrates school-based and work-based learning between secondary and postsecondary educational institutions.

All the subjects felt that the school curriculum failed to focus on transition to work and that curriculum was too narrow and restrictive. XV

"The curriculum is the same as any other school. The only difference, is that our classes are a lot smaller, and we get specialised attention. Our curriculum is very restricted, we are not offered electronics, computers was not offered when I was school, due to costs. Graphic design was something, that a number of students would have liked to have done. But due to costs and staff cutbacks, subject choice was very limited. I personally do not think that the curriculum prepared me for transition (Mr SM).

"The curriculum was too theoretical, and our school options were very restricted. I think this was due to the cost involved in trying to accommodate our disabilities". (Miss CG)

Four out of the five subjects expressed a concern with the curriculum being too theoretical and restrictive, and not being adjusted to meet their individual needs. They also indicated that there was no workplace experience built into the curriculum.

"Personally I would have liked a wider subject package. I would have liked to be able to go out into the workplace during my school holidays, and experience the actual thing. Maybe become more aware of my own limitations, because sometimes I am inclined to believe I can do things that maybe I cannot". (Miss CG)

"Honestly, I would have liked to be able to go and work at an advertising company for just one or two days. Just to get a better understanding of the job, and then maybe I would have realised that this was just not suitable to me and my type of disability. I will never know, as I am now a bookkeeper, not what I had dreamt of doing. (Mr SM)

"I would have liked to visit different businesses, and spent a couple of days in them, just to gain a better understanding of the various jobs available out there. This was never a matter of great importance to the staff, but to the students, it would make the world of difference". (Miss DN)

According to the subjects in the study, the following were the successful features of the vocational programme which they attended during their final years of high school:

It was compulsory for all students, which meant, that students of all disabilities received guidance.

It did provide students with an awareness of vocational opportunities.

It offered subjects such as, goal attainment, self-awareness, which the students felt was of benefit, perhaps not for their transition into the workplace, but for general life skills.

Career aptitude tests were given, even if they did not prove to be of any direct benefit to the individual.

In certain instances, bursaries were obtained for individuals to either attend further educational institutions, or companies were identified that would accommodate individuals with physical disabilities.

Individuals felt that the following areas needed to be brought to the attention of Departments of Education responsible for either curriculum design or vocational training.

It focused more on disability than on career and transition planning. Here the individuals felt, that not enough was being done to equip them for life in the workplace, with regards to their mental, physical and career demands.

No experiential training was offered, with regards to exposure to the workplace. Individuals all agreed, that it would have been of great

benefit to both the individual and the school, for students with physical disabilities to be exposed to work experience.

No individual vocational transition programme existed within the school to help in preparing the subjects for transition. There was no follow-up programme to monitor whether the subjects were coping with their transition.

The subjects believed that the general feeling of the staff, was that students with physical disabilities have so many other medical/health problems that are more serious than their vocational transition needs. Therefore vocational transition is not of a high priority in their estimation.

One of the major problems identified by staff was the unrealistic case load of students, that special education teachers are expected to manage. This has resulted in there being insufficient time to adequately manage and monitor an individual's vocational transition plan.

The subjects were aware of the demands that their physical disabilities placed on staff at the school. However, they all expressed a strong concern with the fact that far too much attention was placed on their disability, rather than on preparing them for transition from school.

4.3.2 Subjects with Disabilities Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Vocational Transition Programmes offered at the School

The students felt that they were academically prepared, but a general comment with regards to their preparedness for vocational transition was-

“What good is it being academically capable, when one has not had the opportunities to assess career interests and experiences. Sure, we are made aware of our strengths and our interests, but we are not taught how to communicate these to others”. (general consensus)

"We are taught to be independent, to communicate our thoughts and feelings to others, but this is different when facing a very competitive work environment, where even the able bodied are fighting for survival. How, can we expect to compete, when we haven't been given the same opportunities?" (general consensus)

"Students from 'normal' schools are offered work experience programmes. My friend has gone into a company when she was in standard nine, and again in standard ten. She spent two weeks in each company, and then had to write a report for the teachers on what she felt about the programme. This helped her to decide whether or not she wanted go into Marketing or Human Resources. She was able to make a clear decision and decided to study Human Resources. In overseas countries, individuals with disabilities, have their own 'Individual Education Programme", that is designed to help them with their transition to the workplace. Why can't we have that in this country. Then maybe people will start to take our needs seriously".(Miss CG)

" I know the staff have their hands full with just taking care of us, but we eventually have to leave school one day, and we are just not adequately prepared. Someone, needs to promote the involvement of consumer and parent work groups in school to work activities. The school needs to provide experiential training to heighten the awareness of disability issues among employers and workers. (Mr MN)

It became apparent, that the failure to gain experiential training before leaving school and taking on either further studies, or moving into the workplace has had a negative impact on the lives of the subjects used for this study.

The subjects had the following comments to make with regards to their exposure or lack thereof, of work experience.

“Personally I would have liked a wider subject package. I would have liked to be able to go out into the workplace during my school holidays, and experience the actual thing. Maybe become more aware of my own limitations, because sometimes I am inclined to believe I can do things that maybe I cannot”. (Mr MN)

“Honestly, I would have liked to be able to go and work at an advertising company for just one or two days. Just to get a better understanding of the job, and then maybe I would have realised that this was just not suitable to me and my type of disability. I will never know, as I am now a bookkeeper, not what I had dreamt of doing. (Mr SM)

“I would have liked to visit different business, and spend a couple of days in them, just to gain a better understanding of the various jobs available out there. This was never a matter of great importance to the school personnel, but to the students, it would make the world of difference. (Miss DN)

4.3.3 Staff Perceptions of Vocational Transition Programmes offered at the School

The staff were aware of the shortcomings of the programme, but felt, that they needed more resources and support. Support would included, more parental involvement with regards to trying to assist with transport of the students.

Businesses needed to become more involved. The school were not too sure how they were to go about getting businesses to be partners. Certain businesses such as ABSA Bank were extensively involved in offering bursaries for the disabled to study at Universities and Technikons. They currently offered a number of job placements for students from the school.

“What we mean by more parental support is that, a number of our students are boarders, they stay in our hostel, due to the fact, that they need constant care. Parents often cannot cope with them at home. This seems to leave the responsibility of the individual with the school. Some parents are fantastic, but unfortunately, they cannot do everything. We need more human resources”. (teacher)

“As yet, we have not considered work experience due to the problems mentioned previously. Somehow, we have to get the business sector more involved. We do have an open day where we invite various celebrities. Perhaps this is not enough”. (Principal)

The teaching and professional staff had the following comments with regards to the curriculum.

“We have to meet the same standards as any other school. There are no exceptions to the rule. Yes! We are allowed to have certain privileges to help accommodate our students needs. But generally we all follow the same education curricular”. (Principal)

“We just do not have the resources available to us, to offer our students a wider range of subjects. Our staff are already over stretched, therefore to try and organise work experience programmes would be a full time job. We have to arrange special transport, make sure that the businesses can accommodate the disabled etc”. (teacher)

“The teaching staff at the school are all dedicated to the needs of the students. There has been a tremendous change over the past few years. More students are wanting to go out and work, or to study further. This has not always been the case. Perhaps this is due to a change in society’s attitude towards the disabled? This new demands has placed a great deal of pressure on the staff of the school to try and meet the changing needs. We have over the past three years made a number of significant changes, not so much to the academic curricular, but in particular to the vocational transition programmes”. (counsellor)

The staff were all aware of the need for a comprehensive vocational transitional programme in South African Schools, but were also aware of the economic constraints placed on the educational sector, and especially the special needs schools.

4.4 Workplace Experiences: Reflections on Challenges Faced.

Three out of the five students have been fortunate enough to gain experience in the open labour market. This study examined their experiences.

“On completing my diploma in Human Resources Management , I was offered a job as a personal assistant for a recruitment agency. I thought this was fantastic. It turned out to be a glorified secretarial job. I was not given clients to deal with, nor was I given any work directly related to my field of study. People were generally very polite and helpful. I have always been an extrovert, despite my disability. I don’t always seem to realise, that I am different, and that I cannot just be accommodated in all settings. I expect people to accept me as I am, I forget, that they see me as perhaps a liability. Another major problem that I had, was that there were no toilets for the disabled, which meant

that I had to ask someone to help me to the toilet each time. This is not so embarrassing for me, as I am used to it. But I could see, that the other person was very uncomfortable. My second job was for a tourist company. I was supposed to have been employed as the Human Resources Consultant. I worked hard, never missed a day and was always up-to-date with my work. I would take piles of work home and work until all hours of the night. I did not want my disability to become a problem at work. The Human Resources Manager left, and I acted in the position for nearly a year. When the job was eventually advertised, I applied. I thought that I had a very good chance of getting it, as my work was of a high standard. I did not get job, because it required traveling. The company made the decision for me, that I would not be able to travel, and so therefore on the basis of that I was discriminated against. I have taken the case to the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), based on unfair labour practice. I have now realised, that school should have given us entrepreneurial studies, to teach us how to work on our own, or to start our own business". (Miss CG)

Miss CG felt that her disability is still looked upon as disabling. She was not given equal opportunities, tasks given to her were menial and did not comply with the tasks in the job specifications. She felt very strongly about the fact that others (able-bodied) still tended to make decisions with regards to her abilities and her future.

→ lobby govt

"My biggest problem is with public transport. I have to wait for a taxi each night, and they are not very accommodating towards a person in a wheel chair, as I take up too much space. That is one thing that I would have liked to have been taught at school. How to use public transport, and how to drive. I want to get my own car one day. I think that the school has started to teach students how to use public transport, now that there are some busses for the disabled in Durban. I was eventually moved to our branch in Field Street, because

*X
functional*

management felt, that the facilities were better for me, and that transport was more centralized. (Mr TN)

Mr TN, had a great deal of admiration for the management of the company, with regards to their sensitivity towards his disability, and the challenges he faces on a day to day basis.

4.5 Conclusion

Although a school exists primarily to meet the academic needs of each learner, the staff are aware, that an all-round education is not restricted to the academic aspect. There needs to be a wider curriculum base, that offers students exposure to other challenges, such as work, further education and community living.

The similarities, differences and the recommendations made by both students and teachers, will be discussed further in chapter five, under the heading of "findings".

It became apparent during the interviews that all subjects had a high regard for the special needs school which they attended, particularly to all the staff. This admiration did not, however, influence their criticism of the education system with regards to preparing them for transition from school to either further education or the workplace.

CHAPTER FIVE : DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This section will discuss the findings of the study that explored how five individuals with physical disabilities perceive their transition to life after school. The results highlighted the various social, economic and political factors that impact on their lives. An attempt will be made to explore the themes that have emerged in the context of literature reviewed in other developing countries.

5.2 Meeting the Vocational and Transitional Needs of Individuals with Physical Disabilities

The individual's main concern was that school had provided them with a sound education, and made them aware of how to cope with their physical needs (lifeskill needs) on a day to day basis. However, they expressed the concern with regards to the lack of preparation for future life in a challenging and competitive work and social environment. Students had not had adequate exposure or preparation for their transition to further education or to the workplace. A general concern was the lack of exposure of the disabled to the workplace prior to leaving school. The individuals felt, that there needed to be more contact between the school and business sector. They also expressed the view that more effort was needed to be made with regards to giving individuals with disabilities more opportunities at school to go out into the world of work, in order to create an awareness of not only their own shortcomings, but to make businesses more aware of what adaptations needed to be made in order to accommodate the disabled into the workplace.

The individuals who were interviewed for this study agreed that they had received vocational education, that had enabled them to make a career choice, but not necessarily the choice that they would have wanted. Both pupils and teaching staff expressed a concern with the lack of preparedness that individuals are given for

their transition phase. A further concern was emphasis placed on basic life skills training and academic achievement, thereby neglecting the importance of vocational transition programmes. An additional concern was that special needs schools followed the same vocational curriculum of all other schools within the education department. There is no special curriculum designed to meet the needs of the individual with physical disabilities.

It is stated in the Education White Paper 4 (Department of Education, 1998)

"The Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour have a joint responsibility for providing education and training pathways for young people and adult workers, and for developing more effective linkages between training and work" (2:12).

"The Skills Development Strategy of the Ministry of Labour and the new FET framework are complementary. To this end, the two Ministries must work in close collaboration in sharing labour market information, providing career guidance through advice about appropriate job paths, planning responses to labour market training needs, building links between training and job placement, and sharing information on tracer studies of graduates" (2:17).

"Schools must be encouraged and assisted to provide more meaningful and varied opportunities to young people to acquire useful and relevant knowledge and skills. The Ministry of Education considers that schools should be centres of creativity and innovation, and more firmly rooted in the lives of the communities that they serve" (3:17).

These statements are directly in line with a theme that emerged in this study that vocational transition programmes must be centered around the needs of the individuals as well as the community in which the individual lives. Schools need to take a more active role in preparing individuals for transition to the work place, by forming partnerships with the business sector.

It is hoped, that with this new legislation and social responsibility the National and Provisional departments of education will address the issue of the curriculum for

vocational transition programmes at all schools that cater for learners with disabilities.

The United Kingdom has incorporated special vocational transition programmes into all school curriculum, including schools for the disabled. One area in which the United Kingdom has taken a strong stand is with regards to Youth Training (YT) programmes for the disabled. These programmes offer young people both disabled and non-disabled vocational training in related work experience to assist them to compete for jobs in the open labour market. Individuals are assessed to identify their individual requirements before they join the programme in order that an individualised programme is drawn up. The individuals are then placed in work related situations that offer them exposure to fields of interest.

In the USA many school systems have created specialised training programmes which more adequately serve the transitional needs of individuals with disabilities. In the late 1980's, business sought to assist in the training of this underutilized population by designing "replica shops" which were implemented by several school districts in the USA. These shops were designed to help individuals with disabilities learn workplace skills demanded by the labour market which could be transferred to the job setting. These programmes began to mold the new business/industry partnerships for the 1990's. The techniques used to help students learn job skills, combining education and work include: Cooperative Education, Work Study, Youth Apprenticeship and Internships (Final Recommendations of the Workgroup on Persons with Disabilities, 1995).

learner
ship

A further innovation in the USA to help individuals with disabilities in their transition to the workplace is the Occupational Competency Curriculum Project which is funded through the Department of Education to help develop specific competencies for occupations in demand in the economy. This project allows business and industry to identify the specific tasks/skills necessary for selected occupational jobs or industries. In addition, to meet the challenge of labour market demands and expectations, programme measures and standards have been implemented to ensure student proficiency in the job tasks/skills necessary for these occupations.

The Department of Education's Office of Adult and Occupational Education states:

"As standards for the workforce readiness system and competencies for specific occupations are established and maintained, programme options within secondary schools for persons with disabilities must hold to the same basic standards applicable to students in the general school population "(United States Department of Education, 1995).

South Africa is not at this stage, but hopefully the recommendations made to Government during the discussion phase of the Green Paper on the "Integrated National Disability Strategy"(1996) will help to address the vocational needs of individuals with disabilities. The Integrated National Disability Strategy White Paper, 1997, states:

"Special attention should be given to vocational training in all schools in order to equip learners with special needs"

5.3 Policy to Practice: Dilemmas and Possibilities

Disability-related issues have gained prominence during the past decade in all countries. This has been due in part to campaigning by vigorous disability movements, which have increasingly looked to the experience of anti-discrimination legislation relating to other marginalised groups. Although South Africa has eschewed an all-embracing social rights approach to education and training since 1994, the anti-discriminating legislation passed in the Equal Employment Equity Act of 1998, and the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy, (Office of the Deputy President, November 1997) have marked a significant breakthrough. The Education White Paper 4 (Department of Education, August, 1998) has also made it clear, that all persons are entitled to equal education and training opportunities, regardless of colour, gender or disability. It also states the need to establish linkages with appropriate community services and organisation that may be necessary for successful transition from

school to the workplace. It does not however, make mention of how this is to be done, or by whom. *Me! Hari Krishan!*

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Apart from the Equal Employment Act of 1998, none of the other acts have a monitoring process in place to ensure that what is legislated is applied. A concern of this study is that individuals in special needs schools will continue to be marginalised with regards to workplace experience and equal job opportunities. As with other countries, South Africa's policy on disability is primarily based on the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1993). The Standard Rules were adopted by the United General Assembly on 20 December 1993, and the aims of the Standard Rules that are applicable to this study are:

- They imply a strong moral and political commitment by the state to take action for the equalization of opportunities for person with disabilities.
- They offer an instrument for policy-making and action. The purpose is to ensure that all persons with disabilities may exercise the same rights and obligations as other citizens. (Office of the Deputy President, November 1997).

The objectives of the Standard Rules that would apply directly to this study are:

field
"To outline crucial aspects of social policies in the ~~field~~ of disability, including as appropriate, the active encouragement of technical and economic cooperation" (Office of the Deputy President, November 1997).

If implemented correctly, these policy statements would have a direct impact on the successful vocational transition of the disabled in South Africa, with regards to equal opportunity of access to resources.

5.4 Empowerment and Self-Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities.

The individuals in this study felt that students needed to be included in every level of their educational planning and implementation process during their school life.

They felt that individuals should be allowed to acquire knowledge and skills required for the workforce and lifelong learning, and to self-evaluate their own progress. Their opinions are reinforced in a statement from the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (November 1997).

“People with disabilities are best equipped to change perceptions and attitudes towards disability, and should therefore play a central role in the development of strategies and projects through their legitimate organisations” (p.22)

Schools should establish an interagency coordinating body that includes youth, parents, educators, community services providers, rehabilitation personnel, employers and others, to assist with the successful transition of the individual to the workplace. Once this is done, to establish a collaborative agreement between:

- schools and employers
- schools and service agencies
- further and higher education institutions

Countries such as the USA and the UK, have already begun structuring interagency coordinating bodies to assist in the successful vocational transition of the disabled, in accordance with the disability policies of the country. As yet South Africa has no recognized disability policy, and therefore there is no official legislation to protect the rights of the disabled in the country. The lack of legislation has direct implications for individuals with disabilities vocational transition to the workplace.

The subjects interviewed for this study mentioned, that they did have contact with outside businesses during the open day visits to the school, but felt that these visits did not give them enough opportunities to assist with their transition to the workplace. The subjects felt, that a student body (committee needed to be set up at the school level), that would act as a liaison between the school and a work

workplace. The subjects felt, that a student body (committee needed to be set up at the school level), that would act as a liaison between the school and a work agency. They also felt, that there needed to be a designated school to work transition contact person, that could assist with the transition process.

recruitment agency

Schools needed to provide experiential work opportunities for individuals whilst still at school, to heighten the awareness of disability issues among employers and to provide the individuals with a better idea of work related issues. A strong theme of self-advocacy that came out of this study, was that the individuals felt, that the disabled must learn to draw attention of the rest of the society to their needs, and not just sit back and expect something to happen.

A major concern of both teachers and individuals with disabilities was with regards to the individual's future employment possibilities and independent citizenship. Other concerns were about their safety in the workplace, accessibility, and the future of the individual once the care-giver dies. McConkey (1996) stresses that individuals with disabilities need to experience life as a valued member of a family, a community and society, and to feel that he or she belongs to a social group. McConkey (1996) argues for a community based approach to transition. He suggests some key components that need to be included in the training model that is community based (community based training programmes take into account the needs of the community with regards to employment opportunities and skill requirements):

The active involvement of the family is essential to promote the development of independent skills, such as communication, independent mobility, and personal self-care.

Education at schools needs to be focused on the individual, and relevant to the local environment, leading to productive work and independence.

A vocational or training programme needs to address the low expectations people with disabilities have of themselves as workers.

Vocational projects should be community orientated, with key businesses offering experiential training to the disabled.

5.5 Transforming the System: Partnerships between Schools and Business

Society in general has come a long way with regards to views on disability. However, this study has shown, that we still have not completely shaken off the view of disabled as being different, passive recipients of welfare, and in need of guidance. It is evident from this study, that disability is not the major barrier which prevents integration. The most obvious are found in attitudes, in education opportunities, and in social and environmental factors that impede access. In order to address barriers to access, a great deal of change in the relationship between all members of society, communities and people with disabilities need to take place.

Educational Institutions, be it secondary or further education, need to form linkages with the business sector. In support of this, the following statement taken from the Integrated National Disability Strategy White Paper (Office of the Deputy President, November 1997):

“Educational Support Services should be seen as an integral part of special education needs , and every learner, irrespective of age or centre of learning, should have access to ESS. Educational Support Services must involve partnerships and coordination of special education needs in a continuum. It must involve professional and other non-professional in assisting learners to derive maximum benefit from curriculum through differentiated (but not fragmented) education and training” (p.40).

It is felt that the most effective way to promote job opportunities for people with disabilities is to get employers to recognise the abilities of disabled people and the business case for employing them. Education departments, support services and institutions for further and higher education need to facilitate the formation of a

partnership with business to assess the relevance of curriculum, in order to equip students with the skills necessary for the workplace.

One of the most important objectives of the outcomes based approach to education and training OBE, that is relevant to this study, is the creation of learning environments that accommodate diversity and create experiences that acknowledge different learning rates, levels and styles. Another valuable feature of OBE, is that its curriculum is designed to assess knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed by both the learners and society. Thereby, allowing individuals with disabilities to access a curriculum that is practical and will equip them with the skills necessary for successful transition to the work environment. Despite the value of OBE, and its advantages to students, unless implemented and monitored correctly, and with a sound practical basis for skills that are relevant to the workplace, students with disabilities will continue to face the same barriers to employment as what they are presently experiencing.

In this study, both teaching staff and students indicated the need to establish an interagency coordinating body that includes youth, parents, educators, community services providers and employers in order to help identify general workplace competencies, needed by students for their successful transition. To help provide training sites for the disabled to gain work experience, and to serve on 'school to work' advisory committees. One of the tasks of such a committee would be to coordinate an integrated curricula, across all subject areas within a school to work framework (school-based, work-based, and connecting activities). Another task would be to form a network, that would provide school to work information to youth, families, business and industry, as well as other community organisations. Coordinate school to work activities between employers and school transition specialists as well as all special educational personnel.

Unless such an agency or committee is put in place to implement the above recommendations, it was felt, that the disabled would continue to be marginalised from the open labour market, and equal employment opportunities. Business would continue to see them as a liability and not an asset, and only specific jobs would be made available to the disabled, based on this unsound attitude.

CHAPTER SIX : CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have important implications for service provisions for individuals with physical disabilities in both school and the workplace. It is clear that the principles of human rights and social justice for all citizens enshrined in policy documents that have emerged in South Africa since 1995, (White Paper on Education and Training , March 1995, The Integrated National Disability Strategy Document, February, 1996) have not been translated into practice. The rights of individuals with disabilities to achieve equality of opportunity and equal access to services in society and their rightful citizenship continue to be violated.

Government needs to do more than to implement a policy document and legislation outlining the need for equality. Provincial Education Departments need to ensure that stricter measures are put in place to ensure, that equality is guaranteed for all. The education system needs to redress the curriculum to cater for individuals with disabilities, making their transition from school to work an easier experience. Pre-employment training strategies and programmes should promote efforts to make vocational training, institutions for further and higher education and occupational programmes accessible to people with disabilities wherever possible.

This study has shown, that equality of opportunity only exists at policy level, and that individuals with disabilities, especially those with physical disabilities, are not being adequately accommodated in the workplace and at school to facilitate transition to the world of work. With regards to legislation, the Labour Relations Act of 1995, provides guidelines relevant to good business and employment practices, however, the weakness of the Labour Relations Act lies, in the fact that this provision is not enforceable, but rather provides employers and the courts with guidelines for appropriate practice. The Equal Employment Act of 1998, sets down specific rules for the employment of the disabled, and prohibits unfair discrimination. The Equal Employment Act of 1998, is to be enforced into all businesses and is to be monitored by the department of labour, but unless carefully monitored, will not alleviate unfair labour practice with regards to the employment of the disabled in the workplace.

The purpose of this study was to provide educationalists with a better understanding of how individuals with physical disabilities perceive their school curriculum with regards to preparing them for transition to the workplace, and what changes needed to be made to both school curriculum and policy and legislation for the successful inclusion of the disabled in the open labour market. Although rather limited, due to the fact, that the study was conducted on one special needs school in KwaZulu-Natal, and only five subjects. It is evident from this study that students with disabilities require a far more structured, needs driven vocational transition programme, that will enable them to compete more favourably with their able-bodied colleagues in the work place. Specific outcomes must be included in individual curriculum plans for learners with disabilities, and these must be monitored, evaluated and reviewed in an ongoing manner. Legislation must be developed to protect and guarantee the vocational transition services of students with disabilities. This legislation must be augmented by an administrative framework to ensure the smooth management and running of a national vocational transition programme.

As standards for the workforce readiness system and competencies for specific occupations are established, through policy documents such as the Skills Development Act of 1998, (Department of Labour), which promotes an integrated skills development system thereby promoting economic and employment growth and social development. The Skills Act, is primarily concerned with improving the intermediate level skills base of the country and labour market training for target groups, including the disabled. The successful implementation and evaluation of this act will impact significantly on the future job opportunities of the disabled in a competitive labour market.

The Employment Equity Act of 1998, this Act attempts to provide redress for people with disabilities who are unfairly discriminated against, and requires employers to implement positive measures for the employment and advancement of the disabled in the workplace. Employers are compelled by this Act, to implement employment equity plans to the Department of Labour, outlining their staffing structure, thereby indicating the number of disabled in employ. The criticism of such an Act, is that it does not stipulate a percentage of the workforce

that has to be disabled, and fails to clarify disability. Further research needs to be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness the Act and its implications for equal opportunities for the disabled in the workplace.

There is a need for future studies on vocational transition programmes for the disabled. No documented evidence was available to the researcher with regards to vocational transition programmes for the disabled in South Africa. Future research needs to examine the extent to which the disabled are successfully integrated into the work environment in accordance with government policy.

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Appendix 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your high school years at Open Air, both positive and negative.

2. What did the school do to prepare you for transition, either to work or to further education?

3. What did the teaching staff do to assist with this preparation?

4. What type of disability do you have, has this made it more difficult to adjust?

5. What would you have liked to have had more experience to do, with regards to vocational curriculum?

6. Tell me about your experiences on leaving school.

7. Did you attend an institution for Further or Higher education?

8. You decided to go straight to work after completing matric, tell me about some of the problems you had to overcome with regards to your disability, and do you believe, that school had prepared you for this big moment?

9. Do you feel that you are coping adequately with your transition, or are there areas of which the school failed to address, and so you were not quite prepared for the major transition.

Appendix 2

**VOCATIONAL TRANSITION STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
PERSONNEL**

1. **What vocational transition programme are you or your school presently operating?**

2. **Please identify the successful features of your transition programme with regards to workplace employment**

3. **Please identify the unsuccessful feature of the transition programme**

4. **In relation to the above two questions, what changes would you like to see made in the future to help improve this programme?**

5. Please would you give me a brief outline of your vocational transition programme for individuals with physical disabilities.

6. Have you or your school run follow-up evaluations of the effectiveness of your transition programme for the physically disabled in the workplace? If yes, please describe briefly what is being done. If no, please give a brief reason.

7. Does your school provide students with physical disabilities the opportunity of doing any form of experiential work in the open market? If so, please give a brief explanation of how this is done.

8. What organisations are used for this exercise? How were they contacted in order to accommodate your school pupils?

9. Are organisations invited to attend open days at your school, to create an awareness of the potential of the physically disabled for the open labour market? Please give a brief outline of what is or has been done in the past.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TRANSITION PLANNING

Semi-structured interview

NAME :

AGE :

GENDER :

SCHOOL ATTENDED :

DATE STARTED :

DATE COMPLETED :

Did you matriculate? :

Type of disability :

Tertiary Education :

First Job :

Reasons for leaving :

Present Employment :

1. What did your vocational guidance lessons include, that helped to prepare you for transition either to further education or to the workplace?

2. Did you receive any formal testing to help you with your career choice or further education options?

3. What tests were given, and how did they benefit you in your career choice for transition into the workplace?

Tests : _____

Preparations: _____

4. What other forms of guidance did you receive with regards to your transition from school?

5. Do you feel that you were adequately prepared for transition from school, if not, what would you have liked the school to do for you in this regard?

6. Did you receive any form of experiential work experience?

7. Where and for how long?

8. What problems if any did you experience with regards to work experience?

9. Were these problems disclosed to the staff at your school?

10. What recommendation would you make to help improve the transition programme for students with physical disabilities?
