

**THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF PREGNANT AND NURSING ADULT
LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY OF MORGENSTER TEACHERS' COLLEGE**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF PREGNANT AND NURSING ADULT LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY OF MORGENSTER TEACHERS' COLLEGE** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Mamhute

SIGNATURE

(Mrs R Mamhute)

March 2011

DATE

DEDICATION

To my father and late mother

God - given husband

Sons: Tarirai and KudaKwashe

Daughters: Ruwarashe and Tariroyashe

Grandsons: Taonanyasha and Kudzwaishe Arnold

My late brother, Milford.

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ABSTRACT

The academic challenges faced by pregnant and nursing students in Zimbabwe do not seem to attract the attention of scholars. This study focused on the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College, a tertiary education institution. Participants' perceptions of the academic challenges they faced were established through the use of a qualitative methodology in which the semi-structured interview was the dominant data collection method. Non-participant observation and document analysis were employed to complement the dominant method. The findings indicated that the academic challenges faced by mothering adult learners are related to physical problems, social relationships, inadequate financial resources and administrative problems. The study revealed that such students develop strategies to alleviate some of the educational challenges they face. In view of the findings, recommendations are made to improve the learning environment of mothering students and for further research to address the problem.

KEY TERMS

Educational challenges; Third phase college students; Adult Learners; Academic Performance; Pregnant Students' Challenges; Nursing Students' Challenges; Physical problems; Insufficient Financial Resources; Administrative problems; Anxiety; Academic progress; Self – esteem; 2-5-2 programme; 3-3-3 programme.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter in which the study is contextualised serves to provide an orientation of the research. It describes the context and the parameters within which the study was carried out. The statement of the problem as well as research aims are given. The preliminary reading that helped in shaping and focusing initial research ideas is discussed. Consequently, the motivation or rationale that justified carrying out the research is provided. A brief overview of the research design and methodology are presented. Finally, key theoretical concepts are defined so as to ensure effective communication.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain in 1980. During the early years of independence like in the colonial period, students who fell pregnant during the course of their training programme were withdrawn from the course (Madzowere & Musarurwa 2010:D8). They had to rejoin after giving birth and weaning their babies. However, from 1998 to date, Morgenster Teachers' College allowed pregnant and nursing students to continue with their studies. This gender-sensitive gesture was not accompanied by the necessary support and guidance to help this special group of students pull through their studies with relative ease.

Recently, the Zimbabwean government has announced that pregnant school girls and nursing students will no longer be expelled. Instead, they will get three months maternity leave. According to the Harare metropolitan provincial education director, the move has resulted in the re-interpretation of the Education Ministry's circular (P35), which deals with disciplinary action (Murape: 2010:1). It now encompasses pregnant and nursing students. However, private institutions may or may not abide by this regulation.

Over the years, a number of pregnant students at Morgenster failed to write their examinations because they gave birth during the examination period. They had to take their examinations the following year. In 2000, a student experienced labour pains during a physical education practical examination. She gave birth during the course of the day but had to take her examination the following year. In November 2006 a pregnant student failed to do a music practical examination because she gave birth on the eve of the examination day. No arrangements were made to enable her to take the examination after giving birth. She had to take her examination in August 2007. A few students have voluntarily withdrawn from the programme only to rejoin after weaning their babies. They had to interrupt their studies because the college would not accommodate them in the hostels.

The college policy on hostel accommodation is that pregnant and nursing students should operate from outside the college premises. This means that such students could not be accommodated in college hostels and had to seek alternative accommodation at their own expense (Appendices A). Such accommodation is available from Morgenster Mission workers in the different departments: Teachers' College, Printing Press, Hospital and Theological College. The Mission workers charge these students twice or thrice the boarding fees (the fees they would have paid if they were using boarding facilities).

Morgenster Teachers' College trains primary school teachers following two different programmes. One group which graduates to teach all grades in the primary school (grades 1 to 7), follows what is known as the General Course. It is this group which follows the 2-5-2 programme. The other group is of Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers who graduate to teach the lower grades: pre-school to grade three. These follow the 3-3-3 programme.

For the General Course students, their curriculum comprises the ten subjects in the primary school: English, Shona, mathematics, environmental studies, social studies, religious and moral education, home economics, art and design, physical education and music. These comprise a course referred to as Professional Studies Syllabus B (PSB). In Syllabus B, students learn how to teach the different subjects (content and methodology) to the primary school child. They also learn about professionalism in a course named Professional Studies Syllabus A (PSA) that among other things deals with the code of conduct of the teacher.

Like all student teachers, these students have to take a course in Educational foundations. The course is called Theory of Education (TOE) and deals with psychology, philosophy and sociology. Besides, students have to carry out a curriculum depth study project. They also have to choose one subject from the primary school curriculum and study it in depth (academic or main study). To these have been added health and life skills (HLS) in 2004 and national and strategic studies (NASS) in 2005. Health and life skills is done in the first phase only. All these subjects have to be passed with a sub-minimum mark of 50%.

Those following the ECD programme spend the first year in college, the second on teaching practice and the third year in college again. Their curriculum differs from the General Course in that it focuses on children in the three to eight years age range. Thus, in PSB they learn how to teach the different subjects to the three to five year olds (ECD A & ECD B) and five to eight year olds (infants). They also do PSA, NASS, Theory of Early Childhood Development (TECD) and a main study or subject.

In the first phase made up of only six months (two school terms) for the General Course group and nine months (three school terms) for the ECD group, students have to read and write assignments as well as sit for end-of-phase one examinations in all the fifteen areas. It is on the basis of these assignments and examinations that students are promoted into the second phase: Teaching Practice. Those who fail to make the grade either repeat or withdraw from the programme, depending on the degree of failure. In the third and final phase students have to write qualifying assignments and end-of-programme examinations.

Besides attending lectures and writing lecture notes, students are expected to do extensive reading so as to complement lecture notes and complete assignments for all the fifteen subjects in the first phase or fourteen subjects in the third phase. Each subject has a stipulated number of assignments per phase. Given this scenario of a packed curriculum and the expectations of the certificating board (Department of Teacher Education – DTE), one wonders how the pregnant and nursing students manage time to cater for their academic and mothering roles (Edwards, Hanson & Ragatt 1996:213). In such instances in which the student mother seems to be overloaded with responsibilities she needs to work extremely hard.

Given the demands of the primary teachers' training programme and the limitations and discomforts of pregnancy or the demands of the infant in terms of care and attention, there is a likelihood of tension. This situation can be characterised by a number of setbacks, inter alia, emotional, physical and psychological.

This is even worse for the new and inexperienced mothers. Parenting in such cases can "... become a heavy load...and might even change into a crisis" (Crous, Roets, Dicker & Sonnekus 2000:102). Essentially, deliberate support and guidance should be given to this group of students to assist them in their studies (Bezuidenhout 1993:33).

Both the DTE and college administration have no gender sensitive policies on how these students should be treated. Yet they constitute a significant group in terms of numbers. For example the Shona main study group of 2007 had eighteen female and four male students in the final phase. Five of the eighteen female students were either pregnant or nursing. This was the general trend in all the ten academic study areas. The average size of the groups was twenty. A cursory survey showed that in 2007 alone, the number of students who were either pregnant or nursing was about 25%.

Furthermore, pregnant and nursing students' performance is a cause for concern. With reference to the Shona main study group of 2007, the coursework mark schedule shows that two nursing students failed to get passing marks in three assignments used to compute the final coursework mark for Shona. The Shona coursework mark was an average of two assignments in modern and traditional literature, one assignment in modern poetry and two grammar tests. It was in the second attempt that these students managed to pass. Besides, one pregnant student who gave birth a week after writing the final examinations, failed in two areas: PSA and environmental science, and had to write supplementary examinations in 2008. From the group that enrolled in May 2007 and completed in April 2010, the lowest coursework and examination marks were obtained by nursing students.

The combination of students' responsibilities, which are healthful living during pregnancy, studying and caring for the infant, justifies categorization of these students as "... individuals with special needs ..." (Enis-Cole & Allen 2002:299). This calls for affirmative action to address the genuine concerns of this particular category of students. Suffice to say, this can be meaningfully done after an in-depth study of their predicament is carried out.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In education and in employment, the issue of gender seems to adversely affect women. The institution of motherhood seems to oppress women. Studies carried out in order to develop a comprehensive career development theory reveal that mothering is not quite compatible with other roles women are expected to play. One such study revealed that "... women's career motivation is much more vulnerable to competing role priorities and environmental demands ..." (Farmer (1985) cited in Luzzo 2002:164). In a similar study by Swanson and Tokar (1991), female students identified childcare concerns and career sacrifices as barriers to their career aspirations (Luzzo 2002:164).

These findings serve to show that female adult learners have a number of significant challenges to cope with. In view of this, the research question is:

What can be done to improve the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College?

To gain a better understanding and appreciation of the situation of such students, the following sub-questions were addressed:

- a) Which are the actual educational problems experienced by pregnant and nursing adult learners?
- b) How do pregnant and nursing adult learners confront or cope with their situation?
- c) What can be done to improve the situation and make their study experiences worthwhile?

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

In view of the above research question and sub-questions, the following research aims were explored:

- a) To identify and get an in-depth understanding of the educational problems or challenges experienced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster.
- b) To identify strategies used by pregnant and nursing adult learners to overcome the educational challenges or problems they face during teacher training.
- c) To make recommendations to the college principal, the responsible authority and the DTE on how the learning situation can be improved.

Hopefully, the findings of this study will make Tertiary Education Authorities (TEAs) at all levels realise the need to put in place intervention measures to address the educational challenges of pregnant and nursing adult learners, not only at Morgenster, but in all tertiary education institutions.

1.5 RELATED LITERATURE

In order to have a better understanding of the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners, a preliminary scholarship review was done. The literature studied focuses on two issues: students as adult learners and educational challenges of adult learners. It is hoped that a focus on these two issues would shed more light on the predicament of this group of adult learners.

1.5.1 Students as adult learners

Gravett (2001:6) views the adult learner as an adult engaged in educational activities. Besides, she has to answer to other demands and responsibilities of adulthood such as mothering: pregnancy and childcare. Thus, according to Havighurst (1972), cited in Crous et al. (2000:84), adulthood like other stages in human life, is marked by developmental tasks which may be internally or externally imposed. It is these developmental tasks, skills and competences which enable mankind to establish control over their life-world.

Kranjnc (1989:20) adopted Ogrizovic's (1966) definition that refers to adults as "... those who have completed or interrupted their initial education [secondary education] in order to take part in other ... activities or ... social roles". In this sense, other activities could be post-secondary education, while social roles could be parenting. According to Crous et al. (2000:85) and Vrey (1992:9), adulthood as a period of human development can be attained by reaching a certain chronological age. With reference to chronological age, Havighurst (1972) cited in Crous et al. (2000:85) divided adulthood into three phases: early adulthood (18-35 years), middle adulthood (35-60 years) and late adulthood (60+ years). For this study, the focus is on early adulthood (18-35 years) since participants' ages in this study ranged between 19 and 30 years. Early adulthood is the stage at which the adult learner seeks to accomplish personal aspirations such as career development and starting a family vis-à-vis lack of adequate "... social attention and support" towards the accomplishment of those goals which she would have defined for herself (Crous

et al. 2000:85-86). Thus as a student, the adult faces many challenges with regard to her social roles, personal values and aspirations.

The above views of Havighurst (1972) are echoed by Gravett (2001:6) who argues that the adult status is dependent on the extent to which the individual

- a) fulfils the social roles typically assigned to this group of people and
- b) takes responsibility for her actions.

The adult learner, because of the period of life she is in, is expected among other things, to form love relationships, marry and raise children (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee (1978) cited in Schiller 2002:190). Therefore, the student as adult learner can also be a mother who is either pregnant or nursing. The role of parent or mother or spouse is thus added to that of full-time student. The student as adult learner has multiple roles and responsibilities which can be uncomplimentary. These oftentimes create educational challenges for the adult learner.

1.5.2 Challenges of adult learners

The second of Levinson's (1978) six crucial tasks is to "...negotiate the tension between exploration and creating a stable life structure" (Schiller 2002:190). This process is rekindled each time the individual increases her roles. For example, an adult learner who becomes a mother or a mother who engages in learning increases her life roles. This role expansion requires the adult to form a self-image that is congruent with each of the life roles (Crous et al. 2000:4). In support of the same view, Magolda's (2002:112) perspective on how adult learners can overcome challenges in their life-world advocates for an internal definition of the individual while remaining connected to the human-world in a meaningful way. Both Levinson's and Magolda's views point towards the development of a balanced personality in order to effectively contend with challenges posed by seemingly uncomplimentary life roles. This indeed, is a difficult task to achieve but one that is essential if the adult learner is to succeed in her endeavours. Where the accomplishment of roles and tasks is met by challenges and failure, dissatisfaction is likely to set in (Crous et al. 2000:84).

As learner, the adult is expected to develop the mind and to systematically develop skill patterns required to perform adequately tasks peculiar to the career (Gravett 2001:1X). The addition of the mothering role

brings with it parenting stresses into the life of the learner (Bullen, Kenway & Hay 2000:444). This tends to aggravate the situation. To ensure success in both endeavours, the adult learner should devise measures through which she can effectively realise her potential (Crous et al. 2000:2).

According to Milner-Home, Power and Dennis (1996), cited in Bullen et al. (2000:448), the traditional image of a mother is that of a self-sacrificing being. If taken as such, the adult student is likely to exhaust herself as she attends to both her studies and the parenting role. Besides, the demands of parenthood and studentship are not only conflicting but stressful thereby posing great challenges to the adult learner (Roxburgh, Stephens, Toltzis & Adkins 2001:56). Hence, in Britain the Social Exclusion Unit Report (SEU 1999c) views teacher training content or curriculum as one of the factors responsible for socio-economic disadvantage especially on female learners (Bullen et al. 2000:445). The incompatibility of the curriculum to the needs of the learner adds to the already existing pressure characteristic of this stage of human development.

1.6 MOTIVATION

According to Hoffman (2002:21), “[t]he effort to combine work and motherhood is usually heart-wrenching and filled with guilt and exhaustion”. Studentship is thus not quite compatible with motherhood. Each role has its own demands and this results in competition and conflict of priorities.

Luzzo (2002:164) is of the opinion that the career development process of women is negatively affected by personal and environmental factors. Such factors result in role conflict and confusion, salient features in the female adult learner’s life. In essence, curriculum requirements violate mothering expectations while daily parenting conflicts with curriculum expectations.

Mothering students are also a cause for concern in Britain. According to Bullen et al. (2000:444), the Social Exclusion Unit Report (SEU 1999a) contains an item aimed at alleviating the problem of mothering students. To this end, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) was tasked to find out how the curriculum can address peculiar needs of teenage parents. A number of policies were put in place to offer this disadvantaged group of learners advice and support services.

In Zimbabwe therefore, the adult learner's predicament calls for guidance and support to help cope with the complexities of life. However, the support is limited because the lecturer cannot be aware of every student's peculiar experiences (Gravett 2001:7) and the policy framework marginalises such learners. Nevertheless, the challenges of pregnant and nursing adult students are not a well-researched topic. Research in Zimbabwe seems to dwell on other aspects of teacher education and women's lives.

Different views on how adult learners in general can be assisted have been given. Mwamwenda (1995:5) feels that conducive environments should be established. Edwards et al. (1996:6) argue that adult learners should be assisted to cross the boundaries between life and learning. While Garret (1982:239) is of the opinion that they need to be assisted to manage time so as to minimise frustration due to role ambiguity.

This research intends to capture and bring to the fore actual experiences of pregnant and nursing adult learners with the intention of influencing relevant education authorities to offer necessary assistance as would have been identified. These learners are also encouraged to rise up to the educational challenges.

1.7 DEMARCATION OF THE PROBLEM

Though the problem being studied may occur in other tertiary institutions, this study was confined to Morgenster Teacher's College: a Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ) institution. The study was based on six selected students: three pregnant and three nursing. These students were in their final year or third phase of study.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 A literature study

In order to get information on the experiences of pregnant and nursing adult learners, a literature study on the topic was done. The literature study focused on crucial issues pertinent to the education of student mothers. These included topics such as motherhood, studentship, how adults learn and challenges faced by pregnant and nursing learners. Such a study provided a theoretical basis for the empirical study. To this

end, books, journal and magazine articles, newspapers, policy documents and minutes were studied. The internet was also explored for relevant literature.

1.8.2 Empirical research

1.8.2.1 Research design

Since the aim of the study is to get an in-depth understanding of how pregnant and nursing adult learners experience their studies, a qualitative exploratory research design is followed. The design enables the researcher to get information from the participants' point of view. (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh 1996a:446; Mouton 2001:193; Fouche 2002:109; Le Compte & Preissle 1993:238). The approach also gives the participant the opportunity to express her own feelings and experiences and the researcher to observe the participant's covert and overt behaviour. The researcher, who is also a practitioner at the institution, was able to capture data regarding the innermost experiences of participants on a daily basis. This was possible since participants were studied in their natural setting at Morgenster Teachers' College.

1.8.2.2 Population and sampling

Purposive sampling was employed. Pregnant and nursing students were sampled. Out of the third phase students at Morgenster Teachers' College, six students were selected. Of these, three were pregnant and three were nursing mothers.

1.8.2.3 Administrative matters

The interviews took place in the lecturer's office to allow privacy, non-interruptions and the creation of an atmosphere in which the participant felt comfortably engaged. Before the commencement of the interview(s) the purpose of the research, the role of the interview(s) and the confidentiality of the selected material were explained to the participants (Greeff 2002:300-301). In this way, participant co-operation was elicited. The participants had to indicate the time slots convenient to them. The time slots were derived from the free periods on the timetable. This ensured that the research process did not interfere with the business of the participant and the institution.

All the information given, even the most familiar, was documented (Le Compte & Preissle 1993:236). The researcher was the main data gathering instrument: writing what was heard, seen or experienced as well

as recording her own perceptions during the interviews (Greeff 2002:304). All the information: interview guides and transcriptions from the process notes, was labeled and filed in a way that made the data easily identifiable and retrievable. This ensured that no data was lost or misplaced.

1.8.2.4 Data Collection

Data was collected through the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. With the consent of the participants, data was audio-taped and later transcribed. Through the face-to-face interview, the researcher was able to probe, follow up and elaborate responses (Cohen & Manion 1994:273; McMillan & Schumacher 1993:250; Huysamen 1994:145; Babbie 2004:333). Furthermore, it was possible during the interview to make an assessment of what the respondent felt, thought and believed through observing verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Cohen & Manion 1994:272, 277).

The face-to-face semi structured interview availed participants the opportunity to give their own points of view in respect of their situation (Gall, Borg & Gall 1996:309). There was however need to create a conducive atmosphere which allowed participants freedom and independence to participate (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:269; Greeff 2002:300).

In order to compliment data from the face-to-face interviews, non-participant observation and document analysis were used. As part of the college community, the researcher kept a watchful eye on the pregnant and nursing students during and after lectures. This enabled her to capture some of their behavior as they carried out their daily activities. In this way, the researcher was able to record the participants' idiosyncratic behaviour. Furthermore, analysis of information from the log-sheets provided data on nursing students' nocturnal activities related to the research question and likely to impact on their educational activities. When more than one data collecting method is used, gaps in collected data are filled and false or misleading information can be detected (Greeff 2002:306; Ary et al. 1996a:445). This way, the researcher established the authenticity of the data.

1.8.2.5 Data analysis

Analysis of data started as soon as data collection began (Ary et al. 1996a:481; Le Compte & Preissle 1993:238). This enabled the researcher to:

- a) ask questions about collected data

- b) collect more information to fill up information gaps before leaving the field of study
- c) understand the data better and
- d) ensure that the study remains focused.

The new information that was yielded through this continuous adjustment was also subjected to new analysis. In fact, all the collected data were subjected to analysis while the interview process was still fresh in the mind of the researcher (Greeff 2002:305). Participants were given the opportunity to verify recorded information. In this way, the researcher came up with as informative and accurate field notes as possible. Such notes were an asset to the researcher.

In the margin of field notes, memos indicating the researcher's own perceptions of the data were written. This not only helped to capture sentiments and perceptions but also to separate meanings assigned by participants from the researcher's. Such separation of meanings and identification of subjective components in the notes are important preliminary stages of analysis (Le Compte & Preissle 1993:235; Greeff 2002:305).

With the research question and sub-questions in mind, the text was read several times. In the reading process, the researcher identified themes or recurring patterns of beliefs and provided codes for them (De Vos 2002:344). Patterns and regularities in the data were transformed into categories. The categories and patterns that emerged helped the researcher to make sense of the data. After initial interpretation, the data was subjected to another critical analysis. Here the apparent pattern was challenged and "... other plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them ..." were sought (De Vos 2002:344). Data analysis in this study consists of "thick" descriptions of events and patterns.

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in De Vos (2002:351), call trustworthiness the truth value of the study while Lemmer (1993:95) refers to it as the accurateness and completeness of the research. In this study, both the researcher and the participants contributed in different ways towards this aspect. Verbatim tape transcriptions were availed to the participants as soon as possible after the interviews. Holstein and Gubrium (1985), cited in Greeff (2002:304), point out that this allows the information to be clarified and elaborated. In other words, the researcher is able to establish whether

- a) she and the participants ascribe the same meanings to the phenomenon under study
- b) she actually observed and accurately captured information on the phenomenon she has set herself to observe.

This answers to what De Vos (2002:351) calls the credibility of the study.

To allow similar situations to be understood in the context of this study the theoretical framework, sampling, social context, role of the researcher, data collection and analysis were explained. Such detail can help other researchers to conduct follow-up studies and other readers to understand this study better. It is on this background that findings in this study can be tested for reliability, dependability, conformability and repeatability (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:385-391; Greeff 2002:352-353). Where findings cannot be confirmed, discrepancies can be explained in the same light.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Information for the research was provided by the participants on the basis of mutual trust. In return, the researcher assured that the participants' interests, sensitivities and rights were protected. The researcher disclosed to the participants the aim and beneficiaries of the research. Participants' rights in the research were also explained. Participants who considered it worth participating gave their consent (Mouton 2001: 244; Strydom 2002: 64) and were free to withdraw their participation at any point.

In the research process, no form of injury or harm either through language or actions on the part of the researcher was inflicted on the participants. More so, the participants' true identities were not disclosed in any way throughout the study. The information they gave was used for research purposes only. Hence, the research interactions were guided by generally accepted norms and values such as protection from harm, informed consent, disclosure, anonymity and confidentiality (Strydom 2002:64, 68; Le Compte & Preissle 1993:106-109).

1.11 RESEARCH SITE

The study was conducted at Morgenster Teachers' College which is situated in Chief Mugabe area in Masvingo province in Zimbabwe. The college was founded by missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) from South Africa. It trains primary school teachers. When Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980 the ownership of all the Dutch Reformed Church institutions fell into the hands of black Zimbabwean missionaries. The black missionaries preferred the name Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ).

Besides Morgenster Teachers' College there are a number of institutions found in Morgenster Mission. These include Morgenster Memorial hospital, Murray Theological College, Morgenster Central Primary School, Morgenster Secondary School, Henry Murray School for the deaf and dumb and the printing press. Workers in these institutions are provided with accommodation but some whose homes are within walking distance from the Mission prefer to work from home. They reserve a room for their use when it is convenient to do so and sub-let the rest of the rooms to secondary school students whose homes are far away from school and to college female students who cannot be accommodated in college hostels. Morgenster Teachers' College is therefore part of a large community. Currently the college has a female principal. There are more than sixty lecturers. The student enrolment has however dropped to less than three hundred students for all intakes leaving some of the college hostels unoccupied.

While information on the research site helps in understanding the context within which pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College operate, an explanation of key theoretical concepts used in this study facilitates communication between the researcher and readers of this research report. In the following sub-heading key theoretical concepts are explained.

1.12 KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

In this study, there are key terms that are frequently used. For effective communication, their conceptual and operational definitions are given.

- **Adult learners**

In the context of this study the term adult learners is defined in line with the views of Gravett (2001:6), Crous et al. (2000:85) and Fraser, Loubser and Van Rooy (1990:16) as persons who are following a programme of learning in a tertiary or adult educational institution on a full-time or part-time basis. Thus, a learner is considered an adult not on the basis of age or being a spouse but by virtue of her entering a tertiary education institution in order to acquire knowledge and skills for the enhancement of self-actualisation. However she brings other facets of her life such as mother, into the learning situation. Hence, the adult learner is also referred to as a student teacher, a learner or a student.

- **Student mothers**

Student mother refers to a female student who is either pregnant or has a baby she is nursing. In the context of this study such students are also referred to as mothering or pregnant and nursing students and the term "her" refers to the same.

- **Challenges**

Challenges are drawbacks or barriers one encounters in the execution of one's life tasks. Such barriers could be lack of support or empathy from the lecturing staff and inability to balance time between study and mothering demands. Therefore these challenges are demands made on the individual learner and are likely to stall progress towards the achievement of a goal. In the absence of a strong inner conviction, guidance and support from others in the environment, drawbacks may force her to abandon the goal altogether.

- **Training programme**

A training programme refers to a curriculum designed for students seeking "...specialised and vocationally [oriented] knowledge [and] skills ..." in a tertiary educational institution (Fraser et al. 1990:16). In this study the curriculum comprises both academic and non-academic aspects such as sport and gardening. The adult learner graduates into a qualified teacher after completing the curriculum. This takes a minimum of three years and a maximum of six years.

- ***Learning phases***

The concept refers to a learning or study period in the teacher-training programme. For the General Course group the first and third learning periods are six months long or two school terms. The second learning period is fifteen months long or five school terms. For the ECD group each of the three phases is nine months long or three school terms. During the first and third phases students engage in residential learning. The second phase comprises teaching practice.

- ***Department of Teacher Education***

This is a faculty of the University of Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, colleges that deal with teacher education are affiliated to the Department of Teacher Education (DTE). Thus teachers' colleges are associate members of the University of Zimbabwe. In this relationship DTE has the mandate to monitor academic and professional standards in the colleges. On completion of the teacher education programme graduate trainees receive internationally recognised diploma certificates from the University of Zimbabwe.

1.13 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

In this chapter the context of or background to the study on the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College is explained. This helps to put the study into perspective. The statement of the problem, the research question and the research sub-questions are given. These together with the stated research aims helped the researcher to remain focused throughout the study. A preliminary review of related literature is given. The focus was on students as adult learners and challenges of adult learners. Under motivation the justification for this study is given, while the research design and methodology gave an outline of how the empirical research is undertaken. Other issues dealt with in this chapter include trustworthiness, ethical considerations, the research site and key theoretical concepts used in this study. The chapter ends by outlining the structure of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The chapter presents a theoretical background to the study. This helps to familiarise the researcher with educational challenges faced by mothering students in other contexts. To this end, literature from Zimbabwe, South Africa, East Africa, Britain, Australia and the United States of America was reviewed. To present a systematic literature review the following themes or aspects were identified: motherhood, studentship, how adults learn and challenges faced by pregnant and nursing learners. The last two themes were further broken down to make them better understood. The impact of each of the themes on the education of the mothering student is explained.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

In this chapter the research design and methodology used in the empirical study is presented and discussed. The motivation or rationale that justifies the empirical study is also given. For this study the case study method which belongs to the qualitative design has been adopted. The strengths of the qualitative design in bringing about an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study are presented.

Since the study seeks to understand the educational challenges of pregnant and nursing adult learners, the semi-structured interview is the major research tool. It is complemented by non-participant observation and document analysis. By triangulating data collection methods, it is hoped that all essential data is captured. Details of how the research tools are used and their advantages are given. The chapter also contains explanations of sampling procedures used in the study, presentation and analysis of data. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also dealt with.

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussion.

This chapter deals with presentation, analysis and discussion of empirical data. This is done under the following topics:

- The effect of physical problems on the educational activities of pregnant adult learners.
- The effect of social relationships on the educational activities of pregnant adult learners.
- The effect of physical problems on the educational activities of nursing adult learners.
- The effect of social relationships on the educational activities of nursing adult learners.

- The impact of insufficient financial resources on the educational activities of pregnant and nursing adult learners.
- The role and involvement of college administration and its effect on the educational activities of pregnant and nursing adult learners.
- The effect of the identified challenges on the overall academic performance of pregnant and nursing adult learners.

Throughout the chapter, the participants' voices are heard. Besides, a thick description of the participants' experiences is given.

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions, limitations and recommendations

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study. Summaries of the literature review and the empirical study and a synthesis of the research findings are given. Conclusions based on the research findings are also provided. Limitations of the study are outlined and recommendations to identified stakeholders on how the educational environment of pregnant and nursing adult learners can be improved are made. Furthermore, suggestions for further research are given.

1.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an introduction and overview to the study with regard to its background, research questions and aims, research design and research site. The related literature, rationale, trustworthiness, ethical considerations and key theoretical concepts are explained. An outline of the structure of this study is also given.

It has been established in this chapter that pregnant and nursing adult learners face challenges that can adversely affect their studies and their mothering roles. It has also been established that though pregnant and nursing adult learners comprise a substantial number at Morgenster Teachers' College, not much has been done to alleviate their predicament. In view of the above, the need for further research is justified in order to gain better insight and appreciation of the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at the institution. In the next chapter literature related to the topic under investigation was reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the study with regard to its context, research aims and questions and the research design. The rationale of the study and an outline of the research structure were also given. In this chapter an overview of relevant literature that informed the study on the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners is given. In the literature search the researcher found very few sources on pregnant and nursing adult learners in Zimbabwe. However, a number of sources which were found were on pregnant and nursing learners outside tertiary institutions in other countries. Since such information was found relevant, it formed the basis of the literature review.

The purposes of a literature review are given in a number of sources. According to Babbie (2004:487), Fouche and Delport (2003:266-267), Mouton (2001:87) and Merriam and Simpson (2000:31-33), a literature review serves the following purposes among others:

- to inform the researcher on previous and current knowledge on the focus of the study
- to lay the basis for discussion of own research findings
- to ensure that the study is a valuable contribution to cumulative knowledge-building efforts.

In this study, the purpose of reviewing literature is to familiarise the researcher with current knowledge with regard the educational challenges faced by mothering (pregnant and nursing) adult learners. Hopefully, this would provide the researcher with points of reference for interpretation and conceptualisation of the research findings on these students with "...blended identities..." (Lynch 2008:597).

The following aspects comprise the categories of the reviewed literature:

- motherhood

- studentship
- how adults learn
- challenges faced by pregnant and nursing learners.

In each case, the impact on the education of the mothering student is explained.

2.2 MOTHERHOOD

Cultural norms prescribe different roles for mothers in all societies. Most societies expect mothers to be gentle, loving and caring so as to perform their varied caretaker roles in the family (Lynch 2008:585; Ghosh 2000:25-26). In Zimbabwe, motherhood is also associated with tolerance and endurance (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture 2000:19). Furthermore, mothers are expected to subordinate their needs and desires to those of their children (Lynch 2008:586; Bullen et al. 2000:448). Accordingly, the implication is that a mother should get fulfilment from her sensitivity to the needs of the family and her compassionate care for the same.

According to Hanna (2001:101) and Thorpe and Elliot (1998:108), motherhood defines a woman's adult identity, her role in the family and reinforces her feminine qualities. Magwaza (2003:7, 9) refers to mothering as a gendered practice and therefore a woman's prerogative. As such, motherhood is central to a woman's life (Roxburgh et al. 2001:57). Consequently, women are expected to derive great pleasure from looking after their children and caring for their families. However, Magwaza (2003:12) advances the idea that mothers should also be understood from an individual perspective as persons with their own needs and aspirations not particularly related to the culturally prescribed mothering roles. Similarly, Luttrell (2003:95) refutes the idea of the "myth of maternal omnipotence". According to her, mothers do not solely exist to gratify their children's needs. In fact, they may have wishes, needs and desires contrary to their children's needs.

Motherhood as an institution is fraught with challenges such as anxiety, stress, indecision, frustration and fear. Such challenges are compounded by educational challenges in instances where the mother is a student. Mothering students face many challenges such as social, physical, financial and administrative challenges which are likely to militate against their career successes. All these challenges have a psychological effect on the pregnant and nursing mother.

Although there are educational challenges common to student mothers in institutions of higher learning, there is need to clearly understand academic challenges peculiar to each category of student mothers: pregnant and nursing. It is also important that one understands the implications of being a student for the mothering learner. Hence, the essence of studentship is discussed in the next paragraphs.

2.3 STUDENTSHIP

Studentship in the context of this study entails studying at a tertiary institution in order to attain a degree or a diploma. This involves a transition from high school to college life. As such, students have to adjust to college life in order to appropriately fit into the new situation and experiences (Education Encyclopedia 2002:1). The values, attitudes, behavioural norms and even relationships in tertiary institutions are of necessity different from those in high school. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), cited in the Education Encyclopedia (2002:1), are of the opinion that these students need to be socialised in order to cope with the expectations of their new status.

Furthermore, college life makes new academic demands such as lengthier assignments, more frequent written work and higher standards. In spite of these new requirements, the student must exert herself so as to achieve the required levels in order to pass (Gosling 2003:163). Besides, students experience new freedoms such as to attend or not to attend lectures, form relationships and organise reading and sleeping schedules. Therefore, if not appropriately socialised students are likely to experience social and psychological shock.

As an adult the student brings to the learning situation a number of attributes such as experience, needs, meaning systems, self-perceptions, self-confidence, self-esteem and physiological conditions (Jarvis 1998: 103-104). It is therefore pertinent that the student should adjust so that the attributes she brings to the educative environment facilitate rather than hinder academic progress. Similarly, tertiary institutions should treat students as people who are destined to discover themselves through the realisation of their potentialities by offering appropriate support. It is therefore pertinent to understand how adults learn. This is thus the focus of the next section.

2.4 HOW ADULTS LEARN

According to Brookfield (1996:vii) and Tight (1996:24), the nature and form of adult learning is determined by the personalities of individuals involved, the education context and its setting and the prevailing political climate. Learning then, would involve an interaction of the personalities, philosophies and priorities of the individuals involved in the education encounter.

Though no generalised statements on how adults learn can be made, there are tenets that guide the conduct of the learning encounter (Gravett 2004:22, 39; Walklin 2002:16; Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall 2003:13; Reece & Walker 2003:3; Merriam & Sharan 2005:202). These include voluntary engagement, positive self-concept, collaborative learning and the nature of accompaniment. These are discussed in the following paragraphs because an understanding of these tenets helps one to have a clear picture of the student mothers' predicament.

● *Voluntary engagement*

In an effort to find effective ways that can enable them to cope with ever changing situations in their lives, adults voluntarily engage in educative encounters (Crous et al. 2000:2; Brookfield 1996:10; Reece & Walker 2003:7). Because their participation is voluntary, adult learners expect to be treated with respect and dignity and that their willingness to learn is fully utilised (Reece & Walker 2003:8). Consequently, they do not look forward to andragogic encounters in which they are intimidated, bullied, belittled or coerced into learning (Brookfield 1996:10; Crous et al. 2000:22; Walkin 2002:16). Adult learners can also withdraw from the learning encounter if their expectations are not met.

Furthermore, adult learners interact with others as individuals or in a group in a social context. It is the context which makes learning real. The physical, emotional and intellectual environment surrounding an experience gives it meaning (Caffarella 2002:110; Fry et al. 2003:23; Walkin 2002:1, 2). Therefore, adults' willingness to learn can be fully utilised in a conducive learning environment.

- ***Positive self-concept***

To actualise her potential, the adult learner's self-concept should be congruent to her potential (Crous et al. 2000:53). The learning environment should therefore enable the learners to be conscious of and accept their feelings and experiences. Hybels and Weaver II (2004:34) define self-concept as how one thinks and feels about oneself. These authors contend that one's self-concept is determined to a large extent by the cultural values and the community one comes from.

The community prescribes what it expects from an individual while culture determines attitudes and beliefs. According to Hybels and Weaver II (2004:34), the extent to which these cultural attitudes and beliefs are reflected by the expectations of her community determines one's self-concept. Crous et al. (2000:54) also contend that for one to have a positive self-concept one requires positive regard from others. The care and appreciation as well as respect and approval from others are essential in the development of a positive self-concept. A positive self-concept enhances an adult's chances to function as a self-directed learner (Bruggerman 2005:4). Consequently, one's chances to succeed in attaining a career are increased.

Furthermore, adults' learning is enhanced when they collaborate. The following paragraphs highlight the essence of collaborative learning.

- ***Collaborative learning***

As pointed out in the previous paragraph, adults learn best when they collaborate (Brookfield 1996:10; Reece & Walker 2003:7). Collaborative inquiry brings about active learning, which promotes the adult learners' thoughts and changes their attitudes (Horgan 2003:77). Through participation in shared activities, the mind experiences growth (Elias & Merriam 2005:54). Besides, collaborative learning also affords adults an opportunity to change their learning styles, increases their competency and aids the development of self-confidence and interpersonal communication (Griffiths 2003:93). Echoing the same sentiments, Gravett (2004:29) says learning flourishes when learners share knowledge so that it can be tested, examined, challenged and improved before it is internalised.

Similarly, Caffarella (2002:112) contends that group participation improves one's ability to express ideas clearly and to understand the learning content better. By so doing, learners learn from each other. More so, collaborative learning enhances cycles of reflection and action, thereby develop in learners new meanings and interest in the learning content (Bruggerman 2005:4). However, if conditions necessary for healthy

discussions are not established, discussions can degenerate into "...psychodynamic struggles and emotional battlefields" (Brookfield 1996:139). Therefore, it is the lecturer's responsibility to create learning environments in which trust and membership abounds (Reece & Walker 2003:8).

To benefit from the learning encounter the adult should be motivated. Without sufficient motivation learning ceases to be a goal worth pursuing. It is therefore important to understand the role of motivation in the adult learner's educational endeavours.

● **Motivation**

In adult education, motivation plays an important role (Crous et al. 2000:44; Reece & Walker 2003:78). According to Walklin (2002:1), motivation is the "... arousal, control and sustenance of behaviour necessary...to attain a goal." A motivated learner develops interest in and enjoys learning.

Provision of the means by which the learner's needs are met promotes motivation. In this regard, Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be considered. Maslow sees physiological needs as basic to human survival (Mwamwenda 1995:345). Such needs include food, water, sleep and rest. The other needs in their hierarchical order are psychological needs namely safety and security, love and belonging and self-esteem. The fulfillment of these deficient needs is largely dependent on the support and guidance of other people (Mwamwenda 1995:265). Reece and Walker (2003:79) have shown how this hierarchy of needs can be applied in a classroom situation. For the purpose of this study, safety and shelter, love and belonging and self esteem are used to demonstrate how motivation can be promoted through the fulfillment of needs. The satisfaction of higher or being needs such as self-actualisation is highly dependent on the student herself (Mwamwenda 1995:265).

❖ Safety and shelter (security)

This can be realised through maintaining confidentiality and privacy as the situation dictates.

Lecturers should not disclose information about students without their consent and should avoid threatening students or outbursts of anger. Because students are adult and human, they need to be treated fairly. When students feel safe and secure they tend to perform well in their educational activities.

❖ Love and belonging (feeling accepted)

Students tend to fare well when they are loved and accepted as fellow human beings. Lecturers should therefore show concern and care for their students. A cohesive classroom environment in which students interact well among themselves and between themselves and the lecturer should be created. Nurturing love and a sense of oneness or belonging enhances the adult's chances of success.

❖ Self esteem (pride)

Most people have the desire to be viewed and treated as valuable. This desire can be met when the lecturer treats students with dignity and respect by inter alia, praising them when they deserve. Lecturers' verbal or written comments on students' work should be constructive and encouraging even if the student fails to meet the expected standard. Lecturers should welcome students' ideas and encourage them to be independent individuals. In this way the students' self-confidence, self-respect and feelings of adequacy can be developed or enhanced. Lecturers should always make an effort to develop, maintain or enhance students' self-esteem.

Despite the diversity of students, these needs have to be sufficiently met for students to succeed (Gosling 2003:164). According to Newstead and Haskins (2003:69) and Fry et al. (2003:13), intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation is more desirable in adults. Without such an inner drive the adult learner may find the going tough, leading to disheartenment, anxiety and a dented self-concept.

● ***Nature of accompaniment***

As adults, students face multiple challenging situations which require them to make decisions and act appropriately (Crous et al. 2000:4). It is this multifaceted nature of the adult learner's responsibilities which necessitates the need for proper guidance. Guidance of learners who differ in class, gender, culture, physiology and personality is a challenging task which requires the facilitator to think of effective ways which can assist each individual learner to actualise her potential (Gravett 2004:23).

Given that learning is accomplished through concerted efforts of the learner under the guidance of a teacher, lecturers should possess characteristics which facilitate interpersonal relationships between them

and their students. Lecturers should therefore be friendly, approachable and fair in their dealings with and treatment of students (Crous et al. 2000:12, 18). A lecturer who is able to share and to understand a student's feelings and situation develops positive attitudes and perceptions in students. When this happens a favourable condition for students to learn is established. Walklin (2002: VI) says, a student-lecturer relationship which is more of a working partnership enhances active participation that is beneficial to learners.

Adult learners should be treated in a way that promotes self-esteem and self-confidence (Walklin 2002:16). Hybels and Weaver II (2004:43) have described self-esteem as the sum of one's interactions with others. In order to cope with a complex life in which study and career preparation are added to other social roles, the adult learner needs the support of a warm, sensitive, empathetic and sympathetic lecturer (Crous et al. 2000:12, 23). The lecturer should therefore know each learner as an individual so as to treat each according to her needs (Reece & Walker 2003:7; Crous et al. 2000:23; Caffarella 2002:109; Griffiths 2003:163). In essence, there is need for communication between lecturers and students. Both verbal and non-verbal communication is important. According to Reece and Walker (2003:290) the lecturer should be in a position to read the students' body language and should also be aware of his or her own body language. One's posture or facial expression can send signals that tell of "trouble". When the lecturer detects trouble his intervention should encourage the student to be actively involved in a way which solves the problem. By paying attention to student needs, lecturers become more of mentors than teachers bringing about transformational learning. In so doing, interior mental barriers are broken enabling students to reach greater heights or levels (Caffarella 2002:112).

Given that college work is more demanding and new freedoms and opportunities are availed to the student, full commitment and ingenuity are called for on the part of the learner to overcome educational challenges she faces in her learning endeavours. The college student is thus expected to balance academic challenges and social choices (Educational Encyclopedia 2002:2). Confronted with such a situation the student not only requires a lecturer who "...provides inputs and resources..." but one who, besides being firm and fair, is patient and helpful (Walklin 2002:233). The students need faculty emotional support to form a self-image which corresponds to academic expectations (Crous et al. 2000:4).

Van Rensburg and Lamberti (2004:76-81) give examples of situations in which lecturer assistance may be called for:

- ❖ students failing to make sense of what the lecturer is saying because of his “speed” and language of instruction
- ❖ students’ inability to sit alone reading a text for a long time
- ❖ students’ slow reading speed.

Faced with such problems, the student would need a sympathetic lecturer who not only discovers the student’s problems but also engages her in finding solutions to the problems. A lecturer who engages students in problem solving is not likely to be enraged, instead, students are given ample time to practice (Walklin 2002:18). Such a lecturer helps students to develop positive self-confidence; one of the essential ingredients for proper self-actualisation. Suffice it to say that student-lecturer relationships should be underlined by mutual communication (meaningful and beneficial dialogue) rather than communiqués.

2.5 CHALLENGES FACED BY PREGNANT AND NURSING LEARNERS

Pregnant and nursing learners experience challenges due to the competing and conflicting demands of their mothering roles and studentship (Merrill 1999:201; Lynch 2008:595). The challenges can be physical, social, financial and administrative. These challenges have a negative effect on academic progress and achievement (Sekgobela 2008:32-33; Netshikweta 1999:82-83). Some challenges are peculiar to pregnant mothers while others are confined to nursing mothers and a few are common to both. In this section educational challenges related to physical and social relationships of pregnant learners are presented first. This is followed by physical and social problems peculiar to nursing learners. Lastly issues of financial resources and the role and involvement of administration affecting both pregnant and nursing learners are discussed.

2.5.1 Pregnant learners: educational challenges related to physical problems

When a female learner becomes pregnant she bids farewell to youth and has to contend with realities and responsibilities of adulthood (Luttrell 2003:4). She also adds the status of mother to her academic role. Yet more often than not, the demands of motherhood and studentship are incompatible. The pregnant student

has to put effort in balancing the two roles. With regard the endeavour to combine college work and motherhood, Hoffman (2002:21) sees it as a heart-wrenching activity filled with guilt and exhaustion. In her struggle to serve two “masters”, the student may fail to satisfy both. Her physical and mental states might adversely affect her studies (Netshikweta 1999:31; Sekgobela 2008:33).

Pregnancy is a unique condition in that it is the only state which affords two people to live under one skin (Luttrell 2003:4). This two-in-one state affects the physical well-being of the mother. Some of the problems given by Dlamini (2002), cited by Sekgobela (2008: 32,115), include the following:

- ❖ oedema of the extremities
- ❖ nausea
- ❖ vomiting
- ❖ bleeding
- ❖ dizziness
- ❖ tiredness
- ❖ cephalopelvic disproportions
- ❖ pre-eclamptic toxemia

Irrespective of the degree of their complexity, these problems have a debilitating effect on the pregnant students. Sekgobela (2008:33) also cited a study carried out by Netshikweta and Ehlers (2002) which indicated that pregnant student nurses found it difficult to care for their patients. Similarly, the Canterbury Christ Church University (2010:1) views pregnant learners as at risk students who should not be exposed to “...significant physical activity...chemicals, paints and radiation.” Thus, pregnancy curtails students’ working capabilities thereby affecting their self-esteem (Sekgobela 2008:33 citing Netshikweta 1999).

Studying while pregnant is an uphill struggle. This is supported by Zwolak (2008:1) who points out that students felt they could not cope with the demands of pregnancy and study hence they requested for maternity leave. Sentiments expressed by pregnant girls in Luttrell’s (2003:95) study indicated that school life was a struggle. However, pregnant students experience their pregnancy differently. While some find it easy to study others find it almost impossible to study while pregnant (Pankhurst 2010:1). Since pregnancy can cause undue tiredness, and as noted by Sekgobela (2008:112), reduces the student’s concentration span, it is generally recommended that pregnant women should get adequate rest. Students who continue with their studies despite being pregnant risk poor progress and ultimate failure (Netshikweta 1999:29).

In her study, Sekgobela (2008:112) found that the pregnant nurses confirmed that the physical, social and academic challenges they faced made it difficult for them to study. Although pregnancy affirmed their reproductive freedom, the actual experience was a bitter pill to swallow. Netshikweta (1999:34) cites a study done in the USA by Dryfoos (1990), which indicated that pregnant students had varied feelings regarding their predicament. Some felt lonely, unhappy or frustrated while others were happy, proud and felt great. Reference is also made to a New York study (Netshikweta 1999:34) which confirmed that loneliness was a painful, undesirable and frightening experience which nagged pregnant students.

Although some pregnant students had positive attitudes towards their pregnancies, they acknowledged experiencing physical discomfort (Harries 1996 cited in Netshikweta 1999:35). In her study, Netshikweta (1999:83) noted that 89% of her respondents experienced physical discomfort. According to Luttrell (2003:117) during pregnancy the body undergoes changes and sends signals which the students must pay attention to. Some such signals are backache, morning sickness, muscle cramps, heartburn and hypertension (Sekgobela 2008:115).

Physical discomfort tends to negatively affect academic performance. Academic progress is held back as coping strategies and attention spans are reduced (Sekgobela 2008:33, 115). Netshikweta (1999:30), citing Kaseke (1996), is in agreement with the above sentiments when she says that working abilities of students are affected by pregnancy. One of the reasons why pregnant school girls in the USA were expelled from school in the early 20th century was that they were not able to function in an academic situation (Luttrell 2003:15). Besides, the physical demands placed upon the students can cause stress which also has a detrimental effect on their studies (Adams 2002:232). It is in the light of such challenges that Canterbury Christ Church University (2010:2) advises the pregnant students to communicate with their programme directors so that they can get the necessary assistance. In essence, the university's concern is to ensure that the health of the student is protected from any harm and that academic studies; coursework assignments and examinations, progress well.

Similarly, emotional dispositions impact negatively on pregnant students' academic progress. Netshikweta (1999:89) reported that 54.8% of her respondents felt frustrated and overwhelmed by their situation. The same sentiments are echoed by Roxburgh et al. (2001:56) who contend that the mismatch between what is

expected in parenthood and the actual reality of parenthood combined with studentship can cause stress as the new parent tries to adjust.

2.5.2 Pregnant learners: educational challenges related to social relationships

Society seems to view pregnant learners negatively. In her exposition on Higher Education for Africa's women, Okeke (2004:480) says achievements made by women have not been supported by social policies. The expulsion of pregnant pupils from school is proof that society holds a negative attitude towards this group of learners (MENA development report 2004:33; Luttrell 2003:4; Murape 2010:1; Sweetman 2000:14). Teachers' sentiments also indicate that for pregnant learners, education is a responsibility and not a right (Luttrell 2003:22). Differential attitudes towards pregnant learners projected by different members of society tend to affect their self-esteem (Sweetman 2000:14; Luttrell 2003:37; Netshikweta 1999:30; Kambanji 2010:D2). Even when provision is made for these learners to study separately from the non-pregnant, they become apprehensive. In the USA, the establishment of the Piedmont Programme for Pregnant Teens (PPPT) was seen by the pregnant girls as segregatory rather than an act of goodwill. The pregnant girls were aware that society viewed them as sexually irresponsible so it kept them away from the "good" learner (Luttrell 2003:22). By so doing, the bad girls would not spoil the good ones (Kambanji 2010:D2). However, some pregnant learners were hurt while others took it as an opportunity to rise above their present situation or circumstances (Luttrell 2003:111).

Society's view of pregnant learners is, more often than not, at odds with the learners' own view. According to Hybels and Weaver II (2004:34) such a situation is a result of people communicating with the person one represents in their own eyes and not the whole person. What society seems to ignore is that like other human beings, pregnant learners have their own needs, wishes and desires. Instead, it expects pregnant learners to abide by cultural beliefs which glorify and idealise self-sacrificing motherhood (Luttrell 2003:143). Society's refusal to treat such learners with dignity and the concomitant inability to assist them causes anxiety. Anxiety, according to Hybels and Weaver II (2004:105) can create psychological noise or disturbance of the mind which causes confusion. Psychological noise is a barrier to communication and consequently to academic achievement.

According to Luttrell (2003:9), pregnant pupils are not even accepted by their own peers especially by boys. In her study, Luttrell (2003:9-18) observed that pregnant girls were discriminated against in nearly every school function, including sitting at their own table during meal times. Brookfield (1996:12) indicated that mutual respect among learners is one of the conditions for successful learning. Disrespecting and embarrassing pregnant learners negatively affects their learning.

The realisation of these effects has led the Zimbabwean community to expect female learners to complete high school and tertiary education before starting a family (*The Saturday Herald*: 2010:4). Kambanji (2010: D2) is of the opinion that the psycho-social issues that mothering learners have to deal with make it undesirable for girls to fall pregnant while studying.

Like in the case of pregnant mothering learners, the following paragraphs will focus on the physical and social challenges faced by nursing learners. Such a discussion puts into perspective the factors that are likely to impact on the educational activities of this group of mothering learners.

2.5.3 Nursing learners: educational challenges related to physical problems

A number of studies indicate that women's expectations of parenthood are different from the real practice (Roxburgh et al. 2001:56; Luttrell 2003:95; Canterbury Christ Church University 2010:2). As a student mother the adult learner blends two identities, the roles of which conflict. To be a good student one needs to be fully committed to the academic demands. On the other hand, motherhood requires "...intense commitment of time, energy and devotion to one's children" (Lynch 2008:596). Both roles therefore require commitment and devotion. In order to succeed in both endeavours student mothers need to work extremely hard. According to Woollett and Nicolson (1998a:4), personal and psychological costs accompany the mothering role.

The post-natal period has been described by Woollett and Nicolson (1998b:95) as physically, spiritually and socially vulnerable for mothers and their babies. Thorpe and Elliot (1998:107) also indicate that the arrival of the new baby "... presents new emotional challenges which are potentially stressful and likely to impact on the mother's emotional well-being." With the birth of a child, therefore, new demands, sometimes unpredictable are made on the mother. These demands are not neutral, they have either negative or positive effects on the mother.

Combining childcare with academic pursuits can be stressful and impacts negatively on either role. After giving birth the mother needs to recover physically and this may take time (Tulman & Fawcett 1991 cited in Woollett & Nicolson 1998b:93). Activities such as feeding the new baby at intervals during the day and at night deprive the student mother sufficient time to rest. Consequently, tiredness from lack of sleep breeds anxiety and in turn women feel incompetent in their mothering role (Woollett & Nicolson 1998b:95). In order to cope with both roles the student mother needs a balanced personality (Hattingh 1990 cited in Crous et al. 2000:4). However, the student mother might not have the appropriate skills to handle the situation (Canterbury Christ Church University 2010:2; Zwolak 2008:1; Coiumiity College Weel 2007:2).

The myth of maternal omnipotence, that mothers solely exist for and have the potential to gratify the needs of their children, sets impossible social expectations of mothering for the student mothers (Luttrell 2003:95). The student mother who is fully aware that she has to concentrate on her studies in and outside classes finds herself downplaying the student role outside classes (Reece & Walker 2003:7). She has of necessity to do so in order to attend to the ever present needs of the new baby (Woollett & Nicolson 1998a:3).

The nursing student is expected, among other things, to find out why the baby is crying when it does and to soothe it. In her efforts to cater for the needs of her new baby during the day and at night the student mother is deprived of sufficient rest. The disturbance made on her sleeping routines tires and exhausts her body (Barryman & Windridge 1998:75; Lynch 2008:597). This view is confirmed by Thorpe and Elliot (1998:114) who say that the mother's physical and emotional health is affected by the baby's sleeping and crying behaviour.

Hays (1996), cited in Lynch (2008:585), makes reference to intensive mothering which requires a woman to devote most of her time, energy and money in raising children. This can result in maternal burnout: an overload of stress that manifests itself in sickness (Crockett & Woodfield: undated article p4). Fulfilling the role expectations of motherhood and the academic demands, though possible, is a difficult task (Ghosh 2000:25). These competing demands, viewed in the light of the fact that most lecturers are not grounded in adult learning theory (Caffarella 2002:109; Hearing Testimony 2010:3; Gravett 2004:22; Fry et al. 2003:9) pose adjustment problems to the nursing student. Hence, the debilitating effect of the constant and

continuous demands made upon the student mother who has to accommodate the baby into study routines cannot be over emphasized.

Women's competency and confidence as loving caregivers decreases as a result of anxiety caused by, among other factors, tiredness (Woollett & Nicolson 1998b:96). These feelings, coupled with a sense of guilt arising from failure to measure up to culturally prescribed norms of a good mother; subordinating all other interests to the child's (Lynch 2008:586), are likely to negatively affect academic progress. According to Bullen et al. (2000:448), parenting is not compatible with education. Involvement in learning activities tends to minimise the student's chances of good mothering while mothering compromises her chances of a good student. The addition of the mothering role onto the student's identity makes it hard for women to concentrate on their studies and may retard their effort for personal development (Ryan 1997:2).

2.5.4 Nursing learners: educational challenges related to social relationships

For the nursing student to adapt to her new pattern of life, she needs support and guidance (Crous et al. 2000:3). In her study of graduate student mothers in north-eastern USA, Lynch (2008:601) reports that students who get support from their peers find it easy to combine study with mothering. Peer support dispels any fear of loneliness. The same study reports that when support is not forthcoming or denied, students feel lonely and dejected. One such student Mia said:

“ ... I need to get home to my daughter...

Its lonely, but I am here to work.”

While Lucy whose request for assistance was denied by her peers commented:

“...the whole thing has affected me ...

I felt so alone and I still do” (Lynch 2008:601).

Women who choose to engage in other activities such as employment and study do not get society's approval in most cultures. Hoffman (2002:21) makes reference to one such mother who made it clear that they got minimal support and had to struggle against all odds to succeed as mothers and as students. Magwaza (2003:9) indicated that such women were made to feel guilty. Woollett and Nicolson (1998a:4)

echo the same sentiment when they say society expects mothers who fail to fulfil ideal mothering duties to feel guilty. Thus, the nursing mother's effort to achieve her goal and actualise her potential is made difficult.

The fear of being labeled as incompetent or incapable results in some students failing to seek support from faculty (Lynch 2008:602). When students fail to talk about important issues salient to their academic well-being (Hybels & Weaver II 2004:229; Crous et al. 2000:15), learning becomes a struggle, and chances of academic excellence or achievement are stunted (Reece & Walker 2003:7). The primary task of education is to help the learners to actualise their potential (Merriam & Sharan 2005:54). To realise their educational goal, student mothers need a supportive environment so that they do not experience depression (Canterbury Christ Church University 2010:2-4). Depressed students cannot exert themselves to their studies. In support of this sentiment, Walklin (2002:2) indicates that for a meaningful interpretation of the learning situation the student should be mentally and emotionally stable.

Having discussed physical and social challenges peculiar to pregnant students on one hand and nursing students on the other, common challenges to both groups are now looked into. These include financial and administrative challenges.

2.5.5 Pregnant and nursing learners: educational challenges related to insufficient financial resources

Financial support is essential in the pursuance of educational endeavours (Ryan 1997:1). When financial support is not forthcoming or inadequate, it has a negative effect on student mothers. Lynch (2008:589-590) has made reference to mothering students who had to seek part-time employment in order to finance their studies, healthcare and childcare needs. Time taken to do part-time work was obviously time taken away from one's study. Though switching on to part-time status afforded student mothers time with their babies and to adjust to their new identities as mothers, the students experienced slow progress in their studies (Lynch 2008:590).

Women's economic circumstances, according to Sweetman (2000:13), pose barriers to gender equity in education. Bullen et al. (2000:444) also cite a British Teenage Pregnancy report which identified parenting stress and "... the cost and availability of childcare..." as some of the barriers prohibiting student mothers

from pursuing their educational endeavours. In view of such economic limitations, the (British) Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) planned to task Social Services and local education authorities (LEAs) with the responsibility for providing financial support to student mothers whose families cannot sponsor them (Bullen et al. 2000:444 citing SEU: 1999a).

2.5.6 Pregnant and nursing learners: educational challenges related to the role and involvement of administration

The realisation of the incompatibility of parenting and study has in some instances forced governments, schools or colleges to formulate policies or regulations that would cater for the welfare of mothering students. Though a gesture of goodwill, the policies in most cases, lack clear guidance on how student mothers should be treated, they instead offer general guidelines. In America, Title IX regulations (Education Amendment of 1972) sanctioned the inclusion of all female learners, including school-aged mothers, to equal education opportunities (Luttrell 2003:10). However, as late as the 21st century, New York City schools experienced 70% teenage-mother drop-out partly due to stigmatisation and inadequate support (Hearing Testimony 2010:3) within and outside their schools.

Even the P-schools (schools for pregnant girls) established for pregnant and nursing learners in New York City between 1967 and 1970 failed in their endeavours, one of which was attainment of vocational education (Hearing Testimony 2010:3). According to Luttrell (2003:10), one such school, the PPPT was dissolved in 1997. Lack of viability and commitment by the authorities to ensure that policies are implemented led to the closure of such schools. According to Kambanji (2010: D2), policy targets can achieve the opposite if not well defined. Hence, policies can act as barriers to self-actualisation for the student mothers.

In Australia, the Women's Employment, Education and Training project (WEETAG) found out that social stigmatisation of young women can result in negative self-limiting self images which tend to limit their future options (Bullen et al. 2000:253). This realisation, according to Bullen et al. (2008:444), has led the British Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 1999a) to recommend that the DfEE consider the particular needs of teenage parents in the study programme and attendance requirements. Similarly, policy makers should consult pregnant and nursing students so that policy supports and upholds the development of positive self images.

Contrary to the Australian and British situations, in Zimbabwe the principal of a teachers' college has been vested with authority to permanently or temporarily expel, exclude or remove a student from the college premises if, in his personal opinion, the student's physical health makes it undesirable for her to continue with her studies (*Statutory Instrument 81 of 1999:459*). Over the years such a policy has seen college principals and responsible authorities expelling pregnant students. Such students had to rejoin college after weaning their babies. However, the advent of a new policy that allows pregnant learners to go on maternity leave for three months ushers in an era of hope for pregnant and nursing adult learners in Zimbabwe (Murape 2010:1).

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter literature which has a bearing on the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners was reviewed. The institution of motherhood has been focused on and related challenges have been identified. Similarly, studentship has been looked at in order to understand its expectations. Moreover, insights into how adults learn were obtained. The review also identified physical problems, social relationships, inadequate financial resources and administrative problems as factors that bring about educational challenges to the mothering students.

The focus of this research is on educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College. In order to assist this group of learners to succeed in their educational pursuits, it is important to understand their situation from their own perspective. Hopefully, this will help create not only a gender-sensitive but also a student-mother-friendly learning environment. In the next chapter; the research design and methodology of the empirical research are presented.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a literature study which yielded a number of themes that are addressed in the empirical study was done. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design and methodology used in the study. It entails giving details on procedures that have been systematically used to answer the research questions. A detailed explanation of techniques and tools used to carry out the research is given. These include sampling, data collection and analysis procedures and ethical considerations. The semi-structured interview, observation and document analysis were used for collecting empirical data.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The educational challenges of pregnant and nursing adult learners in tertiary education in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have received very little attention. In Zimbabwe particularly, literature searches have availed no such issues. However, with regard to other countries a significant body of knowledge exists (Hoffman 2002:21; Luzzo 2002:164) that indicate that combining study and motherhood is not an easy task. Since literature searches in Zimbabwe did not show any previous study of this nature, research into the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners could make educators in this country aware of the educational challenges of this group of learners.

Given that in the contemporary world women, unlike in the past, engage in employment and study, it makes one curious to want to find out how these women adjust to the dual roles. It being a practice that was culturally unheard of in Zimbabwe, it is pertinent to find out the hurdles that these women have to overcome in order to succeed in their educational endeavours. Therefore, through this study the researcher hopes not only to identify academic challenges faced and strategies used but also to make recommendations that would assist pregnant and nursing students to realise their career goals.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design has been defined by Marshall and Rossman (2006:56) as "... a plan for undertaking a systematic exploration of the phenomenon of interest." All the decisions made by the researcher in planning the study constitute the design of the research. The research design is actually the plan or blue print that guides the researcher in conducting a research (Yin 2003:19-20; Babbie 2004:12; Punch 1998:149; Fouche & Delport 2002:266; Fouche 2002:271).

In coming up with a design, one needs to take into account research ethics such as considering whether the research can be carried out without causing harm to participants or major disruptions to the setting (Marshall & Rossman 2006:56). Furthermore, the design enables the researcher to get adequate information which connects empirical evidence to the initial research questions (Yin 2003:20-21; Punch 2009:112). A research design therefore concerns itself with decisions made by the researcher regarding, among other things, the research topic, the sample, the purpose, the methods and instruments for data collection (Babbie 2004:112; Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh 1996b:116; De Vos 2002:44). These decisions enable the researcher to guard against and to rule out alternative interpretations of results (Punch 2009:112).

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative-exploratory design. This design enabled the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College and to recommend to stakeholders measures to alleviate the challenges. Results from the study would influence stakeholders to put in place appropriate measures that would enable such adult learners to make the best of their educational encounters.

3.3.1 The qualitative design

The qualitative design has been described by Fouche and Delport (2002:79) as one "... that elicits participants accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions." Merriam and Simpson (2000:97-98) are of the view that qualitative methods enable the researcher to uncover the lived experiences of individuals through enabling them to interpret and attribute meaning to their experiences and in the process construct their worlds. Qualitative research is concerned with the meaning-making process. Hence, its goal is to get a

holistic picture and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Ary et al. 1996b:22; Fouche & Delpont 2002:79).

According to Fouche and Delpont (2002:80), the qualitative methodology is premised on "... the assumption that valid understanding can be gained through accumulated knowledge acquired at first hand by a single researcher." Data obtained from qualitative research consists of verbal descriptions of behaviour or social interactions in written or verbal utterances of the participants (Fouche & Delpont 2002:79; Ary et al. 1996b:482).

Merriam and Simpson (2000:27) contend that studies whose goal is to discover theory rather than verify it belong to the qualitative design. In qualitative studies, the phenomenon yields data which can be used in developing theory. Be that as it may, Greeff (2002:307) gives three fundamental strengths of qualitative methods namely exploration and discovery, content and depth and interpretation. These are the subject of the following paragraphs.

- ***Exploration and discovery***

The qualitative design allows the researcher to discover/find answers to research questions. It not only allows researchers to investigate the full nature and characteristics of a phenomenon but also familiarisation with the data. The phenomenon being studied is thus understood from an informed point of view and new insights into the phenomenon can be developed (Babbie 2004:87-89).

- ***Content and depth***

Another advantage of the qualitative design is the opportunity it avails to participants to tell their stories, that is expressing own thoughts and ideas about particular issues (Greeff 2002:301). Besides, when the researcher feels that information given by a participant is inadequate, the perceived gaps can be filled in through probing. It is thus the content and its depth which oftentimes lend them to validity.

- ***Interpretation***

De Vos (2002:344) describes interpretation as involving "...making sense of the [collected] data..."in relation to the research questions. The researcher can use hunches, insights and

intuition to make sense of data. It is through the use of the qualitative design that the researcher can "...step back and form larger opinions of what is going on in the situations or sites" (De Vos 2002:344).

There are various types of qualitative research, one of which is the case study design which is described in the next paragraph. The case study design enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the educational challenges of pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College.

3.3.2 *The case study*

The goal of a case study is to give an intensive, holistic description and interpretation of significant characteristics of a phenomenon or social unit (Merriam & Simpson 2000:108). As such, the case study is a useful methodology for exploring an area or field of practice not well researched (Merriam & Simpson 2000:112). According to Yin (2003:1), the case study is appropriate when how and why questions are posed, the investigator has little control over events and the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real life context. In a case study, therefore, the researcher is engaged in a systematic exploration of the phenomenon, discovering what it is so as to give a fair presentation of the data (Merriam & Simpson 2000:108; Yin 2003:2). Moreover, the researcher is immersed in the setting so much that both her and the participants' world view determine the outcome of the investigation (Marshall & Rossman 2006:55).

In this case study, physical, social, administrative and financial aspects which impact on the academic performance of pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College are explored in order to capture the salient aspects on how this group of students experience their education and training. Using hunches, insights and intuition from the whole research process, the researcher makes sense of the empirical data, interprets and describes it as clearly and as detailed as possible.

3.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

For this study, pregnant and nursing students were selected from the population of similar students who were in the third phase of the teacher education programme at Morgenster Teachers' College. Babbie (2004:183) defines a sample as "... a small subset of a larger population whose selection is based on the

knowledge of the elements of a population and the research purpose.” The selection of the subset is done strategically and systematically so that the units or persons that meet a specific criterion are identified and selected (Merriam & Simpson 2000:57; Sapsford & Jupp 2006:26).

In this study, purposively selected student teachers (adult learners) who were either pregnant or had babies they nursed during their study comprised the sample. Though sampling in a case study is straight forward, sampling within the case was done “... because not every case can be studied” (Punch 1998:193). To be included in the study the participants had to be:

- student teachers in the last phase of training at Morgenster Teachers’ College
- either pregnant or nursing mothers.

The researcher identified students who were visibly pregnant. For those students whose pregnancy was not visible, the researcher asked the visibly pregnant students to identify them (Strydom & Delport 2002:336). For the nursing mothers, the researcher started with those she knew. Participant referrals were then used to know the other nursing mothers. Snowball sampling was therefore used in the selection of participants. Six participants were chosen: three pregnant and three nursing. From the six participants, the researcher hoped to get an in-depth understanding of the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners. Although the size of the sample increases the utility of the information obtained, it is generally agreed that small samples are ideal in studies which require rich and detailed information about a phenomenon (Strydom & Venter 2002:199; Merriam & Simpson 2000:111).

The selected participants were contacted and informed of the objectives of the study as well as their role in it. They were also informed of their ethical rights as participants. Only the willing participants were involved in the study.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through varied research instruments. The instruments included the semi-structured interview schedule and document analysis. The researcher also observed participants in and outside lectures. Through the use of the interview the researcher was able to “... understand the world from the participants’ point of view” (Greeff 2002:292). Thus, in the guided conversation, the researcher was

afforded an opportunity to hear the participants' stories thereby capturing the deep meanings of their lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman 2006:53).

The researcher interviewed six willing students in September and October 2010. Data was collected by means of the semi-structured interview. Two interview schedules were used: one for pregnant students (Appendix D) and the other for nursing students (Appendix E). In line with research ethics, the researcher informed each participant of the purpose and procedures of the study and asked for their participation in the study. Before each participant signed the consent form (Appendix C), the researcher explained the contents of the form. The interviews were conducted in the researcher's office or a venue of the participants' choice.

Since the participants and the researcher were part of Morgenster community, the interviews were face-to-face. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed enabling the researcher to capture every detail. Examples of the transcribed interviews are attached as follows: Appendix G for the pregnant students and Appendix H for the nursing students.

- ***The semi-structured interview***

According to Greeff (2002:302), the semi-structured interview is used to "... gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about or perceptions... of a particular topic." To this end the researcher was guided by the questions on the schedule. However, the interviewer was not bound to follow the order of the questions or the wording (Babbie 2004:300). Yin (2003:89), Babbie (2004:300) and Merriam and Simpson (2000:152) are in agreement that the semi-structured interview is flexible in terms of how questions are asked. Because of the flexibility of the instrument, the researcher is expected to respect the way the participant frames and structures her responses to enable her perspective to unfold as she views it (Marshall & Rossman 2006:101).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using interview schedules: one for pregnant and the other for nursing students. Participants were shown the schedules so that they could choose the questions they wanted to begin with. The researcher, in some cases, decided to begin with questions that helped participants to uncover their perspectives (Marshall & Rossman 2006:101). When participants' responses yielded "leads" during the interaction the researcher pursued them in

order to get more data and clarity (Merriam & Simpson 2000:52; Greeff 2002:302). Since the questions were open-ended, the participants were afforded greater opportunities to tell their stories (Greeff 2002:302; Babbie 2004:300). As facilitator the researcher made an effort to ensure that participants were comfortable. There was a need to reaffirm the value and usefulness of the participants during the interaction. Data obtained from the face-to-face interviews was complemented by data obtained through non-participant observation.

- ***Non-participant observation***

Strydom (2002:280) has described observation as "... a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday set up in a particular community or situation." As such, it enables the researcher to get an in-depth insight into the real experiences of the participants. The data is obtained through listening, seeing or inquiring and writing notes. The intention being to explain a phenomenon as it occurs naturally. Such data provides useful additional evidence on the research topic and is also used to inform and guide the interviews (Punch 2009:156).

The researcher observed pregnant and nursing mothers during lecture time and outside lectures. By observing them while they were not aware that they were being observed, the researcher obtained a true picture of reality. At the end of the day or at the first available opportunity the observational notes were reviewed and a well formulated report was produced. Data was also obtained through document analysis.

- ***Document analysis***

Document analysis entails studying the contents of recorded human communications (Babbie 2004:314). For this study, the researcher designed log sheets (Appendix F) on which nursing mothers indicated the times they woke up at night to attend to their babies' needs. This allowed participants to furnish the researcher with information on another aspect of their experiences as student mothers. Furthermore, the final mark profile of their academic performance was analysed (Tables 1&2). Strydom and Delport (2002:323) are of the opinion that information from document analysis complements objectivity with subjectivity in the research process. The triangulation of data collection methods added validity to the study.

Having elaborated on data collection methods, the following paragraphs focus on criteria on which the truth value of the study can be established. Such criteria include reliability and validity.

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In any systematic enquiry into the human condition it is important to establish the truth value of the study. The study must be judged against certain criteria so as to ensure that the findings are a true reflection of the participants or reality (De Vos 2002:351). Through criteria such as validity and reliability, the accurateness and completeness of a study can be ascertained.

- ***Reliability***

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000:102), reliability refers to "...the extent to which one's findings will be found... again if the inquiry is replicated." After the completion of a study, if another investigator carries out the same study using the same procedures, the same findings and conclusions should be obtained. With regard qualitative studies, Babbie (2004:307) sees reliability as "... a matter of dependability." To cater for the dependability of their studies qualitative researchers should, therefore, document the procedures they use in detail. Moreover, they should "... conduct research as if someone was always looking over [their] shoulder" (Yin 2003:37). Reliability or dependability, as a test for judging the quality of a research design, aims to minimise errors and biases in a study.

Given that human behavior is not static and the choice of research instruments is very personal, it is not feasible to get the same results in a replicated study. However, the use of multiple methods of data collection (triangulation) increases the reliability of the collected information and provides insights into the study (De Vos 2002:341,365).

- ***Validity***

Validity, according to Merriam and Simpson (2000:101), is the "... need to be assured that the findings of the investigation are to be believed and trusted." This implies that concern should be on ensuring that the instruments measure what they are supposed to measure. In essence, the

question of validity is a concern for accuracy and truthfulness of the research findings. As a criterion for quality assurance, validity has two aspects. These are internal and external validity.

Internal validity is concerned with congruency between one's findings and reality (Merriam & Simpson 2000:101). De Vos (2000:351) regards internal validity as the soundness or credibility of a study. Although the researcher is a lecturer at Morgenster Teachers' College, she upholds all the ethical measures that guarantee trustworthiness. These are discussed in section 3.8 of this chapter. In this way the validity of the study is enhanced. In this study, the data from the setting is embedded in the complexities of the variables and interactions that are thickly described. The focus of the study is on the educational challenges of pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College. Therefore, effort was made to ensure that the study is valid within the context of the focus of the study.

External validity refers to the transferability of findings to another context (De Vos 2002:352; Merriam & Simpson 2000:102). Though external validity is identified as one of the weaknesses of qualitative studies (De Vos 2002:352), thick descriptions provide the readers with sufficient information to be able to determine whether the findings match their own situation. Merriam and Simpson (2000:103) contend that in studies such as this one, it is the people concerned who should determine whether the findings are applicable in their situation.

3.7 PRETESTING THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A pilot study was conducted with three students from the pregnant and the nursing adult learners. These students did not participate in the actual study. Pretesting the research instrument enabled the researcher to fine-tune the questions in the interview schedule (Strydom & Delport 2002:337). It also prepared the researcher in conducting the interviews. According to Yin (2003:73), piloting helps "... refine data collecting plans with respect to both content of data and the procedures to be followed."

In this study, pretesting the research instrument helped the researcher to reformulate some of the interview questions ensuring that they were in line with the initial research questions. As a result of piloting, the researcher was able to include questions that helped to put the participant at ease. It also helped in

rephrasing questions so that no assumptions were made regarding the experiences of student mothers. Furthermore, it gave the researcher practice in interviewing. Through piloting, the researcher was therefore confident that the interview measured what it was supposed to measure.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Babbie (2004:63) has defined ethical issues as "... the general agreements shared by researchers about what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific inquiry." These include seeking permission, voluntary participation, no harm to participants, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (Babbie 2004:63-64; Marshall & Rossman 2006:57,90; Strydom 2002:64,67; Punch 2009:50). Sekgobela (2008:47) contends that ethical guidelines direct researchers so that their studies are of a high standard. Consequently, I upheld all the ethical aspects stated above as shown in the following paragraphs.

- ***Permission***

Since the study was carried out in the college premises, the researcher asked for permission from the college administration. A letter to this effect was written and delivered in person. This in turn enabled the administration to know the goal of the study (Strydom 2002:283). The administration acknowledged its approval by stamping the letter with the college stamp (Appendix B).

- ***Voluntary participation and informed consent***

Participants need to be furnished with accurate and complete information on the goal(s) and procedures of the investigation so that they fully understand and in turn decide whether to participate or not (Strydom 2002:65; Trochim 2006:1; Punch 2009:50). This makes informed consent a necessary prerequisite to any research in which human beings are involved as participants. In this study, the researcher clearly spelt out the purpose, the nature of the study and its significance to the participants. The researcher expected the participants to make rational decisions on whether to participate or not. No participant was coerced into participation. From the time-tabled free periods on the students' time table, each willing participant indicated the most appropriate day and time for the interview.

- ***No harm to participants***

In Babbie's opinion (2004:64), "... the ethical norms of voluntary participation and no harm to participants have become formalised in the concept of informed consent. Accordingly, participants base their voluntary participation in research studies on the full understanding of the possible risks involved. Harm can either be physical or emotional (Strydom 2002:64; Trochim 2006:2). Throughout this study, the researcher made an effort to ensure that participants were not harmed physically and or emotionally. According to Babbie (2004:64), the researcher should guard against the subtlest dangers.

- ***Anonymity***

Research participants' well being and interests need to be protected. Participants' identities in the study should be masked as far as possible (Trochim 2006:2). The people who read the research and the researcher should not be able to "... identify a given response with a given respondent" (Babbie 2004:65). The names of participants are not revealed anywhere in this study instead, code names are used. The recorded responses and the written report remain silent on the true identities of the participants. In this study, the three pregnant participants are identified as Y1, Y2 and Y3 while nursing participants are identified as X1, X2 and X3.

- ***Confidentiality***

According to Strydom (2002:67), confidentiality "... indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner." This definition implies that the researcher must jealously guard all the information disclosed by the participant so that only the researcher has access to it. To this end, the researcher was the sole custodian of documents used and information collected in this study. The researcher's colleagues did not have access to the raw data which was treated as "privileged information" (Strydom 2002:68). The tape recorder was used during the interviews and permission was sought from the participants. After such information had been transcribed the tape recordings were deleted.

3.9 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

After data had been collected it was presented, analysed and interpreted. It was through these procedures that the meaning of the empirical study was established.

- ***Data presentation***

Collected data can be presented in different forms: narrative, tables or pictures (Merriam & Simpson 2000:339). Yin (2003:109) says that before interpretation takes place, data should be displayed and presented. In this study, the researcher presented data in narrative form before any interpretation was done. Through the presentation of "... solid descriptive data, the researcher leads the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon being researched" (De Vos 2002:339). Two transcribed interviews from audio-tapes with the richest data are included (Appendices G & H).

- ***Data analysis***

According to Yin (2003:109), data analysis "... consists of examining, categorising, tabulating... qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of the study." For this to happen, he argues, one needs to have an analytic strategy in which priorities of what and why to analyse are defined. He proposes three strategies, namely, reliance on theoretical propositions, setting up a framework based on rival explanations and the development of case descriptions.

De Vos (2002:339) regards data analysis as the process that brings order, structure and meaning to the collected data. However, it has been noted that data analysis is done even during data collection. There is interaction between data collection and data analysis in a qualitative study. By collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, the researcher is given an opportunity to revise data collection procedures and strategies in order to capture rich data.

Furthermore, it is important that the researcher should be systematic in the analysis of data and should use methods which can be seen and described (Punch 2009:171). Analysis of the data was done through coding and memoing (Punch 2009:174-179; De Vos 2002: 343, 346). As one reads through the transcribed data, there is need to put tags or labels (coding) against pieces of data. In

this way, the researcher is able to attach meaning to the pieces of data. During the coding process one gets ideas or insights from the data. These ideas or insights are written against the data. This is called memoing. Through coding and memoing, data in this study was reduced into manageable forms and patterns or themes were discovered from the data. Through this process, the researcher came up with statements about relationships within and among categories of data (De Vos 2002:339; Marshall & Rossman 2006:154). Besides being systematic and disciplined, data analysis was transparent. To this end, analysed data was availed to the participants. The data was also fully described so as to enable readers to see how conclusions were arrived at.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented and discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. The qualitative research design in the form of a case study has been adopted. Through the selected design, methodologies that warrant collection of rich, first-hand information such as the semi-structured interview, non-participant observation and document analysis were employed. Thick descriptions of participants' narratives have been identified as appropriate in presenting empirical data. Coding and memoing were the chosen methods for data analysis. These were sufficiently explained and discussed. More so, ethical issues with regard seeking permission to carry out research, voluntary participation and informed consent, no harm to participants, anonymity and confidentiality were discussed. These ethical issues which benefit research with human beings were exercised in the next chapter. Chapter 4 focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of empirical data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on presentation, analysis and discussion of the empirical data. The data presented were obtained using research methods discussed in the previous chapter. These included interviews, observations and document analysis. The researcher undertook an exploratory-descriptive study with the intention of identifying educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College.

Interview questions (Appendices D & E) focused on determining the actual problems experienced by pregnant and nursing adult learners, their coping strategies and how the situation could be improved. Data from interviews was transcribed and filed (Appendices G & H). The transcribed data was read several times enabling the researcher to attach meanings to pieces of data through coding. At the same time, the insights the researcher got from the reading process were written as memos in the margins of the transcribed data. Themes or patterns that emerged from the data were thus identified. The themes from the transcribed data, tabulated examination scores (Tables 1 & 2 section 4.8) and the log sheets (Appendix F) were interpreted and discussed in the context of this research.

The literature reviewed in chapter 2 highlighted possible challenges that pregnant and nursing adult learners are likely to face in their teacher training course. To this end, the analysis of collected data revealed seven themes, namely:

- The effect of physical problems on the educational activities of pregnant adult learners
- The effect of social relationships on the educational activities of pregnant adult learners
- The effect of physical problems on the educational activities of nursing adult learners
- The effect of social relationships on the educational activities of nursing adult learners

- The impact of insufficient financial resources on the educational activities of pregnant and nursing adult learners
- The role and involvement of college administration and its effect on the educational activities of pregnant and nursing adult learners
- The effect of the identified challenges on the overall academic performance of pregnant and nursing adult learners

The seventh theme was derived from the first six themes.

The meanings constructed by the participants from their lived experiences were rich in information which addressed the research question: What can be done to improve the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College?

The discussion deals separately with pregnant and nursing adult learners with regard the first two themes and combines the two groups of students when it comes to finance, college administration and the impact on the overall academic performance. This was necessary because pregnant and nursing student mothers face peculiar educational challenges related to physical problems and social relationships. However, educational challenges related to insufficient financial resources and the role and involvement of college administration are common to both.

4.2 THE EFFECT OF PHYSICAL PROBLEMS ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF PREGNANT ADULT LEARNERS

In this section, physical problems are seen as obstacles preventing adult learners from exerting themselves fully on their educational tasks. All the three participants reported that their pregnancy brought with it some physical conditions which tended to impact negatively on their studies. Participant Y2 complained of swelling legs and dizziness while participant Y3 complained of vomiting and was generally not feeling well. Participant Y1, who has failed to submit three assignments on time, said, "... I could not hand them in because I was ill. I was ill and this disturbed me a lot." The participants, without exception, indicated that they often submitted their work late because of physical problems.

There was general consensus that the production of an assignment cost the participants a lot of effort as well as sacrifice. In this regard, participant Y2 said, "I ignore the pain ... the illness and do work. Its difficult

but there is no choice.” Participant Y1 acknowledged that studying while pregnant was an uphill struggle. By ignoring the physical body’s natural requirements such as rest, students struggled to achieve academic success. As a result, they failed to realize their full potential. Thus, Y1 said, “I managed... to prepare for the examination, though under excessive pressure. It was painful... my examination preparation was not like that of others...”

She nearly failed to write the qualifying Professional Studies examinations in July were it not for the encouragement she got from one of the lecturers. The lecturer encouraged her to be strong so that she would manage. She said, “... she advised me to persevere... so I tried and managed to write all the papers.”

None of the participants looked physically fit. It seemed their illnesses manifested in different physical conditions. For participant Y1 it was pneumonia which was an on and off condition. Although participant Y2 could not tell what it exactly was, she was visibly weak and her movement indicated lack of strength in her body. Her poor physical condition caused her to miss a number of lectures. She said, “Yesterday ... I could not come in the afternoon.” It also appeared, from observation, that she missed a good number of afternoon lessons. It was therefore not surprising that this participant (Y2) collapsed while writing the qualifying examination for Theory of Education. When she recovered she was made to sit at the entrance of the examination room where she could get sufficient fresh air. She was also given extra time.

All the pregnant participants reported that they easily got tired and this negatively affected their study schedules. Naturally, a tired body requires rest, the participants succumbed. By so doing, they postponed some of their work or assignments to a later day or some other time. Procrastination stole their study time, leaving them perpetually pressed for time. On this point, participant Y3 said, “...I easily get tired and this affects my participation in lectures, even studying ... For most of the time I feel like sleeping.” All the participants felt that movement from the hostels or their lodging places to the teaching centre and from one lecture room to the other tires them. This left very little energy for active participation and study. Participant Y2 said, “... sometimes I feel tired but I sit till the end of a lecture... Movement... is painful...” This statement implies that though physically present, the student’s mind might not be meaningfully engaged. Therefore, lecture attendance is done to fulfil a requirement but there is little or no academic benefit.

Generally, the pregnant participants were in agreement that their physical un-wellness affected their academic performance. Participant Y3, who wrote the Professional Studies examination when her vomiting was excessive, said, "If I wasn't pregnant, I was going to get better passes." She however managed to pass all the Professional Studies subjects except one; music.

Responding to a question about what they would say to prospective students who would want to study while pregnant, all the participants indicated that they would discourage them. Y1 said, "I would tell them to study first and get married after completion of their studies... because it is hard." Participant Y2 remarked, "I would say don't... pregnancy and study are not compatible." And Y3 commented, "... I would advice them to just wait. It is difficult because what the body desires and what you are expected to do are completely different..." Such remarks are evidence of the difficult experiences the participants have gone through.

4.3 THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF PREGNANT ADULT LEARNERS

The narratives of all the pregnant participants bear testimony to the value of a supportive educational environment. Without support from other participants in the academic arena, the pregnant students would have found it impossible to proceed. A conducive academic environment requires empathy from both the lecturing staff and fellow students. Pregnant students tend to benefit and thrive in the academic sphere when other students and lecturers understand their situation, feel for them and offer appropriate and timely assistance. Participant Y1 passed the Professional Studies examinations because of the assistance offered by her classmates. The examinations were written when she was not well and could not study on her own. She said, "I was surprised that I passed because I thought I would not make it. I think discussions helped me a lot."

Participant Y3, unlike the other pregnant participants, did not like some of her old friends so even when these friends wanted to help her she would deny them a chance. However, she reported that assistance from other students enabled her to pull through. In this regard, she said, "A few friends were helping with tests. When I was not feeling well they would come to the hostel and discuss and I would be lying in bed but listening." Assistance from other students varied. Besides group discussions other forms of assistance such as provision of lecture notes to copy and information or instructions from lecturers were given.

Although help rarely came in the form of explanations, what mattered to the pregnant participants was the

effect of the assistance on their educational activities. Participant Y2 said, "... sometimes they explain to me what they learned in the lectures and they bring information on what is wanted. Yesterday they prepared a chair and a table for me for the exam because I could not come in the afternoon." She also said, "... sometimes I fail to attend lectures ... I get notes from others." Even though such students missed a number of lectures, their colleagues updated them so that they had an idea of what transpired. This kept them abreast.

Though participant Y2 gave the impression that lecturers were empathetic, this view was not shared by other participants. According to her, lecturers also felt for the pregnant students as they wondered how they managed. In spite of the above sentiment, Y2 also shared the feeling with other participants that some lecturers do not understand. She said, "... but some lecturers are rather difficult, they do not understand. They say... bring a letter from the doctor that says you are pregnant."

Participant Y1 carried a really bad picture of some lecturers. Unlike the other participants, she felt that lectures connived to fix her because she was pregnant. She said, "Sometimes you begin to think that lecturers sit to discuss me... at some sort of a kangaroo court... because I am pregnant... they connive against me. I have had so many re-writes. Even some of the comments they pass make me unhappy..." Despite such negative experiences with some of her lecturers, she resolved to persevere. She said, "... with regard college work one needs to be resolute. Sometimes lecturers' comments are very painful... I get so affected that I spend the whole day miserable. At times when I meet the concerned lecturer, I panic." Even when the participant encountered problems while carrying out an assignment she would not turn to such lecturers who made comments such as, "What is this?"

The fact that most participants did not find it easy to communicate with their lecturers is revealed by the experience of participant Y3 who spent five days in hospital and none of her lecturers was informed. She said she did not communicate with lectures because she thought she would make it. She said, "I thought I would manage. I was in hospital over the weekend... I was discharged on Tuesday." It would appear that the participant was hiding the truth. Perhaps she was afraid of comments that would be passed by the lecturers. She preferred to be safe than sorry. There seems to be a general trend that participants did not communicate about their not feeling well to their lecturers. Participant Y1 said, "... I could not hand in assignments because I was ill but the lecturers concerned did not consider my state. They were not pleased at all."

4.4 THE EFFECT OF PHYSICAL PROBLEMS ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF NURSING ADULT LEARNERS

Participants unanimously felt that their educational activities were negatively affected by their mothering role. This section deals with their sentiments on the effect of physical problems on their educational activities as nursing adult learners. Physical problems which affect nursing participants' learning activities revolve around tiredness due to lack of sufficient rest. All the three participants indicated that they overworked in order to meet the academic dead lines and requirements as well as the demands of their babies. Participant X1 made use of her tea and lunch breaks for writing assignments, while X2 reported of an occasion when she spent the whole night awake and went to sleep around 4.45 am. The third participant, X3, used any time she could find to write assignments.

During the day the participants spent more time on their studies and less time on their babies' needs. Participants could afford to ignore their babies' needs during the day and attend to their educational activities particularly through lectures. Participant X3 reported that her baby cried nearly everyday when she left for lectures. On the day of the interview she said, "... she was busy crying. She wanted to breast feed but I couldn't feed her because I am feeding the first baby which is college work."

In the evening the participants tried to divide themselves between the baby and their studies. Because of their proximity to the babies, college work was neglected and the babies got the first priority. Participant X2 said, "In the evening my baby needs more attention. He becomes so much of a nuisance that you put aside all your academic work and attend to him." There was general consensus that baby interference with the mother's study schedule during the night forced the mother to create time to meet college demands. If the student could not work at night, it meant that she had to find time during the day. X2 said, "... like today... I don't think I even spent three minutes with him." In such instances, the day's schedule became congested. Participants were able to compensate lost time by "stealing" time from other programmes. When a lecturer failed to attend a lecture because of other college commitments but gave the class tasks to work on, participants used this as an opportunity to write their assignments or do any other outstanding work. In turn, the programmes from which they stole time required repayment of the debt in due course. Consequently, the participants continually worked under pressure. Participant X1 said, "I would write my assignments at

the lecture rooms when a lecturer fails to show up for a lecture.” Participants felt that such abnormal schedules tire the body, exhausting the student-mother, thereby decreasing her potential to perform in the educational arena as she would otherwise do.

Body weariness was also aggravated by the fact that participants did not get continuous sleep at night. Every night the participants had to wake up to attend to the varied needs of their babies. Analysis of the log sheets (Appendix F) indicated that the participants woke up more than twice a night. Given that they went to sleep around 10.00 pm and woke up around 5.00 am, interruptions on the seven hours of sleep they had deprived them of sufficient rest. Data from non-participant observation also pointed to the fact that the dual role of mother and student fatigued the participants physically. All the participants had tired, ill-looking faces. Except for Participant X2, the other participants had visibly lost weight.

All the participants had times when they took their babies to baby clinics. At the local hospital, baby clinics are done once a month on a Wednesday when most mothers in the area are not working in the fields. Generally, long queues are witnessed at the hospital on such a day. The long queues often cost the students a lot of learning or study time. This loss of time resulted in postponement of work, delayed submissions, hurriedly done assignments and missed lectures. In such instances, the adult learner who had a goal to attain became anxious. On one such baby clinic visit, Participant X3 said she had come to the hospital around half past ten, after tea break, but was still in the queue around half past twelve. She looked worried and sounded impatient. Besides baby clinics, participants sometimes took their ill babies to the hospital for treatment. Participant X2 reported an occasion when she missed lectures because she had taken her baby to the hospital. She said, “... I failed to attend ... the baby had a flu, I took him to the hospital.” Participant X1 also said, “... when the baby is ill, I take him to the clinic and report to the lecturer(s) when I am back. Some lecturers fail to understand because at times an assignment will be due.”

Towards final examination time, Participants X2 and X3 exerted more strain on their over-worked bodies. Because of the value they placed on group discussions with other students, they took their babies to the hostels after supper, around 6.00pm. Participant X3 said, “... we go to the female hostel and come back around twelve midnight, carrying our babies on our backs ...I will be afraid and at risk of being attacked on the way.” On the other hand, Participant X1 indicated that she could not go to the hostels for discussions and so studied on her own. It was this participant who came fifteen minutes late to the Syllabus A final

examination. Somebody was sent to inform her that the examination was in progress. The participant later commented that she overslept because she went to sleep very late the previous night. She looked worn out.

The experiences of all the participants were clear testimony that the competing and conflicting demands of their mothering and student roles retarded academic progress. Combining studentship and mothering was an activity which filled the student-mother with guilt. Hence, Participant X3 said, "... and I feel guilty that I can't attend to her. I can't satisfy her needs." It can thus be seen from the participants' narratives that physical problems also affected the students' emotional well-being. A tired body and a troubled mind and conscience are by no means prerequisites to successful learning encounters. It is this realisation that made Participant X1 to say, "If possible it is better not to have a baby during a training course, it lessens problems ... of time." The same sentiment was shared by Participant X3 who made an interesting remark when she said studentship and mothering "... are two courses which do not go well together."

4.5 THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF NURSING ADULT LEARNERS

Nursing participants were able to show that social relationships affected their educational endeavours. The three participants indicated limited assistance by other fellow students. This was because their training programme was too demanding. When nursing participants missed lectures the other students gave them notes to copy but rarely offered any explanations. Participant X1 summed up the group's experiences when she said, "I ask for notes from friends ... If I don't get someone to explain, I just reproduce them." Similarly, X3 indicated that although she copied notes from friends she would have missed the explanations. And Participant X2 expressed the same view: "I ask for notes from others. Some notes are incomprehensible, they need explanations. However, those who give you notes do not have time to explain, they will be busy with their own studies." The participants felt that the gesture of good will by their fellow students of allowing them to copy notes enabled them to fulfil one of the requirements of their teacher education course.

Generally all the participants seemed to appreciate the different kinds of assistance offered by fellow students as this eased their situation in one way or the other. Participant X1 said, "... other students understand my situation and are ready to assist when I need help... When they get textbooks that are relevant, they give me to read. They encourage me to read fast so that I can attend to my baby." Participant

X2 also viewed her classmates as considerate. She remarked, "... if I tell them I will be able to come for discussion at 7.00 pm, they wait for me." It was because of such gestures that nursing participants were able to manage their studies.

Unlike the other participants, X2 experienced problems with the baby minder. She said, "The person who looks after my baby goes home over the weekend." In the absence of the baby minder the participant takes full charge of the baby, thereby undermining her student role. This, according to her, incapacitated her in as far as college work was concerned. She said, "... you can't go to the library with the baby... you can't work holding the baby in your hands... like with art and design... it is impossible,...you can't write personal notes."

Social problems outside college premises but related to participants' status as married women, also impact negatively on participants' college work. Participant X3 shed light on this aspect when she said, "... social problems affect my studies, like when my husband was involved in an accident in July...even now it troubles me." Such problems resulted in loss of concentration as one spent a lot of time thinking about her unfortunate circumstances. As a result, the student failed a mathematics assignment. She said, "I failed a maths assignment... it was on fractions. I was from Chiredzi where the husband is. I just wrote so that it could be said that I submitted..."

Another force that the students had to contend with were the lecturers. Lecturers were not a homogeneous group, so their attitudes and behaviour towards nursing students differed. Lecturers' inconsistent behaviour sometimes had detrimental effects on the participants' educational endeavours. Participant X3 felt that her music lecturer was inconsiderate and hard on her. She had taken her un-well baby to the hospital and so missed a music practical lecture. When she came back she tried to explain the circumstances leading to her absenteeism but the lecturer would not listen to her. Instead, the participant said, "... he shouted at me... told me it was my choice to be a mother and a student." As an aside, the participant commented, "... and he was right, the two courses, mothering and teacher education, do not go well together." After the lecturer had finished scolding her, the participant retorted by saying, "If it was possible, if I had known, I would have abandoned the baby." Such an encounter disturbed the student and distracted her attention from goal-oriented activities. This experience, on the contrary could have spurred the student to work harder to prove her academic worth in spite of being a mother.

Although Participant X1 gave the impression that her relations with lecturers were not problematic, she spilled the beans when she said, "... when the lecturer fails to understand I go through a more understanding lecturer." Such situations where the student spent time thinking of an individual who could intercede on her behalf, bred anxiety and worry in the student. In this state she could not exert herself on her academic work. Besides instilling fear and anxiety in the nursing students, sour relations between the lecturers and the participants affected performance. On late submissions Participant X2 commented: "... I get confused... because I will have a difficult time with the lecturers." Participants were generally agreed that their inability to meet deadlines strained their relations with lecturers. Sometimes remarks made by lecturers, even when they meant no harm, disturbed the participants. Responding to a question on lecturers' attitudes towards nursing adult learners, X2 said, "... not about me but when some lecturers come for lectures and notice someone missing, they make comments such as, 'is she still breast feeding the baby?'" The participant was not sure whether the comment was sarcastic or not. The participant felt that such a comment meant that the learner's priorities were not appreciated. This made the students even more worried.

4.6 THE IMPACT OF INSUFFICIENT FINANCIAL RESOURCES ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF PREGNANT AND NURSING ADULT LEARNERS

All the six participants admitted that they experienced insufficient financial resources in different ways. They felt that inadequate financial support negatively affected their educational endeavours. Except for Participant X3, the other two nursing participants had problems of providing enough food for the baby and the baby minder. Participant X2 said, "... the person I leave the baby with wants to eat ... the baby needs to be clothed and fed. It troubles me." Echoing the same sentiment Participant X1 remarked: "Besides buying food for the baby, I have to pay rent, water and electricity bills".

For all the nursing participants, the baby minders' wages were a cause for concern. Participant X3 summed it up by saying, "... I hardly find wages to pay the maid." Nursing participants necessarily worry about wages because their survival in the academic arena largely depended on the services of baby minders. When wages were not forthcoming, baby minders were not obliged to stay.

The repercussions of such an incident would have been drastic for the participant. The nursing student would be forced to be a full-time mother, consequently abandoning most of her educational activities. Her work would lag behind and she would be forced to work under pressure until she secured the services of another maid. It was because of too much pressure of work that Participant X2 said, "... today I did not get enough time with the baby, I don't think I spent even three minutes with him." Furthermore, as full-time mothers, participants missed some lectures and as a result missed out on certain concepts. This was particularly so because other students failed to give clear explanations as those given in the lecture(s). Participant X3 said about missed lectures: "If you miss a lecture and find certain concepts handled... to have them explained by somebody, it is difficult ... if I had no baby I would have understood." She was making reference to a lecture in Theory of music. Consequently, the participant's performance deteriorated in that area.

The participants indicated that they had limited resources to cater for their varied but essential needs. In view of this, Participant X1 metaphorically referred to scarcity of funds by saying "...money cannot be enough ...". It appeared that the problem of money was a difficult one because it could only be provided by a few people such as spouses and parents but rarely by brothers or sisters. Participant X3 who had earlier on indicated that she had no problems with food said, "... money is a problem."

All the three pregnant participants felt that they did not have as many problems with finance as the nursing adult learners. They however indicated that even meager resources would suffice but as Y2 said, "... sometimes hunger reaches extreme levels ... and when hungry, I abandon my studies to find means of satiating my hunger."

Participant X1 failed to submit her coursework files when others doing Early Childhood Development (ECD) did. This was because she had no money to buy certain materials needed. She said, "The problem comes with some things which need money. Last term I failed to submit files because I had no covers. I had no money to buy floral covers." Participants X2 and X3, doing the General Course, were bailed out by the researcher who provided them with box files in which to present their coursework when she got to know their need.

4.7 THE ROLE AND INVOLVEMENT OF COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF PREGNANT AND NURSING ADULT LEARNERS

From the participants' narratives, it was clear that the college administration did very little in terms of supporting student mothers. The six participants felt that the administration was aware of the existence of pregnant and nursing students among its student population but as the participants pointed out, it refuses to take full responsibility for them. Although some mothering students had been offered free accommodation in vacant college general workers' houses, others were left to rent rooms from mission workers. Of the six participants, only X2 enjoyed free accommodation but paid electricity and water bills. She said, "The admin gave us a place to stay...we don't pay rent, we only pay for electricity and water."

The above comment comes against the background that the college provides all adult learners with hostel accommodation and pays electricity and water bills from the learners' college fees. Pregnant and nursing adult learners are not catered for although they pay fees like the rest of the learners. Five of the six participants felt that they were getting a raw deal from the college authorities. Although the authorities were aware that pregnant and nursing student mothers were not allowed in college hostels, they made them pay fees that were equal to those of the other students. Participant X1 said, "The College wants fees equal to what the other students pay plus the food hamper. They say they don't know that we stay outside the hostels..." On the other hand, Participant X3 commented, "... the admin could give us accommodation so that we don't pay rent, water and electricity bills." Such a move, according to Participant X3, would lessen pressure on pregnant and nursing adult learners' inadequate financial resources. When participants' shelter needs are thus met, they would have more time to concentrate and remain focused on their major goal which is academic success.

There was consensus among the participants that the college was unfair on them with regard to fees. Participant X2 said, "The admin should not make us bring the food hamper and our fees should not be the same as others because we don't stay in the hostels." The participants felt that their administration was insensitive and they did not see any reasons why pregnant students were not allowed in the hostels. Consequently, Participant Y3 flouted the rule and stayed in the hostel. She said, "I... have been staying in the hostel because nobody could tell that I was pregnant."

All the participants were doubtful on whether the administration could do anything to alleviate their plight so as to support their learning efforts. Participant Y1 said, "I don't know what to say. It all needs God's grace." These sentiments were also echoed by Participant X1 who said, "I don't see how the administration can assist..." While the other participants had accepted the status quo, X3 was bitter as could be detected in her statements. According to her, nothing good as far as pregnant and nursing students were concerned could be expected from the college administration. Her sentiments were expressed thus: "Which admin? The college administration can do nothing for us." She also highlighted an incident which nurtured her negative feelings about the college administration. She said, "If you go to the admin with your problem... they will scold you saying, 'why do you have babies when you want to come to school?'" Since they expected nothing in terms of assistance from their college administration, the participants had to depend on their own ingenuity. Thus, most of the participants sneaked into the female hostels for group discussions with their fellow students while some pregnant students, as indicated by Y3, stayed in the hostels without the knowledge and consent of the authorities.

4.8 THE EFFECT OF THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES ON THE OVERALL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PREGNANT AND NURSING ADULT LEARNERS

According to the Department of Teacher Education's (DTE) criteria for final assessment, a student's overall performance is determined when the student's work is presented to DTE for verification and authentication. Students should present lecture and personal notes in a box file, marked coursework assignments in a folder and should have written the final examinations. While no marks are allocated for lecture and personal notes, these notes indicate the extent to which the student would have covered the syllabi. Coursework assignment marks contribute 60% of the final mark while the examination contributes 40%. The final mark in each section (Tables 1 & 2) is computed from the coursework and final examination marks. If a student fails one of the components, the marks would not be averaged. Instead, the student would have to repeat the failed component. This discussion focuses on what the participants said with regard the notes and assignments. The participants' overall performance is given and discussed.

The interviews with both pregnant and nursing adult learners showed that the students missed a number of lectures. The teacher education programme requires that all students must present all lecture notes for final examination. This makes it obligatory for all students who miss lectures to write notes for the missed

lectures. However, according to the participants' stories, most of the lecture notes they copied from were incomprehensible and they failed in some cases to make sense out of them.

Participant X3 commented about the copied notes: "What happens in note taking is ... others use shorthand so you won't understand what the person wanted to say." Participant Y2 crowned it all when she said, "...sometimes the notes are incomprehensible, but I just write to fulfil a requirement." This state of affairs requires the participant to read textbooks so that she would correct errors or fill in missing information instead of simply copying. Because the participants spent time copying notes and had to do current assignments, they did not seem to have time to read in order to improve or supplement the copied notes. The participants, because of their circumstances, were always working under pressure. In this regard, Y1 said, "Before you finish a task there will be another one... something comes up before you have done much..." The participant lost much precious time copying notes which were of very little value to the academic growth of the student and examination preparation. My contention is that for examination preparation, researched notes rather than the text book would be handy.

The repercussions of missed lectures and wasted time were rather severe for Participants Y3 and X3. These participants remained at college for almost two weeks working on their lecture notes. When asked by the researcher what their problem was, Y3 said, "...it is hard mother, it is tough...I try to explain to the lecturers concerned but ... they say 'these are not your notes' because of the hand writing. The hand writing is a bit different because I wrote some notes in a hurry." Participant X3 had none but herself to blame. She said, "This term I came two weeks after opening." As a result, she was pressed for time and shelved the writing of some lecture notes until the last minute.

Participant Y3 openly admitted that her academic performance was deteriorating. She felt that this was due to the varied effects of her pregnant state. It was now and rarely before that she failed most of the coursework assignments. She said, "I feel my pregnancy is responsible. Had it not been for it, I would have put more effort and I would not have failed." Apart from failing assignments, these participants were no longer active in class. Participant Y2 summed their predicament when she said, "...pregnancy slackens my learning pace... Even participation in lectures... I just sit and try to listen."

There was general consensus among both pregnant and nursing participants that they did not have adequate time to read and research from textbooks. Nursing participants rarely went to the library to read. Participant X1 said, "... time for doing research is not enough. In the evening you can't come to the library because the baby wants its mother." Participant X3 said, "The best I can do is to borrow a book." Pregnant participants, on the other hand, were riddled with varied illnesses and had a tendency to want to sleep. They also had very little time for independent study. Most of the participants in this group had occasions when they got admitted in the local hospital. Participant Y1 said, "The whole of last term I was not well so I was no longer reading or writing." Though pregnant participants were not always inclined to sleep, sleep nagged them. Participant Y3 said, "...sometimes you don't feel like sleeping in the evening and you can study. Sometimes you feel like sleeping the whole day and you don't study... being pregnant can make you work hard for the sake of the baby."

Since the mothering role curtailed participants' time to work on their academic programmes, none of them got a distinction in the final examinations. Through perseverance most of the participants achieved their goal. The tables below show the final academic results of the participants.

Table 1. Early childhood development (ECD)

Participant	Section 1. Teaching Practice (TP)	Section 2. Theory of ECD	Section 3. Main Study	Section 4. Professional Studies [P/S]
X1	67	64	Mathematics 70	66
Y1	70	61	Social Studies 56	54

Table 2. General course

Participant	Section 1. Teaching Practice (TP)	Section 2. Theory of Education [TOE].	Section 3. Main Study	Section 4. Professional Studies [P/S]
X2	55	65	RME 67	60
X3	60	64	Music 63	67
Y2	63	62	English 72	64
Y3	65	Fail and Repeat 6/2011	English 58	59

Each participant's scores are presented separately. Table 1 shows the scores of the participants who pursued the Early Childhood Development course. Table 2 shows scores for those who were doing the general course.

The academic performance of Participant Y1 (Table 1) deteriorated when she fell pregnant. Her Teaching Practice score, before she fell pregnant is higher than any other score. It is in Professional Studies (P/S) that she obtained the lowest mark. This was necessarily so because P/S examinations were written in July when she was going through the first trimester of her pregnancy. She said, "When I got pregnant, I fell ill and this disturbed me... The long hours of sitting ... were painful, they caused me pain... When I got home I tried to read while lying down, but ... eh... it was a struggle." It is therefore not surprising that she remarked, "I really thank God that I managed, He gave me strength to persevere..."

On the other hand Participant X1 (Table 1) had pleasing results. According to her, "... the baby [did] not cause a lot of trouble." The participant also made use of tea and lunch breaks for writing assignments. Unlike most of the participants, she found time to read textbooks. She said, "... time for doing research is

not enough... I make use of the time between end of lectures (3.00 pm) and supper (5.30 pm)... "twice a week." Through such reading, she was able to augment knowledge obtained from lectures hence the good results.

Table 2 displays the final results of Participants X2, X3, Y2 and Y3. Of the two pregnant students doing the general course, Participant Y3 failed to make it. She has to repeat the failed component in June 2011. In her narration of the effect of her pregnancy on her academic performance, she remarked that pregnancy was the cause of her deteriorating performance. She said, "I easily get tired... for most of the time I feel like sleeping." She felt that such tendencies deprived her time to read and adequately prepare for her final examinations. Participant Y2's final academic performance was second best among the participants. Her Teaching Practice mark, before she fell pregnant, was not very different from her final examination marks. She managed to maintain her standard against all odds. Of all the participants, both pregnant and nursing, she had the highest mark in the main subject (English). And true to her words, "I ignore the pain... illness and do my work" she succeeded in achieving her educational goal.

Like all the nursing participants, Participant X3 was pregnant when she was on TP. It seems that due to pregnancy the lowest mark in her profile was the T.P mark. At the time of the interview her baby was 6 months old. Due to self-sacrifice and sheer hard work she got good passes. In her narrative she said, "... in one instance I went to sleep at 4.45am."

4.9 CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was to investigate and identify the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at a private Teacher Training College. In this chapter, a thick description of the participants' stories was given. The seven themes identified in this empirical study indicated that the participants faced a number of challenges. The participants were clear on what they felt about their situation and its negative impact on their educational activities and endeavours. Despite such challenges the participants persevered until the end of the learning programme. To do this, as indicated in the participants' narratives, they developed coping strategies.

Chapter 5 draws conclusions and makes recommendations and suggestions for further research based on a summary of the literature review and the empirical study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presented, analysed and discussed the lived experiences of pregnant and nursing adult learners on their career path. In it, their voices were heard as they described their situation. Chapter 5 summarises the findings of the literature and the empirical studies, concludes the study and discusses its conclusions with reference to the aims and findings. It also spells out the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for practice and further research. The research sub-questions are revisited to determine whether they have been answered.

The aims of the research were to identify and get an in-depth understanding of the educational problems or challenges experienced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster, identify strategies used by pregnant and nursing adult learners to overcome the educational challenges or problems they face during teacher training and make recommendations to the college principal, the Responsible Authority and DTE on how the learning situation can be improved.

5.2 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in chapter 2 had the following sections and subsections:

1. Motherhood
2. Studentship
3. How adults learn
4. Challenges faced by pregnant and nursing learners:
 - Pregnant learners: educational challenges related to physical problems
 - Pregnant learners: educational challenges related to social relationships
 - Nursing learners: educational challenges related to physical problems
 - Nursing learners: educational challenges related to social relationships
 - Pregnant and nursing learners: educational challenges related to insufficient financial resources
 - Pregnant and nursing learners: educational challenges related to the role and involvement of administration.

Each one of these sections and subsections was discussed in relation to the research question in order to identify and get an in-depth understanding of the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners.

5.2.1 Motherhood

The literature study has revealed that contrary to cultural prescriptions of motherhood, contemporary women no longer subordinate their needs, desires and aspirations to their children and families' needs (Chapter 2 section 2.2). Though they still compassionately care for their families and children they also engage in educational activities. Motherhood, according to the literature, has a number of challenges which include anxiety, stress, fear and frustration. As such, women who engage in education grapple with problems peculiar to motherhood and studentship.

5.2.2 Studentship

The literature revealed that the transition from high school to college life presents a number of challenging demands on the student. More and intensive reading, lengthier assignments as well as unsupervised study are some of the characteristic features of tertiary education (Chapter 2 section 2.3). It was thus evident that appropriate socialisation was necessary to help tertiary students cope with their new situation.

5.2.3 How adults learn

It has been shown that adult learning is premised on a number of principles. These include voluntary engagement, a positive self-concept, collaborative learning, motivation and nature of accompaniment (Chapter 2 section 2.4).

Voluntary engagement. Adult learners engage in learning activities voluntarily in order to attain an identified goal. They therefore expect to be treated with respect and dignity. As such, they thrive in socially constructed encounters in which they derive personal meanings. It was pointed out that adults can withdraw from learning encounters characterised by coercion and intimidation.

A positive self-concept determines the extent to which the adult learner exerts herself on the learning task. The way the student thinks and feels about herself can be nurtured by positive regard from others.

Collaborative learning enhances competency, develops self-confidence and interpersonal communication as well as changes learning styles in adult learners. Through participatory learning, the adult learner experiences intellectual growth, social development and acquires new learning styles.

Motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, enables the adult learner to develop and maintain interest in learning tasks. Extrinsic motivation can be used to develop intrinsic motivation. Reference was made to the application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in learning encounters to enhance the adult learner's level of motivation.

Nature of accompaniment. The literature has portrayed the adult learner as a person with multiple responsibilities. As such, she requires proper guidance to enable her to make informed decisions and choices in the education encounter. Mutual partnership between the student and the lecturer enables the student to cope with her multi-faceted roles. In this way the student is assisted to actualise her potential.

5.2.4 Challenges faced by pregnant and nursing learners

In this section, summaries of the different challenges that impact on the educational activities of pregnant and nursing learners are given. These are given under six subsections as denoted in chapter 2 section 2.5.

- ***Pregnant learners: educational challenges related to physical problems***

The physical problems which usually accompany pregnancy have been shown to negatively affect the student mother's capacity to exert herself to academic tasks. The pain and or discomfort brought about by physical problems such as backache, swollen legs, hypertension, nausea and dizziness reduce the pregnant student's work rate. In this regard, the literature made reference to pregnant students who were either expelled from school or requested maternity leave because they could not cope with academic demands (Chapter 2 subsection 2.5.1). Those that persevered experienced poor academic progress, frustration and even failure.

- ***Pregnant learners: educational problems related to social relationships***

The literature made reference to social policies which are not gender sensitive as evidenced by the exclusion and expulsion of pregnant students from school. Discrimination of pregnant students by society in general and the academic community in particular affects the student mothers' self-

esteem. Instead of feeling good, the pregnant student feels disrespected and embarrassed. In some instances the pregnant student experiences psychological noise and this negatively affects her academic performance (Chapter 2 subsection 2.5.2).

- ***Nursing learners: educational challenges related to physical problems***

The commitment and hard work required from the nursing mother in order to achieve academic success are potentially stressful. The nursing student is constantly required to attend to her baby during the day and at night. At the same time she is expected to work on her studies. This results in tiredness and exhaustion which in turn reduce efficiency in either role: studentship and mothering (Chapter 2 subsection 2.5.3). Tiredness can cause the student to produce shoddy work thereby straining relationships with her lecturers.

- ***Nursing learners: educational challenges related to social relationships***

The literature has revealed that nursing students need support and guidance from the academic community in order to successfully balance mothering and educational roles. In the absence of such support and guidance, the student mother finds it difficult to cope with her studies. She has to contend with loneliness, dejection, fear and guilty feelings (Chapter 2 subsection 2.5.4). It was also revealed that where support and guidance are readily available, the nursing student experiences a sense of belonging, love and an enhanced self-esteem. Such feelings tend to enhance the student's chances of success in the attainment of her academic goal.

- ***Pregnant and nursing learners: educational challenges related to insufficient financial resources***

The literature made reference to mothering learners who faced inadequate financial support to meet their own academic and childcare needs. Examples were given of mothering learners who engaged in part-time jobs to supplement their meagre financial resources. By dividing themselves between part-time employment and study, mothering learners experience exhaustion as a result of an increased workload: employment, study and childcare. This reduces time spent on educational activities. Apart from parenting related stress, inadequate financial support slackened the students' academic progress (Chapter 2 subsection 2.5.5).

- ***Pregnant and nursing learners: educational challenges related to the role and involvement of administration***

The literature cited educational policies in Britain, the USA and Australia meant to address some of the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing learners. However, lack of commitment by education authorities to implement policies was cited in some cases as one of the reasons for the failure of such policies. In other instances the opposite of what was intended by the policies was achieved: learners' drop out rate increased (Chapter 2 subsection 2.5.6). It was also observed that lack of clarity on how such policies were implemented resulted in the student mothers continuing to experience stigmatisation, inadequate support and exclusion. As a result, the PPPT school in America was closed in 1997. In Britain (1999) and in Zimbabwe (2010) new policies were introduced aimed at making the education of mothering students more inclusive.

In the next section, a summary of the empirical study is presented. The presentation is done according to the seven themes identified in Chapter 4 section 4.1.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

Each of the seven themes that emerged from the empirical data had specific significance to the study. In this section summaries of the empirical findings with regard to each theme are presented.

5.3.1 The effect of physical problems on the educational activities of pregnant adult learners

In the empirical study participants indicated varied physical conditions which impacted negatively on their educational activities. Due to the un-wellness of the body, pregnant students failed to submit assignments on time, missed lectures and lagged behind in note-making (Chapter 4 section 4.2). As a result most of the pregnant participants experienced low academic performance. It was therefore not surprising that all the three pregnant participants felt that one should complete studies before getting pregnant. Their narratives show that studying while pregnant was not only difficult, but a never to be repeated experience.

5.3.2 The effect of social relationships on the educational activities of pregnant adult learners

All the pregnant participants testified to the importance of a supportive social environment. They clearly pointed out that they managed to go through their studies because of support in varied forms particularly from their classmates. However for most of the time, fear and anxiety characterised the lecturer-learner

relationship. Participants could not easily inform or consult lecturers when they faced academic problems (Chapter 4 section 4.3).

5.3.3 The effect of physical problems on the educational activities of nursing adult learners

The nursing students' narratives indicated that the students lacked sufficient rest due to their dual and equally demanding parenting and studentship roles. When not engaged in college work, they would slot in baby caring chores into their schedules and vice-versa. As a result, they tended to tire. Though they tried to do their best in the educational activities they failed to measure up to set standards. Thus, some assignments were handed in late, lecture-notes for missed lectures were not updated and very little research was done. More so, their educational challenges were aggravated by their lack of appropriate skills to handle the situation. Coupled with this was lack of knowledge of adult accompaniment by the lecturers which made the socialisation of the nursing adult learner difficult (Chapter 4 section 4.4).

5.3.4 The effect of social relationships on the educational activities of nursing adult learners

All the three nursing participants acknowledged the positive contributions made by their classmates towards their academic success. Though they sometimes copied lecture notes from their fellow students without the necessary explanations, this went a long way in enabling them to satisfy one of their course requirements. Nursing adult learners derived maximum benefit from social support in terms of group discussions. All of them felt that group discussions bridged the knowledge gap they experienced and enabled them to succeed in tests and examinations.

It was evident from the participants' narratives that lecturers were not always supportive as could be deduced from the comments they made such as "what is this?" when referring to a student's work. Some lecturers were difficult and instilled fear in learners. This does not augur well for effective learning. However the few lecturers who were sympathetic did not do much to help. The least they could do was to encourage learners to work hard (Chapter 4 section 4.5).

5.3.5 The impact of insufficient financial resources on the educational activities of pregnant and nursing adult learners

All the six participants complained of shortage of funds. While both pregnant and nursing students needed funds for, inter-alia, meeting their food and educational requirements, payment of electricity bills and

rentals, nursing students also catered for the needs of their babies: wages for baby minders and babies clothes (Chapter 4 section 4.6). Without sufficient funds nursing students would have failed to retain baby minders. The scarcity of funds therefore tended to distract participants from their studies. Instead, they would focus their attention on securing funds at the expense of their academic work. This resulted in failure to meet dead lines and the production of substandard work.

5.3.6 The role and involvement of college administration and its effect on the educational activities of pregnant and nursing adult learners

Both nursing and pregnant participants felt that the college administration was not supportive. According to them, the college administration had taken a watch-and-see stance leaving them to use their own ingenuity to survive. No student-mother-friendly policies were in place. Lack of supportive intervention by the college left the learners to negotiate with lecturers regarding the challenges they faced. When lecturers failed to appreciate their predicament, learners decided to keep their educational problems and anxieties to themselves (Chapter 4 section 4.7). This resulted in the learners failing to fully actualise their potential.

Reference was made to rules and regulations that excluded them from college hostels but required them to pay the same amount of fees as those who enjoyed college accommodation. This resulted in learners being unable to purchase stationery and other materials needed as course requirements.

5.3.7 The effect of the identified challenges on the overall academic performance of pregnant and nursing adult learners

It was clear from the final (academic) results that the varied challenges encountered by pregnant and nursing students had a negative impact on their academic performance (Chapter 4 section 4.8). Though most (5 out of 6) managed to keep their heads above water none was distinctive. One pregnant participant failed to make it and has to re-do the failed component (Theory of Education) in June 2011.

5.4 SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section gives an overview of common views and disparities that have emerged from the literature and empirical studies. The discussion is based on the following themes:

- conflict between the mothering and studentship roles

- faculty's mixed feelings towards mothering students
- inadequate resources to meet mothering and educational needs of the student
- absence of internal policies to support student mothers.

These themes emerged from the studies and are directly related to the research question of improving the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers' College.

Conflict between the mothering and studentship roles. This aspect has been revealed in both the literature study and the interviews. Motherhood and studentship have been clearly shown to be competing and conflicting roles. Both tend to make mammoth demands on the student mother. Participants stated that academic work was compromised by their involvement in the two roles. Given that parenting and education are often incompatible, the successful academic performance of five out of six participants shows great perseverance on the participants' part. Those who are unable to rise above the situation fail to achieve their academic goal, hence one participant failed.

Faculty's mixed feelings towards mothering students are a major challenge in the pursuance of an educational goal for student mothers. In the literature study, it was clear that some members of the teaching staff were not supportive. Luttrell (2003:22) has also shown that teachers viewed the education of pregnant students as a responsibility and not a right. The empirical study brought out evidence to show that some lecturers stigmatised pregnant and nursing students by the comments they passed.

While the literature indicated that lack of support tended to raise suspicion on faculty's intentions and demotivate the student mothers, one of the participants indicated that this could result in a determined effort to pass in spite of lecturer behaviour. Generally, however, both the literature and empirical studies showed that fear and apprehension characterised the student-lecturer relationship.

Inadequate resources to meet mothering and educational needs of the student is also a pertinent issue in this study. Both the literature and the empirical studies revealed that insufficient financial resources negatively affect one's studies. Sweetman (2003:13) has rightly pointed out that women's economic circumstances pose barriers to gender equity in education. Issues concerning stationery and baby minder's wages were identified as some of the thorny issues that nagged the student mothers and held back their academic progress.

Absence of internal college policies to support student mothers. The literature study has given examples of institutions that have put in place internal policies to support student mothers. One such institution is the Canterbury Christ Church university which views pregnant learners as “at risk” students who should not be exposed to harmful environments and strenuous activities (Chapter 2 section 2.5.1). Unlike in the literature study, the empirical study indicated that there were no internal policies at the identified college to guide faculty and the college community’s interactions with student mothers. The empirical data showed that the academic and social welfare of the student mothers was left in the student mothers’ hands. The participants’ responses showed that they were even bitter that they were made to pay fees just like the other students who enjoyed all college services. One of the participants indicated that the college administration had no capacity to assist them. Because of lack of internal policies to cater for the welfare of these students, the college administration was not viewed as a source of protection and assistance.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

The research question that the study sought to answer was: “What can be done to improve the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners at Morgenster Teachers’ College?” Both the literature and the empirical studies revealed that there are significant educational challenges which pregnant and nursing adult learners faced. These challenges have been found to have affected the students in a number of ways. The study was conducted in a manner that its outcome addressed the research sub-questions which eventually answered the research question. The research sub-questions were:

1. Which are the actual educational problems experienced by pregnant and nursing adult learners?
2. How do pregnant and nursing adult learners confront or cope with their situation?
3. What can be done to improve the situation and make their study experiences worthwhile?

What follows are responses to these questions:

Which are the actual educational problems experienced by pregnant and nursing adult learners?

Physical problems such as swelling legs, nausea and general body discomfort for the pregnant student and tiredness due to lack of sleep and movement between lodging and learning centre, as well as an overworked body for the nursing student resulted in absenteeism from some lectures, late assignment

submission, and inability to excel in academic assignments, tests and examinations. Participants felt that their varied physical conditions deprived them of time to read and research adequately for assignments, tests and examinations.

The empirical study revealed that the un-wellness of the body tended to reduce concentration and participation rates in lectures and other education related activities. Because of their situatedness the students were unable to realise their full potential.

Socially, the pregnant and nursing students experienced difficulties in dealing with their lecturers. Some members of the teaching staff were not approachable. This made it difficult for the student mothers to seek academic assistance from them. In such instances, communication, a necessary component of an effective educative encounter was either limited or non-existent thereby minimising students' chances of improving their academic performance. Besides, students had to contend with lecturers who were also judgemental towards them. (Chapter 4 section 4.3 and 4.5).

Both pregnant and nursing students had their studies negatively affected by financial problems. When financial resources were not sufficient to sustain them, students temporarily absconded from some educational activities such as lectures to source funds and or other essential materials. Even when the student mothers did not abscond from studies and continued as if all was well, worry and anxiety tormented them so much that their presence in the lecture room did not yield the intended academic benefits.

Furthermore, the participants reported lack of support from college administration. Without such support, pregnant and nursing students felt discriminated and insecure. The students were more like the Biblical sheep without a shepherd. Lack of appropriate support in their academic pursuits was a great challenge. In essence, fear and frustration characterised their educational life, hence their inability to excel in their educational endeavour.

How do pregnant and nursing adult learners confront or cope with their situation?

The literature and empirical studies have shown that pregnant and nursing students, as adults who were determined to achieve their set goals, developed and employed coping strategies that enabled them to manage their studies in spite of the challenges they faced. The participants took advantage of their

empathetic and sympathetic classmates to fill-in gaps created by their absence from some lectures. They copied lecture notes from their peers. This enabled them to catch up with the rest of the class and ensured that their work was up to date. The participants also indicated that they engaged in group discussions with their peers. It was felt that these discussions bridged the knowledge gaps the participants experienced. They therefore attributed their academic success partly to the group discussions.

Another coping strategy used by the participants was perseverance. They, when possible, tended to ignore what they felt and worked on their studies even during tea and lunch breaks and at night. In fact, they made use of any time available. Besides, participants realised the need to maintain good relations with lecturers and the college administration. To this end, they attended lectures even when feeling tired and sleepy. They preferred to sit throughout a lecture without active participation.

Mothering students placed more value on academic success. Both the literature and empirical studies revealed that downplaying the mothering role to cater for academic demands was an effective coping strategy. Pregnant students ignored the pain, discomfort and cravings and worked on their studies. On the other hand, nursing students left the babies, despite their ages, to the baby minders' care during the day. However, at night they tried to balance the studentship and mothering roles by, among other things, attending to the babies' needs first.

In instances where some lecturers refused to accept participants' pieces of work because they were late, the participants had to ask a "more understanding" lecturer to intercede for them. Participants also indicated lack of disclosure as a coping strategy. It was evident from the empirical study that participants deliberately decided not to communicate with their lecturers when they faced problems that affected their studies (Chapter 4 section 4.3). In such instances, the student tried to work as if all was normal. Through aloofness or withdrawal, the mothering adult learners avoided comments by the lecturers and college administration which tended to bruise their self-esteem.

Flouting college rules was employed as a coping strategy. Some learners sneaked into the hostels to hold group discussions with their classmates. Others stayed in the hostels in spite of being pregnant. This way, the learners continued with their studies until the end of their learning programme.

What can be done to improve the situation and make their study experiences worthwhile?

The situation that has been revealed and described in this study can be improved in a number of ways. Such improvements would in turn make the study experiences of pregnant and nursing students worthwhile.

Faculty should be sensitive, empathetic and sympathetic and take it upon themselves to meaningfully guide the mothering students. Instead of blaming them, lecturers and administration should encourage students to rise above the situation and do their best. Considering that collaborative learning has been found to be beneficial by the participants, lecturers should practice and encourage group discussions among learners. This gives students the opportunity to interact among themselves and reflectively engage with the learning material in order to enhance their understanding of such material.

Pregnant and nursing students should be encouraged to communicate with faculty. Arrangements should be made by the college to ensure that a conducive learning relationship is established between these students and their teachers. The college administration should also offer all the pregnant and nursing students free accommodation. Alternatively, they can be made to pay less fees than the other students.

In spite of a number of educational challenges they faced, five of the six participants persevered and achieved their goal of becoming certificated classroom practitioners. It is my contention that support from peers, the lecturing staff and college administration would go a long way to reduce the educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners. Consequently, this would assist them in realising their full potential.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

During the course of the study, certain limitations were identified. The most significant limitations were:

- Scarcity of literature and information on the educational challenges of pregnant and nursing adult learners.
- The timing for data collection, the final phase, was a busy time for the participants. Participants might have felt a further deprivation of their study time.
- Some of the information required by the structured interviews was private and confidential so great care had to be exercised to ensure that the participants' privacy was not intruded on.

- The study was limited to a few cases in the third phase and at one private tertiary institution only.
- Under-reporting or over-reporting by some participants as a result of their emotions and the sensitivity of some of the interview questions.

The findings and recommendations of this study should be viewed against the above limitations.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that educational challenges faced by pregnant and nursing adult learners impact negatively on the quality of their lives. Therefore, it is necessary to alleviate the academic challenges they face so as to create a conducive learning environment. This would in turn have a bearing on their studies and thus their lives. In this section of the study, recommendations for the mothering students as the beneficiaries and other stakeholders are given.

Pregnant and nursing adult learners are encouraged to communicate with faculty and administration whenever they face education-related problems or personal problems that are likely to affect their academic work. Through such communication, fear, anxiety, suspicion and apprehension, feelings which have been shown to have a negative effect on learners' academic welfare can be prevented. On the other hand, lecturers and administration are likely to understand the situation of mothering students from an informed perspective. This is highly likely to build and enhance a relationship of trust between student mothers and college staff, a pre-requisite to meaningful learning.

Student mothers must develop personal time tables to cater for various educational activities which include assignment writing, reading, research and writing of lecture notes for missed lectures. This would enable the students to do assignments at the earliest possible time thereby preventing procrastination which leads to accumulation and increased pressure of work.

Pregnant and nursing students find it difficult to improve their learning situation on their own. Other stakeholders must play a significant role. It is therefore pertinent that in implementing gender sensitive policies to benefit student mothers the DTE, the Responsible Authority and the college principal must develop a symbiotic working relationship. The focus of such a relationship should be to ensure that resources are pooled together to create a supportive learning atmosphere for the student mothers. In this way, student-mother-friendly policies would be put in place. Such policies would, among other things, deal

with issues of absenteeism and late submissions which are currently left in the hands of individual lecturers and students.

The recently gazetted policy on maternity leave for pregnant students (Murape 2010:1) can benefit these students if the implementers cited in the previous paragraph take it upon themselves to ensure that its intended benefits are realised. During the maternity leave period (three months), the students can engage in distance learning so that they do not lag behind in their studies. Students who opt to remain in college must be accommodated and assisted. The college administration could establish an office for counselling of pregnant and nursing student mothers. Besides, formal peer education programmes for student mothers should be organised. Such programmes would allow student mothers and would-be-mothers to share experiences regarding educational challenges faced when studentship and motherhood are combined. This would assist pregnant students in choosing to go on maternity leave or not and other students to postpone child bearing for the duration of their learning programme.

From the empirical study, one can describe the student-lecturer relationship as ambivalent. Such a relationship partly stems from the lecturers' lack of grounding in andragogic didactics. Therefore, college administration should conduct in-service courses for lecturers. More so, the DTE as the standards controlling body should recommend to the Government and the college that prospective lecturers must have done a course in adult learning facilitation.

Suggestions provided in this section offer a number of options which student mothers and other stakeholders can adopt. Hopefully, the affected students would take advantage of the best possible option. These suggestions can be improved on through further research before being adopted.

5.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While conducting this study, it became evident that further research is required into related areas which could benefit the pregnant and nursing adult learners as well as lecturers. I therefore propose that further research be carried out in the following areas:

- This study has revealed that it is necessary for lecturers to support pregnant and nursing adult learners. It is therefore important that research be carried out to find ways in which this group of learners can be supported in their educational endeavours.

- Mention has been made of lecturers who treated mothering students in ways which militated against principles of adult accompaniment. It is suggested that research should be conducted on the attitudes of lecturers towards pregnant and nursing students.
- It is suggested that research be done to establish female students' attitudes towards contraception as a method of preventing pregnancy. This is important because, in spite of the challenges mothering students face in institutions of higher learning, female students continue to fall pregnant. Establishing their attitudes towards contraception could open up ways through which they could be assisted to make informed choices.
- With regard to poor support for and poor relationships between college staff and pregnant and nursing adult learners, more information could be obtained. Such information could form the basis on which staff development programmes would be conducted.
- Since this study focused on six participants and one Reformed Church in Zimbabwe tertiary institution, I propose that further research on the subject of this study in primary and secondary teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe and in other countries be carried out. Larger representative samples and more than one institution could be used.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The actual educational problems faced by pregnant and nursing students, their coping strategies and ways of improving the situation have been identified and described in this study. It has also been accentuated that such problems are attributable to the way(s) the pregnant and nursing students react to their situation and how the Responsible Authority, college administration and lecturers perceive the students. Therefore, a concerted effort by all stakeholders to address and improve the situation of student mothers is called for.

Throughout the empirical study, overtones of the incongruence between studentship and motherhood abounded. The seven themes that emerged from the empirical study showed that there were a number of challenges that militated against the career aspirations of pregnant and nursing adult learners. Though not insurmountable, the challenges were a force to reckon with. The identified challenges, irrespective of their nature or intensity, reduced the students' coping strategies.

The literature study has highlighted efforts in other countries directed at addressing the educational challenges faced by mothering students. It is my view that with further research on such and similar efforts, valuable lessons upon which the situation of pregnant and nursing adult learners can be improved could be drawn.

Participants' records of final academic performance suggest that although most (five out of six) of the participants managed to fulfil their educational goal, it was not their best. What was needed was to provide them with a number of options from which each would have chosen according to her situation. It is in this view that recommendations were given in this study.

It is believed that the findings of this study will influence stakeholders to critically re-consider the predicament of pregnant and nursing adult learners with the view to improve their learning environment.

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APPENDIX A

MORGENSTER TEACHERS' COLLEGE

SEPTEMBER 2002-

CONTRACT/AGREEMENT FORM BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND THE TEACHERS' COLLEGE

I..... will observe the following

1. Morgenster Teachers' College is an institution of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, so as a student of this College I agree to abide by the rules and regulations of this church and I am expected to attend Church service on Sunday.
2. I promise to obey authority and carry out duties delegated to me.
3. I agree to pay fees by first day of each term, and that I will be withdrawn from the course if I fail to do so.
4. I understand that I should attend ALL lectures and ALL assignments as required by the college.
5. I agree to maintain and clean the College premises at all times.
6. I accept that disciplinary action can be taken against me by the College authority when my behaviour is unbecoming of the teaching Profession or if I breach any of the rules and regulations.
7. I understand that I will be withdrawn from the course when:
 - a) I am found to be under the influence or possession of intoxicating liquor and habit forming drugs at College.
 - b) I am absent from duty while on Teaching Practice without permission of the Headmaster or the relevant authority.
 - c) I am absent from College, without seeking prior permission from the person who has the authority to grant permission and fail to attend lectures for 14 consecutive days or the equivalent there of.
 - d) Indulge in violent behaviour against fellow students or any other person.
 - e) I am involved or incite other people to get involved in strike, action, e.g. class boycott, sit-in or public demonstration against established authority, etc.
8. I promise to be held responsible for all my behaviour because the College is a tertiary institution for adults, where I am expected to make mature independent decisions acceptable to my country, the Ministry, the University of Zimbabwe, the Responsible Authority, the College and teaching profession.
9. I promise to respect College property and to replace anything that I have damaged or is missing when it is under my care.
10. I understand and appreciate that I will partake of food made available to me by the college.
11. I will follow and accept the channels of communication spelt out in the consultative bodies of the college and the administration.
12. I do appreciate that the college wants to know my whereabouts when it is in session and I will therefore seek permission to obtain leave of absence from college even during the weekends.

- 13. I am aware that Morgenster Teachers' College is a private institution which will not provide bedding so I will obtain my own blankets, pillow-cases, sheets, pyjamas, bedspreads etc.
- 14. I promise that I will observe the rules of formal dress that apply to the teaching profession.
- 15. I promise that I will take part in core-curricula activities organised by the college/school because they serve to enrich my experience and knowledge related to the teaching profession.
- 16. I promise not to be in the company of students of opposite sex in hostels, common rooms and other shady out bounds places after 5pm.
- 17. I understand that if I fall pregnant or cause a fellow student to become pregnant, I shall be withdrawn from hostels.
- 18. I understand that if I fall pregnant or make a pupil pregnant civil servants disciplinary procedures will be applied.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT.....PLACE.....DATE.....

WITNESS.....POSITION.....DATE.....

PRINCIPAL.....SIGNATURE.....DATE.....

APPENDIX B

Morgenster Teachers' College
P.O. Morgenster
Masvingo

8 July 2010

The Principal
Morgenster Teachers' College
P.O. Morgenster
Masvingo

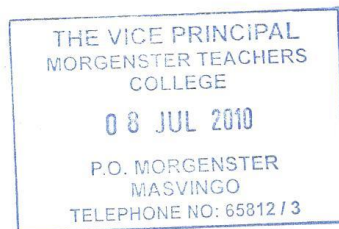
Re: Application for permission to carry out interviews among Third Year students

I write to seek permission to carry out interviews with your students. I am a UNISA student doing a research project in order to fulfil the requirements for the M.Ed degree (Adult Education). The title of the dissertation is: **Educational Challenges of Pregnant and Nursing Adult Learners; A Case Study of Morgenster Teachers' College.**

I hope you will consider my request favourably

Yours faithfully

R. Mamhute (Mrs.)



APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH

I, the undersigned,..... hereby agree to:

- take part in the research on the topic: **THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF PREGNANT AND NURSING ADULT LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY OF MORGENSTER TEACHERS' COLLEGE.**
- authorize the researcher to use in her discretion, the data that I here provide for purposes of writing a research report on the topic given above.

Furthermore, I also state that it is my understanding that:

- I may, at any time, withdraw my consent and discontinue taking part in the research;
- the information that I have provided until such time as I withdraw my participation in this research can still be used by the researcher;
- the researcher will, at all times maintain strict confidentiality and anonymity of the identity of the participant and the information so given by the participant;
- I have the prerogative to refuse to answer any question(s) as and when I feel such question(s) infringe on my privacy;
- by signing this consent form, I undertake to answer in an honest manner all reasonable questions, not to provide false information and not in any purposeful way mislead the researcher;

I herewith declare that the researcher;

- has explained to me the aims of this research
- has informed and explained to me the content of this consent form.

By co-signing this consent form, the researcher undertakes to observe the provisions of this form and I (the participant) indicate that I understand and agree to take part in this research.

Signed at..... on.....(date)

Participants' signature..... Researchers' signature.....

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PREGNANT ADULT LEARNERS

1. How are you feeling today?
2. How is it like to be pregnant and studying?
3. Do you sometimes miss lectures because of your pregnancy? How do you catch up?
4. Would you say your pregnancy affects your studies?
 - * do you sometimes have to re-write an assignment?
 - * how do you feel when this happens?
 - * do you sometimes think of your condition in the light of your studies?
 - * do you communicate with your lecturers when you encounter a problem(s) in your studies?
5. How supportive are other students? -Males? Females?
6. What arrangements have you made so far to secure a baby minder?
7. What problems; physical, social, financial and administrative, do you face in your studies as a pregnant student?
8. If you were asked to advise other students about studying while pregnant, what advice would you give?
9. How do you find physical education, art and home economics practical lectures?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NURSING ADULT LEARNERS

1. How is the baby? What was she/he doing when you left?
2. How do you manage your studies and caring for the baby at the same time?
 - * how does your caring for the baby affect your studies?
 - * do you sometimes submit assignments after the due date?
 - * how do you feel about this?
 - * do you sometimes have to do re-writes?
 - * how do you feel when you fail an assignment?
3. Do you sometimes miss lectures because of the baby? When you do, how do you catch up?
4. Do you think that missing lectures affects your performance in assignments?
5. What would you say concerning your financial situation as a nursing student-mother?
6. What other problems do you face as a nursing student-mother?
7. What suggestions do you have that can help you cope with your studies as a nursing student-mother?
8. What would you like the college administration to do for you as nursing students?
9. What is the attitude of lecturers towards you and other nursing student-mothers?
10. Is there anything else you would want me to know about you and your studies as a student-mother?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW 3: TRANSCRIPTION

Interview held with a pregnant adult learner (Y2) who is in her last phase of the teacher education programme at Morgenster Teachers' College. The interview was held on the 11th of October 2010 at 3.00 pm.

I: Good afternoon. How are you feeling today?

Y2: Much better except for the heat.

I: So how is it like to be studying while pregnant?

Y2: It's hard. It does not go well. There is pressure of work and one's own pressure. Because of pressure of work I have submitted three assignments after the due date. When submitting the late assignments, I talked to the lecturers and they understood... Sometimes you feel like sleeping but there will be work to be done.

I: You talked of your own pressure, what could that be?

Y2: I mean as a person you have a lot of things on your mind and sometimes you are not feeling well.

I: So...?

Y2: I ignore the pain... the illness and do work. It's difficult but there is no choice. Sometimes I submit work late ... but it's risky... lecturers at times refuse to accept late submissions at first, and they threaten you with warning forms...but later they accept.

I: Do you sometimes miss lectures?

Y2: Yes, sometimes I fail to attend lectures. And when I do, I get notes from others. For example last term I was in hospital for a week... Sometimes notes are incomprehensible, but I just write to fulfil a requirement.

I: Would you then say your pregnancy affects your studies?

Y2: Eh...e pregnancy slackens my learning pace. In fact it has lowered my capacity to learn. Even participation in lectures...I just sit and try to listen.

I: How supportive are other students?

Y2: Other students help a lot... sometimes they explain to me what they learned in lectures and they bring information on what is wanted. Yesterday they prepared a chair and a table for me for the exam because I could not come in the afternoon.

I: And how supportive are your lecturers?

Y2: Nothing bad. They even wonder how we manage to continue with our studies. Some lecturers understand us but the Physical Education lecturers are rather difficult, they do not understand. They say... bring a letter from the doctor that says you are pregnant.

I: How about your Physical Education practicals... how do you find them?

Y2: I have no problems with practical assignments... I was fortunate to do all my practical assignments during the early stages of my pregnancy, but others... u...uh they have been given theoretical assignments instead of practical ones.

I: Have you made any arrangements for a baby minder?

Y2: No. I have not made any arrangement. I will give birth during the holidays so there is no need to worry about that.

I: Are there any other problems you face as a pregnant student?

Y2: U...uhm... my legs sometimes swell and I feel dizzy and sometimes hunger reaches extreme levels.

I: How is that...?

Y2: College gives us food [meals] but sometimes I just don't like the food. When hungry I stop reading and look for something to eat first.

I: Any other problems...?

Y2: At times I feel tired but I sit till the end of a lecture... movement ...is painful. Its painful moving uphill [reference to the Morgenster terrain]. I wish we could close and leave this place...it's painful.

I: Do you sometimes have to re-write an assignment?

Y2: No. I think God saw how problematic it was going to be. If you get a re-write when you have to work on another assignment that has to be submitted it was going to be problematic.

I: If you were asked to advise other students about studying while pregnant, what advice would you give?

Y2: I would say don't...pregnancy and study are not compatible.

I: How is that?

Y2: Like I made reference before... sometimes when you have to read or research for an assignment you find that your body is not prepared to. You see... you run the risk of being labeled lazy or dull by the lecturers... and it is not good to be in bad books with them.

I: Would you say you have made adequate preparation for the examinations?

Y2: I think I have... I have done what I could.

I: Does your condition [being pregnant] worry you sometimes?

Y2: Yes. You see... our college is next to the hospital and so many stories are told of frightening experiences from the labour ward. Some women die during giving birth and others have prolonged labour... there are so many stories... and they worry me.

I: So...?

Y2: You know how it is when one is worried ... I won't be reading... even when I try to the stories keep on crossing my mind. I lose concentration on my work. I however leave everything to God.

I: If the college administration asked you what you would want it to do to help pregnant students, what would you say?

Y2: [With a dubious smile] Oh... the admin? I think it should just let us stay in the hostels. It could also allow us to cook food to supplement our meals.

I: Meaning...?

Y2: At times I don't like the meals that we get from the dining. If we are allowed to stay in the hostels, then we won't be able to cook for ourselves as we are doing now. So if they set aside a room to be used... a small kitchen... it would be fine.

I: Thank you for your time. I wish you the best of luck in your exams.

Y2: You are welcome.

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW 4: TRANSCRIPTION

Interview held with a nursing adult learner (X3) who is in her last phase of the teacher education programme at Morgenster Teachers' College. The interview was held on the 18th of October 2010 at 3.30 pm.

I: Good afternoon... (name provided). I am glad that you have managed to come for the interview despite your tight schedule.

X3: Good afternoon mum... it's tight but I had to come because I promised that I would come today.

I: By the way, is your baby a girl or a boy?

X3: She is a girl, her name is...(name provided).

I: What was she doing when you left her?

X3: -chuckling- Ah...a, she was busy crying. She wanted to feed but I couldn't feed her because I am feeding the first baby.

I: Meaning...?

X3: College work of course.

I: So does she cry everyday when you leave?

X3: She cries everyday when I leave her and I feel very guilty that I can't attend to her, I can't satisfy her needs.

I: How then do you manage your studies caring for the baby?

X3: I am trying to do it, but somehow it is very difficult. When you are writing an assignment she comes to sit on the book you are writing in. Sometimes... like what once happened, assignments are eaten (laughs). You will have finished writing, and you decide to do something else leaving your assignment, and you find it

eaten. But I brought it to the lecturer concerned. I said to him "...this is proof that I had written the assignment," and he laughed and gave me time to write it again.

I: So... would you say caring for the baby affects your studies?

X3: The baby does not affect my studies but social problems. You will be having own stress and things like that. What affected me most... was... in July (looking unhappy) my husband was involved in a car accident. Even now it troubles me. He tried to go back to work ...he is a driver...but his leg continues to give him problems so he is at home, making routine visits to the hospital. This also affects me economically.

I: How is that?

X3: I hardly find wages to pay the maid who takes care of the baby. Sometimes people from my family give me the money. As for food, I am okay. But as a student, money is a problem... it is quite difficult.

I: Do you sometimes have to submit assignments after the due date?

X3: Yes but I don't feel bad about it, I don't blame myself. Because of my circumstances I just submit when I have finished writing ...that's when I would have managed.

I: How do the lecturers react when you submit the assignments after others have done so?

X3: Um... sometimes they understand but it depends... at times they consider it as a re-write and mark it out of 50 instead of a 100.

I: How do you feel when that happens?

X3: What can I do? I just accept things as they happen.

I: Do you sometimes have to re-write assignments?

X3: Yes, I wrote one in Maths. I failed to understand the demands of the question completely. It was on fractions... so I decided to leave it until I found the solution. I was from Chiredzi (where the husband is) when I wrote the assignment. I just wrote so that it could be said that I submitted ... it was like I wrote it for someone else. I wrote it hurriedly in the lecture theatre.

I: Would you say you get enough time to do research?

X3: Night time is appropriate for study. So I take my baby to the female hostels for discussions, especially when we are going to write tests and towards exams.

I: What happens to the baby during discussions?

X3: At times she plays alone until she goes to sleep.

I: How about using the library?

X3: Time to go the library is difficult to get. So most of the time the best I can do is to borrow a book... and when the baby is asleep I read.

I: How did you feel when you failed the Maths assignment?

X3: I just accepted because I did not know anything about the topic. The topic was dealt with when I was away.

I: What do you think are the lecturers' attitude towards you and other student-mothers?

X3: They don't consider that we are nursing mothers. If lectures end at 1.00 pm that is when we dismiss with the rest of the students. There is no feeding hour. When you encounter a problem and say, 'I ... I ... trying to explain your case' ... for example in music, my main subject. I had gone to the hospital when others went for singing. When I came back... he shouted at me and told me it was my choice to be a mother and a student...(in a lower voice showing that she was not speaking to the interviewer) and he is right, the two courses; mothering and teacher education, do not go well together. One day I jokingly said to my music lecturer 'If it was possible, if I had known, I would have abandoned the baby.'

I: Besides the music lecture, do you often miss lectures?

X3: No

I: What other problems do you face as a nursing student-mother?

X3: At times when the baby has to be taken for baby clinic and you want to come for lectures so you have to miss lectures.

I: When that happens how you do catch up?

X3: I ask for notes from others but there won't be an explanation ... it will have passed.

I: What do you mean?

X3: What happens in note taking is that others use short hand so you won't understand what the person wanted to say.

I: So what do you do to ensure that you get sense out of the borrowed notes?

X3: Some... I would ask what they wanted to say and I also write using my short hand.

I: How helpful are the other students?

X3: Other students are keen to help. They are keen and kind. If they write something when I am away they explain to me what the lecturer was saying when I come. However, in Theory of music, where my performance is deteriorating, if you miss a lecture and you find certain concepts handled (taught) to have them explained by somebody, it is difficult. Those without children are in a better position. If I had no baby I would have understood.

I: What do you think the college administration can do to assist you cope with your situation?

X3: Which admin? The college administration can do nothing for us. If you go to the admin with your problem...they will scold you saying, 'why do you have babies when you wan to come to school?'

I: Eh-e ... but if it wanted to help what do you suggest it should do?

X3: The Admin could give us accommodation so that we don't pay rent, water and electricity bills. If one had free accommodation it would have been better.

I: Is there anything else you would want to tell me?

X3: The greatest challenges come towards examination time. When you want to engage in group discussions, we have to go to the female hostels and come back around twelve midnight carrying baby on my back... I will be afraid and at risk of being attacked on my way.

I: That is a possibility but I hope it does not happen to you since the premises are guarded Thank you for availing yourself for the interview. Good luck in your examinations.

X3: Thank you.

