

**AN INVESTIGATION OF PARENTHOOD POLICY AMONG STUDENT PARENTS IN A
KENYAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY: A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

CHARITY MWANGI-CHEMNJOR

A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in the Subject

SOCIO-EDUCATION

At the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

UNISA

PROMOTER: DR JS MASEKO

June 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that **AN INVESTIGATION OF PARENTHOOD POLICY AMONG STUDENT PARENTS IN A KENYAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY: A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE** 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.



Signature

Charity Mwangi-Chemnjor
Student number 3576/133/4

June 2012

Date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to various institutions and individuals whose assistance has facilitated the successful completion of this study.

Very special thanks to my promoter Dr JS Maseko for all the support, advice and constructive critical comments made towards the success of this work as well as the patience and encouragement he extended to me. His valuable and continuous guidance towards this work is highly appreciated.

The UNISA library staff for the efficiency with which they processed my requests whenever there was need; Laikipia University College of Egerton University for the institutional support without which this work could not have been a success.

I acknowledge with gratitude the support I received from my son, James Koima, my husband Syllas Chemnjor, my mother Mrs Margaret Mwangi and the rest of my family who continually encouraged me to complete this work. Thank you for your prayers, encouragement and moral support.

I acknowledge with great appreciation the support extended to me by my colleagues especially Dr Pauline Ngoro, and Dr Monica Rukwaro who have always had a positive word and prayer to keep me going and were willing to edit my work under pressure without complaining; Fred Ngoro, for the technical support and encouragement offered right from the beginning of this work until the very end. I appreciate too the gracious technical support that I received from Mercy Wanjihia. May God bless you.

In addition, I wish to sincerely thank the research respondents' participants, students and staff who provided valuable information for the subject of this study. My most sincere appreciation to many others who contributed in many diverse and significant ways to this work and whose names I may not have mentioned. Your contribution went a long way to the success of this work. May God bless you all.

Finally but most important, to God for sustaining me in good physical, mental, emotional health and for providing all the graces and enablement sufficient to complete this study I BLESS YOUR NAME OH GOD!

ABSTRACT

This research is set within the context of the Kenyan Public Universities, where with the changing student population dynamics, students are increasingly choosing to combine parenting with studies. Many of these student parents both male and female have had to negotiate the academic requirements as well as the burden of parenthood. Such a study is important at this time of privatization and liberalization of higher education in order to open up public discourse on the provision of higher education and the effect on the socio-economic status of the students. Using qualitative research analysis based on socio-educational, socio cultural as well as socio-economic status (SES), a study was designed and conducted with the question posed: What are the socio-educational approaches of public universities with respect to student parents. Eighteen (18) interviews of ten (10) university officials and eight (8) student parents formed the research sample. Qualitative research questions were prepared in an in-depth interview guide and a focus group questioning route. Data revealed that there are students both male and female who are actively parenting in the public university and that they face role conflict and financial challenges which impacts on retention and completion rates of students in the public university. The research argues that there is need to create awareness of socio-economic status (SES) in the university approach to inclusiveness of all students as well as student parents. Recommendations based on this study should be helpful as guidelines for a model on guidance for student parents as well as documentation of a clear policy on approaches or support for student parenthood in the public university.

KEY TERMS

Public University; Kenya; Student parenthood; Student-parents; Student-mothers; Student-fathers; Role conflict; Socialization; Social Economic Status (SES); Higher Education; Inclusiveness; Focus groups; Qualitative research; Socio-Education, University Completion Rates; In-depth Interview Guide.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my son James Koima who encouraged me to keep on and not to give up and whose faith in his mother gave me the motivation to complete this work, my husband Sylas Chemnjor who never complained all through however long it seemed, but quietly stood by me which was a tremendous support and encouragement in itself. May God bless you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT	5
KEY TERMS	6
DEDICATION	7
CHAPTER 1	15
GENERAL ORIENTATION	15
1.1 INTRODUCTION	15
1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	19
1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	27
1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH	28
1.5 DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS.....	28
1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	30
1.6.1 Samples	31
1.6.2 Interview Protocol	32
1.6.3 Data	33
1.6.4 Ethical Issues	35
1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY	35
1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS.....	36
1.9 SUMMARY.....	37
CHAPTER 2	38
SOCIALIZATION OF STUDENT PARENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION	38
2.1 INTRODUCTION	38
2.2 BACKGROUND TO STUDENT PARENTS.....	40
2.2.1 Institutional Culture/ Higher Education Culture.....	42
2.2.2 The Role of the University in Socialization	50
2.2.3 Communication and Student Participation In Policy Direction.....	53
2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE SOCIALIZING ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES	57

2.4	SOCIO-EDUCATION FACTORS THAT LEAD TO STUDENT FRUSTRATIONS OR DISSATISFACTION.....	63
2.4.1	Disturbed Involvement (Relationships).....	63
2.4.2	Disturbed Student Parent Identification Role.....	64
2.4.3	Disturbed Social Relationship Setting At University.....	65
2.4.4	Disturbed Entry into The Social Environment	65
2.5	SOCIALIZATION OF STUDENT PARENT: THE ROLE OF FACULTY.....	66
2.6	SUMMARY.....	68
CHAPTER 3.....		70
SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PARENTHOOD IN THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN KENYA.....		70
3.1	INTRODUCTION	70
3.2	VARIATIONS OF STUDENT PARENTHOOD IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.....	71
3.2.1	Undergraduate Student Parenthood	72
3.2.2	Graduate Student Parenthood.....	73
3.2.3	Single Student Mother Parenthood	74
3.2.4	Male Student Parenthood.....	75
3.3	STUDENT PARENTHOOD VERSUS PARENTING AND SCHOLARSHIP.....	77
3.4	SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL THEORIES AND STUDENT PARENTHOOD	78
3.4.1	Structural Functionalism, The Public University And Student Parenthood.....	79
3.4.2	Symbolic Interaction Functions of The Organization And Student Parenthood ..	80
3.4.3	Conflict, Academic Environment and Parenthood.....	80
3.4.4	Conflict, Social Cultural Expectations of Parenthood.....	85
3.5	Socio-Educational Perspective of Student Parenthood	86
3.5.1	Social Perspectives (Demands) of Parenthood.....	87
3.5.2	Educational Perspectives of Parenthood	88
3.5.3	Integration of Social And Educational Demands of Parenthood	89
3.6	SUMMARY.....	90
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		91
4.1	INTRODUCTION	91
4.2	RESEARCH AIMS	91
4.3	RESEARCH DESIGN	92
4.3.1	Qualitative Research.....	93

4.4	RESEARCH METHODS.....	95
4.4.1	Description of The Sample	95
4.4.2	Sampling Procedures	95
4.4.3.	Research Instruments	96
4.4.3.1.	In-Depth Interviews	97
4.4.3.2.	Focus Group Interviews	98
4.4.4.	Observation	99
4.4.5.	Data Collection Procedures	101
4.4.6.	Data Analysis.....	102
4.5.1	Validity	103
4.5.2	Reliability	105
4.5.2.1	Applicability.....	106
4.5.2.2	Consistency.....	106
4.5.3	Ethical Measures	107
4.5.3.1	Confidentiality.....	108
4.6	SHORTCOMINGS DURING DATA COLLECTION	108
4.7	SUMMARY.....	109
	CHAPTER 5.....	111
	DATA ANALYSIS	111
5.1	INTRODUCTION	111
5.2	ASSUMPTIONS GUIDING THE RESEARCH	112
5.3	RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESTATED	114
5.4	DATA ANALYSIS: PHASE 1.....	114
5.4.1	Probability of Student Parenthood in The Public University.....	115
5.4.1.1	Student Parenthood Related To Planned Student Choice	116
5.4.1.2	Student parenthood related to unplanned student choice	117
5.4.1.3	Student Parenthood Related To Academic Environment	118
5.4.1.4	Student Parenthood Related To Socio-Cultural Environment	123
5.4.1.5	Student Parenthood Related To Economic Environment	124
5.4.2	Impact of Socio-Educational Factors On Student Parenthood	126
5.4.2.1	Probability of a University Student Becoming a Student Parent.....	127
5.4.2.2	Probability of A Student Parent Completing University Studies.....	128

5.4.3	An Overview of Research Findings	129
5.5	DATA ANALYSIS: PHASE 2	130
5.5.1	Data Analysis: Observation	130
5.5.1.1	Frequency of Interactions with Office of Dean of Students	132
5.5.1.2	Type of Interactions with Office of The Dean of Students.....	133
5.5.1.3	Frequency of Interactions with Office of The Student Counsellor	133
5.5.1.4	Type of Interaction with The Office of The Student Counsellor	135
5.5.2	Data Analysis: Individual Interviews	135
5.5.2.1	University Personnel Orientation in Relation to Theory and Practice	135
5.5.2.2	Culture and Environment of Public University	138
5.5.2.3	Student Parent Interactions In Relation To University Culture.....	139
5.5.3	Data Analysis; Focus Group Interviews	139
5.5.3.1	Student Parents and Social Environment.....	140
5.5.3.2	Student Parents and Demands of Parenthood.....	142
5.5.4	An Overview of Observations and Individual Findings	144
5.5.4.1	An Overview f Focus Group Interviews	144
5.6	DATA ANALYSIS: PHASE 3	145
5.6.1	Themes Identified	145
5.6.1.1	Student Parents and University Structure	146
5.6.1.2	Role of University Support Services	147
5.6.1.3	Academic Structure and Student Parenting.....	153
5.6.1.4	Administrative Structure and Student Parenting	154
5.7	SUMMARY.....	155
	CHAPTER 6.....	156
	CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	156
6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	156
6.2	OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	156
6.2.1	The Effect of The Experiences of Student Parents In Relation To Their Socio-Economic Status	161
6.2.1.2	The Response of The Public University To The Changing And Diversified Student Body	163
6.2.1.3	The Impact of the Burden of Parenting to the Academic Interactions and Interpersonal Relationships in the Public University	164

6.2.1.4	The Impact of the Burden of Parenting On Student Parents: The Influence of Institutional Factors.....	165
6.2.1.5	The Impact of the Burden of Parenting On Student Parents: The Influence Of Personal/Individual Factors	167
6.2.1.6	Role of the Public University In Terms Of Socio-Educational Guidance of Students to Cope With the Demands Made On The Student Parents.....	167
6.3	CONCLUSIONS	168
6.3.1	Questions Related To Effect of Socio-Economic Status Of Student Parents In The Public University	168
6.3.1.2	Student Parents Negotiating The Effects Of Socio Economic Status.....	169
6.3.1.3	Questions Related To The Diversified Student Body	170
6.3.1.4	Approaches That Can Be Adopted By The Public Universities In Relation To Student Parents	171
6.3.2	Summary	172
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	174
6.4.1	The Role of The Public University	174
6.4.1.2	Develop Staff- Student Relationship	175
6.4.1.3	Develop Policy on Student Parents in The University.....	176
6.4.1.4	Emphasis on The Interrelationships Between Core University Functions...	177
6.4.1.5	Integrate Diversification Into The Rules, Regulations	177
6.4.2	The Role of The Support Services Guidelines For Student Support	178
6.4.2.1	Promote University Support for Student Parent and Other Students.....	178
6.4.3	The Role of The Stakeholders In Public University Education.....	179
6.4.3.1	Promote Community Involvement	180
6.4.3.2	Promote Internal Community Involvement	180
6.4.3.3	Promote External Community Involvement	181
6.4.3.4	Promote Parents/ Guardians Involvement.....	182
6.5	AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	182
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	184
	TABLES.....	194
	Table 1: Typical day for a student mother	194
	Table 2: Sample profile of participants in the study	195
	APPENDICES.....	196
	APPENDIX A	196

Consent Form for participation in interview on student parenting:.....	196
APPENDIX B.....	198
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENT PARENTS IN A PUBLIC UINIVERSITY IN KENYA.....	198
SECTION 1: Biographical Information	198
SECTION 2: Conceptions of student parenting in a public university	198
Section 3: Conceptions about scholarship in the university.....	203
Section 3: Conceptions about scholarship in the university.....	205
4 Conceptions about the role of the university	207
APPENDIX C.....	212
ONE-ON ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENT COUNSELLORS AND DEANS IN A PUBLIC UINIVERSITY IN KENYA	212
SECTION 1: Biographical Information	212
SECTION 2 Conceptions about student parents	212
SECTION 3 Conceptions about the University.....	218
APPENDIX D	221
ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL AND ACADEMIC STAFF IN A PUBLIC UINIVERSITY IN KENYA	221
SECTION 1: Biographical Information	221
SECTION 2 Conceptions about student Parents	221
SECTION 3 Conceptions about the university	225
APPENDIX E.....	229
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONING ROUTE	229
INTRODUCTION:	229
THEME 2. UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE OR SYSTEM.....	232
APPENDIX F	238
RESEARCH PERMIT	238

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHE	Commission for Higher Education
HELB	Higher Education Loans Board
SES	Social Economic Status
SSP	Self Sponsored Programme

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The increasing enrolment of student parents in universities poses a challenge to educators. Student parents in this study refer to students who become parents after joining university and parents who become students. Kenya has experienced an increased demand for university education due to a couple of reasons. Firstly change in the workplace calling for upgrading in marketable skills. Secondly, the increasing emphasis on continuing education to improve and keep relevant in the world of work. Thirdly, the university moving closer to the community and availing its educational services to a wider populace. The university has traditionally been at the heart of innovation in society and is constantly challenged to be a leader in expansion and change (Ramphela 2004:16). These issues have resulted in an increase in the number of universities both public and private as well as in a diversified student population seeking entry into the university.

Various studies in the area of student parenting reveal the silence from major educational journals on the education needs of pregnant or mothering students. This silence is further demonstrated in regard to the socio-education needs of student fathers in the public university. Most of the research on the discourse presented on students who are parents is foremost on student mothers. The studies present powerful and important viewpoints on various socio-welfare policies but the socio-educational perspective on the policy on these students is minimal. Moreover the contribution of educators directly involved with these students in the educational institutions has been largely deficient. Pillow (2006:60) raises the following questions: what are the educational histories and experiences of mothering students; what programs have proved effective in addressing the educational perspective for these students; why have some programs proved to be more effective than others.

These questions demonstrate the gaps in the information on the education perspective in respect to mothering students and student fathers who are even less visible in the public university in Kenya. Is the public university in Kenya able to address the issue of the parenthood policy in regard to student parents in a socio-education perspective?

This is a scientific exploration of the manner in which the public university in Kenya addresses student parents and it asks the question: What are Kenyan public university socio-educational approaches with respect to student parents?

The central issue of the study is to investigate the impact of socio-education in the provision of education to socio-economic status (SES) and the public university of Kenya's approaches to student parents. The investigation is part of the general issue of education disparities, which involves the oft-observed in social welfare, policy, education, financial and psychological support of student parents. A review of recent research and theory identifies the general theoretical approaches that provide explanations for the associations between (SES) and student parents in higher education: the social causation, social selection and interactions perspective.

Higher education including university education has been affected by the liberalization and privatization policies which have impacted on other private and public sectors of the economy. This has resulted in the creation of a competitive environment as well as an increased number of universities. All in the quest to make individual universities stand out in the competition brought about by the liberalization and privatization of university education. Liberalization has been stimulated firstly by the structural adjustment programmes and secondly by the specific governments in an effort to terminate the heavy reliance on government funding of higher education. With declining budgetary allocations to the public universities, the need for alternative sources of funding arises. This has resulted in

universities increasing admission of students to the Module Two or the Self Sponsored Programmes (SSP) in an effort to increase alternative income generating programmes for the university (Nafukho in Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004:129). These self-sponsored students are in addition to the other regular or traditional students who join university after their high school education. This has resulted in a diversification of the student landscape. Student parents are part of this diversified landscape as a variety of students attempt to increase their marketable skills as well as continue their education. A study on public universities and private or self-sponsored students draws attention to the diversity of students admitted into those programmes and how they have enhanced the professional and academic discourse in the university in addition to increasing public appreciation and interest in the public university (Nyaigotti-Chacha in Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004:103). This diversity in student population is valuable and it is due to this diversity that the issue of student parents demands considerable attention given that firstly it will have a bearing on the competitiveness of the institution, and secondly it will influence the way the university perceives and manages diversity. Prewitt (2004:41) submits that with the steady introduction of market-like accountability mechanisms, priorities of the institution as well as internal institutional structures and cultures are part of what is influenced in addition to the diversification of the stakeholders.

The aim of this study was to find answers to the problem as observed in Kenyan public universities about the lack of support to student parents and answer the question: What are the Kenyan public university socio-educational approaches with respect to student parents in higher education? Empirical evidence demonstrates support for the social causation view that SES affects natural provision of education for student parents.

As questions are raised on the educational histories and experiences of student parents in the public university and effectiveness of intervening education programs

in Kenya, hopefully it will be an all inclusive debate with educators as active participants. These are questions which if addressed in a socio- educational setting such as in this investigation would be enlightening. As these questions are raised they demonstrate the gaps in knowledge concerning this group of students as attention is focused on bridging these gaps through addressing some of the questions raised, the policy and practice in the Kenyan public university would be seen and said to be more inclusive. The gaps pointed out by (Pillow 2006:60) in her study on student mothers in North America happen to be closely related to the gaps in knowledge concerning this group of students in Kenya. In Kenya these gaps are demonstrated in a closer examination of policies on student parents. On the Kenyan scene information from the public university concerning student parents and policy is not very elaborate. The policy does not necessarily differentiate between student parents and other students who are not parents. As a result much of the discussion in the following section has been garnered from studies from other universities. Hopefully, the investigation of educational histories and experiences of parenting students in the Kenya public university would result in an expansion of the socio-educational space while a focus on the effectiveness of programs and policies would be enriched by the contribution of the educators directly involved with this group of students.

Student parents as a phenomenon in higher education is as a result of various factors, analysing these factors will place student parenthood in perspective and affect a more sympathetic approach towards reviewing existing approaches. Student parents have challenges of their own of which when these have been scientifically explored will enable educationists to intervene better in assisting to alleviate the challenges.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The problems of student parents in higher education have been investigated by a number of researchers abroad, but very little investigation has been done on this phenomenon in the Republic of Kenya. Alon (2004:10) has conducted research in the University of Berkeley on student parents, career related issues and needs. Some other researchers who have studied student parents abroad are (Williams 2004:3; Millman 2007:2; Stillman 2007:1 and Young 2007:5).

In the Republic of Kenya the following researchers have investigated the need for guidance among student parents in general. Murage (2004:6) focuses on empowering student mothers for improved academic performance and personal development, (Mutyang'a 2004:7) centres on student parents social academic experiences in the public university (Shitemi 2005:3) deliberates on socio- economic implications on student parenthood in the public university, while (Bartoo 2005:9) raises the need to address the economic pressure bearing on student parents in the public universities.

The phenomenon of student parents in higher education has been singled out by many university Vice Chancellors as a major educational problem. The approaches used towards addressing student parenthood in the public university in Kenya vary depending on the specific institution. These approaches are normally based on social policy and are formed as a result of demands brought about by change in the society and in the education policy. They have evolved over time and are as a result of the response to challenges presented to the social and the education sectors. As new universities were (and are) constituted over time, they were encouraged to formulate individual approaches regarding the diversities in their specific institutions within the framework of the national philosophy, vision and goals of education in Kenya. As a result each individual university has been able to respond with varying policies regarding the diversities in their institution. One such diversity has been the approaches taken to student parenthood in the university.

Through the autonomy ceded to the individual university councils by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), the government is able to create incentives for improvement of infrastructure in the local universities with each specific university being encouraged to develop programmes and to expand while bearing responsibility for creativity, expansion and innovation in the face of diversity (Republic of Kenya Sessional Paper No.1 2005:54, 56). The Government of Kenya through the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme 2005-2010 has stressed key components of investment in university education. The objective has been to expand access and equity, enhance quality and relevance and improve effectiveness and efficiency in the governance and management of university education in the face of diversity of the expanding population of students who seek entrance into universities (Ministry of Education... Kenya Education sector... 2005:234).

Student parents are part of this evolving diversity and various public universities in Kenya express different approaches concerning this group of students and these approaches are articulated in university manuals, calendars and student handbooks. A review of the student handbooks and manuals of public universities yielded the following: The Egerton University handbook (2004:35) recommends that expectant students vacate the university halls of residence three months before delivery, “since pregnancy disrupts academic performance”. In Laikipia college of Egerton University the orientation and information manual (2004:30) points out that “maternity services are not provided, and expecting students should vacate the halls of residence at least three months prior to the expected date of delivery”. The University of Nairobi calendar (2001:637) recommends that “in the event of pregnancy either before or after taking residence in the halls, students move out of the residence at least three months before confinement and reapply three months after delivery”. Approaches taken concerning student parents therefore vary from university to university and will be influenced by the specific university charter from which management

practices directing the day to day running are derived. Other guidelines regulating management policy and practice in specific public universities can be gathered from university handbooks and specific university calendars.

The university approach to pregnancy in the public universities in Kenya is not elaborate and leaves many areas wanting. The implications of parenthood while in college seem to leave an information gap which this study hopes to bridge. For example a study conducted on the prevalence of student pregnancy in Laikipia University College of Egerton University, one of the public universities in Kenya, had the findings termed confidential. Keeping information of this nature confidential leads to a situation where it becomes difficult to assess the magnitude of the issues involved and the experiences of the persons involved and as a result it becomes difficult to inform policy or practice effectively. This is the more reason why it is important to capture these issues in an investigative study of this nature so as to inform policy and resulting practice (Academic Dean personal interview May 10th 2008).

Researchers have addressed the issue of student parents in diverse ways depending on the region they operate from. The examples given in the following discussion are from a few public universities, beginning from the local scene then moving to the national and international arena. Reading through policy documents in Kenya, one gathers that the official university approach to student parents recommends that student parents in public universities look for alternative accommodation away from the other 'traditional students' who reside in the residencies offered by the university. The intention of the public universities may not be to deliberately discriminate against student parents, but the management of this approach results in student parents being forced to look for alternative accommodation outside and around the university campuses, which sometimes may be compromising. In a campus of one of the public universities, the dean of students reveals how attempts

to ease the burden of motherhood on the student are approached in an unsystematic manner. He commented, “when a pregnant student approaches the office of the dean for help, the dean at his or her discretion may give some financial aid to help in medical or related costs, this is minimal aid since there is no provision for such a vote in the dean’s office” (Dean of Students personal interview December 20th 2008). These isolated efforts to help ease the burden of parenthood may need to be addressed in a more systematic and comprehensive manner if the approach to student parenthood in Kenyan public universities is to be seen and said to be all inclusive and effective.

In this section investigations from various North American universities bring out the different perspectives that individual universities have taken as regards student parenthood. There are those that focus on the burden of parenting as it relates to the academic requirements of the institution and there are others that address the impact of parenting on the social lives of the students. The experiences of student parents related from the various settings give an indication of their socio- educational experiences. Young, a student mother from the University of Arizona appreciates the fact that there is provision for an academic accommodation period for graduate students normally eight weeks approved if prior notice for arrangements and adjustments to schedules is made at least four months before the anticipated period. This policy is eligible for female students giving birth; it can apply to a male or female co-parent who is the primary caregiver of the baby, and it is limited to one parent per family. In addition there is unpaid family leave of absence of up to two semesters which according to this student parent is a great help when it comes to social organization and accommodation of parenting in the life of a student (Young in University of Arizona Graduate School 2007:5). The University of Arizona and the University of Michigan are among those universities that provide comprehensive and creative service programs which facilitate successful experiences for parenting students thus leading to an improvement in student participation in the University.

The perception of the university towards student parenthood influences the approaches taken regarding the student parents. Among reasons given for selection of universities by student parents, the services on offer for student parents score highly on the list. This can be measured from the following responses of student parents in respect to the universities they choose to attend. University of Houston was listed as a university of choice because as one student put it, “one got to be treated as a person not a number”. Another student chose it for the support system, and still others cited the flexibility of the professors (Stillman 2007:1). As universities listen to students, what is important to student parents is heard and the challenges they face are recognized as part of the diversity of the student body. In addressing these diverse voices, the university becomes more effective in accommodating not only student parents, but by extension, other diversities found on the campus.

The parenting approach for graduate students at the University of Berkeley (2007) deals with socio-economic issues related to parental leave for new parents, pregnancy and childbirth. The approach recommends the provision of “part time” status for student parents for a period of time while holding full time benefits. In effect “the clock is slowed” for preliminaries, qualifiers and candidacy status during that period. The scheduling of classes, exams, seminars and group meetings as much as possible steers clear of weekends, before 9 am or after 5pm. There are several options the student can choose from in the parental leave including minimal academic involvement, withdrawal or the part time status outlined above. This pregnancy policy would create room for advisors to consider offsite readings to make up, or part time status (University of Berkeley 2007:1). Investigations in the Student Parenting Project, Inc. reveal that education approaches geared towards student parent support services contributes to greater persistence and attainment rates among the student parents. The studies advocate supporting public policy

considerations on student parent programs because this support directly impacts college graduation rates. The studies show that where student parent support services make it possible for students to attend school, the provision of such services becomes an issue of access to education (Student Parenting Project Inc 2007:1). In other words, they make the difference between accessing and continuing in the education process, or lack of access and completion of the education process.

Approaches at Penn State University include PhD student family-friendly approach, where student mothers are eligible for a “time-off” period during the term they are on support. This approach is effected when the student gives notice resulting in eligibility for fulltime benefits such as academic accommodation up to eight weeks during the academic year. In addition there is a family leave policy where a student may take an unpaid family leave of absence for the birth or adoption of child or childcare up to two semesters (Penn State 2007:3). Princeton University has family-friendly benefits for graduate students including an approach that offers three months of paid leave from research and teaching to new birth mothers. Doctoral students who become parents including those who adopt may apply for need-based child-care grants, subsidized back-up care and care-related travel funds. Both female and male graduate students have reported benefiting from this approach (Millman 2007:1, 2). Other universities that have reportedly instituted similar approaches are, Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley and The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Stanford Report consists of four components which cover academic accommodation, automatic extension of university and departmental requirements, leave from related duties for some time and uninterrupted on-campus housing. In addition it makes an urgent call to universities to address issues of affordable health insurance, preference in family housing, flexibility to take time off for childbirth and access to part time schedules as part of policy concerns (Williams 2004:3). These

illustrations of approaches from other universities can be helpful in the investigation of the approaches taken to student parents in the Kenyan public university as well as building up on the socio-educational perspective.

This study has been motivated by the following: firstly from personal experience on the university campus and interaction with student parents, one becomes conscious that there are concerns peculiar to this group of students on campus. Traditionally the view of a student on campus has been of a young adult on transit from secondary school therefore when one comes across student parents on campus one develops a desire to get to know and understand this group of students. Silver and Silver (1997:2) advance the notion of focus on “who they are, what they want and expect from higher education, and how they judge the experience”. Some of these concerns of getting to know who they are and what they want have been isolated by studies on “The Changing University?” by (McNay in Schuller 1995:119). These concerns he argues are related to high demand on library resources, lecture and other facilities as well as financial resources, “the facilities available to students from catering to the students’ union were built and organized for the 18-year-old living away from home.” The concerns raised in McNay’s study have a bearing on the motivation of this investigation in that, firstly there is a desire to create awareness of this group of students hoping that an increase in awareness will expand the socio-economic dimension.

Secondly, investigations on the changing university landscape increasingly emphasise that student parents and other non-traditional students are increasingly a part of the university landscape. This calls for diversification in the accommodation of the various groups of students presented. In a study on non-traditional entrants to higher education, (Bowl 2003:112) reveals that there has been lack of information, support and guidance to these students. The investigations suggest a need for analysis of some of the structural constraints acting on these students to facilitate a

better understanding of the situation. Some of the constraints include social and cultural factors that may affect their educational participation in the university. This study therefore is in response to the appeal for further analysis of institutional policies on structures that respond to the student parents in the public university.

Thirdly, from experience working in a university community the student parent both father and mother has to carry the burden of parenthood in the face of numerous challenges, especially as is the case in the majority of African Universities where all aspects of university life are affected, from basic living conditions to learning resources. Girdwood in Schuller (1995:98) draws attention to the pressure that has been exerted on universities financially, because there has been both internal and external pressure to reduce expenditure and this goes on to affect services offered to students. With needs that differ markedly from the traditional populations that universities were designed to serve, it is not surprising that some of these students drop out of school, especially student mothers, while for others the impact of parenthood on their potential to function simultaneously as parents and students in the universities is greatly affected. This motivates this study to focus on the approaches to student parenthood in the Kenyan public universities.

Finally this chapter set out to provide a background to the investigation on the approaches to student parenthood in the Kenyan public university. The discussion focused on examples from different universities beginning with universities in Kenya then presented examples from universities in other countries and continents and how they have addressed the phenomenon of student parenthood. An exploration of the social and educational approaches and their effect on the university was presented. Hopefully this should be able to create awareness of the student parent in the public university in Kenya who they are and what they want. An analysis of the implications of institutional approaches and structures on this group should help in articulating the challenges facing the student parent.

The present study is concerned with the provision of education of student parents in the Kenyan public university. It is therefore concerned with amongst others, the observed symbols used by the university principals in addressing the needs of students, especially those from low SES and more so female students. It is important that the research approach and method should be meaningful, as viewed against the background of the student parents in relation to their SES (Socio-Economic Structure).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to find answers to the problem as observed in the Kenyan public universities about the lack of support to student parents and to answer the question: What are the socio-educational approaches of public universities with respect to the student parents?

The researcher directs attention to the problem area by making use of the following structural questions:

- 1.3.1 How do student parents from low SES cope with needs regarding personal, educational, social, psychological and financial in higher education?
- 1.3.2 What is the nature of university academics, university management's knowledge and understanding of student parents' personal needs in terms of spontaneous dimension, interpersonal relationship and orientation towards provision of education?
- 1.3.3 What is the attitude of the Kenya public university management towards the needs of student parents in terms of interpersonal relationships and financial support?
- 1.3.4 What role can guidance services play in the Kenyan public university to assist student parents in actualising their potential in terms of personal, socio-educational and financial support?

Within the framework provided by the above structural questions, the researcher endeavours to highlight some of the essentials required to formulate a guidance programme in the higher educational environment which effectively addresses the problem researched by the study.

1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of the study were as follows:

- 1.4.1 To examine socio-educational approaches of public universities in Kenya with respect to student parents
- 1.4.2 To investigate the implications of university approaches on the subject of student parents
- 1.4.3 To develop a strategy on enhancing student parent approaches in the Kenyan public university.

1.5 DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS

The central concepts used in this study are defined as follows:

Student parent: In this study refers to students who become parents after joining university and parents who join university and become students (Gallagher and Middleton 2009:1)

Parenthood: Refers to a state of being a mother or father and the responsibilities accompanying the situation (Gallagher and Middleton 2009:3)

Policy: policy has been defined as a governing principle, plan or guide for a course of action, a statement of goals that can be translated into a plan or programme by specifying the objective to be observed thereby giving direction to action. Policy is a regulation by an authoritative body stating and guiding decisions to be taken in order to realise specified objectives (de Coning 2007:237).

Social Policy: it is a series of patterns of related decisions to which many circumstances and personal, group and organizational influences have contributed (de Coning 2007:15).

Patriarchy: is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate oppress and exploit women (Walby 1990:20). Patriarchy has been used to refer to a situation as experienced by individuals' interpretation of policy and practice and the impact on parenthood policy in the public university in Kenya

Hegemonic Masculinity: refers to a state of male domination of most institutional structures which is as a result of historical circumstances brought about by patriarchy. (This domination is experienced through traditions, language, and education, division of labour and cultural customs. Hegemonic masculinity perpetuates patterns of domination and power, through ideologies in the social, economic, political and educational institutions. Historically these key structural organizations have been numerically dominated by men and so the ideologies produced have continued to serve this dominance by promoting practises that perpetuate the culture of domination legalize and sustain patriarchal power) (Whitehead 2002:86, 91).

Theory: has been defined as a set of interrelated concepts, assumptions and generalizations that systematically describes, explains or predicts regularities in behaviour. It stimulates and guides the further development of knowledge (Hoy and Miskal 1991:3). Theory is used in this study as a tool to explore the role or function of policy and the impact or influence of policy approaches.

Social Theory: is any attempt to understand society in a systematic and abstract way. Sociological theory is the logically interconnected sets of propositions from which empirical uniformities can be derived (Merton 1967: v, 39).

Social systems: are a group of people who come together with common goals (Hoy and Miskel 1991:17) define a system as a set of interdependent elements forming an organized whole. Organizations are systems of social interactions with influence both from within and from without the system.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is a qualitative study that is investigative in nature. It involved an evaluation of parenthood policy and approaches in the public university in Kenya which were done in relation to an exploration of student parent needs. The research problem and the research questions were used to guide the study.

Sub-problems were used in the study, and these sub-problems as established by (Mcmillan and Schmacher 1993:13) became more specific as the research progressed. The justification for the choice of a qualitative study in investigating the student parent policy and approaches as adapted from these two researchers is that social realities are socially constructed through individual and collective definitions of the situation. A qualitative study or the collection of detailed descriptions of the experiences of student parents is one way of revealing the socio-educational perspective of policy as it impacts on the student parents. A description focussing on various structural change, transformation and localization of gender equity in higher education should be able to bring out areas that have been taken as neutral or common sense. A critical analysis of these structures and ideologies as (Wyner 1991:48) proposes facilitates an exploration of institutional practises, patterns and power structure.

In considering the unit of analysis, the researcher sought to find out who can best answer the question on approaches to university student parenthood. The data was

collected from student parents who carry the burden of parenthood, both student mothers and student fathers. The people who interact with them more often in the management of students; this includes staff in the student counsellor's office, students' deans as well as a sample of administrative and academic staff. The research perused policy documents available on the parenthood policies and other approaches that may impact on student parents.

1.6.1 Samples

The sample of participants for the interviews included:

- Student mothers: Homogenous sampling was used to select student mothers the researcher sampled individuals who are student mothers by virtue of pregnancy or childbearing while studying in the university. This included students who become parents or those parents who are students, or are expectant.
- Student fathers: Snowball sampling, was used to identify student fathers since identifying student fathers is not easy as they do not carry physical characteristics as is the case for pregnancy. Therefore a purposeful sampling like in snowball sampling was used. The researcher asked participants to recommend students on campus who may be fathers and are willing to participate in the research. This was done informally and through questioning in the interviews.
- Personnel who interact most with the student parents: Homogenous sampling was done of staff like the student deans and the student counsellors to include at least male counsellors and female counselling staff. Deans male and female were selected to complete this sample.
- There are administrative personnel who are involved in the policy making and oversee implementation of approaches concerning student parenthood. At least both male and female staff were selected through homogeneous sampling.

- Members of academic staff both male and female were purposefully selected to participate in the study.

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were used where some questions that are close ended and some open-ended questions were asked. The predetermined close ended responses as recommended by (Creswell 2002:205) were useful in acquiring information to support theories and concepts in the literature while the open-ended responses allowed the participant to provide personal experiences that may be outside or beyond those identified in the close-ended options. The use of a close-ended question followed by an open-ended question to explain or elaborate on answers given was done in an effort to represent the different viewpoints in policy and experiences. An interview protocol (guide) was designed with instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked and space to take notes from the interviewee.

1.6.2 Interview Protocol

An interview protocol was designed for use with the student parents. This was done to structure the interview and for note taking and as a result, these captured issues raised in the research questions concerning various dimensions of parenthood in the university and the experiences of student parents in relation to the parenthood approaches of the public university. The interview protocol contained instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked and space to take notes on the responses from the interviewee (Creswell 2002:212).

A staff interview protocol was designed for use in the interviews with the university staff members, administrative and academic staff and faculty who interact on a socio-educational environment with the student parents. The protocol or guide was meant to capture issues concerning the approaches, structure and mechanisms in place in

the public university; elaboration on policy reforms and direction as well as how this can be transformed and localized.

1.6.3 Data

Data collected was in the form of interviews, observations of participants and policy documents.

- The study consisted of one-on-one interviews made up of semi-structured questions some which were open-ended and others close ended. This was to allow the participants answer from their point of view. Any predetermined close ended responses were used to verify information that may arise from the social theories that were proposed to have influenced approaches to parenthood in the public university.
- The open-ended questions allowed the participants to provide personal experiences that may be outside those provided by the close ended options.
- The specific questions asked were so as to elicit detailed information that may be personal and useful to the study as indicated by (Creswell 2002:212), and which enhances the study

The approach used was the one-on-one interviews, where the researcher conducted individual interviews with student parents both fathers and mothers. The researcher asked questions and recorded answers from one particular participant at a time.

One-on-one interviews with the student counselling staff, the student deans as well as the administrative and academic personnel who interact with this group of students were conducted as well.

These one-on-one interviews were used to elicit the participants view and to answer the research question. During the interview the researcher took notes on an interview protocol as well as tape recording of the interview so as to make a record of the comments and answers.

A quiet suitable location was chosen for conducting the interviews; consent was obtained from the interviewee to participate in the study by having them complete a consent form.

The interview plan was flexible in following the conversation of the interviewee and in listening to any leads or comments. Probes were used to elicit additional information either to clarify or elaborate on issues that came up.

Through personal interaction the researcher is in a better position to obtain data addressing the questions asked in the research. LeCompte, Preissle and Tesh (1993:166) encourage the use of corroborating information obtained through other forms of data like observation and study of documents as a form of substantiating the information gathered.

Observation data formed part of this study. Betrand and Hughes (2005:74) are specific when they relate observation to interviewing arguing that interviewing is a purposive conversation with the interviewer always being a part of the interview process as participant observer. It is this direct involvement in the social practices of the institution where behaviour is noted, customs of the institution, processes and practises are observed yielding valuable sources of data (Betrand and Hughes 2005:146). The observation in this study was in the form of participant interviewer and the observation of among others; expressive movements and language behaviour which yielded a description of the organization. Observation has been related to interviewing in that researchers have noted that interviewing involves listening not only to the guided conversation but “hearing the meaning” as well, so as to make “cultural inferences” or thick descriptions of a given social world (Grubrium and Holstein 2002:84)

Official documents were another form of data in this investigation. To address the research question on parenthood approaches required the study of certain

documents. According to (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:434) documents take many forms in an organization and they provide an internal perspective of the organization. Among some of the information yielded is a description of the function, values and how various people define the organization. Some of the documents that produced vital information for this study included working papers, minutes of meetings, public statements, program brochures, senate and faculty board reports of the university. These suggested the official perspective on an issue (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:434) propose that student files may be used as they too yield information not only about the student, but also the different perspective on the student whether administrator, counsellor or teacher.

1.6.4 Ethical Issues

The ethical measures put in place included getting the consent of the interviewees to participate in the study. This was obtained by having them complete an informed consent form before starting the interview. The information given in the form was to convey the purpose of the study and how long the interview will take to complete, as well as the plans for using the results from the interview and the availability of a summary of the study when the research is complete.

1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to two campuses of a public university the Egerton University and Laikipia University College. The selection of the research site and setting of two campuses in two very different locations was an effort to get as adequate representation as possible of student parenthood in the public university. Since the study will be localized to one public university, the claims to generalizing to all public universities in Kenya can only be made modestly as the particulars of each public university may be peculiar to the individual institution. This was noted as a limitation given that the research aimed not at generalization of results, but extension of the

understandings gathered to similar situations and subsequent research in related areas.

Another limitation of the study is the fact that approaches to student parenthood was not very clear. Since these approaches were imprecise, many of the student parents were unable to participate as actively in the study as when there has been creation of awareness.

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 General Orientation

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter which contains a general orientation, analysis of the problem, aims of the study, definition of terms, an outline of the research methodology and conclusion.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter contains a discussion of the theories underlying the study. Two social theories are discussed as well as the bearing they have on the research.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Paradigm

Chapter 3 contains the theoretical framework that was used to guide the research in order to analyse the data collected. It facilitated an exploration of approaches to student parenthood, provided a base for conducting the study, as well as justified the rationale for conducting the research in the way it was conducted.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

Chapter 4 includes the design of the research. It gives the role and experience of the researcher, selection, access and description of participants is given as well. The data collection strategies and techniques that were employed, issues of validity reliability, translatability, comparability and ethics are addressed.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis

This chapter gives the techniques employed to analyse data and the relationship between the research questions and the theoretical frameworks, the coding procedures employed and how the categories and themes were developed.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Guidelines

This final chapter sets out the assertions that arose from the study, the conclusions and results of the study as well as summary and recommendations of the study.

1.9 SUMMARY

This chapter set out to describe the study of parenthood approaches in a public university in Kenya. It has shown how the socio-economic perspective is the focus of the study. A review of the literature on approaches to parenting in the public university as well as the government's policy as articulated by the Ministry of Education in Kenya has led to identification of a gap in knowledge. Additional review of approaches from North American regions goes to further isolate the lack of elaboration on approaches to parenthood in Kenyan universities. Theories present a conceptualization of the phenomenon of parenthood in the Kenyan Public University showing how the approaches affect the practise of parenting, as well as how the structures respond to student parents in the institutions. All this has been done in an effort to address the effect of liberalization and privatization on university education and the diversification of university entrants. Through social dialogue, socio-cultural issues and their impact on student parenting come to the surface, further demonstrating how specific local contents can be used in responding to the global terms in the analyses of student parent experiences. These platforms give rise to a need for definition of terms and explanation of concepts which have been given in this chapter. A summary has been done of the research method and how the study was conducted. Finally a division of the table of contents guiding the different sections of the study has been given.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIALIZATION OF STUDENT PARENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The student population in the public university has changed over the years as shown through a simple demographic check on many institutions of higher learning; it includes a rising number of student parents or students likely to have dependents. A student parent is a student who also happens to be a parent (Gallagher and Middleton 2009:1). This is a group that is particularly affected by the social and physical environment within the academic context of the university as they interact with faculty, lecturers, other staff and their peers. There has been a growing awareness of this group of students and of their expectations in the academic circles.

This section of the study presents student parents in higher education organizations; a background to the student parent is given, showing who they are, where they are and what causes them to be in higher education institutions. The effect of approaches and practices in higher education institutions and the consequences of this on student parents are examined, with an attempt to locate socialization of students and in effect student parents in higher education.

In light of the need for greater accountability from the public, greater expectations and increased demand for quality from prospective students, parents and other supporters of the educational institution, the public university needs to gear up to respond to these demands by engaging in an assessment of their organizational performance as regards the work done for all students, this will go a long way in putting in place accountability measures of the expectations put on the university by the public both within and without. Few individuals in any institution may be able to know all there is to know about the students in the organization and the initiatives that support them but as (Alexander and Gardner 2009:21) contend, it is necessary to gather as much information as possible about whom the university campuses serve,

approaches taken that may have an effect on those students as well as any existing opinions, all this is done so that any decision that is made which may have implications on the students will be based on the information gathered. They assert that while the organization may not be able to control student behaviour they can control institutional approaches and practices. As the organization puts in place assessment mechanisms to evaluate and review how its approaches impact on the different parts of the body of students, it will be better placed for accountability and efficient and effective delivery of educational services.

The assessment mechanisms put in place should be able to evaluate norms and assumptions that impact on student parents. This is because norms and assumptions influence the behaviour of the participants in the institutions, and these are learned through socialization (Gardner 2008:126). Socialization is based on certain norms and assumptions as well as the behaviour of those being socialized. It has been defined as the process through which an individual learns to adopt the values, skills attitudes, norms, and knowledge needed for membership in a given social group or organization. Gardner (2008) shows how socialization as a process acts uniformly on all students and leaves little room for individual differences. Therefore, if there are individuals who are different in the place where socialization is expected to take place, the process of socialization may not be as successful as planned or envisioned (Gardner 2008:128) because these individuals will not fit into the uniformity.

This brings us to an exploration of the norms of socialization in the university setting in relation to the research sub-questions. In answering these questions, there is need to capture the socialization experiences of the student parent in view of academic structures, conventions, schedules and other expected norms and assumptions in a traditional university setting. These can be captured in the socialization theories of structural functionalism and symbolic interaction which are explained further in section (2.3).

These two theories have been used to put into perspective the socialization experiences of student parents who are not traditionally assumed to be the norm. According to the research sub-questions raised in chapter one of this study, one of these sub-questions concerns the effect of institutional culture on student parents; while another one is based on what are the socio-educational approaches in public universities in respect to student parents. A third sub-question is based on what the experiences of these student parents are and how they are socialized into higher education in view of the academic structures, conventions, schedules, norms and assumptions of the traditional university setting. Structural functionalism has to do with the structures and functions of different parts of the organization and the institutional culture. Symbolic interaction has to do with the norms and assumptions of the organization and the roles of the actors in that organization.

University education has a normative socialization pattern which may prove unsatisfactory to the student parents. The academic structures as articulated by (Kelly, Kendrick, Newgent and Lucas 2007:1030) are such that there are certain expectations about the following: financial fulfilments, expectations concerning course work and grades, study skills and time management and coping skills in relation to the stresses of university life. In addition to what is expected from the students, the students experience newfound freedom and different attitudes of peers, faculty, staff and family members who have expectations of what is the criterion for students in the university, when scrutinized most of these attitudes in relation to the university conventions and norms do not seem to compare to what is the student parent reality.

2.2 BACKGROUND TO STUDENT PARENTS

In an attempt to answer why we have student parents in the university (Seo 2001: 8), in her study on Parent, Student and Faculty satisfaction recognizes external

influences such as political and social issues that have impacted on the organization. One emerging social trend identified is that the demographics have changed to include more university students, who are older, with children and may have had diverse occupations and experiences in life. Many university students of today may have had more responsibilities than the typical eighteen year old student who has just finished school. She points out that socially the university student body will experience influences from this emerging body of students which needs to be captured to understand better the emerging social trends in the public university.

Political implications are represented in new constituencies or internal publics, who will expect some difference in accommodation of the richer input this new body of students bring into the university, student parents included. Constituents just like in the political arena have certain demands and expectations. For example in the public university, since this group of student parents have needs and expectations that relate to the burden of parenthood they will look to the administration to accommodate them. For instance if a student parent needs to take a child to the clinic, they will need to begin understanding where, how and with whom they begin negotiating for leave of absence as well as the implications this whole process of parenting will have on their status as students (Medved and Heisler 2002:108). Therefore (Steck 2003:vii) advises that with the emerging social trends in the university which vocalise needs and demand representation, the student body will have a diverse political student makeup with different voting patterns and representations based on these demands.

These internal politics are related to the external politics where nationally, there are changing social trends and demands placed on higher education institutions, especially as concerns students with children and availing of equal educational opportunities for all. This means there can be no discrimination whether the student is pregnant or has a child (Ministry of Education Science and Technology Kenya

Sessional Paper No.1 2005:27). Since the Ministry of Education acting externally as a national policy making body recognises the need to have equal opportunity of all notwithstanding paternity or maternity, this has an effect on the internal institutional trends leading to expectations that may differ from the usual.

In addition women have been entering the university both in the graduate and undergraduate levels in more numbers. A study on graduate student parents presents these women at the median age of 33.6 years, and argues that there is the likelihood that their time in university will most probably coincide with their prime childbearing years (Springer Parker and Leviten-Reid 2009:437). Most student parents enter university at a prime age, and some may choose not to put off childbearing until they finish their studies as may be expected by the university culture and the community. In Kenya there are certain assumptions that one may grow old in the university and not marry or get married. This leads to the incidences prevalent in certain universities that, when the first years join the university there is a rush by the male students in the second, third and fourth years to befriend the first year students this is referred to as the “gold rush” (Makiche 2010:1). This phenomenon results in some of the first year female students getting pregnant as well as other students in the advanced classes getting pregnant or coupling in order to retain their male friends more so as they get to the end of their studies in the university. This is done in an effort to shed off the label of leaving university unattached. As a result there may be students in the university, who deliberately choose to be fathers or mothers because socially they feel they are of age.

2.2.1 Institutional Culture/ Higher Education Culture

In this section of Institutional culture, the culture in higher education is analysed in relation to the socialization of the student parents in higher education. Here institutional culture as defined by (van der Weijden, de Gilder, Groenewegen and Geerling 2008:308) is used showing how it impacts on the approaches and practice in

the management of student parents. They portray organizational culture and climate as overlapping concepts around which can be explained the behaviour and performance of members of an organization. These researchers discuss other studies on organizational culture Hofstede (1990), Rentsch (1990) depicting culture as the role of wider held norms and beliefs in organizational life and climate as the direct experiences within the work processes and interactions in the environment as perceived by the workers.

There has been an increased interest in institutional culture in recent years and how it can be used in overcoming problems that may crop up in the administration of institutions. In defining institutional culture (Tierney 1988:2) compares traditional culture with how historically transmitted patterns of meanings are embodied in symbols. These patterns and symbols are what help people communicate and perpetuate their knowledge and attitudes to life. In this study of organizational or institutional culture, this comparison is used to demonstrate how these symbols help people communicate and perpetuate their knowledge and attitudes to life as grounded in the shared assumptions of individuals participating in the organization. The authors elaborate on how assumptions are often taken for granted by the actors themselves and how they are expressed in diverse ways through a language of the group, norms and attitudes of the organization and an ideology that emerges from individual and institutional behaviour. In other words each organization will conceptualize attitudes and norms that are peculiar to that particular group. To be a part of that group, one will need to demystify the assumptions made, as well as understand the culture of that organization. To do so, one would need not only to examine the structures of the institution, but also analyse the interpretations that those who operate in the institution make, as well as appreciate the lived experiences of the actors in that institution. Therefore it is important to analyse the interconnected meanings and interpret the significance attached to the behaviour,

norms, attitudes and ideologies of the particular institution, and the actors' experience of these meanings.

Understanding the role of institutional culture and how it impacts on the student parent helps to address issues that may arise in the management of approaches to student parents in higher education.

In addition culture is taken by (Hart and Shoolbred 1993:23) to be the role of wider held norms and beliefs, while climate is seen to be the direct experiences within the work process and interactions within the environment. In the analysis of culture, certain questions need to be addressed, namely; what are the historically transmitted patterns of meanings grounded in the assumptions of student parents and how do they become an ideology that affects student parenthood, what structures are in place in the public university and how do people make meaning out of these structures, how do student parents cope regarding personal, educational, social, psychological and financial needs in the higher education environment? As student parents enter the organization they find pressure to cope with the assumptions concerning personal needs. These include health and related expenses, food and clothing, housing and hygiene expenses among others. Educational needs include tutorial materials and books, tuition and related expenses. These assumptions therefore necessitate that in the provision and in the access to educational services these should be provided to all on a level playing ground so that it can be assumed to lead to equal opportunities for all. If for any reason, the burden of parenting makes it difficult to access these services it may lead to a student dropping out of the system or not maximizing to their full potential. Social needs will include relationships with fellow students, university faculty that is the teaching staff as well as interaction with other non teaching staff. The society includes both the internal publics within the university and external publics outside the university institution. Internal publics will have certain expectations and external publics will also have their own demands.

Further, psychological needs can be addressed by recognising the level of potential in the student parent and encouraging that student to access fully the spiritual, emotional and psychological potential within them. Financial needs can be addressed through enabling the student parent recognise and organise themselves to cope with personal and financial needs and what the burden of parenthood involves. It is therefore necessary to put all these issues in perspective thereby acquiring an understanding of how they fit into the overall management of the higher education process, as gathered from the behaviour, norms, attitudes and ideologies of the Kenyan public university.

Furthermore, a World Bank report on the financing and management of higher education discusses how higher education in the context of reforms is seen as a repository and defender of culture, an agent of change in this culture, as well as an instrument for the realization of collective aspirations (Bruce 1998:4). Culture influences institutions at various levels and it is important to have an understanding of how the culture influences decisions and operations within the organization, since this helps to minimize conflict within the actors in the organization as well as assist in the understanding and developing of shared goals. It is through this understanding that goals can be implemented and be seen to be successful (Tierney 1988:5). In the decision as to whether to follow one course of action or the other, culture influences the choices made. In defining the essentials in organizational culture and higher education, Tierney (1988) suggests that practise can be improved through recognizing that culture helps address potential or real conflict holistically and not in isolation. Any contradictions are easily recognizable, and can be addressed systematically as seen in structure or operation and perception or comprehension, of the position of the different groups in the organization.

In adapting the practices encouraged by this study, the perceptions of student parents in regard to the institutional performance will be acknowledged and by so

doing approaches in respect to student parents will be defined. In addition everyday decisions that get implemented are evaluated according to the role and influence they have on culture of the institution. These essentials create a place for understanding the symbolism of the decisions, actions and assumptions made by actors in the organization, leading to support and meaningful appreciation of the approaches to management of student parents, especially female. There is need for institutions to engage in meaningful and constructive understanding of the perspectives converging on the organization both internally and externally. In a review of assessing organizational performance the author puts forth a case for understanding that the external constituencies which include the community around the institution, government, political-interest entities and professional associations exert pressure to conform. This is in addition to the internal publics or constituencies that include the diversified student body, administrators, faculty or lecturers and other staff and the institutional culture as defined by administrators, faculty, students, alumni and friends of the institution (Emmanuel 2007:611).

In addressing the internal public and its role in socialisation of student parents it is important to address the key dimensions of culture as captured within a framework outlined by (Tierney 1988:8). This framework used in the study of Organizational culture in Higher Education, addresses all facets of the organization and the role they play in socialization of its members. It incorporates issues of the environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership. Mission in this framework is defined as what gives meaning and purpose for the individuals as well as motivating support for the core values of the institution. The actors in the organization are socialized into the belief system of the organization that bonds them. In Tierney's study on managing academic culture, the emphasis is both on management of academic culture and management of social integration. As students operate daily in an institution, social bonds are formed that allow them to operate under a common purpose. The mission should be all inclusive and it is

important to find a place for all students, as well as the interpersonal relationships that are found among student to student as well as within peers. In assessing the effect of mission on the approaches to student parenthood it is important to bear in mind what core values the public university seeks to transmit and to be seen to undertake.

In defining environment, the framework raises questions concerning the foundation of the institution and the direction in which it is headed. What are the political and industrial demands made on the institution, and how does it react to them as concerning external and internal publics. The demands made on the institution will influence the structure of the organization, the mood of the organization as well as how the organization reacts to students and its orientation towards provision of education. Identifying the direction that the institution desires to take or is headed to helps focus the approaches to be taken in a holistic way (Tierney 1988: 8).

In addition the framework defines socialization as the passing on of elements of a group's culture to its new members (Schein 2004:18). How the organization reacts to new members is indicated by how the actors relate to one another, how members welcome and accommodate new members. Making space for new members in the organization is important to the impressions created of the institution. People are welcomed to "fit" into the "personality of the place" and how accessible and available management leaders and other staff are, shows care and concern of the organization (Tierney 1988:12). This socialization influences the knowledge and understanding of student parents on different dimensions such as adapting, perception of acceptance, accessibility, warmth and openness in the new environment. As a student parent there are certain understandings and knowledge that may be transmitted or not, depending on the approaches taken to socialization. It is therefore important to articulate what the university wants achieved in relation to how it socializes its new members.

Information has been identified as shared knowledge of formal language by (Schein 2004:147). This includes accessibility of all segments of the institution, how members of the organization know whom to see when they have a problem, relationships within the institution and both the internal and external community. The activities and meetings going on around the institution all project a message on availability of information. Sharing of information helps in providing possible solutions and alternatives to issues which may arise and in so doing help in addressing any conflict that may arise between scholarship and parenthood.

Strategy as put forth by (Schein 2004:89) and (Tierney 1988:15) is about decision making and how different segments of the community are accommodated when decisions need to be made. The need to keep a balance of the needs of the different constituencies in the organization in the day to day operation of an organization enables the members to develop a common identity, common assumptions, and conventions that are easily identified by other members of the group. As people relate within these shared meanings they are able to make space for newcomers. The way the newcomers become part of the group will be determined by the interpretations they put on the understandings of the items in the socialization framework (Tierney 1988:18).

Leadership in the institutional culture is about symbols and frames of reference both formal and informal and how they fit in articulating the institutional values and goals, while socialization is concerned with cultural norms. Leadership facilitates the group to deal with its internal and external problems, addressing the formal and informal frames of reference that are the source of these beliefs and values (Schein 2004:36). For the leader to offer leadership there has to be an implicit belief in the mission of the institution to provide a public good if what the leader proposes works, the staff, faculty and administrators share in the assumption that it is for a common good.

Therefore socialization in the organization includes the consideration of how people will fit culturally as well as through such symbols as open door policy, constant information flow, and of access throughout the organization, dedication to work and commitment to excellence “Organizational culture, then, is the study of particular webs of significance within an organizational setting” (Springer, Parker and Leviten-Reid 2009:4). How do the individuals in the group attach meaning to particular settings and what is the significance of this both to the actors within and without the group. As the assumptions raised within the socialization framework are addressed it will affect satisfactory provision of education and access to that education equally, acknowledging the needs of the participants, and fulfilling the satisfaction of all concerned. In the process, scrutiny of approaches taken concerning the diversified student body will encourage a focus on approaches to student parents in particular.

Common identity, assumptions and norms that help the organizational members fit into the culture of that organization are encouraged and supported (Schein 2004:89). The symbols, structure and communication flow will help members adequately avail themselves of all that the organization has to offer. As the Kenyan public university addresses the student parent needs, viewed against the social structure and their socio-economic status, it will be important to assess the impact of the socio-educational approaches of the public university to the student parents in Kenya.

This section has discussed a socialization framework that may be helpful in describing and evaluating various dimensions of organizational culture and which can be used to assess the organization culture and how change can be effected in an orderly manner. This socialization framework can be a useful tool in addressing assumptions of the organization and in making the approaches to student parents in public universities more inclusive.

2.2.2 The Role of the University in Socialization

Through various definitions from different studies (Gardner 2008:127) captures socialization as the process through which an individual learns to embrace the values, skills, attitudes, norms and knowledge needed for membership in a given society, group or organization elaborating that it is generally transmitted through organizational culture, in this case the culture of higher education. From these studies done in organizational culture the definition of socialization is seen to include the sum of activities, symbolic and instrumental that result in shared meaning (Schein 2004:18). When new members join an organization, they incorporate and understand these activities; they gain insight on how to act, hope and what it means to succeed for the people who join the organization. They learn to fit, and choose to belong to that organization, including learning the rules, guidelines and culture. Those who do not choose to learn do not fit into this organization. The study by (Gardner 2008:127) puts forward four developmental stages as a basis for discussion of the role of the university in socialization these stages are; Anticipatory, Formal, Informal and Personal, the study expounds on how these different stages impact on the student body the following section discusses examples of how they can impact on student parents in the public university.

The anticipatory stage occurs when students enter the university and need to learn new roles, procedures and agenda. It is characterized by information seeking and searching for direction where the student becomes aware of expectations in the various domains of their role as students (Gardner 2008:127). The second stage as discussed by the author is the formal stage and it is characterized by the observation of roles by the student, and learning role expectations, new tasks and communication. It involves the seeking of information concerning courses, course materials and coverage, expectations from faculty and staff. It is this stage that is concerned with the norms and regulations concerning interactions between faculty and staff as well as with other students in the faculty or within the university.

The other stage is the informal stage at which point the student learns of the informal role expectations as she or he interacts with other students. These expectations consist of behavioural cues and how to respond and react to these cues, survival in the university society, as well as observation of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Most of this is done through informal socialization and interaction with other students.

The final stage is personal, and involves internalization of all that has been learned by the individual the social structures and social roles are individualized and internalized. This is the stage at which conflict if any, which may arise as a result of transformation of roles is resolved. As conflict is resolved, new values are accepted and the student begins his or her search of the self (Gardner 2008:128).

Therefore a socialization process begins as the student parent enters university together with other students in the entire student body. New symbols and new activities acquire different meanings from what they were used to. The process of change leads to acquired shared meanings in the academic setting. If a student fails to change with the times, this results in them not learning how to cope and succeed in the university setting. As they experience the different stages they seek information on expectations of their new roles as students as well as information on regulations and interaction with faculty and staff. This informal stage helps them settle with other students learning from one another how to survive in the university. Then finally they settle any conflicts that may arise as they acquire the new roles. This is an internal process which leads to transformation in line with this new self. This is important to the individual as a student parent who will have to acknowledge and resolve anything unexpected in his or her role as scholar and parent.

These four stages are reflected and accommodated by the formal and informal structures in the organization. The formal structures are captured in the legitimate

offices and the persons who occupy these offices for example the principal or head of the organization, the dean, lecturers and other members of faculty and staff. The informal structures operate within the informal interactions among peers and colleagues. How the students relate with one another changes, their knowledge, assumptions and understandings of the environment. Both the formal and informal structures have an impact on the experience of the student in the university setting; how they negotiate and survive. If well managed socialization meets the needs of the various groups in the university, leading to transformation of the individual in line with the university norms and regulations and helps resolve any conflicts that may arise as a result of acquisition of new roles.

It is important for the public university as a higher education organization, to take up a positive socialization role. In this way they will be in a position to respond to the non-traditional groups like student parents who are entering higher education in larger numbers. With the university system targeting specific groups of non traditional students and creating an enabling environment to promote positive student experiences for these students targeted by the system, they will be able to increase retention and graduation rates of these non-traditional students (Hinton-Smith 2007:1). In a study addressing barriers to participation in education by (Pescosolido and Hess 1994:4), suggestions are given of some of the ways that the university can take up socialization positively. The authors show the way in which the professional socialization of students is accomplished, in three types of packages which include: written materials, courses and other course presentations and funds for professional development activities. These are used to raise awareness and interest, and to encourage discourse in faculties, schools and departments of the university around various issues. It is through such packages that the university can incorporate issues of scholarship in relation to managing parenting. The professional socialization allows students to discuss concerns that impact on their experiences as scholars thus they will be in a better position to internalize these experiences

positively. Support courses can be used to enable students adapt into scholarship while parenting thus being in a better position to integrate into the university setting.

In addition another socialization tool is to be found in the orientation programmes which are used to socialise students into the university these programmes together with the core or support courses facilitate adaptation of the student to life in the university and beyond. Successful integration of student life requires negotiation of new norms both academically and socially. Failure to negotiate these changes reduces the level of social and academic integration into the department as well as into the rest of the university settings resulting in a negative impact on academic performance, self-concept and progress throughout the university program as well as the successful completion of their studies (Harper and Walters 1991:1).

Positive socialization role goes a long way in actualizing the potential of student parents in the university and in higher education. It helps in creating equality and equity in access to educational services for all. Personal goals and needs are articulated, social needs and psychological aspirations are actualized and financial support is realized through proper identification and management of the available services in the public university.

2.2.3 Communication and Student Participation in Policy Direction

In a study on student-faculty interactions with student parents, issues of communication were presented and modes of communication between student and faculty were discussed. Included in the discussions were the framing of requests, how students perceive the options available to them, and their feelings of self worth in communication negotiations. These were issues perceived to be critical to the communication interactions (Medved and Heisler 2002:116). In this study the upward influences in organization hierarchy were a point of debate, arguing that subordinates are limited in influence strategies as compared to their superiors in any

organization. Student parents perceived themselves to be in a subordinate position in the communication process, therefore their frame of reference in the communication more often than not had to be based on facts and focussed on reality. When negotiating with their superiors in this case the administrators, faculty and other staff members, their conversations have to be grounded on facts. In formulating approaches to manage student parents democratically it is necessary to find out what are the structures in the organization that can be used as a reference point. In other words, what facts can be identified for example in asking for a leave of absence from school to deal with parenting issues? Can one base a request on any organizational realities? What facts are needed to build up a relevant case to communicate their agenda? What is the reality concerning the approaches and practices in relation to student parents in the public university, is there a way they can negotiate, make space or have their voice heard.

It is therefore important to involve students in contributing to discussions made at each level of their academic progress and to incorporate their suggestions into approaches and policy that will impact on them, without causing them to feel intimidated. The following suggestions are given in the guidelines of student participation policy by (Butler 2008:1). The student body can be encouraged to negotiate about their work or work required appraisals; they can be encouraged to participate in classroom management and organization through student forums at class levels and through school-based discussion groups like student bodies, student council and student subcommittees and through advisory groups. For the students to participate effectively in the decision making process there is need to enable them develop appropriate skills and knowledge to participate effectively in the decision making process so as to analyse information, plan, negotiate, communicate and create solutions in collaboration with others. This guideline summarizes how the process of acknowledging, respecting and listening to student views enhances and

encourages self-respect developing responsibility and experience in the democratic process (Butler 2008:1).

Student participation in the educational organization is a planned process with each university community ensuring that its practises are inclusive of the unique and special characteristics of its student population. The suggestions from Butler (2008) include the examination of school policies and practises to ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate in decision making matters related to their academics, developing an environment that fosters and supports participation of all students in developing skills and knowledge appropriate to age, social and cultural background. The need is emphasised as well for capacity building or enablement required by students in order to participate effectively in decision making, and in the process acknowledging and modelling effective democratic decision making processes adding value to contributions made by students (Butler 2008:2).

Santa Clarita Community College in the USA has a student participation policy manual (Santa Clarita College 1992:3). This manual offers guidelines on student participation in shared governance, with various suggestions given for opportunities to participate in the formulation and development of college policies. These include among others opportunities in code of conduct, processes for institutional planning and budget development, student services planning and development, and any other college policy procedure or related matters that may be seen to have a significant effect on students. Student representatives are appointed to serve on task forces or other governance groups and are expected to represent their constituencies. In this way communication is enhanced, and student participation is included in policy direction and approaches taken concerning them.

Studies on transformation in undergraduate education point to the necessity of facilitating faculty student interaction, since policy is about change that needs to be

communicated to all who will be affected for that change to be effective (Astin, Keup and Lindholm 2002:160). In their study on changes in undergraduate education and system transformation, these authors discuss the view that students are both recipients of institutional influence as well as a source of influence on others. This is in relation to the concept of individual and organizations' effect on the environment as well as the effect of the environment on the individuals and the organization. They at the same time stress the importance of both formal and informal organizational structures and how this affects the student participation and outcome, showing the influence of programs and faculty as well as peer influence on the direction of policy. Formal and informal structures affect the way individuals react to the socializing role of the institution. Therefore it is important to take into account this influence in creating positive experiences and making these formal and informal structures work for the advantage of all concerned in the organization. There has to be a way of involving those who will be affected by that change for the change to be effective.

In the process of transformation questions concerning institutional transformations and their effect on students are raised in the study. Hopefully through encouraging such a discourse, an increased faculty student interaction and increased participation in the community should result. As students get involved in the transformations, and an increase is noted in faculty student interaction, this should result in a positive influence in policy direction (Astin, Keup and Lindholm 2002:143). In the same way it should have a positive influence in the approaches and policy direction taken by the university in respect to student parents.

This subsection attempts to focus on how student parents can be involved in participating in the direction of the approaches taken concerning them. Communication as a tool of facilitating student participation is important. The facts on the ground and structures in place need to be identified so as to help in

articulation of student needs. As student parents learn negotiation and other appropriate skills, they get involved democratically in the formulation of a programme which will effectively address their needs and the approaches taken in respect to them. The suggestions gathered from various studies show the importance of facilitating interactions between students and the university management, faculty and other staff in the public university.

2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE SOCIALIZING ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

This section gives the theoretical perspectives of the socializing role of the universities. Two socialization theories have been proposed to address the approaches taken in the management of student parents in the public universities in Kenya. The first one is structural functionalism and the second one is symbolic interactional theory.

Structural functionalism focuses both on the structure and function of the organization. It emphasizes the role of social structure. In the functionalist theory the social system in the organization is seen to be a system of interrelated parts that has a normal state of affairs or equilibrium held together by norms and values, with the existence and actions of individuals and institutions explained in terms of the functions they perform (Mann 2007:30,31). Structural functionalism has been associated with Talcott Parsons (1937) as cited by (Mann 2007:31), who analyses his book “The structure of social action in which the human actors are presented as voluntarily engaging in potentially rational actions rooted in norms and values of the cultural system. Therefore society is seen as a system with subsystems that perform basic functions yet limited Parsons lists four components that explain how structural functionalism works in an organization. First an actor seeks a goal, secondly the actor seeks the means to achieve the goal, thirdly the actor considers the situational conditions that cannot be controlled and, finally the norms and values of the society and how they will affect him or her. Parson (1937) therefore declares that any actor

who is well integrated cannot afford to ignore the normative rules of the game because these are internalized through socialization. If there is dissonance in the socialization process, it leads to conflict as mentioned in the section on institutional culture earlier on in this chapter (Bruce 1998:4).

In the case of student parents they are the actors seeking a goal which is successful completion of university studies and acquiring a degree. The means used will include studying hard, attending classes, doing assignments on time and participating in classroom discussions. The situational conditions include obstacles to the goal, such as financial constraints, time and the burden of parenthood. Norms and values of the social system include finishing of assignments on time, originality of work, work with and respect for lecturers, to be a good student. Parenting and childcare may fall outside this social system values (Mann 2007:31).

This theory is useful in attempting to explain the conflict arising in areas that are crucial to the academic survival of the student parent in the academic environment of the university. On one hand is the university which has structures in place that have to do with the core business of the university; teaching, learning and research. Universities are about facilitation of optimal environment for these educational services to take place in an efficient, effective and competitive manner. The university charges for the educational services provided.

On the other hand, a student parent is both a student who needs to avail himself or herself of these educational services as well as being a parent with others who depend on him or her needing care in terms of shelter, food, safety and health facilities all which are added costs to the cost of being a student. Most students find themselves struggling with insufficient funding to cover their immediate needs such as healthcare and childcare as well as the costs of student life. This insufficiency creates a dissonance in the situation of the student parent life in the university.

Financial constraints versus survival in the academic environment of the university cause a conflict in the students' life that need to be resolved.

Another area in the socializing role of the university that creates conflict in the student parents' life is childcare. Since the student has to attend to academic matters while he or she has someone depending on them, the conflict is on how to reconcile studies with affordable and reliable childcare. The student parent therefore has a need to be fully settled in their mind about the safety of their child or children otherwise it will be difficult to concentrate on their schoolwork. These are some of the potential social conflict constraints that the individual requires to resolve in their life in order to operate effectively in the social academic setting of the university.

The other socialization theory is Symbolic Interaction, which deals with the individual social interaction that seeks to understand the private and the inner experience of the individual, the values and meanings that different objectives have for the individual (Mann 2004:186). Contemporary sociological theory defines symbolic interaction as an approach to the scientific study of human group life and human conduct. This theory is associated with George Herbert Mead who gave the distinction between "I" and "Me". "I" he defined, as the acting subject who chooses freely and "me" as the acted upon object (Mann 2004:184). The other person closely associated with this theory is Herbert Blumer who developed further from the Meads notion of a gesture as an act that calls for a response, to the emphasis that human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, interpretation and meaning of the other person's actions (Mann 2004:186). This involves objectifying the actions as having meaning or character, the person involved has to take into account the demands, expectations, prohibitions and threats in the situation he or she is acting in. That is the different aspects and significance of his or her actions, based on how he or she defines or interprets the social demands made. Blumer identifies this as self-indication and explains that it always takes place in a social context. He explains

further that symbolic interaction takes the view that the social organization is a framework to develop actions by the people “culture”, “social systems”, “social stratification”, or social roles. It sets conditions for acting but does not determine the action. Mann (2007:187) expounds on this by saying that the individual has a sense of subjective meaning therefore social action consists of stimulus to interpretation then a response. Meaning that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings they have for them; the meanings of things arises out of the social interactions one has with one’s peers or colleagues. These meanings are managed in, and modified through an interpretive process that the person uses in dealing with the things he or she encounters.

In other words conflict may arise within the structural environment which consists of a set of socio-cultural expectations that construct the student parent life. The norms and expectations in life are learned through socialization in respect to the dominant cultural ideals presented to the individual through the symbols and their interpretations. Socio-cultural expectations would be based on culturally accepted norms and symbolic interpretations of who is expected to take care of the child. How does a student manage the practice of being a proper parent and reconcile it with the practise of being a scholar as per socialization into the socio-cultural expectations. These ideals are discussed by (Lynch 2008:595) under what she calls identity practises. Identity practises are taken to convey the way student parents manage their dual identities within the dominant academic culture. How do they support the reality of the identity they live out. Identity support is part of constructing an identity that can survive in the academic environment of the university. Since identity construction is a social process in which student parents experience either support or lack of support for the role they are involved in, it becomes part of the socialization into the university culture.

The university culture has certain conceptions about “parenting” and “scholar” which are often in conflict. Proper parenting as far as the dominant social culture is involved normally does not include the parent being a student. Neither does culture expect that proper schooling can be combined with parenting therefore for an individual to attend to both adequately a conflict occurs which needs to be resolved. There has to be a way for the student parent to circumvent this conflict successfully resulting in identity practises that student parents devise to survive and represent each identity adequately (Lynch 2008:595). Some may not acknowledge that they are parents, and so one can come across a situation where a student mother delivers a baby over a weekend and the following Monday they are back in class; another situation may be that the student may attend lectures till the final day of delivery then resume classes two or three days after delivery. Others will not deny parenthood, instead they will acknowledge that they are parents and they will want to be involved fully in activities that proper parents are involved in, such as making time out of their schoolwork to take the baby to clinics, or attending parent meetings in their children’s’ school in the process they exhaust themselves by doing double shift as parent and scholar and they still measure themselves as falling short of social expectations. This in effect creates identity crises for the student, and dissonance in their lives.

A study on graduate student mothers in American universities examines the external structural constraints in university education around which student parents operate and rely on heavily to attain educational achievement and resolve discord in their individual life or situation while gaining harmony to face life situations positively (Lynch 2008:588). It is through an understanding of how an individual operates in the structures of the university with its cultural norms and values that the situation of student parents can be explained. Symbolic interaction deals with individual social interactions that seek to understand the private and inner experiences of the individual, the values and meanings different objectives have for the individual.

Identity support needs to be understood in light of the relationships of student parents and faculty, student parents and other students, student parents and other family members. How the student parent relates to these other significant social contacts has an influence on how they operate in the university. Investigation of the student parent against identities and social structures which project the individual both as a scholar as well as a parent who is guided both by the norms of academia as well as the socio-cultural scripts concerning parenthood will expose a conflict. The conflict arising has to be resolved since the symbolic nature of both roles scholar and parent in the socio-cultural environment, is often in conflict with the structural elements around which each role is performed (Lynch 2008:603).

Each of these socialization theories has strengths and weaknesses for example, symbolic interaction is strong in micro-sociological analysis but it is not so good in explaining social structures. On the other hand functionalism is able to explain social structures like institutions and their expectations in norms and values and how the individual is expected to fit in, but it is weak on explanations about how people shape, form and alter their actions based on the indications they get from others, not according to overarching structures and functions. From this perspective, it therefore becomes difficult to fix the form of social interaction in advance, since each of these explanations may be limiting but they are useful in bringing the issue of socialization of student parents in higher education to focus and in the process help in addressing the approaches taken by public universities to student parents in the organization.

In addition they prove useful in addressing structure and function of the institution and society and the way this affects student parents as well as the individual university. They also demonstrate the interaction of the student parent to the values, norms and expectations of the university and society as a whole.

2.4 SOCIO-EDUCATION FACTORS THAT LEAD TO STUDENT FRUSTRATIONS OR DISSATISFACTION

Financial needs and childcare are not the only barriers to education for student parents. Other factors frequently reported are isolation, a lack of support and understanding, policy and practise that indirectly discriminates against students with caring responsibilities (Gallagher and Middleton 2009:1). Other barriers documented include physical and psychological demands, social and self-expectations and policies with certain standards of practice (Grenier and Burke 2008:597). In addition to managing class assignments and other family responsibilities elements of student life such as personal finances, adjustments to campus climate are some of the socio-education factors that may lead to student frustration in the university. How an educational organization addresses these issues has an impact on the culture of the university as well as on the rate of retention and completion of the students.

Some of the issues mentioned in a study on first year students that may impact on them and that may lead to a disturbed entry into the social environment include; orientation, introductory courses, freshmen and women interest groups, living units, residence hall staff, mentoring opportunities and academic advising (Smith 2003:4). Others include factors such as living away from home or family, trouble fitting in, housing, family issues such as marriage and pregnancy, difficulty with advisors, course work and difficulty with faculty, staff, scheduling as well as lack of academic programs (Kelly, Kendrick Newgent and Lucas 2007:1031). These issues were listed generally by the student body but the impact of these on student parents as individuals is significant since most of them will be day to day occurrences affecting their relationship with the faculty, other staff and fellow students.

2.4.1 Disturbed Involvement (Relationships)

Assumptions about the responsibilities of parenting and schooling are disparate. There are cultural assumptions that are entrenched in our cultural institutions like law, policies, religion, media and education. These assumptions as discussed by

(Gardner 2008:134) show how socialization, academic structures, conventions and traditions in higher education are typically not designed for students with children. The balancing of time and priorities creates an environment that is disturbing and may not be so conducive to the student parent in the higher education organization which emphasizes individualism, competition and autonomy (Luchen 1998:394). A student therefore who becomes a parent has to struggle with the individualism aspect of who is to take care of this child. If the student is female; will the father be involved? And if the student is male; will the mother take care of the child? If both are students and they got the baby before completing their studies, individualism and autonomy may create a conflict resulting in disturbed relationships in the university which may affect the scholarship of the student parent. For instance, some universities will not provide housing for students who are actively parenting in the university, but will provide housing for the other students who are not actively involved in parenting in the university. A student who is a father but is not actively involved in parenting at the university may get housing leading to a situation of separation between the two student parents which may create disturbed relationships (Murage 2004:6). There are other issues of disturbed relationship as presented by Murage in his study, which are as a result of pregnancy on campus. Low self-esteem because of rejection by parents, guardians and siblings and the stigma associated with single parenthood because the society cannot reconcile parenting and schooling; the assumption being that one should first finish school before becoming a parent.

2.4.2 Disturbed Student Parent Identification Role

Parenting is not the norm on the university there is an invisible and devalued nature of social reproduction within academic institutions. In a study on graduate student parents (Springer, Parker and Leviten-Reid 2009:439) report on how student mothers experience awkward pauses rendered by pregnant bodies on campus, struggle to navigate strollers in classrooms, and the search to find discreet places to feed their

babies. The same sentiments are expressed by (Murage 2004:7) concerning a public university in Kenya. These are just some of the subtle reminders in the social and physical environment of the university to the student parents and their children that they do not truly belong. When student parents enter the universities they enter into a culture that strongly disapproves of parenting while assuming the role of student and many times it is the students who have to make an effort to fit in, or create space for themselves and their child or children. Identification of the student as a parent is one that they have to work at, since the norms and culture of higher education do not readily accept it. Working at creating space for the role of a student as a parent is an everyday uphill task that can be tiring and quite disturbing.

2.4.3 Disturbed Social Relationship Setting At University

In describing some of the socio-economic factors that may lead to student parent frustration, disturbed involvement in relationships creates a crisis whereby a student parent has to meet the challenges of making ends meet while paying rent, tuition and childcare especially when that student is the sole breadwinner of the family (Alon 2004:10). Most student parents are left to fend for themselves either as student mothers may be because the society cannot reconcile the twin roles of parent and student, or in the case of the student father the father is unable to accommodate the child together with him on the university premises due to the residency rules and regulations. This may result in a disturbed social relationship setting.

2.4.4 Disturbed Entry into the Social Environment

The university culture and environment as presented by a study on the student parenting realities in the university by (Alon 2004:22) seems to have little place for students with children whether in the classroom or the laboratories. The social environment of the university seems to censure student parents with some people including lecturers taking it that a student parent is not serious with their education. The environment is such that the time consuming work of child care does not get

recognized in the university culture. This leaves the student parent to struggle most of the time on their own. The study indicates that there is a judgemental culture based on the stereotypical demographics, which envision traditional undergraduate university student. This student is assumed to be young and with little experience living away from home. Therefore student parents are a minority in a larger majority. They are “invisible” and marginalised because of their inability to make a significant impression on the dominant culture (Alon 2004:22).

There is a call to respond to some of the issues affecting the social environment of student parents and which may impact on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Addressing the interests and priorities of student parent’s results in a less stressed, and more creative, more productive committed individual as indicated by a community survey done in the University of Michigan on Student parent task force (Hollenshead 2001:5).

2.5 SOCIALIZATION OF STUDENT PARENT: THE ROLE OF FACULTY

In the socialization of student parent, the faculty has a significant role to play as noted by a study on student transition to college. The authors maintain that the relationship of student versus faculty is measured by the interactions and concern of faculty for the student development (Kelly, Kendrick, Newgate and Lucas 2007:1022). Though “other student” attitudes had a higher impact than that of the faculty, the attitude of faculty plays a significant role in the socialization of students into the university. Research on students and their identity formation at the college level suggest that as they enter institutions of higher education they are engaged in a process of personality consolidation and value crystallisation (Kelly, Kendrick, Newgate and Lucas 2007:1024). This is a time of decision and problem solving that can be difficult, stressful and overwhelming if not well handled more so if this is a category of student parent who is handling parenting and scholarship. The

researchers recommend that the institution, faculty, included can help in providing specific information in decision making and an understanding of negotiating skills.

For the faculty to play this role of helping the student in decision making and other skills, they will have to include student parents in their agenda. What is the perception of the faculty towards student parents? How does this affect the realization of this goal of helping in decision making? Faculty are involved in academic advising and how they interact with the student parent as they help him or her make decisions about their scholarly work while in the social situation of parenting will depend a lot on the way the faculty member has been socialized. Some may not be very comfortable working with students who are parents since they may find it difficult to reconcile the two roles or they may feel the student is not serious with school work.

Comprehensive studies of undergraduate student populations done at University of California Berkeley and University of California San Francisco have shown significant relationship between a range of educational and personal outcomes and time spent interacting with faculty (Sparrey, Lapour Buckley and Agogino 2009:3). A survey conducted in these two major universities, showed that faculty student interactions impacted on students' personal and academic lives. The researchers discuss how students are affected by the social and physical environment as they interact with supportive peers, faculty and staff. This study focussed on the formal structures for providing feedback to the students on their achievements, tools and support for students and best practices on student advising. From the study there was a significant relationship between the educational and personal outcomes of results and time spent interacting with faculty (Sparrey, Lapour Buckley and Agogino 2009:3). It showed that students who felt positively towards their faculty advisors were less likely to suffer from depression and more likely to seek professional help.

In the public university in Kenya, the psychological guidance offered may need to take into account the level at which the student parent interacts with the staff, both teaching staff and non-teaching. Karp and Hughes (2008:73) in their study on information networks integration concur that at faculty level, guidance given to students and integrated to other aspects of student lives does make it more successful. These studies demonstrate the need to create awareness of the guidance that is given to students; does the university focus mainly on academic advising? How are other aspects of student life integrated into the guidance programme to make it more successful, coupled with the guidance offered from the student counselling affairs and the guidance on social welfare as offered from the dean of students' office which is in charge of student welfare? Tones, Fraser, Elder and White (2009:526) in their research with supporting mature aged students from low socio-economic background demonstrated that there was difficulty in access to psychological support services. This translated into conflict both in academic and personal life. Personal counselling and career counselling were reported unavailable for use resulting in a need for that support facility. Since the socialization of faculty will impact on their relationship with the students they are advising and interacting with, there is need to address any issues that may arise as a result of the individual lecturers socialization that may impact on the support advanced to the students they are advising.

There is need as well to integrate all these approaches to the student parent so that social welfare, financial support, psychological guidance and other services to the student parents are availed in approaches and practices that facilitate the access to education services in an equal and equitable manner in relation to the rest of the student body.

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter was an attempt at addressing the issues that impact and shape the student parent experiences in higher education. The socialization of student parents

in higher education was presented elaborating on the institutional culture and climate and the influence of these on student parent. There are various ways that the university does socialization of which student parents can be made part of. An attempt was made to illustrate how students can participate in policy direction and how the communication process can be clarified. Theoretical perspectives touching on the socializing role of the universities and how these can be used to explore the situation of student parents in higher education were considered.

Finally an exposé on socio-education factors that may lead to student parent frustrations and dissatisfaction in higher education were considered with the role that faculty or lecturers play in the socialization of student parents. This has been done to emphasize the significance of coordination in regard to the approaches taken by the public university towards student parents in Kenya and how these can be helpful to the student parent.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PARENTHOOD IN THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN KENYA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section an analysis of the variations that may present themselves in student parenthood in the public universities are explored with an attempt to appreciate the similarities and differences of each group, the challenges they face and the way parenthood impacts on scholarship. An elaboration on what student parenting and scholarship entails to the individual student is developed with the implication on policy and practice for an academic environment and the public university in general explored.

In addition socio-educational theories and their influence on student parenthood are briefly discussed, specifically structural functionalism and symbolic interaction in relation to student parenting in the public universities. Any discussion on parenting cannot be done outside the context of the family whose concept is changeable and based on the prevailing world views that support society, fashioned by society and placed within a socio-historical framework (Ambert 1994:530). When parenting and the family are seen to be fluid, this implies change based on circumstances surrounding the individual, as well as cultural norms and values. In this case, social change is seen from a historical context and in an educational background. Therefore, the socio-educational theories may attempt to place student parenthood in a certain time and context, but may be limited in explaining certain factors that impact on the individual student parent. The prevailing world views may impact on society in that the context of parenthood in the educational realm will depend on the individuals in the organization and the understandings and ideologies they may hold concerning parenthood and scholarship.

Parenting therefore can be seen as a cultural invention, an ideology and a socially defined phenomenon. A warning is sounded though, that although parenting has been institutionalized in the dominant structures of society, and has been influenced by ideological orientations of the main knowledge producers and professionals in that field, the literature may give a universal picture, but the reader has to bear in mind that parenting is really culture bound (Ambert 1994:530). Implying that though we may analyze the variations in parenting in the public university we need to ask ourselves where and when in time we are doing it. As a result, conflict may arise in the academic environment and in the cultural expectation in relation to student parenting and some of these are addressed. Finally the socio-educational perspective of student parenting is considered with some ways of integrating social and educational demands of student parenthood in the public university presented.

3.2 VARIATIONS OF STUDENT PARENTHOOD IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

In a discussion on parenthood (Ambert 1994:529) focuses on various social changes and their effect on concepts of parenting. Social concepts have a bias on definitions of parenting that affect research paradigms and parenting is a social construct evolving with socio-historical changes. As the social concepts evolve, they will influence how student parents are perceived as well as their expectations of the public university.

In this section, variations of parenthood in the public university are discussed but it is important to heed the caution given above. Who defines Parenting, what is accepted as parenting more so since the concept of parenting is culture bound. The discussion focuses on the prevailing culture which is an academic public university culture, with roles and expectations of students and faculty and the academic organization. Student parenthood involves the parenting that is done by students who are actively involved in studies at the university. It varies depending on the individual. Single student parents maybe full-time traditional-age student with a child or children or

they may be graduate or undergraduate, taking care of their child/children as well as undertaking studies in the university. This group of students have increasingly become more vocal in demanding that educational institutions make it easier for them to balance their academic goals with financial demands (Farrell 2010:A40).

Since social and historical contexts play a big role in the popular and scholarly constructs of parenting (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth and Lamb 2000:127) contend that it is important parenting of students in the public universities is seen against the background of the university's recent past. Due to the liberalization and privatization of university education, both Public and Private Universities have expanded tremendously in Kenya, leading to a huge demand for the educational services of the University the University has opened up reaching out to the community. As a result students have enrolled in large numbers in the public universities including the traditional student fresh from secondary school as well as mature students and graduate students, leading to changes socially in the student body as well as adjustments in both popular and scholarly conceptualizations of student parenthood in the university (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, et al 2000:127).

3.2.1 Undergraduate Student Parenthood

This group consists of the students who are entering the University for a First Degree Course. Majority of them are traditional-age students who have just completed a secondary school course and may be venturing out of home or boarding school for the first time. This group of undergraduate student parents is vulnerable and college dropout rates of traditional undergraduates who have just transitioned from high school and are full-time parents is a growing problem, further exacerbated by the dearth of acceptable childcare options for students pursuing a bachelors degree. Most of these students talk about how they have had to work overtime to maintain their grades and place in college teams as well as being student mothers (Peterworth 2007:2). Studies on university undergraduate students repeatedly show the

association between parenthood and shortened educational achievement. Most students especially student mothers find the burden of parenthood and scholarship difficult to juggle (Corcoran 1998:50).

Undergraduate student parents face unique problems in organizations of higher learning. These problems are to do with the institutional policies, procedures as well as the normative expectations of student performance based on the lives and experiences of a specific 'ideal' student without childcare responsibilities (Steck 2005:1). There is need to explore ways the organizational structure of social institutions coordinates the everyday activities of its members. The official university policies and procedures are communicated to undergraduate students through various manuals, catalogues, university handbooks or calendars and fees structures, as well as course syllabi but (Steck 2005:7) argues that rarely is the official category of dependants included in these university texts. There are other areas in the university where undergraduate student parents "become invisible" within the housing contracts, and the university clinics. These are areas where the undergraduate's dependants are not accounted for. There is need therefore to bring the undergraduate student parent into the discourse analysis of the public university.

3.2.2 Graduate Student Parenthood

This is a group of students who are returning to the university after the first degree, for a second course of study which may be a postgraduate degree/diploma, masters or Doctorate degree. Others may be returning to the university after employment and would like to add on to their working experience. This is a group that consists of both part-time and full-time students. Though these are non-traditional students who maybe more mature, they still have to balance student life and parenthood. A study conducted with these postgraduate students on family policies in the university indicated that policies are not treated as needs based entitlement, but seem to be more a reward for those student mothers who are perceived as the best and the

brightest. Their data show that by 2003 two third of new psychology Doctorates were women 59% sociology doctorates were women and almost half of life science Doctorates were earned by women. They further show that even the physical sciences have increased women doctorates by five times since mid 1960's to more than a quarter of the total production. This data collected from a study done in various American Universities (Spalter-Roth and Erskine (2005:19) points to the fact that graduate students are increasingly consisting of women who probably would include student mothers.

In addition this study pointed out that the allocation of work family policies in the universities is tied to graduate school productivity and prestige and future career promise rather than to the need of parenting. Since family policies are designed to be needs-based strategies, to help all in the institution better balance obligations of work and family, the university as an academic institution should make them visible to all members. The human resource departments of universities need to inform chairpersons as well as staff and students about these policies and they should encourage accountability as well as equal distribution of their use otherwise argues (Spalter-Roth and Erskine 2005:25), a large percentage of the university student parents pursuing postgraduate studies will be disadvantaged.

3.2.3 Single Student Mother Parenthood

This is a group of students that are taking care of their child/children on their own without help of a partner or other family while pursuing their studies. Most have to juggle childcare, studies and the burden of parenthood on their own. Whether as a consequence of divorce or the failure to marry, single mother parenthood carries risk factors as submitted by (MCloyd 1990:319). There is a higher risk of anxiety, depression and health problems in this group compared to the other groups as well as an inverse relation between socio-economic status and various forms of psychological distress particularly among single mothers. MCloyd argues that some

of this distress is rooted in the burdens and responsibilities of solo parenting. The combination most productive of psychological distress he quotes “is to be simultaneously single, isolated and exposed to burdensome parental obligations” (MCloyd 1990:319). Single student motherhood may be of particular significance since mothers assume the role of custodial parent in many cases thus impacting on their mental health. A study on parenthood in the public university would need to pay close attention to this group of students and seek ways of integrating their needs to the rest of the student body, more so since academic life in the university is fast paced, and produces stress on its own without the added burden of motherhood.

3.2.4 Male Student Parenthood

This group consists of male students who are fathers and have chosen to be actively involved in studies as well as participating in the full-time care of their child/children. The scientific study of fathering has been somewhat neglected. This may be due to the fact that the father role is hardly consistent even within a particular culture and is subject to very great fluctuations from culture to culture making the study of fathering much more difficult than the study of mothering (Henderson 1980:427). In studying the importance of the father role there is a tendency to study the importance of fathering to children ignoring that fathering is clearly important to the psychological development and further growth of the father. Views about what it means to be a father and the roles of fatherhood are constructed over many years, beginning in early childhood. The path taken to the practice of fathering, or the complex set of developmental processes that give meaning and shape to fathering have yet to be described in research (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda et al 2000:131).

In a study on fatherhood in the twenty first century Cabrera et al point to the fact that since fathers have had the privilege of defining their parental roles and responsibilities more than mothers, this private development of fatherhood involving gender role attitudes, as well as sensitivity, responsibility and supportiveness, may

require further research. In addition to emerging concepts connected to schooling and in this case scholarship in the public university as well as in other social and educational organizations, fatherhood is embedded in these social contexts (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, et al 2000:131).

Fatherhood is differentiated by social systems which include social, economic and political spheres as well as the status of men within society. Social stereotypes determine the rules for the performance of the fatherhood role, including gender stereotypes (Boriensko 2007:84). Fatherhood includes socio-cultural aspects such as historically existing behaviour stereotypes, social requirements and socio-personality characteristics as defined by the terms “role” and “status”; embedded in its function is socialization and acting as a link between generations (Boriensko 2007:84). This carries significance in an organization like the public university where there are certain roles that are played out by individuals in the organization. An understanding of the roles and norms is important to the effective performance and survival of student fathers and other actors in the university. The way the individual has been socialized will influence the way they view student fatherhood whether as a student, faculty or staff in the university as well as how they perform in their position.

While the choice to have the child belongs more to women than men, men have to decide whether they are available for support, financial or otherwise. Male student parents experience parenthood in diverse ways and they acknowledge that parenting is a daunting undertaking, particularly when combined with full-time academics. Some male student parents have opted to drop out of college, or if on an athletic scholarship, they opt out, but for those determined and disciplined enough, they acknowledge the challenge has matured them (Dew 2007:6). Other choices made by student fathers between scholarship and parenting, are described by student father Marcus Landry in (O’neil 2008:1) when talking about the choices he has to make between parenting and scholarship. He mentions that sleep is one of

the things most desired in balancing classes, burden of parenting and still maintaining top grades. But instead of discouraging him this has encouraged him to aim higher and work harder. Another example is seen in the University of Kansas in United States of America which created a policy concerning student parents indicating that they would not have to lose their athletic scholarship, due to pregnancy, and they would have one year eligibility extend. Apparently the rules did not provide for male parents or student fathers as some student fathers learned to their detriment (Petrworth 2007: 2).

3.3 STUDENT PARENTHOOD VERSUS PARENTING AND SCHOLARSHIP

As the university gets more students who are parents and as more parents become students, it is pertinent to address how student parenting as a role and as an existential phenomenon impacts or is impacted on by the university as an institution. With the social changes taking place around the world, parenting which is a social construct based on social historical changes then is expected to adapt to these changes. Social, legal and behavioural writers set the pace for these changes as did the missionaries in former times in various countries (Ambert 1994:538). Various universities attempt to address these changes in diverse ways, and they need to set the pace in adapting to the changing environment otherwise they will be left behind by more advanced sections of the society to the detriment of the student body, and the loss of student numbers. Students need multiple sources of support to succeed in school and in their own communities more so as they actualize their goals, aspirations or the kinds of assistance they need to reach their goals. The students who receive support from home, family and community benefit on all three fronts and are more likely to be academically successful (Sanders and Epstein 2005:215).

Some of the support that these two researchers focus on that is significantly important and can be effective for students, including student parents comprise the following: firstly parenting which is helping families establish home environments

that support children and helping educational institutions understand families; secondly communicating about the educational programs and the students progress; thirdly volunteering that is recruiting and organizing help and support for studies, functions and activities as well as providing students with help on decision making both academic and curriculum related and finally, strengthening and providing support for students their families and the educational institution (Sanders and Epstein 2005:203). This would go a long way in making visible the ‘invisible’ parenthood in the educational environment

3.4 SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL THEORIES AND STUDENT PARENTHOOD

Society and culture are dynamic and parenting is a social construct evolving with social historical changes (Ambert 1994:530). Therefore there is a need to reformulate theoretical models of parenting to accommodate the new and diverse structures that are as a result of changes in the dominant institutions and ideologies. Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, et al (2000:129) argues that research on the development of fatherhood is complicated by the fact that there is no singular set of developmental end points or tasks that define competent supportive fathering for all men, more so when fathering outside the traditional family model like in student parenting. The theoretical framework in this study focuses on two theories that examine the combination of scholarship and parenting. The first one structural functionalism interrogates the social organization and the role it plays in giving structure and functions. The second one symbolic interaction addresses symbols, rules and structure of the organization and how this impacts on interactions. Both theories focus on the role conflict, ‘ideal’ student, and ‘ideal’ parent, and how this may conflict with the demands and ideals of the organization.

These theories focus on the academic organization its functions on the one hand and cultural expectations and norms of parenting on the other. They suggest distinct separations between scholarship and parenthood in the university, citing conflict in

cultural expectations and functions of the university to explain this. The unique environment of the university and the demands made on students to work within an academic calendar raises questions on the relationship between academic work and parenthood. The assumptions institutionalized in the university organization disadvantages the student parent who may have competing responsibilities. Negotiating through the responsibilities of parenthood and scholarship may create unnecessary tension that is uncalled for (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004:237).

3.4.1 Structural Functionalism, the Public University and Student Parenthood

Structural functionalist theory posits that the existence and actions of individuals and institutions are in relation to the functions they perform for the social organism or system (Mann 2007:30). This theory emphasises the role of social structure focusing on how the needs of the social system are met by various social structures which have norms and values. According to functionalists, people pursue goals rooted in the norms and bound by the values of their cultural system (Mann 2007:31). Therefore motivated individuals will create goals and use various means at their disposal to achieve these goals, constrained by the normative standards of the social system and situational conditions which they may not be in a position to change.

The two social systems under discussion are the individual student parent and the educational system. Survival of each depends on the following: adaptation to its environment, achievement of goals, commitment to shared values and integration into the system (Mann 2007:35). The theory explains that for the student parent to succeed in the environment of the university there is need to adapt, achieve, commit and integrate of the student into the university system or the university system to the student parent. Inconsistency in the successful achievement of any of the above may lead to physical and mental disparity, which impacts on the individuals in the university organization negatively.

3.4.2 Symbolic Interaction Functions of the Organization and Student Parenthood

Another theory that may address the functions of the organization and how they interact with student parenthood is symbolic interaction. Symbolic Interaction focuses on how individual human minds create a universe of shared symbols thereby creating a society. It focuses on the small social interactions that create society based on symbols some of which maybe words (Mann 2007:181). People share insight, as a group which determines the way we see each other, as well as the way we imagine others see us based on the image we have of ourselves. Taking into account the judgement of others regulates our own actions. Symbolic interaction is developed through significant symbols that have the same meaning for an entire social group, arousing in others the same response it evokes in the person making it (Mann 2007:186) an example is language. Meaning is a product of society given by people. It arises from interaction which takes into account the actions of others relating their actions to our actions (Mann 2007:188). Therefore symbolic interaction is based on an interpretation of the actions of others. This theory explains student parenthood in the context of the public university. The meanings assigned to scholarship and parenting and the response to student parents from the rest of the university fraternity. The meanings that the student will assign to themselves will be based on the shared symbols. There will be symbolism in organizational structures and functions.

3.4.3 Conflict, Academic Environment and Parenthood

The academic environment is such that there is the potential for parenthood and scholarship to conflict in a number of areas. These include among others the area of policy, practices and programmes. These areas may present a conflict with student parenthood, since the academic environment has norms and structures in place for the “ideal” student, while culture and society has roles and ideologies consistent with the “ideal” parent, where these do not conform, it may lead to conflict.

In a study on family friendly policies in a Research University, (Quinn, Lange and Olswang 2004:34) list policies and practices that have been adapted in institutions of higher education in America to help members in primary care giving roles. Some of the benefits developed from these policies apply both to staff and students. However the researchers found major challenges to the use of these programmes: these include inconsistency in communication of policies and programmes; decentralized decision making at departmental level, which influences the implementation of policies and inconsistent tracking and evaluation which makes it difficult to monitor the effectiveness of policies and programmes.

The study therefore recommended the use of broad communication about availability of policies to all concerned so that the use of the policy is seen as legitimate, and treated as routine and consistent across the institution. In addition the researchers recommended the tracking of the policy use in order to determine effectiveness and effect of such use on the faculty members. As well as sending out a clear message that structures that enhance family friendly values are absolutely consistent with excellence in teaching and scholarship through demonstration of a commitment to make the faculty environment family friendly (Quinn Lange and Olswang 2004:34).

In a study titled “Hitting the Maternal Wall” (Williams 2004: 18, 20) the researcher describes discrimination in organizations that arise due to what is described as gender stereotyping and cognitive bias. One of which is referred to as maternal wall and the other paternal wall. These are conflicts described in the study which arise from social and cultural expectations and have an impact on parenthood. In spite of family policies in most workplaces, discrimination may arise if academic administrators do not re-examine decisions made in regard to expectations of faculty staff and students. When a parent seeks leave from academics due to pregnancy, it may trigger negative assumptions of incompetence. When an academic father seeks

leave beyond the occasional doctors' appointment or occasional school play they feel their future is dimmed (Williams 2004:20). Therefore much as academic institutions work at making the workplace equitable Williams (2004) recommends the need to examine the decisions made to avoid the tell-tale signs of discrimination. Some of the discrimination may produce relatively small differences but these add up over time accumulating to a disadvantage for parents in an academic environment.

Another conflict that has been observed in the academic environment and parenting is when social demands of parenthood call upon the student parent to take up policies in the workplace if and when they are available. But students and faculty sometimes avoid taking advantage of these family-friendly policies, even when they are student parents since those who do may sometimes suffer penalties not withstanding that these policies have been structured to assist them in balancing scholarship and parenting. By avoiding using these policies, (Drago, Stauffer, Pirreti, Burkam, Fazioli, Lazarro and Habasevich 2005:22) call this bias avoidance. In their study on the extent and nature of bias avoidance in American Universities they point out that student parents and faculty in the university use such strategies owing to the fact that norms of the ideal student and parenthood may be incompatible. It is the normal practice in the university that students who become parents have to juggle both scholarship and parenthood. For example Kansan University athletes who become parents have to balance the obligations of classes, childcare and sports, making everyday hectic and a test of their discipline. They must put together money from summer jobs, savings and parent support to pay for babysitting, medical care, food, clothing and other parenthood expenses. The University of Kansas created a policy concerning student parenting that they would not have to lose their athletic scholarship due to pregnancy and they had one year eligibility extend (Dent 2008:2). Though this is a well intended policy, in practice it left out a part of the student parents. It happens to be directed to the female parents; however the same does not apply for male parents or student fathers except for counselling. A student

father in the University of Kansas lost an athletic scholarship because he had been enrolled in school for five years. Though he challenged the ruling on parenting, he lost the appeal since male parents are not extended eligibility to take time off for parenting (Dew 2008:3).

Another area of parenting and academic conflict was observed in the practices of academic environments. In a study on pregnant and parenting students done in a New York school, the researcher notes; “that pregnant and parenting students are routinely subjected to hostile and punitive treatment in mainstream public schools, resulting in their educational disenfranchisement” (Ling 2002: 2388). Many educational institutions have been known to either “counsel out” or “ease out” students who are pregnant (Lieberman 2002:2). Ling (2002:2389) noted that in spite of empirical evidence of the positive outcomes of education for teenage mothers and their children, the first course of action in most institutions is to push pregnant and parenting students into separate pregnancy school programs.

In Kenya conflict has been noted in the academic environment and parenting whereby most educational institutions had for long formal policies requiring pregnant students to drop out of school once their pregnancies became known or apparent to school officials. This was later amended and the Ministry of Education in Kenya introduced a return to school policy that is in place to encourage girls return to school after giving birth but due to the influence of the earlier policy of non recognition of parenting in the academic environment, this guideline is not effectively utilized by many institutions which prefer to expel pregnant or parenting girls as they feel that these are a bad influence to others in the school (Muganda-Onyango and Omondi 2008:45). This conflict of practice and policy in the academic background is as a result of the carryover from cultural and organizational norms and role expectations.

The official Kenyan policy is that students who become pregnant while they are in school must drop out temporarily. The student mothers who give birth are not prohibited from returning to the same school, although whether any school permits reinstatement is unclear. As for student fathers no equivalent ministerial regulation exists for those who are found to have impregnated girls and thus each institution is free to set its own policy on whether to continue or discontinue such student parents (Mensch and Lloyd 1998:1). This practice in the secondary school academic environment tends to have a slight bearing in the way student parents are made 'visible' or 'invisible' in the public university which has left many student parents to shoulder the burden of parenthood and scholarship largely on their own. Another study on the attitude of Kenyan in-school adolescents towards sexual autonomy documents that student parenting and its connection to school dropout is a concern both in Kenya and in other sub Saharan African countries, since most teachers (even female) teachers favoured forcing pregnant students out of school expressing their feelings that such students mothers should not be allowed back to the same school after delivery (Adaji Warenus Ong'any and Faxelid 2010:38). This is despite the fact that Kenya has a school re-entry policy after pregnancy and child birth since 1994. The educational exclusion of pregnant students is rooted in the background of missionary and church sponsored agencies that have been responsible for education in Kenya for a long time. It was feared that if pregnant and parenting students were permitted to remain in schools the school and community would be seen to condone that conduct and others in the school through association would be contaminated and likewise get pregnant. Thus the schools insisted on teaching such pregnant students a lesson through educational banishment. Apparently this lesson was meted out solely onto student mothers rather than both the male and female parents (Ling 2002:2392).

3.4.4 Conflict, Social Cultural Expectations of Parenthood

A principal finding from a study on fatherhood as a personality development factor in men by (Boriensko 2007:82) was that fatherhood is socially determined and influenced by contextual forces within the family and the community. The study emphasises how contemporary society is facing the destruction of traditional sex stratification resulting in alterations to gender roles including parenting (Boriensko 2007:83). The researcher alludes to the need for greater emphasis on studies of particularities of fatherhood since these will enrich emotional, motivational and value aspects of the role of the father and other family psychological support programs. The studies on fatherhood focus on the social role, status in terms of conceptions and stereotypes, gender, psychology, personality changes and characteristics. Boriensko emphasises the fact that biological and social factors are closely intertwined in the preparedness for fatherhood. The society makes specific demands on the adult, social, financial and professional status of the individual, and regulates the behaviour by means of the system of social roles leading to specific features of fatherhood that are dependent on a multitude of socio-cultural factors and conditions that may vary specifically (Boriensko 2007:83).

Since fatherhood is culturally and socially determined, any alteration to the expectations creates conflict and demands a response. The conflict that may arise in the social cultural expectations of parenthood may be in the area of roles, and conceptions of parenting and scholarship, and how the student father is expected to reconcile the two, more so when due to changes in the cultural expectations, more mothers are going back to the workplace placing demands and expectations on fathers. This translates to the academic environment where there will be more expected from the student father. In an article *Fatherhood 2.0* the author questions the notions of masculinity, saying that many fathers are challenging old definitions of manliness showing how those fathers who change from the culturally expected norms of fatherhood may look strange but they are better adjusted to the changing times and their children as well (Cullen and Grossman 2007:64).

The change in cultural expectations of parenting and scholarship has implications on student mothers as well as on the expectations of the academic environment, since student mothers will be discouraged from carrying the burden of parenting alone. Griffith and Smith (1990:20) suggest institutional ethnography as a way to situate the effects of the social relations of a capitalist economy, showing the experiences of guilt formed when mothers identify a gap between what she should be doing as a mother responsible for her children, and the other demands for her energies. When this is brought to an academic environment, the student mother and the institution is able to identify areas that may produce gaps and be more prepared to deal with them. The researchers focus on how the organization of the labour market and work schedules is transmitted into the schooling process. This can have a disorganizing effect on parenting, on time, as well as on the inflexibility of the basic temporal parameters of schooling. Parenting and workday of the institution, is affected as well as the demands placed on the parents' participation in external organizations (Griffith and Smith 1990:23). As more women get into the workplace it becomes harder for men to shirk childcare, the same going for student parenthood as both male and female students have the opportunity to continue as students while parenting, it becomes even more important to consider parenting and scholarship for both. The fact that masculinity and fatherhood is a mutable cultural construct invites more studies on the changing roles of men, and the emerging and evolving norms of fatherhood (Cullen and Grossman 2007:66). This will enrich the studies on parenting and shed light on areas of conflict and how best to overcome them.

3.5 Socio-Educational Perspective of Student Parenthood

In a study on the impact of economic hardship on black family and children (McLoyd 1990:311) the author argues that poverty and economic loss diminish the capacity for supportive, consistent and involved parenting and render parents more vulnerable to the debilitating effects of negative life events. They further argue that parents'

networks reduce emotional strain, and foster positive socio-emotional development in children. A student parent who is social and emotionally stable will be in a better position for parenting and academic pursuits. Therefore there is need to address the social emotional aspect of an individual and how this impacts on the socio-educational perspective of the student parent. A study conducted in a school district in South California on empowerment of parents, examined the cultural knowledge that is deemed important in encouraging parents to participate effectively in their children's education which in essence is power (Delgado-Gaitan 1991:20). As student parents are empowered they are able to question assumptions, and absence of appropriate socio-cultural knowledge that may be beneficial to the advancement of their education and their experiences in the university. Power has been defined as the capacity to produce intended, foreseen, and unforeseen effects on others to accomplish results on behalf of self. How one utilizes power determines the extent to which individual or organizations access valued resources (Delgado-Gaitan 1991:22). This researcher concludes by arguing that there is need to question activities in educational organizations which have been institutionalized and which easily tend to ignore the needs of the underrepresented groups in that organization, relegating more power to the institution (Delgado-Gaitan 1991:43). The underrepresented group in this case would be the student parents and how they are treated socially and academically in the university.

3.5.1 Social Perspectives (Demands) of Parenthood

There has been a growing interest in what has been known as “socio-cultural or cultural-historical theory”. These are broad theoretical frameworks that may give an understanding of what the situation of student parenthood is in a broad sense (Daniels, Cole and Wertsch 2007:2). This theory explains that higher order functions develop from social interactions through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions. These measure and strengthen the said functions. As people participate in activities and they communicate about what they

are involved in more and more it encourages expectations of these functions as well as the norms of participating in them. Vygotsky in de Valenzuela (2007) describes learning as being embedded in social events occurring as a person interacts with people, objects and events in the environment (de Valenzuela 2007:280). This embedding in the social events is what solidifies the understandings and ideologies concerning our social perspectives. Considering this contribution of socio cultural theory to understanding the social perspectives of parenting there are two approaches to social interaction described by Vygotsky: one is fundamentally cultural that shows how we are informed by what culturally surrounds us. What culturally surrounds us demands our attention and our response to situations will be based on the perspective we bear.

Secondly, the reactions and interpretations we get around us will transform our behaviour into a social act thus we are educated, and supported by those and that which surrounds us. This buttresses the knowledge we acquire and transforms our thinking and our practice (de Valenzuela 2007: 282). Our understandings will therefore be related to the activities that surround us and will be embedded in our communal history and discourse. Traditional signs symbols and speech are carriers of both meaning and socio-cultural patterns and they lead and assist individuals to self-regulate and develop internal mechanisms of thinking. This theory explains the social demands made on parenthood and on scholarship to be as a result of the meanings and socio-cultural patterns that are embedded in the society and the organization.

3.5.2 Educational Perspectives of Parenthood

The University has traditionally been a pivotal institution for social inclusion and there is need to examine the strategies for change, as well as its policies, institutional and organizational practices for transformation (Morley 2006:285). As pivotal institutions universities are supposed to influence the values, knowledge and politics of inclusion both in the public and private sectors. Morley (2006:293) discusses the changes that

have taken place in the educational perspectives of the public universities from the 1960's to date. She details how from mid 1960's – 1980' the university was concerned with minimising effects of inequalities, then 1980's- mid 1990's the university was involved in addressing structural inequalities by bridging the gaps but the organizational structures remained unchanged. Then the third period was from mid 1990's to present, the era of globalization presented both a threat and an opportunity for access to new ideas, contacts and international resources. There were a lot of international declarations but some have been difficult to implement due to institutional politics and policies (Morley 2006:296).

These changing global formations have had an influence both on the notions of the purpose of the university as well as on approaches to change. The global changes have impacted on the educational perspectives of parenthood in the public university, by promoting social inclusiveness and promoting competitiveness as well as acting as promoting agents of equality.

3.5.3 Integration of Social and Educational Demands of Parenthood

A study on Fatherhood in the twenty-first century argues that the integration of socio and educational demands of parenthood will depend a lot on how researchers, policymakers and practitioners integrate resources to institute policies aimed at helping student parents help themselves (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, et al 2000:133). The Parenting model which once seemed natural is now yielding new cultural ideals, with changes in responsibilities, expectations, beliefs and attitudes about parenting in the context of social institutions. These changes are revealing images of collective social consciousness and these, the researchers maintain will lead to changes in many institutional settings, including the universities, schools and the work place. The researchers urge a need for capturing these changes as social scientists and integrating them into theories, methodological approaches, policies and practices.

3.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter an attempt was made to introduce parenting in the public university in its various forms. Student parenthood in relation to scholarship in the education and academic environment was discussed. Two social educational theories namely structural functionalism and symbolic interaction in the public university as they relate to student parenthood were presented, showing how the organization, culture and social norms influence the perceptions of student parenthood in the public university.

Areas that might present conflict in the social, academic and cultural perspectives were explored; with an attempt to demonstrate how the educational and social demands of parenting for student parents can be integrated as a result leading to positive change and transformations in the way the public university perceives parenting and scholarship.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the research methodology of the study. In order to investigate areas that need attention in regard to educational opportunities and the approaches taken towards university student parenthood, a qualitative study was conducted. This was necessary so as to examine the effect of the socialization process that student parents undergo, the norms, values and attitudes that create or decrease educational opportunity for individual students. The aim was to develop a strategy that would enhance the approaches taken towards student parenthood in the public university. To do this effectively a qualitative research approach was deemed to be most appropriate as a scientific exploration of the manner in which the public university in Kenya addresses student parents and it asked the question: What is the public university's socio-educational approach with respect to student parents in Kenya. Towards this end, the present chapter presents the research aims, design, methods and data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations of the investigation.

4.2 RESEARCH AIMS

As stated in Chapter 1 section 1.3 the overall purpose of the study was to examine the position of socio-educational approaches towards student parenthood in the public university in Kenya. To achieve this objective the research attempts to answer the following questions:

- How do student parents from low SES cope with needs regarding personal, educational, social, psychological and financial in higher education

- What is the nature of university academics, university management's knowledge and understanding of student parents' personal needs in terms of spontaneous dimension, interpersonal relationship and orientation towards provision of education
- What is the attitude of the Kenya Public University management towards the needs of student parents in terms of interpersonal relationships and financial support
- What role can guidance services play in the Kenyan Public Universities to assist student parents in actualising their potential in terms of personal, socio-educational and financial support

Finally as questions are raised on the educational histories and experiences of student parents in the public universities as well as on the effectiveness of intervening socio-education programmes this will be enlightening and make approaches to parenthood in the public universities more inclusive.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design used in this study follows a critical qualitative method that is contextual in nature. It adopts (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:13) approach that asserts research questions will become more specific as the research progresses and as the social world behind the sub questions gets revealed. In this way the research design describes the how and the why things happen or are the way they are as well as the methods and conditions under which data will be obtained (Ulin Robinson Tolley 2005:6). It is in defining situations that human beings create culture from the physical reality they live in through the giving of meaning to physical events and processes in terms of their values (Scott 1998:107). How an individual perceives or conceptualizes institutions in the society will be greatly influenced by culture. How they respond to these institutions will be affected by their cultural background. Since institutions are made up of individuals, the way these individuals relate to

others in that organization will be influenced by the way they perceive the culture. Therefore the research design should be one that can be able to peel off the layers embedded in the values of the individuals as a result of the culture which is given meaning by the institutions that govern the person.

As people address their social reality, and express their everyday experiences they are in a position to define their situation. This brings understandings that help them address everyday reality, social interaction and knowledge. From this social interaction, cultural and physical conditions become real. Therefore in a study that involves meanings made from cultural reality, it is important that the design of the research includes activities that are able to grasp culture understandings, cultural reality and concepts involved and not just explaining the physical reality of the structures of the institutions.

4.3.1 Qualitative Research

This section elaborates the reasons for using qualitative research. According to (Bryman 1998:138) qualitative research basically draws on the social world which is depicted as socially constructed with a meaningful reality that is in a constant state of revision. Therefore since the social world is as a result of the reality we make for ourselves and since society and people are dynamic, this social world is constantly changing, as a result there will always be a need for revision and that is why qualitative research which is not structured on unchanging reality is most appropriate for this study. What affects those being studied is given in context so that meanings are derived based on the reality as opposed to assumptions held by quantitative approaches of stability in context. As a result the flexibility of the approach encourages the theoretical framework to be the frame of what the participants experience themselves.

Qualitative research has been defined as a naturalistic, interpretive approach concerned with understanding the meanings people attach to phenomena which are the actions, decisions and values within their social worlds (Ritchie and Lewis 2003:3). In this study, qualitative research maximizes on the understandings of activities, beliefs and the processes through which these are structured, since it enables the researcher see the world from the participants' eyes with a technique that is less structured as it seeks to probe and peel off social layers (Maynard 1998:128). The less structure there is in the technique, the freer the explorations of the leads and assumptions presented in the course of the study.

In addition descriptive research was used in this study as a way of allowing the world studied to interpret itself in texts and dialogue, leading to an account of the lived experiences of participants and their productions of meanings while conducting the reader into a generalization of these experiences (Denzin 2001:90). An attempt to capture the experiences of student parents and their relationships with other members of the university was done as precisely as possible with their voices recorded in the interviews as well as descriptions of how they understand the impact of the socio-educational approaches taken by the university on them. Descriptive research has been depicted as the classification of themes and categories emerging from the data collected, and how these are managed to give distinctive and meaningful concepts that illuminate the content accrued (Ritchie and Lewis 2003:237). This study attempted to create meaning from the data collected of personal experiences and the construction of social reality of student parents and the university staff. The use of qualitative research enabled the researcher describe, analyse and make interpretations about the patterns seen and heard during the collection of data (Creswell 2002:491).

Finally the descriptive component of this study is critical in the development of a strategy that will be useful in enhancing approaches to student parenthood in the

public universities. This strategy is elaborated on in chapter 6. Such a strategy benefits from a rich descriptive research.

4.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods used in this study relied on multiple sources with an interpretive approach which made an attempt to question assumptions whether correct or incorrect. In-depth interviews were conducted with student parents and university staff. Focus group discussions were carried out to provide understanding of what was being studied in addition observation and analysis of documents was done. This approach was used to address the social situations based on the perspectives and experiences of the people within (Denzin 2001:3), and to get as clear a picture as possible of the reality as experienced by the participants.

4.4.1 Description of the Sample

Purposeful sampling was used in this study of the individuals who experience parenthood in the public university. The site was one public university and one constituent college of the public university. Sampling was done purposefully to get information rich individuals (Creswell 2002:378). When one wants to understand a case, and to increase utility of information from small samples purposeful sampling is recommended (McMillan Schumacher 1993:378). Therefore the sample was chosen because they were seen to be more knowledgeable and informative about student parenting in the public university in Kenya, and that the information given would depict the reality in a public university.

4.4.2 Sampling Procedures

The sample of participants for the interviews included:

Student mothers: Homogenous sampling was used to select student mothers the researcher sampled individuals who are student mothers by virtue of pregnancy or childbearing while studying in the university. These students who become parents or

those parents who are students, or are expecting a baby were selected to include at least four student mothers.

Student fathers: Snowball sampling was used to identify student fathers. This was done after the study had began as it was not as easy to identify student fathers like the student mothers since they may not carry physical characteristics as in the female pregnancy. Therefore purposeful sampling was used, where the researcher asked the participants to propose other students on campus who are student fathers and are willing to participate in the research. This was informally done through questioning during the interviews with the other participants.

Personnel who by nature of their job interact most with the student parents were sampled homogenously personnel like the dean of students and the student counsellors were selected to include male and female counselling staff. A male and a female dean were selected to have a gender balanced sample.

Administrative personnel are involved in making and overseeing approaches taken in relation to parenthood in the University. Of these, a total of four were targeted consisting of both male and female staff from each of the sites participating in the research. These were selected through homogeneous sampling of the personnel in the student registrar's office.

Academic staff both male and two female members teaching in the two sites participating in the study were chosen purposefully depending on who has taught a group that included student parents.

4.4.3. Research Instruments

The main research instruments used were in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

4.4.3.1. In-Depth Interviews

The one-on-one interviews consisted of questions that were semi-structured and the answers were recorded. Some questions were open-ended and some close ended questions this was done to permit the participants answer from their point of view. The predetermined close ended questions were used to verify information that arose from the social theories proposed to have influence on practice. The open-ended questions as acknowledged by Creswell (2002) allowed the participants to provide personal experiences outside those provided by the close ended options as well as elicit detailed information that may prove useful to the study (Creswell 2002:212).

The use of a close-ended question followed by an open-ended question to explain or elaborate on answers given was done in an effort to represent the different view points on the practice and experiences as relates to student parents. Two sets of interview guides were designed and developed by the researcher. One for use with the student parents and another for use with the university staff the interview protocol (guides) were designed to give structure to the interviews and for note taking capturing issues raised in the research concerning various dimensions of parenthood in the university as well as the experiences of student parents in relation to the approaches taken by the public university to parenthood. The interview protocol contained instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked and space to take notes on the responses from the interviewee (Creswell 2002:212). (See Appendix B).

A staff interview protocol (guide) was developed for use in the interviews with the university staff members both administrative and academic who interact on a socio educational environment with the student parents capturing issues concerning approaches to parenting taken by the public university.

(See Appendix C and D).

The Interview guides were used to elicit information concerning:

- Conceptions about Student Parenthood in Public Universities
- Conceptions about the Role of the Public University in relation to Student Parenthood
- Challenges faced both by student parents and the public university in relation to parenthood
- Suggestions on how to address the phenomena of student parenthood

4.4.3.2. Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews provide checks and balance on each other and weeds out false or extreme views as argued by (Flick 2009:196). This study used focus group interviews to explore specific issues that arose from the one-on-one interviews as well as issues related to the research question and sub-questions that needed clarification from the participants the use of clarification through the focus group as been documented by (Grbich 1999:109). The use of focus groups in this study was an attempt to give the participants opportunities to introduce any new ideas and was expected to provide a mutually supportive and constructive setting. Maynard (1998:132, 133) submits that focus groups create settings that are as close as possible to the contexts in which people negotiate the recounting of opinions and remembering of experiences thus they are closer to what goes on in social life than one-on-one interviews. The group interviews are expected to stimulate participants and give support in remembering events beyond the answers given in the one-on-one interviews (Flick 2009:196).

4.4.3.2.1. Selection of Respondents

The focus group respondents were the student parents who had participated in the one-on-one interview. Thus they were conducted after the one-on-one interviews and they consisted of not more than six student parents.

4.4.3.2.2. *The Focus Group Discussions*

The groups were homogeneous. One composed of student mothers and the other of student parent couples. This was done to encourage discussions relevant to the different aspects of parenthood in a public university. The researcher developed a focus group route which was used to draw out and focus on issues pertinent to the study (See AppendixE).

The researcher moderated the discussion and tried to create as open a space as possible to support the dynamics of the group. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to gain an understanding of the student parents' experiences of the approaches and practices adopted by the universities towards them, as well as gain insights on their perceptions of the day-to-day experiences in the public university (Krueger 1994:67). They lasted between one and a half hours and were used to collect information, clarify personal experiences, parenting issues as well as identify pertinent issues related to the research question that were needed for the analysis.

The interviews were conducted after class hours or over the weekend whichever was most convenient for the participants. The participants were contacted after the initial one-on-one interviews, with a personal reminder send out to them before the interviews. There was an incentive offered in the form of tea and snacks as well as money token to stimulate the attendance. The incentive is helpful as (Krueger 1944:92) suggests because it makes it worth the while for the participants to attend, it encourages the participant to set aside the time for the interview, as well as communicating to the participants that the focus group is important.

4.4.4. Observation

Observation data formed part of this study. Observation has been related to interviewing in that researchers have noted that interviewing involves listening not only to the guided conversation but “hearing the meaning” as well, so as to make

“cultural inferences” or descriptions of a given social world (Grubrium and Holstein 2002:84). Interviewing as suggested by (Bertrand and Hughes 2005:74) has been seen to be a purposive conversation with the interviewer always being a part of the interview process as participant observer. Participant observation was used to collect data and involved the description and explanation of the regularities and variations within the culture of the institution. This was interpreted within the defined theoretical framework. Participant observation as shared by (Grbich 1999:123) is a technique of unobtrusive, shared or overtly subjective data collection. In this study it involved spending time observing the interactions of student parents within the public university and with various offices and institutions. This was done so as to understand the meanings constructed in that environment as well as of everyday experiences. It is this direct involvement in the social practices of the institution where behaviour is noted, customs of the institution, processes and practises are observed which yields valuable sources of data (Bertrand and Hughes 2005:146).

As a participant observer the researcher took the role of total researcher. Grbich (1999:125) underscores the fact that in such a situation, the researcher is emotionally and physically separate and there is an emotional and physical distance between the researcher and the observation setting. The observation was done when the interviews were going on as well as when the student parents interacted with the various faculty and administrative staff that offer them services.

The questions used for the participant observation were general, related to the details of the student parents’ daily life while focusing on the details that impact on student parenting in the Public University. For this study it involved recording observations on the setting, environment, people and their relationship to the participants. All observation noted was recorded as soon as possible after leaving the observation site it consisted of brief notes about events, key words, remarks and

a place was left on the right hand margins of the notepad for critical comments and emerging themes (Grbich 1999:134).

4.4.5. Data Collection Procedures

The first step in collection of the data was getting approval from the supervisor to begin the process of going out into the field.

Thereafter a research permit was obtained from the National Council of Science and Research (Kenya) (see Appendix F).

After Permission to conduct the research in Kenya was approved, permission was sought from the Head of the Institution where the study was to be conducted. In addition permission was sought from the ethics committee of the Graduate school where the researcher is based to conduct the research.

Before the actual data collection, the interview protocols (guides) as well as the focus group questioning routes were pre-tested (piloted) on a selected sample similar to the actual sample that was included in the study. Subjects in the pre-test were not in the actual samples. The procedures used in the pre-testing were identical to those used in actual data collection. This allowed the researcher to make meaningful modifications to the research instruments.

Two members of staff male and female, two students male and female were included in the pilot study to get as close as possible to the actual characteristics of the study.

Pre-testing was considered important to this study because comments and suggestions by the respondents during the pre-tests proved helpful in improving the quality of the interview guides and focus group guides. In addition, the pre-testing revealed unclear instructions, vague questions as well as checking responses to see how they related to the theories used in the study.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher over a span of three months when the participants indicated their availability. Appointments were booked to carry out the one-on-one interviews with student parents, after which appointments were booked for a follow up with focus group discussions. Arrangements were made for interviews with the various university staff at a place and time of their convenience. The interview situation was designed in such a way as to minimize differences in status, knowledge and power and to create a sense of equality that enabled free flow of information between interviewer and interviewee. This was done through the following. Making a preliminary phone call to advise the person what her or his participation in the study would involve. Secondly informing them how much of their time will be required then, getting a location they are comfortable at and explaining their rights as participants. Finally the researcher stressed the importance of the person's contribution and addressed concerns raised by the individual (Gbrich 1999:98).

Data analysis was on-going as the interviews were conducted as well as after all the interviews were done.

4.4.6. Data Analysis

In an attempt to interpret the data, the data was subjected to various frames of interaction. Frames were used to analyse data and to compare knowledge with previous events and personalities. Some areas that were used as bases of interpretation based on (Grbich 199:218) include frames applied by the researcher; the researcher's interpretive focus as well as the reader's position in relation to the collected data. These frames were appreciated in this study as well as the awareness that imposing a frame on an event may affect the actual form of the data collected.

Considerable overlap among modes of qualitative data analysis occurred in the study. The study used an interpretive interactive approach the iterative mode (Grbich 1999:231). This has been described as collecting information by observing,

interviewing then transcribing this information, reflecting on it, initially analysing then gathering more information if need be.

To enable effective analysis, interview sessions were transcribed as soon as possible while the observation sessions were written up within 12hrs of the observation to maximize recall. The interview and observation transcripts had a margin that allowed for comments, clarifications, interruptions and issues that required follow up.

All this was done in an attempt to identify gaps and utilize various concepts and frames in relation to the issues being identified then the interviews were summarized. Themes evident from this preliminary analysis of the data were identified, interpreted, after which the writing up stage was began.

Analysis of the focus group data was done through categorization of responses in terms of questions asked based on the theoretical frameworks chosen for the study (Grbich 1999:113). The results gained were combined in a focused manner by placing them within previous research.

4.5. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

4.5.1 Validity

Validity of the study is the credibility of the description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation and any other sort of account. In addition the study should be useful to those undertaking it (Holloway and Wheeler 2002:253). Validity has also been defined as whether what is being observed identified or measured is what was said to be (Bryman 2001:271). Holloway and Wheeler (2002) discuss some of the threats to validity and how these can be overcome. Some of the threats discussed include collecting incorrect or incomplete data, which can be dealt with by having an extensive and detailed field diary. This study kept a detailed field diary of what was observed in the interactions with the participants. Internal validity they go on to illustrate as the extend of truth of the findings of the study as well as an accurate reflection of the aim of the research and social reality of those participating in it. This

can be established through comparing the findings with the perception of the people involved through a members check. This study incorporated the focus group interviews, as a way of establishing the truth of the answers given and how they related to the social reality experienced by the student parents the focus group became a form of checking or confirm that what was said by one participant was correct or the reality experienced. In addition other methods, such as observation and one-on-one interviewing were done to complete and verify the data collected. All these were done as part of this study in an effort to make the descriptions, conclusions and explanations credible so that what was observed and measured was as close as possible to the social reality experienced by the student parents.

Validity can be achieved through a careful investigation and careful explication of the relationship between what is being observed and the larger historical and organizational contexts. Gbrich (1999:62) suggests documentation and analysis of these in terms of their historical and cultural environment: key individuals, their activities, schedules, division of labour hierarchies, routines and variations; member's perspectives, social rules and patterns of order and disorder. In this study a cultural and historical study was done of the structure of the public university and organizational environment this was put into context, as it compared to the perspectives of the participants in relation to routines, schedules, activities and division of labour and tasks. The student parents were then in a position to verify or validate these cultural and structural patterns and relations.

Other techniques used in the study included: face validity which was done through checking interpretations by presenting them to a focus group of the participants. Construct validity in this study was done through confronting the theoretical perspectives discussed with the data and development of new conceptual interpretations as suggested in the study by Gbrich (Gbrich 1999:62).

4.5.2 Reliability

The findings of the study need to be dependable, which is seen in the consistency and accuracy of the study. Holloway and Wheeler (2002:255) assert that the readers should be able to evaluate the adequacy of the analysis through following the decision-making processes of the researcher. The context of the research must also be described in detail so as to demonstrate how the researcher arrived at their conclusion. It is important to do this so as to guide other researchers wishing to carry out similar research even though the research may not necessarily be replicated, it may be repeated.

This study made an attempt to detail the processes carried out in the study step by step so that it would be easy to replicate another such study. In addition how the analysis was done and all the decisions that were made and followed by the researcher and which lead to the conclusions were given this was done in an effort to allow for the possibility of a repeat of the study if there need be.

Reliability as portrayed by (Ritchie and Lewis 2003:270) is concerned with the replicability of the research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study using the same or similar methods, was undertaken. If this is possible with similar results, or if it is not possible, then reasons showing why the results are not similar is what gives the study reliability. This study tried to present all the phases of the collection of data and the steps of the analysis of this data. Bryman (2001:273) encourages researchers to adopt an audit of all phases of the research process as well as keep records of the same in an accessible manner this will involve records from the beginning to the end of the research process including problem formulation, selection of participants, fieldwork notes, transcripts of interviews data analysis decisions. These are important in making a follow up to the study if need be. This study made an attempt to keep to this audit and a concise recording of the process has been preserved.

Another way of ensuring the reliability of the study is by the researcher locating himself or herself in the study. This can be done either through making explicit the grounds for conducting the research with a clear setting out of procedures used and explanation of why things have been done the way they have, as well as the researcher questioning the likely effect of his or her assumptions on the research and its analysis (Maynard 1998:131). This should be done in an attempt to make the relationship between the researcher and the researched more transparent. This study attempted to follow all these processes in ensuring that the study was reliable. The study has documented the assumptions of the study and how these were likely to affect the research and the analysis.

4.5.2.1 Applicability

The applicability of the research was based on how the findings and the conclusions of the study can be applied to similar settings or populations and to the usefulness of the research. This study made an attempt to use theory based generalization as suggested by (Holloway and Wheeler 2002:253) since theory contributes to the greater body of knowledge when the concepts found in one situation are applied to other settings and conditions. Based on the socio-educational theories which form the theoretical analysis of this study as presented in Chapter 3, the concepts that arose were put to test in other settings and conditions. This was done in an effort to interrogate the structures in the public universities whether they are similar as portrayed by the theories and if similar, whether they serve the expected functions. What is the result of the symbolic interactions and what is the significance of these to the daily experiences and interpretations of the participants. The applicability or non-applicability of these theories that form the basis of this study was tested to gauge their contribution to the greater body of knowledge.

4.5.2.2 Consistency

This refers to the methodological soundness and adequacy, and how dependable, credible, transferable and confirmable the study is. This means that the findings in

one context can be transferred to similar situations or participants. Holloway and Wheeler (2002:255) stress that the knowledge acquired in one context should be relevant in another, and those that carry out the research in another context will be able to apply certain concepts originally developed. This study made an attempt at consistency through a step by step communication of each process followed from the beginning of the research process, sampling, selection of participants, and collection of data to the interpretation of data and analysis of the data. In that way any other study done should be in a position to apply some of the concepts as well as transfer the findings to similar situations and the results should compare with those of this study.

4.5.3 Ethical Measures

Ethical measures involved the minimization of any form of exploitation in this study. In an endeavour to improve and or protect the lives of the participants (Grbich 1999:71) proposes that the potential participants must be given information of the purpose of the study, the personnel involved, and descriptions of possible outcomes including benefits if any. The participants should be reassured of anonymity as well as confidentiality with an indication of how this will be maintained. Maynard (1998:131) suggests doing this through a strategy such as explaining as much as possible the nature of the research, obtaining participants' feedback on interpretations and analysis of the research as well as dissemination of findings to them. Where respondents raise questions, these should be dealt with seriously with information being availed and experiences shared (Maynard 1998:131).

The ethical measures that were put in place in this study included getting voluntary consent of the interviewees to participate in the study. This was obtained by having them read and complete an informed consent form before starting the interview. The information given in the form conveyed the purpose of the study and how long the interview would take to complete. It also outlined how the results from the

interview would be used as well as availability of a summary of the study after completion (see Appendix A).

4.5.3.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality involves protection of the participants' confidences from other actors in the setting whose private information may enable one to be identified, as well as protection of the informants from the general reading public. This is the responsibility of the researcher (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:442).

Confidentiality was achieved through the use of codenames in the study, where excerpts of the interview and quotes are given in the final report. Confidentiality involved withholding participants' real names and other identifying characteristics from others, from published and unpublished results as well as from casual conversations, formal and informal talk (LeCompte, Preissle and Tesch 1993:106). In addition this study noted the need to remove any identifying information as soon as it was no longer necessary to avoid it falling in the wrong hands (Babbie 1998:442).

4.6 SHORTCOMINGS DURING DATA COLLECTION

Shortcomings identified in the research design with the implied limitations were identified. Firstly the time that the study was undertaken happened to be in the first semester of the university year, noticeably, the number of student parents, particularly in the first year of study was particularly low therefore the implications of the burden of parenting in the University particularly for first year student parents was not very evident.

Secondly the population of student parents and university personnel chosen for the study was relatively small. To include a larger sample was beyond the reach of the study given the limited time and budget for conducting the study.

Thirdly the interview guide focussing on the differences in structures, systems and mechanisms was limited in instances where the participants were unable or did not

see the need for differentiating them, or where these were not available as was the case in some of the responses given.

In addition the generalizability of the research findings was limited in that they were generated in an explanatory qualitative inquiry specific to the study this means that in effect any personal explanation offered was related to the specific environment of the study. The research design was intended to produce results that document the student parents' experiences as well as the effectiveness of the approaches in place. This liability was clear at the onset and the study was able to generate clear and specific relations of practical experiences that can be applied to approaches and practice.

Finally content analysis technique as used in this study takes time some questions were not understood well or the information needed was not well articulated. Therefore, the study was time consuming, costly and there was interviewer bias on some of the expectations. In addition non standardization of the questions made it difficult to generalise on a large scale.

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has attempted to present the research design of the study and demonstrate how the data was analysed. In the introduction, the focus of the study was reiterated illustrating how the research aims impact on the design. An explanation of qualitative research and its relation to descriptive research is specified. The research methods are outlined showing how the study was carried out as well as the ethical measures that were put in place.

The participants are introduced as well as issues of confidentiality, validity and reliability in qualitative research. How applicability and consistency of the study was ensured is offered. The data collection process is presented showing how sampling

was done, how the one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews were conducted. Observation was shown to be an important part of the study and how it was carried out is presented. Finally how the interpretation of the data, the analyses and presentation of the analysed data is discussed.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The double responsibility of university education and parenting poses a challenge to university students with children. Juggling university education and family responsibilities is an area that is increasingly coming on the radar more so as the university student population becomes more diversified and less non traditional. This diversification necessitates the debate in the institutions of higher learning to include an agenda of change and transformation within the institutions that is consistent with the changing student body (Steck 2005:1).

This Chapter presents findings from an investigation of student parents and academic and administrative staff working in a public university. Excerpts from interview and focus group data are used to illustrate and enrich findings on parenthood as well as on the effectiveness of intervening programs or approaches in relation to student parents. An examination of how the institutional organization and practices of the university coordinate and constrain the lives of students with children or those who are about to become parents is analysed with an exploration made of the bureaucratic power structures within the university and how these intersect with the experiences and obligations of students who are parents.

Officially the public university has a social and academic environment that is based on the lives and experiences of the “ideal” or traditional student who has no parenting responsibilities. There are official institutional policies and practices as well as unofficial norms and expectations for student performance which organize the everyday lives of university students as well as staff. The interviews presented in this section were conducted within a public university institutional setting to try and demystify the institutional sites that coordinate daily activities and responsibilities of

the students. The emerging sketches from the individual interviews and focus group data help construct a map of the social relations in the public university that identifies channels through which everyday experience is ordered and regulated by broader power relations in the organization. The interviews investigated the institutional practices and culture, structures, systems as well as policies that shape the everyday experiences of the individuals in the institution, both of the student parents and staff who interact with those students in an attempt to establish and break through into the institutional discourse.

5.2 ASSUMPTIONS GUIDING THE RESEARCH

The study's theoretical framework revolves around four assumptions that are generated from the social theories underpinning the study.

The first assumption is based on role conflict which may arise due to conflicting and competing demands made by the role of the student both as student and as parent. There are certain expectations demanded of each role. This study assumes that due to the various demands made on the student parent the student parents' experiences are different in the public university from the experiences that other traditional students who are not involved in active parenting undergo. This calls for the appreciation and identification of effective approaches for management of these students.

The second assumption is based on the social interaction between the student and the academic aspects of the public university. Everyday interactions are guided by norms and symbols which develop meanings or interpretations that influence the way people relate to one another. In the public university the assumption is that a student has come for an academic agenda with all the expectations that are assigned to the student; any other agenda outside this prescribed one for example parenthood becomes difficult to recognize, accept and accommodate into the academic environment. There is need therefore to interrogate the social interactions

that make up the student parent experiences in the public university for improved interactions with a changing student body.

The third assumption is based on functionalism generated by cultural and social expectations of parenting in the public university. The society, of which the public university is a part of, has a structure with interrelated parts, norms, customs, traditions and institutions. These traditions and customs operating within their functions in the structure of the organization, become institutionalized thus they are expected to operate in a certain way as the norm, for the organization to be stable. The assumption is that with the emergence of non traditional students like student parents, the functions of various structures and approaches in the public universities are challenged therefore an appeal is put to the public university to redefine or transform so as to accommodate the expectations and demands of the changing student body.

The final assumption is based on socio-economic status of the student parent as a result of the burden of parenthood. The assumption is that the public university's approach to student parenthood will have an effect on the socio-economic status of the student both in terms of interactions, selection and social causation. One of the roles of higher education is better economic and psychological outcome. Education attainment is strongly related to income and as students interact with the higher education systems there may be chances of student parents going through inadequate educational experiences. This may be as a result of the curtailed opportunities and interactions they are exposed to as student parents if they have to spend time trying to balance financial obligations and the burden of parenthood to the detriment of university activities. As a result they may experience delayed graduation due to deferment; or may be less likely to make it to graduate school and further their studies in an effort to improve their status in life. There are those that may fall out of the system altogether owing to their circumstances and experiences

as student parents in the university resulting in lower socio-economic status. This study therefore assumes the burden of parenthood in the university may result in the student parents experiencing lower socio-economic status than their peers.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESTATED

- To what extent do the approaches taken by the university management both academic and administrative enhance the actualization of the student parent potential in the public university?
- What is the effect of the experiences of student parents in the public university in relation to their socio-economic status?
- How does the public university respond to the challenge of a changing and diversified student body?
- To what extent are the academic interactions of student parents and their interpersonal relationships in the public university enhanced or limited by the burden of parenting?
- What is the role of the public university in terms of socio educational guidance of students to integrate or cope with the various demands made on the student parent

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS: PHASE 1

In the exploration of the student parent experiences in the public university there was a lot of information gleaned from the discussions both with the student mothers and the student fathers as well as observations of their interactions with the various university institutions set up to support the student body. The student parents were able to respond to how the educational, social, economic and cultural experiences influenced their participation as students in the public university sharing both academic and social experiences unreservedly.

5.4.1 Probability of Student Parenthood in the Public University

When asked about the probability of student parenthood in the university, both staff and students alluded to the fact that the number of students who are actively parenting is quite high. Student parents are more frequently to be found in the second and the third year of study, a few begin cropping up in the first year second semester after entering the university. This was attributed to the fact that in the first year first semester in the university, these students are still trying to find their feet, still fresh and green and coming to terms with the new environment. By the time they get to the second year then parenting becomes a reality. Out of a class of between 200-250 undergraduate second year students the estimates of student parents is about 20 student parents. At one given time a total of about 50-70 student parents in the total undergraduate group is quite a high percentage given that these are the ones who open up to the fact that they are parents, and that there may be many others who would rather not come out into the open; this was the view of one of the dean of students. The time between completion of secondary school education and before proceeding to university is about two years during which the secondary school leavers have a lot of time on their hands and a few of them may willingly or unwilling find themselves becoming parents before they join the university. When the undergraduates enter university for the first time, they are open to various socio-economic and cultural challenges and the probability of parenthood in the university is inevitable. One of the student mothers mentioned that;

if one becomes a mother when in university; it will be good for them later on especially if they get employed in a busy place they can be past the business of childbearing and child caring

As a result student parenthood maybe planned or unplanned but the probability of active parenting is a reality in the public university. How these students who are parents negotiate the burden of parenthood in the public university is the focus of the discussion in this section of the study.

5.4.1.1 Student Parenthood Related To Planned Student Choice

When asked what causes student parenthood the responses were varied both from the staff and the student parents. Some of the participants maintained that student parenthood is planned while others argued it is unplanned. As students enter the university each has their own goals and priorities in life. Some students have a path drawn out already for them by their parents or guardians, while others may just be ambling along and taking whatever they find in the public university. One student mother alluded to the fact that student parenthood may be a deliberate choice, especially for some students who are finalizing their studies with the prospect of leaving university and going out into the world of employment. This was an indication both by the student mothers and student fathers. A student mother commented;

some students in the fourth year of study may plan to get a child to be assured of a baby before getting involved in the work environment

A student father commented;

yes it may be true, sometimes some men may be looking for a life mate and they think that if they get their partner pregnant the lady will not leave them even if he finishes before her

A member of staff was of the opinion that some students have planned to get pregnant before they leave the university or on completion of their studies due to social pressure;

strangely enough I have heard that some of these students walk in with the intention of walking out with a baby...landing yourself with “one” (a husband) means you have to leave campus with a child (this as culture has it, is one way of catching a husband)...in some areas the female student will be advised that they are entering into an institution of higher learning, and that is where the best

husbands are to be found so make sure you land yourself one before you leave. (This implies get yourself a husband by all means even if it involves getting pregnant) so the female student can then say I have a baby and the male student will not leave me

This indicates that to some students, parenting is part of their agenda and it comes as no surprise to them; how they plan to deal with the pregnancy and all that parenting involves came up in the interviews and focus group discussions.

5.4.1.2 Student parenthood related to unplanned student choice

A number of the student parents interviewed expressed the fact that they were caught unawares by parenthood. Out of maybe experimentation or in the process “of living the life of the” university student away from the umbrella of their parents or guardians for the first time, student parenthood resulted. In the course of the interviews and focus group discussions, when asked if they had planned for parenthood in the university, a student mother commented;

it was not planned but since it happened we took it in our stride

A student father commented;

no student plans to be a parent in the university unless they are married maybe

Most of the staff believed that student parenting was an accident that it was unplanned for. One counsellor said;

they don't know how to handle it, lack of proper information or not being able to act on the bulk of information, being unable to make informed decisions, others get pregnant due to peer pressure, they end up doing things because others are, resulting in actions that produce a baby that they had not planned for because they may not have taken precautions

There was yet another comment from one of the deans interviewed;

over 70% of the student pregnancies are unplanned; most begin participating actively in sex for the first time when they get into the university.... suddenly they have too much freedom too much exposure and nobody to be accountable to. This results in accidental pregnancies; many are not even serious relationships

It was noted as a point of concern that some students got into relationships where the males catered for the financial needs of the female students and that the students reciprocated in kind through sexual favours leading to unplanned pregnancies. From many of these comments, student parenting was perceived to be unplanned and depending on whether the student viewed the event or process negatively or positively, it comprised a major impact on their lives and experiences in the public university.

5.4.1.3 Student Parenthood Related To Academic Environment

Parenthood and academic expectations are two very demanding options in the life of an individual. It is very easy to become swamped by the daily demands of each. The student mothers indicated that they experienced parenthood challenges in relation to the academic environment. If they were given a choice, some said they would prefer that one completes school first instead of combining the two because there was conflict of roles as a parent and as a student which took a toll on the student parent. The student parent had to learn to be critical time managers in order to handle both academic and parenting expectations.

Some of the challenges that the student parents faced in the academic environment included; the challenge of inadequate participation in group assignments and in clubs and games, the challenge of reading facilities and long sitting hours, participation in

impromptu lectures, continuous assessment tests that may be slated at unexpected hours, and the challenge of fully participating in work study programmes. These are all academic exercises that call for participation as a student since they are core to the makeup of a university student. How one negotiates the university experience goes a long way in helping them achieve their full potential as a student. If a student parent for one reason or another is unable to fully participate in the academic and core curricular activities it results in a limitation on their potential in the sense that they may not attain their aspirations and goals as they would have wanted and a resultant limitation in their opportunities after university. The student parents emphasised that time management is of the essence since they are handling two roles, parenting and scholarship; it is very easy they commented to get caught up if one did not plan their time well, since the parenting role can interfere when one is trying to concentrate on the scholarship role like maybe trying to beat an assignment deadline.

The academic environment sometimes calls for working in groups on projects and other academic assignments. This may pose a challenge more so since the entire group may not be available to work on the assignment at the same time. If one lives off-campus it becomes more complicated. Most of the student parents live outside the campus and they have to devise ways of participating. One student parent shared how he coordinates the parenting and academic roles in such a case;

what I do when we are working out group assignments, I research and make my contribution from the library and then hand over my part to the group, especially if they are to meet after classes, then they can incorporate my contribution, in the group work that is how I manage to survive

Another parent noted;

sometimes I may not have been involved as much as I would want to since as a student mother one may have to cut down some of the social participation for example I may limit the number of times I appear in the field for sports and games. But we try as much as possible not to cut down on the academic participation unless it is absolutely unavoidable

These are just some academic experiences that make up a university student life and the student parent both father and mother has to compromise their participation in the academic environment so as to accommodate the burden of parenthood.

This has a bearing on what goes into the makeup of a complete student experience in the public university. Another student parent mentioned how they had to cut back on the academic trips due to the baby. Fortunately they had an understanding lecturer who gave them a take home assignment to make up for marks earned on participation in the academic trip. The student parents try as much as possible to be involved in the socio-academic life of the university. Some of the things they alluded to about success as a student is being fully involved in the studies and the core-curricular activities or socio-education activities. Many are able to participate in clubs and societies as well as in games and athletics, but their participation is challenged and to some extent not as much or as fulfilling as they would want it to be. As one student parent mentioned;

I cannot attend to all the practices because they are on campus and I am up here

Therefore if a student parent happens to go back to their place of residence before the games and club activities begin, and they get caught up in the parenting activities where they live, it becomes difficult to commute back to the campus to participate in those essential socio-educational activities.

Reading facilities were another challenge in the academic environment, especially since access to the library could only be done during the school hours when they were on campus. One therefore has to maximize the time they are not attending class because it would be difficult in the evening once you leave the campus and come “here” (meaning where they reside outside the campus). The fact that some books are on short loan limits the time the student spends on them since they cannot extend their time in the library or study till the closing time at ten o’clock in the night. Other reading materials can only be accessed in the library since they are restricted and when the student is faced with time constraints due to their shorter school day, it becomes a real challenge to access the reading materials and other related facilities like making use of the computer centre.

Participation in work study programmes was cited as a challenge by some student parents. Though work study is related to the economic environment and working helps meet the financial obligations of the student parent, participation was perceived to be a challenge. Full participation meant being a resident within the campus since most of the work is on campus and sometimes after classes, at which time most student parents are preparing to move off campus to their areas of residence. If they choose to participate in the work study programme, apart from the time it is offered after classes, this will interfere with the time they have set aside for catching up on reading and assignments. Therefore unlike the traditional student, their choices are limited and this causes a real challenge for them.

There are times the academic environment calls for makeup lectures, or continuous assessment tests. Any lecture or assessment that is not on the university timetable can be a source of disruption, since the student parents do not live within the campus. When a makeup is called for, whether assessment or lecture and it is scheduled impromptu, it implies a lot of reorganization whereby other students on their own volition and goodwill go out of their way to call up the student parents and

if they are able to reach them and the student parents get the message on time, she or he has to commute back to campus as quickly as possible since their accommodation is normally quite a distance from the campus. This has sometimes proven to be quite a challenge.

The normal school day is structured from eight o'clock up to five o'clock unless during the school based sessions which are conducted over the school holidays. During these off session periods classes may run from seven o'clock up to eight o'clock in order for all the scheduled classes to fit into the university timetable. This means that for a student parent who normally lives off campus, they have to plan to be away the whole school day since when they do not have a scheduled class most probably that is the time they make use of the library to catch up on private reading or assignments. This calls for waking up early sometimes as early as five o'clock and sleeping late so as to be able to balance the parenting and scholarship roles. One student mother shared how she physically expresses her breast milk in the morning so as to feed the baby when she is away for the day since she will not be back after she makes the trip to the campus; it is quite a distance she adds, to keep moving to and fro. The university runs on a structured timetable and the student parent and the student's child have to adjust to that timetable; where it does not favour their time then it is the student parents or their studies that suffer. One student mother put it in this manner;

you have to make use of the time to do your studies because you do not know if the baby will be crying or sick when you plan to hand in an assignment

See Table 1. Typical day for a student mother

5.4.1.4 Student Parenthood Related To Socio-Cultural Environment

How the student parent interacts with the social environment of the university and the community around is influenced greatly by the beliefs they and those they interact with have, concerning student parents. One member of staff saw his role as;

taking care of the welfare of students as well as guiding the students' behaviour to be acceptable in the society...there are cultural expectations which are expected of students and that is what the office of the dean stands for... as a university student one is not expected to be a nuisance to the society or to fellow students

Anything that would be seen to be a nuisance in the environment of the student is strongly disapproved of. The environment of the student consists of a learning environment, reading facilities and interactions of students with students, and administrators versus students. Anything that is seen to be a distraction to these activities is frowned upon. In our society as one member of staff observed; children are to be seen and not to be heard especially at an institution of higher learning like the university. He elaborates further;

this is a private matter...you know the time you will give birth take care of it then...don't even involve us they are unplanned pregnancies....that is why we take a lot of time when they enter the university to brief them, pointing out how difficult it is to learn with a pregnancy, you have a child an unwanted child in the sense you are still unmarried, these are young people... why would you want to get a baby before the right time the environment totally discourages

He went on to emphasise that many universities look at student parenting or pregnancy as culturally unacceptable and If one was to announce that “*those ladies with babies or who want to have babies while studying, you are welcome to our*

university” he poses “which parent will agree?” this he explained was the cultural baggage and he concludes that not many parents will encourage it at all.

our core business is learning and teaching these others are distracters although we need to understand there is nothing like a perfect society including that university in which we are in

Another staff member posed;

and why do you think we need to change that attitude at all? We don't need to encourage student parenthood, it is disruptive. It disrupts the learning process, it wastes resources, what I think what we should be doing is to ensure that there are fewer pregnancies

As far as this member of staff was concerned, the main issue is that the university is a place for learning so that when students come and report, the university is more interested in their academic life, rather than their social life. My job as an administrator is to ensure there are classrooms for them, a place where they can sleep for those who need accommodation. But the issue of parenting or student parent does not occur; there is a clear divide between the core business of the university and these other issues.

As the student parent interacts with these messages, they internalise that parenting and scholarship is discouraged and is not part of the university setting.

5.4.1.5 Student Parenthood Related To Economic Environment

The burden of parenthood was felt most when it came to the economic environment. Most shared that the task of combining parenting and scholarship would not be so difficult if it wasn't for the fact that they have to live outside the university where the rent rates are not subsidized. One parent expressed it in this way

since the major challenge is rent/housing we would ask that the university speaks to the landlords so that there would be an understanding on the level of rent to pay, or at least subsidise the rent. We would ask that as the university constructs hostels they bear in mind residences for student parents

Another student parent shared;

financial status is a real challenge we pay 6,000 per semester for the hostels outside campus, and for the person in campus, the accommodation fee is 3,000 per semester. There are two beds in the room, we cook within the room, and we divide the room with a curtain for the childminderthe childminder is 17yrs old, old enough to be responsible for the baby

Subsidized housing, as well as childcare facilities attached to the campus would be of great help. At the time of the interviews, some student mothers had not reported back to college because they were still trying to get a child help.

When asked to approximate how much their living expenses were per month a student couple shared:

- Food for the baby around 3000/= per month
- Salary for the child minder 2500/= per month
- Rent 6000 per semester ≈2000/= per month

This does not include their own personal budget of books and personal requirements.

Lack of the option to choose accommodation on campus or off campus like the other university students who are not parents was perceived to be a challenge. In their definition of a student parent interestingly a student parent offered the definition as;

a person who is undertaking studies in school but has a child or family, a student parent is not allowed to live within the school compound as they undertake their studies

Another student parent included this in their definition “a student who has a child and is commuting from outside the campus” living away from the university community seemed to be part of how the student parents defined themselves in the university environment. The university structures cater for students without children; therefore the official policy is for the students to vacate the halls of residence at five months of pregnancy; they are on their own as one lecturer put it, “look for a place to handle your pregnancy”. Therefore most of the student mothers in addition to reporting back for the beginning of the academic semester are busy looking for places of accommodation outside the campus as well as locating a child minder. The student parents suggested that it would be of great help if the university reconsidered some of the structures that cater for the traditional students and lock out non traditional students from the rest of the university community, since student parents are part of the university community this would go a long way in easing the economic burden of parenting.

5.4.2 Impact of Socio-Educational Factors on Student Parenthood

There is need for integration of the student parents in to the university community as well as into the wider society, it is necessary to provide help and support to the student parent in order to facilitate integration and prevent marginalization and social exclusion. The structure of higher education with its norms and symbols of clear divide between scholarship and parenthood calls for change. One member of the university community put it so well;

we need to stop assuming that the student parents are not part of us, because at any given time, they are there, they have always been, and will always be... as

we plan the programs for the university the student parents need to be slotted in

Interestingly, the policy is different from practice as a member of staff put it; policy expects you “out”, but in practise you are “in” and how you manage is up to you since you are not part of “us.” This situation of us versus them results in a situation where structures, systems and mechanisms are not put in place in the university since the assumption is that they are out and the university does not acknowledge that there are student parents who do not go out when they are expected to. The fact is that a student parent is not expected to be in there since they were supposed to vacate at five months of their pregnancy and defer their studies but the reality is that they do not defer most of the time. They continue in the university without the backing of any structure, systems and mechanisms. Socially they are on their own, educationally they continue with their studies with no acknowledgement of parenthood on the outside. Therefore the university needs to plan for them, by acknowledging that they are there. As this member of staff was quick to point out;

we are not saying we are encouraging them, but because they are a part of the university be concerned... just like we don't encourage sickness but we have no control over it when it comes just be prepared

Once the university begins by acknowledging that student parents are part of the university then the marginalization and social exclusion will begin to end and what they hear the student parents expressing should form a part of what is included in the approaches to student parenthood in the public university.

5.4.2.1 Probability of a University Student Becoming a Student Parent

As mentioned earlier in 5.4.1 there is a high probability of university students becoming parents or parents becoming students. As more and more people seek

higher education and combine studying and parenting, the traditional university student as we have known changes and the clear divide between scholarship and parenting is challenged. In the Kenyan public university when asked about the probability of university student parents some of the discussions were quite enlightening; a member of staff put it as; the students who are actively involved in parenting and she gave two different scenarios of student parenting. The first one being those that take care of their own children; that is they have babies while in college and then another special group of students who take care of their siblings. This she elaborated is a group who may be orphaned and they have the responsibility of taking care of their brothers and sisters even as they are pursuing their undergraduate studies. This is a group that is actively involved in parenting on campus and they have parenting responsibilities as students.

5.4.2.2 Probability of a Student Parent Completing University Studies

A student counsellor gave the probability of a student parent completing their university studies by summing up the profile of the university student from when they enter to when they become a parent and the effect this has on them. She illustrated how when an undergraduate student enters the university, they begin with orientation. Orientation involves interaction with staff and faculty, departmental heads, and subject choices in the first two weeks of the semester. There is a lot of advice on life in the university and how to succeed in university life, with staff alerting the freshmen and women on pros and cons of various behaviour and pitfalls to avoid in some of the choices they make. All this is usually done during the first two weeks of the semester before the rest of the student body report.

After orientation, follows a stage of peer influence as the freshmen and women interact with their fellow students. Some begin finding themselves in a lot of problems. About the second year a number of them find out they are pregnant and on their own which is a shock to them. They are not prepared for it. In addition to

this unpreparedness, the second year is a time of trying to adjust to the new life, trying to improve their grades where they didn't perform well in the first year and trying to become the university student that they were supposed to be. Sometimes life is not as good for them as they try to fix some problems. Some may even contemplate suicide, defer or drop out. This is not only for the student mothers. Some men feel cheated as well especially if they believe they had invested a lot in a relationship. For the student parent they discover if you get a baby they are not accommodated in the hostels on campus and that they need to identify places outside to reside. In addition they realise that they keep moving up and down between their area of residence and the campus. They have to breastfeed the baby, to look for a childminder, and they become a mother with all the hustles of mothering and student at the same time many end up depressed.

By the third year this person has developed a poor self concept. They are dealing with issues of self esteem trying to adjust and bring back their self esteem because they feel betrayed. They don't think anyone loves them or that they are of any value. Some of them may either use that to adopt a positive change or mentality where they want to make the most of their life while others give up.

Those who became parents are trying to adjust to life trying to cope with the demands of a family especially the student mothers they have a lot of problems. They do quite poorly not only due to financial but emotional problems as well.

From this summarized profile, it is easy to see why one member of staff concluded; *"the policy is silent...deliver your baby then come back."* Most don't resume studies they feel condemned.

5.4.3 An Overview of Research Findings

From the research findings as the profile of a student parent emerges with the challenges they experience in the public university discussed, there is a strong reminder that student parenthood in the university will not be removed through

stigmatization, condemnation or discouragement neither will it disappear if the university public closes its eyes to the students who are parenting. What is needed is acknowledgement of parenthood in the university, setting up structures of support, and working through any issues that may arise to help student parents negotiate the student and the parenting roles amicably.

One member of staff acknowledged that due to the changes in the society, the university needs to change as well, the students entering university should be treated as grownups and given options but the university has not set facilities and structures due to the same cultural baggage mentioned earlier that the participant reiterated has to be addressed. From the research findings as questions are brought up concerning the cultural baggage of the public university and the slow pace of change, it will be a time of facing the reality of transformation.

5.5 DATA ANALYSIS: PHASE 2

This section of the study examines the interactions of student parents with staff, structures and institutional sites in the university in an attempt to identify how activities and various responsibilities cater for student parents. A scrutiny of the social relations, approaches and practices, as well as organization and regulation of the everyday experiences is carried out.

5.5.1 Data Analysis: Observation

The observations were carried out at various sites including; the area of residence, the library the counsellor's and dean of students office as well as interactions within other public spaces in the university. These observations were carried out in an attempt to delve deeper into the understandings of the lives and experiences of the student parents in the public university; in many instances observation was used to clarify the research questions as well as verify the participants account. The

observations revealed a lot about the social, cultural and economic contexts of the participants (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Quest and Namey 2005:25).

In the social interactions the area where the student parents resided was observed to be quite a distance from the university in effect confirming that participation in university activities was influenced by the distance from the university.

sometimes I may not have been involved as much as I would want to ... I limit the number of times I appear in the field for sports and games in the evenings due to time and distance

The observations were helpful in cross checking the nonverbal expressions or what was usually left unsaid, as well as clarifying the concerns and the situation as it was on the ground (Kawulich 2005:3). The conditions in the areas of residence were an indication of the economic constraints the student parents were subjected to.

At the residential sites it was noted that the accommodation areas, had been inspected by the university public health officials, but the area was overcrowded with the student parents sharing rooms that were meant for two students sometimes between a student couple, child and childminder.

there are two beds in the room, we cook within the room, and we divide the room with a curtain for the childminder

In the library, the observations involved the reading area, and the interactions at the borrowing and returning counter. In the reading area it was observed that students' especially female who were expectant were unable to sit for long periods and they showed signs of physical discomfort and swelling of feet. This was noted around the classroom facilities as well with desks and chairs proving cumbersome to manoeuvre

and no place set aside for privacy if for example a student needed to nurse a baby, or express milk. One of the librarians commented;

being a student parent is a difficult thing especially for student mothers...they will request to be given books and many times they are unable to return the books on time... other times when I notice an expecting mothers feet are swollen, I can allow them to use this device that elevates the feet especially when one is going to be seated for long it eases their discomfort

The observations clarified what the students were not able to express verbally about the limitations and challenges faced by expectant student mothers or student parents in the university public space.

5.5.1.1 Frequency of Interactions with Office of Dean of Students

The office of the Dean of students in most public universities is set up to deal with financial, accommodation and social problems. There are student counselling units which cater for individual student guidance and psychological wellbeing. This office has been mandated to oversee the personal and socio-economic affairs of students therefore it is expected to provide support to the entire student body which it does through staff like the professional counsellors, senior administrative staff, wardens and office staff.

It was noted that students frequently interacted with this office whenever they had a need. These needs were grouped into personal as well as socio-economic. When it was time for applications of loans and bursaries, those students that needed financial assistance interacted with the office of the dean more in order to apply for the Higher Education Loan (HELB), the various bursaries and work study programmes. This office wrote recommendations for the students to enable them access other bodies that gave funds in the community. The interactions observed here was more of an economic nature when and where there was need of financial assistance.

Though student parents were considered for financial assistance, it was confirmed that sometimes they were unable to access some of it, due to the nature of the time that limited their participation. For example the work study programme would greatly boost the student parents financially but most of the activities were scheduled in the evenings after classes when the student parents had to leave for their residences outside the campus. This was just an example of one of the structures put in place to support the student parents but may need to be restructured to more effectively include this group.

5.5.1.2 Type of Interactions with Office of the Dean of Students

Types of interactions with the office of the dean of students included issues of interpersonal relationships, and social interactions that student parents experienced in the university. A member of staff from this office shared;

I have had to play a reconciliatory role between student parents and their parents or guardian because some may have been disowned some parents feel it is a shame for a university student to become a parent while still in school they do not want to have anything to do with this student parent

Another senior staff member mentioned that he too had to deal with some student fathers who may refuse responsibility and he did the job of following them up and ensuring they did not shirk their responsibility but take care of their part of the burden of parenthood. These interactions worked to resolve issues that impacted on the personal life of the student parents.

5.5.1.3 Frequency of Interactions with Office of the Student Counsellor

The office of the student counsellor is one of the busiest areas and as one of the staff shared; the work was overwhelming and emotionally draining. Apart from being busy, it was underfunded and lacked enough structures to function adequately.

Therefore counselling appeared to be conducted at any place deemed convenient to the student parent as well as the counsellors.

The student parents indicated that they were adequately supported and when it came to accessing counselling services both male and female parents were well received and the interaction was positive.

One of the student counsellors commented on the unofficial norms and expectations of the university that was able to put the office of the student counsellor in perspective;

the practice is having nothing to do with them. The university's business is scholarship; parenting is not part of it actually as far as this university is concerned we don't address such issues

As this staff observed, there is no written policy on pregnant and parenting students in the public university and though deferment is provided for when students deliver, most students do not take it up; resulting in a situation where the office of the student counsellor has to counsel students as regards parenting and scholarship. Therefore the university finds itself in a position of having to deal with student parents whom they had not planned for and the result is a situation where there are no structures and mechanisms and no acknowledged practice for the management of student parents.

The fact is that a student parent is not expected to be part of the university system; there is no official approach in relation to the student parents, and they get by on the systems and structures that have been functioning for the other students who are not parents. This counsellor cautions that we need to stop assuming that this group of students is not a part of the university; instead there is need to begin addressing the entire makeup of the student body. As the students are oriented they need

direction specifically on what to do, where to go if one is a student parent for example just like the other specified members of the university student body.

5.5.1.4 Type of Interaction with the Office of the Student Counsellor

The interactions with the office of the student counsellor were not very different from those to do with the dean's office, but they dealt more with individual issues. These originated from social, academic, economic as well as interpersonal relationships on campus. There did not seem to be any difference in the quality of interaction between the male and the female student personnel, but it was noted that the student would approach whoever they felt most comfortable with, someone whom they felt they would trust and who would not judge them.

5.5.2 Data Analysis: Individual Interviews

The data analysis of the individual interviews focused on a sample of eighteen interviews conducted in total. Out of these, there were ten university officials of the ten six were male and four were female. The student parents interviewed consisted of two student fathers and six student mothers bringing the student parents to a total of eight. All in all eighteen interviews were conducted with ten females and eight males.

See table 2 for a sample profile of participants in the study

5.5.2.1 University Personnel Orientation in Relation to Theory and Practice

Recognition of a holistic approach to education is important because a student's academic progress is influenced by a range of factors outside the classroom which may be socio-cultural, and many initiatives in higher education emphasise interdependence both for academics and administrators in achieving the major element of the core business of education which is effective student learning

(Eastcott and Farmer 1996:205). These researchers maintain that an approach for the university personnel both academic and administrators teaming up is the most effective way forward in the support for student achievement.

The theory of both administrative and academic faculty and student interaction is further discussed by (Landry 2002:7) who focuses on the concept of faculty serving as socializing agents for the institutions which not only results in influence on the development and competences of the individual student but leading as well to greater institutional commitment and increased social and academic integration. In the public university where this study was conducted, student interaction with both administrative and academic staff was greatly encouraged. Most of the participants mentioned the fact that they looked out for one another, and when asked whether they felt responsible for the student parents, the staff responded in the affirmative. Many expressed the fact that these were young people forced to be in the situation they were in not of their own choice, others expressed the fact that they should be integrated into the system and not condemned or stigmatized, since they were part of it.

Some of the activities that result in benefits both to the university in retention of students and to the students in form of increased social and academic integration include faculty advisers, academic advising, course coordinators, peer tutoring and study support networks (Landry 2002:7). Some of these are helpful in breaking the sense of isolation which can be a challenge to students in the university especially for student parents who live outside the campus and have limited time to interact with the rest of the university fraternity. But sometimes it proved difficult not only for the students but for the university personnel to participate as fully as they know they should.

One member of academic staff commented;

my role as a lecturer should place me closer to the students, but I find my interaction with them is very restrictive. The lecture hall I use is the largest, but it is too small for all my students, ventilation is not so good, and therefore I find myself reduced to lecturing only...the large classes make it difficult to know who is who and the students are the ones who follow me up sometimes after classes if they need to consult or if they have any questions...during the class time, one or two will rise up their hands for clarification but that is about as far as I can go with interaction. The classes are too large to even notice if there is a student mother or a student who needs my attention

One of the administrators explained that when it comes to dealing with the students he wishes he would do it differently, but there is no policy, or method he can use to trace students who may be parents so what ends up is;

I deal with them as if they do not have the attendant luggage of social or economic responsibilities unless of course one wants to delve deeply that category of student parents is not even captured as a data item.

If there is deference of studies, you look at it purely as a medical case it could be just like one of the cases like psychiatry or medical it is seen as common...nothing special

The university academic and administrative personnel are committed to fairness both in theory and practice. They are actively involved in excluding biases of all sorts and creating an all inclusive environment. Most biases can easily go unnoticed in that the structures that have been put in place for inclusion may be based on the traditional norms of the institution as related to the larger social order. Some of this was noted in the student collaborative course projects, the student lead seminars and discussion groups. These have been integrated in the university academic practices to support

the theory of inclusiveness but some of the student parents are unable to be fully involved especially if the groups met on campus while they live off campus, and if they meet after classes or are scheduled on non schooldays. The scheduling of these as well as other university functions may be more convenient to the faculty and the administrators rather than to the students; it may be helpful to refocus on what the student needs rather than on what has been tradition (Blimling and White 1999:189).

5.5.2.2 Culture and Environment of Public University

The culture of the public university is dynamic due to the evolving and complex nature of the internal and external factors influencing the way it functions (Reisser and Roper 1999:118). When culture is portrayed as patterns of thoughts and behaviours made up of assumptions learned and passed on in a group of people, and used in confronting circumstances, then these researchers argue that this way of thinking is validated as organizationally correct. From the individual interviews it emerged that the environment of the public university has invisible values and norms based on the understandings of scholarship and these have over time created shared values and behavioural norms. One of the staff interviewed had this to say;

the prevailing culture of the university and the society in general doesn't encourage parenting and scholarship to go hand in hand. It is almost like you should wait until you finish your studies so that you open that other chapter of your life later...so somewhat the student parents are shy about opening up to what the implications of studying and parenting entail

He continued to reiterate that culture both within and without the university just clams up on the topic of student parenthood. Even the students themselves sometimes would rather be left on their own to sort out their own “little” problems, largely because of the way it is perceived, that they are too young and a bit foolish to

have assumed those responsibilities while still attending to studies so it is like they feel stigmatized both by the internal and external communities.

5.5.2.3 Student Parent Interactions In Relation To University Culture

The university's culture and practice does not seem to have place for scholarship and parenthood to go hand in hand so many times the student parent especially the undergraduate parents find themselves in a situation of negotiating what has been viewed as right or wrong for a long time and some opt to carry the burden of parenthood as unobtrusively as they possibly can due to the message that they have received that; it is "your problem deal with it, it does not concern us".

others may bring up the agenda of student parenting especially when it comes to the election time and it is bandied around as an agenda but after the elections the situation "normalizes"

Until student parenthood is acknowledged as a phenomenon that is part of the evolving culture, the approaches towards student parenting will be difficult to change.

5.5.3 Data Analysis; Focus Group Interviews

The number of focus groups planned was two; one group was to be made up of male student parents and the other to consist of female student parents. It was not difficult to identify and get the female student parents to agree to the interviews but getting the male student parents to agree to the focus group interviews was easier said than done. As a result the focus group interviews conducted were still two with one consisting of five student mothers and two student couples. That is two student mothers and two student fathers living together were interviewed as a group. The other focus group consisted of five student mothers.

The focus group interviews were conducted to get further clarification on issues mentioned in the individual interviews as well as any other information that may have been overlooked and was deemed important to the student parents. The interviews were conducted in a secluded and quiet corner of a hotel nearby to where the student couples lived. During the discussion clarification was sought on the issues that had been raised in the individual interviews. The student parents were relaxed and participated freely, elaborating on probes to clarify and correct any misrepresentation. A small token of Kshs 250/= was shared to each student after the focus group interviews in appreciation of sparing time for the interviews.

5.5.3.1 Student Parents and Social Environment

Student parents operate in a social environment that draws from the norms and expectations of the prevailing social culture and practice. Assimilation is a principal tool in the social environment to produce equity in education opportunities that leads to social advancement. Any structural deficiencies in the system are interpreted as underachievement on the part of some groups as a result these groups are viewed as a problem for the system since it is not easy to fit them into the existing social environment (Ratchiffe 2006:134). Some of the participants in the study expressed the prevailing social environment in the public university. While one member of the academic staff queried why the university would want to change this prevailing social environment, since student parenting would be a disruptive influence on the academic process, as well as a waste of resources. Yet another member of the counselling staff cautioned;

there seems to be a level of stigmatisation against these student parents...we point fingers saying we don't want you being a student parent when you enter the university.... there is no place for that here

So as the university community goes on and on about the difficulties that one is bound to encounter if they choose that path, the student parents feel prejudiced in the social environment and the university community causes other students to form an opinion about them, thus the stigma. They feel belittled and to blame for their choice of having a baby and to even consider that they can pursue life in this, a social environment of higher education. She further argues that some of the student parents are already judging themselves negatively and instead of providing a supportive environment the university adds salt to injury causing them to feel stigmatized and they are used as the unfortunate examples. The social environment is therefore hostile to the student parent.

As a result of the social environment in the university being based on the prevailing culture both within and without the university, one of the university administrators mentioned how the society does not feel comfortable discussing the topic of student parenthood. This leads to a situation sometimes where the student parent feels that they would rather be left to sort themselves out, since they believe that they are viewed as a problem by the university, and are thought of as not being bright enough to plan for their time in the university. Any support that is given to them is limited. He maintained that as a matter of fact, there is a sense in which the support given to the student parents in the public university is qualified support even if it is availed nobody wants to be called upon to answer what is termed as “extra care”.

The student parents in relating to the social environment of the public university mentioned that among the challenges facing them is the fact that they can be easily overlooked since they live outside the campus in other words; they are not accepted as part of the social environment of the college. A student father pointed out, that they have to be extra vigilant when there are important functions not to miss out, since they will be remembered only as an “afterthought”. One participant put it that

as student parents it is your duty to fit into the system if you do not, that is your problem not the systems.

For the social environment in the public university to be deemed “effective” in terms of all students regardless of their status, attaining their full potential it is necessary for all students to feel psychologically safe (Ratchiffe 2006:137). The student parents were of the opinion that their performance was under scrutiny and that they had to prove they were as serious with their studies as the other students to be accepted into the social environment both by the internal and external publics. The onus was on them as one student mother commented; we try to fit in as much as possible, even when we do our assignments, our work is no different from the other students unless like in a case where a student may not be in a position to attend a field trip because of parenting responsibilities. It is even difficult for the lecturers to differentiate because the work handed in by a student parent and that of the other students who are not parenting since it is not any different. This attitude of exclusion of student parents’ right from the lower levels of learning on to the institutions of higher learning was a powerful normative process that impacted on the student parents in the social environment of the public university.

5.5.3.2 Student Parents and Demands of Parenthood

Parenthood in the public university has its demands and it impacts on the student parent. As Anderson (2001: i) explains it is an important human experience that changes people emotionally, socially and intellectually. The demands of parenthood in the public university where this study was done fell under the following categories, social, financial, emotional as well as intellectual or academic challenge; of these the highest on the demands of parenthood was financial support. All the student parents interviewed and especially the student father’s, articulated that finances were a big challenge. Though the couples in the focus group interviews mentioned the fact that they both contributed to the financial demands or needs of parenting;

one of the student fathers explained how he planned to fulfil his role as a father through the saving of money from his student loan in the semester preceding the birth of the baby so as to be in a better position to provide for his new family. But they agreed that if their parents and guardians did not step in financially, it would be extremely difficult to perform as adequately in both their academic and parental pursuits.

In addition there was the social challenge or demands of parenting. Most students were under the social expectations of what parenthood consists of that is; taking care of their children and they felt the strain in fulfilling this expectation. In the university where this study was carried out, there were no childcare facilities nor any university sponsored or subsidized childcare facilities therefore there are demands of parenthood that impact on the student parent. There are expectations that are put on the student parent to behave in accordance with the approved system as expected of students. This leads to prioritizing of the different roles that this student is expected to fulfil. All the student mothers in the focus group interviews agreed that there were multiple roles that demand their attention, and that they felt under pressure to respond accordingly to each. But they reported that they tried as much as possible not to allow parenthood to interfere with the student role. Whenever they were under pressure they set aside the demands of parenthood to accommodate the student role. Sometimes leading to guilt emotionally but they consoled themselves that it was just a transitory phase.

Another demand that came with parenthood was the sense of isolation reflected by living away from the rest of the student body which resulted in them integrating less with the college environment. Living off campus posed challenges of affordability of housing as well as accessibility to facilities and participation in some of activities on campus, especially those that are done after school or over the weekends. The sense of isolation was reflected in the way one student parent defined the term student

parent; as one “who lived away from the school”. This way of defining themselves was part of what constituted the demands of parenting.

Socially when asked about success the student parents’ responded that success was defined as achievement not only of the academic goals but achievement of life goals as well. They were at pains in the focus group to explain that success was not only measured by high academic grades only but in addition the level of adjustment of the individual socially which they as student parents aspired to fulfil.

5.5.4 An Overview of Observations and Individual Findings

From the observations and individual findings most of the student parents acknowledged that though it was a difficult task being a student as well as handling the demands of parenting, one way of moving ahead is being positive, accepting the situation, and working to fulfil the necessary demands. Most did not complain of the state of affairs but rather pointed out ways they felt would benefit student parenthood in the public university. They preferred looking for a solution rather than contributing to the problem or being seen to be the problem.

5.5.4.1 An Overview of Focus Group Interviews

The fact that one focus group was mixed, that is both student mothers and student fathers was helpful in that this combination brought out points of agreement and points of conflict in opinion between the different groups. The mixed group concurred on need for financial support, but they differed on participation in the work study or in any other money generating venture. The student fathers experienced greater freedom to participate more in the after school work programs and any other work related to economic empowerment, whereas the student mothers preferred work between school sessions that is during the university vacation a time when they were in a position to get help with the child care.

The homogenous group of student mothers were in agreement over most issues brought up on environment and culture of the university that impacted on the burden of parenthood. For example balancing, timetabling and commuting from their areas of residence were a challenge to them all. In the case of facilities, the student mothers in the group were of the opinion that academic life would be easier to balance with parenting if there were childcare facilities within the university especially when there is need to be on campus throughout. Library facilities would be greatly enhanced by online catalogue and renewal so that they are at liberty to choose where and when to study.

5.6 DATA ANALYSIS: PHASE 3

The most important resources in learning are human resources, research on student support cautions us to be careful that we do not become resource managers and lose sight of the values and principles at the core of our institutions mission (Reisser and Roper 1994:116). This section of the data analysis addresses themes identified in the approaches taken towards student parenthood in the public university as well as how these interact with the student parents. The structures, support systems, mechanisms policy and practice are to a great extent dictated to by the resources available in the public university. Through an exploration of the experiences of staff and students in relation to parenting; values we place on the people who make up the university become visible. The role of the staff in all divisions of the university is to translate into practice theory and research. This should be done in conjunction with the social responsibilities, missions, values and conditions in respective universities (Reisser and Roper 1999:113).

5.6.1 Themes Identified

The themes that emerged from the study are largely related to how the student parents negotiate the university structure, both administrative as well as academic.

In the quest to fulfil their potential the students needed support and the way they relate to this support emerged as an important theme.

5.6.1.1 Student Parents and University Structure

The University as we know it is changing, with the requirement to become more universal and to manage more complex change (Dopson and McNay 1996:31). The context that universities are operating in is more demanding and as more students seek places in universities and as they make their preferences known, there is competition to attract students which is affected not only by the academic programs on offer but the services that cater to the student needs as well. This is influenced by the belief in the student as a whole therefore one needs to focus on all aspects that go into the makeup of this student; social, economic, financial as well as academic. The provision of advice and help to the student about the various support services of the university greatly eases the decision making and the making of informed choices Rowley (1996:166) maintains that the university should be proactive rather than reactive to developing customer needs.

Funding is linked to students, leading to more recruitment of students and the need to create ways to relate better with the student as customer results in choices being made. As choices are made as to whether to incorporate non traditional students in the university structure there arises the recognition of the budgetary consequences associated with the new choice policies and since funds follow the student this leads to innovation which has been defined in one way as any response in programs or organizational routines to competitive pressure exerted by choice (Plank and Sykes 1999:389).

The University structure is based on policies of equal opportunities, and as such the underlying assumption is that the students are entitled to such opportunities and that these must be distributed equally and with reference to equity, in addition there

is the understanding that any assumptions are open to questioning. The purpose of education in addition to serving the principle of the goals of equity and social justice is to play a critical role in preparing a workforce. This role is affected by tradition, culture, law and custom. These too are affected by change, and as rules change, organizations adapt, since they are not passive agents but they actively seek to shape the rules that regulate their existence and behaviour (Plank and Sykes 1999:399). When there is a policy that encourages choice, it creates boundaries which in turn channel access and opportunity thereby creating a basis for inclusion and exclusion.

Out of the interview discussions, what emerged is the need to recognize student parents; the process of acknowledging that student parents are part of the university body will be the first step towards identifying what are their needs and how they can provide appropriate services which may differ from those required by the regular student body. The provision of these services will be influenced by the institutions' mission or purpose more so as the university collaborates both with the internal and external publics. One of the ways that the university stops being an "ivory tower" and becomes part of the community is by reaching out and identifying how they can be of help to the local community and how the local community can gain by the university being in their midst. Putting a "face" to the institution as well as creating awareness of the environmental influences within which their institutions operate becomes an important part of their corporate responsibility.

5.6.1.2 Role of University Support Services

As a public institution it is important for the university to comply with the law and not discriminate any student on the basis of gender, disability and ethnicity among other human rights. But simply not discriminating against any of these is not the same as supporting non discrimination. Research has shown that support for student parents can help them achieve (Fust 2011:2) in Minnesota's resource for teen pregnancy information (MOAPPP). Not all institutions may have the resources to support or

provide all the services needed by pregnant and parenting students and their children, but they can coordinate those services for students by partnering with community-based organizations, day care centres and public health, nursery and social services agencies. This idea was observed by one of the interviewee's. Community involvement and effort in the provision of housing, childcare and having a community association that looks out for the student parent was mentioned as a possibility of the role of the university in support services.

A growing area of the higher education enterprise is related to student affairs and student development functions. In the case of the institutions where these interviews were carried out, these were administered under different programs and attached to the office of a deputy principal. But both staff and students affirmed that they have learning benefits not only for the student parents but for the whole student population which research supports that enhancement of these programs has benefits that accrue to the quality and overall reputation of the institution (Dickeson 1999: 49).

Some of the university support services or programs that were mentioned to be of significance to the student parents included; financial aid programs, enrolment management, student recruitment and retention programs, childcare policies and services, student government liaison, residence halls programs, academic support services, student advising programs, student health and counselling programs. These were some of the areas of student support that were significant to the student parents through the discussions in the interviews. What came up was that not all of the services needed to be provided by the universities, some can be outsourced and be well coordinated by the university with information flowing to all the parties involved. Another point that came up was the fact that in provision of these support services they ended up not only benefiting the student parents but majority of the student population as well as the university community.

Financial aid programs and policies on administration fall under the dean of students' docket and there was a committee set up to oversee the disbursement of bursaries, loans and work study programs. The staff interviewed both academic and administrative mentioned the significance of finances in the burden of parenthood. Some of the sentiments expressed from the staff were captured;

when it relates to student parents in particular, if the office of the dean is aware of any scholarship, I look out to award it to the student parent...if there is any bursary, work study program I ensure the student parent is not left out and is given priority,...any link I can get to donors and bodies that give grants, as well as loans such as HELB, I negotiate for them to be considered

Another participant expressed it in this way;

sometimes the university management may try to make an effort to lighten the burden of parenting by availing bursaries and maybe considering them in the work study programs on campus which may give them a financial boost

A member of the teaching fraternity asked;

how serious are we in the university do we even take time to link up these students with bodies out there that can help them out financially... there is nothing as bad as seeing a student hustling for money in between classes because even when they are in class you can be sure they are focusing on how they will catch that person who owns them money

Another area of support that was seen to be significant was enrolment management. Concern in this area came up as the discussion focussed on structures in the

university that would be of benefit to the student and how the university can restructure itself to reach many disadvantaged segments of the society

there are other things that are not going to cost the university much yet they will be of enormous help not only to this section of students (student parents), but also the larger student body. This involves automation of the registration process since the student population has become so diversified

This particular member of staff was alluding to the follow up that was done in the registrar's office as to why some students didn't turn up and it was discovered to be as a result of delay in receiving registration material and a deficiency in the method used by the office to clarify frequently asked questions. The Office of the Registrar learned from this mistake and as a result indicated that it was critical to invest in technology and improve the existing infrastructure to be automated in order to reach a larger mass of the student body, leading to a rise in recruitment, retention and follow up. There was a need expressed for more research and investment in online registration to enhance the access to education since the student body is becoming more diversified.

Childcare policies and support services was another area that would greatly benefit the student parents. Most expressed a desire to just have a place where the child was taken care of thereby give them peace of mind for the time they attended classes. Though the student parents did not complain but they emphasised the difference it would make in their lives. One student parent mentioned;

I tried living with my child off campus so as to have the time to nurse her, but not for long I realised we were both suffering my classes and her health. I opted to take her home to my mother she was still very young less than six months

Though she did that with a heavy heart, she was left with no option. The burden of parenthood forces the student parents to sometimes make drastic choices.

Through the discussions childcare and a policy on support services was noted as a benefit not only to the student parents but to the university community as a whole. The student parents did not seem to mind paying extra for these services since they already pay for those people that mind their child but when it becomes a communal effort, it can be subsidised for the good of the university. This was a service that both staff and students agreed can even be outsourced and it becomes a community effort.

The issue of residency and halls has been overwhelming to the staff in charge of housing. The universities where these interviews were conducted are still expanding and so housing is a big challenge. In the course of the discussions, when the issue of comparing with other public universities came up, not many have accommodated the high housing demand. But it was argued that since many of the public universities are expanding constituent colleges in rural areas then there is need to factor family housing into the expansion agenda, more so when it is taken into account that most of the areas of expansion are in the countryside where housing outside the university may be hard to come by as opposed to those universities based in the urban areas or more established towns and cities which are more built up and university students can easily have access to housing in the environs surrounding the university.

The policy as of now is that the students vacate the halls of residence when they are five months into their pregnancy. Most said they were able to get some place around the university. A member of staff commented that

since most universities have less than 30% living on campus there is need to have a community outreach where the issues to do with housing security can be tackled in a cross cutting way by involving the community and in fact not

segregate the student parents out there, but have all the issues to do with housing off campus coordinated for the benefit of all the students

This member of staff argues that as the university outsources for student housing it will be beneficial for the reputation of the university since with the community outreach involvement there is mutual benefit to all. As the university recruits and improves on enrolment, they can indicate through information availed to prospective students as to where students can get appropriate accommodation. This would be very reassuring for all the involved parties.

Student health and counselling was a department that needed to be strengthened. In one of the campuses where the interviews were conducted the counselling department had been drastically reduced due to cost cutting measures. Staff both academic and administrative reasoned that many of the students who faced one crisis or another would easily have avoided these problems if there was a vibrant and functioning counselling unit. One of the academic staff interviewed observed;

we are lecturers not trained to be counsellors so the university was putting a lot of pressure on lecturers to counsel and we are not trained for that

They underscored the fact that matters pertaining to course selection, career choice and anything else to do with academic life they can advise on but personnel issues, they pass them on to the student counsellor or student affairs. It was therefore imperative that a proper counselling unit and a crisis centre were developed and enhanced more so with the expanded and diversified student population. Most members of the university concur that these student support services are crucial to the academic affairs more so as the universities grow. Sometimes one is not able to 'catch' needy cases on time

one time there was a student who was having difficulty during the exam she was sweating and kept on going outside we realised she may be unable to finish the exam so we advised her to go to the medical department and deal with “it”

The university has engaged a part time gynaecologist who comes to attend to antenatal cases. But most expectant students seek services at the nearby provincial hospital therefore this is an area that can be outsourced for the benefit of both student and university.

Though the university may do cost cutting in some of these non-academic areas it may be necessary to bear in mind that the value of some of these non-academic services is to build up and support the student body as well as the reputation of the public university. There is need as (Dickeson 1999:51) advises to focus on the special elements that address efficiency, effectiveness and centrality to the mission when dealing with student support services, since these go a long way in sustaining and retaining student numbers as well as the reputation of the institution as a student centred university.

5.6.1.3 Academic Structure and Student Parenting

The academic structure in relation to student parents is greatly wanting in that mechanisms of identifying student parents are nonexistent as expressed by most of the participants. There does not seem to be a clear way of identifying and directing them where to go for help. This lack of structure and direction is a wider problem that affects a lot of other areas that concern students.

Academic support services and student advising, is one such area that can be improved greatly. Most of the student parents indicated that due to time constraints they were unable to consult with their academic advisors. They said by living off campus they had limited time to attend to all the matters that were academic and as

a result academic advising, they felt, was not a priority. On the other hand due to increase in enrolment the academic staff was overwhelmed by the number of students whom they were assigned to advise. Most of the student advising was pushed to the dean of students' office, and it was suggested that the student counsellors' offices needed to be greatly strengthened to deal with the demand for student support services. One lecturer said

the students are suspicious about student advising they avoid seeking out the advisers my advice is that the university should set aside two days in the semester which should be for interaction with the lecturers and in fact the whole university fraternity this will help reduce the suspicion and help overcome the hurdle between the two groups

The recommendation given was two days with no classes taking place in the university on those days, but spent on that exercise alone. The student advisors would meet with their advisee and have a session with them. The academic staff maintained that there was need to come up with activities that the student advisor can relate to for example in the first year identify the first year needs and the student advisor attends to these needs in those two-to-four days of the semester or year. Maybe within two semesters after interaction days like that, the students will start realising the benefits of that kind of advice and begin seeking out the academic advisors.

5.6.1.4 Administrative Structure and Student Parenting

The structure of the university does not seem to encompass student parents as one of the administrative staff commented, it may not be a priority as of now, but as the university grows rapidly as is happening where many public universities are opening up constituent colleges in different parts of the country, the university population is increasing and it will then be necessary to have some structure in place to guide the

management of this growth. What would be of benefit in developing such structures is to deliver the services that are expected to all students.

5.7 SUMMARY

Institutions have mission statements that reflect their growth as well as the changing social conditions. Those who are part of these institutions need to be well versed in the evolving mission statements as well as being aware of how they can be part of the process of achieving this growth. Reisser and Roper (1999: 114) reiterate that there are goals set by higher institutions of learning like the university and there are stakeholders who hold them accountable educationally as well as socially. Conditions facing the universities and higher institutions of learning have grown increasingly challenging in the recent past, calling for greater accountability to the public in terms of reducing costs, addressing the reduced funding as well as declining enrolments.

This section set out to analyse how a public university interacts with a segment of its diverse student body; the challenges the university faces and areas that can be addressed to bring about transformation for the good of all the students involved and in the process address its mission and vision. The public university was seen not only to be accountable to many of its stakeholders, but in addition it needs to rise to the challenge of transformation. In doing that, there has to be a starting point which begins from the known to the unknown. This section was an attempt to make known the experiences and the interactions of student parents with the university, as well as the approaches by the university to student parenthood. In the process hopefully set up a platform from which to launch out in a direction that will enhance the experiences of not only student parents but possibly many other students in the changing landscape of the public university as well.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a summary of the findings regarding student parents, their experiences and parenthood in the public university are presented. The objective of the study was to establish the impact of socio-education in the provision of education to the socio economic status of student parents as well propose a model of enhancement to the approaches regarding student parenthood in the public university in Kenya. The findings of this study will among other things contribute to public policy and practice of approaches taken to parenthood by the public university; the findings are essential for those interested in higher education in public universities and should help in the development of an efficient model or programme of guidance that will assist in managing the diversity of the student body, part of which comprises student parenthood in the public university. In addition, the findings should create a deeper understanding of the impact of socio-economic status on student parents and how the public university can improve on the approaches taken towards other students disadvantaged by socio economic factors.

Chapter five presented and analysed the findings from the research conducted. This chapter presents a summary of the study and the research findings. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations made on possible ways of enhancing approaches to student parents in public universities, as well as proposing possible areas for further research.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings in relation to the research questions which the study sought to address. It shows how the research relates to the literature on socio-economic status (SES) and the approaches taken by the public university, submitting the impact of SES on student parenthood, the social causation and interactions. The

findings are presented in response to each of the research questions. The research questions arose from the assumptions of the study and were in turn influenced by the social theories underpinning the study. They sought to interrogate the extent to which the approaches taken by the public university impact on the student parent. The ultimate aim in chapter 1 (1.4.3) is to propose a strategy of enhancing approaches to student parenthood in the public university.

The research questions attempted to provide an answer to the following questions as outlined in section (1.3);

- how student parents from low SES cope with needs regarding personal, educational, social, psychological and financial in higher education
- what is the nature of university academics, university managements knowledge and understanding of student parents' personal needs in terms of spontaneous dimension, interpersonal relationship and orientation towards provision of education
- what is the attitude of the Kenya Public university management towards the needs of student parents in terms of interpersonal relationships and financial support
- what role can guidance and counselling services play in the Kenyan public university to assist student parents in actualising their potential in terms of personal, socio-educational and financial support.

The data obtained in response to the interviews, focus group discussions and observations was categorised according to the major themes of the study and analysed.

The literature review in chapter 2 illustrates that student parents are part of the public university and it behoves the institution to interrogate its practices and approaches taken in regard to the individual students in the institution. This will result in accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of its services to the public in general and the students in particular. The factors that influence

parenthood in the university are varied, and include the students themselves, higher education culture, and university socialization as well as complex socio-educational factors. The social factors which are the most influential include the changing university student demographics in the liberalization of higher university education. As more students of diverse ages and experiences, join the university and as the university encourages higher student enrolment through policies that do not peg admissions to availability of bed space in the institution; this results in many students some young and inexperienced finding themselves on their own for the first time in the public university. Some of these young students due to their socio-economic status find it extremely difficult to survive in the impersonal environment that they find themselves in, without accountability to anyone with most of them finding themselves on their own for the first time.

Other factors that influence parenthood and impact on student parents include conflict in the expected roles of the university student and parenthood, as well as the norms and assumptions of the university. The theoretical assumption underlying the conflict that arises in this situation is the structural functionalism and the norms and values that hold institutions and individuals in that institution in a state of equilibrium. This helps explain conflict that may arise in the academic business of the university and the parenting issues that the student parent has to resolve. Another theory that tried to explain this conflict was the symbolic interaction approach that places social cultural expectations or demands made on the student as a parent as well as scholar in perspective. This theory as well is based on the socialization into the expected cultural norms and symbolic interpretations of the expected roles.

In addition other factors such as lack of support, understanding, isolation, social pressure as well as physical and psychological demands all lead to frustration and as a result impact on the academic life of the student parent.

The current study is based on socio-educational theories that try to explain the student in a parenting role as well as in an educational environment. Socio-economic theory (SES) lends an explanation of the financial implications to the approaches of support given to student parents. This theory maintains that; there are substantial disparities in educational outcome by socio economic status (SES) among other factors, at various stages of the educational journey. Historically low (SES) groups have been underrepresented in higher education. In Kenya with the introduction of the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), students who were hitherto unable to access funds for university education are in a position to access loans to finance their education. As the participation of more economically disadvantaged groups continues growing in the university it is important to monitor anything that may be likely to impact on their retention and completion rates in the public university.

Public universities are assumed to be dedicated to equal opportunity and affordability therefore it is important that the diverse groups of students in the public university have an equal opportunity of accessing education.

Chapter three is an overview of variations on student parenthood and the experiences peculiar to each of the group of student parents in the public university in Kenya. It shows the concern over the impact of parenthood on the individual student, the vulnerability of the undergraduate student parent as well as the single student parent. In addition; the association between student parenthood, shortened educational achievement and stress is addressed.

In the public university in Kenya, approaches to student parenthood are varied as the university seeks to support the various groups of students who may be disadvantaged in their access to education, as well as in their interactions with the academic organization, its various structures and functions. Some of the approaches have been influenced by the educational policy whereby students defer their studies

until after they deliver their babies. There are socio-educational implications that result when student mothers vacate the halls of residence in their fifth month and seek accommodation outside the university. These implications carry some assumptions that impact on the integration and inclusiveness of this group of students, as well as in the equal access to education opportunities for the student parents.

There has been a sense in which integration and inclusiveness has been advocated by the international community in a bid to minimise the effect of inequalities in provision of education. This has resulted in an impact on the educational perspectives of parenthood in the public university with various support services being advanced, and accountability being expected from the University on retention and completion rates of all students admitted in the public universities.

However, despite these efforts, there is still a lot left to be desired in the approaches taken towards student parenthood. The public university needs to be more in the forefront in promoting change and integrating student parents into the university community as well as more inclusiveness in the institutional space, structures and discourse of the academic environment.

The Data Analysis is discussed in chapter five of the study. The qualitative approach has been used in data analysis to produce a description of the participants, assumptions, experiences as well as events that may occur which shape the meanings given to the everyday lives. In particular the experiences of student parents in the public university, the interpersonal interactions with their fellow students as well as with the personnel who work in the public university, showing how they relate to various structures and places in the public university. Chapter six presents the assertions that have arisen from the study, the results of the study and conclusions as well as recommendations for further study.

6.2.1 The Effect of the Experiences of Student Parents In Relation to their Socio-Economic Status

The study showed that estimates of student parents are about 20 students per year of 250 students. In any given time the total number may be 50-70 student parents in an academic year. There are student parents from the first year of study through to the fourth and even in the graduate programmes, but the larger number is the females or student mothers. The second year of study in the public university where the research was conducted had a higher number of student parents; the number diminished as they proceeded to the third year. Fourth year students had fewer cases of active student parents to be found while it was found that most graduate student parents are mature, more focussed in their studies, and less distracted by socio cultural and economic burdens that accompany student parenthood. This demonstrates that though the exact number of student parents is not readily available, student parenthood is a most probable occurrence in the public university. These findings concur with (Bowl 2003:112; Murage 2004:6; Sitemi 2005:3) as well as qualitative data obtained through interviews with the student deans, counsellors and staff working with students in the public universities. The findings seemed to indicate that student parenting becomes more pronounced in the second and third year of study and that the population of student mothers is higher than that of student fathers.

The study sought to establish the reasons for parenthood among university students. Student parents and staff responded to questions related to what caused students to become parents in the public university. The most commonly perceived reason for student parenthood at the undergraduate level was that pregnancy happened accidentally. Accidents may occur as a result of too much freedom and exposure, with nobody to be accountable to; an unstructured life as opposed to what they were used to in high school with non segregation of the sexes. The students suddenly find themselves with too much freedom and the accompanying pressure to engage in relationships with the opposite sex. In addition accidents may occur due

to ignorance, lack of experience in handling too much free time and attention, minimal counselling and lack of information on survival skills.

Other causes of parenthood in the university are as a result of cultural expectations whereby the student is pressured into pregnancy with the expectation that this may lead to a marriage relationship, or that the student father or student mother will not desert their partner.

Financial constraints were cited as explanations related to parenthood as well, whereby students get involved in sexual relationships in exchange for money, with financial constraints leading to some students involving themselves in activities that resulted in pregnancy. Very few of the students in the undergraduate level had planned for pregnancy at the public university. Those interviewed admitted that pregnancy and the resulting parenthood happened accidentally.

In addition the study sought to establish the experiences of student parents in relation to the economic environment and the socio-economic status. The students and staff responded through the interviews and focus group discussions. Based on the focus group discussions, it emerged that majority of student parents experienced a low socio-economic status; this was revealed through the fact that many relied on funds from the higher education loans board (HELB) to finance their studies, and this is what they used to meet the parenting expenses. In response to the query on any other sources of finances they used to meet their needs, the student parents indicated that sometimes their parents helped them out, but for those who were student couples, they pooled their HELB loan to meet all their financial needs while studying at the university.

The staff that interacted with these students concurred that most of the students may have found themselves as student parents due to financial constraints. Some,

they said, may have gotten into relationships whereby their economic needs were met and they reciprocated these favours sexually and in some cases may have resulted in pregnancy. Others in response to social pressure and in the course of trying to climb the social economic ladder may have had basic expenses like grooming needs, dressing and entertainment provided for by their male friends and they reciprocated through sexual favours resulting in pregnancy.

A student counsellor revealed that sometimes those in the lower SES may be taken advantage due to their ignorance and they may be experiencing deficiencies in certain areas. Since they come from very economically challenged areas they may not have been exposed to life away from their home areas and as a result may not be prepared for the life they find themselves in, in the public university. This life she indicated may include pressure to conform to certain social standards that may be out of reach for them. As a result, in a bid to conform to the pressure they encounter, they become student parents.

6.2.1.2 The Response of the Public University to the Changing and Diversified Student Body

The researcher tried to find out whether the public university was aware of the changing and diversified student body and the response of the university to these changes. From the response of staff, some were aware of these changes and they felt that these should be incorporated in the policy and practice of managing all students and especially students who are parents, because if this was not done, then the university will not be as competitive in the era of liberalization and privatization of higher education.

Still some of the staff felt that the university should not be involved in the business of student parenthood since the students who enter university are deemed to be

mature and should be responsible for their actions, but those that expressed this were in the minority.

From the students' responses, it was evident that they did not want to be seen as a problem but wished that in spite of parenting, the university would provide options for them which they were even prepared to pay for. They expressed that they were treated as outsiders instead of being regarded as part of the university community and they felt isolated from the rest of the university fraternity.

The general perception was that the university seemed ill-prepared to respond to the needs of the student parents, and the structures and the systems did not account for parenting in the public university. According to the administrators and even some of the academic staff interviewed there were no mechanisms in place of capturing student parents in the university and therefore no formal programmes tailored to the student parents. If one became a parent, or entered the university as a parent, they had to find their own way of survival.

6.2.1.3 The Impact of the Burden of Parenting to the Academic Interactions and Interpersonal Relationships in the Public University

The study sought to establish the impact of the burden of parenting on the academic interactions and interpersonal relationships of student parents. The staff interviewed felt that though the student parents tried to put up a brave face, it was not an easy task balancing student parenting and scholarship, and based on their responses there was need for more counselling and advice to avoid finding themselves in such a situation. Though the staff agreed that the students concerned worked very hard, there are times these student parents were caught up in blaming themselves as well as having a poor self image. There was need therefore to have programs that targeted the student relationships in the public university as well as mentoring programs.

The student parents' perception of the interactions they had with the different service providers was unbiased, though the structures were a bit limiting in the sense that things like the timetable was structured on the tradition of full time student living on campus. So long as they did not live on campus they did not see the need to defer their studies. This resulted in practices in which the university is unable to cater for the student parents based on the assumption that they have deferred their studies.

On student to student interactions, the student parents looked out for each other trying to help out when colleagues miss out on impromptu lectures. There was a lot of cooperation on assignments and projects with the understanding that each individual is responsible in contributing their part of the group work. There were instances when the student parent may be dealing with a disturbed relationship with the father or mother of their child and when issues arise and are not settled then the student parent performed poorly; and if they lived on campus and they seem disturbed their colleagues usually assumed that the disturbed phase was due to parenting.

6.2.1.4 The Impact of the Burden of Parenting on Student Parents: The Influence of Institutional Factors

Institutional factors are those circumstances that prevail on the student parent in the public university and impact on their education experiences. The study sought information on academic expectations placed on the student parents as well as what they expected of the public university. When asked what defined a successful student, the student parents all agreed that a successful student included academic success and fulfilling all the requirements expected of them by the university; this included core and extra curricula activities, as well as attending lectures and academic trips. It was evident that the student parents took their academic expectations seriously. Some of the student mothers felt the pressure to participate

fully in all the academic activities but sometimes it was evident that due to the burden of motherhood they were unable to.

According to the staff interviewed on the cultural and social environment of the public university, they responded that the environment did not encourage parenting at all, and that those who went against the grain were hard pressed to balance parenting in the social environment of the university. Most of the staff though sympathetic was of the opinion that the academic environment was not conducive to parenting.

In theory the institution tried to be all inclusive but in practice the university personnel was unable to accommodate all the expectations of the student parents. When responding to the issue of accommodation, the staff in charge of housing responded that not all students would currently be accommodated and that as the university expanded, the issue of accommodation required urgent attention. On mechanisms in place to capture and track student parents, the staff in charge of registration responded that there were no mechanisms in place yet, but it was necessary to find a way of capturing the diversity that the student body represented.

The student parents' responses indicated that some selected institutional factors impacting on their achievement as student parents was to do with the policy of deferment of studies by student mothers and the requirement to vacate the university hostels by expectant mothers. The academic staff indicated that with no structures or mechanisms in place to cater for student parents it was difficult to plan for approaches of managing them. The administrators indicated that the resulting situation was one in which the student parents do not feature in the university data base.

6.2.1.5 The Impact of the Burden of Parenting on Student Parents: The Influence of Personal/Individual Factors

The study sought to find out the influence of personal factors on the student parent. These included the demands of parenting, challenges faced by the student parents' academic, financial as well as the role of support services both academic and administrative.

The responses of the student parents in relation to vacating the halls of residence made them feel as though they are not part of the university community and this led to feelings of isolated and being unwanted as though they were of no account. Some students as well as staff perceived that parenting in the university was stigmatized and condemned. It was not encouraged or acceptable. This led to the perception that parenting was pushed away and any support was seen as an afterthought. The fact that student parenting was not accounted for in the universities policies led to no planning for student parents in the management of the students, as well as appropriate approaches. Other factors that influenced the individual student parent were finances. All the students agreed that the issue of finances was a challenge and it influenced their full participation in the life of the university.

6.2.1.6 Role of the Public University in Terms Of Socio-Educational Guidance of Students to Cope With the Demands Made On the Student Parents

The research explored the role of the university in terms of socio-educational guidance. The responses from the staff were unanimous in the need for students to receive guidance. However the methods given were varied; for the academic staff they observed that they were not equipped to be student counsellors and therefore there was need to identify a process to follow, a policy that gave direction on whom to send the student to. For the student counsellors, they expressed the fact that everyone who deals with students in the public university whether academic or

administratively needed a course in counselling so that they are in a position to direct the student where they can get help.

When the students were asked to respond to the adequacy of socio educational support to cope with the demands of parenting, they indicated that though they were happy with the services offered by the dean of students office, the fact that they lived out of campus sometimes limited the support they received, as well as their interactions both with the academic and the support staff.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the literature findings and the findings of the investigational study. The burden of parenthood impacts on the potential of students in the public university. The approaches taken in the management of student parenting are limited. It is necessary that approaches be formulated that are more inclusive so as to incorporate additional needs and expectations of student parents in an effort to make the public universities' response more appropriate to this group of students who are part of the university population.

Student parents cannot be wished away and the public university though not desiring to encourage parenting may have to support those who are student parents in order for them to attain to their full potential, and increase retention and completion rates of the students.

6.3.1 Questions Related to Effect of Socio-Economic Status of Student Parents in the Public University

The following conclusion can be drawn in relation to SES; student parents are disadvantaged in their socio-economic status due to the burden of parenting. It was established that most student parents are economically challenged and many rely on HELB to finance their studies. Therefore the approaches taken in the management of this group of students has to take this into account to avoid them being further disadvantaged and marginalised in their quest for education.

In addition, the reality is that student parents face socio-economic challenges and appropriate management approaches if taken to support student parents should enable them manage both their academic and interpersonal relationships so as to achieve to their full potential. This will reduce deferment, postponement or non completion of their studies which could lead to further lowering of their SES.

6.3.1.2 Student Parents Negotiating the Effects of Socio Economic Status

The study concluded that for some student parents economic or financial challenges in the public university is one reason that resulted in unplanned pregnancy which led to the burden of parenthood in the university. There is need therefore for strategies to address the effects of SES on the student parents. Another related challenge was the burden of parenting on the academic and socio economic environment of the student parent which impacted negatively on the achievement of the student. It was apparent that the approaches taken by the public university in the management of the student parents should be improved if the student parents were to be prevented from escalating in a downwards trend.

There are many challenges facing the student parents in the public university, as well as many challenges facing the public university in the management of a diversified student body. This is an indication of the necessity to address these challenges presented and work at minimising the effect of SES on a group that would be disadvantaged further in their educational opportunities as well as in their socio-economic status. In addition the awareness by the public university to address the approaches they take in regard to the diversified student body in general and in particular the student parents within will result in a more conducive and inclusive environment.

6.3.1.3 Questions Related to the Diversified Student Body

The research tried to find out whether student parents were treated differently from the other students. It emerged that student parents were a part of an emerging diversified university student landscape that is changing due to the liberalization and privatization of university education. The staff who interact on a daily basis with the students mostly gave their response that in the process of incorporating the requests of the student parents they realised that majority of the student body who would otherwise have been disadvantaged benefited as well.

When asked about their role in relation to students, most responded that it involved encouraging all students to perform to their full academic potential. In the process anything that prevented the achievement of the goals of the students was perceived as a breach of contract with the students. Most agreed that since the student parents are just as much part of the university as the others, they too should be included in the planning and practices of the university.

The research revealed that as the university community expands the call to have structures and policy in place to address parenthood will be inevitable. When asked if the university should be concerned with student parents many responded in the affirmative not only for student parents but other disadvantaged groups, that is if the university is interested in raising enrolment, and improving on the transition rate from high school to university; and if the university is interested in retention and completion rate from the university of the students. Most respondents testified that there is a socio-economic impact on the status of the student parent which the university should be aware of to avoid parenthood impacting negatively on the student. They were of the opinion that already there is a lot of deprivation on the part of the student which goes hand in hand with parenthood.

In response to the question on whether there are mechanisms in place to cater for student parents, one of the administrators in charge of student registration

responded in the negative and emphasised that some mechanisms and measures if put in place would prove to be of tremendous help not only to the student parent but to the diversified student body as well and would go a long way in improving the enrolment and completion rate of the diverse students some of whom may be disadvantaged. For example the automation of records, library, online registration and online learning may not cost much in comparison to the improvement in service that they would bring to the whole of the student body.

6.3.1.4 Approaches that Can Be Adopted By the Public Universities in Relation to Student Parents

The study sought information on the common approaches to parenthood used by the public university. Student parents, academic and administrative staff who are involved with students on a daily basis such as counsellors and dean of students responded to the relevant questions through the interviews and focus group discussions.

Based on the responses the participants noted that there are no mechanisms in place, to identify student parents. Some by chance obtain help from the nearby health centres or the provincial hospital.

Asked about the policy on student parenting, the respondents both academic and administrative staff understood there to be no policy on student parents maintaining that when the university rules and regulations state that expectant students vacate the halls of residence by the fifth month the student who gets pregnant just leaves the university and the university has no way of tracing them, or engaging with their needs and expectations. Some of the staff responded that the policy on parenting is official but not documented; which is to discourage student parenting. In view of the university not having a documented policy it cannot have a documented approach or practice. This, as one administrator reiterated, results in a situation where there are

no systems, no structures in place, no approaches in regard to parenthood, and that the matter of parenting in the university is treated as a private matter.

On structures and systems in place to cater for parenthood in the public university the responses indicated the negative. Therefore the approach taken is a silent one. The students are regarded as over eighteen therefore adults and the assumption is that they should be able to take care of themselves. If one seeks help then they can be attended to on merit and if they need to defer their studies or otherwise they are advised. On the mechanisms put in the system to cater for student parents, the respondents concurred that these are nonexistent or ineffective as they do not serve the student parents. There are no facilities, no provisions, nobody plans for student parents and as one counsellor put it there are no structures, systems and mechanisms in place, since the public university goes by the rule and the policy that student parents have deferred their studies.

6.3.2 Summary

The current study attempted to find out possible measures that the respondents wished to see instituted to improve approaches to student parenthood in an effort to mitigate the burden of parenthood in the public university.

This section is a summary of the proposals arising from related questions on preferred measures that were addressed to the staff both academic and administrative as well as to the students. The following were the suggestions:

Strengthening the guidance and counselling programme; improve and support counsellors' office, train more staff in guidance and counselling; train student leaders and increase peer counsellors.

Academic advising needs to be revamped, with fewer students assigned to the academic staff and time made in the university programme for it to be more effective.

Teaching about family life, relationships and human sexuality should be done as core courses as well as teaching survival skills and advising on family planning options.

Organizing open days or forums where parents and administrators meet with students as well as the outside community to discuss social issues that may help the students and enhance open communication.

For uniformity negotiating of scholarships, bursary or work study programmes for student parents; improve links with donors and agencies that may be willing to assist student mothers with loans or grants/bursaries.

Put up hostels within as well as negotiate for accommodation or residences that include family quarters for student parents.

Provide information on available support, location of facilities and even a hotline for student parents. This may be done in form of a brochure to distribute during orientation or other forums.

Documentation of a clear policy on student parents with guidelines on support services, what to do, where and when and who is accountable.

Provide childcare facilities as well as institute a safe sanctuary for student parents on campus where they can unwind if need be in between lectures, and support one another. This facility can be used for nursing the baby and pooling childcare support.

Overall a policy on student parenthood was identified as vital in the guidelines on any approach or guidance programme to support financial, economic and accommodation needs in the concerns that arose.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature review and the investigative study, various recommendations for a model, strategy or programme of enhancing the approaches taken by the public university towards student parenthood are proposed. The following are recommendations for a strategy or model of enhancing the approaches taken by the public university to student parenthood. These recommendations though requiring attention and resources are quite feasible.

6.4.1 The Role of the Public University

It is evident from the research that student parenthood is inevitable in the public university, and that it is precipitated by financial factors, cultural factors as well as ignorance or lack of exposure to information about their sexuality. In addition peer pressure and too much freedom within an unstructured system in the university led to lack of accountability, putting pressure on many undergraduate students fresh from high school to be involved in activities that resulted in student pregnancies.

Causes of parenthood in the public university can be divided into issues to do with accountability and information for example, lack of information, lack of survival skills unstructured life and accountability, peer pressure and too much freedom provide fertile ground for student parenthood.

The other category is related to the individuals' socio-and economic environment; cultural factors and financial or economic factors. The study recommended that any model or strategy to address student parenthood should be all encompassing, addressing issues in both of these categories. The aim should be to improve and

strengthen mechanisms that will reduce the pressure on students as well as reduce the vulnerability of the students to the cultural and financial snares.

6.4.1.2 Develop Staff- Student Relationship

Staff both academic and administrative has a crucial role to play in reducing the impact of student parenthood in the public university. It was noted in the current research that all staff that interact with students in one way or another would benefit greatly from a course or seminar in counselling; that way they will be prepared if a student seeks them out for advice or counselling.

In addition the research findings revealed that lecturers are allocated students for academic advising but the groups are too large. It was recommended that the groups be reduced, and since they are academic advisers and may not be equipped to counsel; a policy with guidelines should be availed so that the lecturers are in a position to recommend the student to the office of the counsellor or dean of students for specific or further help.

It was further noted that to enhance a workable student staff relationship especially with the academic staff that are involved in academic advising, it would be helpful to come up with activities that are relevant to the students. For example if it is the first year students it was recommended that a system be put in place to identify their needs and plan activities that will respond to these needs. The same with second, third and fourth years; these interactions it was felt should be planned for two days in a semester. After these two day semester interactions, the student may be encouraged to seek out the student advisor since they will identify with the guidance they are receiving, and this type of interaction will reduce suspicion on the part of the student and open up academic advising.

The research noted that with the number of students increasing in the public university and many more with diverse needs it is important to create ways to

connect with the students. This can be done through provision of office space and time for student consulting in the schedule of the staff and the programme of the university. This will increase chances of mentoring and acting as role models for the students.

In the same vein, documentation can be availed to the staff on how to handle issues that crop up in the course of consultation with students; what to do, which office to contact so that the students are assured of support. Otherwise many students may just shy away or keep off academic advising and staff student interaction.

6.4.1.3 Develop Policy on Student Parents in the University

The study determined that a major impediment to enhanced approaches to student parenthood in the public university is the lack of a clear policy on student parents in the public university. The study found that student parenthood was referred to only in the rules and regulations of the institution where it was noted that the student vacates the halls of residence. However the university's regulations do not specify what support if any is availed to the student parent. The rules concentrate on the student parent vacating the halls of residence at five months of pregnancy, and deferring their studies till after they deliver. This leaves room for assumptions both on the university and the students' side which are not helpful to the student parent. There were recommendations to document a policy on student parenthood in the university that is comprehensive enough to reflect best practices in education while taking into account the diversity of the student population.

In addition the students should be involved in the formulation of the policy so that it is all inclusive and acceptable to. The staff expressed the desire for a comprehensive policy as well that would guide them in their dealings with the students. The policy should clearly specify what to do and in addition put mechanisms in place which

would help in identifying the students who are carrying the burden of parenthood and the type of support advanced to them.

6.4.1.4 Emphasis on the Interrelationships between Core University Functions

The public university is a complex system with multiple stakeholders both within and without. For the university to achieve its core functions and mandate of learning, teaching, outreach and community service, all parts of this system must work together through partnership for the common good (Waswa and Katana 2008:46). The respondents were all in agreement about the core business of the university but with the diversification of the student body, there are other functions of the university that will impact on the delivery of the services that accomplish the teaching and learning mandate.

It was recommended that the core functions necessary for the acquisition of knowledge should work in correlation with other service providers. That way the student benefits and the university is able to fulfil its function adequately. It is evident from the research that sometimes the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing; therefore student parenthood that impacts on the social, educational and economic aspects of the students requires attention from all sectors, the peer counsellors, the deans and the academic staff. All should be involved and mechanisms instituted so as to make the burden of parenthood lighter. The proposed approaches to parenthood imply that there is need for team work and emphasis on interrelationships between core university functions so as to assist in addressing the burden of parenthood.

6.4.1.5 Integrate Diversification into the Rules, Regulations

The study determined that due to the societal expectations, it is important that the public university changes as well so as to address the evolving needs of the students. In view of the fact that they are taken to be responsible young adults, they should be

given options on accommodation as well as health services, as opposed to the blanket regulation that students vacate the halls of residency at five months of pregnancy. It was established that the student parents are willing to subsidise if given an option on family residences accommodation, as well as on-campus childcare and health care. As it is now the university is not in a position to take up the parenthood burden from the student, but it was recommended that the least they can do is to provide information on precautionary measures to prevent pregnancy, in order to reduce the parenting cases on campus, as well as involve the community around the university in negotiation of appropriate accommodation.

6.4.2 The Role of the Support Services Guidelines for Student Support

Information was sought on student support services and their perceived effectiveness. It was recognized that when support services are effective, they foster a positive institutional climate, as well as increase retention and graduation rates of students. For these activities to be effective, they require planning to enhance personal and academic development. The staff indicated that parenthood has an impact on the retention and graduation rates and as such any approach taken should aim at addressing enhancement and development of the individual. It was recommended that guidance programmes would be of great benefit if provided in the following support areas; study skills and time management; the handling of multiple responsibilities; personal growth and development, financial aid, academic and career development. These areas according to the staff were identified as important in acquiring and accessing information that is helpful in increasing retention and completion rates of the students as well as ease the burden of parenthood in the public university.

6.4.2.1 Promote University Support for Student Parent and Other Students

On measures which should be instituted, the study recommended needs assessment of the student parents in the public university, who they are, where they are and how

best they can be served. In promoting mechanisms for student support it is recommended that the public university institutes mechanisms which will be effective in keeping a record of those in need of parenting support. This should be done in addition to establishing mechanisms of curtailing student parenthood.

One of the challenges reported by the staff who deal with students is the provision of activities to occupy the students especially those in university campuses in the rural areas. There is need for the provision of more options in the core curricula and community outreach activities that will help keep the students busy, and help them manage their time more productively rather than requiring the students to abstain from activities that lead to pregnancy or to keep themselves occupied and stay in their rooms.

Providing educational related activities that keep the students engaged was a key point noted more for the university colleges that have been established away from the urban areas. In these campuses of the university it was evident that students have less options and access to entertainment and leisure activities than in those campuses in the cities and urban areas where the students are exposed to more entertainment and leisure activities. The respondents all agreed that university support for student parents is essential in easing the burden of parenthood both on the student parent as well as on the university community.

6.4.3 The Role of the Stakeholders in Public University Education

With the stringent economic and accountability measures, many public universities recognize that the student's satisfaction and later on her or his success in the workplace are critical to the advancement of the particular institution. For students to be satisfied and to feel good about themselves demands a focus on the whole student experience; the university cannot achieve this without the involvement of stakeholders. The current study established that there are many areas where both

staff and students recognized the need to incorporate other key stakeholders in working with the burden of parenthood. A need to come out of the ivory tower and involve the parents and guardians as well as the internal and external communities of the university was expressed. The stakeholders in this study were those individuals who stand to gain or lose from the success or failure of the organization.

There is a substantial need for well evaluated approaches in the involvement of the surrounding community more so if the university is to fulfil its mandate of community outreach. It is essential for the internal public or community of the public university to change their approach to student parents and clear any misconceptions about the students who are carrying the burden of parenthood as well as academics.

6.4.3.1 Promote Community Involvement

It was established that the community has a big role to play in the support of the student as well as of parenthood. Community outreach and involvement is among one of the mandates of the university. The study recommended the promotion of public goodwill towards the university as a whole as well as towards the students; when the community is involved it helps in developing character that is culturally acceptable in the society, involvement in more community work, which builds an appreciation in the students especially to the more disadvantaged in the society. It is evident from the study that involvement in community outreach activities like volunteer work, and mentoring in schools through various clubs and societies keeps students occupied, less idle and improves on accountability which was an effective way of reducing cases of pregnancy.

6.4.3.2 Promote Internal Community Involvement

The study found that forums in the internal community of the university where students can bring up issues that they feel they may need support on as well as providing for facilities that will support them in carrying the burden of parenthood

were appreciated. A forum initiated to discuss issues openly that student parents are facing maybe on childcare or accommodation, as well as other facilities was recommended. It was noted that providing an internal sanctuary where the student parents can have communal childcare, look out for each other maybe nurse their baby and just relax in between classes would be helpful. This was expressed as one way that the internal community can help in easing the burden of parenthood.

6.4.3.3 Promote External Community Involvement

The research findings revealed that open day forums to interact with the outside community and talk about the evolving culture and best practices in education would be an effective way of sharing the burden of parenthood. When outsiders who are role models are invited to talk to the students and interact with the student body, it impacts positively on them as well as encouraging those who are parents or are disadvantaged in any other way that it is possible to complete their university education.

Another way that the external community can be involved in easing the burden of parenthood is through making arrangements with the landlords to provide security in hostels where the students reside. Student parents felt that the university should try and negotiate for student friendly hostel rates since finances were mentioned as one factor that impacted strongly on student parents.

On the fact that the public university's regulations bar student parents from residing in the halls of residence after five months, the university can support an outreach programme, where there is a common forum for landlords or those that provide accommodation to the students an association of hostel proprietors especially when the university is not in a position to offer accommodation to all students. As more students live outside, there is a common cover that the student parents can benefit from safety in numbers.

6.4.3.4 Promote Parents and Guardians Involvement

University students are assumed to be adults and they are expected to make life choices on their own but many are still relying on their parents or guardians for support for both tuition and personal expenses. Therefore most of the respondents alluded to the role that parents may play by being involved with student parenthood since parents play an important role in supporting and influencing their children. Most of the staff expressed the desire to bring the parents on board as a number of them already chip in to support their children when they have to combine parenting and scholarship.

The study recommended periodic meetings with parents, guardians, administrators and staff of the university to discuss social issues that may be of help to the students.

6.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Drawing from the findings of the study, and building on existing research, it is suggested that more studies be carried out to address the following:

Further research should be done to replicate this study, but emphasize quantitative data gathering techniques such as questionnaires and analysis to find out the significant relationships between parenthood and university approaches. Using such an approach would create a more comprehensive strategy for parenthood approaches.

More studies are needed with respect to background and socio-economic status (SES). This is because the current study did not determine the association of SES and student parenthood, or the effect of parenthood on SES of the student parent.

Although the study has recommended a policy for student parents in the public university, information is needed on the components that constitute an effective

parenthood policy. In addition research is needed to ascertain the relationship between the university policy and the approaches to parenthood.

Given that in this study student counselling and academic advising are emphasised in the approaches to parenthood in the public universities, their effectiveness in addressing the issue should be investigated. Such studies would contribute towards strengthening counselling and academic advising in the public universities.

There is a substantial need for integration of SES in the university approaches to parenthood, as well as accompanying campaigns to create awareness of the rationale of SES and inclusiveness for other disadvantaged students as proposed by the current study.

Finally in conclusion, the current study has shown that parenthood impacts on the academic potential of the student, and in effect the retention and completion rates of student parents. This retention and completion rate of a student in turn has an effect on the SES of the individual. It is therefore evident that the public university should be involved in addressing parenthood and instituting structures and mechanisms in place to enhance any approaches as regards parenthood. If the rate of student parents is about seventy (70) students in any one given time, given that the respondents alluded to about twenty (20) student parents per academic year, the implication is that in any one academic year students are subjected to a burden of parenthood that impacts on the public university rates of completion. Change in the approaches to parenthood can help in mitigating the effects of parenthood on the students if all the parties involved make a decision to make it happen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Academic Dean, (2008). *Interview with researcher*. May 10th. Egerton University.
- Adaji S., Warenius L., Ong'any A. and Faxelid E. (2010). The Attitudes of Kenyan In-School Adolescents Towards Sexual Autonomy. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*. 14 (1), 38-48.
- Alexander, J.S. and Gardner, J.N. (2009). beyond Retention: A Comprehensive Approach to the First College Year. *About Campus*. May-June, 18-26.
- Alon,T., (2004). *Parenting realities at the University of California Berkeley: Balancing Work, School and Parenting in Academia*. Honors Thesis, University of California Berkeley.
- Ambert A. (1994). An International Perspective on Parenting: social change and social constructs. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. (56), 529-543.
- Anderson, L. (2001). *A Comparison of Stresses of Married Student Parents and Non-Parents at Brigham Young University*. PhD Theses thesis, Brigham Young University.
- Astin, A.W., Keup, J. R., Lindholm, J.A. (2002). A decade of changes in undergraduate education: A national study of system transformation. *The Review of Higher Education*.25 (2), 141-162.
- Bartoo, V. (2005). Varsity rocked by “Couples Crises”. *East African Standard*, 3. January, p.24.
- Betrand, I. and Hughes., P. (2005). *Media Research Methods Audiences, Institutions, Texts*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Blimling G, and White J. (1999). *Good Practice in Student Affairs: Principles to foster student learning*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Boriensko J. (2007). Fatherhood as a Personality Development factor in Men. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* . 10 (1), 82-90.
- Bowl, M. (2003). *Non-Traditional Entrants to Higher Education*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books.
- Bryman A. (1998). Quantitative and qualitative research strategies in knowing the social world. In: May T and Malcom W.,(eds). *Knowing the Social World*, Buckingham: Open University Press. pp 138-155

- Bryman, A. (2002). *Social Research Methods*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bruce J. D., (1998). *Financing and Management of Higher Education: A Status Report on Worldwide Reforms: World Bank Report*. Available: <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/educ/postbase.htm>. Last accessed 13/10/2009.
- Butler, S. (2008). *South Australian Department for Education and Children Services- Department of Education and Childhood development, State Government Victoria*.
- Cabrera N., Tamis-LeMonda C., Bradley R., Hofferth S. and Lamb M. (2000). Fatherhood in the Twenty-First Century. *Child Development*. 71 (1), 127-136.
- Corcoran J. (1998). Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy/Parenting: A Review of the Literature. *Social Work in Health Care*. 27 (2), 49-67.
- Cullen L. and Grossman L. (2007). Fatherhood 2.0. *Time*. 170 (16), 63-66.
- Creswell J.W, (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Daniels H., Cole M. and Wertsch J. (2007). *The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Dean of Students, (2008). *Interview with researcher*. December 20th. Laikipia University College.
- de Coning, C. and Cloete, F. (2007). Theories and Models for Analyzing Public Policy. In: Wissink.H. de Coning C. *Improving Public Policy. From Theory to Practice*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. Ch.2.
- de Valenzuela J.S (2007). Sociocultural views of Learning. In: L. Florian, (ed). *Handbook of Special Education*, California: Thousand Oaks, Sage, pp280-289.
- Delgado-Gaitan C. (1991). Involving Parents in the Schools: A Process of Empowerment. *American Journal of Education*. 100(1), 20-46.
- Denzin, N.K. (2001). *Interpretive Interactionalism*. California: Sage Publications Inc. Thousand Oaks.
- Dew M. (2008). *Athletes with children KU Athletes must find time to excel in both sports and childcare*. Available: <http://www.kansan.com/stories/2008/jan/23/athletes-children/>. Last accessed Nov 28th 2011.

- Dickeson, R.C. (1999). *Prioritizing academic programs and services: reallocating resources to achieve strategic balance*. California: Jossey –Bass Inc.
- Dopson, S. and McNay, I., (1996). Organizational Culture. In: Warner D. and Palfreyman D, (eds). *Higher Education Management*, Suffolk: SRHE and Open University Press, pp16-32.
- Drago, R., Colbeeck, C., Stauffer, K., Pirreti, A., Burkum, K., Fazioli, J., Lazarro, G. and Habasevich, T,. (2005). Bias Against Care giving. *Academe* 91 (5) 22-25.
- Eastcott, D. and Farmer, B. M., (1996). Managing Student Learning. In: Warner D. and Palfreyman D, (eds). *Higher Education Management*, Suffolk: SRHE and Open University Press, pp 205-216.
- Egerton University Laikipia Campus (2004 :) *Orientation and Information Manual* Egerton University Press.
- Egerton University (2004) *Student Handbook*. Egerton University Press
- Emmanuel N.R., (2007). Assessing Organizational Performance in Higher Education. *Journal of College Student Development*. 48 (5), 610-612.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Inc.
- Flick, U. von Kardorff, E. and Steinke, I. (2004). *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. London : Sage Publications Inc.
- Fust, S., (2099). *How well is your school serving student parents? Minnesota's resource for teen pregnancy information. (MOAPPP)*
Available: www.moappp.org/.../apn/HowwellisYourSchoolservingstudentparents.
Last accessed 15/12/2011.
- Gallagher, S., Middleton, S. (2009). *Student Parents Movement: Envisioning a Family Friendly Future for Educational Institutions*. Available:
<http://groups.google.com/group/studentparents>. Last accessed 2009/11/06.
- Gardner, S.K., (2008). Fitting the Mold of Graduate School: A Qualitative Study of Socialization in Doctoral Education. *Innovative Higher Education*. 33 (2), 125-138.
- Girdwood, A. (1995). Evolving Roles and Responsibilities: The University in Africa. In: T. Schuller, (ed). *The Changing University?*, Bristol: SRHE and Open University Press, pp93-103.

Grenier, R.S. and Burke M, C., (2008). No Margin for Error: A Study of Two Women Balancing Motherhood and PhD. Studies. *The Qualitative Report*. 13 (4), 581-604.

Gribich C., (1999). *Qualitative Research in Health*. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Griffith, A and Smith D., (1990). "What did you do in school today?" Mothering, Schooling, and Social Class. *Perspectives on Social Problems*. (2), 3-24.

Gubrium, J and Holstein, J. (2002). *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. California: Sage Publications, Inc Thousand Oakes.

Harper, S., Walters, J. (1991). *Facilitating a smooth transition to Graduate School: A model Orientation Program*. San Antonio, Texas.

Hart C., Schoolbred M., (1993). Organizational Culture, Rewards and Quality in Higher Education. *Quality Assurance in Education*. 1 (2), 22-29.

Henderson J. (1980). On Fathering the Nature and Functions of the father role. Part ii: Conceptualization of Fathering. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 25 (Aug), 413-431.

Hinton-Smith T., (2007). *Lone Parents: Addressing barriers to participation in Post Compulsory Education*. Department of Sociology University of Suxxex.

Holloway, I. and Wheeler, S. (2002.). *Research in Nursing*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Company.

Hollenshead .C (2001) *Enriching the Mix: Responding to the needs of student parents at the University Of Michigan*. Chair Community survey on student parent taskforce 2001, Michigan.

Hofstede, G., Neuijen, B., Ohayv, D and Sanders, G. (1990). Measuring organizational culture: a qualitative and quantitative study across twenty cases. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 35: 286-316.

Hoy, W. and Miskal, C. (1991). *Education Administration, Theory, Research and Practise*. New York: McGraw-Hill Inc.

Karp, M, M., Hughes K, L., (2008). Information Networks and Integration: Institutional Influences on Experiences and Persistence of Beginning students. *New Directions for Community Colleges*. 144:73-82.

- Kawulich, B., (2005). Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6(2)
Available:<http://www.qualitativresearch.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996>.
Last accessed 2012/2/3.
- Kelly, J. T., Kendrick, M.M., Newgent, R.A., Lucas, C, J., (2007). Strategies for Student Transition to College: A Proactive Approach. *College Student Journal*. 41 (4), 1021-1035.
- Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*. California: Sage Publications Inc.
- Landry, C.C. (2002). Retention of women and people of color, unique challenges and institutional responses. *Journal of College Student Retention*. 14 (1), 1-13.
- Lecompte, M. Preissle, J. and Tesh, R. (1993). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research*. . Available: http://nyclu.org/rrp_chancellor1.html. Last accessed 2011/11/06.
- Ling T. S. (2002). Towards equal education for pregnant and parenting students. *New York Fordham Urban Law Journal*. 29: 2387-2412.
- Luchen, K., (1998). The Education of Student-Mothers in Childcare Schools. *A Journal of the American Educational Studies Association*. 4, 394-410.
- Lynch, D, K., (2008). Gender roles and the American academe: a case of graduate student mothers. *Gender and Education*. 20 (6), 585-605.
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K., Quest, G., and Namey, E., (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collectors' Field Guide*. Family Health International, North Carolina.
- Makiche, E. (2010). *Evolution of a female university student*. Available: [http://www standard media.co.ke](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke). Last accessed 21/05/2010.
- Mann, D., (2007). *Understanding society; A Survey of Modern and Social Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Maynard, M., (1998). Feminists' knowledge and the knowledge of feminisms: epistemology, theory, methodology and method. In: May T and Malcolm W., (eds). *Knowing the Social World*, Buckingham: Open University Press, pp120-137.
- May, T. (1998). Reflections and reflexivity. In: May T and Malcolm W., (eds). *Knowing the Social World*, Buckingham: Open University Press, pp157-177.

McLoyd V.C. (1990). The Impact of Economic Hardship on Black Families and Children: Psychological Distress, Parenting and Socio emotional Development. *Child Development* 61. 311-346.

McMillan, J. and Schumacher, S. (1993). *Research in Education A Conceptual Introduction*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers.

McNay, I. (1995). From the Collegial Academy to Corporate Enterprise: The Changing Cultures of Universities. In: T. Schuller, (ed). *The Changing University?*, Bristol: SRHE and Open University Press, pp105-113.

Medved, C, E., Heisler, J. (2002). A negotiated order of critical student-faculty interactions: Student Parents manage Multiple Roles. *Communication Education*. 51 (2), 105-120.

Mensch B, Lloyd C. (1998). Gender Differences in the schooling experiences of adolescences in Low income countries: The case of Kenya. *Journal of Studies in Family Planning*. 29 (2), 167-184.

Merton, R. K., (1967). *On Theoretical Sociology five essays, old and new*. New York: The Free Press.

Millman, S., (2007). Princeton Expands Family- Friendly Benefits for Graduate Students with Children. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Washington. 53 (32), A.13.

Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2005). *Kenya Education Sector Support Programme 2005-2010*. Nairobi: Government Printer

Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology (2009). *National council for Science and Technology*. Nairobi: National Council for Science and Technology.

Morley L, (2006). *Sounds and silences: Gendered change in Higher Education institutions in the Commonwealth; In Higher Education in a Global Society: Achieving Diversity, Equity an Excellence*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.

Muganda-Onyango R. and Omondi M. (2008). *DOWN THE DRAIN Counting the Costs of Teenage Pregnancy and School Dropout in Kenya*. Centre for the Study of Adolescence, Nairobi.

Murage (2004). Empowering Student Mothers for improved academic performance and personal development. *Egerton Newslink*. Graduation special, Issue November 2004.

Mutyanga, S. (2004). Student mothers face tough challenges at Universities. *Daily Nation*, 5 September, Blackboard 7.

Nafukho, F. M., (2004). The Market Model of Financing State Universities in Kenya: Some innovative Lessons. In: Zeleza, P.T and Olukoshi A. (eds) *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century vol 1*. Dakar: CODESRIA.126-129.

Nyaigotti-Chacha, C., (2004). Public Universities Funding: The Challenges in East Africa. In: Zeleza, P. T. and Olukoshi A. (eds.) *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century vol 1*. Dakar: CODESRIA.94-107.

O'Neil D. (2008). *Student, Athlete, Husband, Father*: Available: <http://sports.espn.go.com/ncb/news/story 3616868>. Last accessed 21/05/2011.

Penn State University (2007). *Student Family Friendly approaches*. Pennsylvania Available from: <http://www.gse.upenn.edu/degree_programs/policies3.php>. Accessed: 31 Aug 2007

Pescosolido B. A., Hess D. (1994). *Report of the Ad Hoc Graduate Education Committee: Models for the Professional Socialization of Graduate Students*. American Sociological Association, Indiana University and South Dakota State University.

Petrworth. (2007). *Balancing Books Basketball and a Baby*. Available: <http://thewarrior.org/2007/02/13/balancing-books-basketball-and-a-baby/>. Last accessed 15/7/2011.

Pillow, W., (2006). Teen Pregnancy and Education: Politics of Knowledge, Research, and Practice. *Educational Policy*. 20 (1), 59-84.

Plank, D. and Sykes, G. in Soudien, C. Kallaway, P with Breier, M., (eds) (1999). Education Equity and Transformation. *International Review of Education*. 45 (1), 5-6.

Prewitt, K., (2004). Higher Education, Society, and Government: Changing Dynamics. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. 2 (1), 35-56.

Quinn, K., Lange, E and Olswang S., (2004). Family- Friendly Policies and the Research University. *Academe*. 90 (6), 32-34.

Ramphele, M., (2004).The University an Actor in Development: New Perspectives and Demands. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. 2 (1), 15-33.

Ratchiffe, P., in Allen, W., Bonous-Hammarth, M., Teranishi, R. and Dano, O., (eds) (2006). *Higher Education in a Global Society: Achieving Diversity Equity and Excellence Advances in Education in Diverse Communities: Research Policy and Praxis*. Elsevier Inc., California.

Reisser, L. and Roper, L. (1999). Using Resources to Achieve Institutional Missions and Goals. In: Blimling, G. and Whitt, J *Good Practice in Student Affairs*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.113-131.

Rentsch, J. (1990). Climate and culture: interaction and qualitative differences in organizational meanings. *Journal of applied psychology*.75 (6), 668-681.

Republic of Kenya. 2005 Sessional Paper No.1. *A Policy Frame work for Education, Training and Research* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Ritchie, J.and Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Rowley, R., (1996). Student Support Services. In: Warner, D. and Palfreyman D, (eds). *Higher Education Management*. Suffolk: SRHE and Open University Press, pp166-180.

Sanders M, Epstein J, L. (2005). *School-Family-Community Partnerships and Educational Change International Perspectives in Hargreaves A., Extending Educational Change*. Available: <http://www.santaclarita.edu/policies>. Last accessed 13/10/2009.

Scott, J. (1998).Relationism, cubism, and reality: beyond relativism. In: May T and Malcolm W. (eds.) *Knowing the Social World*. Buckingham: Open University Press.103-119.

Schein, E H., (2004). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Seo H., (2001). *Parent, Student and Faculty satisfaction with and support of campus laboratory school programs*. Doctor of Education thesis, University of North Texas.

Shitemi, N. (2005). Varsity Students warned on “Campus Marriages”. *East African Standard*, January: 14, p.2.

Silver, H. and Silver, P. (1997). *Students: Changing roles, changing lives*. Buckingham: SHRE Open University Press.

Spalter- Roth, R.and Erskine, W. (2005). Beyond the Fear Factor Work/Family Policies in Academia- Resources or Rewards? *Change*: Nov/Dec

Smith R., (2003). Changing Institutional Culture for first year students and those who teach them. *About Campus*. March/April

Sparrey C.J., Lapour B., Buckley J.M., Agogino A.M., (2008). *Academic Climate and Advisor Support Affect the Quality of Women's Experiences in Graduate School*. Available: <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/graduateeppor.html>. Last accessed 21/03/2011.

Springer K, W., Parker B, K. and Leviten-Reid C. (2009). Making Space for Graduate Student Parents: Practice and Politics. *Journal of Family Issues*. 30 (4), 435-457.

Steck, L.W., (2005). *Negotiating the demands of Post Secondary Education and Parenthood*: Available: www.allacademic.com. Last accessed 2011/12/15.

Stillman, D., (2007). *Student mothers face unique challenges*. Available: <http://media.www.ustcauldron.org/media/storage/paper444/news/....> Last accessed 15 Nov 2008.

Student Parenting Project, Inc. (2007). Available: <http://www.studentparenting.com/sppolicyconsids....> Last accessed 2011/05/03.

Tierney W.C. (1988). Organizational culture in Higher Education: Defining the Essentials. *The Journal of Higher Education*. 51 (1), 2-21.

Tones, M., Fraser, J., Elder, R., White, K., M., (2009). Supporting mature-aged students from a low socioeconomic background. *Higher Education*. 17 (58), 505-529.

Ulin, P., Robinson, E., Tolley, E., (2005). *Qualitative Methods in Public Health*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

University of Berkeley Graduate Student Policy. (2007). Available: <http://www.eecs.berkeley.edu/Programs/grad/parentpolicy.html>. Last accessed 15 November 2007.

University of Michigan. (2007). Available: <http://www.umich.edu/~hrra/worklife/workingbfeed.shtml>. Last accessed 1 Sept 2007.

University of Nairobi Calendar 2001-2003: Nairobi University Press.

Walby, S (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Ward K, Wolf-Wendal L. (2004). Academic Motherhood: Managing Complex Roles in Research Universities. *The Review of Higher Education*. 27 (2), 233-257.

Waswa, F. and Katana, G. (2008). Academic staff perspectives on operating beyond industrial actions for sustainable quality assurance in public universities in Kenya International. *Journal of Environment, Workplace and Employment*.4 (1), 45-48.

Whitehead S. (2002). *Men and Masculinities*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Williams, J. C., (2004). Singing the Grad-School Baby Blues. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* [online]. Tuesday, April 20, [Accessed 10 June 2007]. Available from: <<http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2004/04/20004042001c/printable.html>>.

Williams J. (2004). Hitting the Maternal Wall. *Academe*. 90 (6), 16-20.

Wyner, N.B., (1991). *Current Perspectives on the Culture of Schools*. New York: Brookline Books.

Young T. *Student Mother University of Arizona Graduate School*. Available: <http://lifework.arizona.edu/wls//act/lact-strat.php>. Assessed 27 Nov 2007

Zezeza, P.T. and Olukoshi A. (2004). The African University in the twenty-first Century In: Zezeza, P.T. and Olukoshi A. (eds.) *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century* vol 1. Dakar: CODESRIA.126-139.

TABLES

Table 1: Typical day for a student mother

5:00am	Wake-up
6:00am	Study for about an hour Attend to the baby, express milk for the day make trip to college
8:00am till end of official classes	Attend classes, study and do assignments
5:00 till around 7:00	Prepare supper, eat and play a while with the baby
7:30 till around 8:00	Baby sleeps, and I can study awhile before retiring for the day depending on the work I have to do.

Table 2: Sample profile of participants in the study

	University Officials (10)	Student Parents (8)
Age: between		
20-30		eight
31-41	Three	
42-52	Five	
53-65	Two	
Gender:		
Male:	Six	Two
Female:	four	Six
Occupation:		
Administrator	Six	
Academic	Four	
Year of study:		
1 st		
2 nd		One
3 rd		Four
4 th		Three
Postgraduate study		

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Consent Form for participation in interview on student parenting:

Dear _____

I am doing a study on student parents in the public university.

In this study I wish to talk to you about your experiences as a student parent, student counsellor, dean, administrator or lecturer. I feel that your perspective of university student parenthood is extremely important in adding knowledge to this area especially making visible this group as well as giving voice to this group of students since this is a group that increasingly cannot be overlooked in our public universities.

I would be most grateful if you could spare the time to assist me in this project by granting me an interview touching on certain aspects of the topic. All information discussed will be treated in the strictest confidentiality and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting report. You are entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time, or to decline to answer particular questions. Since I intend to make a tape recording of the interview I also seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording in preparing the research report on condition that your name and identity is not revealed, and that the recording will not be made available to any other person. This study has been approved by the ethics committee of the university. The Secretary of this committee can be contacted on +2540724249730

If you decide to participate in this study would you kindly return the signed consent form so that I can contact you to arrange a suitable time for your interview.

Please accept in advance my thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

I agree to willingly participate in the interview on the study on student parents. I have read and understood the conditions above and I hereby append my signature below

Name: _____ Signature: _____

APPENDIX B

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENT PARENTS IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN KENYA

INTRODUCTION:

My name is _____. I am a researcher from Egerton University, doing a study on student parents in public universities I wish to talk to you so as to get your perspective of university student parenthood which will go a long way in enriching my study

Would you spare an hour or so, to answer questions touching on certain aspects of this topic from your position as a university student?

SECTION 1: Biographical Information

What is your name? _____

To which of the following age groups do you belong?

- (a) Under 20
- (b) 20-30
- (c) 31-41
- (d) 42-52

SECTION 2: Conceptions of student parenting in a public university

a) Are you an undergraduate or postgraduate student in this university?

b) How would you describe a student parent? How does a student parent differ from other students of the university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes

c) How does a student parent fit into the university life?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes

d) Are you a student parent? If so please specify if you are a student mother; student father?

e) Are there differences in these groups of student parents? If so please specify?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes

f) Can you narrow down the differences between the experiences of student parents and the other students in the university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes

g) What is your opinion on student parents? Should they be part of the university community?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes

h) Are you interested in the life of the student parents? Do you feel that other persons of the university have the same interest as you?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

i) How different would you like to see the situation of student parents in this university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

j) From your position as student parent, identify a specific incident you encountered in your daily life in the university. What is your reaction to the treatment of the student parent in that incident?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

k) Are there other instances that give you impressions about the treatment of student parents? Name a specific instance

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

l) What is your impression of the incident above?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

Section 3: Conceptions about scholarship in the university

a) Striving for success is often viewed as the most important goal for students. Do you agree?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

i) How different would you like to see the situation of student parents in this university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

j) From your position as student parent, identify a specific incident you encountered in your daily life in the university. What is your reaction to the treatment of the student parent in that incident?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

k) Are there other instances that give you impressions about the treatment of student parents? Name a specific instance

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

l) What is your impression of the incident above?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

Section 3: Conceptions about scholarship in the university

a) Striving for success is often viewed as the most important goal for students. Do you agree?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

b) Give your understanding of success as a student

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

c) How does a student parent cater to the responsibilities of scholarship and parenting?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

d) How does the student parent cope with the life of being a student and with the life of being a parent in this university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

e) Is this different from the life of other students? If yes specify how?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

f) Is it any different from other student parents in other public universities in Kenya?

Please explain your answer

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

4 Conceptions about the role of the university

a) Does the university play any role in the life of the student parents? Please explain your answer

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

b) Should the university be concerned about student parents If yes how?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

c) Should the university take up the responsibility of student parents? If yes what responsibilities?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

d) How does the university treat student parents? Is it any different from how it treats other students if yes specify how?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

e) What management practices have been taken by your university towards student parents?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

f) What structures are in place to respond to student parenting in the university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

g) What is the significance of these structures to the student parent?

h) How effective are they in the life of the student parent in the university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

i) In your position what would you prefer to be done differently? Explain your answer

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

APPENDIX C

ONE-ON ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENT COUNSELLORS AND DEANS IN A PUBLIC UINIVERSITY IN KENYA

INTRODUCTION:

My name is _____. I am a researcher from Egerton University, doing a study on student parents in public universities I wish to talk to you so as to get your perspective of university student parenthood which will greatly enrich my study.

Would you spare an hour or so, to answer questions touching on certain aspects of this topic which is extremely important to student life in the university?

SECTION 1: Biographical Information

What is your name? _____

What is your gender? _____

To which of the following age groups do you belong?

- (a) 20-30
- (b) 31-41
- (c) 42-52
- (d) 53-65

SECTION 2 Conceptions about student parents

a) Please tell me about yourself and the role of your office in the University?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

b) What does your job entail in relation to students in the university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

c) Briefly tell me what you relate to the term student parent?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

d) How does your job relate to the student parents?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

e) Please specify the decisive features of your job in relation to the student body in general and to the student parents in particular?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

f) What influences your work as a counsellor/Dean in the university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

g) Are there aspects of your job that you would change? If so specify which and why?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

h) What factors in the University facilitate or impede the work of the student Counsellor/Dean?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

i) Do you feel responsible for student parents generally as a student counsellor /Dean? Please explain your answer

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

j) How many student parents do you have in the university?

k) What categories of student parents do you have in the university?

l) What mechanisms are in place to identify student parents in this university?
Are they effective? Please explain

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

m) What systems are in place to support student parents in this university? Can these be improved? If yes how, If no why not?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

SECTION 3 Conceptions about the University

a) What is the university's' approach to student parents? Is that approach adequate?

Specify what you would prefer to be done differently?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

b) What comparison would you make between the approaches taken by this university to the student parents and other public universities you may be aware of?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

c) What structures are in place to cater for student parents?

d) Are these structures effective? If yes specify how, If not specify why not?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

e) What is the management practice concerning student parents? Is it comprehensive enough, If not why not?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

f) What is the policy on student parents in this university? How is this different from what is the practice?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

APPENDIX D

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL AND ACADEMIC STAFF IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN KENYA

INTRODUCTION:

My name is _____. I am a researcher from Egerton University, doing a study on student parents in public universities I wish to talk to you so as to get your perspective of university student parenthood which will greatly enrich my study.

Would you spare an hour or so, to answer questions touching on certain aspects of this topic which is extremely important to student life in the university?

SECTION 1: Biographical Information

What is your name? _____

What is your gender? _____

To which of the following age groups do you belong?

(a) 20-30

(b) 31-41

(c) 42-52

(d) 53-65

SECTION 2 Conceptions about student Parents

a) Please tell me about yourself and the role of your office in the University?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

b) What does your job entail in relation to students in the university?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

c) Briefly tell me what you relate to the term student parent?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

d) Please specify the essential and decisive features of your job in relation to students? Does it differ when it comes to student parents?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

e) Do you feel responsible for student parents generally as an administrator/lecturer?
Please explain your answer

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

f) How many student parents do you have in the university?

g) What categories of student parents do you have in the university?

h) What mechanisms are in place to identify student parents in this university?

Are they effective? Please explain

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

i) What systems are in place to support student parents in this university? Can these be improved? If yes how, If no why not?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

SECTION 3 Conceptions about the university

a) What is the university's' approach to student parents? Is that approach adequate, If not specify what you would like to see done differently?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

b) What comparison would you make between the approaches taken by this university to the student parents and other public universities you may be aware of?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

c) What structures are in place to cater for student parents are these structures effective, If yes specify how If not specify why not?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

d) What is the practice concerning student parents? Is it comprehensive enough?
Please explain your answer

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

e) What is the policy on student parents in this university? How is this different from what is the practice?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

f) What role should the university play in relation to student parents? Is it different from the role it plays towards other students? If so how?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

g) Should the university be concerned with student parents? What responsibilities should they take towards student parents?

Summary/Brief Notes

Quotable Quotes)

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONING ROUTE

Focus group No. _____

Date of Focus Group _____

Time of Focus Group _____

Tape No. _____

Number and Description of participants _____

Moderator's Name _____

Moderator's Phone Number _____

Assistant Moderator's Name _____

Assistant Moderator's Phone Number _____

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to this meeting of student parents where we will talk about parenting and scholarship in the public university. Student Parents are increasingly becoming a part of the student landscape in the university in Kenya. I am a researcher from Egerton University where I work and we are interested in how we can effectively facilitate scholarship in the face of parenthood. I have invited you as a follow-up to the individual interviews we held earlier in an effort to clarify and validate some of the information given. We will continue talking your experiences as student parents in the university and we will record what you say so that we can write a report.

Opening Question

Tell us who you are, your department and faculty, your mode of study, and a little bit about _____ yourself

Theme 1: Causes of student parenthood in public universities

Q1. What are the reasons of students becoming parents in the university?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q2. The Responsibilities of Student father or student mother

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q3. What challenges face student parents in the public university?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q4. What are the needs of student parents in the public university?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q5. What are the coping mechanisms employed by student parents in the public university

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q6. What intervention measures would you prefer to see being taken in the public university concerning student parenthood?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

--	--

THEME 2. UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE OR SYSTEM

Q7. How does the University Community perceive student parents?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q8. How does the Family and larger community perceive/relate to student parents

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q9. Please comment on your perceptions of how the University management understands student parenthood

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q.10 Please comment on the perceptions of the academic and administrative staff on the understanding of student parenthood.

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q.11 Comment on the interpersonal relationships between student and student parents as well as student parents and administrative or academic staff.

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

--	--

Q12. Give a typical day in the life of a student parent in the public university

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q13. What are some of the social academic experiences in the life of the student parent in the university

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q14. What are some of the social economic implications to the student parent?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

--	--

Q15. What socio-educational approaches does the university have in relation to student parents?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q16. Please comment on the accessibility, equity, quality and relevance of the approaches or programmes in place for student parents

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q17. Please comment on the effectiveness of socio-educational approaches or programmes in place for student parents

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q18. Please comment on the role of the guidance services in relation to student parents

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Q19. What role does the guidance services have in assisting student parents' personal/social/educational/financial

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

--	--

Q20. In your opinion what strategy should the university take to enhance their approach to student parents?

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH PERMIT

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Telegrams: "SCIENCETECH", Nairobi
Telephone: 254-020-241349, 2213102
254-020-310571, 2213123.
Fax: 254-020-2213215, 318245, 318249
When replying please quote

P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA
Website: www.ncst.go.ke

Our Ref: Date:

NCST/RRI/12/1/SS-011/1316/4 **26th September, 2011**

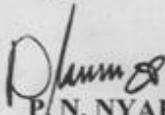
Charity Mwangi
University of South Africa
SOUTH AFRICA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*An investigation of parenthood policy among student parents in Kenyan public universities: A socio-educational perspective*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Nakuru & Nyahururu districts** for a period ending **30th September 2013**.

You are advised to report to the **Vice Chancellors of Egerton University & Laikipia University College of Egerton University** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **one hard copy and one soft copy** of the research report/thesis to our office.


P. N. NYAKUNDI
FOR: SECRETARY/CEO

Copy to:

The Vice Chancellor
Egerton University
P. O. Box 536
NJORO, EGERTON