

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL**

**THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEENAGE MOTHERS WHEN  
BALANCING THEIR CHILD REARING RESPONSIBILITIES WITH  
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN THREE SECONDARY SCHOOLS  
IN INANDA.**

**A RESEARCH REPORT**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The focus of the study is on the provision of equitable education to girls who leave school due to their pregnancy related predicaments. The study explores the challenges faced by these young women in schools.

The study was conducted in an informal settlement on the outskirts of eThekweni. Through the employment of qualitative methods, using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires I was able to show that in a country which ensures access and success of every child to education without learners being unfairly discriminated in any way, teenage-mothers face hardships in balancing their educational needs and social responsibilities.

Through a series of interviews the study draws attention to some of the challenges facing the education of female learners who have children while at school and endeavoured to uncover the ways in which schools respond to the needs of these teenage-mothers.

The findings of the study outlined the challenges faced by teenage mothers in schools and the role played by the school. The study concluded with the implication and recommendations for all stakeholders involved in the education process.



## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted for the Master's Degree in Education at the University of KwaZulu Natal is my original work, it has not been submitted to any other institution. Any other authors' works quoted has been indicated and acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references.

Signed



M.S. ZONDO

## STATEMENT BY THE SUPERVISOR

This thesis is submitted with/without my approval.

Signed

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Dr. Suchitra Singh

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

Issues over the provision of equitable education for girls have been a major concern in South Africa. This has been prompted by the contributions made by women towards family care, the economy and politics in South Africa. Despite all the contributions made by females, the provision of equitable education for women is still a struggle; especially for girls who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy related hardships. When these teenage mothers re-enter their schools, their learning is affected by numerous social factors and the solutions to these barriers are minimal if not non-existent.

To raise a child and try to maintain academic excellence is a difficult challenge to meet. It becomes worse if no assistance is given to these teenage mothers. Issues of child bearing by young girls, is not a 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon. However, in the last few decades the proportion of adolescents giving birth in a school social context has increased. Adolescent fertility has become considerably more problematic today than in the past. Today, it is socially described as a problem with epidemic proportions and it is framed as a defining example of what is morally and socially wrong. Such stereotyped attitudes held

by the society have negatively influenced the learning of teenage mothers in most schools.

When these students are facing challenges of balancing their learning with child rearing responsibilities, parents and schools seem to tug in different directions. Parents become angry, disappointed and ashamed while the internal school policies are highly influenced by the social norms and values. Both parties, however, have a common denominator of ignoring the needs of teenage mothers.

Nathanson (1991) views the role of schools in such a situation as that of pleasing all the constituencies on both left and right, with the resulting lack of assertion regarding the institutional and academic needs of the teenage mothers. McGee et al., (1985) state that those who provide assistance to these students to cope with their schooling demands are perceived as rewarding bad girls. Their parenting position is viewed as the primary responsibility of the teenage mothers not as the improvement in the institutional policies. As a result of such beliefs, few girls find their way to resume their education after giving birth, but the overwhelming majority do not (Bledsoe et al, 1993)

When one views this at both macro and micro level, the implications are that at the macro level there is a loss in social investment in education. At micro level,

this can mar the socio-economic prospect of girls who have planned to complete their education and also pave the way in which they will be confined to low paying, unskilled jobs and low socio-economic status.

For the purpose of this study, focus is specifically centred on the provision of equitable education to girls who leave school due to their pregnancy related predicaments. Their position perpetuates the existing passive exclusion of girls in education despite all the policies in place to make their learning bearable and fruitful.

What is noticeable through the findings of this study, is that in most cases when these students are faced with a challenge, parents and schools seem to pull in different directions, leaving helpless teenage mothers in the middle. Anger, disappointment and loss of face makes it difficult for most parents to approach the school, to make the necessary arrangements for their daughter's education. Those who are courageous enough to approach the school for the continuation of schooling for their daughters, tend to approach the issue as transgressors, rather than exercising the rights of their daughters towards education (Belsches-Simmons, 1995; Preston-Whyte 1989). On the other hand, the schools attempt to please all the constituents on both left and right, results in the lack of assertion regarding the institutional and educational needs of these teenage mothers (Nathanson, 1991).

It is in this context that the study explores the challenges faced by these young women in schools, and tries to break the silences of unfounded conclusions made about teenage pregnancies and early parenting, which affect their learning and lacks the voices of those involved (victim narration).

The data collection for this study was conducted in 2003 from three secondary schools; Amatikwe, which forms part of greater Inanda in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The area is characterised by a high rate of unemployment amongst the economic active members of the society and a lack of proper housing facilities for most families. As a result homes are small living spaces where children do not have a place to play, or to study or have privacy. In acquiring the experiences of teenage mothers concerning their schooling, semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires were used. All of the participants were teenage mothers from three secondary schools in the area.

The study was conceptualised against the legislation that govern the South African schools. The legislation ensures access and success of every child through education, namely: The South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996, which obliges every public school in South Africa to admit learners and serve their educational requirements without these learners being unfairly discriminated in anyway. Sections 9 and 29e from the Constitution of the

Republic of South Africa 1996, Act no. 108, prohibit unfair discrimination against anyone, directly or indirectly on the basis of sex, gender or pregnancy and guarantees the right to basic education of every child, dismantling the barriers that block access to education for women and assist girls who are victims of sexual violence.

It is in the above context that the study looks specifically at the provision of equitable education for girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy related situations. Their position seem to perpetuates the exclusion of teenage mothers from education despite all the policies in place to make the learning of every child bearable and fruitful.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In the current South African schooling system all learners who find themselves within the school setting are entitled to equal treatment and their rights respected by both teachers and parents. Learners are also entitled to receive any form of assistance they need if that is in the interest of their learning. Despite all the provisions made for learners, the exclusion of learners who face hardships in balancing their educational needs and other social responsibilities still prevail. Girls' education is not yet highly prioritised as that of boys, placing female students at a disadvantage. To highlight some of the concerns, this study tries to draw



attention to some of the challenges facing the education of female learners, who have children while at school. Furthermore, it endeavours to uncover the ways in which schools respond to the needs of these teenage-mothers as it is demanded by the constitution of South Africa.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

#### **1.3.1 Personal Motivation**

The motivation for the study is derived from my personal experience accumulated over ten years of teaching in a secondary school in Amatikwe, Inanda, North of Durban.

Observing female students dropping out of school, before completing their studies, became a trend. The effect of which has contributed to an increase in uneducated masses and unskilled future adults who are unable to provide adequate parental and social support.

What is noticeable about the plight of the teenage mothers is that the contributing factors of this differ. However the major causes seem to be related to the moral decadence. This decadence has resulted in the diminishing of “ubuntu<sup>1</sup>”, which has lead to various forms of harassment, child headed

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<sup>1</sup> A South African word derived from isiZulu which refers to the special bond of love that individuals show and the dignity as well as respect that fellow human beings accord to each other.

household, single parenting and high unemployment rate among the economic active members of the society.

Despite the above prevailing situations, the majority of these teenage mothers find their way back and resume their schooling. What I have observed through the years is the way in which their re-entry is laden with challenges.

Returning to school indicates that such a girl, referred to as a teenage mother or schoolgirl mother, has fallen behind in her studies; because when the childbearing begins, education usually stops (Ramalebana, 1995:161). Caring for the child without sufficient support or backup is also usually demanding and expensive for the unemployed teenage mother. The position in which these young mothers find themselves in may ensure that the children they bear will be born into the same social milieu as those of their parents (Preston-Whyte 1989: 84).

Challenges of these students are compounded by the lack of formal responses from schools in providing educational support that hold out rewards of social and economic advancement to these teenage mothers. Schools have never come up with programs to be provided to these students, which will entice their learning. Educators on the other hand keep a “low profile” as program providers (Weatherly et al., 1985). The lack of such assertiveness by schools make one to

reach certain conclusions, one of these being that our schooling system is still deeply rooted in a patriarchal culture which devalues the education of women. The provision made by the South African schools Act no. 84 of 1996 which guard against and provide suitable grounds for every learner to acquire the “assert of life” through education, seem to be understood by a few while implementation programmes are non-existent. Hence one witnesses hardships faced by some of these teenage mothers.

The disparities that exist among learners in schools especially towards females as compared to boys, warranted an investigation as to what these “silenced” students feel about their position; and what role has the school played in assisting these students academically.

### **1.3.2 Rationale**

Schools are framed by policies to ensure equal outcomes among learners. This study sought to ascertain the manner in which schools are responding to the needs of teenage mothers in order to nullify the existence of passive exclusion of these students.

The learning of teenage mothers needs to be redefined and renegotiated with regard to what really needs to be done to ease their learning challenges. An attempt has been made by this study to highlight or provide an insight as to

what the needs or difficulties of these students are, as far as their learning is concerned.

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The fundamental aim of the study is to investigate the challenges that are encountered by teenage mothers in schools when pursuing their academic goals and how they balance that, with child rearing responsibilities. Of equal importance, is the manner in which schools are responding to the needs of teenage mothers in order for them to realize their academic ambitions; and the adherence of schools in the provisioning of equitable education to every learner as it is demanded by the constitution of South Africa. To achieve the aim of the study, the following questions serve as the guide ;

- 1. What challenges do teenage mothers face in schools when trying to balance their child-rearing responsibilities with academic excellence?**
- 2. How are the school responding to the needs of teenage mothers?**

#### **1.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study lies in its response to the growing need of providing education to every child within the South African context, especially teenage mothers. Research done in Africa and in South Africa in particular shows that there is a national concern to provide both girls

and women with self-empowering education. With that in mind, the study will try to highlight the successes or the failures in recognising these demands.

It is hoped that the study will bring awareness that the learning of teenage mothers is no longer an individual problem, but a political, economic as well as a social issue. It needs policy clarifications, identification of specific outcomes and the achievement of equitable education for teenage mothers in schools with clearer guidelines for the school-based actions in addressing these needs.

Most studies on women show, that the social stereotypes and socialisation affect the learning and achievement of girls and women in general. The study will contribute towards the most needed democratisation of education in schools, encourage teachers to be real agents of change, and in formulating clear guidelines for school-based actions on issues or challenges that affect the learning of teenage mothers.

## **1.6 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The limitations experienced in this study have somehow affected the data collection and influenced the conclusions. The following limitations were noted:

The study was limited to the teenage mothers at three secondary schools at Inanda because of time constraints and the qualitative nature of the study, therefore the findings tended to be suggestive rather than conclusive.

-Conclusions drawn are not to be generalised to all African teenage mothers since different cultures, values, traditions and economic background do affect learners differently.

-The study investigated the learning of teenage mothers but excluded other stakeholders in their learning e.g. teachers, parents and other learners were never consulted for the verification of certain facts, and that made the finding to be suggestive and / or relative.

- My position as one of the school management team members in one of the schools, involved decision making, student welfare in the school and my maleness in women's world might be a threat to participants.

Furthermore, information provided may only reflect what learners perceived as positive for the sake of this study. This on its own can affect the conclusions made about the study.

## **1.7 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter one provides a preamble to the study. It describes the personal motivation and rationale for undertaking the study, states the aims, significance, critical questions and limitations of the study.

Chapter two provides a literature review on the social perceptions and the schooling of teenage mothers.

Chapter three explains the theoretical-framework of the feminist theories and reveals how it applies to issues of young women and their education. Ideologies from liberal and African feminism have been utilised.

Chapter four analyses the methodological approach used in this study. Here it describes the methodology chosen and explain its implications for a feminist study. Sample selection and research tools that were used to interrogate the study are elaborated upon as well as the analysis of data.

Chapter five presents the findings, analysis and discussions about the study on teenage mothers and their learning challenges.

Chapter six provides a summary, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

For the purpose of this research which investigates the challenges faced by teenage mothers in schools and the role of schools in addressing the needs of teenage mothers, it has become important to closely examine literature contributing effectively to the understanding of who teenage mothers are; the social perceptions towards them, educational and economic implications of their position and coping strategies employed to ease their positions and the findings of studies conducted, especially in South Africa. The research is framed by the feminist perspectives

#### **2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TEENAGE PARENTING.**

Early marriage and childbearing among adolescent women is not a new phenomenon. It was not unusual to find a teenage girl bearing a child before getting married although it was unacceptable. When that happened the young girl involved was not thrown out of parental home because she has fallen pregnant. The girl who find herself in that situation, usually



confided to the older female member in the family who would inform the parents of the girl involved. Anger and distress felt by the family of the girl involved was dissipated by the reparation for seduction and impregnation which was payment towards the damages done. This practice is still evident in most of the South African societies, mostly in rural areas. The child and the teenage mother remained the part of the family although that might strain the resources of the family (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1996; Singh, 19860).

With the change in the ways of living of modern societies, the perception towards teenage mothers has been skewed. Geronimus and Korenman (1990), view this skew in perception as emanating from the comparison of teenage mothers with married women or those females who are no longer teenagers. This perceptions also includes the need to acquire education and economic independent before a teenager can bear a child. This has made education and wage work to be regarded as ends in themselves (Nathanson, 1991). The above perceptions are also echoed by De Viser et al. (1996) in that the dilemma in understanding teenage pregnancy and child bearing among South Africans should be understood on the historical, political, social and economical stand of the society. Issues of teenage parenting have the particular consequences for the country as a whole.

In bringing about change in the status of the teenage mothers, Singh (1996) suggests the need of taking action that will reduce the prevalence of teenage mothers. This in return it will serve as a mean of breaking the cycle of poverty and she regards educational attainment and job training as the basic towards the economic independent among teenage mothers. The perceptions on the welfare of teenage mothers tended to initiate the need to understand how are they defined at different context

### **2.3 DEFINITION OF A TEENAGE MOTHER**

In defining teenage-mothers in a school setting, most literature consulted inclined to concentrate on age-grading, emotional development and the level of education already acquired. In defining teen-mothers, Foster (1986) and Preston -Whyte (1992), describe teenage-mothers as teenage girls, usually of school going age, who had children before the age of eighteen, and who do not finish their higher education. Besides the age grading, their experience and emotional development come into the fore when being characterized. According to Lesko (1990), the public view held about teenage mothers is that of young unmarried females who are sexually immoral and irresponsible, wrought with a feeling of hopelessness in their lives, with the potential of destructing the social fibres and the sources of the country's ills.

Burdell (1993) regards such negative social perceptions developed towards teenage mothers as emanating from the historical beliefs that childbearing is associated with adulthood and marriage. The belief of deciding who and when to have a child makes Nathanson (1991) to regard it as a source of stigmatisation towards teenage motherhood. The end result of such stigmatisation is the construction of a range of oppressive options, which limit their capacity for autonomous sexual decision. Burdell (1993) in support of Nathanson, regards such construction of teenage mothers as destructive. Labelling such as “babies having babies”, children incapable of “mature” and thoughtful control or articulation of their lives etc., make teenage mothers to struggle with their identities as women inside a nexus of institution, discourse and practices that produce and limit their possibilities for constructing representations of themselves.

In defining stigma, Fulcher (2002) regards it as a social reaction that picks out a particular characteristic and uses this to devalue a person’s whole social identity. The usage of it applies to any characteristic that is regarded as abnormal or unusual and that result in denigration or exclusion of a person being stigmatised. Bourmrind (1994) points at some of auxiliary traits associated with stigmatised persons as welfare-dependant, abusive and generally incompetent parents. According to

Weatherly et al., (1995 :24) the stigma attached to teenager mothers seem to be an adult phenomenon, the teenagers involved find acceptance among their peers, “there is no stigma to them, they take their children back and show off the trophy”. This has made Mcdale (1992:67-70) to view these issues regarding teenage mothers as “not different from any other age, relations among school, family and work place will remain a dilemma for teenage mothers and well into their years”.

Apart from the negative description towards teenage-mothers, Mwamwenda (1995) and Nash (1990) argue that the social attitude toward teenage-mothers and early pregnancies depend on the socio-cultural context. They argue that some societies accept child brides and early pregnancy but with the change of time, especially in complex urban and highly technological societies, it is widely felt that pregnancy and child bearing among teenagers is best delayed until a girl has reached full maturity, has completed her formal education and is capable of caring and even supporting a child. This is also preferred when it occurs within the context of a matured sexual relationship. Testa (1992:8) regards this lengthened “social timetable” of adolescent development as mainly aimed at achieving position of middle class in the society, earning power and prestige”, and stresses that the only conduit towards that is firmly attached to education. The over reliance in schooling in achieving these

perceived social goals, make Fine and Zane (1989) to regard schools as mainly seeking to identify, civilize and contain that which is considered uncontrollable in the society. They also regard public schools as marbled by ethnicity and gender stereotypes that makes learning of teenage mothers difficult.

#### **2.4 THE SCHOOL SETTING**

Apart from the challenges teenage-mothers face in the society at large, the school setting in which they find themselves in, poses new challenges to them. These challenges emanate from their ability to return to school after dropping-out, the school policies, support from parents and level of education already achieved (Meerkers and Ahmed, 1999: Dynowski - Smith, 1981: Cherlin and Riley, 1986: Ramalebana, 1995). Their learning is also loaded with problems, usually culminating in the relationship formed by the adolescent-mother with the self, peers, teachers and other significant people. They are expected to fulfil the challenging role of behaving on the one hand as ordinary girls in the school, and on the other hand, to be mothers to their children or babies. They are also expected to educate their own children while they themselves are still in need of education (Ramalebana, 1995: 2)

Mwamwenda, (1995) elaborates further on barriers exacerbating the problems and challenges faced by teenage-mothers in schools, including the school policies. Policies drafted by school governing bodies like the code of conduct are viewed as an extension of the gap between teachers and students (teenage-mothers). For teachers, to implement the equal opportunity policy among learners in a school will mean challenging the values and culturally sanctioned patterns of behaviour, not only of the children, their parents and local community, but also of the teachers in the school. Teachers view parenting of these students as primarily the responsibilities of teenage-mothers and whatever the initial capability of these teenage-mothers, becoming a parent, is viewed as the reduction of their education and vocational success. In support Mwamwenda, McGee and Blank (1989) regard such attitude of teachers of not wanting to invest a great deal of effort on teenage-mothers, as emanating from the societal pressure which makes teachers think that if they assist these students, they will be rewarding bad girls viewed as offenders to influential adults.

In South Africa there are positive steps taken by the South African government in affording every child an equal opportunity in education, through the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. Although this is appreciated in most spheres of education, incidents of discrimination and resistance from the school authorities still prevail. Some incidents of

such exclusion were highlighted by Daily Sun<sup>2</sup>, 4 June 2004, and television programme such as Third Degree<sup>3</sup>, on the 9 October 2002, titled “hard lessons”. Pregnant students, one from Wordworth High School and one from Clemont High School were asked to leave the school premises on account that they refused abortion or because the school policies do not accommodate such students. Both schools in defence cited the need or the importance of “moral well being” of other learners. The incidences quoted above on pregnant students support Cannison (1990) in her belief that when implementing an equal opportunity policy within a school, that is equated to challenging the values and culturally sanctioned behaviours by the community, parents as well as teachers themselves.

## **2.5 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

The other area of public concern about teenage-mothers is the economic implications on the side of teenage-mothers, their parents as well as government. The positions in which they find themselves seem to have a range of implications. Their early motherhood implies both short and long term implications. The latter also implies the jeopardised future employment opportunities, life- time poverty, hopelessness and enforced

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<sup>2</sup> Daily Sun is a daily newspaper published in the Gauteng region of South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Third Degree is an investigative news program that is aired weekly on the independent, national television station, e-tv.

dependence upon others (Van Coeverde de Groot, 1991; Mogatlane, 1993; Mogolebone, 1999). The school attendance of teenage mothers is also viewed as an unbearable demand. According to Cherlin and Riley (1986) school attendance of these teenage-mothers is like labour force participation, it may not be compatible with raising a child. Getting involved in such realities at a young age is likely to be more of a problem to girls who want to continue with their education than those who do not. The presence of a child could bring about a drastic change in the life of a teenager and her family and this may be due to the lack of support from the father of the child. The end result of this is that both the teenage-mother and the child become economically dependant on others in the family or neighbourhood.

The economic hardships faced by teenage-mothers make Ntombela (1992: 23) to regard such challenges as the “core cause” of school interruption among teenage mothers. They are frequently absent from school in search of jobs in order to care for the child financially. For Seabela (1990:9) these “shifts” by teenage-mothers prevent the development of their potential and self-fulfilment of the teenagers involved, as well as that of their children.



## **2.6 CONTEMPORARY FAMILY STRUCTURE**

Le Roux et al, (1996; 105) view teenage motherhood against the nature of contemporary family structures. In the context of a multi-generational household, “teenage motherhood has become a very common type”. The views of Le Roux on contemporary family structure is also echoed by Preston Whyte (1988), in that success in life is not mainly determined by marriage, there are successful single women who have children and they are “neither ostracized nor openly ridiculed “(p64).

This is viewed as a further encouragement not to avoid pregnancy and early motherhood among teenagers. Geronimus (1987) in opposition with the above views, argues that even if there can be role models for teenage mothers, giving birth early by teenagers enhances chances of living in poverty and in a socially and economically deprived circumstances. For Compton, Dancan and Hruska, (1987;14-15) these depriving conditions tend to be “cyclical” in the sense that the children of the teenage parents frequently become teenage parents themselves and thus face the same consequences that their parents faced. They further argue that unless people and institutions intervene, these parenting teenagers will continue from generation to generation.

## **2.7 RESEARCH REVIEWED**

Research conducted by Ramalebana (1995:2) around secondary schools in Venda, found that at school, the position of teenage mothers has a traumatic effect on some of these students. This can dent their self-image significantly and can result in unpleasant learning experiences.

Ramalebana found that teenage mothers tend to show characteristics of poor academic achievements as compared to the “ordinary” schoolgirls. The teenage mother’s academic performance is lower, worse or weaker than before they had babies. Their brightness has gone, ability dented and they seem depressed most of the time, generally appearing demotivated.

Research on teenage mothers conducted around Durban by Preston-Whyte and Zondi (1988), found that the control and power to influence fertility and reproduction lie invariably with the older generation, parents, church leaders and eventually with the government. Socialization of teenagers, cultural beliefs and political stands were found to be antagonistic with peer pressure and personal will to experiment with sex. The latter seemed to attain the upper hand. Teenage mothers seemed to have developed their own ways of absorbing the societal pressure.

Statements like:

- “the world does not come to an end if an African school girl or young unmarried women becomes pregnant” (p229).

OR

- “even if I wanted just to be a professional (somebody) do you think my husband would be satisfied? Never ... a man can't stay without children”.

OR

- “Who wants to live without children? Even if you are Mrs Thatcher!” (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1989:59)

The above perceptions from teenage mothers show that socialization toward women-hood and education or to become a successful person are two different and unconnected situations. Bearing a child out of wedlock is an achievement on its own and to be successful in life through education the other. Birth seems to operate in a sphere, which quite separate marriage from education. Children are valuable and teenage mothers see no reason to deny themselves a child simply because they are not married (Zondi and Preston Whyte 1988:64). On close inspection of the youth perceptions, these researchers found that this is a reaction of teenage mothers in general, and young unmarried

women in particular, in a subordinate position that is deliberately rejected by teenagers. They tend to develop their own culture.

## **2.8 DEVELOPMENT OF TEENAGE MOTHER'S CULTURE.**

Hugginson (1998) observed that, through the societal pressure imposed on teenage-mothers, these mothers have developed their own culture in retaliation to stigmatisation. The culture is influenced in different ways by the age, social class and race of the teenage mothers.

Kinney (1993) asserts that the school setting in which their age place them, enhances the competitive nature of the teenage-mother group. Schools generally generate competitiveness in many ways. Academic competitiveness imbued in learners because a school is a place where people are sorted into those who will go on to college and those who will not. This competitiveness fosters extreme social competition because students are sorted into cliques with different amount of status or popularity. By bringing the teenage-parents together in a school setting that is competitive both academically and socially, teenage-mothers are forced into developing their own cliques and relevant culture.

White (1993) argues that adolescents compete not only for grades or teachers' attention, but for the respect and recognition of their peers. Mangelsdorf (1994) further believe that, this competition among teenage-mothers is mainly to prove wrong those images attached to them, in order to persuade others and to convince themselves that they are not deviants. According to Kenny (1993) such practices of teenage-mothers can be seen as the way of making them good rather than fighting the stigma of all teenage-mothers in the form of identity politics where they might seek to change societal conceptions of them.

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

As Preston Whyte et al., (1988) assert the world does not come to an end if an African schoolgirl or young unmarried women become pregnant or has a child. It becomes clear that the girl is seldom forced to leave school for more than the academic year in which she gives birth. It is a common practice for girls to finish her schooling after the birth of a child, in some cases returning to the same school. "If parents can continue to afford it, pregnancy or child-bearing is not allowed to jeopardize it." It does not necessary mean the end of their hopes for professional career. In support of Preston Whyte and Zondi, Nathanson (1991) stresses that; issues involving the schooling of teenage mothers are complex. The most compelling public duty is to

provide education and training programmes that would make these young mothers self-sufficient. Schools as the frontline institutions in which teenage-women interact daily, must provide them with the educational needs of young parents.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The theoretical framework of this study interrogates the ways in which the lives of women are shaped in the society and attempts to provide an understanding on how such beliefs and values can be understood in trying to address issues for the emancipation of women; and how social justice can be achieved in society.

Since the research seeks to find out the experiences of teenage mothers and issues that affect their learning in schools, the research is informed by the feminists' theories thus liberal feminism and African feminism. Both of these theories provide an insight on how the oppression of women and girls can be understood in a given context. They both place emphasis on the role of education in changing the social stereotypes that affects and oppress women and girls.

#### **3.2 LIBERAL FEMINIST THEORY**

The liberal feminist perspectives are generally concerned with ways in which norms, roles, institutions and internalised expectations limit women's behaviour. They also seek to demonstrate how women's personal control operates even with the constraints of relative lack of power (Steward, 1994).

The liberal perspectives have been very influential in setting the agenda for research on gender and organisation. It is also concerned with the measuring and explanation of various forms of inequalities between men and women. These theories also aspire to a world in which women have equal access to current social benefits and so develop an educational agenda premised on notions of "access and success" that are equal to men.

Liberal feminists like Agger (1993) and Craig (1992) believe that men and women are equal and should be valued equally and also have equal rights. Gender is viewed as a socially constructed concept that has important consequences in the lives of all people. Men are viewed as equal to women; both have much in common as they seek to gain a better understanding of the causes and consequences of gender inequality.



In an attempt to find the fundamental attitude that causes gender inequality, the liberals find that sexism, prejudice and discrimination against women, legitimates the belief in biological predetermination of women's role. According to Bobo (2001) sexist attitudes disadvantage women through socialization into submissive gender roles. Bobo (2001) also argue that the roles that women are forced to play- that of emotional, sexual and household servants, renders them mindless, dependant and subconsciously depressed.

The liberation of women is equated with equality of opportunity through the provision of equal civil rights and educational opportunities. By providing women with the opportunity to engage in these activities are viewed by liberals as a mean in which women can have the same chances for success as men. Gender socialisation that eliminates discrimination is valued in society as a whole. Teachers, families and media are regarded as important in shaping the appropriate masculine and feminine attitudes and the behaviour of the society.

Thus liberal feminism asserts that inequalities do exist between men and women. The main cause of inequality is the lack of access by women to resources that empower them. This perpetuation oppresses women whose only solution is to make education accessible to women and change the social stereotypes that affect women negatively.

For the purpose of this research, the views of the liberals is seen as appropriate in understanding how the lives of both men and women should be transformed with an aim of improving lives, especially for the oppressed. The challenges that teenage-mothers face is somehow influenced by the social stereotypes which do not value education for girls and women. As a result of that, the educationally needy teenage-mothers are passively excluded in the schooling system in South Africa. Little or no attention is even paid to pregnant students, dropouts and those who re-enter school after delivery.

### **3.3 AFRICAN FEMINISM**

African feminism is another perspective employed in this research to understand the issues affecting women both old and young. The focus on continental identity shaped by particular relations of subordination in the

world economy and global social, cultural and educational practices make it to be relevant also in this research. The focus of African feminism seems to be particularistic in addressing issues affecting women in the society, it also guard against representation of African women by those with different experiences about oppression.

Like most feminists themes if not all, the African feminism also place high value on women and demand for a social change if women are to lead secure and satisfying lives (Anger,1992). Central to African feminists is the valuing of everyday experience of black women. According to Miller (1990), the issues that disturbs feminist's politics today, is that of speaking about, for, or to, the others. To her, such acts of representation are fraught with problems in that "who speaks and is spoken about or for, has depended largely on the other categories". This has made African feminism to view representation of women's experiences as problematic since people from different locations in the world, view or understand their environment differently.

Representation of African women's voices and experiences is criticised by Alcoff (1994:287) in that, "speaking for others is problematic because it concerns the location and speech, the position from which one speaks from, has an epistemological significant impact on that, speakers can

claim and can serve either to authorize or disauthorize one's speech". For her (Alcoff), the identities are fluid and always shifting.

Davies and Graves (1986), believe that the goals of African feminists thinking should be concerned with specific needs and goals arising out of the concrete realities of women's lives in African societies. They further argue that traditional and contemporary avenues of choices for women should not be seen in conflict with traditionalism, instead they should point to a society where some of the inequalities lie and are thereby already involved in the struggle to shape society. African feminists perceive this strategy as the means by which stereotyping and generalisation can be rejected.

As the research focuses on the everyday experiences of teenage-mothers in schools, Hills (1991:60) regards the personal experience as a "valid source of knowledge, of seeing the world differently". The notion of Hills is supported by Code (1991) in that people living in different locations will have different experiences and see the world differently. There is also no way that one theory or knowledge can explain the whole world to everyone. In stressing the above position of the African feminists, Temogo (2002:127), believes that "there can be no talk of homogeneous sisterhood of African women because of our different cultural, religious

and socio-economic background". The personal account of women makes one understand how they understood their past and how they envision(ed) their present and future. The narratives offer a rich source of exploring the complexities as opposed to over simplification of young women's negotiation and renegotiation of their identities and relationships.

African feminists also emphasize the need to recognise and respect what their societies demand of them. They believe that change is negotiated within a given societal context. Kuumba (2001) in stressing the importance of women's voices, she views it as a tool which reflects a range of factors such as cultural and custom, class and citizenship, socio-economic level, political and economic context and lastly, the historical period. For her, there is no "monolithic" African feminism that can explain gender equality or oppression. Gender oppression is fused with other forms of oppression such as slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, poverty, illiteracy and diseases (Sheftall, 1981).

When looking at teenage reproduction, feminists regard it as a way of resistance by teenage girls that cuts across all the social barriers (Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1988). Reproduction by teenagers is also regarded as their emancipation where they seem to have seized control of their own

bodies in which they react to both the cultural and social pressures which place women in general and young unmarried women in particular, in a subordinate position vis-à-vis young men, older women and men as representatives of senior generation.

In agreeing with the above teen-emancipation, O'dowd cited in (AGENDA 4: 1989: 79) points to the role played by socialisation in the society. She believes that women are persuaded by their socialisation to give in to men's demand for. In this process women are helpless and their situation are being forced by their upbringing into an oppressive position. According to Eagle cited in (AGENDA 2; 1988: 88), socialisation is more than a force compelling people to obey their oppressors. In tackling these forces, African feminists are cautious that not all forms of resistance are equally visible, especially to the outsider. In order to understand and make judgement of such oppression, it is important to understand how the oppressed group experiences it. For O'dowd, the attempt in understanding oppression will enable the outsiders to understand the social systems and meaning of resistance that grow directly out of the oppressed experiences.

Freedman (1990) when looking at teenage reproductive, believes that sexual rights are about the choices that human beings make, it can mean

different things to different people. She further argues that people's differing realities and contexts, within which they struggle to realize their sexual rights, influence how they interpret their actions. This perception supports O'dowd where she views the child bearing of teenagers as the way of retreating from the sexual control by men into their own sphere of power (that of child bearing) from which men are excluded.

African feminists further believe that equality in any given society is brought about by the transformation of the environment in which individuals interact. Gupta (2000) regards such an environment as an "enabling environment". She argues that such an environment must give women and adolescent girls power to make choices and maximise their sexual rights that are free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Mangena cited in Amadiume (2000), expands that in order to promote such an environment, African feminists should depend upon the existing legacies of African systems together with the prevailing knowledge of women in order to formulate an authentic theory of human development with survival and African philosophy at the centre.

The contribution of African feminism in this research stresses that women oppression is not always visible especially to outsiders. For a person to make a judgement, it is vital to understand how the oppressed groups

understand oppression. Moreover different geographical locations result to different experiences of the world, due to different religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Women's lives are also shaped by the political, economic, historical and different social experiences. Teenage pregnancy is viewed as a way of resistance, which cut across all social barriers and the emancipation from both the social and cultural control of their bodies. Above all these social boundaries and stereotypes held about women and girls, the African feminism regards education as the liberating force for women and it must occur within a given societal norms. The environment in which all the changes are to be recognised must be an 'enabling environment' which empowers girls and women to make choices about their sexual rights – free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

In summing up the need for the development of an African feminists' tradition of thinking and participation in the formulation of new theory and methodologies, McFadden (1997:34) asserts that; "we must write about ourselves and speak for ourselves...we have every reason to want something different for Africa in the twenty-first century".

Having looked at the broader perspectives presented by the African feminists in general, it is imperative that a specific African feminist



theory, which is envisaged to be framing this research be employed. This is not done for the sake of the requirement for a researched work but with its gist on how equality and justice can be achieved in the society. Such a theory is the “Reformist Feminist theory”

### **3.3.1 The Reformist Ideology**

The beliefs and thinking of the reformist are advocated by feminists like Magona (1990), Ogot (1966) and Nwapa (1966). The reformists are mainly concerned with the individual, patriarchal-moulded attitudes, norms and convictions, both old and modern, which discriminate against women and hinder their self-realisation.

Negotiation with patriarchal society is seen as the way of gaining new scope for women, while accepting the fundamentals of patriarchy as a given fact. Reformist’s theory assumes that, the society is capable of reforms provided that alternatives to what is criticised are always discussed. Ogot (1980) believes that partial criticisms of patriarchal-gender relations, especially political inequality is capable of change only if men can re-think (AGENDA: 54:2000).

The other area of concern to the reformist is to do away with 'blanket' criticism of men. In this theory men are criticised as individuals, not as

representatives of men as such because men themselves have "that" agreeable side. They tend to be capable of rethinking and overcoming their reprehensible behaviour, though only partially and within boundaries offered by patriarchal society.

Temogo (2002:127) believes that women from Africa can play a role in effecting change. In order to realise this, they must firstly "recognise and respect what their societies demand of them and know how to negotiate for change within a given societal context". Although education is viewed as a liberating force for women, the reformists also believe it is also equally important to respect the norms of the society. This "chameleon-like" gift of African feminists as Arndt (2002) puts it, has gained a foothold in all African societies and provided flexible perceptions and visions of a new co-existence of men and women.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

Although there can be no theory that can fully account for human interaction globally, the lens through which the African and the liberal feminists view the position of women provide us with an insight on how women understand their position and the perceived means of achieving equality of both sexes. The input of both feminists' theories contributed

in the knowledge formation of this study and influenced the data analysis as well.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a broad methodological orientation for the present study and clarifies certain key issues in the research methodology. In addition I will discuss how I resolved the different methodological dilemmas, which presented themselves in the study. The aim of the study is to elicit the challenges facing teenage-mothers in schools when trying to balance their child rearing responsibilities with academic excellence. Secondly, it attempts to understand how schools are responding to the needs of teenage-mothers.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH: FEMINIST QUALITATIVE.**

Through my exploration of literature that can best provide me with the understanding of teenage-mothers' experiences in schools, I found that the feminist qualitative approach has the attributes of providing this research with the informed understanding of issues affecting these young women. The reasons for locating this research within a feminist research

paradigm emanated from the ability of feminist theories in fighting for the recognition of women's experiences in research. Secondly, feminist research strives to put women's issues on the agenda, and in this way addresses discrimination, oppression and power imbalances. Lastly, feminists focus on engaging women in interpreting their experience of contradictions and/ or marginality as outcomes of social inequality rather than as signs of personal inequality.

Strategies involved in qualitative research such as the participation observation, in-depth-interviews, fieldwork and total participation in the activities being investigated combined with the feminist approach, enabled me to get close to the data. This flexibility of qualitative approach allowed me to obtain first hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question. The research also demanded of me, to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions prevailing. Marriem (1988:16-17) regards the qualitative understanding of human behaviour as an end in itself. It is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future, but to understand the nature of setting what is going on for them; what their meanings are; what the world looks like in that particular setting and the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. The analysis also strove for depth in understanding.

The use of feminist qualitative approach in my understanding of issues affecting these young mothers in schools is viewed by Wilkinson (1988) as not accountable only in terms of clarity or confusion, but also in broader emancipation and transformational goals. Such goals in a research setting are achieved through the use of soft qualitative approach because they encourage the elimination of unhealthy differences between those who “know” and those who do “not know” (Christenson, 2001: Maher, 1996: Luther, 1991: Smith, 1987: Harraway, 1988).

My choice to combine these two approaches in women studies is also viewed by Silverman (1993) as a mean to provide reflections and transformation of experiences and actions. Both methodologies strive to bring change in a person or a community. The support levelled on these approaches in women studies allows Kopala et al., (1999) to emphasise the importance of combining these approaches in disciplines such as education and social work. They generate the information that the researcher tries to find, and their usage must be situational, depending on how the researcher understands himself/herself and the participants of the research. In support of Kopala, Gilligan (1992) stresses the importance of how knowledge is constructed in a research situation. She believes that, for a social researcher to construct knowledge, it is vital that the process

begins with knowledge from the participants as they are the masters of their own lives and experiences. For the success of this research I succumbed to the above factors. Although I had to design questions for participants to respond to, I never forgot that they are the masters of their experiences and their own lives.

When conducting a research, the researcher has a choice in selecting any method/s that best suite her/his research. For the success of my research I relied on participants' narrations. This tool is also supported by Smith (1988) in that narrations by participants is the only way which credits them with the power and ability to tell their own experiences, encourage their agency, their sense of personhood and the ability to affect their own lives. What is also important in fact finding, is the emotional consideration of participants. Patton, (1990) and Maher, (1990), in addition, regard emotional consideration of participants in a feminist research as an alternative means through which the researcher can understand the world of meaning of the participants and how this can differ from the researcher's point of view.

During the research process I acknowledged that as a researcher, I am tempted to bring to the fore my own consciousness, perspective, politics and passion. My reliance on feminist approach demanded that the

findings of this research reflect the social context in which claims are made in order to provide a broader scope of meaning for the researcher. In this research, participants were not regarded as objects, but there was that interaction which made participants to be the active owners of knowledge. The relationship that developed through casual talks helped in the development of trust and respect other than fear, created by my position in the school, my age and my maleness.

I considered relationship development between myself and the participants as vital tool because trust, friendship and openness make the knowledge formation process flow smoothly. Haraway, (1988) regards relationship in a research as the best way in which the voices of participants can be heard and this enables the researcher to remove the hegemonic traces of patriarchy in a feminist qualitative research. For Henwood (1996:39), andocentric biases in feminist research can be apprehended by employing more flexible, content-sensitive and meaning-sensitive methods of qualitative research.

Throughout the research process of this study, I found feminist qualitative methodology possessing the elements needed for this research, as it aimed at unpacking the experiences of teenage-mothers without generalization. It was through interviews and questionnaires that I could

explore individual experiences, which had an impact on the lives of the research participants.

### **4.3 CHOOSING PARTICIPANTS**

Choosing and acquiring participants for the research is one of the most difficult challenges the researchers usually face. This is due to the fact that the researcher needs to have more time with participants and they must also have the attributes that the researcher requires. My choice and acquisition of participants was no exception to these challenges. The participants for my research comprised of only teenage-mothers who are still at school and my zeal to gather more information on my topic, made it difficult for me to set a limited number of participants required. As mentioned earlier that the study focussed on three secondary schools in Inanda. It was difficult to accommodate all participants as no boundaries were set for those who were interested in the study. Although it was difficult, I had to select five participants from my school to participate in the interviews. This was prompted by time constraints and the qualitative nature of my study as Neuman (2000:196) views qualitative research as mostly concerned with a small number of participants and their choice should be based on their ability to describe a particular experience. I regarded the five participants as representative since all of them experienced motherhood at an early age and they possessed the



appropriate characteristics as demanded by the critical question of the research (Kerlinger, 1988)

In choosing the sample for my research from the school where I am teaching, I relied on the understanding that existed between myself and learners of both sexes. The snowballing technique made the challenge of choosing participants easier. I contacted female students whom I knew had experienced child bearing while at the same school. That made the sample to be purposive as I was strictly interested in teenage mothers who were studied within their own environment and in my attempt to experience reality from the participant's frame of reference (Kopala et al., 1999:64).

My ambition to include all participants who were eager to contribute in the knowledge formation process, initiated a need of allowing other participants from the two neighbouring schools to respond through questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered on the two schools targeted at the planning phase of this research. Like the sample of the research, participants from these schools were also represented as the research demanded (Silverman, 1993 and Kendall, 2002)

### **4.3.1 Access, gate keeping and consent**

As the research tried to understand the challenges of early parenting among female learners, it was a challenge to me to access the participants, who were to enable the process to move from a written research proposal into the operational plan of the research. As mentioned earlier in this chapter I chose three secondary schools where I had to gather information and I had to adhere to certain guidelines. Access and gate keeping, informed consent of all stakeholders like education authorities from Kwa-Mashu circuit, principals of the schools identified, teachers, as well as the parents of the participants were important. I wrote letters to the circuit manager, principals of the schools involved in the research. Formal permission from school authorities was followed by a request to parents, which was also done formally. Access to participants was gained through snowballing, which is viewed by researchers as a less formal channel in social research. I relied on the assistance of teachers and female students themselves in identifying the participants for the research.

The identification of participants did not mean willingness to participate in the research. It was important that I inform them about the purpose of the research and their rights to participate in the research. I arranged a briefing session for each of the schools, involving only the teenage

mothers. These briefing sessions took place after normal teaching hours, lasting for an hour at most. It took only three days to inform the participants from these three schools. Although I had established a rapport with them, it was not easy for some of them to agree on participating. A representative was chosen to whom they were to submit their responses as to whether they will participate or not. At the school, which I have chosen to name as Langa Secondary for the purposes of this research, eight females were willing to participate in the research. In the second school, which I named Masilingane Secondary also for the purpose of this research, five participants agreed. These two schools were to respond to questionnaires only and the third one, which I have chosen to name Lihle Secondary for the purpose of this research, five learners agreed to participate in the interviews.

Gaining access and to have consent are two different things, in this research the consent I regarded as valid, was a written one from parents of the participants. Participants were asked to submit letters of consent to a teacher who helped me in handing out and collecting the completed as well as uncompleted questionnaires of the research in each of the two sites.

#### **4.4 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

As it has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, that the research tried to understand the experiences of teenage-mothers in schools, a feminist way of getting peoples perspectives about their world was used. Dawson (1995) regards interviews, questionnaires, mostly with open-ended format and observations as the most appropriate methods to achieve this. In this research, two of these methods were used thus semi-structured interview and open-ended questionnaires were presented.

Maher (1996) stresses that methods used in a research have both advantages and disadvantages. This was also the case in this research. Interviewing is a procedure that is both demanding and difficult, but the demand of this research favoured the interview as it relied heavily on conversation. The importance of conversation in a social research is well echoed by Kvale (1996:5) where she states that:

“Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction. Human beings talk with each other, they interact, pose and answer questions. Through conversation we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings, hopes and the world they live in”.

Interviews vary in the amount of structure they impose in the situation. Highly structured interviews may be more demanding than spoken questionnaires, and on the other side of the spectrum, semi-structured

interviews can allow for an open-ended description of experience. Interviews usually need more time but they fulfil the aim of allowing people to describe their behaviours and experiences in their own terms. It is through this nature of interviews that my research relied on semi-structured interviews as they allowed the participants to describe their experiences in their own terms. Although semi-structured interviews yield essentially to feminist qualitative data, Benyard et al., (2000:435) regard semi-structured interviews as more difficult to analyse and more difficult to draw generalization from, but they offer insight into people's personal world. In this research, interviews were supplemented by questionnaires in the data collection process. My reliance on questionnaires in this research is also supported by Grayson (2000:434), because of the potential in finding out what people think, feel and do. They are designed to draw out information from people in a manner that researchers can make generalisation about the topic.

For the success of this research, I opted for semi-structured interviews and open-ended format questionnaires. These instruments enabled me to capture the experiences, perceptions, beliefs and the behaviours of the participants on how they balance the child rearing responsibilities with academic excellence and how schools respond to their needs?

The interview schedules were conducted on the sample of the research from one of the three schools and questionnaires administered on the respondents from the other two schools.

#### **4.4.1. Semi-structured interviews**

My option for this instrument in the research was based on the potential it provides, when describing the experiences and because of their structure that harmonizes well with the feminist research. Kvale (1996) stresses that qualitative methods are not merely some new, soft technologies added to the existing hard-core arsenal of social research. Rather, the mode of understanding what is implied by qualitative research that involves the alternative conceptions of social knowledge, of meaning, reality and truth in social science research; is that the meaning and understanding in research is provided by conversation with human beings, where participants not only answer questions prepared by an “expert”, but by themselves, in a dialogue of their own conceptions, of the world they live in.

Qualitative interview is theme oriented because two persons talk to each other about a theme that is of interest to both. The topic of discussion is mostly based on everyday world of the interviewee and her/his relation to

it. Smith (1995:9) regards semi-structured interviews as the only way to allow for a greater flexibility and produce rich data, by allowing the interviewee to pursue areas of interest that arise throughout the interview. The process credit interviewees with the power and ability to narrate their own experiences, it encourages their agency, sense of personhood and ability to affect their own lives.

The interviews were designed to allow for flexibility in this research, during the interviews, I allowed that flexibility which enabled the participants to gain confidence within themselves when expressing their views. According to Kvale (1996:36) the languages used in a research setting should be representative of the interviewees, this makes the human reality to be understood through the use of languages. The interviews were therefore conducted in isiZulu.

Having allowed “that” flexibility in our conversations, I took into cognisance some of the things that we must guard against when conducting interviews. Firstly it is possible for the interviewer to get an impression that participants feel relaxed and confident to speak openly and honestly during the interviews, whereas there could be a tendency amongst participants to attempt to perfect themselves and their conduct in what may be regarded as a positive light. Secondly it is important for the

interviewer to listen and not to talk whilst the participants are making their accounts, in order to enhance among participants that impression of concern, interest and undivided attention. In our conversation I found that flexibility did boost their confidence of narrating their experiences. Having allowed “that” flexibility in our discussion, I made it a point that interviewees do not detract from the core of what I wanted to know. That pointed to the significance of my draft questions for my interviews.

To grasp everything offered by participants, I made use of a tape recorder. It allowed for a complete and accurate recording of interviewees exact words and note taking about those non-verbal actions of participants like facial expressions and questions, which are important in a qualitative research, as they allow the interviewer to “read between the lines’ about the responses made on certain questions (Smith 1999:18)

#### **4.4.2 Open-ended questions**

My reliance on this type of instruments were based on the need for this research to leave the respondents completely free to express their responses/feelings as they wish, as detailed and complex, as long or as short as they feel is appropriate. Shaughnessy (1992:445) regards open-ended questionnaires as “an efficient way to obtain information needed to describe people’s thoughts, opinions and feeling”. Open-ended questions



are also viewed as not based on already conceived answers, but well suited to exploratory studies, or studies based on qualitative analysis of data (Bless, 2000:115-120)

In constructing these questions it was important for me to take into account the need, interests and problems of the respondents. I had to design a respondent-centred questionnaire that allows flexibility when responding to it. They were to respond without indicating their names that ensured anonymity and promote honesty in their answers. This type of questionnaire is more problematic to analyse, since the respondent is the only person who knows the true answer, I regarded that as the only element, which could have affected the analysis of my results.

#### **4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Data collection is a process that involves humans, and demands persuasion of participants to co-operate in order for the research to be successful. Failure by the researcher to persuade participants can result in a disastrous situation. The above challenges in a research make persuasion of participants to have boundaries as participants have the right to accept or reject participation.

This research like most social research invaded the person's privacy through interviews and questionnaires. My maleness in the female world was not easy for both sides. I had to respect the participants' right to privacy and appreciate their selflessness in providing their insight about the demands of critical questions of the research. Their minor positions demanded that I obtain their personal concern, parental or guardian consent. It was also vital to make participants aware of both the negative and positive aspects of their participation and the right to participate or not.

I also noted that it takes courage to divulge information that is of a very personal nature. I had to assure each of the participants of the anonymity. This was evident in their response to questionnaires even though the research relied on a group data than individual account in reaching certain conclusions about the data provided. They were encouraged not to write their name or school name when responding.

Bless et al., (2000:101) stresses the need for confidentiality in social research in order to protect participants especially when relying on interviews. This ethical demand was also observed in my interviews as they involved direct contact with all interviewees. Confidentiality, of information given was guaranteed to participants. The information given

was to be used for the purposes of the research and nothing beyond that and I made it my responsibility to keep it like that throughout this research.

#### **4.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

In keeping with the qualitative methodology used to gather data for this study, I followed certain procedures to perform the data analysis. The format included translations of transcripts, reading and re-reading of data, making comments and memos on the transcripts, developing a list of categories and reducing categories.

As indicated earlier semi-structured interviews were used in the study. Transcriptions from audiotapes were completed, assisting in the re-reading of the transcripts in order to familiarize myself with the data.

Responses by participants to interviews and questionnaires were done in isiZulu. As all the participants were second language English speakers, they preferred to respond in their mother tongue. For the purpose of this research, the transcriptions were first completed in isiZulu, thereafter translated into English. This was not an easy task to perform, as the translation became problematic at times where the exact words translated did not reflect the meaning the participants sought to convey.

After completing the transcriptions, I had to read and re-read the transcripts in order to uncover broad themes that prevailed in the data, in terms of the lived experiences of the teenage mothers who participated in this research. The emerging themes were matched in terms of the feminist theoretical framework towards which the study was directed.

Data relevant to each theme was codified by means of coloured highlighters under the broad themes. This resulted in the arrival to themes presented in the next chapter of this research. Coded data was thereafter organised by grouping the individual respondent's answers together in accordance with the themes developed. The relationships among the various themes and categories were described in accordance with the pattern or structure that emerged from the data.

#### **4.6.1 Synthesis**

The themes that emerged from both questionnaires and interviews were integrated and that led to the arrival of a common understanding of teenage mothers experience in schools.

#### **4.7 LIMITATIONS**

The sample, although representative of the targeted group, does not represent broad-spectrum categories of mothers in different locations of South Africa. As my study was limited to teenage mothers in three secondary schools at Inanda, the findings of the research cannot be generalised to all teenage mothers who are still at school. The exclusion of male students and teachers' experiences, which would have provided a broader understanding of experiences to be integrated into the data limited the findings.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a detailed account of the entire process in conducting this research.

The qualitative approach and its implications for a feminist study were explained, the size, characteristics and reasons in choosing participants were explained in depth. The purpose and content of both interviews and questionnaires were described. The procedures followed to analyse data and the limitations were also provided. The next chapter describes the data gathered and the findings that arise from the analysis.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the teenage mothers interviewed are given an opportunity to present their perceptions concerning the challenges they are facing in striking a balance between child-care responsibilities and those of educational achievement. The challenges prevailing inside and outside the school setting are elaborately presented.

The accounts provided in this chapter are not based upon prima facie information, but upon deep understandings revealed by the language of the participants on how they view their position in a school environment. For the purpose of this study the following names with their abbreviations were given to interviewees: Phindile, Simphiwe, Yekiwe, Buhle and Queeneth. Questionnaires were also used in the study and were numbered from 1 to 8 and quoted according to these numbers in the analysis.

#### **5.2 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Consistent with thematic analysis of data, all the ideas discussed in this chapter emerged from the data obtained through the interviews and

questionnaires. Various themes emerged as I was endeavoured to acquire views of teenage-mothers regarding the critical questions of the study. Transcripts developed from each recorded interview were used simultaneously with responses from the questionnaires. Upon analysing the transcripts, common themes emerged frequently in relation to the critical questions of the research.

### **5.2.1 The need for support.**

Under the theme of support, interviews conducted, highlighted the importance of support for teenage-mothers in order for them to remain in school and pursue their educational goals. The discussion under this theme is supported by brief quotations from the account made by participants during interviews and from individual transcripts.

For every student to succeed in her education, the support from the family, teachers, relatives and friends is vital. The same thing applies to teenage-mothers who find themselves in a school setting. In the accounts made by participants about their position as parents, none of them gave an indication of being married or preparing to get married soon after their schooling. This suggests that their position of being parents at an early age does not give them the status of being independent. They are still in

need of support from their parents, relatives or friends. They also regarded themselves as children in their respective families even though they have responsibilities of raising their own children.

### **5.2.2 Child-rearing support**

Apart from the assistance needed in child rearing from parents, teenage mothers also need encouragement in order for them to remain in school. The accounts given by all five participants suggest a need for support in order for them to re-enter the school to fulfil their dreams:

*Phindile: ...my sister who is not working at the moment offered to look after my child in order for me to come to school....*

*Queeneth: my sisters help me ... they take him (child) to crèche before going to school...*

Two other teenage mothers did indicate that, although their parents were not available during the day due to employment, their parents do provide financial support towards raising their children. This afforded teenage mothers a chance to manage their schooling.



*Yekiwe ...my mother provides me with the money ...she is paying R80 already for the crèche*

*Queeneth: ...he has become my mother's responsibility...she does not complain...*

Respondent "Buhle", also indicated the help she receives from her neighbour, who compensated her in appreciation for the washing and ironing job offered to her. This helped finance day care.

*Buhle: ... I do ironing for someone ... she pays me whatever she could.... I save the money to pay for my child at the crèche...*

From the excerpts, it suggests that in order for a teenage mother to balance her academic challenges with childrearing, it becomes important that she receives support either from the family or neighbours.

One of the teenage-mothers interviewed (Phindile) pointed out the hardships she faced after having a child. For her, the lack of support from anyone forced her to stay at home and look after her child. At first she dropped out of school in the middle of the school year. The following

year she remained at home and cared for her child in view of the fact that no one offered any form of assistance.

*Phindile: in 2001 I left school in the middle of the year, I had no one to look after my child... In 2002 I stayed at home for the whole year and I came back to school in 2003 'cause my sister offered to look after my child"*

Such responses suggest that teenage-mothers do face tough challenges at times, especially in continuing their education.

This argument is also supported by Bloedsoe (1993), who argues that when the child bearing begins, education usually stops and there is little chance for teenage mothers to continue their education. Their age demands that teenage mothers to be at school and the position of being parents on the other hand demands them to be responsible in raising their children.

### **5.2.3 Governmental support**

Apart from the support they get from their families, the participants also highlighted the importance of the child support grant from the Social Welfare Department of the South African government. As indicated

earlier the socio-economic background of the area in which the research was situated is characterised by high unemployment rate among economic active members of society. This exacerbates the hardships and challenges of raising a child or providing for a family. This has been evident on the account made by the participants. The child support grant tends to ease the pressure of raising a child and offers teenage mothers a chance to return to school.

*Researcher: How do you cope with the expenses of raising a child?*

*Simphiwe: The grant helps me a lot...my mother is not working...although it's not enough...I manage to dress my child ... eat what is being eaten at home...*

*Phindile: ...although it is not enough...I pay for the crèche...buy small ... or give it to my mother...*

*Queeneth: ... I collect the money and give it to my mother....she is the one who looks after us ....*

#### **5.2.4 Alternative financial support**

For the teenage-mothers who do not receive the child support grant or those who are still waiting for the approval of their application, it becomes difficult to cope with financial demands of raising the child. This forces them to find other means of obtaining money. Responses by some teenage-mothers indicated that they are forced to seek temporary jobs on weekends or “sell anything that can earn them some money”. The money earned helps in looking after the child’s basic needs such as paying for day care centres or buying clothes. At times it becomes difficult for some of the teenage mothers to finance all the child’s needs with the money they earn from temporary jobs:

*Buhle: ...if I had to buy clothes for him, I had to lie to my uncle ... mentioning things required at school, then he will give me the money ... then I can buy clothes...*

#### **5.2.5 Challenges of the school environment**

Even though the financial hardships of raising a child are somehow minimised, their schooling environment seemed to pose certain challenges too. In their account about the school itself, there were indications that they do experience some form of discrimination.

It is expected of any school to promote equality amongst its learners. This does not occur automatically since we have different temperaments, beliefs and other contributory factors prevailing in the school environment. Societal values and attitudes prevail amongst the learners and teachers as well since the school usually reflects the norms and values of the community and the social systems as a whole.

In the analysis of the transcripts, there were indications that teenage-mothers do encounter some form of uneven treatment in their respective classes. Although they are still regarded as children by their parents due to the age and financial dependency; with their peers or classmates, it seems to be the opposite in some instances. The remarks passed on by other pupils or class mates make them feel isolated at times or excluded. The belief that schools are for children and not parents is not held only by some adults but is also brought into the class by learners themselves. In discussion with teenage mothers during interviews, the feeling of being isolated cropped up. Some did mention the hardship they are facing in making friendship or even to play as they used to. They feel that their position demanded something different:

*Researcher: Do you feel comfortable here at school after having a gap year?*

*Queeneth: ...there is apartheid in our class...especially boys...they say they are learning with mothers or call us <sup>4</sup>‘izinkwamba’...not allowed to make comments at times...they will say “leave us alone you mothers”*

*Buhle: ...during class debates...boys like to include topics related to child support grant...we don’t like that, we become humiliated...some teachers tell us that we are old...we are not supposed to be in his class ... we should be working ....*

*Simphiwe: ...boys are troublesome...they tease you...stigmatise you as <sup>5</sup>umdlezane” and say all sorts of things...depending on how you look...if your blood is not movin’...they will say all sorts of things.*

The comments made by teachers during lessons towards students seem to affect teenage-mothers, they feel unwelcome in class.

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<sup>4</sup> ‘inkwamba’ is an isiZulu word making reference to the “shame and disgrace” conferred on a female as a result of the loss of her virginity, which is considered sacred. This derogative term alludes to the possibility of her not marrying , especially as she has had a child

<sup>5</sup> umdlezane is an IsiZulu word referring to a female who has just given birth to a child

*Questionnaire 7: ...teachers pass “ those” remarks like ... “cause we all mothers” if one makes a minor mistake...*

*Buhle: ...we are not happy about that...I ask them why are they saying that...they tell us they had problems from other classes...and we create the same problems for them...*

From the above excerpts it suggests that the teenage stage is a state where self-realisation is important. Acceptance among peers or age group is important in boosting one's ego. The prevalence of labelling in the accounts made by participants does indicate the promotion of “introverts” where they develop shyness or self-pity. It is possible that such experiences by teenage mothers can reduce their participation during lessons or stifle leisure time freedom. For them to be called odd names, not allowed to *comment at* times or use their motherhood position in formulating debate topics, seem to be the hardest challenge they had to face in class. They feel embarrassed and harassed by their classmates.

*Simphiwe: ...it disturbs you a lot ... at times you can't concentrate, you feel embarrassed ... at times you don't feel like going to school or you tend to dislike certain people ...*

Even though some of the teenage mothers are aware of the prevailing conditions surrounding them, they appear helpless and trapped. The frustration of this nature was evident in the responses of one respondent.

*Simphiwe: ... there is nothing you can do ... you are forced to learn, at times you end up leaving school... you feel that conditions are not in your favour...*

Apart from the experiences they face in class from peers, teachers too, seem to perpetuate their exclusion. The promotion system in the school seemed to be of major concern as the teenage mother feels “hard done” by the system. Dropping out of school for few months due to pregnancy or child rearing responsibility, is interpreted as repeating the same grade twice or more. This practice to them is attributed to the lack of sympathy, lack of interest and inconsideration from the side of the teachers.

It is common practise in most schools that if a student drops out of the academic year due to the experiences of a family ordeal (such as death) or personal ill health, that student is condoned when re-entering school. This condoning is based on the student’s academic performance prior to dropping out. Such practices are regarded as just and official in most of the schools. Students are not held back but allowed to progress. From the



transcripts there were indications that this was not the practice with teenage mothers. Teenage mothers are of the opinion that their circumstance needs to be taken into account. They should be provided with some form of assistance with regards to condoning or be sympathized with; especially if one has performed brilliantly before taking “maternity leave”:

*Queeneth ...I left school when we were writing the final exam...I was left with only two subjects...Zulu and English...I spoke to my class teacher...she said it was my fault...nothing can be done...I had to repeat...my mother also told me repeatedly, I'm still young...I felt disappointed ... my friends are ahead of me...others completed matric...*

*Phindile: ...I left school in 2001...in the middle of it ...came back in 2003... I explain my position to my class teacher...subject teacher...both did nothing...*

Cunninson (1990) further argues that the reluctance of teachers to initiate change and the implementation of equal opportunity policy within the school is a way of avoiding challenging the values and culturally sanctioned behaviour by the community, parents and teachers themselves.

Interesting suggestions emerged as to an answer to the challenge of implementing change:

*Queeneth: ...I felt disappointed...my wish was to be promoted to the next grade...*

*Phindile: ...class teachers must place you in the next grade...provided that you showed seriousness in your school work...*

The above sentiments of teenage-mothers is supported by Ramalebana (1995: 161) in that when a teenager has a child and returns to school, such a girl referred to as school-mother has fallen behind in her studies. Teenage-mothers demand to be treated equally to all learners and not to be excluded because it was not their aim to fall pregnant while they were at school.

#### **5.2.6 Self acceptance**

With factors of discrimination and passive exclusion as described above, teenage-mothers provide evidence of an uncanny acceptance of the

positions they found themselves in. This self-acceptance makes it possible for them to continue with their schooling.

Their position of being parents and students seemed to be something that they have accepted as their responsibility. After bearing all the labelling from classmates, they did not blame anyone but accepted their position:

*Researcher: How do you feel about the ill treatment you encounter in your class?*

*Phindile: ...I disapprove it, but at times I accept it...because I know my position...that of being a mother...*

*Simphiwe: ...it disturbs you a lot; at times you can't concentrate while the teacher is in front of you...you keep on thinking about your position that of being a mother...you feel embarrassed, at times you don't even feel like going to school...*

*Queeneth: ...yes I agree, I'm a mother but I don't like to be reminded about that...*

*Buhle: ...on my side...I don't care about the next person, he can say whatever...what I want to do I just do it because no one will help me...I just ignore them 'cause they won't help me with anything and you can end up having nothing...*

### **5.2.7 Society's perceptions of Teenage-mothers**

Other than the ill-treatment teenage-mothers experience in schools, they also “feel hard done” by perceptions of the society towards them. Their position is viewed negatively, in that, it becomes difficult to form study groups at home with those who are not in their position.

Furthermore, some parents regard the interactions of teenage-mothers with other children as the perpetuation of bad behaviour:

*Questionnaire 4: ... neighbours did not like me to be friend with their children ... they feel their children will learn a bad lesson from me ...*

*Questionnaire 7: People must not look down upon those girls...they don't know the future, maybe teenage-mothers will be of assistance to them with their education...*

*Questionnaire 6: ...there is that perception ...it is assumed that if one goes to back school is going to collect another child...*

This acceptance of their position indicates some emotional growth on the part of teenage-mothers, and their ability to face reality and willingness to move on with their ambitions of being recognised as educated mothers in their society.

All of them had a goal of completing matric. To some of them matriculation is seen as a key to employment. To others this means an opportunity of accessing tertiary education irrespective of their position. Although they have a foreseeable future, there are cases where they do seem not to be in control of their schooling. For any child to succeed it is important for him or her to be abreast with the schoolwork. This demands that one must always be present at school, do the work in time and do things systematically.

### **5.2.8 Absenteeism**

Raising a child requires that the parent be involved in childcare responsibilities for 24 hours a day. This is not a choice, but a responsibility of being a parent. The child is a gift from God. The child

did not ask to be brought into this world. Therefore the child is to be the responsibility of the parents until she/he reaches an adult stage.

Through the transcripts developed from this study, it emerged that teenage-mothers do face this dual responsibility at times. Like any parent, it is impossible to leave a child behind with the baby sitter when the child is not in good health. Under such challenges, teenage-mothers are forced to look after their children unless their parents (of teenage-mothers) offer some form of assistance or take partial responsibility in rearing the child, while the mother attends school. When there is no assistance to these young mothers, they become forced to shoulder the responsibility until the child has made a satisfactory recovery. When such challenges occur, teenage-mothers are forced to stay away from school and the implication thereof, is that they will fall behind with schoolwork. Ramalebane (1995: 2) views this challenge as an ambivalent role that the teenage-mother must fulfil. They are expected to be mothers to their children and behave like ordinary schoolgirls when they are in class:

*Researcher: Does it happen that you absent yourself from the school for certain reasons beyond your control?*

*Simphiwe: Yes... a child becomes sick at times, so you have to take him to the clinic or a doctor....*

*Yekiwe: ... if the child is sick or if there is something urgent that I must do which I can't do after school...*

Another unavoidable cause of absenteeism mentioned by participants was that of the monthly grant collection. Although grant collection plays a pivotal role in managing their financial needs, its collection leads to unavoidable absenteeism:

*Simphiwe: You can't send anyone to collect it on your behalf...you are required to scan your thumb when claiming the money... to prove that you are the rightful person to claim it...*

*Phindile: ...I was even advised by my class teacher to wake up early.... queue for the grant...come to school thereafter, even if I can be late...its better than being absent....*

*Queeneth: my class teacher told me to report if I had to be absent for grant collection ...I come with the ticket the next day to prove my absence.*

Another cause of absenteeism mentioned by teenage-mothers is that which emanate from bad weather. If weather conditions are not bearable, it becomes impossible for teenage mothers to leave their children at day-care centres. This makes absenteeism to be unavoidable to those teenage mothers who do not have support in taking care of the child other than relying on day-care centres:

*Questionnaire 4: when the weather is not good or raining... you are forced to stay at home with the child...*

One of the teenage-mothers indicated that she was absent at times due to quarrels that occur at home between herself and her sisters. This is not viewed as serious but one of those misunderstanding amongst sisters. However this did cost her a day-off from school.

*Buhle: ...as we are girls ... we do have misunderstandings amongst us ...they hide my books and uniform...I end up not coming to school ...*

All these circumstances fuel absenteeism, which make their learning challenging and makes it difficult for them to focus on their schooling. This issue of absenteeism is supported by Ntombela (1992:23) who



regards the challenges of teenage-mothers as the “core cause” of school interruption and frequent absence from school.

### **5.2.9 Time management**

Time management seemed to be another challenge that teenage mothers are facing. The responsibilities a teenage-mother has to complete before arriving to school determines her punctuality at school. Furthermore, the ways of managing time until they complete matriculation without a gap year and the activities they are expected to carry out at home affects the time management.

#### **5.2.9.1 Punctuality at school**

From the responses of teenage mothers both in questionnaires and transcripts what emerged, is that all the schools involved in this study commence at eight o’ clock in the morning. This is the official time where all learners are to be in class and the commencement of the first lesson of the day. Given the work that teenage-mothers are expected to do every morning, punctuality at school becomes a challenge:

*Yekiwe: ... I had to take him to crèche before I come to school*

*Buhle: ... I wake up at 5 in the morning ...*

*Simphiwe: ...I wake up early... breast-feed the child ...*

Teenage-mothers who manage to be punctual, are able to do so either because they are assisted or the day-care centre is in close proximity to the school, attended by the teenage-mother:

*Queeneth: ...my half sisters take him to the crèche before going to school...*

#### **5.2.9.2 Late coming**

Some teenage mothers find it difficult to be punctual. Their lateness is attributed to the responsibility of raising a child:

*Buhle: ... it's difficult ...at times we attend morning classes...at 7a.m I usually come late ... I had to wait for the crèche to open first*

*Phindle: ...I was even advised by my class teacher to wake up early...queue for the grant ...come to school thereafter, even if I can be late... It's better than being absent....*

The other area of concern by teenage-mothers is the management of their sleeping and study times. Their time seem to be determined by the child. If there is no one to assist, the teenage-mothers are expected to be responsible for taking care of the child:

*Simphiwe: ...I spend most of my time looking after him...I wake up early...he must be asleep before I can sleep...*

*Buhle: ... I only do my work when he is asleep...I start studying at 9p.m ...wake up at 5a.m...*

### **5.2.9.3 Gap year and repetition of grades**

Time management during “maternity leave” does not appear to be easily managed. Returning to school for teenage-mothers without losing a year or two is determined by other factors like giving birth before or after final examination, during vacations or having someone to look after the child. This makes it impossible for teenage-mothers to set educational goals for herself within time frames:

*Queeneth: ...to have a child is not good at all ...I should have completed matric like most of my friends....*

*Phindile: ... I was disturbed in 2002 and in 2001... I came back in 2003...*

From the accounts made by these two teenage-mothers it becomes evident that the individual goals set by teenage-mothers need support from other people like family members who can look after the child. Managing time seemed to be difficult and teenage-mothers are expected to cope with unrealistic times, given their age and financial position.

#### **5.2.10 Forgiveness**

Asking forgiveness from parents is another way of coping with the learning challenges for teenage-mothers. To have the unplanned grandchild in the family is something traumatic on the side of the parents. This unexpected situation can lead into a break up in a parent-child relationship, which can negatively affect their academic performance. Asking forgiveness from parents for the mistake made seems to ease the pressure. Some respondents regard this as away of managing the challenges. Parents who accept this plea of help, either look after the child or provide financial support to both the teenage-mother and her child:

*Questionnaire 4: ...I talked to my parents, asking them to help with the child ...'cause it was my first mistake ...*

*Questionnaire 6: ...I asked parent's forgiveness, they helped in looking for a person who was going to look after my child ...*

**5.2.11.** Goal setting: Despite all the challenges of raising a child, the academic goals set by the teenage-mothers seems to be the other way of coping. Putting schoolwork before other challenges enables them to focus on what they want to accomplish in life:

*Simphiwe: I want to be something ...education is important...I must have matric ...I've managed to escape all the problems I've faced ...*

*Yekiwe: I wish to be a professional someone ...but my mother is just a domestic worker, she will not afford ...*

### **5.3. SCHOOL ASSISTANCE**

From their responses to questions seeking to establish what schools are doing in minimizing these challenges, it emerged that schools provided teenage-mothers with little help. Rather than responding to what the schools have done, participants tended to suggest what the schools should do.

They suggested the need for better communication between them (teenage-mothers) as part of the school community and teachers. Female teachers are regarded important in achieving this. They regard them as mothers who have experienced such challenges, which make it easier to discuss sensitive issues freely with them and to get proper and honest advices on how they are expected to behave as well as how to cope with their challenges. The following accounts by teenage-mothers support Weatherly (1995:24) in her belief that schools never come up with programmes that will be provided to teenage-mothers to entice their learning:

*Questionnaire 4: ... Female teachers at schools must sit down with us...talk, tell us the truth ...the way in which we must dress ...not to bunk classes ...*

*Questionnaire 2: ...teachers must take us as learners or like other children on earth, give love ...all is by the will of God, there is nothing we can do ...*

Providing sex education to learners, guidance and education is another viewed role of the school. This need for knowledge is regarded as vital

in providing awareness to all female learners in the school. It is also regarded important in providing teenage mothers with the coping skills needed if they are to cope with their dual responsibility:

*Questionnaire 1: ... there must be counsellors for teenage mothers... make them aware of the dangers of having a child and challenges associated with that ...*

### **5.3.1 Communication between the school and the parent.**

The two-way communication between the school and the parent is regarded by teenage-mothers as vital in promoting acceptance of their position, especially to those parents who seem reluctant in educating girls who had a gap year due to pregnancy and child bearing responsibilities. Teenage-mothers see the involvement of the school as a way of changing the stereotypes held by some of the parents who do not see a need of educating girls. This worsens if a girl becomes pregnant and becomes a teenage-mother while she is still at school:

*Questionnaire 4: ...schools must have meetings with parents and community... be advised about the future of their children...if a person go back to school after having a child... her mind is*

*focused... she is no different from those who don't have children... they must pay for our school needs...*

### **5.3.2. Childcare: Crèche**

Providing a crèche near the school is viewed as the other way of easing the challenge of leaving their children away from them. This will enable them to see their children during breaks or to pick them after school:

*Questionnaire 1: ...this will enable us to see our children... breast feed them...*

*Buhle : ...if they can provide us with crèche ...maybe deduct payments from the child support grant...so that we can pick them after school...*

### **5.3.3 Flexible times**

Teenage-mothers suggested that the schools must be flexible, for them to leave children at the day care centre at 7a.m and be expected to be at school before 8a.m seem to be a demanding challenge to them. For teenage-mothers who walk long distances to school, late coming is always guaranteed and the closing of school gates before 8 a.m,



leaving them outside, forced them to suggest flexibility with time. Mwamwenda (1995) regards this as the extension of the gap between the teachers and teenage-mothers. Policies drafted by the school hardly include the needs of teenage-mothers:

*Phindile: ...school gates must not be locked earlier ...at times we miss the first lesson of the day...school policies must not be strict...this worsens the problems we are facing...*

Despite all the challenges of raising children, teenage-mothers seem to have set goals for themselves: that of completing their studies. Their suggested desire is that they must be allowed to learn and be supported:

*Questionnaire 4: ...let us be allowed to learn... we love to learn... move forward ...get brighter future and be treated like all learners...not excluded... it was not our aim to fall pregnant.*

*Yekiwe: If they can offer us help by providing us with study material...at home you just sit doing nothing ...there is enough time to study...*

This willingness and eagerness for education shown by teenage-mother is supported by support Bloedsoe (1993) “ today girls have ambitions outside the home, they see themselves in the formal labour market”.

The introduction of the of the South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 provided learners with various benefits, also protecting them from any form of ill treatment. Teenage mothers participated in this study seem to have benefited from the Act. They managed to attend school while pregnant which was not the case with previous policies. This is viewed as one of the ways in which they cope with their schooling:

*Questionnaire 1: ...I managed to go to school pregnant...I delivered my baby...came back to school, wrote my final exam and passed...*

*Questionnaire 4: ...yes... no one is allowed to harass anyone... everyone has freedom...*

*Questionnaire 2: ...yes, I attended school pregnant until I wrote December exam without being harassed...I gave birth and came back to school...*

In spite of the virtue of this policy, the school culture made some teenage-mothers feel that they never benefited from the policy. They were never supported by the school while on maternity leave and even in class:

*Questionnaire 7: ...I was forced to leave school...children were teasing me in class...even teachers...I could not concentrate in class...I used to cry...ended up leaving school...*

*Simphiwe: ...there is nothing you can do...you feel that conditions are not in your favour...*

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

Looking at the themes emerging from the data collected through the employment of questionnaires and interviews, responses suggest that the learning of teenage-mothers is infused with various challenges. The socio-cultural and economic conditions of the participants suggest that they do have a negative impact in their school attendance and their academic performance.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The research study focused on the challenges of teenage-mothers in a school setting. The focused was concentrated on three secondary schools in Inanda, an area which has influenced the data. The direction taken by the study has also been influenced by the literature reviewed with regard to the learning of teenage-mothers. The data was gathered using qualitative techniques employing semi-structured interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. This chapter draws together the conclusions emanating from this study and the recommendations are triggered mostly by the conclusions as well as the recommendations for further research.

#### **6.2 CONCLUSIONS**

From the data analysis and literature reviewed for this study it can be concluded that the learning of teenage-mothers is a complex process and difficult for these teenage-mothers to cope with.

Regular school attendance by teenage-mothers is not guaranteed as it is not possible for them to devote time to school work due to the responsibilities of

child rearing. Absenteeism is compounded if they do not receive support from others who can help care after their children while they are at school.

Although school policies no longer excluding pregnant students and teenage-mothers physically from the school; there are no direct policies with clear guidelines on how to re-integrate these students into school after they experience a gap-year/s. Neither is there clarity on the policies that enable them to reacclimatize into the classroom environment or provide coping strategies that their parenthood demands.

According to the South African Schools Act Number 84 of 1996, parents of teenage-mothers need to maintain an open dialogue with educators of their daughters. From this study it was found that there was a lack of communication between teenage-mothers, parents, teachers and the school; hindering the learning process. Teenage-mothers fall behind with their schoolwork, as there is no provision of learning materials communicated to parents. This ‘lost material’ would have enable teenage-mothers keep abreast with what was done in their absence, preventing the repetition of the same grade especially when problems are encountered during the course of the year.

Social values, norms, culture and their economic position do affect their learning. The inability of parents to afford a baby-sitter so that the teenage-

mother can continue with schooling forces these students to stay at home and look after the child. For those teenage-mothers who receive financial support, learning is not kept on hold by the demands of raising a child. They have enough time to concentrate on their schoolwork and do well in class.

The majority of the teenage-mothers in this study did not consciously choose to give birth when they did. A lack of knowledge was a major contributing factor to these teenagers falling pregnant. Others did not have any attractive alternatives, being young women in a rural male dominated area, and motherhood became a consequence.

The comments made by teenage-mothers suggest that teachers tend to brush aside the concerns of teenage-mothers regarding their educational needs. As a result of such behaviour by teachers, teenage-mothers lose self-confidence, become less motivated in their schoolwork and their self-esteem takes a hard knock.

### **6.3 SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS**

Teenage parenting in schools is a reality that cannot be over looked. It needs the involvement of knowledgeable adults.

#### **6.3.1 The role of teachers**

Teachers need to realise their massive responsibilities in helping to change the society. Their own sets of beliefs, ideologies and the stereotyped attitudes that they themselves hold, which needs to be constantly invoked as it has an influence on their teenage-mother learners. Through the positive actions, all forms of anti-social attitudes can be reversed and fears about losing face or control in the school are eased when assisting the academically needy teenage-mothers.

Teachers need to realise and respect that South African women have a long history in struggling to free themselves from the conditions that have held them back. This demands teachers to be critical thinkers when it comes to the alteration and improving the opportunities for all learners, particularly female learners.

### **6.3.2 The operational plan by the schools**

Schools should be required to take the initiatives in formulating school based operational plans with clearer guidelines in order to realise the demands of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, that guard against discrimination and unfair treatment of those students with social problems like pregnancy.

A supportive school environment for teenage-mothers should not be viewed as a way of promoting teenage pregnancy and parenting but as a mean of

developing a base line in which contextual information, effective interventions and support is given to younger generation, with the long term goal of eliminating the existing difference between boys and girls. Such a difference affects learners negatively into their adult life as those norms are internalised and taken as innate and natural.

It is also recommended that schools need to collect, analyse and publish records reflecting the extent these young women were successful in completing their education when returning to school. Record keeping is viewed as the way of assessing that every child in a school setting gets “that” individual attention and serves to promote awareness to those who may fall into the trap of becoming parents while they are still in need of education.

Counselling for parents and daughters is regarded as important as it will prepare them psychologically to deal with the challenges of accepting and move on with life. Such intervention may be one of the ways to mitigate later problems of adjustment and it can go a long way in preventing the recurrence of non-marital births experienced by both male and female students.

#### **6.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

From the literature consulted for this study it emerged that little research has been conducted in South Africa with an aim of understanding the learning of



teenage-mothers in schools. The importance of such a research will lie on its strength in highlighting what is needed when providing self-empowering education to learners. Further research under this study will assist in policy formulation with clear guidelines on what needs to be done in order to witness real change in the stereotypes held about parenting students. It is also important to engage educators in such a research as they have amassed a lot of insight in dealing with parenting students in school.

## **6.5 CLOSING REMARKS**

This research is an exploratory study in that it concentrated in an area which has received little attention from education stakeholders, namely educators, policy makers and implementers, school governing bodies, Department of Education and Culture and the Learner's Representative Council which is an official body that represent students in secondary schools.

The education of teenage mothers must take place because the Constitution of the country provides protection to every child to access education. Education is not an assumed privilege but a right. Through the findings of this study it is hoped that the learning of girls and specifically teenage mothers will receive "that" positive intervention which will empower them at an early stage for future independence and meaningful economic contribution.

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## **Appendix A**

### **BUHLE**

#### **GRADE 11**

Welcome and thank you for participating in the interview, the focus for our discussion is on teenage mothers and their schooling. What we are discussing we be confidential and the information given will be used only for the purposes of this study, you are free not answer all the questions asked especially those you feel are personal.

#### **1. Can you tell me about yourself and your home background?**

My name is Buhle, I'm staying here at Amatikwe. At home we are eight, that's my mother, grandmother, five children after me and extra children for my Aunt who passed away and my child. Only my mother who works and my grandma is a pensioner.

#### **2. Is there any period in your schooling where you had to stay at home not attending school?**

Yes for two years, when I was pregnant and after I had a baby. I had to stay at home and look after her before I could continue with my schooling.

#### **3. Who looks after your child at the moment?**

I leave her at the crèche every morning and pick her up after school.

#### **4. How do you find this responsibility?**

Difficult to do by myself, at times when we have morning classes at seven, I fail to be on time because I had to wash, dress and feed the child

first then prepare myself for school, take him to the crèche, at times I get there early before they open the crèche and I had to wait, It's difficult.

**5. Are you able to do your schoolwork at home without any disturbance?**

No, I do my schoolwork at night when she is asleep, I had to do the cooking since I'm the eldest, clean the house, do washing, all rest on my shoulders, I can not just look after my schoolwork.

**6. Then when do you start doing your homeworks?**

At about nine at night when she is asleep maybe until midnight and wake up early in the morning at five everyday. I don't have enough time to sleep.

**7. What made you to decide to come back to school after having a baby?**

Is because there would be no future if I had to stay at home, there are jobs, if you are illiterate it becomes difficult and worse, you can't get jobs.

**8. Who is paying for your child at the crèche?**

It is not my mother but myself, there is one sister who asked me to do ironing so that I can get the crèche fee and buy some simba chips for her to eat at the crèche, she helps me a lot 'cause my mother earns very little, less than a thousand rand. I can't take my load and give it to her.

**9. Is there other source of income for you and the child?**

There is no other source, I have just registered for the government child grant and it has not yet been confirmed.

**10. Do you think it will make things easier?**

It will help me with other things although it will not be enough to cover everything, If I had to buy clothes for her I had to lie to my uncle, say there is something required at school, then he will give me the money.

**11. I hope you are going to pass matric when you get there, what are the plans after matric?**

Yes, I have prepared myself for that but I don't have plans for that except becoming a soldier after matric.

**12. Do you like it or you just do it?**

I don't like it's because I don't have money, even at home my aunt who is a nurse and looking after us financially since lost our father, she can't afford to us to tertiary institutions because we are so many for her, my father left other children from different mothers, all of us we are my aunt's responsibility, so she can't afford us all.

**13.If you did not have a child was going to be possible to go to tertiary institution?**

Yes, although the money could be a problem, at present I had to look after my child, there is no other way.

**14. Does it happen that you absent yourself from school for certain reasons?**

Yes, as we are girls at home, at times we fight then they hide my clothes, school uniform or my books, just to punish me, at times I wake up late, if I ask them to take the child to crèche as they attend the nearby school, they refuse, I end up not going to school.

**15. Can you say that a child can cause you to be absent from school?**

Yes, but at times I absent myself for no reasons.

**16. After you have been absent what do teachers say?**

They undermine us, teachers tell us we are old, you feel that you are really old because if someone say you are old you feel likewise, you see yourself as a misfit in that class, you're suppose to be working, it's really late for us to be at school but we persevere

**17. How do you feel when they say that?**

It does not sound good at times, I even ask them why are they saying that, if s/he had a problem with bother classes, they come to our class with that mood and we also annoy them and the end up saying we're old.

**18. What about other learners?**

They don't harass us that much, 'cause in my class there are so many girls who had children, there is no problem, boys do talk about the grant, they write on the board that they want the grant money others say it verbally. Even if we are to choose topics for debate, the one with child support grant is always there.

**19. How do you feel about the grant topic?**

It does not sound good 'cause others criticise it saying it must not be there giving reasons for that.

**20. Do you agree if they say the grant must be stopped?**

I don't but to those who misuse it, they must not get it, like those who use it to drink liquor while schooling, but it can be helpful to us.

**21. What does the society say about teenage mothers?**

I have told myself that I will never border myself about other person, even whatever s/he can say, what I want to do I just do it 'cause they will never help me with anything. They ask why do we have to go to school instead of looking after the children, you must be strong, ignore them in order to succeed.

**22. What is it that can make your learning as a teenage-mother easier?**

Maybe if they can provide us with crèche where we can leave our children while we are at school, it can make things easier, the money that we pay at the crèche can be used for other things.

**How should you be treated at school?**

We must be treated like all learners 'cause at school we all children even at home we are children 'cause we have parents and we must be respected. To learners, if they treat us as adults, we must treat them as children but if they see us as equals then we will see them likewise.

**23. If the child is sick, who take of the situation?**

Myself, my grandma cannot do a thing she suffers from the stroke and my mother is the only person working, she only give me the money to take the child to the doctor

**24. Where you are with other teenage-mothers how is the atmosphere like?**

I don't spend time with girls who have children, I don't have time for that, it happens at times here at school but not so often.

PHINDILE  
Grade 11

Welcome and thanks for coming for the interview, the main focus of our talk will be on the challenges you face as a student and young mother who is still at school. What we are going to discuss is confidential.

**1. Can you briefly tell me about yourself or your family background?**

I'm Phindile, I stay with my mother, my father passed away, I have three sisters, two brothers and my child. We live here at Amatikwe, we are not poor nor rich, we live an affordable life.

**2. How do you find learning as you have a child to look after?**

I manage because my sister looks after my child, but at times I find it difficult as I have to take my child to clinic when he is sick but in most of the time it is not a problem because he is not always sick.

**3. When you are absent from school do you have to account for your absence the next day?**

Yes, it is duty of the teacher to find out why I was absent but I don't tell the truth because I feel shy to tell them why I was absent.

**4. Do you have enough time at home to do your school work without any disturbance?**

the child disturbs me because at times when I'm suppose to go and study I have to look after his needs first, but if there is someone at home, they look after him and get time to go and study.

**5. How old is your child?**

He is four, he was born in 2000.

**6. After 2000 did you have any break or you just continued with your studies?**

I was disturbed in 2000, I could not come to school and in 2001 I left school in the middle of the year, I had no one to look after my child and in 2002 I stayed at home for the whole year. I came back un 2003 because my sister offered to look after my child

**7. What do you think can be of assistance to young mothers who encounter problems like yours?**

What can help I think can be your full responsibility to your child, even if you

have parted with your boyfriend, you must face the situation, if there is someone who can look after the child, all the better since at times you may wish to take the child to crèche but if you don't have the money it becomes difficult and force you to stay at home and look after the child.

**8. If the government can offer help in this regard, what do wish that to be?**

I can wish a crèche nearby to enable us to bring our children and pick them up after school. It won't disturb me much because I would be able to attend school during the day.

**9. After a gap year how did you find your schooling?**

When I came back I found it difficult on my side because I saw other students who were with me in class completed their matric. If I had not had that break, I should have completed schooling by now. I would be at home doing something, I find it difficult also when I'm in class, when you speak, other students especially boys would say things like, "leave us alone you mother", you feel that they are saying some true because I'm no longer supposed to be in this class.

**10. How do you feel about that?**

I disapprove it, but at times I accept it because I know my position, that of being a mother.

**11. What did teachers do for you not to be left behind during your gap years?**

I can say much because when I left school it was already December, schools were closed.

**12. What was your main problem?**

I had no one to look after my child, I had to stay at home and look after him.

**13. When you were at home, was there any teacher who asked of your where about?**

Only Miss X in 2001 who asked what my problem was, I explained to her. In the same year I dropped again, it was in June and the teacher who asked was Mr X, I explained to him too, both did nothing.

**14. Who supports you financially for your personal and school needs?**

My mother supports me, I also registered for the government child support grant, The money helps me to dress my child, buy some food although it is not enough for me to take care of my child, pay for the crèche but I manage to buy small things as we made an agreement with my mother that after collecting the grant I must give her R50 and the rest will look after my child's needs, it helps a lot.

**15. Do you manage to keep your schoolwork up to date?**

At times I do some and leave some, but on my side I don't have much work to do After school.

**16. How often do you get the child support grant?**

Once a month.

**17. Does that guarantee your absence from school once a month?**

Yes

**18. When you are absent from school due to grant collection, how is the perception of teachers and classmates?**

Not that good but I don't tell them the truth about my absenteeism the next day. I was advised by class teacher to wake up at 5 a.m. for queuing, by 7a.m or 8a.m I'm through and ready to go to school

**19. What should be done for teenage mothers not to repeat the grates after their maternity?**

Something which can help us, if you have been pregnant in a particular year, talk To your class teacher, maybe they will place you in the next grade, provided you Showed seriousness in your school work.

**20. If a school can design a programme for teenage mothers not to be left behind, do you think that can help?**

I don't think so, it won't help at all because at times you can't even afford to do what you're suppose to do at home, its better to stay at home for that period then go back to school.

**21. Where do you rank yourself, as an adult or a teenager?**

I regard myself as a child but at different level, I can play with them but choose what game to play e.g. I can't play "shumpu" but at school I can act like a child and at home I'm a child although it happened that I become a mother at an early age.

**22. Where do you see yourself after matric?**

I wish to be a nurse or doctor.

**23. How possible is that dream?**

I can not say because my mother's financial position is not that good, maybe only The money can be a problem.

**24. Who will look after your child while you persue your dream?**

That can also be a problem because if there is no one to look after my child, I can



not succeed.

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME PHINDILE

## **SIMPHIWE**

Age: 20

Grade: 12

Welcome: Thanks for your time and courage to be part of this interview, our discussion is based on students who have children while they are still at school. Feel free not to answer questions which you feel are too personal and what will be discussed is going to be treated confidentially.

### **1. Can you briefly tell me of yourself and home background?**

I'm Simphiwe, staying here at Amatikwe, doing grade 12, I stay with my mother, my younger sister, my stepfather, I have two children, the younger one stays with me and the older one stays with my in laws to be.

### **2. Did you have any gap year or a break in your schooling due to maternity demand?**

Yes, for two years, first in 2000 and in 2003.

### **3. After these breaks what made you to not to loose hope and fought your way back?**

Because I want to be something, education is important, I must have matric in order to get piece jobs.

### **4. How do you find it to be like to raise a children and to be a learner, where do you spend most of your time?**

I spend most of my time looking after my child, you must wake early since children wake up very early and I had to breast feed my child, in most of the time my mother helps me, she looks after my child in the morning while I'm at school. In the afternoon I can't do anything unless I hide from my child so that he does not disturb me, then I can do what I have to do first then take him and breast feed him. He must be asleep before I can sleep, this is evident when you look at the books especially for those who have children their books are torn apart, at time kids do disturb.

### **5. How do you cope with the expenses of raising a child?**

The government grant helps me a lot although the child can not get all the needs that satisfies him, but I manage to dress them, eat what is being eaten at home at that time especially since my mother is not working.

### **6. What is the society's perception towards the schooling of young mothers?**

Traditionally it not desirable, it depends on when did you have a child, if you are it is viewed as bad unless you are married and have your own house.

**7. What is the perception of teachers, do they help you academically or they just leave it up to you and your parents?**

There is no help because if you're gone, you're gone, if you don't come back to school they don't border much, it is not their business even if you can deliver the baby at school they won't help you.

**8. If there was support during your gap years, would that have helped you academically?**

Yes, it would have helped me because I would have completed my matric by now.

**9. Do you think such programmes or assistance to teenage mothers can help?**

Yes it can help many girls.

**10. How do your classmates and society react towards those who are in your position?**

The society does not say anything openly because we are also human because this can happen to anyone even their can fall into this trap. In class only the boys who are troublesome, they tease you saying you make them feel asleep when you are pregnant, after you have delivered the child they would say you have that stigma of being "UMDLEZANE", they will also say all sort of things it also depends on how you look, if your blood is not moving, they don't like you, they will say all sort of things.

**11. Does that affect you?**

Yes it disturbs you a lot at times you can't concentrate while the teacher is in front of you, you keep on thinking about your position.

**12. Does that make you think about the pressure you will encounter in class every morning you go to school?**

You feel embarrassed at times, you don't even feel like going to school. When you are pregnant you have those moods and tends to hate certain people and teachers too.

**13. What do you do in such cases?**

There is nothing you can do you're forced to learn, at times you end up leaving school because you feel conditions are not in your favour.

**14. Do you think a curriculum designed specifically for pregnant and parenting girls can help?**

Yes, it can make us not to be left behind in our schoolwork.

**15. Where do you rate yourself, adult or teenager?**

I can say I'm in the middle because at home I stay with my mother, I'm under her control, here at school too I'm under the control of teachers, that makes my behaviour to be moderated 'cause I'm forced to, I wish to be independent, during breaks I can't play as I used to when I was a child but now I have grown up, I must do the right things.

**16. Does it happen that you absent yourself from school?**

Yes, a child becomes sick at times so you have to take the child to the clinic plus the dates we're given for the child support grant so you're required to be there in time since the queues are long or if you're late it can happen that you don't get your money.

**17. Does the school give an allowance to collect the grant or you absent yourself first and account the next day?**

No allowance if you are absent you are expected to pick yourself up and get what been done in your absence.

**18. Does grant collection guarantees your absence from school once a month?**

Yes, because you can't send anyone to collect it on your behalf, since you're always required to scan your thumb when you claim the money to prove that you're the rightful person.

**19. What are your future goals?**

I want to be a nurse maybe I can later be a doctor.

**20. What do think can be an obstacle in achieving your goals?**

Since I've managed to escape all the problems I faced, I don't think is there anything except the finance for tertiary education, a child can never be a problem.

**THANKS FOR YOUR TIME**

**YEKJWE**

Age: 21

Grade: 11

Welcome: Thank you for allowing me to have an interview with you, our discussion will only be based on the of the students who have children and students at the same time. Feel free not to answer questions which you feel are too personal and what we are discussing will be treated confidentially and will be used for this study only.

**1. Can you briefly tell me about yourself and home background?**

I stay with my mother, my older sister and my son. My mother is the only person working to support us. My father is married to another wife and he does not stay with us, even to support us. I've got a son who is one year old, his father passed away due to illness, my son is attending a crèche and I am a student here at school doing grade eleven.

**2. Is there a period where you had to leave school and stay at home for certain reasons?**

Yes, in 2002 I had to break for a year due to pregnancy.

**3. Who helped you to re-enter the school?**

My mother, she offered to pay for my child at the crèche and pay for my school needs.

**4. Who is responsible to take your child to the crèche?**

Myself, I had to take him to crèche before coming to school and fetch him.

**5. How do you find this responsibility?**

It's demanding and it enslaves me.

**6. Do you have enough time to do your schoolwork and other things that your friends do?**

No, to fetch a child, clean the house, do washing and cooking take a lot of my time, I end up being unable to study or do home works because I feel tired after doing all the work at home.

**7. Are you able to cope with the work done at school?**

No, I'm left behind, I wish I can have enough time to study, it's just that I don't know can I get such time.

**8. Does it happen that you absent yourself from school?**

Yes!

**9. What is the cause of that?**

If the child is sick or there is something agent that I had to do which I can't do after school.

**10. When the child is sick, who take the responsibility?**

My mother, she gives me the money to take my child to the doctor.

**11. Is she not complaining?**

She does as she is already paying R80 for the crèche every month.

**12. Do you anything about the child support grant from Social Welfare?**

Yes, but I haven't applied for that because I didn't have an ID. in order to register for the grant, but I just received my ID. I will apply for it.

**13. Do you think the money will help you?**

Yes, I will pay for the crèche and buy some of my child's needs.

**14. Where do you see yourself after completing matric?**

I wish to be a professional someone but I don't see it possible because my mother is just a domestic worker, she will not afford.

**15. In your opinion, what do you think can make your learning possible?**

If I can just have enough time for my school work not doing the jobs I'm doing after school, even if I do some like washing, that must not take most of my time.

**16. Is there anything the school can do to make the learning of teenage mothers easier?**

If teachers can help us by initiating study periods especially when we are about to write any examination and there must be a teacher supervising it since you can't study in an unsupervised class, we will waste time talking useless things. The presence of a teacher will make us ask some of the work that we don't understand, that will make us to be updated with our work.

**17. If a school or the department of education can design a learning programme that will assist teenage mothers, do you think that can help?**

Yes, it can help us because we are committed, we can't do all the things at once because at home we don't have time to sit and do work like others.

**18. During your gap year, what do you think teachers should have done to help you not to loose a year or two?**

If they can provide us with study materials and allow us to study because at home you just sit doing nothing, there is enough time to study.

**19. Here at school, is there any teacher/s who have helped you?**

No, even to ask about my where about.

**20. How did you feel about that?**

I don't know what to say but they must help us because in most cases you are out of school for at least two year, that is when you are pregnant and when you raise the child. When you come back t, you're already left behind and the child is growing on the other hand, with certain demands.

**21. With the experiences that you have, can you regard yourself as a child or an adult?**

I'm old, I'm supposed to be working by now or have completed matric, or not working there is no job.

**22. Is your mother always at home after work?**

No, she comes just once a month, she is staying at work, at home it's just me, my sister and my son.

**THANKS FOR YOUR TIME**

## **QUEENETH**

Age 20

Grade 11

Welcome: Thank you for coming to our interview, what we are going to discuss are the challenges of being a teenage mother and a student at the same time. Feel free not to respond to questions that you feel are too personal or the one that you don't have any knowledge about.

### **1. Can you please tell me about yourself and your home background.**

I'm alone to my mother and half sisters, my mother is the person working. We stay with my son who is three years and I'm twenty years old, doing grade eleven.

### **2. How is it like to have a child while you are still at school?**

Not good at all, I should have completed my matric by now like most of my friends, it's not good at all.

### **3. Who look after your child while you are at school?**

We leave him at the crèche, my half sisters take him to crèche before they can go to school and pick him up after school

### **4. Why not you?**

I do take him and pick him up

### **5. How do you find it?**

He disturbs me, I can't do my school work at home while he is next to me, he always hold me and sit on top of me.

### **6. Did you ever experience a stage where you had to stay at home, not attending school because of the child?**

I stayed at home for few months while I was pregnant, I left school when we writing final exams and I was only left with two subjects to finish my exams, it was November and I came back the following year in January, I stayed at home for few months.



**7. Did you get promoted the following year when you re-enter the school?**

No, I didn't, I run short of one and a half subjects. I failed Zulu which I did not write and the last English paper, my class teacher Miss X just said I was pregnant and nothing could be done.

**8. Is there any teacher who helped you with that problem?**

No because I had to repeat the same grade due to the subjects that I did not write during the final exams, I could not do any thing because it was my time to give birth.

**9. What was your wish?**

My wish was to get promotion or be allowed and assisted to finish the exams.

**10. What effort did your parents do for you to complete those two subjects?**

Nothing, my mother told me to repeat grade ten I'm still young.

**11. How did you feel about that?**

I felt disappointed because my friends were ahead of me and others have completed matric, others working.

**12. What is your goal after matric?**

To be a policewomen (why?), I just like it.

**13. When your classmates find that you have a child, what was their reaction towards you?**

In our class there is apartheid, especially boys, they say we are learning with mothers. That hurt us because some of them have children and no one is teasing them about that. To us they say leave us alone you mothers or call us "izinkwamba"

**14. What is your understanding of izinkwamba?**

I don't know, I will have to ask those who have children.

**15. Do you bring this harassment to the attention of teachers?**

No, I just tell the person who is saying that to stop because I don't like what he is saying. Yes I agree I'm a mother but I don't want to be reminded about that.

**16. Does that disturb you in class?**

Yes it does.

**17. Financially how do you manage to support your little one?**

My mother, he has become the responsibility of my mother, even though I get the child support grant from the government, I give it to my mother, she does not complain because even her she is helped my grandmother who is a pensioner.

**18. How and when do you collect the child support grant?**

We collect it at the post office, I present a card and they scan my thumb then get a ticket to collect the money, I do buy some household needs.

**19. Does this mean you have to be absent from school every month, what do teachers say about your monthly absence?**

Yes, my class teacher told us to report if we are to be absent the next day. When I'm absent for the sake of grant collection, I come with the card the next day to prove my absence.

**20. How do you manage to catch up with the work done in class?**

I look from my classmate what has been done in my absence and write it, if it becomes difficult to understand, I go to the subject teacher concerned for clarification.

**21. Do they ask you why you were absent?**

Yes, and I tell them why, but I only tell the female teachers if I had to be absent the following day due to grant collection, and to male teachers I lie.

**22. From all the responsibilities you face, what do you think can make your learning easier?**

On my side I've suggested that my child must go and stay with his father because he disturbs me in my learning. In fact they asked for him but my mother and grandma refused, they promised to look after him, but no when I'm studying he disturbs me and they keep on saying that he is my child, then I'm left with no options in this regard.

**23. In short one can conclude that you don't have much problems since you have people who can assist you?**

I have a problem, I like to be free and go out where ever I want to go, at times I sleep out, when my mother my mother questions me about that, I just remind her that they promised to look after the child.

**24. Don't you think that is a form of punishment or retaliation towards you parents?**

No, if I want to go I tell them even if I won't come back, I phone them to let them know about my where about.

Thank you for sharing your experiences with me, if you have any concern or problem on what we have discussed, feel free to ask for my advice.

## **Appendix B**

## **Questionnaire One**

### *A. Personal information*

*Grade: 11*

*Year: 2004*

*Age: 19*

*Number of children: 01*

### *B. Open-ended questions*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage mothers in who are still at school?*

*The problem we are facing is that we are no longer accepted at home and in the community when you go back to school. Parents are no longer willing to pay for your school needs and to pay for the place where we are to leave our children while we are at school.*

*2. How do you manage the challenges mentioned above?*

*I look for piece jobs on weekends so that I can pay for my school needs, and the person who look after my child. I was also helped by the child support grant from the government.*

*3. What is it that you think can minimize these challenges you have mentioned?*

*The school must have meetings with the parents and the community, be advised about the future of their children. When a person goes back to school after having a child her mind is focused, she only concentrates on her schoolwork and know that she has second chance. They must be told that even if one has a child, she is no different from those who do not have children, so they must send them to school and pay for the school needs.*

4. *The South African schools Act number 84 of 1996 protects students from any form of ill-treatment in schools. Did the Act protect you, tell how?*

*When I was about to deliver, we were writing the final exams in my school, I benefited because I managed to write it and passed.*

5. *Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance schoolwork and child rearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*When the schools re-open in January, my child was very young, I asked our neighbour who is not working to look after my child, she agreed, when she was older I took her to a crèche with the help of the child support grant from the government.*

6. *How is the perception of the community towards the schooling of teenage-mothers and how does that affect your schooling?*

*In our community there is “that” perception that if one has a child and go back to, there is nothing much she can learn, therefore assumed that if one goes back to school is going to collect another child.*

7. *What is it that you think can minimise such thinking by the community?*

*Teenage mothers must be encouraged to behave well, parents must ensure that they go back to school after having a child and she is fully prepared.*

8. *What do you think should the role of the school be to ensure that teenage-mothers are not left behind with their academic work?*

*It must meet with parents, advise them about the future of their parents, school must know that if one goes back to school for the second time her, mind is focussed and be treated like any child in the school.*

*must get all the assistance they need so that they can feel like students with strong character.*

## *Questionnaire two*

### *A. Personal information*

*Grade: 12*

*Year: 2004*

*Age: 22*

*Number of children :01*

### *Section B*

#### *Open-ended questions*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage mothers who are still schooling?*

*Thinking about the child especially when s/he is sick, when the weather is not good or raining you are forced to stay at home with the child.*

*2. How do you manage the challenges you mentioned above?*

*It's difficult, you cannot ignore the school 'cause it's important to learn especially if you have a child, I'm force to go to school.*

*3. What is it that you think can minimize these challenges faced by teenage-mothers in schools?*

*Better if the school can open a crèche for us to enable us to see our children during breaks and breast-feed them.*

*4. The South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 protect students from illtreatment of any kind in schools. Did this Act help you, how?*

*Yes, I managed to go to school pregnant and after having a child I came back to school, write my final exam, passed and proceeded with my studies.*

*5. Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance schoolwork and child rearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*My parents helped me, they look after the child until the end of the year, my mother is not working and she looks after the child.*

*6. How is the perception of the community towards the schooling of teenage-mothers, how does that affect your schooling?*

*Good, they see that you are serious about your future.*

*7. What is it that you think can minimize such thinking by the community?*

*No response*

*8. What do you think should the role of the school be in assisting teenage-mothers not to be left behind with their academic work?*

*No response*



## *Questionnaire Three*

### *A. Personal Information*

*Grade: 11*

*Year: 2004*

*Age: 19*

*Number of children: 01*

### *B. Open-ended questions*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage mothers in who are still at school?*

*The problem we are facing is that we are no longer accepted at home and in the community when you go back to school. Parents are no longer willing to pay for your school needs and to pay for the place where we are to leave our children while we are at school.*

*2. How do you manage the challenges mentioned above?*

*I look for piece jobs on weekends so that I can pay for my school needs, and the person who look after my child. I was also helped by the child support grant from the government.*

*3. What is it that you think can minimize these challenges you have mentioned?*

*The school must have meetings with the parents and the community, be advised about the future of their children. When a person goes back to school after having a child her mind is focused, she only concentrates on her schoolwork and know that she has second chance. They must be told that even if one has a child, she is no different from those who do not have children, so they must send them to school and pay for the school needs.*

4. *The South African schools Act number 84 of 1996 protects students from any form of ill-treatment in schools. Did the Act protect you, tell how?*

*When I was about to deliver, we were writing the final exams in my school, I benefited because I managed to write it and passed.*

5. *Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance schoolwork and child rearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*When the schools re-open in January, my child was very young, I asked our neighbour who is not working to look after my child, she agreed, when she was older I took her to a crèche with the help of the child support grant from the government.*

6. *How is the perception of the community towards the schooling of teenage-mothers and how does that affect your schooling?*

*In our community there is "that" perception that if one has a child and go back to, there is nothing much she can learn, therefore assumed that if one goes back to school is going to collect another child.*

7. *What is it that you think can minimise such thinking by the community? Teenage mothers must be encouraged to behave well, parents must ensure that they go back to school after having a child and she is fully prepared.*

8. *What do you think should the role of the school be to ensure that teenage-mothers are not left behind with their academic work?*

*It must meet with parents, advise them about the future of their children, school must know that if one goes back to school for the second time her mind is focussed and be treated like any child in the school.*

## Questionnaire Four

### *A. Personal Information*

*Grade: 12*

*Year: 2004*

*Age: 21*

*Number of children1: 01*

### *Section B*

#### *Open-ended questions*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage-mothers who are still schooling?*

*They don't spend much of their time on their schoolwork 'cause they have to look after their children. At times they are absent from school when the children are sick, they are to take them to a doctor or clinics. Parents are not willing to look after the child, problems of paying for those who look after the children like crèche and pre-schools. We can't do our schoolwork properly at times we fail to meet our school needs.*

*2. How do you manage the challenges you mentioned above?*

*I look for jobs on weekends so that I can pay for the expenses of raising a child, I forced to sell something that can earn me so money*

*3. What is it that you think can minimize these challenges faced by teenage-mothers in schools?*

*We must be accepted by the school, there must be counsellors for teenage-mothers to make them aware of dangers of having a child and challenges associated with that e.g. to have a child while at school.*

*4. The South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 protect students from ill-treatment of any kind in schools. Did this Act help you, how?*

*Yes, no one is allowed to harass anyone, everyone has freedom.*

*5. Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance schoolwork and the child rearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*I talked to my parents, asking them to help with the child 'cause that was my first mistake and I applied for the child support grant from the government to enable me to support the child.*

6. *How is the perception of the community towards the schooling teenage-mothers, does that affect your schooling?*

*They see it as disgraceful, to have a child while you are still learning, they also think that you will influence their children, you became a bad example.*

7. *What is that you think can minimize such thinking by the community?*

*Social workers must visit schools and give advices to learners about what must be done in order not to find ourselves in a position of having children. They must empower parents on how to look after their children and avoid having babies.*

8. *What do you think the role of the school should be in assisting teenage-mothers not to be left behind with their academic work?*

*We must be accepted and be advised on how to cope with the situation.*

## *Questionnaire Five*

### *A. Personal Information*

*Grade :12*

*Year :2004*

*Age :20*

*Number of children : 2*

### *B. Open-ended questions*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage-mothers who are still schooling?*

*To take a child to crèche, when the child is sick and to wake up early in the morning.*

*2. How do you manage the challenges mentioned above?*

*I wake up early in the morning so that I can take the child to the crèche and be on time at school. When the child is sick I absent myself from school or ask someone to take the child to the clinic. I sleep early so that I can wake up early. If I am absent from school, I ask from those who were present what has been done in my absence*

*3. What is it that you think can minimise these challenges faced by teenage-mothers in schools?*

*The school gate must not be closed early and if we are to write tests we must be informed earlier so that we can prepare ourselves. The school policies must not be firm, this worsen our problems.*

*4. The South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 protects students from ill-treatment of any kind in schools. Did this Act help you and how?*

*I don't know*

*5. Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance schoolwork and child rearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*Preparedness, face the problem and ask assistance from outsiders.*

*6. How is the perception of the community towards the schooling of teenage-mothers, and how did that affect your schooling?*

*They see it as a way of harrying things by us teenagers. It disturbs because they make you loose hope, they don't want you to befriend with their children and think that you will influence their children badly.*

*7. What is it that you think can minimise such thinking by the community?*

*People must be educated that to be a mother at an early age is something that can happen to anyone, they themselves did not bear children at the age of fifty.*

*8. What do you think should the role of the schools be in assisting teenage-mothers not to be left behind with their academic work?*

*Schools, crèches, clinics and the grant offices must be closely located, these are the facilities that we use.*

## *Questionnaire Six*

### *A. Personal Information*

*Grade: 12*

*Year: 2003*

*Age: 20*

*Number of children: 01*

### *B. Section B*

#### *Open-ended questions*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage-mothers who are still schooling?*

*Psychological and mental disturbance that you are a mother, you tend to have low self-esteem in school and people whom you know and those with whom you grew up. The main problem is that of being absent in most of the time when the child is sick, it needs your attention and you can't get assistance from home and you are no longer regarded as a child.*

*2. How do you manage the challenges mentioned above?*

*I had to co-operate with my parents, ask for forgiveness from all what I have done, not listening, behaving badly, so that they can forgive me and accept me as their child. They can help in looking for someone to look after the child when you are at school. You must ensure that you come straight home early not lingering about.*

*3. What is it that you think can minimize these challenges faced by teenage-mothers in schools?*

*There must co-operation between parents and teachers, teachers must have phone numbers for our parents, the same thing with parents, they must communicate. Female teachers at school must sit down with us, talk,*

*tell us the truth, the ways in which we must dress so that we don't provoke males. We must also not bunk classes.*

*4. The South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 protect students from ill-treatment of any kind. Did this Act help you, how?*

*It helped, if the Act was not there I should have opted for abortion or died in the process. I got a child and went back to school and this was not possible before the Act, yours was to get the child, thereafter look for jobs 'cause you are a mother.*

*5. Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance schoolwork and child rearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*I managed because I asked for forgiveness from my parents, without that it was going to be impossible to raise a child because I'm not working, I relied on my parents in looking after the child and I had to grow mentally.*

*6. How is the perception of the community towards the schooling of teenage-mothers and does that affect your schooling?*

*They are positive others negative, my community was positive, that helped me a lot, they moulded me a lot, making me grow, praised me for going back to school.*

*7. What is it that you think can minimize such thinking by the community?*

*You must show that you did something wrong in your family and community. You must change so that those who had negative attitude towards you can forgive you and talk positively about you in their families.*

*8. What do you think should the role of the school be in assisting teenage-mothers not to be left behind with their academic work?*

*There must be a co-operation between parents and teachers, they must tell us the truth about life and how to prepare for it.*



## *Questionnaire Seven*

### *A. Personal Information*

*Grade: 10*

*Age: 20*

*Year: 2004*

*Number of children :01*

### *B. Open-ended questions*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage-mothers who are still schooling?*

*Is when you don't know who is going to look after your child, the harassment that you get from other children at school when you try to make a point about something, they will say keep quiet you mother, why are you learning because you are a mother. Teachers do pass those remarks that are destructive when you make a small mistake, they will say "because we are all mothers".*

*2. How do you manage the challenges you have mentioned above?*

*We must not be harassed because some of us it was not our intention to get pregnant but because of rape, you don't even know who the father of the child is. Teachers must take us as learners like every learners or other children on earth, give love, all happened by the will of God, there is nothing that we can do.*

*3. What is that you think can minimise these challenges faced by teenage-mothers in schools?*

*They must be allowed to learn because they love to learn, move forward with and get brighter future. They must be treated like all learners, not to be excluded 'cause its not their aim to get pregnant while they are at school. If you get pregnant you must not be expelled, be allowed to*

*continue till you deliver and come back to school. They must be assisted in every way they need so that they can feel strong as learners.*

*4. The South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 protects students from ill-treatment of any kind. Did this Act help you and tell how?*

*No, I was forced to leave school because I was pregnant and children were teasing me in class even teachers, they said I make them fall asleep. I was always worried, heart broken, I could not concentrate in class because I used to cry as they were teasing me, I ended up leaving school.*

*5. Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance schoolwork with childrearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*It was a heavy load on me, my mother sworn that she will never touch the child with her hands because she felt tired of raising me since I was young. She also said that I must leave school and raise the child on my own or go and stay with the family of my child (the father of the child).*

*6. How is the perception of the community towards the schooling of teenage-mothers, and does that affected your schooling?*

*They perceive it as time wasting 'cause they tend to look down upon you, as a child that failed to behave accordingly.*

*7. What is it that you think can minimize such thinking by the community?*

*People not look down upon those girls with children 'cause they don't know the future, maybe we will be of assistance to them with our education, they must tell themselves that things have changed in the world, they must accept with open hands.*

*8. What do you think should the role of the school be in assisting teenage-mothers not to be left behind with their academic work?*

*School must allow them to learn 'cause they love to learn, move forward and have better future, they must be taught like all learners not excluded, it was not their aim to get pregnant while learning. If you are pregnant you must not be expelled until you deliver and come back to school. They*

*must get all the assistance they need so that they can feel like students with strong character.*

## *Questionnaire eight*

### *A. Personal information*

*Grade: 10*

*Year: 2004*

*Age: 19*

*Number of children: 01*

### *Section B*

#### *Open-ended question*

*1. What do you regard as challenges for teenage-mothers who are still schooling?*

*We don't have enough time to do our schoolwork, there is a lot that we must do after school like cleaning do washing and cook, at time you feel tired, just sleep without doing schoolwork.*

*2. How do you manage the challenges you mentioned above?*

*I try to do some, at times I find it difficult, my friends help me in class.*

*3. What is it that you think can minimize these challenges faced by teenage-mothers in schools?*

*The school must help us, maybe by after noon classes or on weekends for those who are not doing well in their work.*

*4. The South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 protect students from illtreatment of any kind in schools. Did this Act help you, how?*

*Yes, I returned to school after having a child and learn like everyone.*

*5. Usually teenage-mothers find it difficult to balance their schoolwork with child rearing responsibilities, how do you manage to balance the two?*

*My mother helps me, she looks after her while I'm in school, if she was not there it was going to be more difficult.*

6. *How is the perception of the community towards the schooling teenage-mothers and how that affects your schooling?*

*We disappoint them as parents but if you behave well they love you.*

7. *What is that you think can minimize such thinking by the community?*

*No response from the respondent.*

8. *What do you think should the role of the school be in assisting teenage-mothers not to be left behind with their academic work?*

*Anything to help us to pass.*

*THANK YOU.*

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM TO PARENTS

RESEARCH TOPIC : Challenges of being a teenage mother in a school.

RESEARCHER: Zondo M. S.

School of Educational Studies – University of KwaZulu Natal

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Suchitra Singh

I understand that:

1. The participation of my daughter in this study is voluntary.
2. As a parent I reserve the right to withdraw her from the study at any time.
3. My daughter is not obliged to respond to the question of this study.
4. Interviews will be conducted in a safe place within the school, during normal time and tape recorded for the purposes of transcripts only.
5. Confidentiality in this study is guaranteed.

I do/do not give consent for my daughter to participate in the study.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date

.....  
Contact number

APPENDIX D

For Attention: Dr G.M. Msimango

Reference: Zondo M.S.

KwaMashu Circuit

Tel. 031-518 5796

KwaMashu

Persal number: 11210377

Sir

RE: Research for Master of Education

I registered my Master of Education Degree with the University of KwaZulu Natal.

My research topic focuses on the challenges encountered by teenage-mothers in schools.

I'm presently employed by the Department of Education and Culture as an educator under KwaMashu circuit.

For success of this study I will need the help of teenage-mothers from three Secondary schools in your circuit (WARD 56). I hereby apply for the permission to access these schools. My supervisor is Dr S. Singh from the Department of Education Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

I will appreciate if your office can allow me to conduct this study.

Yours sincerely

Zondo M.S.



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

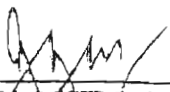
Address	A 186-7 Musa Road	Private Bag	X018	Telephone	031-5031177
Ikheli	KWAMASHU	Isikhwana Seposi	KWAMASHU	Ucingo	031-5031195
Adres	4360	Privaatsak	4360	Telefoon	
				Toll Free No.	0800 360691
				Fax	031-5031178
Enquiries	Dr Msimango	Reference		Date	09/05/2005
Imibuzo		Inkomba		Usuku	
Navrae		Verwysing		Datum	

ATT. MR ZONDO

RE. PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

**This letter serves as an agreement to conduct research in three schools in Ward 56. This agreement gives you permission to collect data in accordance to the requirement of your study.**

**The office wishes you the luck in this regard.**

  
DR G.M. MSIMANGO  
CIRCUIT MANAGER