

**Support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with  
Distance Learning**

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## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

The work in my thesis unless indicated otherwise in the text, is mine and has not been presented for a degree study in another university.

All sources of information I used to substantiate claims and arguments have been acknowledged in respect of intellectual property and copyright.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal certified ethical clearance for this study.

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**Professor Valerie Charlotte Mbali**

Supervisor

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved wife Ropafadzo Beatrice, my late inspirational parents, Sasayi Dorcas ‘Master Farmer’ and Gibson Horomondo ‘Gonyohori’ Mapako Mugabe, and my grandsons, Michael Tinashe and Ngonidzashe to whom this should be a pride and compass into the future.

## ABSTRACT

I explored the support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with distance learning (DL). The Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) wished to become a world class university of excellence while students struggled to complete programmes. My argument is that education cannot produce the quality of graduate that society expects unless access is accompanied by adequate effective learner support. I studied adults' experiences with the ZOU support structures and student's strategies that they used to cope with: administration of the programme, availability of learning materials, library, information communication technology (ICT) needs, studying in isolation, tutorials, assessment and financing the programme. Adults' strategies for integrating study with employment, family and social commitments, and their suggestions for improving learner support in DL were crucial aspects of my study.

I used a mixed-method research design of the phenomenological interview and a questionnaire survey. The design helped in comprehensive coverage and cross-data validity checks. My sample comprised three sets of Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) students that completed on time, those that delayed completion and others that were on the programme. My epistemological position is that data obtained from interviews reflects participants' perspectives. I collected data from past and current students. I used phenomenological interviews to understand the subjective world of my participants and the questionnaire to determine relationships among themes and cross-check findings for the sake of generalization.

My study revealed that students used ZOU administrative and academic structures to cope with DL. The structures they used include: the regional centre staff and facilities, orientation, modules, the library, ICT, contact tutorials, assignments, examinations and projects. However, some students faced challenges in: orientation, communication, use of modules, supervision of assignments and projects, missing results and funding which contributed to delayed completion of the programme.

As adults, my participants also used: social contracts with family and employers, study groups, private extra tutorials, outsourcing ICT services, dedicated study and past examination papers, buying own books, borrowing money, self-help income generating projects and paying fees by instalment as well as good time management to cope with DL.

I recommend research into and improvement of: communication between ZOU and students, student support services, preparation and supply of modules and ICT, staff development on supervision of assignments, projects and examinations, and also student funding to enhance the quality and rate of programme completion in DL.

**Keywords: support structures, strategies, adults, cope and distance learning.**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

A' Level	Advanced Level Certificate
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
CDE	Centre for Distance Education
CEP	Certificate in Primary Education
Crosstab.	Cross tabulation
DE	Distance Education
DEO	District Education Officer
DEP	Diploma in Primary Education
DES	Diploma in Secondary Education
DL	Distance Learning
DT	Data tree
GPA	Grade Point Average
HOD	Head of Department
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
ICT	Information and communication technology
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change- Tsvangirai
O' Level	Ordinary Level Certificate
OUHK	Open University of Hong Kong
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SRC	Students' Representative Council
TIC	Teacher in Charge
UCDE	University College of Distance Education
ZANUPF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZOU	Zimbabwe Open University

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE STUDY AND ITS SETTING

### 1.1 Introduction

Many people around the world share the view that education is instrumental to development (Mandela 1994). Education illuminates the darkness of ignorance (Gross 2007). It is the one that links development and learning (Daniel 2009). Learning for development expresses a vision beyond formal education to embrace areas of learning that are vital for better livelihood, greater prosperity and a safer environment (Sreedher 2009). In fact, education is the cornerstone of democracy and the avenue to equal opportunity for all (Lolwana 2001). Its availability and quality indicates national socio-economic competitiveness.

Technological advancement has pushed a university degree to become the basic qualification for many skilled jobs (Moore 2001). Meanwhile developing countries have inadequate facilities for higher education (Darkwa and Mazibuko 2000 ; IICBA 2003). During the 1980s, developing countries under-funded higher education assuming that it had lower returns on investment than basic education (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall 1985). Hence half of today's higher education students are in developing countries that are pre-occupied with problems of social disorganisation, low productivity, underdevelopment, poverty and diseases, including HIV/AIDS so that few resources go to education (UNESCO 1994; Domatob 1998; Bank. 2000; AULA 2002). The reason behind enrolling so many students from developing countries into higher education is the belief in the prediction that by 2020, 40 percent of the global workforce will be knowledge

workers that require tertiary qualifications (Daniel, Kanwar et al. 2009). Degrees from higher education are the passports to employment in the knowledge society (Uvalić-Trumbić and Daniel 2009).

Post-colonial African nations, like Zimbabwe, sought to redress colonial disparities by emphasizing access to education. This resulted in more learners demanding university education in the absence of new universities (Dhanarajan 1997 ; Guedegbe 1997; Valentine 2002). Among the learners that demanded higher education were those traditionally excluded from university education like the disabled, ‘second chance’ (Tait and Mills 2001) under qualified employed adults and school drop-outs. The need to retain students in their jobs while they improved their qualifications necessitated studying through distance learning (DL). DL was identified as a key mechanism for facilitating access, participation and redress, especially in higher education (Sherry 1996; Glennie and Bialobrzeska 2009). It has been argued that DL promotes development and cuts human capital wastage in developing countries by enrolling traditionally excluded adults and employees (Sweet 1993). DL’s large enrolments are said to quickly raise national education standards as it trains citizens in specialist skills that drive economies. It has the advantage of reaching the remotest parts of developing countries through use of information and communication technology (ICT) connectivity and use of local satellite centres. DL is also considered cost-effective as it relieves governments of responsibility to construct new universities (Valentine 2002; IICBA 2003; Pityana 2004). Such considerations led to the starting of the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) in 1993 (Dhanarajan 1997; Benza 2001) .

In this study, I explored the structures and strategies used by adults to cope with the B. Ed. programme through DL at ZOU. I examined the lived experiences of B. Ed. students in three categories comprising:

- Those who had unimpeded passes and completed the programme in the prescribed four years,
- Those who delayed completion due to either repeating courses and/or temporarily withdrawing from the programme, and
- Those who were still on the programme.

My exploration sought to determine the extent to which adults used ZOU support structures and their own strategies to cope with the Bachelor of Educational Management (B. Ed.) programme. I used an additive mixed method design of phenomenological interviews that were followed by a questionnaire survey. I used these combined approaches of data collection to determine the mechanisms that benefited learners most in coping with DL.

## **1.2 Key research questions**

My study specifically sought to answer one main and four sub-questions that reflected my sources of data. The main question in this study was:

- What structures and strategies do students use to study through DL at ZOU?

The sub-questions to facilitate the main question were:

- To what extent do adult learners use support structures at ZOU to cope with the B. Ed. programme through DL?
- How do B. Ed. students use their own strategies to cope with DL at ZOU?
- What strategies do B. Ed. students use to cope with information and communication technology (ICT) needs in DL?
- How can strategies used by students inform the development of effective learner support structures and strategies at ZOU?

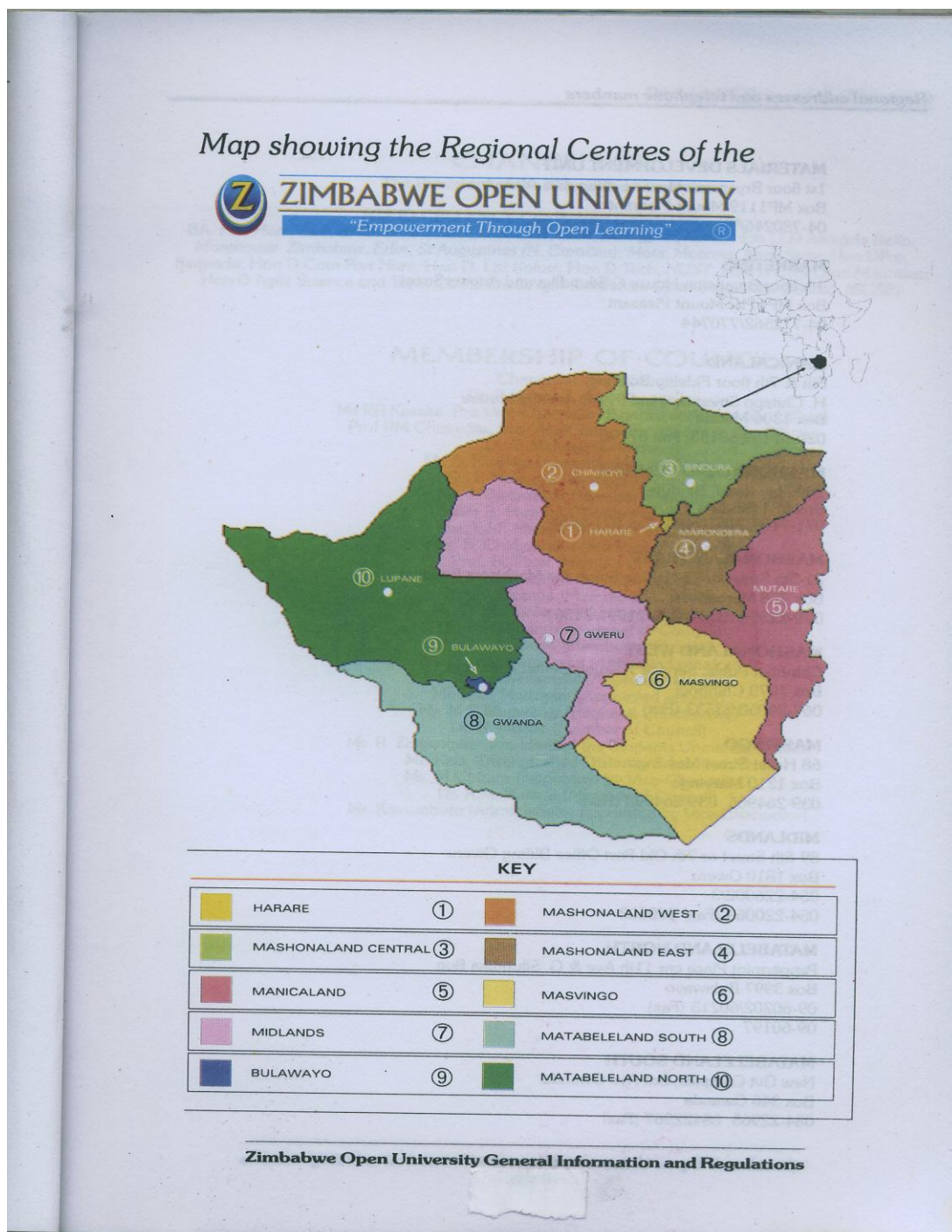
### **1.3 Motivation for the study**

ZOU started as a centre for distance education of the University of Zimbabwe in 1993 offering the Bachelor of Education in Administration, Planning and Policy Studies. Over time, that degree programme was transformed into the B. Ed. Management programme under this study. The Centre for Distance Education (CDE) became a university college of distance education (UCDE) in 1996. It subsequently evolved into the Zimbabwe Open University on 1 March 1999. ZOU was opened to provide tertiary education, especially to those Zimbabweans who might have been, “rendered unable to attain university education” (Mugabe 2005:1). The Zimbabwe Open University started with three faculties: Arts, Education and Humanities, Science, and Commerce and Law (Pfukwa and Matipano 2006). At the time of this study, a new and fourth Faculty of Humanities had been instituted.

The map in Figure 1 shows the ZOU regional centres in Zimbabwe. The structure of ZOU has a head office in Harare providing central administration and faculties where deans and chairpersons operate. This national centre monitors activities at regional centres located in the ten provincial capital cities of Zimbabwe. Regional directors in charge of these centres recruit, register, provide library and learning materials. They facilitate teaching-learning, manage written assignments and organize logistical requirements for face-to-face tutorials and written examinations.

Each programme offered at ZOU falls under a regional programme coordinator appointed to attend to students’ academic needs in each of the ten regional centres. ZOU aimed at supporting DL students with multi-media instruction comprising: print, radio, telephone, contact tutorials and assessment, district study centres and library research (Benza 2001). The B. Ed. programme was the founding undergraduate programme of the CDE. Since its inception, the B.Ed. Management was a four-year distance education programme aiming at improving the education management skills of qualified senior teachers.

Figure1. Zimbabwe Open University Regional Centres



To be recruited into the programme, an applicant was supposed to be a senior teacher holding a teacher's certificate after Ordinary Level Certificate, with a grade C or better in English Language and some administrative experience. Senior teachers included: head teachers, deputy head teachers and education officers in the Ministry of Education.

The programme initially sought to train teachers for specialisation in either Educational Administration and Supervision or Educational Planning and Policy Studies. These areas of specialisation were the areas in which students were expected to carry out research projects in their fourth or final year. Students were expected to take core/compulsory courses and elective courses in an area of specialisation.

The programme regulations required students to take ten courses consisting of eighteen half courses and the research project which was a full course. The half courses were drawn from thirty that were on offer that dealt with the four mentioned specialist areas and also included the eight compulsory half courses.

ZOU adopted a DL mode of lesson delivery as it had no campus of its own. The delivery mode includes multiple aspects: the module, audio/video cassettes and radio broadcasts, face-to-face weekend tutorials and study groups run by students themselves (Dzvimbo 2001). The programme assessment comprises written assignments, written examinations and the research project. The initial support services available to students included: the national Centre for Distance Education, regional centres, study centres, library, counselling by guidance and counselling specialists as well as by subject coordinators and financial advice for students in addition to information service. For regular communication, the university and its regional centres hoped to reach distance learners through: radio, television, newspapers, circular letters and newsletters (UZ Undated).

This study was prompted by stakeholder concerns about ZOU programmes. I worked at ZOU, first as a B. Ed. part-time tutor from 1996 to 1997 and as a full-time regional programme coordinator from 1998 to 2009. ZOU provided many student support mechanisms, yet a lot of its students perennially struggled to succeed in DL. This study took place against the backdrop of ZOU's lofty objectives to satisfy clients and achieve the highest level of excellence. ZOU had a vision to become a world class DL university by the year 2009 (Kurasha 2005). To make matters worse, by the end of 2008 the Zimbabwean economy had declined to the extent that annual inflation reached world record level beyond 231 million percent (Reporter 2008). That economic situation was a result of seizure of land owned by white farmers by the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANUPF) Government under Robert Mugabe in the controversial land reform programme that started in 2000.

The situation worsened when Robert Mugabe and ZANUPF refused to relinquish power after losing the 29 March 2008 general elections to the Movement for Democratic Change lead by Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T). All supporters of MDC-T were seen as enemies of the state by ZANUPF and as a result hundreds of those people lost their lives. The land seizures, economic mismanagement by government and the political conflict over the 2008 general election results had serious consequences for the nation. It resulted in massive investment flight, scared potential investors and cut Zimbabwe's ties with many economically influential international organisations including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Most of the Western countries imposed what they called "targeted" sanctions on members of the government of Zimbabwe that were viewed as champions of lawlessness and abuse of human rights in the country. The effect of that conflict was that the whole Zimbabwean economy ground to a halt and thus compromised ZOU's ambition.

Some literature contends that DL gives students autonomy over their learning (Rowntree 1992) without explaining how learners cope with the constraints in the

learning process. There is also a tendency to consider DL support systems from the institution's rather than the learners' viewpoint (Sweet 1993). This is an approach which is organised to meet the convenience of the institution and its staff rather than that of students. Universities should put the student at the centre of the learning process. They should ensure that provisions are tailored to the students' needs. There is need to provide a learning environment which is holistic in scope. It should enable students to tap a wide range of learning resources (from their peers, library, computing and media) free of the constraints of time and space. Such an environment is one in which learners are active participants under the guardianship of the facilitators/tutors (McCaffery 2004).

This study examined students' experiences and the strategies that helped them to cope with:

- Study in isolation in the DL context with new teaching- learning methods,
- ZOU support mechanisms from regional centres,
- Access to learning materials, libraries and tutors,
- Access to and use of information and communication technology (ICT),
- DL teaching-learning methods like the course module and weekend tutorials,
- Assessment methods like assignments, examinations and research projects,
- Integration of studies with employment and family commitments,
- Financing the programme (Sweet 1993; Bank. 2000; Izuagie 2001), and
- Suggestions for improvement of DL systems.

#### **1.4 Importance of the Study**

This study is important to DL students and institutions. The first reason why this study was important was that, learning at a distance in the B.Ed. programme, at ZOU, was a specialised option meant for national development. It was meant for employed educators to improve their professional qualifications and prowess in order

to improve the education management system of Zimbabwe. Meanwhile in DL participants are separated from one another and their communication is mediated through written material and/or electronic means (Steyn 2001). That situation could increase interpersonal distance due to fewer chances for contact and limited feedback. Whereas the physical separation of educators and learners posed actual and perceptual obstacles, the learners' views of their own capacity to cope with learning at a distance could also be challenged. As a result, it was necessary to understand the needs of learners out of their experience in order to come up with strategies that work for learners in order to improve DL in general (Steyn 2001).

Researchers in education often investigate how students integrate themselves into academic environments yet seldom how adults in DL integrate academic work into their lives (Hunter 2007). Adult learners often face inadequate academic preparation, economic hardships, ineffective time management strategies, unrealistic expectations and external pressures (Kirkpatrick 2001). Such observations made this study necessary.

It is my argument that facilitating high access of adults into education is not enough unless it is accompanied by adequate effective support mechanisms that enhance student retention and completion of programmes. Learner support should enhance students' enjoyment of experience in studying by DL in order to improve their rate and quality of success. High quality learning programmes guarantee the transfer of skills and knowledge from training to work places and society as a whole. In addition to that, good quality products of the programme are its best marketing tool. They sell the programme and raise the reputation of the institution faster than political pronouncements. Hence my study was necessary as it sought ways of improving the quality of the teaching-learning process and the rate of programme completion among the adult learners at ZOU. Specifically, I sought to establish key factors that are important to adult DL and understand the process of learning for the benefit of

the students rather than to predict academic performance. My study was important as it helped to identify distinctive approaches taken by different students in approaches to learning, cognitive style and responses to experiences of learning. Its results could help as a point of reference for improving distance education provision (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

This study was also important as it sought to protect ZOU against a current threat in higher education. The integrity of the global higher education system is currently threatened by the multiplication of bogus institutions known as degree mills. These are educational institutions that rapidly churn out degrees that are not recognised or accepted in the home country (Uvalić-Trumbić and Daniel 2009).

Adult learners doing studies by DL normally have commitments other than education. My participants were often geographically isolated and had restricted access to learning resources. Furthermore, most adults had done their previous lower level studies through conventional education. As a result, they were likely to face challenges doing university studies through DL. In DL the learners depended on self-motivation and self-management. They had limited interaction with teachers and colleagues. They had less lecture/tutorial times than those who studied at conventional universities. They also depended on text-based instruction with lack of immediate peer support and restricted access to support services (Kirkpatrick 2001). That created a demanding educational context in which adults confronted not only the demands of the study but also the challenges of DL itself. Hence this study was very important as it helped me to determine adults' perspective on strategies that helped DL students most.

These mechanisms of coping can also help faculty and administrators to advise new students (Hunter 2007). They can also be recommended for inclusion in ZOU practices and policies. Results of this study can help people, among them, the

researcher by guiding in the improvement of skills for coordinating DL programmes. Theory developed from such a study also contributes to the existing DL knowledge.

### **1.5 Summary**

This chapter gave a concise background to my study. This included the importance of tertiary education to nations and the global knowledge society of the twenty-first century. It also showed why post-colonial countries adopted DL as a higher education solution to the problems of access and redress of colonial imbalances. I presented the five questions to be interrogated by the study and the methods of data collection. The chapter also identified the criteria I used in selecting participants in the study. The motivation and importance of this study have been dealt with taking into account the various beneficiaries. The intention in this chapter was to lay the base upon which the theoretical framework chapter would be developed.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

Successful teaching and learning of adults through DL requires an understanding of how adults learn best (Lieb 1991 ; Jensen 1998 ; Blunt and Yang 2002). It is also important to appreciate the theoretical basis upon which adult DL is conducted in order to provide support mechanisms that help students to succeed with less difficulty. This chapter deals with adult learning and coping theories. I used andragogy (Knowles 1980), approaches to study (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983), constructivism (Aylward 2001) and open learning model (Kember 1995) as my theoretical bases. I define the concepts and discuss theories that informed my study.

#### 2.2 Key concepts

Definition of the key concepts is important to contextualize their meanings in this study. The concepts are: support structures, strategies, adults, cope, and DL.

##### 2.2.1 Support structures

To support is to hold up. This applies when DL students that are likely to drop out are motivated by counsellors, tutors, colleagues and/or family members to persist on the programme. It also entails retention of learners on the programme. However, while retention refers to institutional efforts taken to keep students enrolled in a degree programme (Lowe 2005), learner support are the institutional arrangements

and efforts made by the learner's social circle including family, relatives, employers, colleagues and workmates, to assist the learner to succeed in a learning programme. This happens when those who have knowledge of the course like tutors and colleagues help struggling students with learning skills. To support also means to provide for. This support occurs when family and relatives provide funding, supply learning materials and afford the learner the time for quiet study. All these dimensions of support contribute to enabling the adult learners to cope with DL. Hence, support is provision of safe space where the student accesses trust, recognition and assistance to move ahead (Daloz 1999).

Students usually get support from: the learning institution, colleagues, family and those that they share life with at work. Student's family, some employers and workmates can encourage students to enrol on the programme. Family members and some employers also provide the learner with space and time to study as well as moral support. Support varies with where it is sought and how it is provided. Lack of it delays completion of and leads to dropping out of the programme (Rowntree 1992). Appropriate institutional and instructional support must be provided to ensure the academic success of students. That leads to degree completion. Institutional support includes provision of competent and credentialed faculty, learning materials, lesson delivery technology and infrastructure. Instructional support refers to the design of courses, interaction with faculty, tutorial assistance and so on. Relational support is the affective aspect of the learning process in which faculty encourage, motivate and emotionally nurture students to strike a balance with the intellectual support (Lowe 2005).

Structure is the arrangement of parts of a whole. It can be arrangement of parts of an organisation or a system. In my study, support structures are institutional arrangements designed to assist learners to succeed in studies without undue hindrances. These can be physical, procedural and/or systematic in nature. Support

services are structures and processes which provide students with facilities and opportunities in their academic endeavours (Willis 1993; Nhundu 1997). These include access to: equipped learning centres with libraries, ICT and study packages, feedback from and encouragement by tutors and counsellors, information through newsletters, receptionists, notice-boards, friends and colleagues. Adequate provision of and effectiveness of student support structures in an institution creates a motivating learning environment. It also enables students to persist with and achieve their best and improve the completion rates of the DL programmes. I explored the support structures and strategies that adults used to cope with DL at ZOU.

### **2.2.2 Strategies**

Strategy is a term that has its origins from the planning and conduct of war. It has to do with preparation of psychological, physical and other weapons designed to strike and defeat the enemy. In this study, the ‘enemy’ to be defeated are all the challenges that adults face in the B.Ed. programme through DL. The use of the term strategy has become handy whenever and wherever people are faced with and are supposed to confront difficult situations. Nowadays strategy is popularly used in management of business in the form of strategic management and strategic planning. Similarly, in approaches to learning, strategy is used to refer to the preferences shown in tackling an individual task (Entwistle 1991). Therefore, I am using support strategies in this study to denote the different approaches used by adults to learn and secure assistance during the learning process in order to cope with DL. I use the term taking into account the fact that the support strategies employed by adults to cope with studies in DL vary with the learning tasks on hand and their personal circumstances.

### **2.2.3 Adults**

Adults are mature or fully grown people. They are people who have attained an age in which they are expected by society to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their actions. For example, adults are entitled to make choices on what to believe, do and who to or not to associate with. The Centre for Educational

Research and Innovation (CERI) defines an adult student as a person aged 25 years or over on entry to the course (Jarvis 1995; Kember 1995). Most students in the B.Ed. Programme at ZOU fall within this definition. This is so because to enrol in the B.Ed. programme one should be a trained teacher and/or other professional with some administrative experience. In Zimbabwe, the minimum age at which a person starts working after undergoing professional training is twenty-one years. A professionally qualified person attains substantive appointment status after successfully completing a minimum of two years probationary period. From then on, if found suitable, one can be appointed to a post of administrative responsibility.

Most adults chose to do B.Ed. Programme through DL because they had family and work commitments. Adults use the time that is left after the working day and that which is available during weekends to study. The conflicting demands of roles in the family, work and study on adults create time constraints and psychological tensions that necessitate support in how adults should be taught and successfully learn at a distance to complete educational programmes on time. My study sought the support structures and strategies adults used to cope with DL at ZOU.

#### **2.2.4 Cope**

To cope is to deal successfully with something. Implied in the use of the term cope with DL is a realisation that there are challenges faced by adults in DL. For instance, adults have multiple roles that occupy the same time they are supposed to use to meet the obligations of DL. Many adults may have had many intervening years between their last serious study and joining the DL programme. This can make learners anxious as to whether they will manage the DL programme. Students that are new to DL often face an unusual educational environment in which they learn through multi-media communication instead of being taught by lecturers.

Adults also rely on available people and tools instead of relying on lecturers and the learning institution for academic and technical support. The DL environment

requires adults to change their living and learning patterns. Thus, new students to DL need help in learning how to learn alone and how to adjust to the new socio-academic situation. They need support to learn how to self-manage learning at home without classrooms and lecturers. New students in DL programmes need emotional support to learn how to manage uncertainty while studying in isolation. In other words, coping with DL entails adjusting to being students in an unfamiliar learning environment (Kazmer 2000). Coping is both action-oriented and intra-psychic efforts to manage environmental and internal demands and conflicts which strain a person's ability and resources (Carnwell and Harrington 2001). I use coping as the adults' capacity to overcome the psychological, social and technical challenges that they face in the DL process. Hence I explored the support structures and strategies they used to successfully complete the B.Ed. programme at ZOU.

### **2.2.5 Distance learning (DL)**

Distance learning is invariably termed 'correspondence', 'off campus', 'independent study', and 'open learning' (Rowntree 1992:11). Sherry (1996:337) states that the terms 'distance education' and 'distance learning' have been applied interchangeably by many different researchers to various audiences and media. However, its hallmarks are the separation of teacher and learner in space and/or time (Perraton 1988), the control of learning by the student rather than the distant instructor (Jonassen 1992), and communication between student and teacher that is mediated by print or some form of technology (Keegan 1986). While Rowntree (1992) emphasizes that students can learn at home or work without going to the learning institution, Farrell (2003) stresses that teaching at a distance is done with a variety of 'mediating processes' used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment.

It seems that those who call it distance education emphasize the education provider role of the learning institution while those calling it distance learning emphasize the education consumer role of the learner. While the process requires interaction

between the two, the customer is the 'king' and their needs must be satisfied. My explored the most effective institutional and student-based support mechanisms for adults to cope with learning at a distance and ensure unimpeded completion of DL programmes.

Moore and Kearsley (1996:2) define DL as:

Planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special technologies of course design, special instructional techniques, and special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements.

Valentine (2002) cites Greenberg (1998:36) who defines DL as, "a planned teaching-learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction". She also quotes Keegan (1995:7) who says DL results from the technological separation of teacher and learner which frees the student from travelling to, "a fixed place, at a fixed time, to meet a fixed person, in order to be trained". These definitions concur that the student and teacher are separated by space, but not necessarily by time because DL can include the use of compressed video, which is delivered in real time and live video instruction is the fastest means of mediating DL today.

The fact that different authors emphasize different aspects of DL implies that DL could be understood differently in different countries. However, Ndeya-Ndereya et al. (2003) cite Keegan (1980), Jenkins (1981), Peters (1982), Matshazi (1988) and Lemmer (1994) concurring that DL is a generic term that covers many forms of study whereby students are not in continuous and immediate supervision of lecturers. Kember (1995) cites Keegan (1986:49) who lists the main elements of DL as:

- The quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the learning process,

- The influence of an educational institution in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support services,
- The use of technical media, print, audio, video or computer, to link the teacher and the learner and to carry the content of the course,
- The provision of a two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue, and
- The quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the learning process so that people are taught as individuals and not in groups, with occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes.

The key element distinguishing DL from other forms of learning is separation of the teacher from the learner during the teaching-learning process which necessitates mediation to link them.

The use of technologies and their capacity to deliver interaction through e-conferencing has implications for what we understand by 'distance' and 'near'. In order to provide learner support in view of geographical distance, most DL institutions develop infrastructure of study centres and regional centres in order to be 'near' students (Moore and Kearsley 1996). Students that learn through DL come from a wide range of educational backgrounds that require different learning opportunities. They may be students whose employers do not have trainers. In some cases they are too few people at a time to train simultaneously. They could be geographically scattered. Learners may be people that missed out on some aspects of their education in youth. It may also be that changing times and circumstances have created a need for updating, training or academic study (Rogers 1989; Michael, Schlosser et al. 1999).

The concept of distance in DL goes beyond geographical space. It extends to the effectiveness of communication between the teacher and the learner and also between the learning material and the learner. There are various modes of

communication in DL. However, all forms of communication involve the transfer of information from one person to the other. In order for the transfer of information to qualify as communication, the recipient must understand the meaning of the information transferred to them. If the recipient does not understand the meaning of the information conveyed to them communication has not taken place. Failure of communication creates transactional distance. That distance is better explained by Moore's (1990) Theory of Transactional Distance in Education (Chen 1998).

Moore's theory of transactional distance hypothesizes that distance is also a pedagogical and not only a geographical phenomenon. It is a distance of understandings and perceptions that may lead to a communication gap or a psychological space of potential misunderstandings between people. Moore suggests that this distance has to be overcome in order for effective learning to occur (Chen 2001). Moore and Kearsley (1996) argue that, this theory is applicable to all educational relationships where there is a learner and teacher and a means of communication. They also define transactional distance in the DL environment as, "the physical distance that leads to a communications gap, a psychological space of potential misunderstandings between the instructors and the learners" (Moore and Kearsley 1996: 200). Moore and Kearsley's (1996) view is echoed by McIsaac (1996:2) whom they cite arguing that, "it is not location which determines the effects of instruction, but the amount of transaction between learner and instructor".

Transactional distance is measured by the amount of dialogue which occurs between the learner and the instructor and the amount of structure which exists in the design of the course (Moore and Kearsley 1996). Young (1998) cites Moore and Kearsley (1996) indicating that transactional distance is a function of two variables called "dialogue" and "structure." Dialogue describes the extent to which, in any educational programme, the learner and the educator are able to respond to each other. This is determined by the subject-matter which is studied. Dialogue is also

determined by the educational philosophy of the educator and the personalities of the educator and the learner. It is further determined by environmental factors like the medium of communication.

Unlike dialogue, structure is a measure of an educational programme's responsiveness to learners' individual needs. It expresses the extent to which educational objectives, teaching strategies and evaluation methods are adaptable to the learner. In a highly structured educational programme the objectives and the methods to be used are determined for the learner and are inflexible. In a programme with less structure and more dialogue, interaction between the teacher and the learner permits very personal and individual learning and teaching (Young 1998).

Saba contributed to the transactional distance theory by developing a system dynamics model to examine the relationship between dialogue and structure. His model provides "a flexible means of decreasing structure through increased dialogue" (Moore and Kearsley 1996:208). The results in Saba's model indicate that as learner control and dialogue increase, transactional distance decreases. As transactional distance decreases, the communications gap between the learner and the instructor also decreases and more effective instruction is achieved (Moore and Kearsley 1996). According to Young (1998), Saba also found out that consultation increases dialogue. Once dialogue flourishes, adjustments in goals, instructional materials and evaluation procedures occur. This enables the learner to achieve the desired autonomy (Moore and Kearsley 1996). The concept of transactional distance consists of four dimensions. These are: instructor-learner, learner-learner, learner-content and learner-interface transactional distance (Chen 2001). This study explored the support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with challenges of geographical and transactional distance that enabled them cope with DL at ZOU.

### **2.3 Learning theories**

In this section of my theoretical framework, I discuss the theories that are relevant to this study. These include andragogy, approach to study, constructivism and the open learning model. The primary purpose and value of a theory is that it helps to describe and explain a phenomenon. A theory is like a map. In fact a map is a theory. It shows the general shape of something in a simplified form. It shows the relationships among the constituent parts of the phenomenon. Most importantly, it shows what areas are not known.

A good theory assists in identifying needed research (Moore and Kearsley 1996). For example, Moore's theory of transactional distance serves the role of a map that marks an uncharted cognitive territory to invite more expeditions into the space between the instructor and the learner (Chen 1998). Likewise, these four theories could reveal learner support inadequacies that can prompt the development of institutional structures and learner strategies that help adults to cope with DL. I see these theories as helpful in enlightening educational institutions and their faculty on the optimum support requirements for adults to succeed in DL. They can reveal learner needs that may prompt institutions to provide appropriate management systems, learning materials, instructional technology and adequately prepare academic staff to facilitate adults to learn with less strain. I start with the theory that is linked to adults' learning characteristics. The best known theory of adult learning is Knowles' andragogy (Herod 2002).

### **2.4 Andragogy**

Andragogy is based on a set of assumptions about how adults learn (Knowles, Holton et al 1998). The concept originated when Kapp, a German teacher used it to describe Plato's educational theory. By 1921 another German, Rosenstock said, "adult education required special teachers, special methods, and a special

philosophy” (Knowles, Holton et al 1998:59). Discussion of andragogy continued in Europe until Savicevic, a Yugoslavian adult educator discussed the concept in the United States. Knowles heard about the term and in 1968 used it in Adult Leadership. From that point on, Knowles became the principal expert on andragogy although other adult educators including Brookfield (1986), Mezirow (1991), Lawler (1991) and Merriam (1999) addressed how it can be used to facilitate adult learning.

Knowles (1980) defined andragogy, as an art and science of helping adults to learn (Baugmarter 2003; Dover 2007). Knowles was a teacher and a key figure in the development of adult education throughout the Western world. Many critics argued that both his theory and practice embodied his own value system. Andragogy is regarded a set of assumptions providing one piece of the adult learning puzzle. Despite their limitations, Knowles’ ideas provide a practical instructional guide for all ages, especially adults. Knowles (1980) contrasts andragogy with pedagogy, the art and science of helping children to learn (Herod 2002).

If we accept that learning is best viewed as a continuum, then teaching must follow suit. A range of teaching methods and flexibility are required by educators in order for learning to be effective. In the past fifty years the pendulum of adult education swung from a traditional teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach, and is coming to rest at a mid-point that represents a balanced approach (Herod 2002).

Knowles’ theory reveals the basic contrast between pedagogy and andragogy. The contrast obtains in the fact that the earlier is teacher-centred while the latter is learner-centred. Pedagogy is “directed” while andragogy is “facilitated” learning (Herod 2002). Directed learning helps learners acquire specific skills and knowledge relevant and essential to specific tasks and performance like speaking a foreign language. The teacher is the absolute authority. Minimal critical thinking is required and learners have little or no independence (MacKeracher 1996). Facilitated learning, on the other hand, calls for the educator to, "act as a catalyst; provide

content and process resources; serve as a reflective mirror or alter ego; act as a co-inquirer with learners; and, provide support, guidance and encouragement" (MacKeracher 1996:220).

A graduate student conducting a research study under the guidance of a faculty member is a good example of facilitated learning. The student is required to use personal critical thinking skills, has a collaborative relationship with the teacher, and is permitted a high degree of independence (Herod 2002). Another distinction between directed and facilitated learning arises from their objectives. While directed learning seeks to transmit surface knowledge/skills from teacher to student, facilitated learning seeks to facilitate the deeper processing of knowledge/skills with the guidance of the teacher (MacKeracher 1996; Herod 2002).

According to Knowles, in pedagogy learners are dependent and in andragogy learners are independent and self-directed. In pedagogy, learners are extrinsically motivated by things like rewards and competition while in andragogy learners are intrinsically motivated or interested in learning for learning's sake. The pedagogical learning environment is formal and characterized by competitiveness and value judgments while the andragogical learning environment is more informal and characterized by mutual respect and cooperation. While in pedagogy, planning and assessment are conducted by the teacher, in andragogy, planning and assessment are collaborative between the teacher and students. In pedagogy teaching uses transmittal techniques like lectures and assigned readings, yet in andragogy teaching involves inquiry projects, experimentation and independent study. Furthermore, in pedagogy evaluation is accomplished by external methods like grades, tests and quizzes while in andragogy evaluation includes self-assessment (Herod 2002).

Over time Knowles and other educators came to see that referring to the learning of adults as andragogy and children's learning as pedagogy was a misleading distinction

because many children can also do well when a facilitated teaching approach is used. They are responsible, able to work collaboratively and construct rather than simply receive knowledge. Similarly, some adults prefer the structure of a pedagogical classroom and do not do well in less directed learning environments. The question arises of what, if learners' age and type of audience are not the most accurate ways of distinguishing the difference between pedagogy and andragogy (Herod 2002).

In the second edition of his book, Knowles marked a rethinking in his original conception of andragogy as characterizing only adult learners by changing of subtitles from *Andragogy Versus Pedagogy* to *From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Knowles 1980:43). His most recent conclusion is that the use of andragogical and pedagogical principles is determined by the situation and not by the age of learner.

As a "model of assumptions" (Knowles 1980:43) about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from the pedagogical assumptions about child learners, andragogy is based on humanistic psychology. Knowles' concept of andragogy presents the individual learner as one who is autonomous, free and growth-oriented. The two dimensions of andragogy that Knowles elaborates are its assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners and the process elements of adult education that stem from adults' personal characteristics. He initially discussed four basic assumptions and added a fifth and sixth in subsequent publications. The latest six assumptions of andragogy that are considered influential to the adults' learning process are: self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation to learn and relevance of what is learnt (Knowles, Holton et al 1998).

#### **2.4.1 Self-concept**

The notion of self-concept is based on the assumption that as people mature, they move from being dependent personalities towards being self-directed. Self-directed learning describes a process,

.. in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles 1975: 18).

Being self-directed signifies that adult students can and should be allowed to participate in evaluating their learning needs, planning and implementing the learning activities, and evaluating those experiences. Knowles further stated that individuals can be assisted in becoming more self-directed when given appropriate learning tools, resources, experiences and encouragement. For example, educators might provide assistance to individuals or groups of learners in locating resources or mastering alternative learning strategies. The learners would then seek assistance through technology or learning centres.

Knowles gave three reasons for promoting self-direction among learners. First, Knowles argues that proactive learners, who take the initiative in learning, learn more and learn better than passive or reactive learners, who wait to be taught by a teacher. “They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation. They also tend to retain and make use of what they learn better and longer than do the reactive learners” (Knowles 1975:14). Secondly, self-directed learning parallels the natural processes of psychological development. “An essential aspect of maturing is developing the ability to take increasing responsibility for our own lives—to become increasingly self-directed” (Knowles 1975:15). Finally, many new developments in education place responsibility on the learners to take the initiative in their own learning. “Students entering into these programs without having learned the skills of self-directed inquiry will experience anxiety, frustration, and often failure, and so will their teachers” (Knowles 1975:15).

With the current rapidity of change, the continuous creation of new knowledge and an ever-widening access to information, it is no longer reasonable to define the purpose of education as simply transmitting what is known. Instead, the purpose must be to develop the skills of inquiry (Knowles 1975). Being proactive and responsible for one’s own learning underlie andragogy. However, how learners deal with self-directed learning experiences generated several process models. For

example, Knowles (1975) presented a linear progression from diagnosing and formulating needs to identifying resources and learning strategies to evaluating outcomes. Later models like Mezirow's (1991) are more interactive. In addition to the learner, the context of the learning experience and the nature of the learning itself are also considered. This process of maturation where people move from dependency towards self-directedness happens at different rates for different people and in different dimensions of life. Educators need to encourage and nurture this movement in a manner that is compatible with the learners and their situations. Adults have a psychological need to be self-directing, but they may be dependent in certain temporary situations. For example, "adults resent and resist situations in which they feel others are imposing their wills on them" (Knowles, Holton et al 1998: 65).

In spite of their desire for autonomy, previous schooling may have made some of them dependent learners. It is the job of the adult educator to move adult students away from their old habits into new patterns of learning to become self-directed and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, it is motivating to adults to design adult learning with flexibility to skip sections that students already understand and multiple forms of presentation of material which assist people with various learning styles. All these can be used to permit students to follow a path of learning that most appropriately suits them (Knowles, Holton et al 1998).

#### **2.4.2 Learner's experience**

As people mature, they accumulate experiences that help them in their learning. Those experiences also enable them to help others to learn. Since adults manage other aspects of their lives, they are capable of directing and even assisting in the planning and implementation of their own learning. Furthermore, people attach more meaning to learning they gain from experience than the learning they acquire passively. Hence, the primary techniques in adult learning are experiential ones. These include laboratory experiments, simulations, discussion, problem-solving cases and field experiences. Adults have had a lifetime of experiences. These make

adult learners more heterogeneous than younger learners and also provide an additional base of knowledge that should be used during adult learning. Adults want to use what they know and want to be acknowledged for having that knowledge.

The design of instruction for adults must include opportunities for learners to use their knowledge and experience. Case studies, reflective activities, group projects that call upon the expertise of group members are examples of learning activities which facilitate the use of learners' already acquired expertise. An important corollary to the experience that adults bring with them is the association of their experiences with who they are. Their self-identity including habits and biases are determined from their experience. It is for this reason that those developing instruction for adult learners need to create opportunities for reflective learning.

“Reflective learning involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions”(Mezirow 1991: 6). Mezirow also says that, “reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic or otherwise invalid”(Mezirow 1991: 6). Reflective learning activities can assist students in examining their biases and habits and move them toward a new understanding of information presented. To have students reflect on learning activities or to put themselves in a different character in a case study or scenario may cause adults to re-evaluate already learned information (Knowles, Holton et al 1998).

### **2.4.3 Readiness to learn**

People become ready to learn something when there is need to learn it in order to deal with real-life tasks and problems. This assumption entails that the educator should create conditions and provide tools and procedures for helping learners discover their need to know. In other words, learning programmes should be organized around life-application categories and sequenced according to the learners' readiness to learn. Adults become ready to learn something when, “they experience a

need to learn it in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems” (Knowles 1980: 44).

It is important that lessons developed in adult learning be concrete and relate to students’ needs and future goals. These may be adapted from the goals of the course or learning programme but can also be requests based on students’ expectations. A teacher can encourage students’ readiness by designing experiences which simulate situations where students discover need for the knowledge or skill presented. For instance, students in a personnel management course may not see the need for learning about the Family and Medical Leave Act but an interactive role play that puts students in the place of a manager who must deal with an employee’s request for leave due to a child’s illness will help them see how an understanding of the topic benefits them (Knowles, Holton et al 1998).

#### **2.4.4 Orientation to learning**

As people mature, their time perspective changes from gathering knowledge for future use to immediate application of knowledge. Adult learners are more life, task and problem-centred rather than subject-centred in their orientation to learning (Knowles, 1980). They want to see how what they are learning applies to their life, a task they need to perform, or to solving a problem. Learners see education as a process of developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life. They want to be able to apply whatever knowledge and skills they gain today to a more effective life tomorrow. They see education as a transformative process in preparation for changing social roles. Adult learning experiences should be organized around competency-development because adults’ orientation to learning is performance-centred.

Adult instruction is more effective if it uses real-life examples they may encounter in their life or on the job. Allowing flexibility in the design of lessons permits student input on issues that need to be addressed in a class. For instance, if students can bring real-life examples of school discipline challenges to a discussion on behaviour

management they will be keen to participate and gain the practical experience which helps them to do better at their jobs (Knowles, Holton et al 1998).

#### **2.4.5 Motivation to learn**

While adult learners may respond to external motivators, internal priorities are more important. Incentives like job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life give adults reasons to learn. As people mature, they become more motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. Intrinsic incentives to adult learning include the need for self-esteem, curiosity, desire to achieve and satisfaction of accomplishment. If any of these are part of instruction and learning, then adults will respond positively.

Activities that build students' self-esteem and sense of accomplishment through completion of goals or modules that are checked off in a sequence may help motivate completion of longer lessons. In addition, student's input into the development of lessons or in the prioritization of topics covered can help students to take ownership of the learning process (Knowles, Holton et al 1998).

#### **2.4.6 Relevance**

As people mature, they are interested in doing subjects that have immediate relevance to their jobs or personal lives. As a result, they need to know why they should learn something (Darkenwald 1982; Yonge 1985; Merriam 2001). Under the standard pedagogical model, it is assumed that the student will simply learn what they are told. Adults, however, are used to understanding what they do in life. They want to know the reason why they learn something or how it will benefit them.

Courses that are required to fill gaps to complete a degree are often frowned upon by adult learners. It is motivating and adult learning lessons will be more effective if the

teacher helps students to understand how what they learn will be of use to them. One way to help students see the value of the lessons is to ask the student, in an initial face-to-face meeting, to reflect on what they expect to learn, how they might use it or how it helps them to meet their goals. Lawler (1991:36) suggests that these goals and expectations can be used throughout the programme to reinforce the importance of learning activities. The design of adult learning lessons can incorporate not only the students' original reflections but can solicit feedback about the relevance of the learning process throughout the course. It is incumbent upon the teacher to review these reflections and to adjust an individual lesson structure to more effectively meet student needs (Knowles, Holton et al 1998).

Knowles' andragogy is vital to my study as it provides an understanding of psychological considerations to be taken into account in adult DL and support. Andragogical conditions for effective learning encompass a physical and psychological environment where adults feel accepted, respected and supported (Knowles 1990; MacKeracher 2004). Andragogy promotes mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers. Learner self-esteem is heightened as adults are accorded the opportunity to assist in planning and directing their learning (Knowles 1980 ; Lieb 1991 ; Baugmarter 2003; Beekes 2006).

An assumption of andragogy that is central to my study and distinguishes adults from child learners is self-directed learning (Knowles 1975). Basing on humanistic philosophy, Knowles argues that self-directed learning aims at developing the learner's capacity to be self-directed. It is through self-directed learning that adults are weaned from dependence on transmission learning strategies to developing skills of inquiry thereby becoming proactive and responsible for their own learning.

Knowles' theory is also helpful as it informs DL institutions about adult learner characteristics and how those characteristics influence adult learning. Such

knowledge is essential when developing support mechanisms for adults sought by my study. However, andragogy does not explain how students study in order to cope with the academic constraints. Hence I discuss approach to study next.

## **2.5 Approach to study**

One of the key factors that determine the rate and quality of success in any learning programme is how the learners learn. Approaches to study are descriptions of learning processes used by students (Kember 1995). An approach to study theory has been developed from several researches in education. It argues that students develop coping strategies depending on the approach to study that they adopt. The term approach was initially used to describe the specific form of study activity due to the student's perception of an instruction task on a particular occasion. In other words, the approach was seen to depend on both the context and the content. However, it became clear that students showed a certain consistency in their approaches to learning at a broad level of analysis. It is important to clarify that approach includes both the process and intention (Entwistle 1991).

Approach to study can also be attributed to students' personality and cognitive style. Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) draw from many studies that students depend on either deeper cognitive or personality traits in their studying. Some students' mental processing is inclined to long term memory with episodic and short term memory. Some students operate as convergent thinkers that think in a narrow focussed manner while others are divergent thinkers capable of including wider angles for analysis within their thinking. Some learners use impulsive and others use reflective styles. Some learners use articulated field independent ways capable of analysing and imposing structure while others use global field dependent processing based on impressions and inability to impose own structure. There are students that depend on personality attributes and thus use either extroversion or introversion in their study.

Some students are serialists who learn items in succession while others are holists who attempt to identify the whole before adding detail in their comprehension of learning. The choice of approach to study depends on a student's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Biggs 1979; Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) also introduced the concept of strategic or achieving orientation to study. Actually, learning strategies are combinations of cognitive skills implemented in a learning situation. The style that learners use is related to their prior experiences and personal motives. Approaches, on the other hand, are exhibited when students adapt their learning to suit either their preferences or the situation in which they are engaged. Higher education literature identifies approach to learning as a significant factor affecting the quality of student learning (Biggs 1979; Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

Buckley et al (2010) cite Marton and Saljo (1976) who identified two main levels of mental processing of learning which relate to qualitative differences in the levels of understanding achieved as either high or low level of understanding. They called these levels of processing deep and surface. Students adopting a deep approach study with the intention of understanding the material. They interact critically with the arguments put forward, relate them to their own prior knowledge and experience, and evaluate the extent to which conclusions are justified. The process is internal to the student. In contrast, a surface approach is associated with students who orient their learning towards memorization and reproduction. They rote learn in an unrelated way and are constrained by the specific learning task. In this instance, the process of learning is external to the student.

A third approach to study is called the strategic approach. This describes students who are primarily concerned with achieving the highest possible grades. They use both deep and surface approaches as appropriate and have a competitive and

vocational motivation. More recently, these ideas have been developed into larger frameworks that attempt to provide overarching and systematic models of teaching and learning in higher education ( Geysler 2004; Mcapline 2004; Buckley et al 2010).

### **2.5.1 Deep learning**

Deep learning involves search for understanding and application of knowledge. Students who adopt a deep approach concentrate on reading widely, combining a variety of resources, discussion, reflection, relating parts to a whole, and applying knowledge in real world situations in order to understand the underlying meaning of what they learn(Tam 1999). Their intention is to understand the real message of a piece of writing or the underlying purpose of an academic task.

Deep learners are interested in the academic task and derive enjoyment from carrying it out. They search for the meaning inherent in the task. They seek to know the intention of the author. They personalize the task, making it meaningful to own experience and to the real world. They integrate aspects or parts of the task into a whole. For instance, they relate evidence to conclusions. In other words, they establish relationships between this whole and previous knowledge which leads them to try and theorize about the task and even form hypotheses (Kember 1995: 104).

Deep learning is used by systematic waders (Carnwell and Harrington 2001) who prefer structured materials so that they can unpack parts of the materials and work through them sequentially with minimum tutors' guidance. These students view knowledge as sought. Their active engagement with materials fosters deep understanding in line with Mezirow's transformative learning theory where learners are field independent (Venter 2003) constructivists.

Deep learners organize and structure their learning and engage in the construction of knowledge in ways meaningful to themselves. Such learners enjoy less learner-content transactional distance and more dialogue between themselves and teachers

thereby operating in an active learning environment. Collaboration with tutors is used to extend students' capabilities through guidance. Usually, deep learners originate from individualistic cultural backgrounds (student identity model) (Venter 2003). They are self-driven, enjoy studying and always succeed (Carnwell and Harrington 2001; Obert and Oynton 2005).

### **2.5.2 Surface learning**

Surface learning involves superficial reading and memorising compatible with previous transmission teaching method. Surface learning is done by students who concentrate on surface features of the learning task like words and phrases. Their intention is to memorize and regurgitate elements which seem appropriate. When asked about the content of an article they give detail from examples but do not grasp the principle of the article (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

Surface learners see learning as a task to be fulfilled to meet a set goal like passing an examination in order to attain a qualification. They see the aspects of the learning task as discrete and unrelated either to each other or to other tasks. They worry about the time the task takes. They try to avoid complications like personal input or other meanings of the task. Surface learners rely on memorization, attempting to reproduce the surface aspects of the task like the exact words used, a diagram or mnemonic (Kember 1995).

Surface learning is used by field dependent learners whose culture stresses collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (surrogate teacher model) (Venter 2003). Their previous education is structured. Moore's theory says a structured course limits teacher-learner dialogue and increases transactional distance (Habash 1998). Timetables and deadlines are used to motivate learners in structured courses. Students using surface learning approach are global dippers who view knowledge as given (Carnwell and Harrington 2001). They dip in and out of material in search of

cues to answer questions without understanding. As a result they find learning very difficult. They engage passively with the materials and always need guidance to decide what to read. Consequently, such learners heavily rely on support from tutors and partners (Landbeck and Mugler 2000). Their success rate is very low.

### **2.5.3 Strategic learning**

Strategic or pragmatic learning is a contingency approach to study. This approach uses a hybrid of both deep and surface approach attributes. It is driven by search for goals. Students may study to answer written assignments, succeed in examinations and meet employers' requirements for qualifications. Students who use this approach are speedy-focusers (Carnwell and Harrington 2001). They spot and spasmodically engage with material and focus quickly on aspects of content that address their goal. They view knowledge as given and prefer no dialogue, unstructured materials and a passive tutor role. They succeed but with limited understanding of the course content (Landbeck and Mugler 2000; Venter 2003).

Learning approaches have motivation and strategy elements which are related. On the one hand, deep approach students try to understand a topic if it is of interest to them or if they see its relevance to their professional roles. On the other hand, a surface approach is associated with an extrinsic motivation. For example, in courses that are not directly relevant to them, students adopt a surface approach and aim to remember the bare essentials to scrape a pass. Approaches to study are not stable like learning styles. Instead the approach adopted varies with and depends on the student's motivation and the prevailing teaching context. Extrinsic motivation, reproductive assessment questions, formal teaching, a focus on transmitting information and/or excessively heavy workload have all been shown to make the adoption of a surface approach (Kember 1995).

Kember (1995) cites Ramsden and Entwistle (1981) who found that surface learning approach strongly distinguished between persisters and non-persisters on educational

programmes. Surface learners focus on the text and employ reproductive orientation and memorize facts for recall during assessment. Such memorized material is soon forgotten once the examination is over. However, where material is relevant to a student's job a deep approach is adopted and it is remembered.

Students who use a deep approach concentrate on the meaning underlying a text because they see its relevance to their needs and find it of interest. According to Kember (1995) there is a strong affinity between the deep/surface dichotomy of learning approaches and the underlying assumptions of the distinction between andragogy and pedagogy central to adult learning theory (Knowles 1984). While andragogy recognizes that adult learners are capable of self-direction and through experience, capable of determining their own learning needs, pedagogy places the responsibility of determining course content in the hands of teachers and then expects students to acquire the defined knowledge. The two constructs are different. Andragogical assumptions lead to a deep approach while pedagogy is associated with a surface approach.

Ramsden and Entwistle (1983) found that intrinsic motivation is related to deep while extrinsic motivation is linked to surface approach. Intrinsic motivation refers to the interest students have in the subject matter for its own sake. Extrinsic motivation is concerned with the student's commitment to obtaining a qualification. Extrinsic motivation is driven by career opportunities barred by lack of qualifications, promotion and financial rewards on course completion, family rivalries to obtain qualifications and/or students being of a suitable age to benefit from extra qualifications. Intrinsic motivation has an attitudinal aspect and also influences and/or is influenced by the course evaluation facet of the academic component. If the subject matter gels with the student's interests and career needs, then intrinsic motivation will be heightened (Kember 1995).

Students that enrol on a programme because the employers require some qualification in order to promote them tend to adopt a surface approach and memorize facts which are important hoping to use them in answering examination questions. Kember (1995) cites Knowles (1984) advocating that adult learners should be viewed as unique individuals that are able to determine the relevance of subject matter and skills. Interest in the subject matter for its own sake leads adult students to search for meaning. Intrinsic motivation is particularly important to adult learners.

Use of English as a second language makes some adult students less confident and capable of using the language of instruction. Any student who has to think consciously about deciphering the language of the text finds it hard to discern the meaning behind the reading. Such students operate at sentence or even word level rather than examining a coherent passage. Second language speakers often find studying more difficult. Enthusiasm for wide and extensive reading distinguishes between deep and surface learners (Kember 1995).

The approach to study theory is based on the assumption that students' need for support and guidance is as important as the approach to study that they adopt. Students regard their approach to study and access to support as a coping strategy. While coping strategies result in an enjoyable learning experience for some adults, for others the use of coping strategies reflects a need to adapt their approach to study. To them, access to support is viewed as compensation for factors that may hamper their progress (Carnwell and Harrington 2001).

Adults' coping with DL depends on enjoyment of learning, intrinsic value and perceived importance of learning. Their conception of learning ranges from increasing one's knowledge, memorising and reproducing, applying, understanding, seeing things differently and changing the person (Landbeck and Mugler 2000; Bontempi 2003). While the first three aspects of learning are reproductive, the last

three are transformative in nature. DL students' approaches to study depend on the motivation for learning and their previous learning experience. Apart from culture, adult learners' approaches are influenced by curriculum design and previous teachers' expectations, philosophy and assessment requirements. DL students use any among: deep, surface and strategic approaches to study (Carnwell and Harrington 2001; Blunt and Yang 2002; Venter 2003). More effective learning takes place if the learner is actively involved and understands what must be learnt.

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) drew from the Gothenburg Research Group which emphasized the role of content and context in studying and revealed that only the approach of a student to a particular task can be regarded as being consistently deep. The conception of a single ideal approach to studying as being universally applicable in different courses and subject areas is of dubious practical value to lecturers and students. The way forward is to look at the key points that provide a basis for identifying major aspects of how students learn in different subjects. Approaches to learning are often influenced by the teaching and learning environment. The way a subject is taught has a strong influence on the quality of learning for students. The use of technology to augment the student experience is now ubiquitous in higher education and improvements in student completion rate of programmes are achieved using a blended approach to study (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983; Kember et al 2008; Buckley et al 2010).

This theory reveals that adult learners need both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, academic guidance, feedback and re-assurance. It illuminates the need for this study as it indicates that approaches used by adults can reveal the shortcomings in DL support systems. The concepts of deep and surface learning are attractive because of their influence in teaching and learning today. Deep approach produces high quality learning outcomes while a surface approach results in lower quality outcomes. If DL is to encourage the development of quality learning outcomes in students, such as

deep learning, understanding, independent learning, critical and creative thinking, problem solving and other lifelong learning attributes, there is need to create contexts that discourage surface, and encourage deep approach to learning (Tam 1999) which has constructivist ideas. I explored support structures and strategies used by adults to study in order to cope with DL.

## **2.6 Constructivism**

Constructivism fosters a radical departure in thought about the nature of knowing, learning and teaching which have positive implications for DL. In the familiar mental model of learning, the objectivist epistemology, knowledge and truth exist outside the mind of the individual and are therefore objective. Learners are told about the world and are expected to replicate its content and structure in their thinking (Jonassen 1991). The constructivist perspective describes learning as a change in meaning constructed from experience. Constructivism is a cognitive model based on an understanding of how human attention, memory and language operate. One of its established findings is relating incoming information to existing knowledge structures or schema. Constructivists believe that knowledge and truth are constructed by people and therefore do not exist outside the human mind (Tam 1999; Dash and Memon 2000 ; Buckley et al 2010).

Unlike in objectivism where it is asserted that there is a particular body of knowledge that needs to be transmitted to a learner and learning is acquisition and accumulation of a finite set of skills and facts, in constructivism learning is personal and not objective. Learners construct understanding. They do not simply reflect what they are told or what they read. Learners look for meaning and find regularity and order in the events of the world even in the absence of full information (Tam 1999).

Constructivism emphasizes the construction of knowledge while objectivism concerns itself with the object of knowing. This fundamental difference between the two has implications in terms of philosophy as well as approaches to teaching and material design. Central to constructivism is the view that learning is an active process (Tam 1999; Huxham 2005). Learner autonomy implies that the student is no longer forced to only follow the lead of the teacher and conform to the pressure of the peer group (Conti 1985; Aylward 2001) but to also contribute to what is learnt.

### **2.6.1 The roles of the constructivist teacher and learner**

While information may be imposed, understanding cannot be. Understanding must come from within. Hence, constructivism requires a teacher to be a facilitator. The teacher's function is to help students become active participants in their learning (Ndeya-Ndereya, Mhlanga et al 2003; Hartley, Woods et al 2005).

The teacher should help learners to make meaningful connections between prior knowledge, new knowledge and the processes of learning. A constructivist teacher is someone who:

- Encourages and accepts student autonomy and initiative,
- Uses interactive raw data and encourages students to use them,
- Inquires about students' understanding of concepts before explanation,
- Encourages students to interact with the teacher and among themselves,
- Encourages student inquiry by asking open-ended questions and encouraging students to ask questions to each other and elaborate their responses,
- Engages students in critical thinking and encourages discussion,
- Provides students time to construct relationships and create metaphors, and
- Assesses students' understanding through performance of tasks (Tam 1999).

The constructivist perspective of the teacher's basic function is to facilitate a problem-solving environment. The teacher guides learners to construct their own

knowledge. These propositions suggest instructional principles that can guide the best practices of teaching and designing of learning environments. Such situations depend on the needs of learners. The use of constructivist teaching-learning principles guides the learner in developing an enquiring mind which makes the learner to explore knowledge and question what is not clear. This challenges the learner to think and try out different problem-solving approaches. The constructivist principles prompt teachers to devise teaching strategies that engage students in thinking and problem-solving like quizzes, puzzles, individual and/or group projects, discussion and even research. Constructivism expects instruction to accommodate its perspectives and support the creation of learning environments that optimize the value of its epistemological principles (Tam 1999; Aylward 2001).

Constructivist theory is very important in this study as it, on the one hand, informs adult learners how to take responsibility for their own learning and on the other hand it informs DL facilitators on how best to create an enabling environment for learners by: conducive programme management, timely preparation and supply of up to standard learning materials, presentation of content and online tutorials in a user friendly way, instructive assessment of assignments and supervision of research projects as well as foolproof administration of examinations that motivate learners. My study explored structures and strategies used by adults to cope with active learning in DL.

## **2.7 Kember's open learning model**

The distinction of DL from other forms of learning is separation of the teacher from the learner during the teaching-learning process (Keegan 1980; Peters 1982; Matshazi 1988; Lemmer 1994; Ndeya-Ndereya, Mhlanga et al. 2003). None of the theories above discussed the DL contextual factors that affect how adults integrate study with work and family commitments. Only Kember's theory does that.

Kember's open learning model is the most well known DL coping theory (Kember 1995) relevant to this study. There is usually a question whether DL is open learning. Some people use the terms open and distance learning interchangeably trying to equate the two. Kember (1995) cites Lewis and Spencer (1986) supported by Thorpe and Grugeon (1987) that DL is a sub-set of open learning, not its synonym. The characteristics of DL are given under the concepts (P.16). Open learning is an umbrella term which refers to various educational initiatives. Its facets include: open entry, study anywhere, start at any time, tutors on demand, attendance at any time, flexible sequence, negotiated objectives and content, negotiated learning method and negotiated assessment. Unlike open learning, most university DL courses for formal credit are constrained with regards to flexibility in entry qualifications and duration of programme, teaching sequence, assessment and choice of modules, content and objectives. Such DL requirements violate minimization of participation barriers, freedom and student initiatives within classrooms which are the hallmarks of open learning thereby highlighting the difference between the two terms (Rowntree 1992; Kember 1995).

David Kember developed the open learning model in 1995. His model is based on extensive research and theory about student attrition. The model is about adults in DL. It "focuses on the factors that affect a student's successful completion of a distance education program with particular focus on the extent to which students are able to integrate their academic study with," the often conflicting employment, family and social commitments (Moore and Kearsley 1996: 209).

According to Kember (1995), academic integration encompasses all facets of the offering of the course to the student by the institution. These include the study package, tutoring by faculty members and interaction between the student and the institution whether of an academic or administrative nature. Social integration refers

to the degree to which the student is able to integrate the demands of DL with the continuing commitments of work, family and social life.

In Kember's model students follow two pathways. One path leads learners through the positive track of social and academic integration while the other takes them through the negative side with external interference and incompatibility. The positive track contains factors which lead to high levels of both social and academic integration. The negative track indicates lower levels of integration. Kember's model has a cost/benefit analysis step in which students periodically weigh the benefits against the costs of continuing the study. This analysis enables students to decide whether to continue or drop out of the programme. Depending on the pathway they travel, students arrive at favourable or unsatisfactory academic achievement indicated by grade point average (GPA) (Kember 1995; Chen 1998). While cost benefit analysis could be considered for participants that faced financial challenges in my study, it was not of major interest as my focus was on the kind and manner of support that helped adults to cope with DL.

Social and academic integration are the variables which impinge upon student progress once a course has started. Entry characteristics influence the degree to which both academic and social integration is possible. The extent of integration affects the student's progress towards either success or failure to complete a course. Social and academic integration are intervening variables between entry characteristics and outcome measures. For adults in DL, collective affiliation is achieved if a student feels a sense of belonging to a course and the institution. This sense of belonging arises from contacts with faculty and administrators. It also comes from contacts with colleagues in the course (Kember 1995; Lowe 2005).

### **2.7.1 Students' entry characteristics**

Apart from having work, family and social obligations competing for time with study, adults join programmes with traits which guide them down one of the two pathways. These include *inter alia* previous academic experience, educational

qualifications, family status, employment and residential area. The relationship between entry characteristics and programme completion is useful in knowing students that normally do well so that at-risk students can be identified for counselling. Kember (1995) cites Woodley and Parlett (1983) who found significant relationship between student persistence and age, number of children, housing conditions, sex, sponsorship, residential area, previous education qualifications and occupation for students at the Open University of the United Kingdom. Such information is useful for identifying at-risk students and for evaluation and planning.

With regards to educational qualifications, students rarely enrol in DL straight from high school. They normally have intervening years between leaving school and commencing DL. During that time, experience may have contributed to their ability to tackle the college course. On the other hand, some adults leave school early and their experiences provide little preparation for academic study. Often, such students are not accepted for higher education by prestigious institutions and they enrol in DL. While educational background has no direct causal link with student progress, it influences other components of the model. Students with less formal schooling and history of study since leaving school often face more problems with academic integration than those who had exposure to studying either at or since leaving school. Students with a limited history of schooling are unlikely to have developed a study approach which is compatible with the demands of tertiary education. They are not conversant with the conventions and norms of academic life. Success is unlikely unless the students' work is congruent with academic norms (Kember 1995).

On family status, Kember says that there is usually slightly better completion rate for those without children. More mature students tend to perform better than their younger counterparts for several reasons. DL students' time at work is in direct competition with time to study. Work obligations are often given as an excuse by those who fail to spend sufficient time studying. DL students' entry characteristics,

demographic status, educational history and experience determine how well the students are able to academically and socially integrate. Knowledge of students' entry characteristics helps tutors and counsellors to support learners in adapting to academic study. While entry characteristics help to determine the difficulty a student is likely to face in integration, entry characteristics are not good predictors of final outcomes in a course. Some students strive against adverse circumstances and succeed in DL. However, it is normally students with positive attributes that proceed on the positive path that integrate socially and academically while those who fail to socially and academically integrate go through the negative path and do not succeed (Kember 1995; Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

### **2.7.2 Social Integration**

Social integration encompasses enrolment encouragement, study encouragement, and family environment. In Kember's theory, social integration is influenced by the entry characteristics relating to work, the home and the social environment. Students with adverse characteristics in this domain have greater difficulties in integrating the demands of study into the home environment. The attitudes of family, employers, workmates and social colleagues are important in determining the success of integrating study into their lives. If these attitudes are sufficiently supportive, adverse circumstances can be overcome (Kember 1995).

In Kember's view, enrolment encouragement is the extent to which the employer, family and friends support the student's decision to enrol. This support helps in goal commitment. A positive attitude from others at the enrolment stage helps a student to enter a course in a positive and confident frame of mind. If the employer and family are committed and supportive of a student enrolling in a course, it suggests that they assist in the social integration process and they can support when difficulties arise. For example, students enrolling with employer support feel obliged to do well hoping for further support from the employer as the course progresses. The family's moral and financial support at enrolment highlights the perceived benefits from the

qualification and encourages the student to treat study as a priority towards successful outcomes (Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Study encouragement is the degree of cooperation and moral support the student receives when studying. The family environment determines whether a supportive environment exists in the family. At the beginning of the programme, the learner needs to modify existing patterns of life to allow for study. Fellow workers, family and friends can either support the adjustment process or hinder integration. For DL to be successfully assimilated, those in the student's environment also have to make some adaptation (Kember 1995).

For DL students, integration with employment depends on the attitude of the employer and workmates. Some employers are supportive of study and allow time from work for study and contact tutorials. Some are indifferent and others are even hostile as they see study as a drain of energy which should be devoted to work. Support from the employer is important in reinforcing the student's goal commitment. Extrinsic motivation strengthens if the employer promises that successful completion of the course will lead to promotion. Some employers support DL students by allowing them to go into workplaces on Saturday to study. Students can find attending face-to-face tutorial sessions hard if their employers are uncooperative. Indifferent and hostile employers provide neither study time nor assistance. They go further to de-motivate students. Supportive workmates encourage students, but if they scorn the idea of spending time on study, the student is discouraged. Where the student's programme is related to employment, supportive senior workmates give latest information and also inform the student of relevant workshops to attend ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Supportive families make changes to their lifestyle to facilitate the study process to the extent of sleeping with the light on. Children are usually an impediment to study. Supportive spouses or other family members take over child care duties to allow the

DL student time for study and attend classes. It takes sacrifice for the family to afford a student financial support, negotiate sanctuaries or periods of time when the student can study undisturbed. An equilibrium position must be established which allows study to progress and also maintain family time and family relationships. It takes sacrifices from both sides and such sacrifices indicate a supportive family environment ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Congruence of the study process with the students' social life is necessary for social integration. Social contacts who deride time spent studying hinder integration of the study process into the student's life. Friends, colleagues and workmates can be a good source of support. They can assist with learning the course material through group discussions and motivation if they are in the same field (Kember 1995).

DL support from employers, workmates, colleagues, family and friends makes a difference to the success or otherwise of social integration. Success of integration results from re-negotiation of previous social positions and status and also from sacrifices by the student and those in the student's social circle (Kember 1995).

### **2.7.3 External Attribution**

External attribution is when DL students attribute their failure to cope with studies to insufficient time, unexpected events and other distractions. Students who are successful tend to accept credit by internalizing responsibility for the outcome. By contrast less successful ventures are easier to accept if the cause is attributed to something external to the control of the individual. Lack of social integration is often manifested in the student resorting to external attribution theory. Failure to find ways to integrate study with other commitments makes it is easy to blame the competing work, family and others for the lack of integration (Kember 1995: 89).

Kember (1995) cites Sheath who identified the most frequent reasons for students' withdrawal from studies as: insufficient study time due to work commitments, illness

of student or family, financial and accommodation difficulties. Students who complete the programme normally attribute their success to internal self-control like hard work, perseverance and/or cleverness to enhance their self-esteem. Those who do not complete attribute their failure to outside factors beyond their control to salvage their self-esteem. This negative social integration is called external attribution. It is sub-divided into three reasons most commonly given for either withdrawal or delayed completion: insufficient time that indicates failure to come to terms with competing priorities, distractions attributed to lack of application to study tasks and competing demands from family, employers and friends. This indicates lack of social integration between academic demands and life that leads to failure to cope with DL ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Whereas insufficient time is the worst culprit in external attribution, work is the greatest competitor for time with study as it can be exhausting and that which involves travelling and business entertaining can be disruptive leaving no time for study. Students who succeed in spite of heavy work commitments are those who take responsibility for own scheduling and ensure that sufficient of the time not eaten by employment is devoted to study. Such adults sacrifice family time to attend tutorials and quiet study. Some of them compensate for reductions in leisure by socializing with colleagues only ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Among the often cited distractions by students in external attribution are work-travel and reports on trips that take time leaving very little time for study and studying in noisy environments when limited accommodation is shared with people with young children or large families that make integration difficult. With very strong goal commitment, learners select suitable time slots or alternative places like their work office, public library and/or use own study timetable where study is possible ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Some students are distracted by pressure from friends which conflicts with the need to spend time studying. It takes high levels of goal commitment to overcome such pressure. Focused students build their social relationships into their lives as students by making friends among fellow students. Sometimes students attribute their failure to study to interruption due to sudden changes in the nature of work/ roles and sudden change in the health of family members.

While adults that harmonize their learning environment with study succeeded, those that failed blame elements in their social environment for their problems. Success in social integration helps adults in academic integration while failure in social integration results in failure to academically integrate (Kember 1995).

#### **2.7.4 Academic integration or incompatibility**

Academic integration deals with academic focus on approach to study, motive, course evaluation and language. It covers all facets of a course and contact between the institution and the students including academic, administrative and social. It is in two forms. Collective affiliation develops through interaction between tutors and students, or by good impressions created by efficient operations. It includes moral and value integration between the academic conventions and norms of the institution and the perceptions and performance of the student. Kember splits integration into positive and negative tracks. The positive variable is academic integration while the negative one is academic incompatibility. Both measures: approach to study, motivation, course evaluation and language (Kember 1995; Lowe 2005).

In DL, the image of the course is in form of the study package delivered through the mail. Contacts with faculty may be less and more through telephone, video link and mail through computer messages. More contacts are with administrators than faculty. Everything to do with teaching and learner support is deemed to be part of the academic sphere. This includes the study package. It covers all contacts, face-to-face

or by media, with faculty, administrators and colleagues, for study, administrative or social purposes ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Integration is the degree to which the student is able to fit in the academic environment and to accommodate the demands of the university. A student who has insufficient collective affiliation and moral or value integration is said to have low normative congruence and fails to cope with the programme (Kember 1995). To encourage persistence both sides should develop a sense of belonging between the student and the institution. Normative congruence is the degree of fit between the student and the institution's expectations of each other. Educational institutions have expectations posed as assignments, tests and examinations. Faculty may have expectations about examinations and assignments which are not stated. Colleges may also have less explicit expectations of students in the form of academic norms and conventions ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

There are typical academic facets that determine the extent of students' academic integration. Positive integration is shown by deep approach to study adopted by students who seek to understand what they read and relate it to their experience and needs. Students with academic integration display intrinsic motivation manifested by being interested in the subject for its own sake. They also show a positive course evaluation through positive feedback on course materials, tutoring, assignment marking and administration. Such students enjoy and engage in enthusiastic and extensive reading which indicates congruence with being a DL student since the mode of study involves extensive reading (Kember 1995).

Negative academic integration or academic incompatibility is exhibited by students who display surface approach to study and focus on surface aspects of texts. They concentrate on rote-learning facts which they presume are relevant to examination questions. Some of these students reveal dependency on extrinsic motivation

provided by rewards external to the course such as promotion or pay rise on passing the course. They also display negative course evaluation through giving feedback that is negative on course materials, tutoring, assignment marking and administration. The language component gives an indication that the student is less confident and incapable of using the language of instruction. The student finds it hard to discern the meaning behind the reading. Such students operate at sentence or even word level rather than examining a coherent passage. Second language speakers often find the studying process difficult (Kember 1995).

Course evaluation is done on study packages, mediated lessons, interaction via assignments, tutorial assistance and other academic or administrative interactions between students and the institution. Evaluation of the package determines its normative congruence or whether the content and curriculum design are compatible with student's perceived career needs. There should be congruence between the student's approach to study and the instructional design of the course. Ideally the media mix employed should suit the learning style of students (Kember 1995).

Collective affiliation is established through the interactions associated with academic support for the courses. Frequency and nature of contacts, the speed of response to student initiated contacts, the provision of local tutorials or the use of telephone or satellite conferencing can all contribute to whether or not the student has any positive feelings of association with the institution. Collective affiliation is also influenced by administrative support or lack of it. The student who meets no administrative snags and has queries answered promptly and accurately develops an impression of a competent professional organisation which the student is happy to associate with. On the other hand, students who encounter overpowering bureaucratic requirements, administrative incompetence or slow responses to queries develop disenchantment and even hostility towards the organisation. Both components dealing with academic

integration have sub-components addressing course evaluation issues (Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

Negative course evaluation is indicated by students who express dissatisfaction with the course and its support. Either these are inadequate for the student's needs or the student is incompatible with the mode of course offering. Kember (1995) says, either way there is lack of normative congruence. Students express dissatisfaction with the course material, the tutoring, assignment marking and course administration. For example, students dislike: inadequate module content, irresponsible and disrespectful tutors, superficially marked assignments and poor communication by administration which may lead some students to miss some tutorials (Kember 1995).

The essence of the collective affiliation side of academic integration is the quality and quantity of contact between the student and the organisation. Personal contact during tutorials is effective at providing collective affiliation. Tutors who assist students with both academic and personal challenges strengthen learners' self-confidence. Direct personal contact is beneficial in building collective affiliation. It is also possible to develop collective affiliation through telephone contact and even by mail. Students' negative reactions to academic staff indicate incompatibility. Students either withdraw or delay completion of programmes due to overbearing, inconsistent and arrogant staff (Kember 1995).

Another element of integration is that of value integration or normative congruence. This denotes whether there is congruence between the curriculum and student's career needs. The instructional design needs to gel with the approach to study of the students and the media package should be congruent with the students' learning style. Academic integration is often strongly influenced by the educational background facet of students' characteristics. Those with limited exposure to the educational system will find it more difficult to integrate with the norms of academic

study. Their ability to adjust will be influenced by their goal commitment. To be successful a student has to learn the rules and integrate behaviour with the accepted norms. Sometimes working with other students in groups helps learners to remedy cases of normative incongruence (Kember 1995).

Both positive and negative academic integration have sub-components for an approach to learning. Academic integration has deep approach while academic incompatibility has surface approach. The motivation sub-components are intrinsic motivation for the positive track and extrinsic motivation for the negative. The course evaluation sub-components are labelled positive and negative respectively. The final sub-component refers to language and reading ability. Students on the positive track express enjoyment from reading. Students on the negative track struggle with language ability in courses which normally rely on reading. Collective affiliation and normative congruence apply across the academic and social integration. Students with limited educational experience find difficulties achieving normative congruence with the academic demands and conventions. For example, they may find that their conception of academic study is inconsistent with that expected by faculty. Collective affiliation between students and faculty and/or institution or among groups of students can have a very positive influence on student progress. Collective affiliation is likely to develop through positive experiences of personal contact, though such contact can also damage relationships if the students are disenchanted with the nature of the experiences (Kember 1995; Lowe 2005).

Chen (1998) notes that the implications derived from Kember's model have received much attention from distance educators and organizations. Due to that model, many are working to improve academic integration "by developing collective affiliation and ensuring congruence between student expectations and course procedures" (Moore and Kearsley 1996: 210). Improvement of academic integration increases the rate of students' successful completion of DL programmes (Kember 1995).

Kember's theory can help the teacher to identify at risk students and prepare them for remedial tutoring and support than the students that are not at risk (Young 1998). Dillon in Kember (1995) argues that, unlike other researches in DL, Kember's model explains the interrelationships among learners and their contexts, learning and instruction, organization and context, and culture and policy. The model suggests policy and practice recommendations which link the principles of instructional design and the provision of learner support. Rarely are these two important elements of DL addressed in the same model. Kember's research identifies practical approaches to the design of instruction which can be used to meet the needs of learners with different styles of learning. His research on deep and surface learning translates into specific recommendations for both course design and learner support. Although it focused on open learning, the model highlights understanding of DL designs and systems ( Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

In Kember's model, academic support to DL students includes pre-prepared learning materials that are delivered or transmitted to the students. These can incorporate media such as audio and video, video discs, computer assisted learning and home experiments kits. Even today when multi-media is widely available, print is still the most common medium. Some support services via the technical medium can operate while the course is in progress and involve human interaction. Academic support services concern interactions that facilitate learning progress. These may include video links, outreach visits, contact tutorials and written assignments. Other types of support services associated with learning at a distance are administrative support like enrolment advice and counselling (Kember 1995).

While in his theory, "Attrition rates are a performance indicator used to assess the success of educational institutions" (Kember 1995:22) in my study, I used completion time of the programme as the indicator of success in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU. The aim in this study was to determine, "the factors which are

most important in contributing to students completing a course and satisfying their academic goals” (Kember 1995:23). This study did not only have students’ intrinsic interest but also had policy implications. It sought to suggest ways to arrange courses and how they are taught in order to maximize the chances of students to successfully complete the programme. This theory explores academic and social integration to increase learner success. Another strength of Kember’s model when compared to others is that it conceptually links theories relating to psychological, social, economic, organisational and instructional factors which impact on adult learners’ progress in educational programmes. Hence Kember’s theory was vital as a guide in my exploration of structures and strategies used by B.Ed. students to balance their social and academic commitments in order to cope with the DL programme at ZOU.

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter defined key concepts and discussed theories that guide adult learning. The theories are: andragogy, approach to study, constructivism and Kember’s open learning model. The key concepts are: support structures, strategies, adults, cope and DL. Andragogy gave the characteristics of adults which influence how they learn and how they should be supported. Approach to study gave the academic, contextual and technical factors that influence the way people study. These include demands by the teacher, the content, the purpose of learning and the learner’s perspective. These factors determine whether the learner should use deep, surface or strategic approach to study. This information helps the institution and faculty to develop appropriate support mechanisms necessary for adult learner success. Constructivism revealed how the recognition of learner autonomy and the facilitator role of the teacher assist institutions when they develop and organise learning materials and support like modules, ICT and active learning in contact tutorials for students. Finally, Kember’s open learning model reinforced most aspects discussed in other theories and added the learner’s social dimension. It located adults in a DL context where the institution

and all its support mechanisms are interwoven with the influence of the learner's social circle comprising: the family, employer, workmates, colleagues, relatives and friends. The strengths and weaknesses of these theories helped in understanding the study situations that either stimulate or constrain adult learners. This helps in developing best practices in preparing study materials and teaching strategies for adult learners. This chapter also paved the way for the review of literature in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with literature review. Reviewing of related literature helps to sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of a research. It familiarises a researcher with the latest developments in the area of study. Literature review identifies gaps in knowledge and helps one to discover relationships among different research results by comparing studies. Review of literature helps in the identification of conceptual definitions and research methods used by other researchers (Bless and Achola 1988). Identified strengths and weaknesses from previous studies in literature help researchers to identify what to include and avoid in their studies.

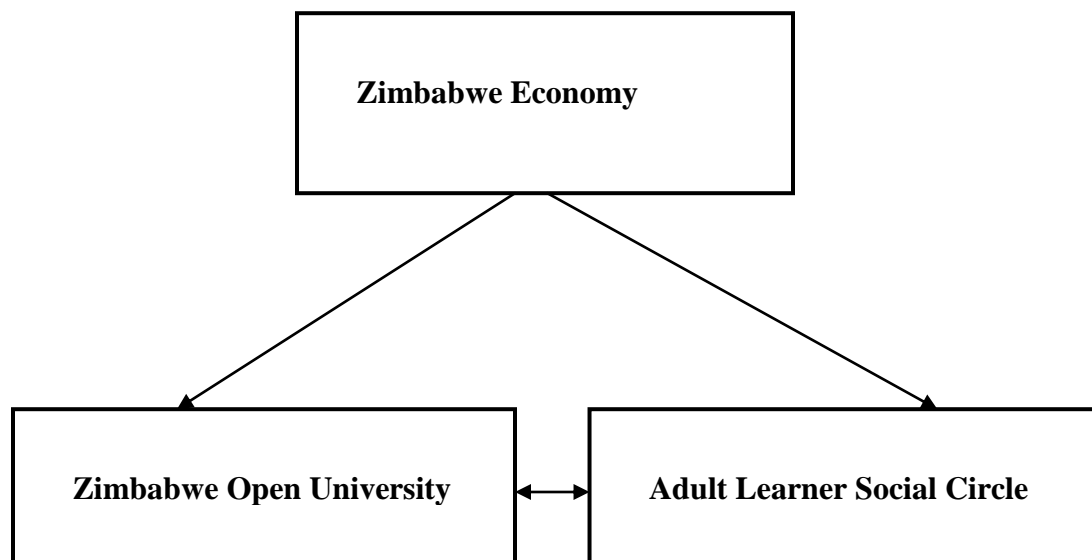
Ideal DL strategies suit learner needs with contact tutorials at local centres, online real time chats and email discussions with staff and other students. Learners are allocated materials and tutors for specific support (Rowntree 1992; Tait and Mills 2001). My literature review addresses issues in the adult's academic environment which have implications on student coping with DL. My theoretical framework covered all facets of the academic environment and the support of the DL programme by the institution. That includes the study package, mediated lessons, interaction via assignments, tutorial assistance and any other interactions between the student and the institution of either an academic or administrative nature (Kember 1995). My study focused on: the adult learners' context, learner characteristics, social and academic integration, administrative support, technology, instructional

support and student funding (Kazmer 2000). I reviewed literature in those studies that were relevant to my study (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010).

### 3.2 The DL Context

DL is now the educator of many adults. The reason for this is the fact that it suits their work and social situations. It also has the financial benefit of students earning a salary while studying and being able to hold on to employment when many people are unemployed (Corry and Lelliott 2001). Like Mugabe (2005) indicates for ZOU (P.4), at the Witwatersrand University over 80% of respondents of a study sample said that studying through DL allowed them access to study which they would not normally have (Corry and Lelliott 2001).

**Figure 2 Adult distance learning support context in Zimbabwe**



The DL context is the environment set by the teachers and the institution, through the course structure, curriculum content, methods of teaching and assessment. Students

perceive and interpret the teaching context and adopt an approach to study that helps them to meet the demands of the teachers and the courses (Tam 1999).

ZOU is a state university. It was set up to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged groups who had limited access to formal education in the 'conventional' universities (Benza 2001; Pfukwa and Matipano 2006). ZOU is sponsored by the government of Zimbabwe. In 2008 the Zimbabwean economy declined (P.7) to world record levels and inflation rose beyond 231 million percent (Reporter 2008) leading to a massive national brain drain. The ZOU Vice Chancellor, Primrose Kurasha, later thanked the government for the support to reduce staff turnover which had risen to, “-a high of 64% in 2008” (Kurasha 2011:2). Like other DL providers, at ZOU, in some programmes open access policies provide entry to higher education for those who do not meet the traditional entry criteria. A second chance is also provided for those who left school early or did not obtain sufficiently good grades for university entrance. Evidence exists that efforts of the students, the quality of instruction and support provided by the institution have a greater impact upon student progress than the students' entry qualifications and characteristics (Kember 1995; Tam 199).

Figure 2 illustrates the adult learner support context at ZOU in Zimbabwe. All my B.Ed. programme participants were employed adults who financially sponsored themselves. Ideally, apart from ZOU, adults could only get learner support from their social circles comprising: the family, employers, workmates, colleagues, relatives and friends. As a state university, ZOU depends on the Zimbabwean government and economy for its funding. Its students also depend on the same economy for their employment. This creates a tripartite interdependence in the learner support triangle among the Zimbabwe economy, ZOU and the adult learners.

New adult students face emotional and social circumstances that significantly impact on their learning (Merriam 2001). For instance, women in Tanzania were found

lacking confidence in their ability to cope with tertiary DL (Bhalalusesa 2001). As a result, adult learners need continuous on-course counselling by tutors and more supportive help, in areas divorced from academic studies, than do students in conventional residential institutions (Tait and Mills 2001) to socially integrate.

DL students often enter unfamiliar learning environments and meet new technology which they should adapt to in order to succeed. Students learn without classrooms and with limited face-to-face contact with teachers and peers. Computer and audio-conferencing permit class discussions without classes meeting. Phone calls and e-mail replace visits to lecturers' offices. This creates a problem of isolation from the cognitive and affective domains provided by human contact (Galusha 2006 ).

This psychological gap introduced by the separation of learners from educators accounts for challenges faced by most of the adult learners in DL. According to Moore's theory of transactional distance (P.19), this increases transactional distance while reducing dialogue between the learner and the teacher. The institution should devise strategies for welcoming students, orientating them and developing their sense of belonging to the systems they are inviting learners to (John 2001).

Students need to learn how to use ICT within the programme and in the context of group virtual learning. The group needs to learn together how to incorporate technologies into their school work and social life so as to create a suitable learning environment. They also need to develop interpersonal relationships in a virtual environment and to balance priorities of work, home and school (Kazmer 2000).

At OUHK feelings of isolation were found to be one of the causes of the high dropout rate (Aylward 2001). It is important that the ways in which course teams design the learning experience should be based on an understanding of the context in which students operate, including their multiple needs, approaches to study and

different conceptions of learning (Buckley et al 2010). Due to the above reasons, my study explored the support structures and strategies used by adults at ZOU to cope with studying in isolation, as well as social and technological uncertainties in DL.

### **3.3 Learner characteristics**

A claim was made (P.7) that, there is a tendency to offer DL systems from the institution's rather than the learners' viewpoint (Sweet 1993). Majority of students who enrol in DL come from traditional educational institutions. Students in traditional classroom settings are often not taught the skills of self-directed learning and learning-how-to-learn which are critical for success in DL. These students enter DL with self-concepts shaped by the realities of a classroom experience that taught them to be dependent and passive. These are two potentially fatal learner attributes in a DL context.

Lowe (2005) quotes Knowles (1975:14) putting it succinctly that, "most of us only know how to be taught, we haven't learned how to learn". Lowe (2005) quotes Paulo Freire (1983:58) criticizing the negative effects of the "banking" metaphor that describes most traditional school instruction as nothing more than "an act of depositing" where students passively "receive, memorize, and repeat" the "communiqués" issued by the teacher with the intention of regurgitating them in examinations. Consequently, most students who enrol in DL from traditional learning backgrounds are ill equipped to handle its unique demands of study.

Many DL institutions treat new students as if their previous education prepared them in the skills of self-directedness, organizing one's learning, time management, academic self-assessment, and ICT skills. To provide appropriate institutional and instructional support, DL institutions should help new students to acquire and develop the skills of self-directedness and learning how- to-learn (Lowe 2005).

Knowles' andragogy theory shows that learners' personal attributes like physical condition, maturity, experience and interest affect adults' ability and willingness to learn. ZOU enrolled into the B Ed programme, rural and urban students with Ordinary Level Certificate with at least grade C in English Language. Most of those were employed teachers with administrative experience (P.4). A few were from other economic sectors, in administrative posts and with Ordinary Level plus professional qualifications equivalent to the teaching diploma, but had no university learning experience.

In some programmes open access policies provide entry to higher education for some students who do not meet the traditional entry criteria and second chance learners who left school early or did not obtain sufficiently good grades for university entrance. Consequently, we have a divide between the expectations of the university and their previous learning experience (Buckley et al 2010). Johnson (1998) echoes Knowles' andragogical assumptions (P.23) by saying that, DL students are more successful than formal education students because they seek higher education with the desire to succeed. They are older, more self-motivated and goal-focused.

### **3.3.1 Students' goal focus**

Adult students are not only successful in DL because of maturity to age around 25 years (P.14), but they are kept self-motivated by achievement of goals (Jarvis 1995). Not only do DL students have to be able to self-start to cope, but that they also have to be: focused, responsible and persistent (Lowe 2005). Kember (1995) notes that the level of educational goals was found to be a strong influence on college completion (Sewell and Shah 1967). Students need not only focus on attainment of the degree, but also have to examine their learning style since what they learn to attain the degree is equally important. They need to engage in deep learning based on the andragogical 'need to know' assumption (P.23) and intrinsic motivation (Kember 1995; Carnwell and Harrington 2001; Blunt and Yang 2002; Venter 2003). This is

based on the educational philosophy that the foundation of higher education assumes that the adult learners have a primary responsibility for their own motivation. This does not suggest that the external environment cannot be facilitative but that it does not encourage responsibility (Pew 2007).

If one is driven to succeed by one's own beliefs, morals, desires and goals, then access to intrinsic motivators is instant and not dependent on the availability or cooperation of external sources like money or motivational speakers. Acquisition of knowledge or critical thinking skills come from a personal sense of accomplishment due to one's maturity as an individual. Achievement of personal goals outweighs any external reward. External gratification, while desirable and not to be discounted, is secondary to an internal sense of accomplishment (Pew 2007). By growing older, the mature adult becomes more independent and self-directing. "When a person becomes older, his motivation to learn comes more from his own self" (Knowles 1984:12). Hence adoption of self-motivation techniques is necessary to succeed in DL.

### **3.3.2 Planning**

Planning is preparation in advance of a semester to ensure students' successful completion of courses with minimum stress, but more enjoyable learning. Planning involves proactive announcements and keeping up (Kazmer 2000). Proactive announcements on semester programmes inform learners about the courses on offer and the teaching timetable to psyche them to prepare their own schedules. Planning includes giving students materials and assignment due dates ahead of the semester. This helps students to incorporate study goals into life goals and it also enables them to organise, in advance, support they need from families and employers.

Keeping up is having work done on time by tutors and students to avoid assignment piling. This requires discipline and trains students to plan ahead in order to complete their reading and written work according to schedule. ZOU appeared to face challenges in its planning since it was unable to publish examination results before

registration every semester (Izuagie 2001). That disrupted the beginning of semesters as students and lecturers were often not sure when to start.

It takes self-sacrifice for adult learners to succeed (Kember, Ying et al. 2005). Tough suggests that, the self-drive in adult DL students to set own deadlines, get the proper resources and find the time to learn, increase motivation to learn (Baugmarter 2003). The more energy a student devotes to contributing time and thoughts to each class, the more learning and satisfaction they gain (Kazmer 2000).

Valentine (2002) echoed the essence of the andragogical self-direction, need to know, and motivation to learn assumptions in adults (P.23) as she argued that not all students are suited to DL and not all subjects are best taught via this medium. More mature students are the most likely to succeed with DL. Students over 50 years were found with higher course completion rates than other DL students (Galusha 2006). Valentine (2002) draws from Threkeld and Brzoska (1994) that success comes with ability to tolerate ambiguity, to be autonomous and flexible. She further cites Hardy and Boaz (1997) who found that, compared to most face-to-face learning environments, DL requires students to be more focused, better time managers and to be able to work independently and in groups. Many distance learners are different from residential undergraduates in that they are already in professions. They have well defined goals and are more motivated.

Distance learners enjoy being part of a virtual learning community. In line with andragogical assumptions (P. 23) and constructivist views (P.40), students in these communities feel less pressure to perform individually and more pressure to collaborate and be part of a team. Being involved in a collaborative learning process is an important part of forming the foundation of a learning community. When this is not encouraged, participation is low and dialogue is absent (Valentine 2002).

### **3.3.3 Previous distance learning experience**

Adult learners with prior DL experience are more likely to succeed in programmes than those with conventional experience only. Kember (1995) found that new students to DL are at risk because of the low state of academic integration following the long break since past study activity. It was found that success in the initial assignments leads to growing confidence. It also heightens new students' academic integration. Students may initially find integration difficult and can be classified along the external attribution and academic incompatibility track in Kember's model. However, the model emphasizes students' progress towards academic success rather than concentrating on the more negative outcome of incompatibility (Kember 1995).

Academic integration is strongly influenced by the educational background facet of learner characteristics. Students with limited exposure to the educational system find it more difficult to integrate with the norms of academic study. Most adults enter DL with few skills in learning-how-to-learn and self-directed learning. They get into DL with an external locus of control. An external locus of control is a psychological state in which students perceive that persons and events external to themselves have a controlling influence over the course and direction of their life. Adult learners with this perspective have been, in Freire's language, "domesticated" by the traditional educational experience to see the learning experience as something that happens "to" them from the outside. The most critical need for adult learners at that point in DL is to receive targeted institutional and instructional support that will enable them to overcome the disorientation of a new learning experience (Lowe 2005).

Their ability to adjust will be influenced by their goal commitment. Academic study is like a game with rules, conventions and codes of behaviour. To be successful, a student has to learn the rules and integrate behaviour with the accepted norms. Sometimes working with other students in groups helps learners to remedy cases of normative incongruence (Kember 1995). My study explored how my participants

addressed their demographic needs in order to cope with DL. I examined participants' experiences with their goal focus, planning and educational past to discover the structures and strategies they used to cope with DL.

### **3.4 Integrating study and social commitments**

Success in DL involves social and academic integration discussed in Kembers' theory (P.43). Social integration encompasses enrolment encouragement, study encouragement and family environment. It involves adaption of the students' entry characteristics to the study programme, work, family and other environmental commitments. Students with adverse characteristics, in this domain, will have greater difficulties in integrating the demands of study into the home environment (Kember 1995).

The attitudes of family, employers, workmates and social colleagues are important in determining the success of integrating study into DL students' lives. If these attitudes are sufficiently supportive, adverse circumstances can be overcome (Kember 1995). Research found that such an approach accelerated the move towards independent study. There is need to develop learning environments to suit the needs of DL students. Buckley et al (2010) cite Thorne (2003) who recommends working with individuals to help them to recognize that who they are will impact on what they want to do and how they are able to achieve their goals.

Students learn through DL because they are tied to particular locations by either family or employment commitments. While entry characteristics have no direct influence on learner progress, the students' background influence the difficulties which should be overcome if social integration is to be successful. Students admitted into DL may not have the academic qualifications expected of those who enter university direct from high school. They might have had little or no contact with an

academic environment. So, they would be unused to the expectations and the academic conventions of universities. Most of the students may never before have had to fit study demands into their schedule of work and family commitments. Such adjustment requires help from friends, family and the institution. Kember's theory states that support from employers, workmates, colleagues, family and friends makes a difference to the success or otherwise of the integration process. The success of integration results from re-negotiation of previously accepted social positions and status. The newly negotiated position results from sacrifices by both the student and others in the student's social environment (Kember 1995).

Students who succeed in social integration rely on sacrifice, support and negotiation of arrangements. These mechanisms operate in the four domains of: work, family, social lives and the self (Kember, Ying et al. 2005). To strike a balance, students keep their families and employers apprised of their school schedules and demands on time and they in turn, help maintain the balance by scheduling tasks around the student's school work or helping complete work left undone. Some families help with taking over child care duties to allow mothers study time. Students' failure to integrate makes them feel disconnected from the DL community and frustrated with their inability to fulfil their responsibilities (Kazmer 2000). Balance in DL can also be achieved by regular contact with the institution to keep students from feeling isolated from peers and instructors (Kazmer 2000). I explored strategies that participants used to establish social integration in order to cope with DL.

### **3.5 Academic integration**

Academic integration in Kember's model (P.49) is a pre-requisite to students' success in DL. It deals with academic focus on approach to study, motive, course evaluation and language. Academic integration covers all facets of a programme and elements of administrative, academic and social contact between the institution and

the student. Academic integration is in two forms. Collective affiliation develops through interaction between tutors and students, or by good impressions created by efficient operations. It also includes moral and value integration between the academic conventions and norms of the institution and the perceptions and performance of the student. Kember's model splits academic integration into the positive and negative tracks. The positive variable is called academic integration while the negative variable is called academic incompatibility. Both have four aspects measuring: study approach, motivation, course evaluation and language ability (Kember 1995).

Integration is the degree to which the student is able to adapt into the academic environment and to accommodate the demands of a university. When a student's collective affiliation and moral or value integration are insufficient then they have low normative congruence which causes difficulties in coping with the programme (Kember 1995). In order to achieve success; both sides should strive to develop a sense of belonging between the student and the institution. Normative congruence is the degree of fit between the student's and the institution's expectations of each other. Universities have formal expectations posed as assignments, tests and examinations. Faculty may have expectations of students in the form of academic norms and conventions on these examinations and assignments which are not explicitly stated. My study explored how adults used ZOU structures and their own strategies to integrate and cope with DL. Illustrations of academic integration aspects of the DL programme are in the subsequent administrative and instructional support.

### **3.6 Administrative support**

Students' performance in DL can be improved by academic integration. Lowe (2005) cites Tallman (1994) and Gibson (1996), who found that the variables that are significant to student persistence are: orientation, level of commitment, early faculty

contact, academic developmental strategies like self-confidence and self-perception, and affective support for emotional encouragement and motivation to students (Turnbull, 1986; Tinto, 1987, 1990; Tallman, 1994; Gibson, 1996).

Social, emotional, psychological and spiritual facets play a vital role in students' understanding of the academic experience. Institutional, instructional, emotional and interpersonal variables play a significant role in student progress. Appropriate support must be provided to ensure academic success and degree completion by DL students. Institutional academic support includes: provision of competent and credentialed faculty, competent and knowledgeable staff, quality materials, appropriate delivery technology, and other material resources. Instructional academic support refers to the instructional design of courses, the interaction with faculty and tutorial assistance. Relational support is the affective aspect of learning where teachers encourage, motivate, and nurture students. Relational support is offered emotionally and attempts to strike a balance with the cognitive support (Lowe 2005).

Pew (2007) says that institutions must create learning environments that let students draw on the internal resources that brought them to university. In Kember's model, academic environment embraces all facets of the DL programme including: administrative and academic support systems, the study package and multi-media delivered lessons. Academic support includes: telephone or contact tutorials that assist students to understand the content in the package or telecommunicated lessons. During tutorials and student support services, academic integration is achieved through developing collective affiliation and ensuring normative congruence between student expectations and course procedures (Kember 1995).

DL students are de-motivated and inhibited from success by lack of: faculty support, student support services and also by high start-up costs (Galusha 2006). Students are likely to integrate through local liaison officer or facilitator than with an impersonal bureaucracy (Kember1995). Basic student needs to cope with administrative

adaptation are: responsiveness, access to materials, contact points and scheduling. Students enjoy DL when administrative questions are answered quickly. They prefer administrators and tutors who are virtually available during evenings and weekends as they are the times DL students do their school work (Kazmer 2000; Lowe 2005).

Kember's model has policy implications. Given the reluctance of DL students to contact tutors, some colleges have policies for tutors to make introductory telephone calls to new students, or to any not attending tutorials, or those late with assignments. Higher levels of contact between students and the college are associated with student success. Significant relationship was found between feedback interval and success. Increasing the levels of student-tutor contact increases programme completion rates. Sherry (1996) argues that while faculty blame the high dropout rate among post-secondary students on poor time management and procrastination, in a study of the effectiveness of university-level courses in Alaska, Sponder (1990) found that the university support network, miscommunication between students and teachers, and lack of course relevance to students also have negative repercussions. Kember's model says that student progress is enhanced by tutor-student contact as it helps in collective affiliation while advice helps students in social and academic integration.

Collective affiliation refers to a student's sense of belonging as a valued member of the institution including affiliation, status and recognition (Lowe 2005). There has to be sufficient contact and communication between students and the college. Sherry (1996) cites Garrison (1990) who argues that the quality and integrity of the educational process depends on regular two-way communication. Without connectivity, DL degenerates into correspondence model of independent study and the student becomes autonomous and isolated, procrastinates and drops out.

The human contact in the academic support system enhances collective affiliation when tutors devote time to tutoring and counselling. All sectors of the college can communicate with students through: telephone, mail, electronic mail, video link or direct face to face contact. Mail can be used for submission and return of assignments, marks and comments. It can also be used for counselling students. Telephone can be used for exchange of information and contributes to collective affiliation. For students to experience a positive feeling, they must either be able to get straight through to their tutor or have their call returned quickly (Kember 1995)

DL colleges are encouraged to introduce systems for faculty and staff to initiate contact with students. While some teachers ascribe students' failure to learn to lack of motivation and inadequate entry qualifications (Kember 1995), DL teachers should have attitudes that encourage meaningful learning approaches that inhibit negative influence on quality of learning. To succeed, the DL teachers' role should encompass motivation, facilitation and catering for students' pastoral needs. My study explored ZOU structures used by adults to integrate and cope with DL.

### **3.6.1 Regional centre support**

The fact that DL is a decentralized and flexible model reverses the social dynamics by bringing the school to students instead of students to school (Sherry 1996). ZOU supported learners by establishing regional centres in ten provinces of Zimbabwe (P.5) to get the university near students. A DL delivery team requires well-trained material developers, teachers, site facilitators, and administrators (Sherry 1996). At ZOU, the principal administrator of the regional centre is the regional director. The director handles logistics, acquires equipment, and provides training and support. Each programme has a regional programme coordinator who attends to students' academic needs, supports students through the difficulties of study (Tait and Mills 2001), and supervises tutors. Clerical staff process requests for equipment acquisition and repair, as well as reproduces and distributes course materials.

While in conventional education, teachers interact directly with students, prepare support materials and are autonomous in their classroom, in DL teachers' communication is mediated by technology and other partners like editors, designers, producers, technicians, media specialists, local tutors, and site facilitators who collaborate to produce and disseminate quality DL programmes. There is need to plan and coordinate staff and clearly define the role of the teacher (Lowe 2005).

The most important factor for successful DL is a caring, confident and experienced teacher who is at ease with the equipment, uses the media creatively and maintains a high level of interactivity with the students. The teacher is the common thread throughout the DL process. The teacher must be appropriately certified for the level, knowledgeable in the subject and trained in effective DL strategies. The teacher is responsible for the subject matter, preparing lesson plans and producing instructional modules, selecting support materials, delivering the instruction effectively, determining the degree of student interaction, and selecting the form of assessment (Sherry 1996). Teachers must be motivated to prepare adequately for classes. Part of the responsibility for motivation lies with the administration and its support of DL. Valentine (2002) cites Inman and Kerwin (1999:586) who argue that, due to the new role for teachers in DL, administrators must provide them with the time, the tools, and the training to meet their new responsibilities.

Sometimes learner support in DL is compromised by administrators' poor prioritization in provision of equipment and other requirements. Valentine (2002) cites Sherritt (1996:4) who found in higher education administration that,

For whatever reasons, higher education administrators and politicians understand the need for technology. But, lacking the heart for distance education, they cannot bring themselves to support it with adequate personnel, simple supplies, and a reasonable operating budget.

This attitude from administration trickles down to the teachers and students. Administrators need to carefully weigh their goals and objectives when taking on DL programmes. Keegan (1995) indicates that the challenge could be in designing cost-effective and educationally-effective systems of technology that permit electronic teaching of students face-to-face at a distance (Valentine 2002).

Few teachers have sufficient training and experience to be effective distant teachers and use technology successfully in their classrooms. At ZOU, Izuagie (2001) found that most lecturers had a master's degree and used the conventional methods of teaching that trained them. Sherry (1996) indicates that proper training helps DL teachers to change their method of teaching and give more attention to advanced preparation, student interaction, visual materials, activities for independent study, and follow-up activities. She further cites Schlosser and Anderson (1993) who identify the skills which teachers must be trained in to assume the role of distance educators. These include: understanding the nature and philosophy of DL, identifying learner characteristics at distant sites, designing and developing interactive courseware to suit each new technology, adapting teaching strategies to deliver instruction at a distance, organizing instructional resources in a format suitable for independent study, training and practice in the use of telecommunication systems, becoming involved in organization, collaborative planning, and decision-making, evaluating student achievement, attitudes, and perceptions at distant sites and dealing with copyright issues .

At the Open University Hong-Kong (OUHK) tutors support learners through: marking and commenting on students' assignments, providing telephone support and contact tutorials. To promote andragogical and constructivist learner independence and self-direction, students engage actively with the self-instructional course materials designed to promote interaction with *inter alia*: objectives, activities, in-text questions and feedback (Aylward 2001).

Learner support takes many forms. Lecturers may visit the distant site or students may visit the study centre. Audio and video teleconferences or interactive chats with tutors and colleagues are two real-time alternatives to site visits, office hours or telephone calls (Sherry 1996).

Sherry (1996) draws from Porter (1994), that interaction and support may also occur when students e-mail or fax questions to tutors or colleagues, or post them on electronic BBSs. Tutors and peers also respond at their convenience. Frequent teacher-student interaction enables the teachers to know the students better than if their only contact were via a televised image from a distant classroom. Students also need guidance in reaching their tutors, organising information, completing and submitting assignments (Sherry 1996). I explored support structures used by adults to interact with ZOU regional centres in order to cope with DL.

### **3.6.2 Student support services**

Kember's model advances a student support services format that enhances collective affiliation and normative congruence. This is best achieved by a policy of localizing support services to a study centre network or to local liaison officers. ZOU regional student support services units had specialist counselors (P.6). Among the roles of student support services staff are: building collective affiliation through a tutoring programme, assisting students to reorient their conceptions of knowledge and adapt to the conventions of tertiary study, enhancing collective affiliation by assisting students with administrative problems, and counselling students on integrating study demands with work, family and social obligations.

The extent to which each or a combination of the above roles can be performed is at issue. Development of integration is central to Kember's model. Among facets of integration, collective affiliation is more likely to be developed by sustained contact with an individual than a succession of short contacts with diverse people. Further

contacts may not happen unless the student is familiar with the member of the institution. Students may be reluctant to initiate contact with a specialist counsellor but may feel comfortable discussing a problem with a tutor or local liaison officer with whom they have established contact (Lowe2005).

The extent to which roles can be combined depends on the locality of the support staff and the cost effectiveness of separation of the roles. The cost rises if tutoring support is dispersed as it becomes necessary to provide expertise in different subject areas. Like other educational institutions in Zimbabwe, the availability of personnel at ZOU regional centres varied with the geo-political situation. Teacher-student ratio determined the allocation of staff. At the time of this study, the national teacher-student ratios were: 1-45 for primary schools, 1-33 for secondary schools and 1-20 for higher education. In parts of the country with a semi-arid climate, large rural areas have small populations. ZOU regional centres in those provinces had low DL student enrolments which justified low staff numbers. Training of local staff is necessary to provide expertise in guidance and counselling students (Kember 1995).

Student support and counselling services minimize involvement of other staff in that function. Existence of student counsellors is a good support mechanism for referring pastoral issues to qualified people appointed for the counselling role. However, while lecturers feel that their function is teaching and administrators feel that theirs is devoid of advice to students, I believe that all members of the college who have contact with students can contribute to developing students' collective affiliation towards the institution through warmth, interest and perceived competence.

Coolness, tardiness in responding, bureaucratic indifference and incompetence have a negative impact (Lowe2005). DL students are unlikely to contact counsellors. As DL students tend not to initiate contact when at risk, all faculty and administrators who come in contact with students should go beyond the narrow interpretation of their role. Even a few friendly words can entice students to contact a person if at

some later date they need advice. While some staff accepts the pastoral role, attitude change among staff can be enhanced by a workshop which trains staff in awareness of the apprehensions of and the problems faced by new students. Students can be encouraged to talk to staff and staff can discuss ways to help alleviate concerns by students (Kember 1995). My study explored how adults used student support services at ZOU to cope with DL.

### **3.6.3 Student orientation into DL**

Universities often enroll into higher education students who are unfamiliar with academic expectations of DL. Even those who completed degrees as full-time students can be taken aback by the demands of DL. Lowe (2005) cites Gibson (1997) arguing that learners who are socialized to be passive recipients of information, competing for grades on examinations that require regurgitation of facts face challenges when they join DL. They need orientation for: time and stress management skills, self-direction, responsibility for learning, cognitive and metacognitive strategies for which they are not prepared.

Orientation is the way to enable new students to know DL academic expectations. Normative congruence is only achievable through orientation (Kember 1995). Kember cites Bowser and Race (1991) who advocate for orientation of new students to be held in local study centres. While orientation programmes are not always successful, they contribute to student success. Lowe (2005) cites Gibson (1996) who recommends a student orientation that introduces learners' to procedures for learning at a distance and instruction in the process of directing one's own learning and in study strategies. The earlier DL institutions alert new learners of the new learning skills they need, the more beneficial the orientation is to the learners.

Early in the enrolment, the institution should guide students on learning-how-to-learn and self-directed learning skills. Students who are taught to be dependent learners can learn how to be independent and eventually interdependent learners. Such skills

have very little to do with academic ability and personal variables. Lowe (2005) cites Case and Elliott (1997) who found a 20% rise in student retention at Rio Salado College due to orientation.

Orientation enables students to develop academic integration as they socialize with one another through face-to-face, e-mail and synchronous text chats. As they talk about DL problems, they encompass their social life. This integration connects them with colleagues, faculty and administrators. At University of Illinois, students start the programme with the “Boot camp” (Kazmer 2000), a two-week session that DL students spend on campus doing a required course for the degree. This gives them opportunity for: face-to-face communication, shared experience and personal contact during which students develop friendship.

The University of New England in Australia enrolls DL students from rural low socio-economic backgrounds. Most of these students leave school without the educational and cultural capital expected in traditional university entry requirements. Their orientation involves information found on the website covering: course information, how to be a distance learner- the challenges, expectations, commitment required, available learner support, comments from current students, self-assessment resources and techniques, and basic study skills. The print version of that information is mailed to students without access to internet.

New and other students entering university on mature entry have a university preparation programme (tUNEup) in a package comprising five separate units. They cover: Study Skills, Academic Writing, Library and Information Technology Skills and Basic Mathematics and Statistics. Study skills cover effective study techniques, listening, note-taking, reading strategies, time management, concentration and managing examination anxiety. Academic writing covers writing conventions, writing for assessment, essay writing, report writing and referencing. Library and

information skills introduce learners to the use of library electronic resources, indexes and abstracts and conducting advanced online searches and use of Netscape and World Wide Web. Basic Mathematics and Statistics introduce these students to programmes that require them. The programme has a self-remediation section for students' self help. International non-native English speaking students are provided with a tUNEup programme which addresses cross-cultural issues (Kirkpatrick 2001).

During this study, new students at ZOU underwent one day of orientation. Every structure of the institution was represented to inform learners where to find and how to use support systems such as the regional centre and library services before starting the programme. The same day was used to introduce students to programmes. Subsequently, learners started Tough's self-directed learning (Baugmarter 2003).

An effective transition into the DL environment is critical to students' progress. Orientation should forestall student concerns and provide reference materials that they need in the programme. It must include effective study skills, suitable printed materials and recorded videotapes (Pennells 2001). Orientation should acknowledge multiple stages of learner integration (Brescia, Miller et al. 2004). Administrators can benefit from recognition of the difficulties new students encounter in DL. Kember's model shows that successful students in social integration are those who negotiate for study time with family, workmates and friends. Those unwilling to make sacrifices and negotiate end up on the negative track and attributing their failure to factors outside their control (Kember 1995). A good precaution is to provide orientation which counsels students away from external attribution towards social integration. Students should think about their current timetable/schedule and realistically incorporate their study period (Kember 1995). This study explored the structures and strategies used by adults in their entry into and coping with DL.

### **3.7 Library**

A library that is well stocked with books and ICT is the main support facility in DL. Buckley et al (2010) found that students were impressed by the range of data sources Like electronic journals available through links to information gateways.

Over-reliance on print medium has its own problems. Some DL students in South Africa found libraries closed at times convenient to employed students after hours, over weekends and public holidays (Selikow 1998). At ZOU, 67% of the students were unhappy with the library service at regional centres (Benza 2001) as 14313 students shared 15000 library books (Maenzanise 2001).

While Australia incorporated multi-media into DL in 1990 (Moore and Kersey 1996), few rural DL students in Zimbabwe, where many ZOU students live, have access to libraries, ICT connectivity, electricity, telephone and television (Darkwa and Mazibuko 2000; Bank 2000). Chikoko (Unpublished) also found that 81% of the ZOU students had no access to telephone. As a result, I explored the structures and strategies used by adults to meet their library needs and cope with DL at ZOU.

### **3.8 Technology**

DL's relationship to computer technologies offers many promises to education. China uses radio and television systems to deliver classes to a geographically diverse population. In Australia, Curtin University uses compressed video conferencing to reach remote students in Western Australia (Valentine 2002). Audiotapes and lessons sent through the mail were used in correspondence courses to teach subjects. Today, the internet and compressed video make DL to occur in real time. Live video instruction occurs in real time and is the most popular and fastest growing delivery mode in the United States (Valentine 2002).

Technologically assisted education, also called ‘networked learning’, and defined as, “learning in which information and communications technology is used to promote connections: between one learner and other learners; between learners and tutors; between a learning community and its learning resources” (Buckley et al 2010:57). Significant positive associations were found between both deep and strategic approaches to study (P.33) and students’ perceptions of networked learning, and negative associations were found with a surface approach (Buckley et al 2010).

A University College Northampton study found that surface learners were not keen to participate in virtual seminars whilst strategic learners found an opportunity to develop time management skills. Deep learners were comfortable with ICT. They preferred independent study and had a positive perception of gains from computer conferences. Students were positive about the incorporation of technology but concerned about the time needed to become competent. They demonstrated a reflective approach and appreciated various ways knowledge could be interpreted. They benefitted from sharing personal experiences on the online forum site. Hence, a blended curriculum design was recommended (Buckley et al 2010).

The ideal situation is where ICT connectivity at the school, students’ homes and work-places work together (Kazmer 2000). In New Zealand the DL process is such that the ICT is unbundled so that students and their supporters choose to access what they want when they want it (Butterfield 1999). Student technological coping includes: training, appropriate technology use and effect of technology on school work. ICT experts would be on stand-by to assist students with difficulties in using technology. Students are trained in the use of ICT hardware and software for their programme, and technology chosen for studies works well (Kazmer 2000).

Even where it is available, the use of ICT falls short of expectations. Some shortcomings are due to problems with the technology. Others are due to

administration, instructional methods and/ or students. These problems include the quality of instruction, hidden costs, misuse of technology, and the attitudes of instructors, students and administrators. Each one of them has an impact on the quality of DL as they are all interrelated (Buckley et al 2010).

Administration often believes that technology improves the quality of the class while technology does not teach students but effective teachers do. Many teachers do not design lessons that support the available technology thereby compromising the quality of instruction. Research suggests that the effectiveness of education, DL included, depends on preparation and teachers' understanding of students' needs. The same goes for the understanding of the use of technology. Technology should be incorporated in the design and delivery of courses (Valentine 2002).

Besides the cost of the technology, there is the possibility of not utilizing all its potential. Some problems arise from lack of training, some from the instructor's attitude towards use of technology and others are hardware problems. Instructors need to be trained to use DL technology, but usually they are not. Advancement in technology does not amount to effective DL. The best DL practices depend on creative, well-informed instructors (Buckley et al 2010).

Some people suggest that newer technologies are not better than old ones and many lessons learned from the application of older technologies apply to newer technology. Instructors should be trained to take advantage of their experience and be able to adapt that experience to the new environment of DL. Instructors must be trained to effectively adapt their organization and delivery of material to the use of technology. Instructors must have technological skills and confidence to use the various electronic devices in order to be effective in the classroom (Valentine 2002).

Literature indicates a need for instructors to adapt their teaching methods to the DL. Where lecture is not effective, multimedia presentations could be successful. This implies that there must be motivation and preparation time for the instructor. Valentine (2002) cites (Walcott 1994) who found that, faculty need to look at distance teaching from the students' point of view in order to effectively bridge the gaps between classroom and distance teaching. Teleconferencing would be more useful for interaction with and between students than for transmitting course content.

Orientation programmes should acknowledge multiple stages of the integration and acceptance of technology. A successful orientation programme should recognize different levels of technology apprehension, previous exposure, and adoption to an individual's learning style. Programmes might either consider modular implementation throughout a semester or might even embed just-in-time orientation (Brescia, Miller et al. 2004). Apple Computers found that it takes two years for instructors to adjust to working with the tools, implement them successfully, and to integrate them into their curriculum. This implies that teachers need support, when they are learning about new technology, regardless of their classroom experience. As they begin their hands-on training with new technologies, some feel intimidated by the equipment, even in a non-threatening environment. Thus, they need to communicate with colleagues who have gone through this process and are competent to advise them and serve as role models (Sherry (1996).

Some institutions either fail to provide ICT competent staff or to facilitate communication with remote rural students (Galusha 2006). Hong Kong is a technologically oriented place with free local phone calls. OUHK students' non-participation in ICT was found less due to access than it not counting towards assessment (Aylward 2001). This leads institutions to rely on print medium (Bontempi 2003) . Kangai and Bukaliya (2010) found that the majority of ZOU

students were not ready and prepared to use ICT as only 34% of ZOU students were computer literate, 5% had personal computers, 12% had access to computers either at home or at the workplace . Kangai and Bukaliya (2010) also cite (Barnes 1995)who found that a project in Canada found that even when students had access to computers and knowledge about them, students needed considerable time to master the techniques involved in using e-mail for discussions and communications, and searching and retrieving information from remote sites.

DL institutions must know their students' characteristics and the environment in which they operate before introducing technology. They should conduct surveys to determine the extent to which students are prepared to use new technology (Kangai and Bukaliya 2010). Any successful ICT programme must focus on the instructional needs of the students, rather than on the technology itself. Sherry (1996) cites Schamber (1988) who states that it is essential to consider students' ages, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, interests and experiences, educational levels, and familiarity with DL delivery systems. Sherry (1996) also cites Millbank (1994) who mixed audio and video in corporate training and found that the retention rate of trainees rose from 20 % to about 75% after introducing real-time interactivity.

To facilitate andragogy and constructivism while teaching with technology, DL institutions can use technology with flexibility that enables adults to move through lessons anytime, anywhere and at their own pace. Material developers should include logical explanations of how learners can adapt the lessons or material that covers what they need to learn and eliminate the material that is not necessary. To adapt to adults' needs, technology-based learning design must be interactive, learner-centred and facilitate self-direction (Buckley et al 2010).

Materials using adult education concepts in the preparation of lessons must also be developed by the facilitators of DL. They should include student input into their

design and create technology-based lessons which are easily adaptable to make the presentation of topics relevant to those they teach. Following such guidelines ensures that the instruction that is developed is both technologically workable and effective from a learner's perspective (Knowles et al 1998).

Instructors should realize that technicians are an integral part of DL and treat them as such. Valentine (2002) cites Olenski et al (1995) who argue that often communication between the technician and the instructor is not cordial either because the technician's role is unclear or there is a shared perception of a difference in status between the two. Instructors must be motivated to prepare adequately for classes. Part of the responsibility for motivation lies with the administration and its support of the programme.

Successful technological innovations must consider the social and political climate of the university and reinforce the authority of teachers and not undermine it. Little happens without administration buy-in. Administrators cannot expect teachers to be comfortable with technology, use it effectively, and maintain it well, without giving them resources and time. Instructors need access to data links, e-mail, and video links. They need to download and upload resources and lesson plans, consult other teachers, and try out new learning modules. The best way to achieve success is to find the right people rather than the most exciting technology. It is necessary to have teachers who are comfortable, and work well with the media, then give them the technical support they need. Their job is to teach, not to maintain the conferencing software. The more transparent the media are to them, the better service they will deliver. This has a financial payoff. The better a teacher works with media, the less the need for expensive distance delivery coursework like graphics and sophisticated editing resulting in creation of quality product (Sherry 1996). I explored the structures and strategies used by adults to meet ICT needs and cope with DL.

### **3.9 Instructional support**

Instructional academic support refers to the instructional design of courses, the interaction with faculty and tutorial assistance (Lowe 2005) that are meant to help learners to enjoy and cope with their educational programmes.

#### **3.9.1 The module**

A DL instrument for achievement of academic integration through value integration or normative congruence in Kember's model is the module. It gives the basic information on the course. Thus it determines whether there is congruence between the curriculum, learning material and student's interests and career needs. The primary barrier to completing a programme in DL is the skill barrier. It is not a matter of motivation because andragogically adult students enter DL with high motivation and expectation (Knowles, Holton et al 1998). Often the institutions cannot get the materials to new students quickly enough to suit them. They are eager to begin their studies. Usually delay occurs between the time course materials arrive and the time students are expected to submit their first assignment. Motivation is compromised by lack of direction and knowledge (Lowe 2005).

At ZOU, the funding problems deteriorated in 2008 due to the economic and political challenges that Zimbabwe was experiencing (P.7) that the cost of providing DL modules was unsustainable. The university took drastic cost-cutting measures to reduce operational costs. The printing of modules was suspended. Hence some courses were done without modules (Kangai and Bukaliya 2010).

Buckley et al (2010) cite Donnelly (2006) who says that learning is a social experience and interaction is a critical component in any learning environment. The principles underpinning any module/course design embody the notion that learning occurs in a social context through collaboration, negotiation, debate and peer review. There are certain expectations and experiences that students bring which tutors should be aware of when designing course materials (Buckley et al 2010). The

instructional design needs to gel with the approach to study of students and the media package should also be congruent with their learning style (Kember 1995).

Information needs to create learning environments that let students draw on the internal resources that brought them to college. To do that, materials must create situations where students can gain knowledge and skills in critical thinking and problem solving in their disciplines (Pew 2007).

The positive academic integration factor in Kember's theory contains deep approach and intrinsic motivation. The negative academic incompatibility factor has surface approach and extrinsic motivation. For courses to enhance student progress, instructional design should develop intrinsic motivation and encourage a deep approach. Kember (1995) cites Keller (1987) specifying four major conditions to be met for students to become and remain motivated: attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. Though not an easy task, instructional materials should strive to achieve these factors. It has been found that materials emphasizing knowledge transmission induced surface approach to study while those in which facilitation predominated encouraged students to adopt a deep approach. The facilitation orientation has components for interactive teaching. Absence of facilitation and motivation of students in transmission leads to dry presentations of information.

Module content should be participative. Transmission communication systems are of little value in enhancing motivation. Two-way communication systems provide for interaction desirable for both motivation and enhancing a deep approach. Facilitators can try out modules as videotapes, building in interactivity as it suits the learning styles of students and then integrate real-time satellite programmes into their schedule later on (Sherry 1996). Two-way communication encourages interaction if faculty and students use them for discussion instead of faculty insisting on lecturing. Instructional materials should be designed in a motivating rather than a complex,

impersonal style associated with transmission academic writing. Most scholars suggest that study materials should use plain, conversational and informal style of writing that includes didactic conversations. Using such an approach develops a sense of collective affiliation between the student and the teacher, even if the instructor appears in print. Diagrams and pictures are widely agreed to be effective both as learning aids and motivational elements. Use of various media has also been suggested as enhancing interest and motivation (Kember 1995).

Module content should avoid subjecting students under undue pressure. Students adapt approaches to learning to the content and the context of the learning task. They make use of reproductive approaches in circumstances of: high workloads, surface assessment demands, low intrinsic interest in the course, and lack of freedom in the learning environment (Kember 1995). Minimizing surface approach increases pass rates. Programmes that reorient students away from a surface approach are preferred as they are consistent with goals of higher education. (Kember 1995) cites Sparkes (1989) who says deep learning entails grasping concepts and being able to use them creatively. For a module to provide meaningful learning, its content should focus on sequencing key concepts of the subject to ensure that students understand major issues. Students should be equipped with fundamental skills of the discipline so that they can discover for themselves the information they need (Kember 1995). Rather than build a knowledge base, modules should teach students to become self-managed learners that keep themselves abreast of developments.

Concentrating on key concepts instead of covering content is doubly important since heavy workload tends to promote surface approach to study. Research shows that departments that score highly on good teaching allow freedom in student learning and do not impose excessive workloads. Most of their students display a meaningful orientation. Evidence suggests that reduction of content overloaded courses results in a higher quality of learning in spite of reduction of the quantity of factual material

covered (Kember 1995). Sherry (1996) cites White (1987) who corroborates the above view and says that if complex issues are presented in unconnected units, the result may be oversimplification and superficiality. Students must learn to discriminate between "junk" and quality information, to judge reliability and identify distortions, to distinguish facts from persuasion, and to understand information itself.

Module content should be flexible to meet learner needs. Kember (1995) cites Fransson (1977) saying that students use a surface approach when they have little interest in the subject or do not perceive its relevance to their needs. The provision of freedom of learning and materials relevant to students' needs implies flexibility and a range of options within courses (Kember 1995).

The module content should be developed in a sequence that makes it easier to grasp. A course should start with the fundamental concepts and fill in details later. Otherwise students may fail to distinguish key concepts from the supporting details. This becomes a case of horizontalization whereby students confuse principle for example. To promote deep learning, the amount of detail in the module should be minimal to avoid heavy workloads that encourage surface learning. Emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity. Instead of providing extensive coverage of knowledge in a subject, it is better to teach students the skills of applying the information to solve problems and discover information themselves. It is more important for students to understand the key concepts of a subject than to memorize information. This implies top-down sequencing rather than the bricks-building approach. Sequencing of material should be based on learners' understanding and the logical structure of the subject matter. Learning is meaningful when students understand the important concepts and can relate one concept to another because students often fail to relate concepts to the existing knowledge base (Kember 1995).

Sherry (1996) cites Shneiderman (1992) who cautions instructional designers to begin with an understanding of their intended users, and recognize the difference between their outlooks from the designer's own. She quotes Horton (1994:32) who states the golden rule for designers of instructional materials to, "communicate unto others as they would communicate unto themselves". If material writers want the learner to construct an idea which is similar to theirs, they should use images for their presentations which trigger similar ideas in the learner's mind, in view of the learning environment and the learner's prior experiences.

Module materials should be interesting and easy to understand. Sherry (1996) cites Willis (1993) who gives attributes of effective DL material presentation which are: developing appropriate methods of optimizing content and pace, adapting to different student learning styles, using case studies and examples which are relevant to the target audience, being concise, and personalizing instruction. Sherry (1996) draws from Schamber (1988) that material preparation must focus on the instructional needs of the students instead of the content itself. It is essential to consider learners' ages, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, interests and experiences, educational levels and familiarity with DL methods and delivery systems.

Sherry (1996) further cites Willis (1992) who says the instructional material development process should consist of the customary stages of design, development, evaluation, and revision. In designing effective DL materials, one must consider the goals, needs, and characteristics of teachers and students, and also the content requirements and technical constraints. If unusual delivery systems are required, they must be made accessible to all participants. Recognition of the constructivist andragogical principle that adults should contribute in determining the content of their course should be made in good module writing in DL. Sherry (1996) cites Porter (1994) who states that revision based on feedback from instructors, content

specialists and learners should be continuous. Updating of course materials is necessary to keep the subject matter current and relevant.

Instructional material development and production is a team effort. A development team should include subject experts, instructional designers, writers and editors, audio and video production staff, and curriculum developers. It is important to identify these "people resources", and assign appropriate tasks, responsibilities, and timelines, so that quality control is maintained. It is also important that learning modules be delivered on time to mesh with the school schedule and that of service providers (Sherry 1996). My study explored the support structures and strategies that adults adopted when using the ZOU modules in order to cope with DL.

### **3.9.2 Contact tutorials**

Kember's theory (P.48), says contact tutorials facilitate students' academic integration in DL. Contact tutorials are important for: socialization, human interaction, motivation and building a sense of belonging to the class. It is the only time students meet students from other cohorts making them part of the institution. While electronic discussions make it easier for them to fit communication into their schedules, DL students want contact sessions to augment technology (Kazmer 2000).

Collective affiliation can be developed through communication between the institution and students in tutorials (Kember 1995). The human element are important in DL in adapting the study package to students' needs. Kember (1995) cites Sewart (1981) who found that the tutor is required to adapt the study package to learners since adult learners are very heterogeneous. Students also need the attention of the instructors. This may be truer in DL than in a traditional classroom. In a situation where eye contact and proximity are limited, students cannot be disciplined nor affirmed by eye contact and body language. Students may also have a difficult time reading the reactions of the remote location class members. This lack of interaction

causes problems when there is a dissenting opinion that cannot be picked up on/ with non-verbal cues and is misperceived as a verbal attack. This miscommunication can cause problems as the class progresses. It is fair to say that compressed video can magnify the strengths and weaknesses of the instructor. Students are prone to pick up on a lack of organization and direction and respond with apathy and absenteeism (Valentine 2002).

Contact tutorials are an effective learner support mechanism to provide teacher-student and student-student dialogue. Contact tutoring helps because the unpredictability of learning requires human intervention. Buckley et al (2010:61) cite Bates (1990) who states that, “-human tutors are still the most effective way to deal with learning and teaching that requires interpretation and individual analysis”. Human contact is necessary for tutors to respond to learners in face-to-face scenarios and understand them individually more than in computer-mediated environments. When tutors know students personally, they know what their weaknesses and strengths are, and they can provide suitable remedial support (Buckley et al 2010).

Tutorials support students and their learning beyond pedagogical considerations to encompass emotional, social and psychological support. Activities involved in tutorials include: learning guidance, eliciting performance and feedback, assessing performance, and promoting retention and transfer of knowledge (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983)

Proximity and eye contact are important factors in education that are limited in the DL environment. Valentine (2002) quotes McKnight (2000: 2) arguing that while we recognize this connection, in the DL environment they are “both severely and sometimes permanently compromised”. Lecturers are unable to observe the emotions of the students and cannot detect moments of anxiety which limits

lecturers' ability to respond to student needs. The instructor must do all that is possible to overcome the limits of technology and involve the students in an environment of interaction that creates the feeling of a true class (Valentine 2002).

Learning in a real-life context requires the consideration of other factors than pedagogic support. Dialogue or interactivity is one of them. Moore (1989)'s theory on transactional distance (P.19) differentiates between three types of interaction: learner-content, learner-instructor and learner-learner. These are best assured by contact tutorials in DL. Learner-content interaction is often extrinsically induced but during tutorials this is enabled by learner-instructor interaction and learner-learner interaction. Moore identifies roles fulfilled by learner-instructor interaction such as: organisation of activities, presentation of information, and demonstration of skills, modelling of attitudes and values, motivating, stimulating and maintaining interest, application of what is learnt, evaluating progress, and providing information, support and encouragement (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) also found that in addition to the pedagogical role, a contact tutor fulfils many roles including providing guidance, encouragement, feedback, and pastoral activities. . Students benefit from contact with their peers, for learning support and psycho-social support. Students also benefit by establishing relationship with the tutor as well as eliciting verbal and written information. Current and topical issues may be included at short notice adding interest and immediacy. Students learn from each other and also student groups benefit from entropy. However, tutorials need proper management to ensure effective participation by all the learners. Sometimes there may be domination by some and little interaction for other students. Tutorial success relies on the tutor's skills. While students prefer face-to-face tutorials and they are most effective in building collective affiliation, their provision at local level is expensive. Teleconferencing is more cost effective for that purpose (Kember 1995).

Tutorials promote the active learning approach advocated by andragogy (P.26) and constructivism (P.40). Constructivist theory prefers course materials that include participatory activities rather than straight lectures (Aylward 2001). In concurrence, Sherry (1996:339) emphasizes the need to include andragogical learner experience as she quotes Simon (1994) who says, "Human beings are at their best when they interact with the real world and draw lessons from the bumps and bruises they get". She also cites Savery and Duffy (1995) who argue that both situated cognition and problem-based learning are based on constructivist principles in which a learner actively constructs knowledge by interacting with the material to be learned. These views are echoed by Kember (1995) when he cites Driver and Oldham (1985) advocating for constructivist teaching sequence in contact tutorials in order to promote conceptual change. Students need to, through the advance and retreat motion, repeat the sequence of evaluating then clarifying their beliefs against alternative conceptual frameworks. By posing a series of questions, students challenge and reform their conceptions thereby adopting a sense of ownership of the learning goals. Besides that, inquiry learning is a new technique that tutors can use to encourage active learning in contact tutorials. Teachers should not be deliverers of fixed information but, should be facilitators of discovery learning by students, through progressive discourse. Inquiry teaching promotes an environment that tolerates ambiguity and encourages students' questions (Sherry 1996).

Instead of lecturing on the course material, tutors must facilitate activities which provide learners opportunities to articulate their understanding and discuss issues among themselves. This enables learners to move beyond knowing information to application of the knowledge in different situations. B.Ed. Honours programme at the University of Natal supported students with four formal tutorial sessions of six hours each, per module (Bertram 2001). This reduces the students' psychological insecurity which becomes worse when: the learners are geographically isolated by

distance, timetables do not take into consideration their needs, learning materials are in scarce supply and learners are new to DL experience and in an institution without a student services facility (Galusha 2006). The interplay of: presenting, questioning, responding, reacting and structuring determine the success of tutorials. The more opportunity that students have to make their conceptualisations explicit, the more their weaknesses are addressed, and the more concepts to be learned are explored and integrated in students' knowledge (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

Successful DL systems involve interactivity as well as active learning in the classroom. ZOU uses the Norwegian Model which combines mediated distance teaching with local face-to-face teaching (Sherry 1996). However, in 2008 its funding became so unsustainable, due to economic and political challenges that Zimbabwe was experiencing (P.7), that contact tutorial hours were reduced from 10 hours to 4 hours (Kangai and Bukaliya 2010) per semester.

Valentine (2002) found that the pre-dominant use of part-time academic staff during contact tutorials is a common practice in DL. Part-time tutors are the majority of academic staff at ZOU (Izuagie 2001). Yet Valentine (2002) quotes Caffarella et al (1992:3) who found off campus instructors to be, “a demoralized bunch, perceiving poor working conditions, isolation, personal and professional deprivation”. Such tutors are not always convinced that administration is behind DL. The rewards are not always there for the good DL tutors. Valentine also quotes Sherritt (1996: 4) who found that, “Tenure and promotion usually does not recognize excellent off campus teaching”. This attitude is hardly conducive to an effective learning environment for the students. If the administration and instructors are lacking in true commitment, it is bound to have a negative influence on the entire DL experience (Valentine 2002). My study explored the support structures and strategies used by adults to deal with challenges faced in contact tutorials and to cope with DL at ZOU.

### **3.9.4 Study groups**

One aspect that enables academic integration in Kember's model is collective affiliation. Study groups among students are a way of enhancing collective affiliation. DL students' workload includes courses per semester, group work, employment and family responsibilities (Kazmer 2000). Group projects are done outside class time. Their coordination has problems of scheduling and communicating. Adult students are displeased with doing a lot of unnecessary reading (Baugmarter 2003). They prefer group activities. ZOU encouraged students to form district study groups (Benza 2001). While group work does not wholly account for, it significantly contributes to student persistence in DL (Kember 1995).

Peer group interaction is essential for pedagogical and socio-psychological support. Distance educators in the Far View Project developed inquiry learning modules. Collaborative groups of DL students participated in self-discovery activities, using manipulatives and conducted experiments under the guidance of site facilitators, and then discussed their experiences with the tutors during tutorials. Success was shown in the PMN video series through the enthusiastic responses of teachers and students during and after the instructional sessions (Sherry 1996). Group membership benefits students from: group entropy, shared goals, social and psychological support. Group membership encourages regular attendance and creates a sense of being part of a learning community where colleagues can be contacted outside class time (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

Collaborative learning is very important when students are separated by distance. According to research by Palloff and Pratt (2000:6), "collaborative learning processes assist students to achieve deeper levels of knowledge generation through the creation of shared goals, shared exploration, and a shared process of meaning making". DL instructors should encourage collaborative learning among students. (Valentine 2002)

Study groups provide for communal constructivism (Holmes and Gardner, 2006) whereby learners become active parts of a learning community. They support their learning with shared expertise and shared knowledge creation which allows them to claim a role in their own education. Study groups in DL are an acknowledgement that meanings and experiences are socially produced and reproduced rather than inhering within individuals (Burr, 1995) and that the socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions in which students learn are different (Buckley et al 2010).

Sharing ideas in study groups is important to students, even to those who prefer to work on their own. Communal constructivism in study groups goes beyond academic development to drawing on the life experiences of others, both in face-to-face scenarios and through online forums. Such groups benefit further from tutors offering top-up sessions (Buckley et al 2010).

Discussion groups/fora are places where learners draw on colleagues' experiences to develop and learn new skills. They demonstrate broad ways in which knowledge can be interpreted and be seen beyond the academic dimension. At the forum, students benefit others in reflecting upon themselves as learners adapting to a new academic environment. This is influenced by open-ended discussion topics set by tutors on the course after seminars, which encourage students to focus on their experiences and apply them to theoretical principles (Buckley et al 2010).

Charp (1994) in Buckley et al (2010) notes that with greater autonomy, student characteristics such as active listening and working independently without an instructor are crucial for success. Sherry (1996) cites Godfrey (1994) who found that 80 percent of his former students at the University of Victoria possessed such characteristics. Buckley et al (2010) cite Johnson (2007) who found that students who tended to be more active than reflective demonstrated a significant preference for face-to-face study groups while Ellis and Calvo (2004:272) found that "students

who conceive of discussions as a useful way of learning about the subject tend to engage in online discussions in a reflective and meaningful way”. Whereas in face-to-face discussions they learn through the experience of others, in online discussions, they emphasize reflection on problems discussed from a variety of perspectives (Buckley et al 2010).

Deep learning is associated with peer group discussions (Entwistle 1991). At Harvard University, it was found that, students who work in cooperative study groups are inclined to deep learning, to asking challenging questions, and to performing quantitatively and qualitatively better than those who study alone. Cooperative learning is the utilisation of learner groups in order to enable students to maximise their own learning and that of others (Bitzer 2004). Rapmund (2001) found that, learners in study groups shifted from an external to an internal locus of control. They got intrinsically motivated as they felt in control of what they learned. That stimulated them to unlock and liberate their inquisitiveness. They were motivated by their connectedness to one another in the group. I explored support structures and strategies used by adults in study groups to cope with DL at ZOU.

### **3.9.3 Assessment**

The normative congruence component of academic integration in Kember’s model is determined through the assessment component of course evaluation. In the B.Ed. programme at ZOU assessment was done using written assignments, examinations and research projects. Assignments are used in formative while examinations and research projects are used in summative assessment.

Unlike in the conventional systems, the DL teacher is no longer the sole source of knowledge but the facilitator to support students to actively participate in what and how they learn. While, DL students prefer written assignments to be submitted in many small parts rather than a few large chunks (Kazmer 2000), at UNISA students

complained about unsatisfactory help from comments on assignments by tutors (Fraser and Hugo 1996). This was corroborated by Chikoko (Unpublished) who found that at ZOU, 51% of the learners indicated that they did not benefit from tutors' comments on marked assignments. Assessment is now accepted as an integral part of the teaching-learning process and not something that is added at the end of the module. Formative assessment on assignments should be used as a teaching tool which should be part of the programme and module development (Geysler 2004).

Entwistle (1991) cites Thomas (1986) who found that while individual differences between students in approaches to learning and studying remain stable over time and course, the balance between deep and surface learning for the whole class can be altered by the assessment procedure. Setting assessment items that demand surface responses leads to adoption of surface approach while questions that demand reflective, analytical and evaluative answers lead to deep learning. Diagnostic questions that demand meaningful responses rather than the recall of information encourage a deep approach or at least discourage a surface approach, in addition to identifying concepts (Kember 1995). Encouraging students to adopt a reflective approach to learning through formative and summative tasks and discussion opportunities throughout the year was found to inculcate sensitivity and independence in both face-to-face and online learning contexts (Buckley et al 2010).

Entwistle (1991) reports that the nature of the examination affects the form of understanding which students seek when revising for final examinations. Approaches to learning are influenced by lecturers' theories of teaching and by the ways in which knowledge is structured and presented. Sometimes the unintended results are obtained from the teaching-learning process. Teaching and approach to learning have two components - intention and strategy. Some lecturers introduce innovations which are intended to improve the quality of learners, but which in implementation contradict that intention (Entwistle 1991).

Sherry (1996) cites Porter (1994) who found that teacher mediation increases the completion rate for DL courses. Students need tutor support and direction through assessment to make the transition from traditional classroom to self-directed learning environments. Assessments are the tools to help learners monitor their progress and obtain timely feedback on their activities. DL systems need to develop new forms of assessment and evaluation that include means to insure that the student's work is original and authentic. There should also be nationally accepted institutional accreditation standards to insure the quality of DL (Sherry 1996). I explored structures and strategies use by adults to cope with their assessment needs in DL.

### **3.10 Student funding**

A support mechanism that enables both social and academic integration in DL is student funding. Australian DL system publicly funds courses (Moore and Kearsley 1996 ) while student numbers at ZOU declined due to financial hardships (Kurasha 2002). The Zimbabwe government also reduced funding for state universities (Majoni 2005) at a time when the economy had an inflation rate at 231million percent (Reporter 2008). The funding problems became so bad in 2008 that ZOU adopted drastic cost-cutting measures to reduce operational costs. The printing of modules was suspended and contact tutorial hours were reduced from 10 hours to 4 hours (Kangai and Bukaliya 2010) per semester.

Sherry (1996) cites Schlosser and Anderson (1994) corroborated by the Pacific Mountain Network (1994) saying that DL enterprises are partnerships. They are characterized by the integration of many parts working toward a common goal. There is need to ensure cooperation among business, government and the education sector in order to secure sufficient funding for running the DL programmes.

The need for cooperation among DL teams is the continuously rising costs of production. Sherry (1996) quotes Cambre (1991:269) who found that, “local productions in 1962 cost about \$165 per 15-minute program. Today, the estimate for high-quality instructional television programs is approximately \$3000 per minute”. Implementation of DL is resource-intensive. Sufficient money and time must be allocated to deliver whatever courseware is promised.

Sherry (1996) also cites Schlosser and Anderson (1994) who argue that since funds come from DL partners, the DL enterprises need to show a high degree of fiscal accountability. Both government and non-government funding agencies, expect to get the most for their funds. She further cites Holloway and Ohler (1991) who state that many proposals are written without regard for the time it takes to resolve development and delivery problems and Pournelle (1994) who notes that, while technology often improves educational quality, it is not necessarily cost-efficient. I explored support strategies used by adults to cope with financial demands in DL.

### **3.11 Summary**

In this chapter I reviewed literature on international perspectives on adult learner support in DL. I focussed on: the DL context, learner characteristics, and social integration of work, family and study commitments. I further reviewed literature on academic integration. This involved discussion of the institutional support provided for adult distance learners in order to cope with DL. This includes support such as: orientation of new students into DL, support by regional centre staff and student support services, library facilities, provision of learning materials, contact tutorials, assessment and student funding. Literature review provided helpful insights in every aspect. Literature review formed a basis for my exploration of structures and strategies used by adults to cope with DL that would emerge after data collection, analysis and interpretation in the next chapter on research design and methods.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design and the research methods I used in this study. It explains the theoretical basis of the methods that I used to collect, present and analyse data. My explanation includes the population, the sampling frame, the sampling method, the sample size, the data collection methods, the completion rate, and the methods of data processing and analysis (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010). I tried to ensure that the methods that I used enhanced the authenticity of my findings.

#### 4.2 Research design

I used an additive mixed methods design. A mixed methods design has an advantage of using qualitative and quantitative procedures in data collection and analysis (King, Keohane et al. 1994; Creswell 2002). I carried out phenomenological interviews and a questionnaire survey in sequence. The mixed-method design is suitable because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality (Patton 2002). Additive multiple methods aim for comprehensive coverage (Bloor and Wood 2006) of the subject under study. This triangulation enabled me to enhance methodological rigour and provided cross-data validity checks (Patton 2002; Bloor and Wood 2006).

There is a view that a researcher's epistemology is the theory of knowledge which serves to decide how the social phenomena are studied (Mason 1996 ; Creswell

2002; Groenewald 2004). My epistemological position in this study was that data on the structures and strategies used by adults to cope with DL were contained in their perspectives as participants. Bracketing (epoche) in phenomenological research is setting aside pre-judgements and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence (Moustakas 1994). I engaged past and current students in collecting the data. Phenomenological approach strove to understand the subjective world of the participants while the questionnaire allowed me to determine relationships among themes and cross-check the truth of the findings (Scott and Usher 1999; Sofaer 1999; Snyder 2006).

Every method has its limitations and no single method can be trusted to adequately solve the problem of rival factors. Hence I used a mixed methods design because of its ability to compensate the weaknesses of one research approach by the strengths of another (Patton 2002).

I conducted a questionnaire survey to complement the interviews. I preferred the survey because surveys collect data about larger populations than other methods (Scott and Usher 1999). I was able to collect data from ZOU's ten regional centres in Zimbabwe. Besides, surveys maximize the flow of valid and reliable information while minimizing distortions of what the respondents know (Verma and Mallick 1999). Data from the use of the questionnaire were used to augment conclusions from interview data. A qualitative research conducted in isolation from a numeric approach could be used as a rhetorical basis for retaining existing prejudice. Hence I used a combination of approaches to facilitate a clear way of deciding between competing conclusions (Gorard 2001).

#### **4.2.1 The Sample**

My population comprised distance education learners and staff because they are the

key stakeholders in revealing essentials of successful DL. My sampling frame included B.Ed. students and staff at ZOU.

In phenomenological research the phenomenon dictates the method and the type of participants (Groenewald 2004). Hence, I used a purposive sampling procedure to identify participants who had the characteristics that were important and would maximize the possibility of examining a wide spectrum of experiences in my study (Locke, Spirduso et al. 1989). They had pertinent experiences relating to support structures and strategies used by adult learners in coping with DL. I chose purposive sampling because it is considered as the most important non-probability sampling to identify the primary participants. I also based my selection of participants on those who had experiences relating to the phenomenon under study and purpose of my study (Groenewald 2004; Leedy 2010). I did this because additional participants would be selected on the basis of analysed data from the earlier cases (Bloor and Wood 2006).

Long interviews with up to 10 people are sufficient to reach saturation for a phenomenological study (Creswell 2002; Groenewald 2004). I had 12 interviewees. I chose participants because they were knowledgeable and informative (Leedy 1997) about the subject of my study. Purposive sampling is flexible and it helps the researcher to explore the dimensional range along which properties of the emerging concepts vary. That maximizes similarities and differences among information obtained ( Lincoln and Guba 1985 ; Dooley 1995; Ertner 1996; Patton 2002 ).

With the help of the regional programme coordinators, I selected 12 B.Ed. former and current student interviewees from Harare, Mashonaland Central, East and West Regional Centres. The 12 included seven female and five male participants. Five of these were from Harare, 4 from Mashonaland Central, 2 from Mashonaland East and 1 from Mashonaland West regional centres respectively. Among the participants

included 8 who had completed the B.Ed. programme but 2 of these had delayed completion. Another 2 interviewees were in fourth year due to delayed completion as they had previously temporarily withdrawn from the programme. One interviewee was in third year and the last one was doing second year. The second year student was a current member of the ZOU student representative council (SRC). I deliberately chose this interviewee to feel the “pulse” of the SRC at ZOU.

To complement my interview findings, I selected a random sample (Scott and Usher 1999) of 100 B. Ed. students, from the 10 regional centres of ZOU to complete a questionnaire. The distribution of 97 returns out of 100 participants in the questionnaire survey comprised: 34 from Harare, 14 from Mashonaland Central, 13 from Masvingo, 9 each from Bulawayo and Midlands, 7 from Mashonaland East, 3 each from Mashonaland West, Manicaland and Matabeleland North and 2 from Matabeleland South Regional Centres. Random sampling was used because it is free of the systematic bias that may stem from choices made by the researcher. It enables the analyst to estimate the probability of any finding occurring by chance. In addition, the sampling error can only be used to estimate confidence intervals where random sampling is used in the sample selection (Gorard 2001).

### **4.3 Research methods**

The types and combination of strategies used by students to cope with DL varied according to their circumstances (Castles 2004). It required mixed methods of data collection and analysis to get to the truth.

#### **4.3.1 Phenomenological interviews**

I used unstructured in-depth phenomenological interviews to collect data. My epistemological basis for choosing in-depth interviews was that I wanted to know the experiences of my participants and how they thought and felt about their experience (Locke, Spirduso et al. 1989; Suresh 2004). I knew that I could never know their

experiences in the same sense that I know my own thoughts and feelings. Therefore I wanted to get as close to that knowing as possible. Hence my interviews included open-ended comments and questions to create a turf for further probing.

Interviews are a powerful data collection tool because how things are said often discloses more than what is actually said. Phenomenological research identifies the essence of human experience about phenomena. Essence is the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is ‘the final truth’(Moustakas 1994).

Phenomenological research is unique among other human science research methods because it emphasizes descriptions of meaning structures of lived experience from the perspectives of people involved. Opinions are not considered to be lived experience. To arrive at certainty, anything outside participants’ experience had to be ignored (Manen 1990; Osborne 1994; Byrne 2001).

In this case, participants described their experiences and strategies they used to cope with DL. Understanding the lived experiences denotes phenomenology as a philosophy and a method. Hence the phenomenological interviews involved studying a few participants through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. In the process, I bracketed out my presumptions about support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with DL. I relied on participants’ descriptions and explanations of their experiences (Creswell 2002). I wanted to understand the structures and strategies that helped them most.

This “naturalist inquiry” (Lincoln and Guba 1985) was preferred because it investigates complex issues through collection of detailed data (Mason 1996; Patton 2002). Qualitative research focuses on how and why things happen the way they do. It is concerned with participants’ perspectives and why they think the way they do (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996). That makes it epistemologically realistic. Although

they are prone to bias, time-consuming and expensive, I used phenomenological interviews because they explore ways in which social actors interpret the world and their place in it (Groenewald 2004).

In fact, a phenomenological interview enabled me as the researcher to appreciate the participants' emic understanding of social reality rather than rely entirely on my etic perspective of it (Leedy 1997; Cutz and Chandler 2000). This makes phenomenological interviews a flexible and interpretive research method. They qualitatively investigate different ways in which adults experienced and think about (Bloor and Wood 2006) how they used different structures and strategies in coping with DL. The phenomenological interview enabled me to construct meanings, themes and patterns from generated data. The descriptions of the differences and similarities of meaning were a fundamental outcome of phenomenological research (Leedy 1997; Patton 2002). They formed the themes upon which I analysed data.

#### **4.3.2 The questionnaire survey**

The questionnaire was used in this study because standard instructions were given and the structured questionnaire was quick, straightforward and lent itself to easy data analysis (Borg and Gall 1989). While a structured questionnaire had a disadvantage in forcing participants to choose alternatives that might not represent some of their opinions (Scott and Usher 1999; Gorard 2001), it was easier to use in collecting data from the ten rural and urban regional centres of ZOU. It sought to discover the extent to which strategies used for coping in the interview data applied to DL students for purposes of informing ZOU practices and policy formulation.

#### **4.4 Data collection**

To strengthen the trustworthiness of my findings, I used both the qualitative phenomenological interview and the questionnaire survey methods of data collection.

#### **4.4.1 Interviews**

Due to high travel costs and limited time available, I dropped Bulawayo regional centre from my sample for phenomenological interview data collection. I confined my interviews to three Mashonaland regional centres and Harare.

I carried out a pilot test of the phenomenological interview with two former ZOU students who stayed in Chitungwiza Municipality in Zimbabwe. During that time, I contacted and arranged with regional programme coordinators by telephone to confirm the availability of selected participants and scheduled the interviews. I also made final contacts and sought the informed consent (Groenewald 2004) of participants on the penultimate days to interview dates.

My interviews had 12 participants. Each interview was cross-checked with its preceding one in order to improve the focus of questions and verify claims in the earlier interview. Since personal interviews took place in four provincial regional centres, the interviews took six days to complete. Five interviews were carried out at regional centres, two at schools where participants were employed and the other five at interviewees' homes. All the venues were suggested by the interviewees.

My interviews' number of questions and duration varied from one participant to the other. They depended on how elaborately interviewees responded (Groenewald 2004). Their length ranged between 18 to 54 minutes of face-to-face conversations. With the consent of my interviewees, I used a digital audio-recorder to record each interview. The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a few entry questions which incorporated provision for probing within the topics. I creatively designed questions to foster an atmosphere of disclosure (Kazmer 2000). I did so with the hope to make participants do most of the talking while I listened (Leedy 1997). I allowed the respondents to articulate explanations and reasons for their feelings (Ertner 1996; Fraenkel and Wallen 1996).

Where necessary, I allowed participants to switch to their mother tongue for elaboration. I allowed participants to switch language use because the intention in phenomenological research is to understand the world and phenomenon in terms of and as it is experienced by the participant in order to allow the essence to emerge (Moustakas 1994, Groenewald 2004). Data collection interviews continued until saturation, that is, until participants could no longer introduce new, rich descriptions or perspectives (Patton 2002;Groenewald 2004;Maxwell 2005) on the structures and strategies they used to cope with DL.

#### **4.4.2 The questionnaire**

To augment and verify results from interview data, I developed and administered a questionnaire based on findings from the interview. The format of the questionnaire was finalised after identifying salient issues that needed exploration by a survey of a wider sample. The survey consisted of 100 randomly selected (Scott and Usher 1999) B.Ed. current and former ZOU students. Of those given the questionnaire 97 returned the completed questionnaire. All the regional programme coordinators except Bulawayo administered and posted the completed questionnaire to Harare by internal mail. I went to collect those from Bulawayo Regional Centre on my way back to South Africa.

### **4.5 Data presentation and analysis**

I used both qualitative and quantitative data presentation and analysis procedures in line with my data collection instruments above.

#### **4.5.1 Interview data**

The first process was to identify the audio-taped interviews by the pseudonyms of my interviewees in Appendix E. I downloaded the files from the digital recorder into the computer. After that, I played each interview as I transcribed it in long hand. I

typed all the twelve interviews and proof read them. I corrected all the errors to the best of my ability. I re-played each of them several times on my desk-top computer.

Phenomenological analysis of transcribed data is initially more open, tentative and intuitive. Organization and analysis of data begin with horizontalization or regarding every statement relevant to the topic as having equal value (Moustakas 1994). The meaning units are listed and clustered into common themes. It focuses on meaning units of analysis. Those are the smallest segments of text that are meaningful by themselves, to describe themes and patterns in the data (Leedy 1997). I transcribed verbatim data from the audio tape record of each interview.

The first part of the analysis involved coding concepts in the data (Kazmer 2000). I used the NVivo qualitative data analysis programme. In NVivo programme each interviewee is regarded as a case. Therefore, I created a casebook (Appendix E) of the twelve interviewees and entered all their personal and professional characteristics. On the basis of shared attributes like gender, age, marital status, geographical location, educational qualifications, previous DL experience, duration between past studies and B.Ed., enrolment intake into the B.Ed. programme, reasons for studying through DL and work positions I created what, in NVivo, we call sets (Richards 2005). They were 22 sets. I also used the sets as units of data analysis.

The twelve audio and twelve written interview transcripts constituted my internal sources of data. From the transcripts, I drew up about 60 free/child nodes on the basis of sub-themes. In NVivo, free or child nodes are the smallest containers for the ideas and for the coding that gathers data about an idea (Richards 2005) through which the structures and strategies used by adults in coping with DL are identified. Clusters of such containers into themes form the tree or mother nodes.

I then condensed the sixty free nodes into 10 tree/mother nodes on the basis of the themes that came out of the data from interviews. Those themes are what I refer to as the data trees (Appendix F) under which I cite excerpts of interviews in my data presentation, analysis and discussion chapters

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis are interwoven. Data is collected, analysed and interpreted in view of the respondents' feelings, attitudes and beliefs about the subject (Maxwell 2005). The twelve phenomenological interviewees constituted my primary units of analysis (Groenewald 2004). I constantly compared interview to interview data at segment level within and across tree nodes and patterns. These theoretical comparisons are tools for looking at properties objectively rather than naming or classifying them without a thorough examination at the property and dimensional levels (Patton 2002). Constant comparison continued until saturation, that is, when there was no longer need to add information to themes and patterns or their properties. The intention was to understand the participants' perspectives on their experience with the use of ZOU structures and their own coping strategies in DL (Ertner 1996).

Interviews engage the researcher and participant in a mutual partnership as the earlier carefully listens to hear meanings, interpretations and understandings of the latter while the latter is allowed to elaborate, illustrate and clarify events the best way possible. Descriptions of experience are the central focus in phenomenological interviews (Leedy 1997). Data analysis involved synthesizing information from respondents' descriptions of their experiences in order to identify themes and patterns that emerged (Landbeck and Mugler 2000).

Unlike in either ethnography or grounded theory which use observation marks, in phenomenological research the use of spoken or written text as data marks the ideological predisposition of the method. Phenomenological research attempts to

minimize a priori preconceptions about the nature of the data through bracketing and reduction. Bracketing out the researcher's entering predispositions in meaning and interpretation towards the question is recognition of the unavoidable a priori dimensions of the method's attempt to allow the data to speak for themselves as much as possible. Phenomenological reduction used here needs not be misconstrued for the reductionist natural science methodology in which analysis subjects data to cause and effect relationship. Instead, it is a deliberate and purposeful opening "to pure subjectivity" by the researcher to the phenomenon "in its own right with its own meaning" (Osborne 1994; Moustakas 1994; Groenewald 2004).

I had to get to the heart of my subject matter through delineating units of meaning and subsequently clustering those units into themes concealed in the participants' experiences of everyday life in DL. Delineating of units of meaning from data was done by extracting those statements that illuminated the structures and strategies used by adult learners to cope with DL (Groenewald 2004). Such statements were coded into free nodes. I developed clusters of free nodes that contributed towards common themes from different participants' descriptions of their experiences in DL and they became my tree nodes (Richards 2006). Rigorous examination and discussion of the nodes are done under data analysis and discussion chapters to elicit their essence in the holistic context (Groenewald 2004) of the support structures and strategies used by adult learners in coping with DL.

#### **4.5.2 Questionnaire data**

The questionnaire survey data was analysed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) (Miller, Acton et al. 2002). I produced frequency tables (Appendix G) out of the descriptive analysis of the data. I also analysed and presented survey results in cross-tabulations between variables. I used Chi-square and t-tests to determine the significance levels of my results (Scott and Usher 1999; Gorard 2001).

#### **4.6 Validity and reliability**

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. In other words, it is the degree to which research conclusions are sound. Reliability is the consistency with which the measuring instrument yields a certain result when the thing that is measured remains the same. Put simply, reliability shows whether a technique applied several times to the same situation yields the same results every time (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010; Leedy 2010). Validity and reliability help in research to determine how much we can learn about the phenomenon we are studying. They also help to determine the probability of obtaining statistical significance in data analysis and the extent to which we can draw meaningful conclusions from the data (Terre-Blanche, Durrheim et al 2006; Leedy 2010).

To improve the reliability of my data collection instrument, I pilot tested my phenomenological interview with two people (Mason 1996; Maxwell 2005). First person reports of life experiences are what make phenomenological research valid (Moustakas 1994). I bracketed myself and relied on the emic perspectives of the participants' descriptions of their experiences with the support structures and strategies they used to cope with DL. I did this to make my findings credible and dependable. Trustworthiness of research findings lies in the neutrality of its findings (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010). Hence, I audio- recorded and transcribed every interview verbatim to bracket myself and ensure that I extracted participants' meanings that constituted the truth of the research. I gave each participant a copy of the text to confirm that it reflected their perspectives (Groenewald 2004) of what went on during the interviews.

I used the interview and questionnaire so that the strengths of one approach compensated for the weaknesses of another. That enabled me to cross-check findings in order to get close to the truth. I built on the strengths of each type of data

collection while minimizing the weaknesses of a single approach (Patton 2002). I cited quotations from interviewees to enhance the trustworthiness of the evidence (Castles 2004). Statistical analysis of survey data and its comparison with thick descriptions of participants' experiences from phenomenological interviews consolidated the validity and authenticity of findings. Bearing in mind that survey results give estimates rather than the exact truth (Nichols 1991), I cross-referenced survey and interview results within and across themes and patterns (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996) to draw conclusions of my study.

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics deals with what philosophically ought to be done and involves a study of behaviour that considers moral and responsible research (Singleton and Straits 1999). Being ethical in research entails conforming to acceptable professional practice. Ethical practice during research seeks to protect the welfare and rights of research participants (Terre-Blanche and Durrheim 2002). I sought a letter of consent (Appendix A) from the academic registrar granting me permission to carry out this study in 10 ZOU regional centres throughout Zimbabwe.

In respect of their individual rights and autonomy, I also obtained consent from each participant before the interview. I only got participants' consent to participate in interviews after I had explained: the nature and importance of the study, the procedures of the research, the need to and seeking their permission to tape the interviews, that it was voluntary, that they were free to withdraw if they so wished and the confidentiality with which their responses would be treated (Groenewald 2004; De Vos, Strydom et al. 2005). As part of my ethical considerations, I gave my participants my supervisor's and my contact details in Appendices C and D.

I informed my participants on aspects of materials from interviews that would be shared with the public and those that would be kept confidential (Henning 2005). This consideration covered the ethical principle of non-maleficence or protection of participants from harm (Terre-Blanche and Durrheim 2002). Such protection from harm includes physical, emotional and social pain brought to bear on participants by the study (Henning 2005). My study could not invoke any physical harm since I dealt with adults and their learning situation.

I also ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of the data that participants provided (Terre-Blanche, Durrheim et al. 2007b). I asked participants to choose own pseudonyms that we used during the interviews. Confidentiality in this study implies protection of participants' right to privacy such that only the researcher and the participant know the source of information. It includes questions that spawn anxiety or guilt in participants (Henning 2005; Woods 2006). Hence we carried out the interviews in private on a one-to-one basis. I used semi-structured questions. Only participants' pseudonyms were used in the written presentation. For respondents to the questionnaire, confidentiality was ensured by omitting information that would lead to their identity.

My interviews were guided by common sense and moral responsibility (Bogdan and Bicklen 1992). I treated participants' views with respect with regards to honesty and fairness (Soltis 1989). I took participants interests into account in view of beneficence that requires the researcher to design the research in such a way that it benefits participants, other researchers and society (Terre-Blanche and Durrheim et al 2002).

I took ethical measures because deception might prevent insights whereas honesty and confidentiality reduce suspicion and promote sincere responses (Groenewald 2004). Hence, I ensured that my data collection and transcription were transparent.

## **4.8 Summary**

This chapter outlined the approaches I used to collect data in my exploration of the support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with DL. I used a mixed-method research design. I used the phenomenological interview and a questionnaire survey as my data collection methods. Twelve interviewees and 97 questionnaire survey respondents were my samples in each method respectively. I analysed data using NVivo programme for the interview and the SPSS for the questionnaire. I used triangulation of research methods to enhance the authenticity of my findings. Data presentation, analysis and discussion are in the subsequent three chapters. The discussion chapter cross-references interview and questionnaire survey results in relation to prior research results. The discussion chapter leads to the last chapter in which I draw up conclusions and make recommendations on the results of my study.

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## CHAPTER 5

### INTERVIEW DATA EXPLICATION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses qualitative data collected through 12 phenomenological interviews. The interviews preceded a questionnaire survey data collection. The presentation and analysis of the data follows the same order. I deliberately avoided using the heading data analysis here in order to highlight Hycner's caution that since analysis generally means 'breaking into parts', it has a propensity for negative connotations in phenomenological research. Instead, I used explication which means investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole. I sometimes used the term analysis in this study in the context of Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) meaning. They regard it as the, "systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships" (Groenewald 2004:10). Descriptions of context and what participants say or do form the basis of inductive rather than deductive analysis. Theory is created to explain the data, rather than the data being collected to test pre-established hypotheses (Locke et al 1989). For anonymity's sake, I used 12 pseudonyms in Appendix E for my interviewees.

Due to the economic downturn in Zimbabwe at the time of the interviews, high transport cost forced me to drop Bulawayo Regional Centre from my sample. Bulawayo is 418 kilometres from Harare where I stayed. I used Mashonaland Central, East, West and Harare Regional Centres. The economic situation was so bad in Zimbabwe that most educational institutions including ZOU, temporarily suspended operations during the second semester. At the beginning of 2009 ZOU

was not fully operational. One could find a few officers who were present to keep offices open and attend to students who visited the regional centres to make inquiries. I had to rely on regional programme coordinators to identify former and current B.Ed. students who suited the criteria in my purposive sample. Arrangements were made for me to interview some participants at regional centres, some at their work places and others at their homes.

My preference for most interviewees who had completed the B. Ed. programme was based on the belief that the descriptions and explanations of their experiences in B.Ed. covered the support strategies used by learners to complete the programme. Most of them had completed the B.Ed. programme while the Zimbabwean economy was still sound. As former students, and products of the system, I assumed that they would have a passion to have the systems at their former school improved. Besides that, they would tell me the truth as they were no longer susceptible to victimisation by anybody. Those who were still on the programme were expected to give the current student support situation and also describe strategies they were using to cope with the B.Ed. programme under the prevailing situation.

I carried out twelve in-depth phenomenological interviews with purposively selected seven female and five male former and current B. Ed. students of ZOU. Five of these were from Harare, 4 from Mashonaland Central, 2 from Mashonaland East and 1 from Mashonaland West regional centres respectively. Among the participants included 8 who had completed the B.Ed. programme. Six of them had unimpeded completion of the programme in 8 semesters. Two of the eight, had delayed but completed the programme. Another two that delayed completion were doing fourth year. These had delayed completion due to previous temporary withdrawal from the programme. The last two were, one doing third year and the other was in second year. The second year student was a member of the ZOU student representative council (SRC). I deliberately selected him to feel the “pulse” of the SRC at ZOU.

The interviews were based on adults' experiences in DL at ZOU in general but with a specific focus on my research questions (P.3):

- What structures and strategies do students use to study at ZOU?
- To what extent do adult learners use support structures at ZOU to cope with the B. Ed. programme through DL?
- How do B. Ed. students use their own strategies to cope with DL at ZOU?
- What strategies do B. Ed. students use to cope with information and communication technology (ICT) needs in DL?
- How can strategies used by students inform the development of effective support structures and strategies at ZOU?

I created space for the interviewees to say all they could on each by using open-ended questions. This gave participants room to give the multiple-perspectives of their understanding of each of the aspects under review.

Basing on my research questions and themes, I used NVivo qualitative data analysis programme. I coded data into sub-themes and themes and came up with 60 free nodes that I condensed into 10 tree nodes. My tree nodes were sub-themes based on the subsystems I considered in exploring the support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with DL at ZOU. My tree nodes were the themes made up of sub-themes as listed in Appendix E. They included the following:

- DT1 The distance learning context,
- DT2 ZOU support mechanisms,
- DT3 Availability of learning resources,
- DT4 Information and communication technology,
- DT5 Distance teaching-learning methods,
- DT6 Distance learning assessment,
- DT7 Socio-academic integration of work, family and study commitments ,
- DT8 Financial requirements of the programme,

- DT9 Participants' advice to ZOU, and
- DT10 Participants' advice to students.

I sought participants' advice to ZOU and students in order to help ZOU improve its systems and assist adults to cope with DL programmes respectively. An attempt to chronologically arrange the issues under discussion was difficult due to their interdependence. Hence I dealt with them in the order which I could defend.

I grouped my twelve interviewees into NVivo sets. As a preamble to the phenomenological interviews, I asked my interviewees to complete a short personal data questionnaire that required them to give attributes that constitute the elements of my NVivo sets. My sets in this study are groups of participants with similar attributes. The attributes I considered included adult learners' personal and socio-economic characteristics. They also covered spatial and time circumstances under which they did the B. Ed. programme through DL. I used the commonality of attributes among the members in each set to draw emerging patterns from their experiences. This was achieved through constant comparison of data in the responses to questions by cases in sets. There were two sets of my sample that covered participants' enrolment intake groups. My sample covered students from Intake 1 to Intake 20. Participants from the first ten intakes (1-10) were in the earlier intakes and participants from the last ten (11-20) were in the later intakes set respectively.

The 22 sets I came up with were:

- Gender- female and male,
- Age- below and 50 years and above,
- Marital status- single, married, widowed, separated and divorced,
- Professional qualifications- primary and secondary school trained,
- Employment position in the B.Ed. programme- class teachers, heads of departments, deputy school heads and school heads,

- Studies prior to DL- recent and long ago,
- Enrolment intakes- earlier and later intakes,
- Previous DL experience- with and without previous DL experience,
- Programme completion - unimpeded, delayed and on the programme, and
- Geographical location- rural and urban learners.

Given the number of my free nodes and my sets, it was impossible to complete a detailed analysis of every free node due to the time and other resources' constraints. Some of my free nodes were a result of probing questions meant to make participants relax and open up. So, they were peripheral to and did not directly answer my research questions. My analysis only focussed on those nodes that generated salient points of interest to the research questions. These included: those that confirmed findings in my literature review, those that displayed contrasting views between sets and those that gave new views to traditional DL practice.

My interviews drew qualitative data from adults' experiences in DL. I presented and analysed data in tree nodes. I had 12 interviewees identified in Appendix E by their pseudonyms as: Angeline (A), Bee (B), Bvu (BV), Charity (C), Chibayo (CH), Eusabia (E), Petty (P), Rutendo (R), Sharon (S), Varaidzo (V), Zed (Z) and Zvinaiye (ZV). I used the tree node number, the participant's initials and the page to cite quotations in my discussion as in (DT1A:1) for Angeline in data tree 1 on page 1 in Appendix F.

Phenomenological research is unique among other human science research methods because it emphasizes descriptions of meaning structures of lived experience. Opinions are not considered to be lived experience. The use of spoken or written text as data marks the ideological predisposition of phenomenological research methods (Groenewald 2004). Although phenomenological research attempts to minimize a priori preconceptions about the nature of the data, there are unavoidable a priori aspects to phenomenological research such as the fore-understanding which led to

the research questions underlying the investigation. Bracketing the researcher's entering predispositions towards the question is a recognition of the unavoidable a priori dimensions of a research method that attempts to allow the data to speak for themselves as much as possible (Osborne 1994).

## **5.2 Distance learning context**

I used context in this study to refer to the learning environment according to Kember's theory and Tam (1999) on (P58) in my literature review. The context is the circumstances under which the adults studied through DL at ZOU, at their homes and in Zimbabwe (Figure 2). This included material, social, psychological and academic support at their disposal from faculty, the institution and their social circle. In the preamble to the interviews participants also gave reasons why they did the B.Ed. degree through DL which I also considered as important contextual factors.

### **5.2.1 Reasons for studying through DL**

When I asked participants why they did B.Ed. degree through DL they gave different reasons. Among them were that DL:

- Enables studying in the comfort of one's home without disrupting family life,
- Is user friendly as learners control their studies,
- Protects learners from opportunity costs as they learn while working,
- Is cheaper than campus-based learning as students learn while working,
- Offers educational advancement to those with minimum qualifications,
- Affords in-service academic and professional growth of employees, and
- Enhances educational and social status of learners.

Learners would be staying with their families while they study. They undertake their normal family obligations without disruption due to re-location as a result of the

educational programme. Half of my interviewees concurred with the female head of department who said she studied through DL because, “-distance education maintains the family--there is no disruption-- because you will be coming from home” (DT1R:368). A male deputy school head supported the above view by saying he, “-found it comfortable to study at home while working” (DT1B:367). A male class teacher among them cherished the flexibility of DL for learners with family obligations. He preferred DL to campus-based studying for learners with families because DL, “-is user friendly” (DT1Z:367) as learners control the pace and place of their studies. Hence, apart from the fact that it bestows the responsibility of when, where and how to learn (Rowntree 1992) on adult learners, DL facilitates family comfort while at the same time adults acquired knowledge. It eliminates the usual notion of viewing education as an instrument of cultural and social alienation.

Another half of the participants shared the view that DL is more convenient than campus-based studies. A female class teacher said, “-it is cheaper and you can work and study at the same time” (DT1A:368). That adults study while working makes DL cost-effective by avoiding opportunity cost. Individuals learn and simultaneously contribute to family and national development. Development at home may slightly be constrained by the immediate cost of the DL programme. However, it continues to take place unlike when the adult learner went away for on-campus study and did not earn income. The nation gains from the learners’ uninterrupted professional production at work places. The adults improve their knowledge and skills while they study through DL. This saves substantial national resources that would be missed if the learners went for campus-based study without pay. If they went to study on paid-leave, their replacements at workplaces would also be paid making them an extra expense to the exchequer and the whole exercise expensive.

DL was also chosen because it did not attract salary reduction for employed adults as happened when they went on campus-based programmes on study leave in

Zimbabwe. It affords adult learners the opportunity to learn and at the same time meet their usual financial commitments. A widowed deputy school head said, “-you manage to pay your fees, buy books and --going for lectures. If you take a study leave---your pay will be cut” (DTIE:368). The Zimbabwean study leave policy for practising teachers at the time of this study was that one went on paid study leave for the number of leave days one had accrued. If one had not accrued leave days, or after the accrued days had been exhausted, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture decided, on a policy-basis, the percentage of the salary to deduct. Usually during the first year of study, one would be on full salary. In the second year one might earn 75% or 50% of his/her monthly salary. In third year it could go further down depending on the accrued leave days that one still had. Sometimes it got to zero because the longer one stayed on study leave the higher the chances that accrued leave days got exhausted and hence the more severe the effects of salary reduction. DL avoids exposure of adult learners to such salary deductions. The fact that adult learners with families met their family, financial, social and professional obligations while they advanced themselves educationally made DL more preferable than campus-based study.

According to a female head of department, DL was helpful because it, “-accommodates -- those who have minimum qualifications” (DTIP:368). Another female head of department echoed the helpfulness of DL as she said that she could not get, “- a place to do the degree at the conventional universities-” (DTIR:367) because she could not meet the entry requirements. Due to few universities in the face of high demand for university education in Zimbabwe, conventional universities’ entry qualifications were raised. University education became a preserve for those who attained the highest grades in their subjects at A level. Thus, in line with Corry and Lelliott (2001), DL was helpful in that it gave an opportunity to Zimbabweans who would not have a chance to do university education (Mugabe

2005). It accepted applicants with minimum academic entry requirements, 5 O level subject passes including English Language that other universities did not accept.

It improved the status of one male deputy school head in the sample as it enabled him, “*-to qualify for his administrative post*” (DTICH:367). He was promoted to a primary school head after he joined the B.Ed. programme at ZOU and attributed his promotion to DL.

Considering the above reasons, DL had more comparative advantages for adult learners than campus-based study. Adults with families meet their family, financial, social and professional obligations while they improve their social standing and advance themselves educationally.

### **5.2.2 Perspectives on DL experience**

When I asked interviewees their views on their DL experiences given that they had other obligations, they gave so many answers that the rest of my questions in the interview sought to explore the answers to this question.

Four of my participants were comfortable with DL. Three participants said they found DL very challenging. Another three participants found DL interesting but with some challenges. Altogether there were eight interviewees who found studying through DL challenging. Six of the eight participants who faced challenges with DL were female and two were male. Five of the eight participants who faced challenges in DL came from later intakes while three were from earlier intakes. This means that more female participants found DL challenging than male ones. It appears as if later intakes interviewees faced more challenges with DL than those from earlier intakes. However, participants’ perspectives and challenges varied with their circumstances. Since the interview sample was not representative enough for its findings to be

generalized, the correct result on this aspect is determined by the results of the questionnaire survey.

All the interviewees who were comfortable with learning at a distance had previous DL experience. One male deputy school head from earlier intakes that completed the programme on time said, *“I had --experience studying-- on my own -- I didn’t find a lot of challenges learning at a distance”* (DT1B:369). A male school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“I went to school up to Form 2 only-- after that I started studying by correspondence --- that love to keep on going with studies that helped me”* (DT1ZV:370). Another male school head with extensive DL experience from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme was driven by excitement to enrol in the programme. He wanted to attain this unique qualification as his, *“--last academic qualification was Form 2 and then distances ‘O’ level, distance ‘A’ level and now this degree programme”* (DT1BV:369). Yet another male school head but from later intakes still on the programme said, *“I only went through formal education up to Grade 7---- I actually enjoy distance learning”*(DT1CH:371).

The above predominantly male group of participants had unimpeded completion of the programme and were mostly from earlier intakes. Their comfort with DL could be attributed to self-confidence and motivation drawn from previous DL experience.

A second observation from this sample was that the six participants who had unimpeded completion were from the earlier intakes and the two who had delayed completion were from later intakes. Of the four participants in the whole delayed completion category, three were from later and one from earlier intakes. That the interview results seemed to show better performance from participants from earlier than later intakes had negative implications on how the programme was run in later intakes. That sample of interviewees had three school heads. It is interesting that all

the three school heads were among the six participants who had unimpeded completion. Therefore interview results also revealed that school heads had a higher and less inhibited completion rate than other groups of teachers. It could be that school heads had more time to study and resources like telephone and typing facilities at their disposal than other teachers as school heads are in charge of all school resources. It could also be an issue of them being more exposed to management matters and therefore having the advantage of sometimes being examined on issues they deal with in their daily work as indicated by one school head who said, “ *the programme was--educational-we had to use-- what we experienced as school heads-- to understand-- the programme*” (DT3BV:396).

My sample of interviewees also showed that more urban than rural adult learners delayed completion on the B.Ed. programme through DL. All the four participants who delayed completion stayed in urban areas.

The eight interviewees who found DL challenging gave their experiences in B.Ed.at ZOU that revealed broader picture challenges that I dealt with under their respective tree nodes to avoid tautology. Among these were:

- Heavy demands of the programme on adults without previous DL experience,
- Long duration between previous formal and DL studies,
- Lack of self-confidence and interruptions while studying in isolation,
- Inability to balance family, work and study commitments,
- Financial problems,
- Ineffective orientation,
- Inadequate modules, library books and internet access,
- Insufficient contact tutorial time,
- Poor communication with regional centres,
- Ineffective feedback from assignments and supervision of projects, and
- Inadequate revision for examinations and missing results.

In this tree node I dealt with previous DL experience, duration between formal studying and DL, lack of confidence, studying in isolation, socio-academic integration and financial challenges. The rest are dealt with in detail under their tree nodes.

In this set three participants faced challenges because they did not have previous DL experience. For instance, a female head of department from later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme said, *“it’s-quite difficult--since it’s --my first time to study alone at home (DTIP:374)*. Another female senior teacher from later intakes without previous DL experience that was still on the programme echoed her counterpart’s view as she said DL, *“-is quite challenging and at times -- you think of dropping out because of the demands of the programme” (DTIC:370)*.

Some challenges experienced by participants were associated with the duration between the last time learners had studied and DL. Six of my interviewees had less than ten years and six had more than ten years between past formal studies and DL. For instance, although he had unimpeded completion of B.Ed., a school head that had more than ten years between past formal studies and DL said that, *“It was a great challenge-- after -- 15 years and one finds oneself now embarking on this programme” (DTIBV:369)*. This adult learner faced the challenge of having lost some of the keenness and skills to concentrate and retain material during learning. Long duration of learners’ stay without engaging in serious study negatively impacts on assignment writing skills. Concentration can be compromised especially among adult learners as they are involved in many social responsibilities. Besides that, the B.Ed. degree programme that he was now doing was at university level yet his other DL experience was at high school level. Hence he was unsure of his capacity to cope with the assignment writing and other academic requirements at university level.

All the four interviewees from rural areas faced challenges of the distance they travelled to the regional centres. Most of them also lacked access to telephone and electricity which are essential aspects of DL. For instance, a female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“I was -- working in Mash East and—doing my programme in Chinhoyi--Mash West--300 kilometres from where I was working”* (DT5V:412). Apart from being late for and missing some tutorials such learners faced challenges of travelling risks, costs and learning time. Under ideal conditions a student should not have crossed regional boundaries all the way from Mashonaland East past Harare to Chinhoyi in Mashonaland West Regional Centre (Figure 1). That in itself implies that something was wrong in her registration process. It smacks of poor management of the programme. If she could not be enrolled in her region, at least she could have been registered in the neighbouring Harare Region.

On asking the participants the strategies they used to cope with DL in the face of challenges, a school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“it needed a lot of dedication-”* (DT1BV:369) in line with the desire to learn among adult learners (Jarvis 1995; Merriam 2001).

### **5.2.3 Lack of self-confidence**

In many ways, adult learner interviewees displayed lack of self-confidence in coping with DL without support. Often, they were unsure whether what they were doing was correct until they got someone’s approval. They also exhibited fear of having difficult questions they could not answer without anyone to refer to. For example, a school head from earlier intakes that unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“-one could only derive confidence if one’s ideas were supported by colleagues”* (DT1BV:371).

A female head of department from later intakes who delayed completion and was still on the programme expressed similar lack of confidence as she said, *“- you find*

*yourself having-- questions whereby you fail to get-- answers since you will be on your own” (DTIP:371).* A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme concurred that, “- you need someone to help you understand the question or answering it” (DTIB:372).

#### **5.2.4 Strategies for coping with lack of self-confidence**

When I asked participants for the strategies they used to cope with their fears in DL they indicated that they benefited from:

- Assurance of institutional support during the orientation,
- Learner-learner support in study groups,
- Tutor support, and
- Motivation from tutor feedback on marked assignments and projects.

A male school head from earlier intakes that completed the programme on time advocated for constant assurance of adult learner support by the institution during orientation as he said,

*-there is need during orientation for an assurance that even if you seem not to be understanding but with time you are likely to cope--it will plant a lot of confidence in students(DTIBV:372).*

Such assurance would be a proactive psycho-therapy to encourage the adult learners to venture into their studies knowing that they had someone to fall back to should they blunder.

Study groups were considered motivational as they enabled students to share their academic information, anxiety and happy moments and also helped them to develop self- confidence. A school head in later intakes corroborated the importance of study groups in learner motivation. For instance, one person understands information which someone fails and when they discuss, it becomes very helpful. He said that is, “ *important to us as students because there is tendency to encourage each other” (DTICH:372).* Study groups are a morale booster among adults. Not only do they

share scarce learning resources, they also encourage those who would otherwise drop out due to disenchantment. The relationship that grows among colleagues as a result of sharing everything to do with studies makes group members to learn from one another and in turn blend their vision. The shared vision motivates all the members of the group to work hard towards success.

Constant communication between tutors and adult learners helped study groups to ensure that they were always doing things correctly. This was viewed as enabling groups to be more productively engaged by a female deputy head from earlier intakes that said, *“at times we had to face a problem of what is really wanted and no one could explain”* (DTIS:372). A male school head from earlier intakes also indicated that feedback from tutors boosted learners’ confidence when he said, *“-it was after the assignment had been marked, - when, one would say, ah, I have it”* (DTIBV:372). This adult learner would have been in a non-believer’s mindset until his work was approved by the tutor. This emphasises the lack of self-confidence that prevails in adults who never had opportunity to go to university education immediately after high school and often for reasons other than intellectual incapacity. The strategy suggested by these participants reinforces the point made by Tait and Mills (2001) stressing that adult learners need continuous on-course counselling and supportive help by tutors.

These adult learners had deep-seated apprehensions about their capacity to do the B.Ed. programme through DL in line with Bhalalusesa (2001) who found women in Tanzania lacking confidence in their ability to cope with tertiary DL. That was because some of them had last studied many years before and forgotten how to study. Some had been labelled unsuitable to do university studies and others had never been exposed to DL. The fact that those adults had not gone straight to university from high school contributed to their lack of confidence. In colonial Zimbabwe’s bottleneck discriminatory education system some high school pass

grades were used to attribute personal incapacity on students who were not recruited into higher education studies. Hence people who did not get places in universities were made to believe that they were unsuitable to do university education. This instilled fear of university education among of them. This is in line with Merriam (2001), in my literature review (P.59) , who says that adult students face emotional and social circumstances that significantly impact on their learning. Such mindsets require support from orientation, tutors and other learners through consultation and in study groups to emancipate and instil confidence in them to cope with DL.

### **5.2.5 Studying in isolation**

I also asked participants about their experiences with studying in isolation in DL. I found out that six of the participants were comfortable with studying in isolation while the other six found it a challenge in many ways.

Four of the participants who were comfortable with studying in isolation had previous DL experience. For instance, a peri-urban school head who only did formal education up to Grade 7 and all his high school education through DL said, *“I actually want to be alone when studying”* (DTICH:383). A male deputy school head who had previous DL experience applauded studying in isolation as an opportunity for him to achieve his best without interference when he said that, *“ - it gave me -- time to deal with the materials on my own”* (DTIB:382). A female senior teacher with previous DL experience said she cherished the empowering nature of studying in isolation as she said, *“-it gives you the ability to be time conscious-to- complete your assignments before the due dates”* (DTIA:382). One remote rural area teacher without previous DL experience regarded studying in isolation as a motivational challenge as he found it, *“-interesting to study on my own--”* (DTIZ:383).

Six interviewees who found studying in isolation a challenge identified the following as their concerns:

- Psychological insecurity for beginners,
- Noise in urban environments,
- Time-management, and
- Distance and transport cost for rural learners.

A female head of department from the later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme expressed psychological insecurity with DL. Those remarks are usually associated with beginners in the programme. She said that she faced, " -- *problems of not understanding-- also the idea of studying at home, it's not very conducive-- at times noise*" (DTIP:371). In rural Zimbabwe the population is generally sparse. Highly educated people are often very few and far apart. In most places there are no telephone lines. Hence some DL students faced the challenge of lack of access to people that could assist them with their academic difficulties. For instance, a rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme found studying in isolation not only difficult but also involving and costly as he said, "*-one would- board the bus-- to go and interact with that one that had done a-- similar programme*" (DT1BV:373). Another rural female head of department faced the challenge of time to study as she could only, "*-borrow on Friday and return the book on Saturday*" (DT3R:400) due to work commitments.

These cases represented typical challenges faced when studying by DL in urban and rural settings. Urban adult learners staying as tenants faced the challenge of people making noise without regard that they needed to study quietly. Others could as well play music very loudly without paying any attention to their needs. Some also could not get help when stuck with difficult questions and concepts. This usually happened if they did not have colleagues in their neighbourhood. Such situations caused learners to travel to the distant but nearest colleagues for help.

The rural students on the other hand had to travel long distances at a cost to seek help. The travelling also compromised adult learners' scarce study time. Such participants could have travelled such long distances due to lack of access to telephone. The situation could be worse for those remote rural students who were unable to meet their counterparts. For example a teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *"I was still working in Muzarabani where I could hardly meet other students"* (DTIZ:383).

Apart from transport cost, this meant that rural adult learners' study and research time were very limited. In line with library challenges in South Africa cited by Selikow (1998) in my literature review (P. 79), libraries in Zimbabwe operated half day on weekends and were closed at times convenient to employed students. These include, after hours, over weekends and public holidays. The issue of study time was critical since assignment deadlines had to be met. This aspect is discussed in more detail under preparation of assignments.

### **5.2.6 Strategies for coping with studying in isolation**

On asking participants the strategies they used to cope with the challenges of studying in isolation in DL, they said they relied on:

- Planning,
- Self-discipline,
- Commitment, and
- Consultation with colleagues and tutors.

Six of my interviewees viewed planning as a key factor for success in DL. A school head from earlier intakes with previous DL experience and unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme emphasized the importance of planning as instrumental to success in DL when he said that,

*50% of the success comes from planning because--some people would like to wake up very early. Some people read up till late-- it depends*

*on what suits you. But, planning is very, very, very important (DT1ZV:381).*

A deputy head with previous DL experience that also had unimpeded completion of the programme survived because he committed himself to a personal study time table to cope with studying in isolation. He said, *“I was able to read from 10.30 pm every day to about 12.00 o’clock” (DT7B:431)*. Actually, a female head of department from later intakes that had temporarily withdrawn from the B. Ed. programme confirmed the negative consequences of lack of planning in DL. She attributed her delayed completion of the programme to the fact that, *“I lacked planning” (DT1P:381)*. Emphasis in this strategy was in line with Kazmer’s (2000) suggestion that prioritisation and commitment to the implementation of a study timetable helps adult learners to cope with DL.

In addition to planning, there is need for self discipline on the part of the learner to create time to concentrate on the DL programme. There is need for good time management. Adult learners need to prioritise their activities. They also need to reduce commitments that interfere with their concentration on studies. A school head that completed B.Ed. on time said that, *“If one drinks and does not put- effort into stopping you won’t cope with distance studies” (DT1ZV:385)*.

Five of the participants concurred that commitment is necessary for adult learners to cope with DL. A school head who had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme boasted that, *“I am never the same. The programme is good. But, it needs one to be --committed” (DT1BV: 381)*. A deputy head that also had unimpeded completion of the programme emphasized that learners should have, *“-the desire to do it and -- to give time to the learning part of it” (DT1B:381)*. For the female head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme, her experience was illustrative of the need for commitment in coping with DL as she said, *“I have failed to complete my studies at the intended time because--I lacked*

*commitment*” (DTIP:381). Emphasis on this strategy was in line with Jarvis (1995) who argues that adults often succeed in DL because they have goal-focused commitment in their studies.

When learners faced challenges studying in isolation they also consulted colleagues and tutors. According to one school head from earlier intakes that completed the programme on time, when confronted by difficulty while studying in isolation, “--initially you would look at colleague --you would-- phone the tutors and -- other people who have-- experience in distance education to assist you” (DTIB:384). This also confirms the importance of study groups (Bertram 2001). A female deputy head from later intakes that delayed completion of the programme underscored the importance of study groups while studying in isolation as she said “-it was hard but we could make groups” (DTIE:383).

The fact that participants used self-discipline, planning, commitment and effective time management to cope with DL was an admission that there are challenges in it. Hence coping with DL requires self-control, self-direction (Merriam 2001) and determination.

These attributes are transmitted through the impression given by the participants’ descriptions of the essence of terms like prioritisation, planning, and commitment. These terms imply that learning in isolation requires the learner to be resolute. It means sacrificing (Kember, Ying et al 2005) some of the usual pleasures and replacing them with serious study in search of knowledge. The participants’ descriptions of suggested strategies for coping with learning in isolation urge adult learners in DL to take full responsibility of their learning. This is in line with Rowntree (1992) who states that coping with DL bestows the responsibility to initiate and organize the place, time, amount and manner of study on the learner and at the same time meet the requirements of the learning programme. The participants’

descriptions of strategies they used to cope with the DL context also emphasize and uphold the idea of learner autonomy and independence (Rowntree 1992; Merriam 2001; Aylward 2001).

The DL context tree node covered the participants' reasons for studying through DL, their perspectives on their experiences in the B.Ed. programme, lack of self-confidence in doing university education among adult/second chance learners, the impact of learning in isolation and the strategies for coping with those aspects. Adult learner experiences in this tree node prompted me to analyse participants' experiences with socio-academic integration before anything else. I got convinced by participants' experiences that socio-academic integration should be part of the planning for adult learners to enter into DL programmes. For instance, an adult requires approval from family members to join a learning programme in order to prevent potential conflict that often arises when s/he occasionally isolates him/herself while studying and when s/he incurs financial expenditure towards the programme. Hence I discuss socio-academic integration and financial requirements tree nodes next.

### **5.3 Socio-academic integration**

I asked interviewees about their experiences in dealing with multiple social and academic roles during the B.Ed. programme through DL. There were two participants who did not face challenges in this area. An example of these was a school head from later intakes with previous DL experience. He said, "*-there is electricity, I am able to enjoy every minute - up to 12.00 midnight-- There is plenty time for me to study*" (DT7CH:432).

Ten of my interviewees faced challenges in integrating studies into family and work commitments. Their challenges were related to:

- Gender biased domestic roles,

- Failure to cope with multiple responsibilities of work, family and study,
- Inability to stand own ground in the face of retrogressive pressures, and
- Poor self-organisation and time management.

Most female participants faced different gender related challenges with a bearing to their traditional responsibilities within the family. For example, a senior teacher from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, “-at home--I had to cook for the family, wash for the family and study and attend to the children” (DT7A:434) in addition to her teaching job. Another female senior teacher from later intakes without previous DL experience and was in third year said, “-it’s unbearable-- I am working. I am a mother. I am also a student--assignments will be due” (DT1C:370). This teacher had pressure resulting from incapacity to cope with the pressure of multiple roles in DL. Having come from conventional education where studying is given its own time without interference from other activities, it was difficult for her to juggle the several responsibilities of work, motherhood and student with due assignments. This required proper time management on her part. A widowed school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme also said, “I had to do my assignments in the office-- At times I spend the whole night—writing assignments-- family needs were ignored” (DT7V:433). In fact, a female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme regretted joining the DL programme as she said, “-the past three years have--been hectic. I have abandoned my social life” (DT7C:431).

A head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme raised the challenge of undue interruption of studies by visiting extended family members. In Shona traditional thought and culture where she belongs, extended family visitors usually just come unannounced. It is expected that they be given the best respect, entertainment and attention to show ‘unhu /ubuntu’ and that they are always welcome. Unfortunately, the rural uneducated folk attach so much importance to

those values that they take precedence over all other things. In such a case, a daughter or sister in law that gives priority to other personal activities that exclude recognition of the visiting relative may be misconstrued by the extended family as ignoring or indicating the undesirability of the visitor in the home. Hence, some DL students failed to balance their social with academic obligations in a situation where they had to go for contact tutorials and at the same time there were visitors to entertain in the home. Consequently the head of department said, “-- *the student may fail-- to withstand the pressure that they get from the relatives when they visit-- some of them could fail to attend-- tutorials*” (DT7P:434).

A male school head that had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme also said studying through DL was interesting but multiple responsibilities were challenging because, “*I was employed. I had --to read, go to church and also to look after my family*” (DT1ZV:377). The multiple roles challenge in DL extended beyond the family. It also affected adults who failed to integrate their work commitments with their studies. That challenge depended on one’s capacity to manage time in different roles. A school deputy head from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, “*It was very hard--I was a class teacher, an administrator-- had to mark the books--teach-- I had to be called for all meetings*” (DT7E:432).

### **5.3.1 Strategies for coping with socio-academic integration**

When I asked interviewees the strategies they used to cope with the challenges of socio-academic integration in DL they gave:

- Social contract with family and employer,
- Planning,
- Time-management, and
- Communication.

A school head with previous DL experience that had unimpeded completion of the programme emphasized that he succeeded because he established a tripartite social contract among himself, his family and the employer. He urged other adult learners thus,

*first thing-- make sure that the family understands that you are on a-- programme--to afford you support socially and educationally, --at work, the teachers--and the district education officers should understand that this man is now on a programme that requires-- their support (DT7BV:431).*

A teacher from earlier intakes without previous DL experience that also had unimpeded completion of the programme used communication with the family to his advantage. He said, *"I used to work-- with my spouse and family members soliciting for their support"* (DT7Z:432). On the issue of visiting extended family members interrupting studies, the head of department in later intakes said that, *"the students need to explain to their relatives that they are students-to be understood by the extended family"* (DT7P:434). This in line with what Kember (1995) says that students with positive attributes proceed down the positive path and are able to integrate socially and academically because they are supported by those whom they interact with in life.

Six of my participants shared the view that planning was an effective strategy to cope with socio-academic integration in DL. A female senior teacher who had previous DL experience , delayed but completed the programme said that the best way to cope with multiple commitments and DL was to, *"Plan on how you are going to do your household work--your studying and how you are going to cope at your place of work"* (DT1A:380). A deputy head from earlier intakes with previous DL experience and unimpeded completion of the programme also said that, *"I made sure I--stick to my timetable--I realised that we needed to-- scale down -- social demands"* (DT7B:431).

Using a timetable as a planning and enforcement tool was echoed by many participants as it ensured commitment to study and making provision for other activities. For instance, while a senior teacher would always, *“sleep late, in order to cope with the assignments as well as to read”* (DT7C:432), a head of department would, *“study early in the morning”* (DT7R:433). A school head who had unimpeded completion of the programme also stressed commitment to the use of the timetable when he said, *“If you are a head-- a teacher--finish up with your work-- then concentrate on your studies”* (DT7ZV:436). There were also others from multi-shift schools who said, *“-when I am off session at school, I could concentrate --on my studies”* (DT7P:435).

Central to adult learners’ strategies to achieve socio-academic integration was mutual understanding within the family. That understanding was also necessary between the adult learner and those at her/his place of work. On further reflection, it dawned on me from some participants’ sentiments that meeting the financial requirements of the DL programme was also a family matter. It was unlikely that an adult would register in a programme unless s/he sought the cooperation of the family on its funding. Thus I discuss the financing of the programme next as it is directly linked to integration of the family with adult learning in DL.

## **5.4 Financial requirements**

When I asked participants their experience with the financial requirements of the DL programme, their common view was that this aspect had challenges that included:

- Salaries that were too low to meet family and programme needs,
- Expensive transport cost for rural students,
- Lack of funds also contributed to the delayed completion of the programme,
- Single parents struggled with multiple financial responsibilities, and
- The negative impact of the national economic decline in Zimbabwe.

Among the eight participants who faced challenges with DL were four who had financial constraints. Indications were that the tuition fees paid in earlier intakes seemed manageable to some adult learners. A male deputy head said that, “*We were able to pay our fees from our salaries (DT8B:437)*. To others like one rural school head that had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme said that DL is quite challenging because, “*I had to look for the money to pay for-- studies. I had to look for money to care for my family” (DT1ZV:377)*. His view was substantiated by a female senior teacher that even when the Zimbabwean economy was performing well their salaries were so low that, at the beginning of each semester in the DL programme, “*The first month all that money would go to the studies” (DT8A:437)*. That meant that although the adult learner earned enough money to pay fees, s/he needed to look for money elsewhere for the family to survive.

The financial challenges were worse for rural than urban students. Most of those that stayed far from the regional centres relied on borrowing. For instance, a rural male school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme humorously expressed that financing the DL programme was so challenging that, “*- it was borrowing from John to pay Peter and- Peter to pay Mary” (DT8BV:438)*.

That plight of rural students was confirmed by a widow school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion as she travelled from Mashonaland East region where she worked to Mashonaland West to attend tutorials. As I asked her the distance she travelled she said, “*-around 300 kilometres --we had a lot of financial constraints” (DT8V:439)*. A female deputy head from earlier intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme echoed the problem of distance from regional centres. She attributed her delay to complete the programme partly to inhibiting transport cost as she said, “*- we could not-- go to the tutorials-- 50*

*kilometres from the place where I was-- at times I could fail to get --bus fare” (DT8S:439).*

Some of the financial challenges experienced by adult learners in DL arose because they were the sole breadwinners in the family. All the four single parents, in my sample of interviewees, faced financial challenges. A female deputy head from later intakes that delayed but completed the DL programme faced a financial crisis in second year that almost led her to drop out of the programme. Being a widow and only income earner in the family, she could not cope with the costs of her son’s wedding and payment of her tuition fees. She said, *“The fees were up-- my son is going to wed, who is going to help me? -I better join the B. Tech which is faster than four years” (DT8E:439).*

Though shorter in duration of study, 18 months, compared to the 4 years that the B.Ed. took, the Bachelor of Technology offered by the then Techikon South Africa was not recognised for promotional purposes in Zimbabwe as it was a non-accredited qualification. Thus it would be an under-qualification just like the diploma that she had. She was encouraged to continue doing the B. Ed. programme in order to enhance her promotion when the opportunity came.

Apparently, the financial challenge affected the four female participants who delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme more than other participants in the interview sample. A single mother and head of department from later intakes that was still on the programme had financial challenges that she attributed her delayed completion of the programme to. She said she was a tenant where she stayed. Her financial commitments at that time included accommodation rentals, typing, her child’s and her own tuition fees. Hence she said, *“ -that’s one of the factors that delayed me to complete my studies --my kid was at a boarding school--I ended up failing to pay for my studies” (DT8P:439).*

For five of my interviewees from later intakes, the financial challenge was worsened by the national economic crisis. Zimbabwe reached a world record of more than 231% inflation (Reporter 2008) before abandoning its own and adopted the United States currency. That affected both DL students and tutors in many ways.

One female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme said that, *“-because of the transport costs, we now have dropouts-- we are going to face hiking of fares--in foreign currency”* (DT8C:438). The same participant said that they were going to face a situation where lecturers would also not come. Tutors complained that ZOU was underpaying them. They were paid amounts that would not cover their transport costs. Hence the interviewee said, *“At times, you would attend a lecture where the tutors would not turn up-- because of-- the economic hardships”* (DT5C:409).

A male school head from later intakes also found the financial challenge so difficult that he said, *“I failed even two semesters to pay ZOU”* (DT8CH:438). A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed the deterioration of financial challenges during later intakes as he said, *“If you have children attending boarding school you fail to pay-- the charges that ZOU is demanding today”* (DT8B:438). That view was further substantiated by the school head in later intakes that was still on the programme who also said, *“we had a problem--ZOU would charge amounts which were four times my salary”* (DT8CH:438). Most adult learners found it challenging to cope with the financial requirements of the DL programme.

#### **5.4.1 Strategies for coping with financial requirements in DL**

I asked how adult learners managed to cope with the financial requirements during the DL programme. Only one married female head of department from earlier

intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that during her time she managed to fund her own education because, *“things were not as expensive as they are today—my salary would suffice for the fees and for the family”* (DT8R:439).

Eleven of my interview participants had to use strategies that included:

- Financial planning within the family,
- Borrowing money or/ and being helped by relatives, and
- Engaging in income-generating projects.

A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme engaged his wife in family budgeting in order to cope with DL. He said, *“- we had to sit down with my wife--B.Ed., I need so much, school fees for the children --every month”* (DT8ZV:441). Another school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme echoed the importance of collective financial planning within the family as he said that, *“one had to make sure that the family understands -- to be supported—financially”* (DT3BV:399).

Financial borrowing took different forms among the interviewees. A female head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that, *“--during my time you would access loans from banks through ZOU”* (DT2R:390).

A female senior teacher that delayed but completed the DL programme said that, *“-the money that was required for a semester was the whole month’s pay-- first month all that money would go to the studies* (DT8A:437). This implies that money for other use by the family had to be borrowed. A rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the DL programme stressed the role played by borrowing and family relations in supporting adult learners to cope with

the programme as he said, *“My initial fee-- I had to borrow it from my uncle— because-- finances were a problem” (DT8BV:440).*

A widow school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the DL programme stressed the importance of support by the family as she said, *“I would borrow money-- to register and-- some family members would assist” (DT8V:440).* Another widow deputy head that delayed but completed the programme had a son who was doing mechanical engineering at a technical training college. Her son required a mechanical kit in form of a tools box for practical lessons. At the same time she was supposed to pay her tuition fees for the DL programme. She could not raise the money. She sought extended family member’s support in kind in order to cope with the demands of both programmes as she said, *“I had to borrow from my brother’s son-- his tool box so that my son would go and do practical work while I pay ZOU” (DT8E:439).*

A female senior teacher that was still on the programme echoed the importance of family support in order to cope with DL as she said, *“-the ZOU fees, it is my spouse who actually pays for that because my salary is not enough to cover my expenses” (DT8C:441).* A male deputy head that had unimpeded completion of the DL programme said that many adult learners relied on financial donations and assistance from relatives. He pointed out that, *“if it were not for our children--we would not be able to pay the fees-- one is-- in UK-- and the other one-- in Germany (DT8B:440).* Support from relatives who worked in the diaspora was helpful especially after the Zimbabwean economy had collapsed in 2008.

Another popular strategy used by adult learners to cope with financial requirements in DL was engaging in self-help income generating projects. A rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“I had to embark on a poultry project in order to support myself (DT8BV:440).* Another rural

teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme said that he supplemented his salary with money, “*-from the market gardening as another source of income*” (DT8Z:441).

Urban adult learners also engaged in small scale commercial self-help enterprises to cope with the financial requirements in DL. While a female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme had to, “*--sell-- wares like sweets -- at school, chips, so that I get the fares to attend—tutorials*” (DT8C:441) another female deputy head from earlier intakes that delayed and was still on the programme said, “*I engaged in being a vendor at times. I could sell freezits, tomatoes to raise funds*” (DT8S:441).

These results show that seven of the interviewees relied on the support from the family to cope with the financial requirements in DL. The rest used either bank loans or income generating projects to raise funds.

The results from the DL context, socio-academic integration and financial requirements tree nodes are collated with those from the questionnaire survey in order to draw up conclusions of the study in the discussion chapter.

## **5.5 ZOU support mechanisms**

The psychological insecurity that most adults experienced on entering DL was expected. That is why ZOU provided regional centres with campus directors in the provincial catchment areas of its students. Regional centres facilitate the programme from marketing, recruitment through to writing of examinations. In short, they support learners in every aspect of DL. Regional directors, administrative assistants and secretaries serve students and other stakeholders. Every regional centre has regional programme coordinators who attend to students’ academic needs. Each

programme has part-time tutors for different courses. Depending on regional enrolments, there are programme secretaries/data capturing clerks. Regional programme coordinators are helped by the data capture clerks to keep all the records of programmes. Each regional centre also has a student support services unit. All these structures are meant to support learners in DL. They are the local communication system between ZOU and its students. This tree node gives results on participants' experiences with administrative support mechanisms offered by ZOU in DL.

After registration into a programme, the first support mechanism that all new DL students get at ZOU regional centres is orientation.

#### **5.5.1 Orientation into DL**

Orientation is a way of welcoming and introducing learners to the various systems, aspects and processes of the learning programme on offer. It involves demonstrations and lectures by experts on students' accessing and use of support mechanisms available to them in DL. At the time of this study, the official length of the orientation at ZOU was a single day.

I asked the participants how they felt about the orientation of new students at ZOU in terms of suitability and adequacy in preparing adults to cope with DL. Six out of twelve participants felt that the orientation of new students at ZOU adequately prepared them to study in isolation at a distance and six said that the orientation did not adequately prepare adults for DL.

One female deputy head from later intakes that had previous DL experience and delayed completion of the programme said that, "*I don't know now -- in 2001- the orientation was quite alright*" (DT2E:387). A teacher from earlier intakes without previous DL experience who had unimpeded completion of the programme praised

the orientation process for informing adults on what was expected when they were studying, “-*how to write assignments, research, discuss and exposed them to the knowledge of getting information from the internet and good libraries*” (DT2Z:385). A widowed school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme without previous DL experience also said, “-*yes, we were-- told that this was DL and most of the things you had to find them out on your own*” (DT2V:386). A head of department from earlier intakes without previous DL experience but had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*you were given the course outline-- if you want to read ahead, it was up to you*” (DT2R:386). A school head from earlier intakes with previous DL experience that had unimpeded completion of the programme expressed satisfaction with the orientation process during earlier intakes at ZOU as he said,

*Those who were-- responsible for orientation were quite encouraging. They encouraged us to study. They gave us some of the problems they had experienced. They highlighted --drawbacks-- which would entice us to stop studying (DT2ZV:387).*

A deputy head from earlier intakes with previous DL experience that also had unimpeded completion of the programme indicated that he did not need orientation as he had just completed another DL course with a college in the UK, “*So, it was not quite new*” (DT2B:369). It seems that orientation at ZOU was better for earlier intakes than during later intakes. Five out of six interviewees that found the orientation adequate were from earlier intakes and all those participants had unimpeded completion of the programme.

Six participants who found orientation at ZOU deficient in its preparation of adults for coping with DL raised concerns that included:

- Lacking relevance,
- Insufficient orientation time,
- Inadequate information,

- Inadequate skills training in DL processes,
- Distance from the venues which were far, and
- Incomprehensible orientation literature.

An earlier intakes school head with previous DL experience that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that, “*orientation didn’t help*” (DT2BV:387). A female senior teacher who delayed completion of the B. Ed. programme from later intakes described the orientation time at ZOU as too short when she said, “*it’s not sufficient because you are oriented—for-- two hours*” (DT2A:386). Another female deputy school head from earlier intakes who also delayed completion of the programme said that orientation was rushed without, “*equipping the person with-- skills needed-- in doing the study*”(DT2S:386). A school head from later intakes with previous DL experience who was a member of the SRC at the time of interview criticised the orientation for lacking adequate preparation when he said that, “*-we have got assignments but we don’t have modules- there isn’t that information-*” (DT2CH:386). A female senior teacher from later intakes without previous DL experience who was still on the programme was not convinced by the strategies suggested for coping with DL during orientation. She pointed out that, “*They warn us-- but they don’t -- provide the support*” (DT2C:387).

A female head of department from later intakes without previous DL experience who had delayed completion of the programme also expressed concern over the inadequacy of student orientation at ZOU. She summed up the concerns raised by this set of later intakes participants by saying,

*-the orientation needs a lot of detail like-- how to write the assignment-- the venue was very far-- most students--did not attend the orientation--- we were told that there was a module which would explain-- how to study alone at home and we found out that when we read that module, some of the issues we could not understand (DT2P:387).*

Since five out of six participants were from later intakes and four of them were still on the programme these results confirm the earlier observation that adult learners from earlier intakes had better orientation and thus faced less challenges with DL than those from later intakes. However, the conclusion on this is drawn after comparison with results from the questionnaire in the discussion chapter.

### **5.5.2 Communication between students and the regional centres**

It was necessary to find out the support that adults in DL got from ZOU structures with regards to communication. When I asked participants about their experience with communication between students and the regional centres, I got varied responses including:

- It was very good, they have been quite supportive,
- It depends according to the mood of the person,
- ZOU was very poor at dissemination of information,
- There was no telephone, we communicated through letters,
- I used telephones from the police station, and
- Tutors at ZOU are literary inaccessible.

The communication challenges among participants depended on whether learners were from rural or urban areas, whether they belonged to earlier or later intakes and also on whom they were communicating with in the regional office.

A male urban deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme revealed that communication between ZOU and learners was better during earlier than later intakes as he said,

*It was very good--we used to receive communication both written and telephone--you would get direct communication from tutors, coordinators and also --we had-- student representatives who communicated, which I think is a far cry today (DT2B:389).*

A female senior teacher who was still on the programme concurred with her urban counterpart regarding communication with staff at the ZOU regional centre as she said, *“They have been quite supportive, the programme coordinators and others”* (DT2C:392).

Another urban female head of department from later intakes who delayed completion of the programme was happy with the communication. Her view was applicable when learners visited the regional centre. She said, *“They are able to communicate with students especially when one is able to visit the centre here in Harare”* (DT2P:393). Another urban female deputy school head had dubious feelings about communication between ZOU and students as she said, *“it depends according to the mood of the person. Some are good, some are what”* (DT2E:393).

The communication experiences in DL were different among rural students. All four interviewees from rural areas faced challenges in communicating with regional centres. Typical was an earlier intakes male school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme who said, *“--you would depend on hunting colleagues to find out --newest information. As far as rural students are concerned-- dissemination of information was- poor”* (DT2BV:391).

These experiences show that adult learners in urban areas faced fewer challenges in communicating with the regional centres than rural ones as they could access telephone and/or travelled to regional centres when the need arose.

### **5.5.3 Strategies for coping with communication in DL.**

I asked participants for the strategies they used to cope with communication challenges. Some rural students like the female head of department from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“There was no*

*telephone-- we communicated through letters” (DT2R:392).* A male teacher in a similar situation said, *“I used telephones from the police station” (DT2Z:392).*

#### **5.5.4 Student support services**

At the time of this study, ZOU had a dean for student affairs and a student services department that gave service to learners in regional centres. I asked participants about their experiences with the support from the student services units in their regional centres. The general feeling was that the student services department was unknown to adult learners. None of my participants used student services units in the regional centres.

For example, a female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme said, *“I haven’t been in touch with the student’s unit--s/he has not been there for us and we are not even aware of his or her existence” (DT2C:394).* Her sentiments were echoed by a female head of department who had delayed completion and was still on the programme. She also said, *“Whatever it is I never consulted it, I don’t even know who they are” (DT2P:394).* The participants’ responses show that the regional student support services units did not communicate with students as they did not know it.

I asked the participants how they solved the challenges they met in their programme. One head of department from later intakes who delayed completion of and was still on the programme said, *“I usually consulted the--programme coordinator” (DT2P:394).* A female senior teacher from later intakes that was also on the programme said, *“Whatever problems I encountered during my programme, I --directed them to the programme coordinator” (DT2C:394).* These answers indicate that participants relied on regional programme coordinators even on issues that were supposed to be dealt with by student services units. They reveal unclear division of functions among departments.

This section dealt with the administrative support systems and revealed participants' views on their experiences in DL at ZOU. The next section deals with the academic support mechanisms used by adults to cope with DL.

## **5.6 Availability of learning materials**

Since its inception ZOU pledged to support DL students with multi-media instruction comprising: print, radio, telephone, contact tutorials and assessment, district study centres and library research (Benza 2001). At the time of this study, none of the participants had used radio in their DL. Most participants wished they had district study centres because they were not available. Print module, library research, telephone, contact tutorials and assessment were used. I deal with them in their tree nodes.

I asked participants their experience in accessing learning materials in the DL programme at ZOU. Ten of my participants said the learning materials were insufficient while only two said they had enough materials. Some of them used their personal resources to cope with DL.

A female deputy school head who delayed completion of the programme and was in fourth year argued that DL is simple if learners have the learning resources. In her view, "*Studying through distance education is quite simple when you have the resources*" (DTIS:370). The basic learning resource at ZOU is a course module.

### **5.6.1 The print module**

In principle, every learner receives a learning package that includes course modules during registration at the beginning of every semester at ZOU. I asked participants their experiences with availability of the modules in the DL programme. Their answers varied from adequate, inadequate and not available. Participants' responses

indicated that modules were better supplied to earlier than later intakes on the B.Ed. programme.

While a deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*-we had enough modules to use-- In our case you would always have a module*” (DT3B:395), a school head from later intakes that was still on the programme said, “*We have got assignments but we don't have modules*” (DT2CH:386). The supply of modules was erratic. In some cases the supply of modules delayed. In other situations the modules that were supplied were fewer than the registered learners. This had negative implications on students’ preparation of and meeting assignment submission deadlines. The impact of poor supply of modules is discussed under DL teaching methods tree node.

### **5.6.2 The Library**

Among ZOU’s learner support mechanisms was provision of the library for research. I asked participants their experiences with the use of the ZOU library in DL. Their responses included that:

- The library is quite okay,
- Being first intake, we did not have any library at all,
- ZOU library had some materials but they were not enough,
- I think our library, you hardly find a book ,
- At times the library was over-crowded with students,
- Library facilities were a challenge due to distance from the regional centre,
- From where I was in the remote rural areas there was no library, and
- Library would not give books for a week; it would just give for overnight.

Only one urban female senior teacher from later intakes who was still on the programme said, “*-the library, ah it's quite okay*” (DT3C:400). The other eleven participants in my sample faced challenges with the use of the library at ZOU. For

instance, a school head from earlier intakes said, “*-being first intake, we didn’t have any libraries at all*” (DT3BV:399). Seven of my interviewees concurred with a teacher from earlier intakes who had unimpeded completion of the programme but said that, “*-in the library, there were very few books*” (DT3Z:398). Another school head from later intakes that was still on the programme said, “*-our library, you hardly find a book*” (DT3CH:400). There was shortage of library books in some regional centres that a female head of department that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*the library would not give books for a week, they would just give you for overnight--coming from the rural areas*”(DT3R:400) . Even where the library had books, there were times when reading space was inadequate in the library. A female senior teacher from earlier intakes that had delayed completion of the programme said, “*-there comes a time when the library is over-crowded*” (DT3A:394).

In other cases, the challenge from library facilities arose, “*because of distance from the regional centre*” (DT3Z:401). A deputy school head who delayed completion of the programme experienced that, “*the Mashonaland East one was roughly 50 kilometres from where I was*” (DT3S:401).A female school head from earlier intakes also had to travel from her rural regional centre to borrow books from libraries in urban areas as she said, “*In Marondera the books were not enough but in Harare the books were okay. I would go to Seke Teachers’ College or Victoria Memorial Library in town*” (DT3V:401).

Participants’ responses reveal that urban students were nearer to library facilities than rural ones. That situation exposed rural students to more challenges from the library than urban ones. These included transport cost and also shorter access and reading time.

### 5.6.3 Strategies for coping with learning materials

I asked participants the strategies they used to cope with challenges they faced in availability of learning materials. Their responses included:

- Buying own books,
- Borrowing books or texts from friends who had gone through the programme,
- Using other universities, colleges, institutions and local authority libraries,
- Sourcing information from internet,
- Borrowing on Friday and returning the book on Saturday, and
- Photocopying chapters from books and articles from journals.

In order to cope with inadequate learning materials in the DL programme, some respondents like a rural female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme had to, “*buy some textbooks*” (DT3V:397). Five participants including a female deputy school head from earlier intakes that had delayed completion of the programme borrowed books, “*-from friends*” (DT3S:397). Four of the interviewees like the female head of department from later intakes that was still on the programme relied on materials borrowed from, “*-other students who have already completed the programme*” (DT3C:399). The other learners used, “*-books from other universities*” (DT3A: 395) and also, “*-photocopying books*” (DT3BV:398) to cope with DL. Participants like the female head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme, “*-would get some information from the internet*” (DT3V:397). In regional centres where library books were too few for the enrolled students, students could only borrow books and return them to the library overnight. A female head of department from earlier intakes said, “*I would just borrow on Friday and return the book on Saturday*” (DT3R:400).

Participants from earlier intakes found access to library books easier than those from later intakes. ZOU still had inter-library linkages with other institutions. For

instance, a deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that, during their time in the programme, “*Once you were a member of ZOU, you would use any library free of charge like; Parliament, Seke Teachers College and the University Library*” (DT3B:398). The impact of the availability of the modules on adult learners’ coping with DL is discussed after comparing the interview results with those from the survey.

### **5.7 Information and communication technology**

In DL, information and communication technology (ICT) is a key learner support resource that connects the distant learner to the educational institution. ZOU expected distance learners to communicate using telephone. Internet was also supposed to facilitate research. I asked participants to describe their experiences with access to and use of ICT in DL. Like in other aspects of this study, their responses varied. They included:

- Many of us did not have access to computers,
- I am not even aware of the ICT that ZOU offers,
- When we went to the library we were told that we would only access the books and not the internet,
- We used ICT to find information for the assignments but not to communicate,
- I could not access ICT because there were too many of us,
- At ZOU the computers are only accessed by their workers, and
- I was divorced from use of ICT because of the area where I was.

Participants’ access to ICT in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU depended on the management of the programme between earlier and later intakes. It also varied with whether they stayed in rural or urban areas.

For example, there were six of the participants like the male urban deputy school head from earlier intakes whose experience with access and use of ICT at ZOU in the DL programme, “*-was challenging-- many of us didn't have access to computers*” (DT4B:402). There were some participants like the senior female teacher who was still on the programme who expressed ignorance of the existence of ICT at ZOU. She said, “*I am not even aware of the information and technology the ZOU offers*” (DT4C:403).

There were other participants who acknowledged the existence of ICT at ZOU but said there were management and geographical factors that prevented them access to ICT. For instance, one urban female senior teacher from later intakes that had completed the programme said they used ICT to, “*--find information for the assignments but not to communicate with lecturers*” (DT4A:402). Another urban female senior teacher also from later intakes but was still on the programme said that when they went to the library, “*-we were only told that we would access the books and not the internet*” (DT4C:404). An urban female head of department who had delayed completion and was still on the programme attributed her lack of access to ICT to too many students using few computers. She said, “*I could not access because there were so many of us*” (DT3P:404). Other participants had experience with access to ICT similar to that of a remote rural teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme but said, “*I was divorced from that kind of communication because of the-- area where I was based*” (DT4Z:405).

A view that summed up learner access to ICT at ZOU in later intakes was expressed by a male school head and member of SRC that was still on the programme. He said, “*At ZOU the computers are only accessed by their workers. When they are not accessible to me I say-- we don't have that facility*” (DT4CH:404).

### **5.7.1 Learner training in ICT**

The importance of ICT in DL necessitated the inclusion of a course on Computer

Application in the B.Ed. programme curriculum at ZOU. I probed further in order for participants to describe their experiences in that course. All the participants acknowledged attending that course. However, they gave experiences that varied with its administration during different intakes. They gave the following answers:

- The course in the B.Ed. programme introduced me to the computer,
- We went to High Glen for practical lessons,
- We were exposed to the use of computers just for two weeks,
- We studied computers for a semester,
- One of our courses involved computer application but many of us did not have access to computers, and
- I had problems on that course. I only did theory and not the practical of it. I had no access to computers.

The training of students in the use of ICT was part of the B.Ed. programme. However, there were participants' that experienced different durations of access to computers. For example, a rural female head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, "*there was a course on computers in the B.Ed. programme that introduced me to the computer*" (DT4R:402). A rural school head also from earlier intakes concurred that, "*We were exposed to the use of computers for two weeks at a technical college in Marondera*" (DT4BV:403).

There were four participants that did the Computer Application course without the practical component like an urban deputy school head who said, "*one of our courses involved Computer Application, but many of us didn't have access to computers*" (DT4B:403). The worst case scenario was summarized by a female head of department from later intakes, who said,

*I had --problems on that course. I only did theory--and not the practical of it. I had no access to computers-- to go to private colleges to study the computers, I had no money-- so, I could only write the*

*exam-- (DT4P:404).*

### **5.7.2 Strategies for coping with challenges in ICT**

When I asked what strategies participants used to cope with access to ICT in DL their responses included:

- Assistance from those who knew computing,
- I relied on my son who had done computers at school,
- Students from regional centres without internet traveled to Harare, and
- You paid money for operating a computer at computer shops.

Among my participants were those who shared the experience by a deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme and said, *“-we had to use other people to get the information for us” (DT4B:403)*. In a similar way, a female school head that also had also had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“I was relying on my son who had done computers at school-- to get information I wanted” (DT4V:405)*. Participants from regional centres without ICT had to travel to urban regional centres to retrieve information from internet. A female senior teacher from earlier intakes in Mashonaland Central said, *“I used the Internet. I used the Harare library” (DT4A:395)*. Students who used private ICT facilities sponsored themselves. A female deputy school head from earlier intakes who delayed completion and was still on the programme said, *“--you were required to pay money for operating a computer at computer shops” (DT4S:405)*.

The impact of learner access to ICT in DL is dealt with in detail in the discussion chapter.

## **5.8 Distance teaching-learning methods**

DL at ZOU uses two main teaching-learning methods, the module and contact tutorials. ZOU also encourages student-organised local study groups. This tree node gives participants' experiences with these DL teaching-learning methods.

### **5.8.1 The module**

The module at ZOU is a print text prepared by experts on the course of study. It helps the learner to study alone. This text gives the learner the basics of what is covered at each level of learning. This is the document that forms the basis upon which written assignment and examination questions are set. However, the module has to be complemented by contact tutorials and extensive library research. Ideally, once a learner is registered the institution should provide her/him with a module for each course every semester.

I asked participants their experiences in the use of the module as a teaching-learning method at ZOU. They gave various responses including:

- The modules were very handy, they gave us the basis on which to work,
- Modules are very important because they allow you to learn at your pace,
- I had challenges understanding some modules,
- Modules were too superficial in content,
- Some of the modules did not have information on the assignments and examination questions that students are given,
- Each one of us had a personal module to use,
- We have got assignments but we don't have modules, and
- Floods could keep me away from coming to the regional centre to collect modules on time.

Most participants viewed modules as an effective teaching-learning method in DL. For instance, a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of

the programme said, *“the modules were very handy. They gave us the basis on which to work”* (DT5BV:406). This was supported by another school head who was an SRC member from later intakes and was still on the programme. He also said, *“Modules are very important because they allow you to learn at your pace”* (DT5CH:406).

Helpful as they are, ten of my participants experienced challenges from the modules they used in DL at ZOU. They complained about some modules that had texts that were difficult to understand. Some modules were said to have superficial content. Other modules were outdated. During some semesters there were either delayed or inadequate supplies of modules. For instance, a male deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“modules were simple-- a challenge for us was the use of the technical language”* (DT5B:406). A female deputy head from later intakes that had delayed completion of the programme also found the module difficult to understand as she said that, *“At first it was very hard to--find information from the module”* (DT5E:406).

A female senior teacher also from later intakes that was still on the programme experienced the challenge of not understanding the ZOU modules on, *“Statistics as well as that of Computers--it doesn't explain in depth how we go about it”* (DT5C:407). A female head of department from later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme concurred that those modules lacked, *“- detail in relation to the exam questions--and to the assignments that students are given”* (DT5P:407). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme expressed the challenge of superficial content in some modules at ZOU as he said, *“- some modules were not good--the writers did not have knowledge in --the level of B.Ed. It was-- low level”* (DT5ZV:408).

Participants' responses revealed that some challenges associated with the module were administrative rather than academic. Students from earlier intakes of the B.Ed.

programme at ZOU had a better supply of modules than those from later intakes. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed this as he said, “*Each one of us had a personal module to use. It is unlike today where people go almost to the end of the year without a module*” (DT3B:395). Students from later intakes were frustrated by the poor supply of modules at ZOU. This was confirmed by the school head and SRC member at the time. He said, “*This year in 2009, we have got assignments but we don’t have modules. What do we do?*” (DT5CH:407).

There were students who stayed in remote rural areas without tarred roads. Such learners could not travel to regional centres to collect modules during the rain season. A teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said,

*One challenge which I used to meet was that of getting the modules-- during summer season-- in January. If ever I went to Muzarabani before collecting the modules from Mashonaland Central Region, floods could keep me away from coming to the region to get the modules-- (DT5Z:408).*

### **5.8.2 Strategies for coping with the challenges in the ZOU module**

I asked participants the strategies they used to cope with the challenges they faced in using the module. They included among others:

- We had to buy our own textbooks to supplement with,
- We would get some information from the internet and going to the library,
- Photocopying from library books and journals, and
- Sourcing books from friends.

To cope with the inadequacies of the ZOU module, eight of my participants used the strategies stated by a rural female school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme. She said, “*We had to buy textbooks-- get information from the internet and going to the library*” (DT3V:397). A male teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of said, “*I used to—collect-- references for sources. I*

*could go and photocopy material from the-- World Bank Library in Harare” (DT3Z:397).* Others relied on interpersonal skills to borrow library books through friends. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“I had friends-- at the University of Zimbabwe where most of the books were found” (DT3B:398).*

These results and their implications on the module as a teaching –learning method in DL are dealt with in comparison to those obtained from the survey in the discussion chapter.

### **5.8.3 Weekend tutorials**

Contact tutorials are a key teaching-learning method and learner support mechanism in the DL. I asked interviewees their experiences with weekend contact tutorials. They gave responses that varied with intakes, tutor preparedness, geographical location, transport facilities and national economic hardships including:

- Weekend tutorials were helpful,
- We never had a scheduled tutorial failing or that there was no tutor ,
- Everyone was eager to attend as most of the tutors were good and helpful,
- Ill-prepared tutors,
- Distance was an impediment,
- Due to transport problems students and tutors sometimes could not come, and
- You would have economic hardships.

Most of my interviewees from both earlier and later intakes regarded contact tutorials as essential and helpful (Macmillan and Mclean 2005) in coping with DL. They shared the view expressed by a rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme. He said that contact tutorial sessions, *“- were helpful--to get guidance from the lecturer, to interact on our own as students and to share experiences” (DT5BV:409).* A teacher from earlier intakes that also had

unimpeded completion of the programme added that contact tutorials enhanced interactive learning among students (Murgatroyd 1980). He also found tutorials empowering learners and at the same time facilitating interactivity between learners and tutors. Hence he said, *“Tutors-- gave us chance to prepare some work for delivery to other students and the tutors could round up students’ presentations”* (DT5Z:410). A school head from later intakes that was still on the programme said that, *“I find those very helpful-- to clarify some points”*(DT5CH:409). This was echoed by an urban female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme as she said that, *“-weekend tutorials benefit a lot, especially those given by dedicated tutors”* (DT5C:409).

Participants from earlier intakes faced less challenges from contact tutorial sessions than those from later intakes. For instance, a male deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“We never had -- a scheduled tutorial failing or that there was no tutor”* (DT5B:410). However, it is not all gold that glitters. Occasionally, earlier intakes had encounters with ill-qualified tutors. A deputy school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“Once in a while, we had queer tutors--relying on what they had done themselves-- failing to teach us from the known to the unknown”* (DT5B:411).

Majority of participants from earlier intakes shared the sentiments of a rural teacher that had unimpeded completion of the programme who said, *“-tutors used to come very well prepared”* (DT5Z:410). Participant experiences in later intakes revealed deterioration in the quality of weekend tutorial sessions at ZOU. Some tutors came ill prepared for tutorial sessions. Such tutors only told students to read the module. A male school head that was an SRC member and was still on the programme from later intakes experienced contact tutorials where, *“most of the lecturers have a tendency of repeating what is already in the modules”* (DT5CH:411).

Students from earlier intakes expressed more satisfaction with tutorial conduct than those from later intakes. A male school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed this as he said, *“Everyone was eager to attend-- the tutors were quite good, very sympathetic--they actually helped us”* (DT5ZV:410). Meanwhile, a female senior teacher from later intakes experienced indifference in the attitude of tutors. She said, *“- some are eager to see students pass but some are not. At times, you would attend a lecture where the tutors would not turn up”* (DT5C:409). In worst case scenarios, a female deputy school head from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme said that, *“You couldn’t see a tutor until we write the exam”* (DT5E:411).

Interviewees also revealed that students from rural areas faced more challenges during contact tutorial sessions in DL than those from urban areas. Time and travel expenses due to distance from regional centres were major challenges. A rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the DL programme said, *“distance was an impediment”* (DT5BV:409). This was substantiated by a female deputy school head from earlier intakes who also said that, *“-because of financial constraints we could not go to the tutorials 50 kilometres from my place”* (DT5S:411). A rural female school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme travelled from her province across a second into a third province to go and attend tutorial sessions. She said, *“I worked in Mash East, doing my programme in Mash West 300 kilometres from where I was working”* (DT5V:412). Another case was that of a remote rural school teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme and could not attend tutorials during the wet summer months. The dust roads in their area got waterlogged and buses could not travel there. Hence he said, *“I was cut away from them because of floods from January to February”* (DT5Z:413)

The challenges to DL students from later intakes at ZOU were worsened by the economic hardships. These were a result of the controversial ‘land reform’ in 2000 and the subsequent poor macro- economic management and political governance in Zimbabwe. A rural senior teacher that delayed but completed the programme said that, *“Because of the transport--others couldn’t make it-- also the tutors, sometimes were not able to come” (DT5A:409).*

#### **5.8.4 Strategies for coping with challenges in tutorials**

I asked interviewees for the strategies they used to cope with the challenges they faced in contact tutorial sessions. They gave strategies like:

- Hiring private tutors due to little contact time that we had with tutors,
- Giving students questions to work on for presentation in next tutorial, and
- Once we complained about ineffective tutors they were replaced.

Seven of my interviewees hired private tutors to make up for the inadequate contact time. ZOU provided 6 hours per semester per course contact time between adult learners and tutors. A female senior teacher from later intakes who was still on the programme said, *“we contacted -- private tutors-- so that we-- understand the subject better because of the of little contact time that we have with tutors” (DT3C:396).*

Other students benefited from interactive learning. A rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“Students should be given questions to go and work on-- when you meet the next weekend, students are going to participate by presenting” (DT5BV:412).*

When students found ineffective tutors during contact sessions they ‘blew the whistle’ to the programme management. Often they got management’s cooperation. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed that as he said, *“-once we complained we got another tutor*

*who was able--to take us from the ordinary life level to the technical concepts wanted” (DT5B:412).*

### **5.8.5 Study groups**

ZOU also encouraged students to do cooperative learning in study groups. The groups comprise students in the same programme and intake as well as staying in the same area. I asked participants their experiences with study groups during DL. Their answers included that:

- Study groups were very helpful but they required commitment from members,
- Organized groups requested and got tutors’ help at no extra charge,
- Uncommitted members of the group would either report late or not come,
- Some members came without researching for the discussion,
- Some group members failed to attend because of the bus fares, and
- Remote rural ones could not meet other students because of isolated environment.

Study groups were a beneficial support strategy in DL. Study groups engaged many learners in student to student interaction (Robertson and Merriam 2005) and also student-tutor interaction. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“I benefited more from those kinds of discussions” (DT5B:414).*

Sometimes students in study groups faced challenges in understanding some of the material under discussion. A female deputy school head that delayed completion and was still on the programme said, *“at times we had to face a problem of what is really wanted and no one could explain” (DT5S:414).* In such cases there was need to seek assistance from either tutors or some people who had done the programme.

Participants' responses revealed that study groups in earlier intakes got assistance from ZOU tutors more easily than those from later intakes. A deputy school head from earlier intakes said, "*--they would visit us at our-- areas which I don't see today. All you needed was to -- call a tutor and the tutor would come -- we didn't pay for anything*" (DT3B:395).

Later intakes had a different experience regarding support from tutors in study groups. A school head from later intakes that were an SRC member and still on the programme said that, "*- tutors are only accessible as far as tutorials are concerned. After their one or two hours, each one goes their way*" (DT2CH:391).

There were genuine cases when adult learners failed to attend study group sessions because of unexpected family commitments and lack of, "*bus fares*" (DT5C:413). However, study groups faced a challenge of some students that lacked commitment. There were those that would absent themselves from arranged meetings. Some came late and others came without preparing for the discussion sessions. A female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that, "*some members of the group did not have commitment, they would report for the discussions late or would not come*" (DT5V:413). Lack of commitment among group members was substantiated by a female head of department from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme as she said, "*sometimes we would assign each other to go and research and others would not come prepared*" (DT5R:413).

The worst case scenario was the abuse of study groups by parasitic students that were deceptive. They came into the group to "suck" information from other members without contributing. A case in point was experienced by a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme and said,

*One lady came into the study group-- she would draft a number of questions, ask questions in such a way that we were feeding her with information and yet she would not --participate much in the discussion. She spent most of her time knitting. When we discovered that, then we were avoiding her (DT5ZV:413).*

Some learners had the challenge of staying in remote rural areas where it was difficult to meet and form study groups with other students. A teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said he could not join a study group because, “--of my isolated environment in Muzarabani” (DT5Z:413).

### **5.8.6 Strategies for coping with challenges in study groups**

I asked participants for strategies they used to cope with challenges they faced in study groups. Their responses included among other things:

- Having sessions where they lectured to one another,
- Discussed in groups and contacted tutors to clarify issues,
- Hiring private tutors, and
- Studied alone if in an area where it was difficult to meet others.

The strategies used by adult learners in study groups engendered learner autonomy. Group members both gathered and constructed knowledge. Eight of my interviewees shared the experience of a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme as he said, “- every Saturday we had to meet as a group -- and this—helped-- that we understand the programme” (DT5BV:414).

At times adults faced challenges understanding new concepts in their course content in study groups. This was because it was a student to student teaching-learning situation. In that case, a senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme said, “We discuss in groups and then we contact them (tutors) to clarify other issues” (DT5C:414).

ZOU provided limited contact tutorial time mentioned earlier. Some courses required frequent practice for learners to understand. Hence, a senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme said, “*-we have also contacted --- private tutors as groups*” (DT3C:396). This was echoed by a female deputy school head from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme as she said, “*a teacher at Glen View 5 could help with Statistics-- after school-- from 2 o'clock to four o'clock*” (DT3E:397).

In the most desperate of situations, students who could not join study groups had to study alone. A school head that was still on the programme said, “*-it's in a rural setting. It's very difficult to find others. So I had to learn to be studying alone*” (DT5CH:414).

This tree node dealt with ZOU teaching-learning methods including, the print module, contact tutorials and study groups. Challenges faced by learners in these approaches have been exposed. Participants also revealed the strategies they used to cope with DL. Conclusions on the findings from this tree node will be reached after comparing these with results from the questionnaire survey in the discussion chapter.

## **5.9 Distance learning assessment**

An inquiry into adult learners' experiences with the DL assessment methods revealed that ZOU uses written assignments, written examinations every semester and a research project submitted in the final year of the programme. The assessment approaches are designed to encourage learners to keep learning. They enable tutors to give students feedback on their progress. Assessment also determines learners' preparedness to proceed from one stage of the programme to the next one. Finally the assessment determines the awarding of the B. Ed degree. I deal with the assessment methods in the order listed above.

### 5.9.1 Written assignments

Written assignments served as an instructional and a formative assessment instrument to guide adults through the B.Ed. programme (Mutch 2003). I asked participants if they benefited from comments made by tutors on written assignments in DL. The participants gave the following variety of responses:

- Written assignments were a very good way of making us study and work,
- There was no proper induction done,
- At times we did not have enough textbooks and the modules did not have the necessary information,
- I failed to meet deadlines because of pressure of work at my school or at home, so I would spend sleepless nights trying to write assignments.
- Some lecturers could not mark assignments in time,
- Some students could not find their assignments,
- Sometimes we got very discouraging comments from some lecturers,
- The comments were sometimes general and not instructive,
- The tutor sometimes gave people a general mark, and
- Some students copied other students' assignments.

Most participants concurred with a deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme as he said, "*written assignments were a very good way of making us study and work*" (DT6B:415). Many participants also indicated that where tutors wrote constructive comments they benefited from comments in written assignments. A female head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, "*Those who write comments, I benefited*" (DT6R:419). A female deputy head that delayed and was still on the programme confirmed that view as she said, "*From the corrections-- from the first assignment-- written by the tutor-- I could develop from there , enrich yourself basing on them*" (DT6S:420). A teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme substantiated that point as he said, "*Tutors-- could*

*write-- comments which showed my areas of strength and weaknesses and--could also -- give a way forward” (DT6Z:420).* A school head that was a member of the SRC and still on the programme indicated that one tutor, “*-wrote comments where I was wrong--in that assignment, when I followed those comments, in all other assignments, I had top marks (DT6CH:419).*”

It was interesting to note that some interviewees like the school head that had previous DL experience and was still on the programme faced no challenges with written assignments. He said, “*To be honest, the demand-- of the assignments themselves they have been so simple” (DT6CH:415).* However, other participants faced challenges from written assignments in varied ways. Adults faced challenges of inadequate induction in assignment writing at B.Ed. level as it was their first time to do university studies. A deputy school head from earlier intakes said, “*-written assignments were good--the attack to the question was challenging” (DT6B:415).* That challenge was substantiated by a female deputy head that delayed completion and was still on the programme as she said, “*-at first we didn’t know what was really required in the writing of assignments. There was no proper induction done” (DT6S:416).*”

Another challenge faced by adults in preparation of assignments for DL was lack of sources of information. A female rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion faced problems in preparing assignments because, “*At times we did not have enough textbooks and the modules did not have the necessary information” (DT6V:419).* A rural teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme was prevented from visiting the regional centre by floods in January and February facing the challenge, “*-of collecting modules and course outlines for the courses” (DT6Z:417)*early enough to prepare assignments on time.

At times adult learners failed to balance time among their work, family commitments and written assignment submission due dates. A senior teacher from earlier intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, *“Sometimes I failed to meet deadlines because of pressure of work at my school or at home”* (DT6A:415).

Sometimes students faced challenges of tutors that either failed to return marked assignments on time or misplaced assignments or could not locate them. A female deputy head that delayed but completed the programme said, *“Some lecturers could not mark assignments in time. -- Some could not even find their assignments”* (DT6E:416).

Although many students were happy with written assignments as an instructional tool, the major challenge faced by adults was ineffective feedback on written assignments by tutors. Apart from delay in returning of marked assignments some students were de-motivated by some comments made by tutors. A rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“-sometimes we got very discouraging comments from some lecturers”* (DT6BV:418). A male deputy head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“The comments were sometimes-- a general comment which was not instructive”* (DT6B:417). This was concurred by a female head of department from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme. She said, *“-some they would just write satisfactory”* (DT6R:419). A senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme added that, *“Some markers-- just put a grade. It does not highlight the weaknesses or strengths of what the writer would have put down”* (DT6C:418). In a worst case scenario, a rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“-one DEO actually dropped after he had been given a very discouraging comment in one of his assignments”* (DT6BV:418).

Participants also revealed irregularities in written assignment mark allocation by tutors in DL. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“The tutor would give people a general mark -- that was discouraging”* (DT6B:417). A school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme complained about the lack of authenticity of some marks awarded to assignments by some tutors in DL. He said,

*Some tutors were not thorough , and gave a mark , let’s say 90%-- yet the stuff which is there is not worthy 90%-- I didn’t like it--I wanted the tutors to be honest. If I got 30%-- I will work hard to say next time--I must get 60%-- , a genuine mark rather than a mark which pleases me* (DT6ZV:418).

A senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme added another dimension of inconsistency in mark allocation by tutors. She said, *“You wonder what actually happens--as group members, the other students --excel and some actually fail-- but the ideas will be the same”* (DT6C:418).

A school head from earlier intakes that had completed the programme revealed an oversight by DL tutors during the marking of written assignments. He said, *“One challenge is the temptation to get someone’s assignment and copy it”* (DT6ZV:420). The problem of adults that copy other learners’ assignments was confirmed by a head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme. She said, *“I don’t hide that students -- get other students’ assignments and write”* (DT6P:416).

### **5.9.2 Strategies for coping with written assignments**

I asked participants the strategies they used to cope with assignments in DL. Their responses included the following:

- Working in groups,
- Hiring private tutors,
- Sourcing textbooks from friends and former students of the programme,
- Reading library literature and books from other universities and colleges, and

- Some students copied other students' assignments.

Just like in other learning activities, participants relied on study groups to help one another to develop answers for written assignments. A senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme said that, *"You get together as a group, you map out the way forward as far as the assignment is concerned"* (DT6C:418).

In situations where the assignment question was beyond their comprehension, participants hired private tutors who guided in developing the answers for the assignments. A female deputy school head from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, *"We could ask Mr Madzimure to help us. We could give him our topics"* (DT5E:414). This was supported by a senior teacher that was still on the programme as she said, *"-we hire and pay private tutors—so that we pass – assignments"* (DT3C:396).

Another strategy used by participants to cope with written assignments was reading literature borrowed from previous students of the B.Ed. programme. They also read library books from other educational institutions like universities and colleges. A head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme said, *"I could source-- texts from other students who had gone through the programme or visit local authority libraries"* (DT3P:397). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme also said, *"I used books- modules and information from UNISA-- that helped me"* (DT3ZV:398).

In addition to other sources, participants in management positions benefited from what they experienced at their work places. Students that were school heads, their deputies and education officers relied a lot on practical knowledge in preparation of some answers to questions on written assignments. A rural school head that had completed the programme confirmed that, *"-because the programme was*

*educational, we had to use much of what we experienced as school heads” (DT3BV:396).*

Some students used an unorthodox strategy for coping with written assignments. Participants revealed that some adult learners survived through cheating as they copied assignments from other students. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed what some two participants had mentioned. He said, *“I see a number of cases where most students tend to borrow assignments from others and work on it and improve it” (DT6B:415).*

My participants were all professionally qualified teachers. Most of them were occupying positions of special responsibility. Hence, I asked them for suggestions to improve assessment through written assignments in DL. They suggested that markers of assignments should give clear instructive comments. In other words, markers should highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the students in the assignments. They should also provide guidance to learners in order to improve the subsequent assignments basing on comments given in previous ones. For instance, a female head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, assignment markers should *“-specify what is satisfactory. If I get a 60-- inform me why I did not get an 80” (DT6R:420).*

A senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme indicated that fairness in the marking of assignments should be assured by moderation of marked assignments. She said, *“one marker marks and then there is a moderator, so that there is fairness” (DT6C:420).* Participants also suggested that tutors need to treat adult learners with patience. They suggested that tutors should make encouraging remarks on written assignments. That gives adults hope and boosts their self-esteem. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed this view as he said,

*I remember a colleague of mine getting 10 out of 100 and was almost dismissed as a useless student. But, when we met with him and gave him encouragement, he became one of our best students (DT6BV:417).*

### **5.9.3 Written examinations**

In addition to written assignments, DL students at ZOU are assessed through end of semester written examinations. Written examinations were one way to motivate students to learn as well as assess if the learning outcomes were achieved (Pitts 2005; Welch and Reed 2005).

I asked my participants their experiences with written examinations in the B.Ed. Their responses varied with individuals' educational backgrounds and their intakes.

A male deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that, *“-exams that time were genuine-- if you had not prepared for them you would flop and if you had prepared you would pass” (DT6B:422)*. A female deputy head from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, *“-some were very difficult. Some were easy --one has got to go to the exam when properly prepared” (DT6ZV:423)*. The importance of preparedness for examinations was shared by many participants as echoed by a male school head from later intakes that was still on the programme. He enjoyed his experience with written examinations at ZOU as he said, *“To be honest-- the examinations--have been—simple” (DT6CH:422)*.

Like other learner support mechanisms, written examinations had their share of challenges. Among those cited by participants were:

- Insufficient revision time,
- Lack of guidance in preparation for examinations,
- Inadequate time allocated for examination questions, and
- Missing results.

A female deputy head that delayed and was still on the programme faced a challenge in written examinations. She said, “*-there was no enough revision--when you are studying you need someone -- to ask if--you don't understand a topic*” (DT6S:424). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme revealed that sometimes tutors did not give sufficient guidance on preparation for examinations to students. This compromised students' performance in examinations. He said, “*-tutors should also be able to give guidance on preparation for examinations*” (DT6ZV:423).

Another school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme revealed that the time allocated for writing the examinations was too short. It did not allow students opportunity to cover the answers that were expected by the questions. He said, “*the period for the exam-- it was just one and half hours -- a mismatch between the-- time and the material required by the question*” (DT6BV:422).

A female head of department from later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme felt relieved that she was part of the sample in this study. She experienced missing results on her written examinations. She saw her inclusion in this study as an opportunity for her to say out her concern. She also hoped that through studies such as this one ZOU administration could be informed about students' frustration from missing results. Hence she said,

*I think your sampling was very much correct-- I wrote examinations. When the results came all the components had 'F'. I cried and went to the academic registrar--had an argument there then-- the result on Educational Policy Making was given (DT6P:423).*

This was a student that wrote an examination on a course she had failed and passed during the second sitting. However, the results that were published were the ones for the time that she had failed. This was because her current results had not been

captured and published. She only got her current pass results after complaining and after an investigation by the academic registry.

#### **5.9.4 Strategies for coping with written examinations**

I asked participants the strategies they used to cope with written examinations in DL.

Their answers included the following:

- Seeking official and private tutors' help during revision for examinations,
- Revising in groups,
- Studying past examination papers,
- Supplementary examinations were helpful,
- Students' resourcefulness helped accessing information, and
- Appealing against missing results.

Eight of my participants relied on seeking help from both ZOU's part-time tutors and privately hired resource persons to cope with examinations in DL. Some students sought help from former students of the B.Ed. programme. A school head from later intakes that was still on the programme appreciated the support that he got from the tutors at ZOU in preparing for examinations. He said, "*in fact two ladies, they went so far as to teach us how to write and prepare for examination*" (DT6CH:424). A senior teacher from later intakes hired private tutors to revise for examinations. She said, "*-at times, we contact other private tutors, who we hire and pay so that we actually pass the exams*" (DT3C:396). Private tutors included former ZOU students and those from other universities that taught at the request of learners' study groups.

In addition to seeking help from tutors, students also used their resourcefulness. They studied in groups answering self-prepared questions from their course materials. They also work out answers to past examination papers and questions prepared for them by their tutors. A head of department from later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme said that, "*-towards examination we could source-- past exam papers to get information to revise*" (DT3P:397). A

school head from later intakes that were still on the programme suggested that students need to be resourceful to cope with DL. He said, “-we are saying the student has to be resourceful--that’s the skill that should be promoted by any university (DT6CH:424). A senior teacher that was still on the programme also said, “We summarised topics-- answer questions-- in the module and the group -- work on the questions that we will have been given by the tutors”(DT6C:424).

Another strategy used by adult learners to cope with preparation for written examinations was serious studying using timetables to revise. For instance, while a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “-one has got to go to the exam when properly prepared” (DT6ZV:423), a head of department from later intakes said that, “towards examinations, I would wake up around 2.00 am or 3.00 am to study” (DT6P:425).

In the event of failure during first attempt on an examination, participants found recourse in supplementary examinations. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “That you would-- write a supplementary exam -- many of us were able to cope” (DT6B:422). Participants also indicated that they appealed to the academic registry when they were not satisfied with their results on written examinations. A head of department from later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme said, “-if I had just kept quiet without following the result of Educational Policy Making Process--it means I could have re-written it with a pass on it” (DT6P:425).

In the worst case scenarios some participants absented themselves from work under flimsy pretexts to prepare for examinations. “At times you-- absent yourself from work when the examinations are around--so that you cover-- topics” (DT7C:432).

### **5.9.5 Supervision of research projects**

The research project is a support mechanism for both teaching and assessing adult

learners in DL at ZOU. It is a study carried out by a student during the final year of the programme on a one to one basis guidance by a lecturer or tutor that serves as a supervisor. The aim in research projects is to give learners a chance to apply knowledge from the theories they learn during the programme. That gives lecturers a chance to assess their learners' level of understanding of educational management. Students carry out research on any topic of their interest in the area.

I asked participants their experiences with the supervision of the research project in DL. I got answers that revealed challenges associated with students' geographical location, supervisors' ability to supervise projects, rapport between supervisees and supervisors, time allocated to do the project and outsourcing typing of projects.

Some students were satisfied with their experience during supervision of the research project in DL. For example, a teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said his experience was, “- *quite exciting-- my supervisor was based at the regional centre-- we used to meet during the school holidays-- I had all the time -- to meet him*” (DT6Z:426). A deputy head from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme also enjoyed her supervision of the research project as she said, “*Some were good. For example my tutor, I could go and submit and she marks and she tells you what to do- - After -- Chapter 5 then she would say--you completed*” (DT6E:426).

Unlike the above two examples, there was a general impression among interviewees that the supervision of the research project was problematic. It was revealed that supervisors gave students a hard time during supervision. A senior teacher from later intakes that was in third year was scared of the research project before starting it. She said, “*I am-- in a state of fear because I have heard that-- supervisors at times give you hell*” (DT6C:425)

Some of my interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the process of supervision of the research project at ZOU citing the following challenges:

- Access to supervisors was difficult,
- Some supervisors lack skills and give inconsistent instructions,
- It was expensive to keep on retyping the project, and
- Time allocated to the research project was short.

A school head from later intakes that were still on the programme said, *“When you are doing your research project, you need to be shepherded. I couldn’t get that help”* (DT6CH:427). This was substantiated by a senior teacher from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme. She said, *“-access to the tutor was very difficult”* (DT6A:425). A female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme was not comfortable with the supervision venue. She said, *“at times we failed to get our tutors. We had to go to their homes which was- disturbing”* (DT6V:427).

The challenge of failing to access tutors was worse if supervisees were allocated to supervisors that stayed far away from where they stayed. That reduced contact time and also made travel costs expensive. A deputy head from earlier intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme was supervised by an ineffective supervisor that stayed very far. Apart from incurring expenses, she made frequent and fruitless visits during her research supervision. She said, *“-my tutor was far from where I was-- I could fail to get- bus fare to go there-- you could go-- and find he had not marked the research project”* (DT6S:426).

The other challenge faced by participants during supervision of the research project was being allocated to supervisors without knowledge of supervising research. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme changed supervisors many times. He said; *“I ended up having 4 supervisors-- you*

*could not find the supervisor-- there was no serious marking. Let alone-- suggestions -- to work on” (DT6BV:425).* Another school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed the inadequacy of supervision skills among some tutors at ZOU. He ended up re-submitting a research project that his supervisor had approved. He lamented his supervision of research project experience. He said,

*-to me is very painful--my supervisor--wasn't honest enough to tell me that this piece of work is not worthy it -- I compiled everything--and when it went for marking, the-- examiner was-- honest enough to say--you were not properly supervised-- go back and re-write (DT6ZV:426).*

A similar but more complex experience was met by a head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme. She experienced a high turnover of supervisors. She complained about inadequate contact time with the supervisor. She also complained about distance between her home and the supervisors. In addition, her typist would not release the project before being paid for her typing services as the student had no money to pay. Hence she delayed submission of the research project as she said,

*I should have completed in 2003--I was first allocated to a lecturer. This lecturer went away -- I was allocated to another lecturer-- He could give excuses if you made appointment to meet him-- I was allocated the other lecturer. This lecturer was very far away -- I wrote Chapter 1- 4 and -- I took it for typing-- but the typist took a lot of time-- And this lecturer could scold me over the phone-- he said that I should have finished that project within six months (DT6P:428).*

Outsourcing the typing delayed completion and made the research project expensive for students. They made a number of drafts before the final one. A deputy head from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme said that, “--typing a project was very expensive-- the tutor would cancel and you go and start again--in our group-- most dropped because of tutors who were demanding a lot” (DT6E:428).

Some participants had the challenge coping with the time over which they had to carry out the research project. Many students failed to meet the research project submission deadline. A senior teacher from earlier intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, *“The research project is-- given one semester—the topic is approved and you are expected to hand in that semester and the time is not enough”* (DT6A:426). The same view was expressed by a female deputy school head that also delayed and was still on the programme. She said, *“They- take time to approve your chapters-- you may fail to submit your project in time because of the-- time that you are given to complete”* (DT6C:427).

#### **5.9.6 Strategies for coping with the research projects in DL**

I asked my participants the strategies they used to cope with supervision of the research project. Participants indicated that they relied on:

- Establishment of good supervisor-supervisee rapport,
- Preparing for the project early and committing oneself once started, and
- Doing own research rather than copying former students’ projects.

It was the students’ first time to do research. They needed the assistance of supervisors. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“We had not done--any research before--we relied on the tutors -- helping us to do research* (DT6B:425). There was need to establish rapport between the supervisors and supervisees. That would enable supervisees to have confidence in and tell supervisors their personal problems. That in turn would help the supervisors to give appropriate advice. A senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme substantiated this view. She said, *“- relationship between the student and the lecturer is important--lecturers need to understand the problems that students face”* (DT6P:430).

Planning in advance was also used by participants to cope with the research project in DL. A senior teacher from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, “--*you should find the topics well before you finish so that you work on the project, while doing other program areas-- when you complete you complete everything*” (DT6A:427). Her strategy was confirmed by another senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme. She also said, “*I-- planned to work on my project in time so that I don’t rush, when the due date is just around the corner*” (DT6C:430).

Although it was not allowed, participants indicated that under pressure, some students copied former students’ projects and submitted them. Copies of research projects submitted by former students had been placed in the library to help subsequent learners to see the research project format. Unfortunately, some students abused that support and copied the projects for submission hoping that they would not be discovered.

### **5.10 Participants’ advice to ZOU**

In business they say, the customer is the king. Likewise the learner is central in education. Whatever institutions do should put learners’ interests first. My participants were all professionally qualified and experienced teachers. Some of them openly expressed their excitement in doing the degree programme through DL. Hence I worked on the assumption that participants were proud of the programme and that they would give genuine views on what needed improvement in the B.Ed. programme. Their views would help ZOU to improve its DL policies and practices.

In line with my fourth research question, I asked participants what ZOU should do to improve adult learners’ coping with DL programmes. They gave answers that covered administrative, academic and technical issues. The general view was that

ZOU should support the students more than it was doing. Participants appealed for improvement of learner support in provision of suitable academic and administrative staff, communication, orientation, learning materials, outreach facilities and funding. They suggested that ZOU could do the following:

- Administrators could communicate more with the students,
- ZOU could recruit good academic and administrative staff,
- Improvement of student orientation process,
- Provision of guidance and counselling for distance learners,
- Libraries could provide enough books, internet and inter-library access,
- Modules could be regularly reviewed to keep them up to date,
- Tutors prepare handouts instead of learners relying on outdated modules,
- Tutors be supervised in their attendance during tutorials, marking assignments and supervision of students' research projects,
- Localization of tutorial centres and increase of time for tutorials and revision,
- Pay attractive salaries to reduce brain drain among academic staff, and
- Assist students in fees payment to improve programme completion rate.

#### **5.10.1 Improvement of communication with students**

Learners' experiences revealed inadequacies in ZOU's communication system especially where sudden changes in the programme were involved. They revealed that sometimes they went for tutorial sessions only to be told that the tutors were not coming. This happened after students had travelled long and expensive distances to regional centres. Students preferred that they be advised about such eventualities before they left their homes. They said that more written communication is preferred and that academic staff should lead by example by observing tutorial timetables. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed this view. She suggested that, "*ZOU organizers-- it's critical that they communicate more with the students*" (DT9B:442). In addition, a school head that also had unimpeded completion said, "*I--loved to see some-newsletters,*

*coming from ZOU” (DT2BV:392).* A newsletter could circumvent non-availability of telephone and update rural students on developments at the learning institution.

### **5.10.2 Recruitment of suitable administrative and academic staff**

Adult learners’ experiences revealed short-comings among members of ZOU academic and administrative staff. While a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “-- *they must have good tutors” (DT9ZV:444)*, a female head of department that delayed and was still on the programme suggested that, “-*lecturers need to be staff developed. Those who play administrative roles, they need again to be staff developed” (DT9P:443)*. Such sentiments revealed the need for recruitment of suitably qualified staff. That could establish positive rapport between the students and the lecturers and students and administrators. Such suggestions became evident when examination results that had been published as failed suddenly turned out to have passed. A student that delayed completion and was still on the programme gave evidence of staff incompetence in the examinations department as she said,

*When the results came-- all the components had F and I went to the academic registrar--had an argument there-- only to discover that the result on Educational Policy Making was given. But at first, I was told that I had an F (DT6P:425).*

Situations like this one could be avoided recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Staff development in such matters is a good intervention.

### **5.10.3 Improvement of the student orientation process**

A number of suggestions were proffered by participants with regards to the orientation process of new learners in DL. It was suggested that more orientation time was necessary to enable tutors to: expose new learners to the programme requirements, highlight potential setbacks and their solutions, assure new learners of continuous institutional support and train new learners in the use of ZOU communication channels. A senior woman from earlier intakes that delayed but

completed the programme said, “*-it should take-- a day or two so that—students discuss with lecturers how to write assignments*” (DT2A:385). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, “*--orientation should --drill on-- challenges that distance students—meet*” (DT2BV:442). An SRC member that was still on the programme said that ZOU orientation was supposed to prepare students not only for learning in isolation and coping with their fear of the unknown in DL but also, “*inform them where, when and how to get materials*” (DT2CH:386). There was need for orientation to provide new learners with adequate orientation time and information on where to get materials, support on written assignments and other challenges they might face.

#### **5.10.4 Guidance and counseling of learners**

Participants’ experiences in DL revealed that students meet unique challenges that could even threaten their retention on the programme. As a result they suggested that adult learners required constant guidance and counselling to help them cope with the DL programmes. A school head from later intakes that was still on the programme suggested that, “*--students need to be oriented in survival skills*” (DT9CH:443). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed that view as he said, “*- we had a lecturer who helped a number of students who were going to drop-- guidance and counselling-- is required for distance learners*” (DT9BV:442). This suggestion shows that adult learners, who, some of them had been labelled unsuitable to do university education, require constant confidence-building in order to persist on the programme.

#### **5.10.5 Provision of books and internet at regional centre libraries**

Most participants experienced inadequacy of books, journals and also the lack of access to internet at ZOU regional centres. For example, a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, “*--the libraries must be packed with a lot of books.*” (DT9ZV:448). Another school head from later intakes that was still on the programme suggested the idea of inter-library loans

in areas with scarce literature as he said, “ZOU --could work in conjunction with other libraries to enable us to access books” (DT9CH:443). A teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, “ZOU should also ensure that it provides regional centres with some internet facilities” (DT9Z:444). Participants also suggested that it would be helpful if ZOU provided additional materials on tapes and videos that students could borrow from the library. An SRC member that was still on the programme said, “I think there could be taped material, which you can play on tape etc, videos,” (DT5CH:408). All these suggestions revealed the inadequate supply of literature that could be improved by ZOU trying some of the proposed approaches.

#### **5.10.6 Reviewing of modules**

My interviewees’ experiences revealed that ZOU students were concerned that some modules that had outdated, unclear and inaccurate information continued to be used without being reviewed. Some of the modules continued in use with typographical errors, misprints, omissions and missing pages. A school head from later intakes that was still on the programme said, “the modules should not remain the same modules that were read in 1980,--they need some editing to update them and-- eliminate printing errors (DT5CH:406). This was echoed by a female senior teacher, also from later intakes, that was still on the programme as she cited specific modules that gave B.Ed. adult learners problems and said, “-- revise your modules once in a while-- especially the Statistics Module as well as that on Computers” (DT9C:443). Where modules had some irregularities, participants suggested that tutors could help clarify issues for learners by preparing handouts. A head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, “-if there are any chapters that they feel the students need to read, they can photocopy for the students” (DT9R:443). Regular reviewing of modules is necessary to keep them up to date and relevant.

### 5.10.7 Localization of contact tutorials

At the time of data collection in this study, Zimbabwe's economy was very bad. A school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, "*-the economic situation at the moment is very, very difficult*" (DT9ZV:444). Things were so difficult that Zimbabwe had abandoned its currency and was using the United States currency. It was expensive and unaffordable for rural students to travel to regional centres to attend contact tutorials. That contributed to de-motivation and absenteeism to contact tutorial sessions. Hence interviewees suggested that ZOU could devise ways to reduce travel expenses and motivate adult learners. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, "*There should be-- de-centralisation so that a lot of students are not discouraged*" (DT5ZV:445). That suggestion was supported by a female deputy school head that delayed completion and was still on the programme as she said, "*-they should localize tutorial centres -- to make it convenient*" (DT9S:445).

Adult learners felt that the contact time with tutors in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU was insufficient. It needed to be increased. It was 6 hours per course per semester including revision for examinations. A female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme suggested that, "*I actually urge them to add to their tutorial periods*" (DT9C:443). A school teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme added another dimension to the improvement of contact tutorial sessions. He suggested that, "*ZOU must revive its system of making tutors conduct the revision-- like it used to do during the 90s*" (DT9Z:446). To that effect, a school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, "*-the tutors—should-- be able to give guidance on preparation for examinations*" (DT6ZV:423). These suggestions could improve the quality of contact tutorials if adopted by ZOU.

### 5.10.8 Supervision of academic staff

Participants in my study indicated that there was lack of academic staff supervision at ZOU. That compromised DL among adult learners. They made suggestions to improve the situation.

A female deputy head that delayed but completed the programme revealed that academic staff needed supervision in their attendance during contact tutorials. She said that ZOU should ensure that, “-- a Statistics person, he is there when you come to tutorial sessions” (DT9E:443). Participants argued that supervision of academic staff should go beyond attendance to include the quality of tutoring, marking of written assignments and supervision of research projects. A head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme confirmed the basis of that argument. She revealed that the fact that some, “-students get other students’ assignments and write-- shows that there are some discrepancies there” (DT6P:416). In view of the above, a participant that was in third year suggested a system to ensure that assignments are marked on time, proper standard of assignment writing is maintained and that could catch up with the cheating students. She suggested that, “one marker marks and then there is a moderator, so that there is fairness” (DT6C:420).

With regards to research projects, many participants concurred with the female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme. She suggested that, “-students need more supervision—in-- research. Some might fear carrying out research-- if the supervision is-- lacking” (DT9V:444). Most of their experiences revealed that adult learners’ success in research projects relied more on close supervision than other factors. Hence, a school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, “-tutors must be supervised in the way they supervise their students” (DT6ZV:445). Another school head that also had unimpeded completion of the programme supported that view as he said,

*“ZOU should sample and see whether the work that has been recommended by the supervisor is it the one that we are endeavouring?” (DT6BV:445).*

Since the inception of semesters at ZOU, supplementary examinations were stopped. Experiences of some participants from earlier intakes in this study revealed that supplementary examinations helped adult learners to complete the DL programme fast. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme lamented that, *“That you would -- write a supplementary exam -- many of us were able to cope” (DT6B:422).* It might be necessary to consider such observations during ZOU’s evaluation of its processes.

#### **5.10.9 Finance**

As noted earlier, students from rural areas and tutors travelled long distances to and from the regional centres for contact tutorials in an ailing Zimbabwean economy. Besides that my participants’ experiences revealed that adult learners’ success in the DL programme was compromised by poor quality of teaching due to the brain drain of experienced academics. A senior teacher that was in third year suggested a way to retain good academic staff. She urged ZOU to, *“-give more salaries to the tutors-- so that they actually get motivated to give students more” (DT9C:443).* Some adult learners found it hard to cope with the DL programme due to failure to pay fees. That was because they had other financial obligations in addition to the programme. A deputy head that delayed completion and was still on the programme suggested that, *“ZOU--should have a strategy where it assists its students with terms of payment because most people fail to complete their study because of financial problems” (DT9S:436).*

Another cost cutting option was to shift travel cost from learners to the learning institution by making tutors visit local centres to conduct tutorials. A female deputy head who delayed completion and was still on the programme subscribed to that

view as she said, “- *it’s better for a tutor to come to Chitungwiza than make 10 people go to Harare*” (DT8S:444). Given that adult learners have other financial obligations and that their self-advancement contributes to national development, learning institutions should engage the state in assisting in the alleviation of adult learners’ financial burden.

## **5.11 Participants’ advice to students**

After going through their experiences, I asked my participants what advice they had for students on or intending to join DL programmes. The advice varied. However, the most common views were that students should:

- Strike a balance between social and educational commitments,
- Plan their finances and commit themselves to personal study timetables,
- Form groups to collaborate in research for assignments and projects,
- Avoid copying other students’ assignments and projects, and
- Be resourceful and join other libraries to cope with shortage of literature.

### **5.11.1 Self-organization and planning**

Participant experiences revealed that most of the challenges faced by DL students were a result of poor self-organization. Hence the interviewees suggested that adult learners should organize their commitments properly in order to cope with DL. A deputy head from earlier intakes that completed the programme on time advised, “*ZOU students to try and strike a balance between their social life and their education - - so that they pass in the programme as well as continue lives in a normal manner*” (DT10B:446). This view was supported by a school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme as he suggested that students should, “*make sure that the family understands that you are -- on an academic programme -- to be supported socially, educationally and financially*” (DT10BV:446).

Adult learners are expected to participate in all social activities in their families and communities. Hence, a female head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme gave advice that focused on self-organization as she said, “- *students need to explain to their relatives that they are students to be understood by the extended family or their relatives*” (DT10P:447).

Some participants suggested that adult learners should plan how to perform their social commitments and use personal study timetables to cope with the DL programme. A senior woman that delayed but completed the programme advised DL students to plan their things. She said, “- *because studies shouldn't interrupt your work, - studies shouldn't also interrupt how you do your things at home—so plan and give yourself time to study and to do everything*” (DT10A:445).

### **5.11.2 Learner commitment to studies**

My participants' experiences revealed that in order to cope with the DL programme adult learners needed to complement planning with commitment to their plans. A deputy head that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*It needs -- determination and it's not a programme where you want to do luxury things*” (DT10B:446). A female head of department that also had unimpeded completion of the programme advised students, “-*to be fully committed when doing distance education because you will be adults and-- you need self-discipline*” (DT10R:447). In addition to commitment, a male teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme also cautioned DL students. He said that, “*I would advise them to be patient-- because they might meet some obstacles*” (DT10Z:448). A further word of encouragement came from a female senior teacher who was in third year. She advised adult learners that, “*I--urge them to soldier on*” (DT10C:446) as DL requires endurance.

According to a deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme commitment meant taking the programme seriously at all times. That included reading the modules, preparation of assignments, carrying out the research project and also preparation for examinations. In advising DL students, he said “-we survived because we were reading and taking all our courses seriously” (DT10B:446). A school head that also had unimpeded completion of the programme emphatically stressed the importance of learner commitment as he said, “Concentrate, concentrate! When you start studying, go ahead and complete!” (DT10ZV:449).

### **5.11.3 Working in study groups**

Many participants’ experiences revealed that study groups were an effective way for adult learners to cope with DL. Hence they advised students to use them. A deputy head that had an unimpeded completion of the programme said, “-that people--share as groups, read the same chapter, meet, then discuss what you have read--helps people to understand-- better” (DT10B:446). A female school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme concurred that, “study groups are very effective” (DT5V:415). A teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme advised DL students, “- to make some groups in which they collaborate in coming up with research for assignments and even the research projects” (DT10Z:448). These sentiments imply that cooperative learning yields a more comprehensive understanding of what is learnt than learning in isolation.

### **5.11.4 Avoidance of copying other people’s assignments and research projects**

My participants’ experiences revealed that some adult learners engage in copying other students’ assignments and research projects to cope with DL. Hence they had some advice to offer those who would be tempted to copy and reproduce other people’s work. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme advised that, “-the temptation to get someone’s assignment and copy it, I would say to students, that has got to be avoided” (DT10ZV:449). The same

point was echoed by a deputy head also from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme as he said, “*-students should do the learning themselves instead of simply-- borrow someone’s assignment-- and submit it*” (DT10B:446).

Participants in my study revealed that copying other students’ work and submitting it also extended to the research project. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme advised students against it. He said, “*Never ever-- copy someone’s project because -- you are not going to be proud of it - because it’s not your piece of work. Go into the field and research*” (DT10ZV:449). A senior woman that delayed but completed the programme advised students on a strategy to overcome the constraints that are often met in carrying out the research project. Hence, she advised DL students to, “*- find the topics well before you finish so that you work on the project while doing other program areas so that when you complete you complete everything*” (DT10A:442).

### **5.11.5 Student resourcefulness**

Other good learning practices that helped some of my participants to cope with the DL programme were self-drive and resourcefulness. A school head from later intakes that was an SRC member and was still on the programme said that, “*I used to run around--libraries in other ministries-- In other words, we are saying the student has to be resourceful*” (DT9CH:443). In the event that learners found that their institution did not have the relevant books for their programme, a deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme had some advice to give to students. He said, “*I urge them to join other libraries*” (DT10B:446). A teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, “*I - also advise them to source- information from various libraries-- where they can access-- internet*” (DT10Z:448). Resourcefulness teaches skills of survival that enhance individual independence.

## **5.12 Summary**

This chapter presents and explicates the results from the phenomenological interviews that I carried out with twelve participants from four regional centres of ZOU. Apart from their personal data I collected and analysed data from participants' experiences with: the DL context, socio-academic integration, financial requirements, support mechanisms offered by ZOU, availability of learning materials, use of ICT, teaching methods and assessment in DL. I also sought and presented participants' advice to ZOU and DL students in order to improve the provision of and learners' strategies for coping with DL. The next chapter presents data from the questionnaire survey.

## CHAPTER 6

### QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSIS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses data from the questionnaire survey. This is in line with my additive mixed methods design in Chapter 4. I administered the questionnaire in all the ten regional centres of ZOU basing on results from the phenomenological interviews in Chapter 5. I used SPSS programme to analyse the data. I made sure that my analysis of every result made sense at the time I did it. I presented a rationale, the data relevant to it, interpreted the result and then indicated where the outcome of the analysis was leading to (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010).

#### 6.2 Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

My sample of 100 respondents to the questionnaire, in Chapter 4, comprised three sets of adult distance learners. The sets included a set of participants that had unimpeded completion, a second one made up of participants that delayed completion of B.Ed. and a third set of participants that were still on the programme. The indicator that I used to benchmark learners' coping with DL was unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme. This refers to completing the programme in four years or eight semesters prescribed in the regulations. I regarded participants who had unimpeded completion as having used effective support structures and strategies to cope with the B.Ed. programme through DL. As a result they faced less challenges than those that delayed completion of the programme.

Participants that delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme could have faced challenges coping with DL. I regarded challenges faced by respondents that delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme as danger warning signs that should be given due attention by ZOU in order for adults to cope with DL. Those challenges also provided information on aspects that DL students should take precautions against.

The set of participants that were still on the programme included some adult learners that delayed completion and others that were in their normal intakes into the B.Ed. programme. This set provided information on the current learner support position at ZOU. Such information was relevant to the study as it revealed whether there was improvement or deterioration in the learner support.

I used descriptive statistical analysis to determine the frequency distribution of responses to my questions. I present the results of the analysis in pie charts and bar graphs. Frequency distribution of responses gives the number or percentage of respondents that subscribe to a particular answer. It does not reveal the significance of the variable to the study. For that, I used inferential statistics called parametric and nonparametric tests of significance. Parametric statistics are also known as classical or standard tests. These are statistical tests which make certain assumptions about the parameters of the full population from which the sample is taken. It is assumed, for example, that the data show a normal distribution. Where populations are compared, it is assumed that they show the same variance. If these assumptions do not apply, non-parametric tests must be used. Parametric tests normally involve data expressed in absolute numbers or values rather than ranks; an example is the Student's t-test (Mayhew 2004;Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010).

Non-parametric statistical tests are not based on a normal distribution of data or on any other assumption. They are also known as distribution-free tests and the data are generally ranked or grouped. Their applicability is wider than the parametric

methods. They may be applied in situations where less is known about the application in question. Due to their reliance on fewer assumptions, non-parametric methods are more robust and simpler. Examples include the Chi-square test and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Mayhew 2004 ).

I used those statistical approaches in order to generalise my findings in ZOU. Inferential statistics pertain to an association of two or more variables or the difference between two or more groups on some variable (Terre-Blanche, Durrheim et al 2006). Hence, I used Chi-square test and *t*-test to determine the significance levels of variables to respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

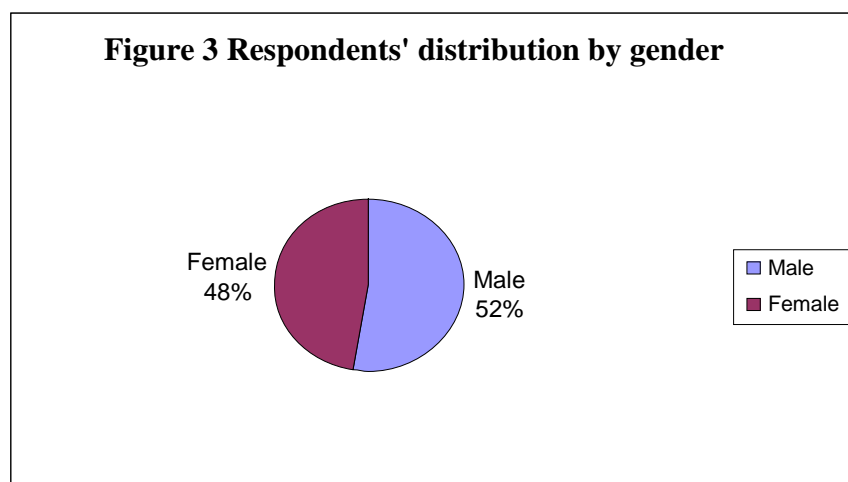
Statistical test results are expressed in terms of probability or risk (for example  $p < 0.001$ ). This is the likelihood of making a Type 1 Error or accepting a false hypothesis as true. This is the worst type of error to make. Type 1 Error occurs when one rejects a true hypothesis. The smaller the size of the level of significance the less likely it is that a Type 1 Error has been made.

To test significance, one needs to set a risk level also called an *alpha level*. In most social research, the 'rule of thumb' is to set the alpha level at 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This simply means that the probability of a relationship as strong as the observed one being attributable to sampling error alone is no more than 5 in a hundred. In other words, if two variables are independent of one another in a population, and if 100 probability samples were selected from that population, no more than 5 of those samples should provide a relationship as strong as the one that has been observed. This is called the level of significance. Three levels of significance are frequently used in research reports; 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001. If any measured association is statistically significant at that level, it is regarded as representing a genuine association between the two variables. In other words, we can discount the

possibility of its resulting from sampling error only (Terre-Blanche, Durrheim et al 2006; Babbie, Mouton et al 2010; Miller, Acton et al 2002).

Levels of significance greater than 0.05 are not usually considered good enough to reject the Null hypothesis. As Type 1 Error means that a researcher may act on erroneous basis it is more serious than Type 11 Error. Therefore research in which reaching wrong decisions may result in high financial loss or loss of human life adopts stricter levels of confidence like 0.01 or 0.001(Babbie, Mouton et al 2010; Miller, Acton et al. 2002). I only presented cross tabulation results of variables that were significant to B.Ed. completion time.

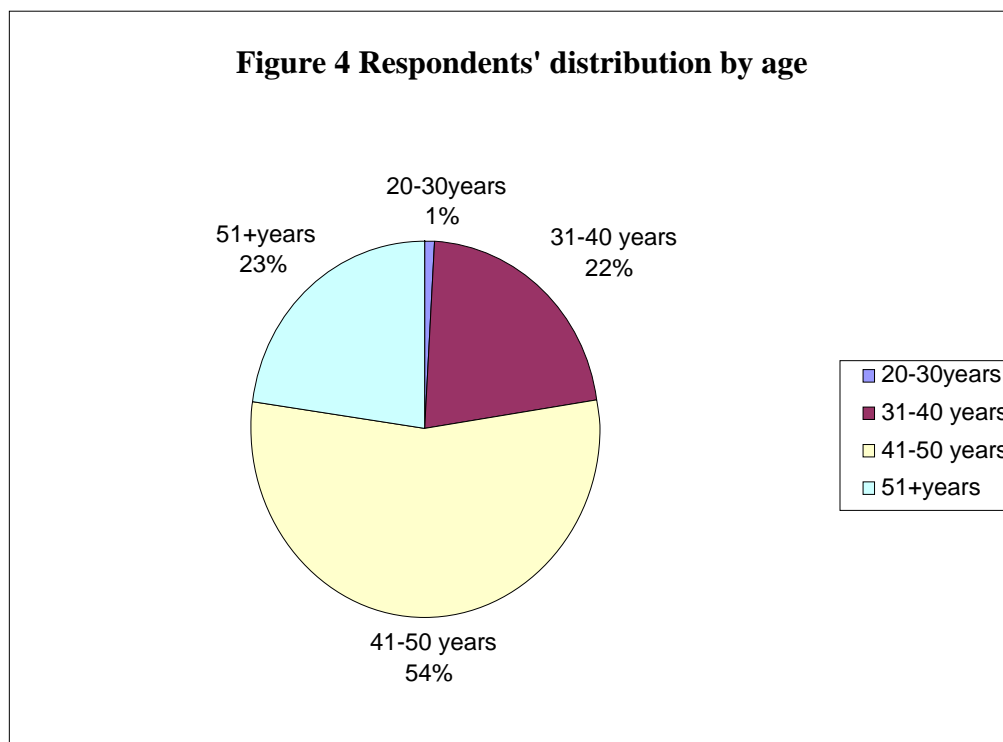
My questionnaire rate of return was 97% out of 100 respondents. Details on regional distribution of the returned questionnaire from the sample are on Figure 10. The following is the analysis of data from my respondents. Question 1 sought the representation of respondents in the sample by gender and got results in Figure 3.



There were 48% female and 52% male respondents in the sample. This distribution gave a fair representation of views by both sexes of adult learners in the DL

programme at ZOU. Parametric significance test results in Appendix G revealed that gender had no significance to adults' completion of the B.Ed. programme.

Question 2 sought the distribution of respondents by age and Figure 4 provides the



answers to that. The distribution revealed was as follows: 23% below 40years, 54% in 41-50 years and 23% in 50+ years of age groups. That was a fair representation of views from all age groups who did the B.Ed. programme through DL at ZOU. Majority of the sample, 54% were in the mature middle age group, 41-50 years.

This distribution is interesting as it showed that the management positions in the Zimbabwean education system were neither over-weighted by the young and less experienced nor the old heading towards retirement. The 51+ year's age group went

to school during the colonial era. They were catching up so that they could be considered for promotion by current professional qualifications requirements.

In the Zimbabwean education system, a teacher can only be promoted to a substantive post of special responsibility after working as an established officer and also a senior teacher for some time. A teacher becomes an established officer after successfully completing two years of probation upon attainment of a diploma in teaching. After that, one becomes a senior teacher after successfully working for four years, if the diploma was attained after General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (O level), and after two years, if the diploma was attained after either General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level) or a first degree.

I used a Chi-square test to determine the significance level of age to adult learners' B.Ed. completion time. Chi-square is a frequently used test of significance in social science (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010). Chi-square test helps to determine if the difference between statistically expected and actual scores are caused by chance/accident or if they are statistically significant, that is not caused by chance (Welman, Kruger et al. 2005). Chi-square works by comparing observed and expected frequencies (Terre-Blanche, Durrheim et al. 2006).

Chi-square is based on the null hypothesis, the assumption that there is no relationship between two variables in the population. Computations are made and we compare the expected distribution with the distribution of cases actually found in the sample data (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010). In Table 2 the variables under consideration are students' age and their B.Ed. completion time. That includes students that had normal and those that had delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme.

In the 31-40 years age group, the observed count for students with normal completion (10) was less than the expected count (12.8). Similarly, among students that had delayed completion (2), the count was less than that of the expected (4). In the 41-50 years age group, the observed count under normal completion (32) is higher than the expected count (31.1).

**Table 2 Crosstab. of age of respondents and B.Ed. completion time**

Age of Respondents		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
21-30 years	Count	0	0	1	1
	Expected Count	.6	.2	.2	1.0
	% within age of respondents	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion Time	.0%	.0%	5.3%	1.1%
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	1.1%	1.1%
31-40years	Count	10	2	9	21
	Expected Count	12.8	4.0	4.2	21.0
	% within age of respondents	47.6%	9.5%	42.9%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	17.2%	11.1%	47.4%	22.1%
	% of Total	10.5%	2.1%	9.5%	22.1%
41-50years	Count	32	13	6	51
	Expected Count	31.1	9.7	10.2	51.0
	% within age of respondents	62.7%	25.5%	11.8%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	55.2%	72.2%	31.6%	53.7%
	% of Total	33.7%	13.7%	6.3%	53.7%
51years+	Count	16	3	3	22
	Expected Count	13.4	4.2	4.4	22.0
	% within age of respondents	72.7%	13.6%	13.6%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	27.6%	16.7%	15.8%	23.2%
	% of Total	16.8%	3.2%	3.2%	23.2%
Count		58	18	19	95
Expected Count		58.0	18.0	19.0	95.0
% within age of respondents		61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%
% within B.Ed. completion time		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%

Similarly, the count among those with delayed completion (13) is higher than the expected (9.7). Among the 51+ years age group, the count for those with normal

completion (16) is higher than the expected(13.4) and among those that delayed completion, the count(3) is less than the expected(4.2).

These figures show that in the 31-40 years age group students with normal completion performed below expectation although they surpassed expectation among those that delayed completion. The next, 40-50years age group performed better than the earlier age group when we compare those with normal completion. They were more than what was expected. The 51+age group had the best performance of them all. Their observed count for normal completion was more than expected and their count for delayed completion was favourably below the expected. Basing on frequency distribution, it can be concluded from the results on Table 2 that the B.Ed. completion rates improved with age.

However, we need to determine the probability that the discovered discrepancy could have resulted from sampling error alone. Sampling error is an inverse function of sample size-the larger the sample, the smaller the expected error. The higher the chi-square value, the less probable it is that the value could be attributed to sampling error alone. We report this finding by saying the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Because it is so improbable that the observed relationship could have resulted from sampling error alone, we are likely to reject the null hypothesis and assume that there is a relationship between the two variables in the population (Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010).

**Table 3 Chi-square test of age of respondents on B.Ed. completion time**

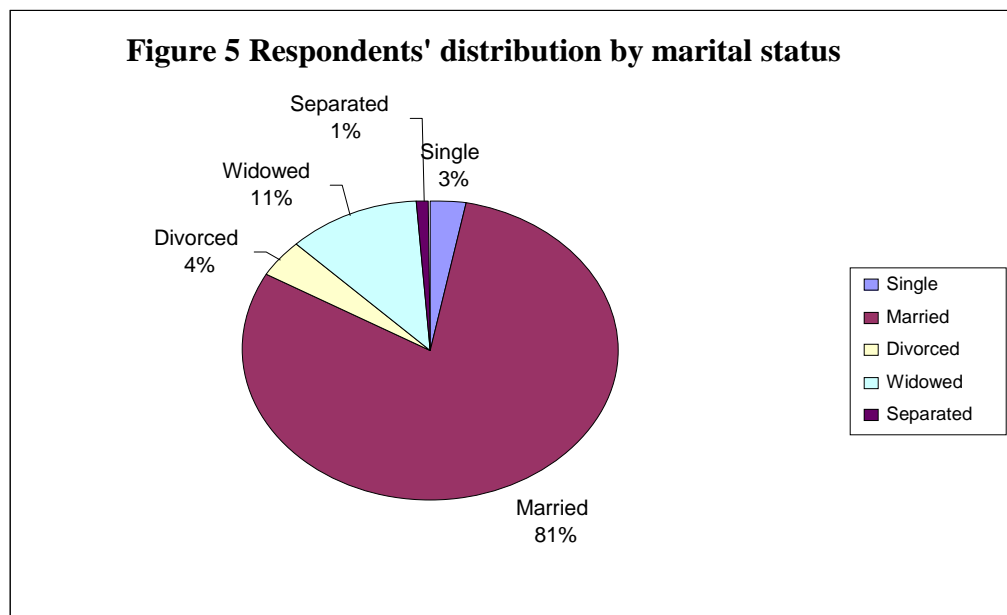
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.260(a)	6	.018
Likelihood Ratio	13.639	6	.034
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.811	1	.009
N of Valid Cases	95		

a7 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .19.

By disconfirming the null hypothesis, we indirectly find support for our research hypothesis (Leedy and Ormrod 2010). Table 3 shows some significance of age to adult learners' B.Ed. completion.

We can see from Table 3 that the Chi-square result of 15.260 has a significance level of 0.018( $p < 0.02$ ). So, if the Null hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Chi-square as large as 15.260 in 2 out of every hundred samples. Therefore, we can safely reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant association between the age of respondents and their B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002). These results are cross-referenced with those from the phenomenological interview in the discussion chapter in order to come up with conclusions on this variable.

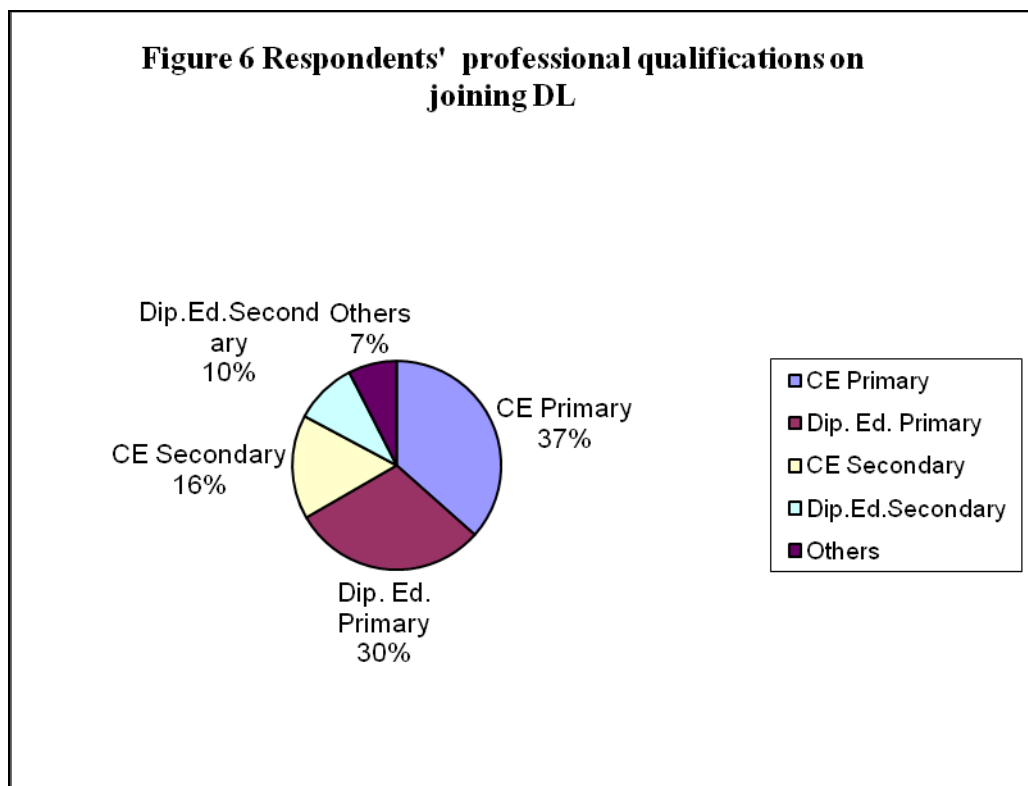
Question 3 sought the distribution of respondents by marital status. Figure 5 gives respondents' answers to that question.



Majority, 81% of the respondents were married, 11% widowed, 3% single, 4% divorced and 1% separated. The distribution gave a typical representation of the marital distribution in society. Zimbabweans view marriage as a fundamental social stabilisation factor among families.

Hence there are usually very few cases of divorce and separation as revealed by this sample. While the distribution by marital status of respondents in my sample reliably represented all adult learners' views on their experiences and strategies they used to cope with the B.Ed. programme through DL, parametric significance test results in Appendix G revealed that marital status had no significance on adult learners' coping with the DL programme.

Question 4 sought the respondents' professional qualifications at the time of joining DL. The respondents' answers are presented in Figure 6.



The pie chart shows that, the B.Ed. programme through DL at ZOU was more popular to primary school trained teachers than other groups in the sample. The sample had 37% of the respondents with Primary Teachers Certificate in Education (CE Primary) and 30% had Diploma in Primary Education (Dip.Ed. Primary).

This means 67% of the sample was primary school trained teachers. Secondary school trained teachers were 26%, made up of 16% with a Teachers Certificate in Secondary Education (CE Secondary) and 10% with Diploma in Secondary Education (Dip.Ed.Secondary). The last 7% belonged to non-educational sectors. The sample was representative of the population under study as it included all groups of acceptable entry qualifications into the B.Ed. programme. Parametric significance test results in Appendix G revealed that participants' professional qualification on entering B.Ed. programme had no significance on their B.Ed.completion time.

Question five sought the respondents' distribution by their places of employment.

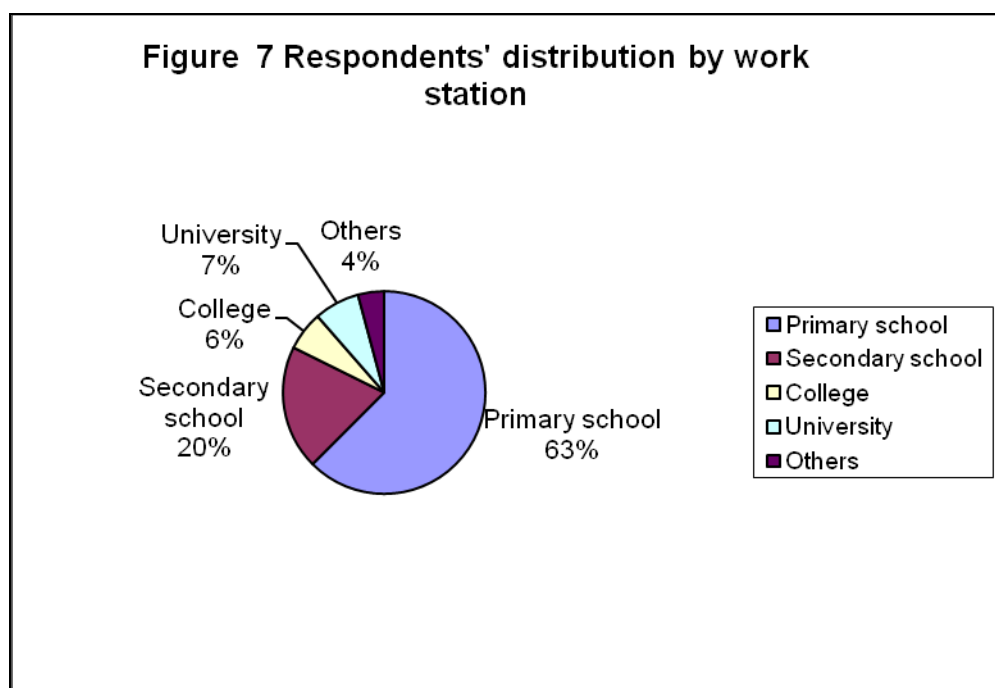


Figure 7 is a pie chart of their distribution and various institutions that employed B.Ed. students in Zimbabwe. Majority, 63 % of the respondents, worked in primary schools, 20 % in secondary schools, 6% in colleges, 7% in universities and 4% in non-educational sectors. Of importance in this chart is that 96% of the respondents were working in the education system and 4% in other sectors.

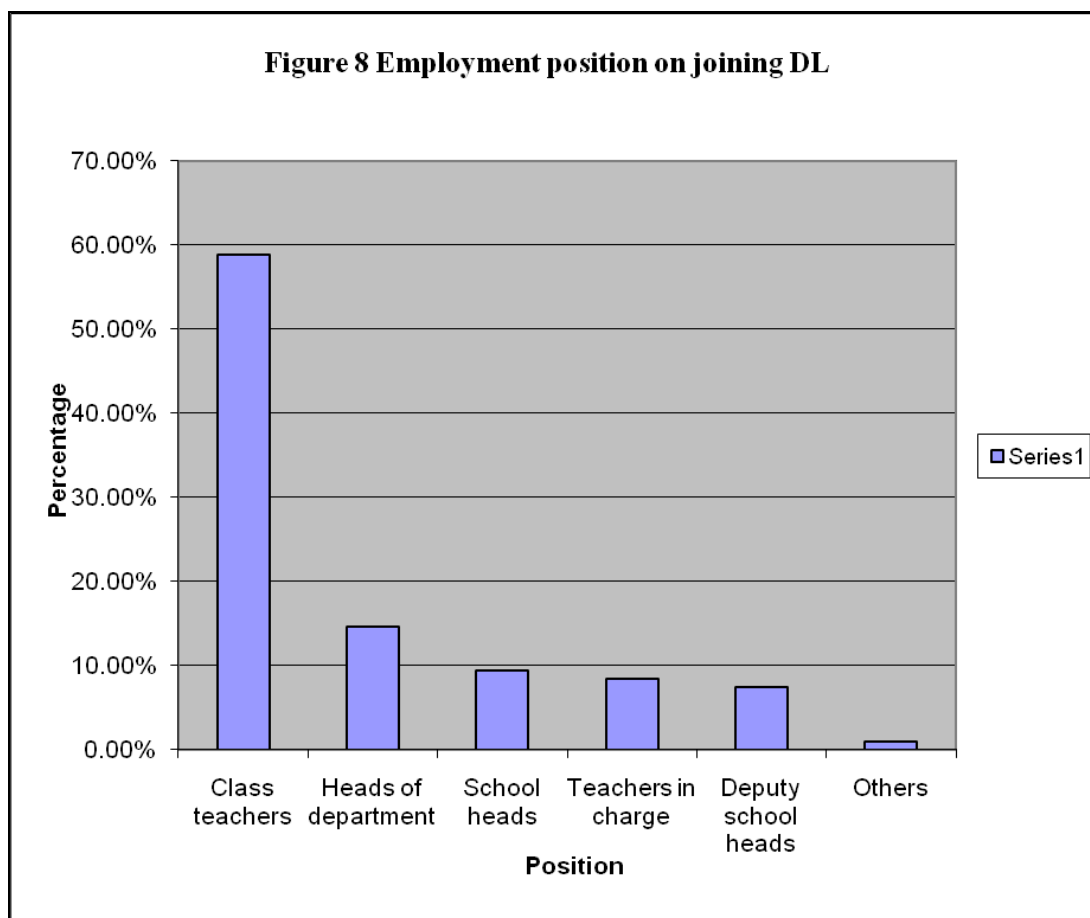
Parametric significance test results in Appendix G revealed that place of employment had no significance on participants' B.Ed. programme completion time. However, the distribution of their responses would be an informed representation of the experiences of adult learners doing DL at ZOU.

Question 6 asked for respondents' employment position when they joined the B.Ed. programme through DL. Figure 8 gives the distribution of respondents and the positions they occupied at work at the time they joined B.Ed. through DL at ZOU.

Among those selected into the sample were: 59% class teachers, 15% heads of department, 10% school heads, 7% deputy school heads, 8% teachers in charge and 1% others. The sample comprises most of the positions that teachers hold in the school system in Zimbabwe.

Class teachers, 59 % of the survey are the majority of school educational staff in Zimbabwe. They occupy non- promotional teaching posts. The 7% in teacher in charge (TIC) position occupied the most critical promotional position in the primary school education system in Zimbabwe. The position is usually occupied by experienced female teachers with proven academic and interpersonal skills to deal with teachers, young learners and parents/guardians. Educational personnel in that position are bestowed with both the pastoral and academic custody of the infant /kindergarten section of the primary school. The infant section includes all the zero /

pre-school grade and also grades 1 to 3 classes. In secondary and/or high schools that pastoral role is held by the senior woman/lady.



She teaches and looks after all the interests of people of the feminine gender in the school. She also handles all disciplinary matters arising in that area. Her male counterpart in a similar role is known as a senior master. This is a key post of special responsibility. The post is designated for seasoned personnel of good moral standing and experience. One should have proven interpersonal qualities and potential to be promoted to deputy school head position to be appointed to that post.

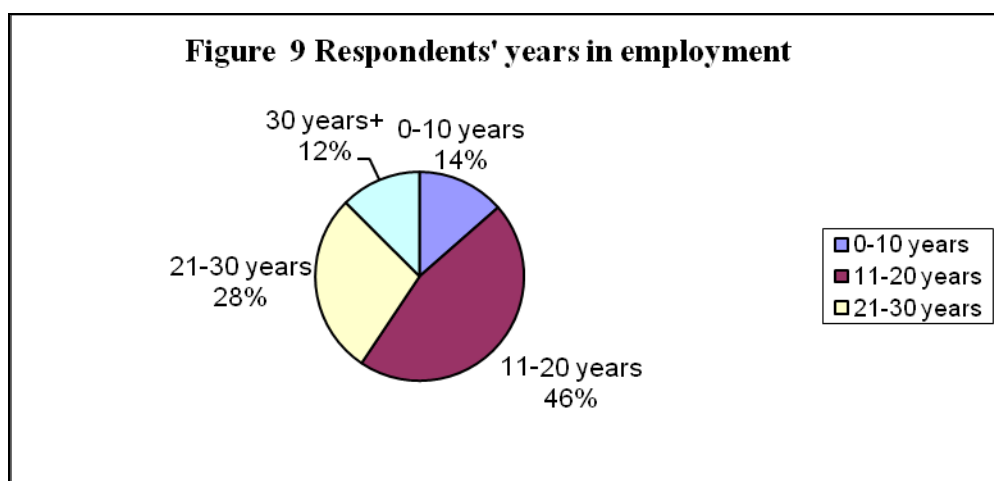
In the head of department (HOD) position were 15% of the sample. This is another promotional post of special responsibility in the secondary school. The post is usually occupied by senior teachers with proven expertise and experience in teaching their subjects. They are custodians of the academic affairs in their subject. Hence, like the TICs, they teach and supervise all teaching-learning activities in their section. They draw an allowance in addition to the monthly salary for operating in that post. Like the senior woman/master position, appointment to HOD is a suitable practising post for one to be appointed to a higher post such as deputy school head.

The 8% in the deputy head position were principals in waiting. They occupied a substantive promotional position and their function is to run the school in the absence of the school head. They are always understudying and carrying out the school head's functions delegated to them. School heads were 10 % of the sample. These occupied the highest promotional post in the Zimbabwean school system. They are the custodians and accounting officers in charge of all the activities that take place in schools. The other 1% adult learners were in non-educational public and private sectors who studied to train in preparation for potential management positions in their areas of specialisation.

TICs, HODs, deputy heads and others in the sample were doing B.Ed. through DL to prepare their credentials for potential promotion to higher positions in the school system. School heads in the sample may have been appointed to those posts prior to the ruling that required a university degree for one to be promoted to the post of school head. Hence they were improving their qualifications to either feel secure and confident in their posts or preparing for promotion to become education officers in charge of educational circuits or districts. The chart gives a reliable representation of the views of most teachers' ranks in the Zimbabwean school system. However, parametric significance test results in Appendix G revealed that participants' position during B.Ed. studies had no significance on programme completion in DL.

Question 7 sought respondents' years in employment that are given in Figure 9.

Most respondents, 46% were in the 11-20 years of work experience, 28% had 21-30 years of experience, 14% had 0-10 years and 12% had more than 30 years of work experience. The results fairly represented DL adult learners. They covered all educational personnel's employment experience in Zimbabwean education system.



Statistical significance tests revealed that respondents' years in employment were significant to their completion of the B.Ed. programme and Table 8 proves that.

The variables under consideration in Table 8 are respondents' years in employment and their B.Ed. completion time. This includes students that had normal and those that had delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme. In the 0-10 years of work experience group, the observed count for students with normal completion (5) was less than the expected count (7.9). Similarly, among students that had delayed completion (1), the count was less than that of the expected (2.5). In the 11-20 years of work experience group, the observed count for normal completion (29) is higher than the expected count (26.7). The count among those with delayed completion (7) is less than the expected (8.4). Among the 21-30 years of work experience group, the observed count for normal completion (14) is lower than the expected count (15.2).

Meanwhile, the count among those with delayed completion (8) is greater than the expected (4.8). Among those with more than 30 years of work experience, the count for those with normal completion (9) is greater than the expected (7.3). Yet among those that delayed completion, the count (2) is less than the expected (2.3).

**Table 8 Crosstab. of years in employment and B.Ed. completion time**

Years in employment		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
0-10 years	Count	5	1	7	13
	Expected Count	7.9	2.5	2.6	13.0
	% within years in employment	38.5%	7.7%	53.8%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	8.8%	5.6%	36.8%	13.8%
	% of Total	5.3%	1.1%	7.4%	13.8%
11-20 years	Count	29	7	8	44
	Expected Count	26.7	8.4	8.9	44.0
	% within years in employment	65.9%	15.9%	18.2%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	50.9%	38.9%	42.1%	46.8%
	% of Total	30.9%	7.4%	8.5%	46.8%
21-30 years	Count	14	8	3	25
	Expected Count	15.2	4.8	5.1	25.0
	% within years in employment	56.0%	32.0%	12.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	24.6%	44.4%	15.8%	26.6%
	% of Total	14.9%	8.5%	3.2%	26.6%
30 years plus	Count	9	2	1	12
	Expected Count	7.3	2.3	2.4	12.0
	% within years in employment	75.0%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	15.8%	11.1%	5.3%	12.8%
	% of Total	9.6%	2.1%	1.1%	12.8%
Total Count		57	18	19	94
Expected Count		57.0	18.0	19.0	94.0
% within years in employment		60.6%	19.1%	20.2%	100.0%
% within B.Ed. completion time		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		60.6%	19.1%	20.2%	100.0%

These results show that in the 0- 10 years of work experience group students with normal completion performed below expectation although they surpassed

expectation among those that delayed completion. The next, 11-20 years of work experience group had both completion groups performing better than the earlier work experience group. Their counts were greater than what was expected. However, the third, 21-30 years of experience group's count for those with normal completion was lower than the expected while the count for those that had delayed completion (8) was greater than the expected (4.8). The over 30 years work experience group had better performance than the 21-30 years of work experience group. Their observed count for normal completion was greater than expected and their count for delayed completion was favourably lower than expected. Basing on the above frequency distribution, it can be said that respondents' years of employment had a significant association with respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

A Chi-square test confirmed the results in Table 8 to be true in Table 9.

**Table 9 Chi-square test of years in employment on B.Ed. completion time**

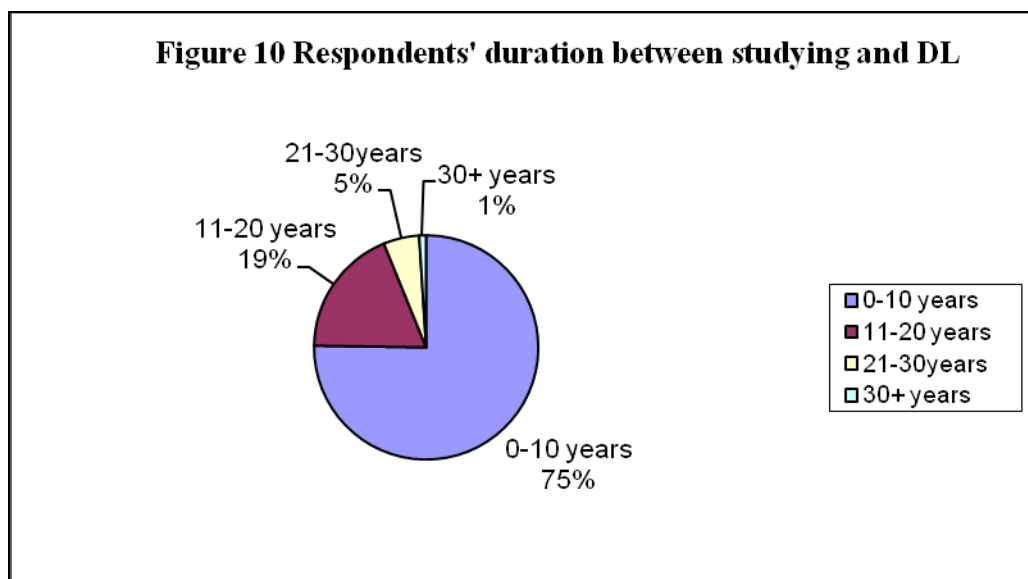
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.117(a)	6	.028
Likelihood Ratio	12.244	6	.057
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.433	1	.035
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 5 cells (41.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.30.

We can see from Table 9 that the Chi-square result of 14.117 has a significance level of 0.028 ( $p < 0.03$ ). This is lower than the 0.05 significance level cut off point.

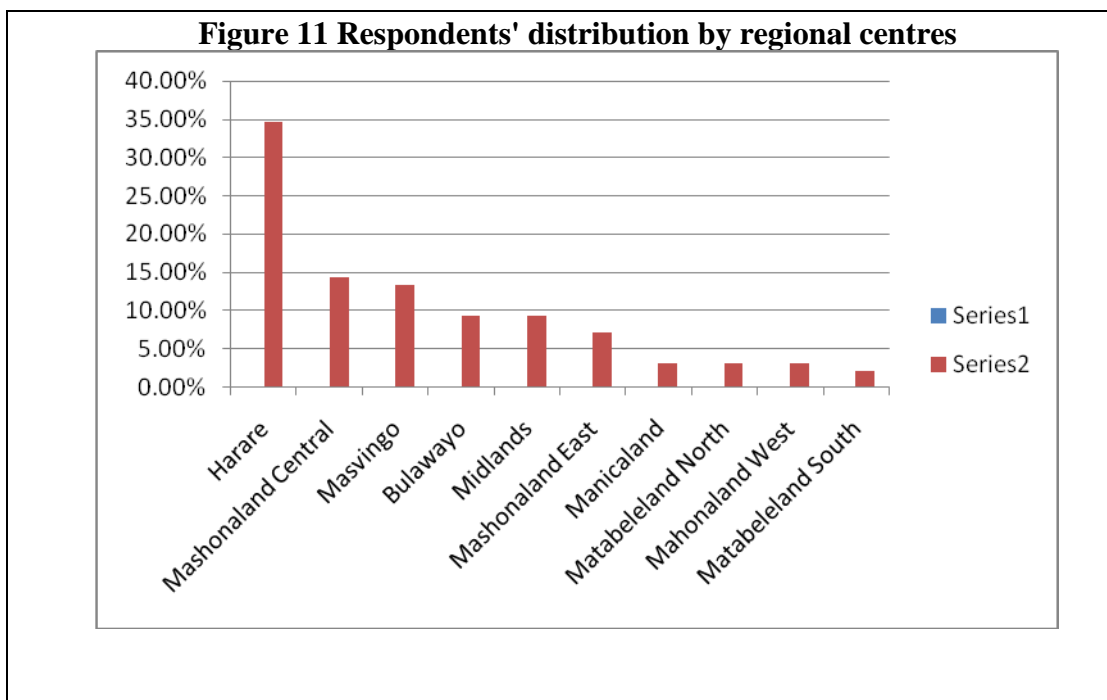
So, if the Null hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Chi-square as large as 14.117 in 3 out of every hundred samples. Therefore, we can safely reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant association between respondents' years in employment and their B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002). These results will be compared with results from interviews in order to come up with conclusions and recommendations on this variable.

Question 8 sought the duration between the time participants last engaged in serious study and the time they did B.Ed. Figure 10 sums up their responses to that question. Most students, 75% had the shortest duration 0-10 years, 19% had 11-20 years, 5% had 21-30 years and 1% had above 30 years between last serious studies and DL.



Whilst the years that adults stayed without serious studying could pose challenges to some adults' coping with DL, statistical significance test results in Appendix G revealed that the duration had no significance to adults' B.Ed. completion time.

Question 9, the last one in Section A of the questionnaire sought to establish the regional centres in which respondents enrolled into the DL programme. ZOU's 10 regional centres at the time of the survey were geographically located on the map of Zimbabwe in Figure 1 and Figure 11 gives the respondents by regional centres. They were; Harare 35%, Mashonaland Central 14%, Masvingo 13%, Bulawayo and Midlands 9% each, Mashonaland East 7%, Manicaland, Matabeleland North and Mashonaland West 3% each and Matabeleland South 2%.



It was not possible to get an equal number of respondents per regional centre because the enrolments in the regional centres were not the same. Besides that, I relied on the assistance of the B.Ed. regional programme coordinators who administered the questionnaire to respondents as they came to regional centres for enquiries and consultation. The distribution of the questionnaire also depended on how frequently students visited particular regional centres. At the time of the survey, ZOU tutorial contact sessions were off semester. Consequently regional programme coordinators administered the questionnaire to those current and former B.Ed. students who visited the centres and also met the criteria of the sample.

The fact that I got 97 % rate of return of the questionnaire from all regional centres and that every regional centre was represented in the sample gave me the confidence to generalise the respondents' views for ZOU. However, statistical significance test results in Appendix G revealed that regional centres in which students enrolled had no significance to adults' B.Ed. programme completion time.

While the first section of the questionnaire mainly focused on learner characteristics, Section B of the questionnaire dealt with the information on the B.Ed. programme administration and processes. It focused on challenges that respondents faced and the support structures and strategies they used to cope with those challenges. I also sought respondents' input on ways to improve DL systems and processes.

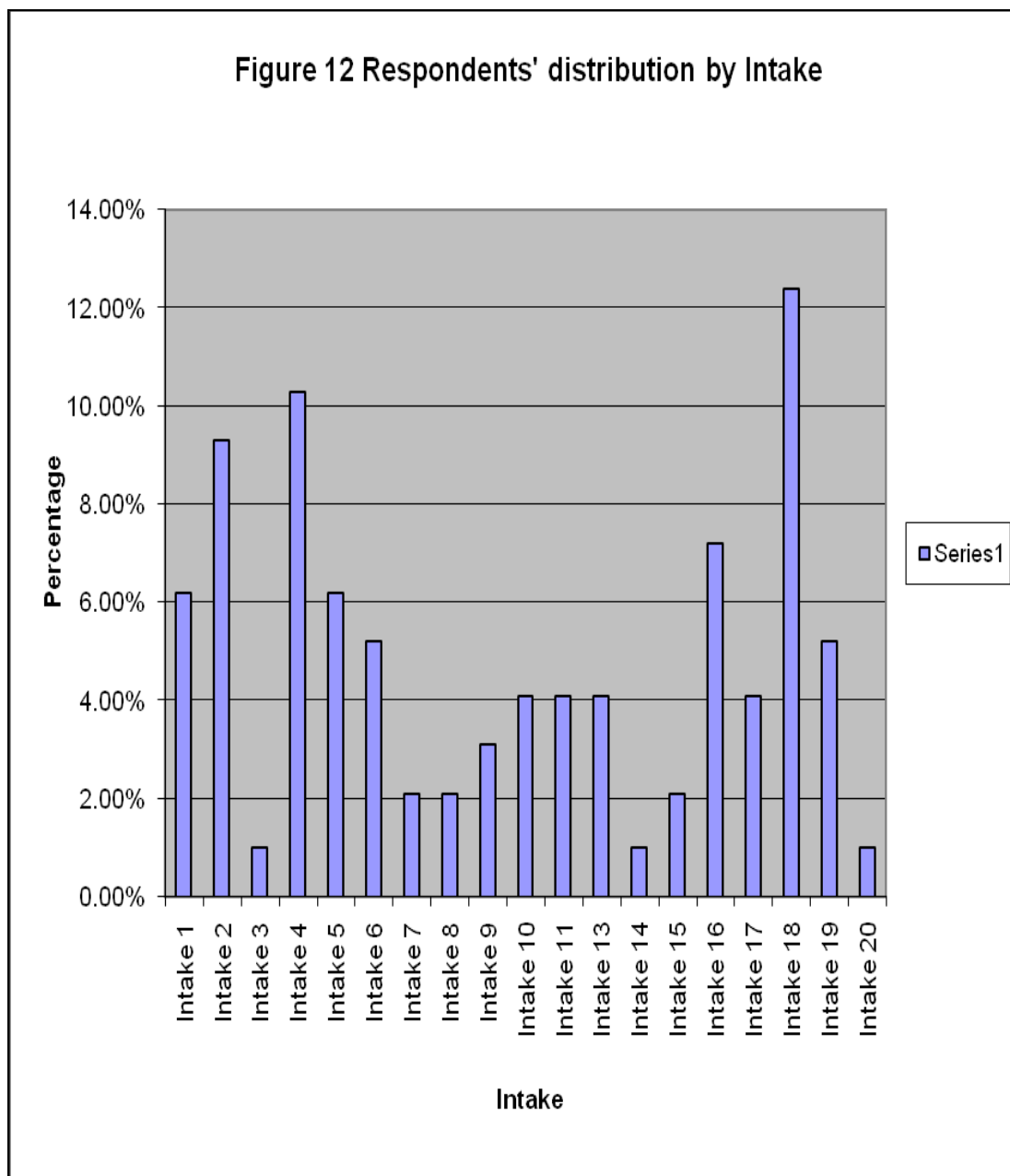
Question 10 asked respondents the B.Ed. Intake in which they enrolled and Figure 12 summarises the distribution of respondents by intake.

The distribution of my questionnaire respondents from the B.Ed. programme at ZOU by their intakes were: 12% from Intake 18; 10% from Intake 4; 9% from Intake 2; 7% from Intake 16; 6% each from Intakes 1 and 5; 5% each from Intakes 6 and 19; 4% each from Intakes 10, 11, 13 and 17; 3% from intake 9; 2% each from Intakes 7, 8 and 15 as well as 1% each from Intakes 3, 14 and 20.

Results showed that, apart from Intake 12, all the first twenty B.Ed. intakes at ZOU were represented. The sample could be representative of the experiences of adult learners that did B.Ed. at ZOU. There was also a fair distribution between earlier Intakes 1-10 with 57% and later Intakes 11-20 that had 43% as revealed in Table 12.

I tested the relationship between respondents' B.Ed. enrolment intakes and B.Ed. completion time for its significance. The results of that test are given in Table 12.

Also in Table 12, I divided respondents' intakes in two sets/groups. I labelled the first group, made up of students that had been enrolled in Intakes 1-10, earlier intakes and the second group, made up of students that had been enrolled in Intakes 11-20, later intakes. I made the groups in that way because students who studied at ZOU during the first ten intakes enrolled under a different administration from the ten that enrolled in later intakes.



I assumed that the two groups could have had different experiences in terms of learner support in DL at ZOU.

In table 12, the observed count for earlier intakes respondents that had normal completion (36) was greater than the expected count (30.2). Similarly, among

students that had delayed completion (10), the observed count was higher than that expected (8.5).

The observed count for later intakes students that had normal completion (17) was lower than the expected count (22.8) and the observed count among those that had delayed completion (5) was lower than expected (6.5).

**Table 12 Crosstab. of respondents' intake and B.Ed. completion time**

		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Respondents' B.Ed. Intake					
Earlier intakes	Count	36	10	3	49
	Expected Count	30.2	8.5	10.3	49.0
	% within B.Ed. Intake	73.5%	20.4%	6.1%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	67.9%	66.7%	16.7%	57.0%
	% of Total	41.9%	11.6%	3.5%	57.0%
Later intakes	Count	17	5	15	37
	Expected Count	22.8	6.5	7.7	37.0
	% within B.Ed. Intake	45.9%	13.5%	40.5%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	32.1%	33.3%	83.3%	43.0%
	% of Total	19.8%	5.8%	17.4%	43.0%
Total Count		53	15	18	86
Expected Count		53.0	15.0	18.0	86.0
% within B.Ed. Intake		61.6%	17.4%	20.9%	100.0%
% within B.Ed.completion time		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		61.6%	17.4%	20.9%	100.0%

These results show that the completion rate among earlier B.Ed. intakes was greater than in later intakes. Thus, there could be some association between respondents' intakes and their B.Ed.completion time.

Chi-square test results in Table 13 confirm the significance level of respondents' B.Ed. intakes to their B.Ed. completion time. We can see from Table10b that the Chi-square result of 15.098 has a significance level of 0.001. This reveals a very strong association between intakes and B. Ed. completion time. So, if the Null

hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Chi-square as large as 15.098 in 1 out of every thousand samples.

**Table 13 Chi-square test of respondents' intake on B.Ed. completion time**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.098(a)	2	.001
Likelihood Ratio	15.717	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.114	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	86		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.45.

Hence, we can safely reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that there is association between respondents' B.Ed. intakes and B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002).

I cross-reference these results with the results from the interview to draw up conclusions and recommendations on this variable in the discussion chapter.

Question 11 asked if respondents had previous DL experience and Figure 13 gives responses to that question. Only 26% of the respondents had previous DL experience and 74% did not. Statistical analysis results revealed a significant relationship between previous DL experience and B.Ed. completion time.

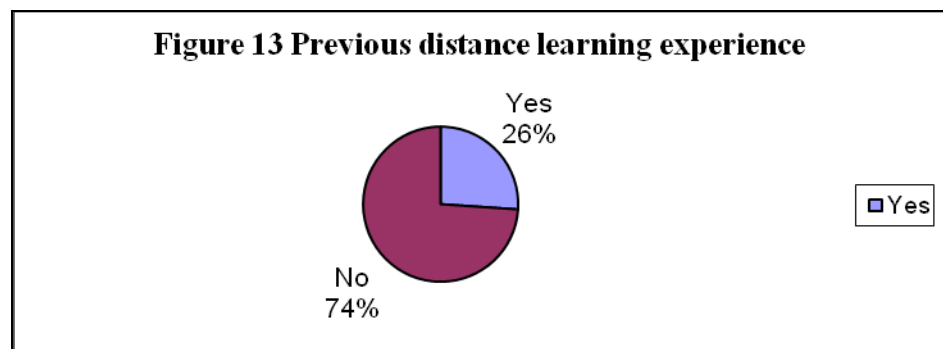


Table 14 gives the statistical significance test results for previous DL experience and respondents' B.Ed. completion time. In Table 14 the observed count for students that had previous DL experience that had normal completion (17) was greater than the expected count (15.3).

**Table 14 Crosstab. of previous DL experience and B.Ed. completion time**

Previous DL experience		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Yes	Count	17	7	1	25
	Expected Count	15.3	4.7	5.0	25.0
	% within previous DL experience	68.0%	28.0%	4.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	29.3%	38.9%	5.3%	26.3%
	% of Total	17.9%	7.4%	1.1%	26.3%
No	Count	41	11	18	70
	Expected Count	42.7	13.3	14.0	70.0
	% within previous DL experience	58.6%	15.7%	25.7%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	70.7%	61.1%	94.7%	73.7%
	% of Total	43.2%	11.6%	18.9%	73.7%
Total Count		58	18	19	95
Expected Count		58.0	18.0	19.0	95.0
% within previous DL experience		61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%
% within B.Ed. completion time		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%

Among students that had delayed completion, the observed count (7) was higher than the expected (4.7). In the group that did not have previous DL experience, the observed count for respondents that had normal completion (41) was lower than the expected count (42.7). This implied an association between lack of previous DL experience and B.Ed. completion time. The observed count among those that had delayed completion (11) was lower than the expected (13.3). Basing on these counts, respondents that had previous DL experience cope better with DL than those without previous DL experience. These results revealed an association between previous DL experience and B.Ed. completion time.

Table 15 provides results of statistical tests of significance level between previous DL experience and respondents' DL completion time. We can see from Table 11b that the Chi-square result of 6.079 has a significance level of 0.048 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This is lower than the 0.05 level of significance cut off.

**Table 15 Chi-square test of previous DL experience on B.Ed. completion time**

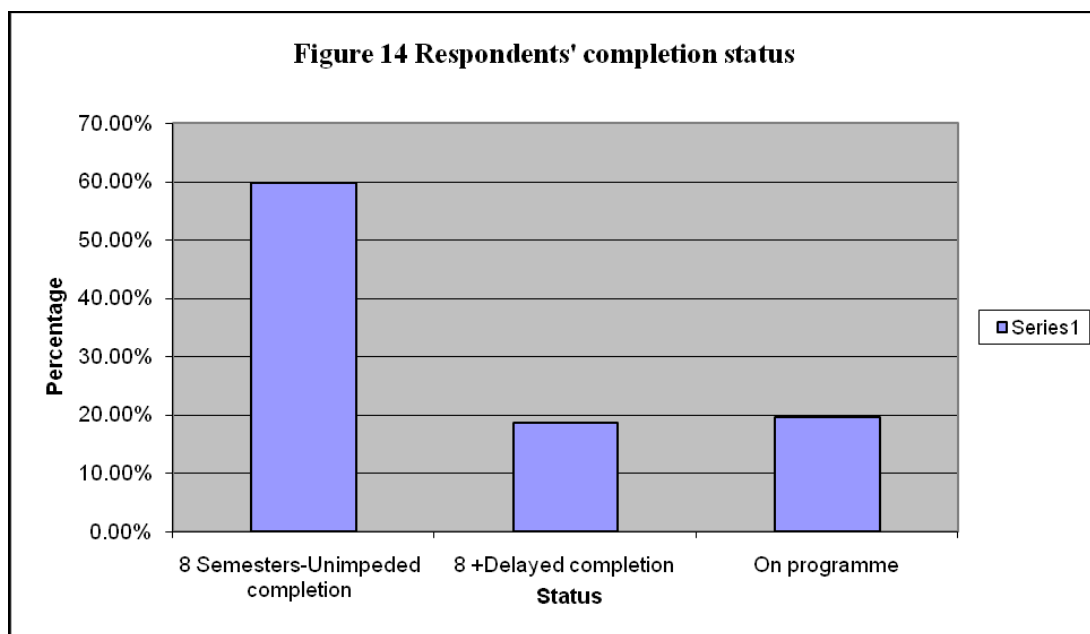
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.079(a)	2	.048
Likelihood Ratio	7.442	2	.024
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.754	1	.097
N of Valid Cases	95		

a 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.74.

So, if the Null hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Chi-square as large as 6.079 in 5 out of every hundred samples. Therefore, we can safely reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant association between respondents' previous DL experience and their B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002). These results will be cross-referenced with those from interviews to draw conclusions and recommendations on this variable in the discussion chapter.

Question 12 asked respondents the time they took to complete the B.Ed. programme through DL at ZOU. This is the question that gave an indication of the completion rate of adults that did B.Ed. through DL at ZOU. It showed the number of students that had normal completion and those that had delayed completion. It also indicated the number of semesters the respondents took to complete the degree programme. For purposes of convenience in comparing the two groups, all respondents that delayed but completed the programme were put in one group called the delayed completion category. Respondents that were still on the programme also made another group called the on programme category.

Figure 14 gives a summary of the respondents' answers to their B.Ed. programme completion status. The respondents' completion statuses were in those three categories in line with the sample.



Respondents that completed the programme in unimpeded 8 semesters were 60%. This was the normal duration over which the B.Ed. programme was designed to be completed. Those that delayed completions of the programme were 19% and 20% were still on the programme.

The percentage that did not complete on time was high enough to cause concern. This is so considering that most of the adults that were enrolled in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU were holders of professional qualifications and had some work experience in education. Conclusions and recommendations on this variable are drawn after comparison of these and the results from the phenomenological interview in the discussion chapter.

Question 13 sought what those respondents who delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme at ZOU attributed their delayed completion to. Figure 15 gives a summary of the various factors that respondents attributed their delayed completion of the DL programme to.

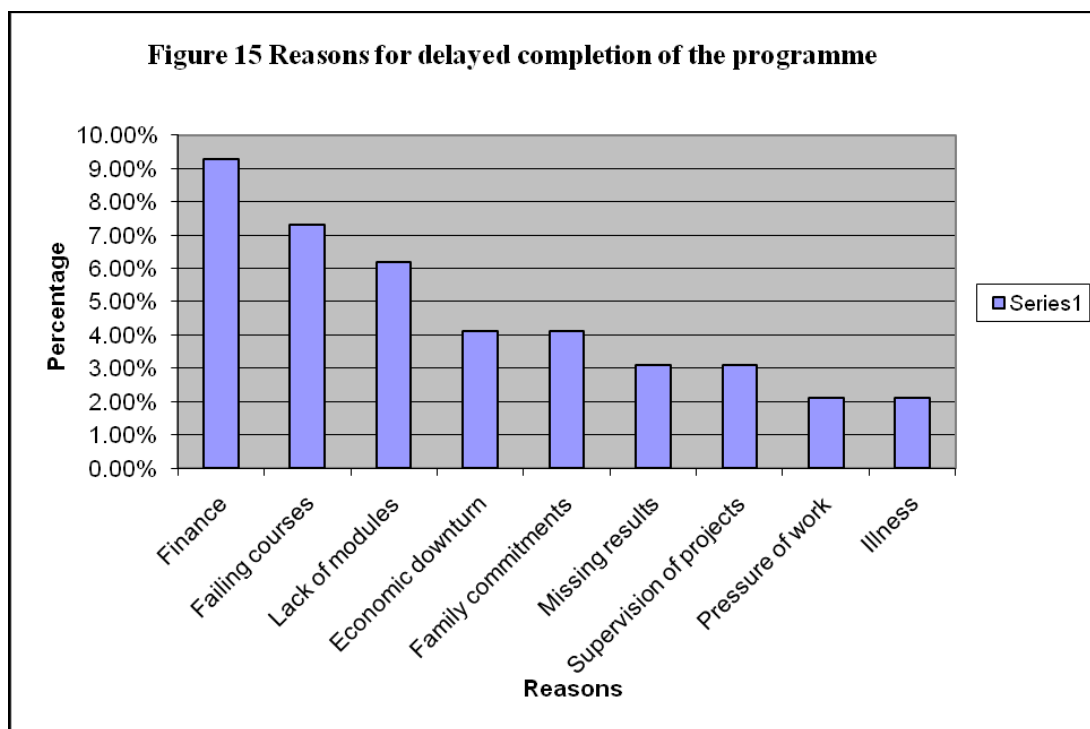


Figure 15 shows that 9% of the respondents attributed their delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme at ZOU to financial problems, 7% attributed their delay to failing courses, 6% attributed their delay to lack of modules, 4% in each case attributed their delay to family commitments and the economic downturn that prevailed in Zimbabwe.

There were also 3% respondents in each case that attributed their delayed completion of the programme to missing results and to challenges they met in the supervision of the research projects while 2% each attributed their delay and pressure of work and illness.

The results in Figure 15 were put to inferential statistical analysis. The analysis sought to determine if the above reasons for delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme through DL had significant association with respondents' delayed completion time. Table 16 gives the results of the cross tabulation between the reasons for delay and B.Ed. completion time.

**Table 16 Crosstab. of reasons for delayed completion and B.Ed. completion time**

Reason for delayed completion of the programme		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Finance	Count	0	3	4	7
	Expected Count	4.5	1.2	1.3	7.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	20.0%	23.5%	7.8%
	% of Total	.0%	3.3%	4.4%	7.8%
Failing courses	Count	0	2	3	5
	Expected Count	3.2	.8	.9	5.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	13.3%	17.6%	5.6%
	% of Total	.0%	2.2%	3.3%	5.6%
Lack of modules	Count	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.6	.2	.2	1.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	6.7%	.0%	1.1%
	% of Total	.0%	1.1%	.0%	1.1%
Economic downturn	Count	0	2	2	4
	Expected Count	2.6	.7	.8	4.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	13.3%	11.8%	4.4%
	% of Total	.0%	2.2%	2.2%	4.4%
Family commitments	Count	0	2	0	2
	Expected Count	1.3	.3	.4	2.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	13.3%	.0%	2.2%

	% of Total	.0%	2.2%	.0%	2.2%
Missing results	Count	0	2	0	2
	Expected Count	1.3	.3	.4	2.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	13.3%	.0%	2.2%
	% of Total	.0%	2.2%	.0%	2.2%
Delayed by project	Count	0	2	1	3
	Expected Count	1.9	.5	.6	3.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	13.3%	5.9%	3.3%
	% of Total	.0%	2.2%	1.1%	3.3%
Illness	Count	0	1	0	1
	Expected Count	.6	.2	.2	1.0
	% within reason for delayed completion	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	6.7%	.0%	1.1%
	% of Total	.0%	1.1%	.0%	1.1%
Not applicable	Count	58	0	7	65
	Expected Count	41.9	10.8	12.3	65.0
	% within the programme	89.2%	.0%	10.8%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. programme	100.0%	.0%	41.2%	72.2%
	% of Total	64.4%	.0%	7.8%	72.2%
Total	Count	58	15	17	90
	Expected count	64.4%	16.7%	18.9%	100.0%
	%within the programme	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	64.4%	16.7%	18.9%	100.0%

Table 16 shows that none of the reasons for delayed completion had an observed count for respondents that had normal B.Ed. completion time. This implies that adults that had normal completion of the B.Ed. programme through DL at ZOU did not have a significant negative influence of the reasons for delayed completion. However, Table 16 shows that for all the reasons given for delayed completion, the observed counts were higher than the expected counts. This implies that there was association between the reasons for delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme and respondents' B.Ed.completion time. Respondents that are labelled as not applicable on Table 16 include those that had unimpeded completion and those that were still on the programme. So, the question of delayed completion did not apply to them.

Indicators from Table 17 led to parametric tests of significance in order to determine the strength of the relationship between the reasons for delayed completion and respondents' B. Ed. Completion time. The results of the statistical tests of significance are given in Table 17.

We can see from Table 17 that the Chi-square result of 85.502 has a significance level of 0.000. This is a very strong and off the mark level of significance that is

**Table 17 Chi-square test of reasons for delay on B.Ed. completion time**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	85.502(a)	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	91.312	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	40.448	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	90		

a. 24 cells (88.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .17.

below 0.001 ( $p < 0.001$ ). So, if the Null hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Chi-square as large as 85.502 in 1 out of every thousand samples. Therefore, we can safely reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant association between respondents' reasons for delayed completion and their B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002).

The results above do not provide explanation of the association of reasons for delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme and respondents' completion time. That can only be provided by comparing these results with the results from the phenomenological interviews in the discussion chapter. Such comparison can be the only basis for drawing conclusions and recommendations on this variable.

Question 14 asked respondents if the orientation of new adult learners into DL at ZOU prepared them adequately to cope with studying in isolation at a distance.

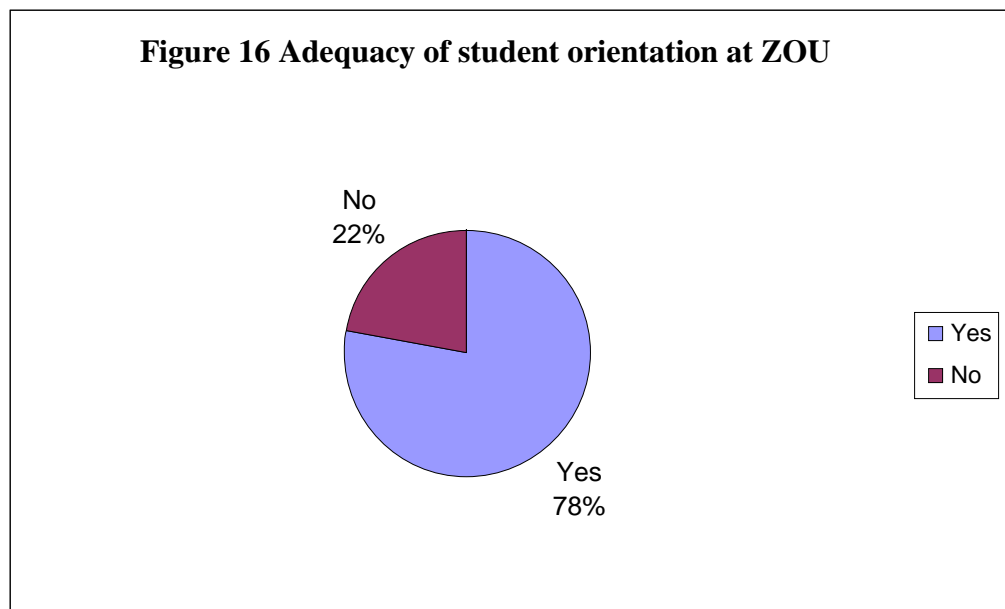
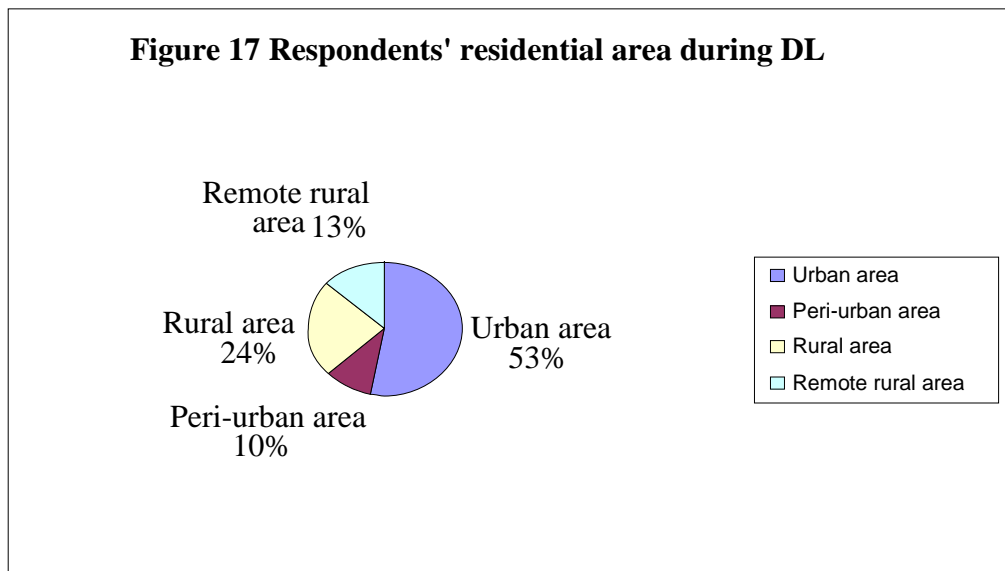


Figure 16 gives the respondents' answers to that question. Majority, (78%) of the respondents felt that the orientation was adequate to prepare new adult learners to cope with learning in isolation while 22% said it was inadequate.

While inadequate orientation might appear as a cause for concern among some adult learners entering DL, Chi-Square test results in Appendix G revealed that orientation had no significance to adults' B.Ed. completion time.

Question 15 sought the rural and urban distribution of adult learners who studied through DL at ZOU.

Figure 17 shows the respondents' distribution by their residential areas at the time they did the B.Ed. programme through DL at ZOU. Most (53%) of the sample stayed in urban areas and 10% stayed in peri-urban areas. The rest, that is, 24% stayed in rural areas and the other 13% stayed in remote rural areas.

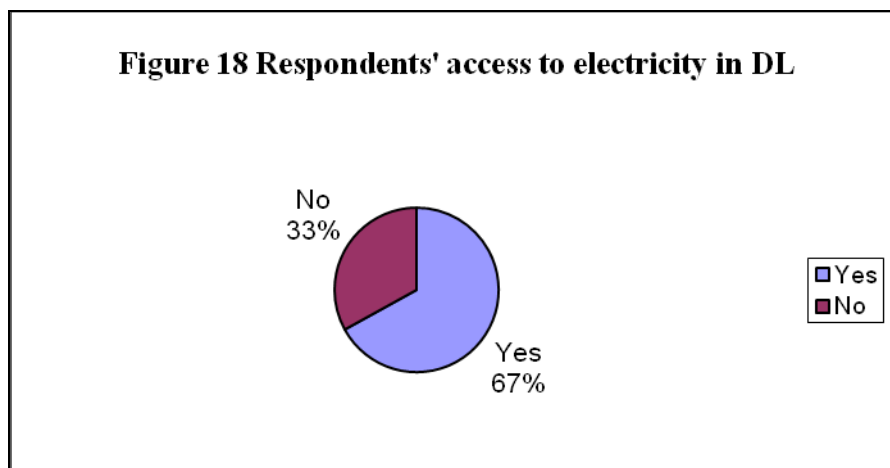


The rural (37%) to urban (63%) divide among respondents was likely to be a cause for concern in terms of B.Ed. completion time. Most respondents that stayed in rural areas complained about the cost of travel to regional centres for tutorials and also to visit the library. Some rural residents faced the challenges of lack of access to electricity, telephone and library. These factors put them at a disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts.

While the above concerns by rural residents were true in some cases, Chi-Square test results in Appendix G revealed that residential area had no significance to adults' B.Ed. completion time.

Question 16 asked if respondents had electricity for study during B.Ed. through DL and Figure 18 gives respondents' answers to that question.

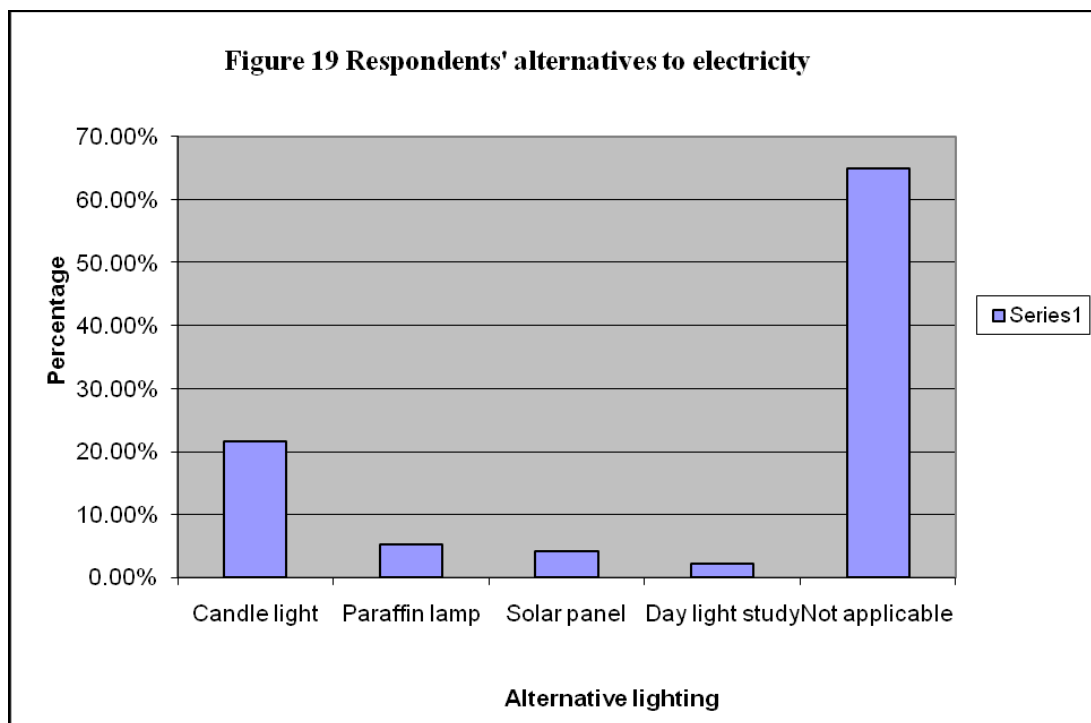
In Figure 18 majority (67%) had access to electricity during the time they did the B.Ed. programme. The rest, 33% did not have access to electricity where they stayed while they were doing the B.Ed. programme through DL.



This could be because most of the students stayed in urban areas as we saw earlier. However, Chi-square test results in Appendix G show that access to electricity was not significant to adult learners' B.Ed. completion time.

I then had to probe further and asked how as adult learners they studied in the evenings considering that most of them spent the day at work and assignments were supposed to be submitted on due dates. Question 17 asked respondents to give the strategies they used to study at night in the absence of electricity where they stayed at the time they were studying through DL. Figure 19 gives the alternative forms of lighting and approaches to study used by the respondents who had no electricity.

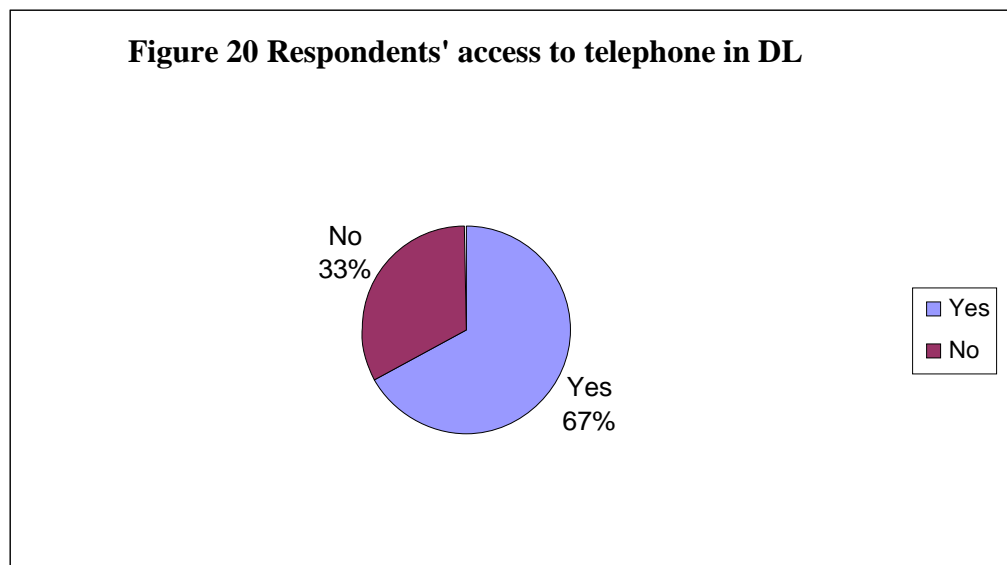
About 22% of the respondents used candle light and 5% used paraffin lamps to study at night. Another 4% of the respondents used solar panels to study at night since they did not have electricity in their rural homes. The rest of them, 2% made maximum use of day light to study. They did not study at night. Most of these confined their studying to weekend day light hours during their B.Ed. studies through DL.



. While respondents expressed concern about lack of electricity in rural areas and the disadvantage of having inadequate study time, Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that the alternatives to using electricity to study at night had no significance on adults' B.Ed. completion time.

In Question 18, I asked respondents whether they had access to telephone at home when they were doing B.Ed. studies through DL. Figure 20 provides the respondents' answers to that question.

While 67% of the sample had access to telephone, 33% did not have access to telephone at home when they did their B.Ed. through DL. This situation was likely to put respondents that had no access to telephone at a disadvantage compared to their colleagues that had telephone in their homes.

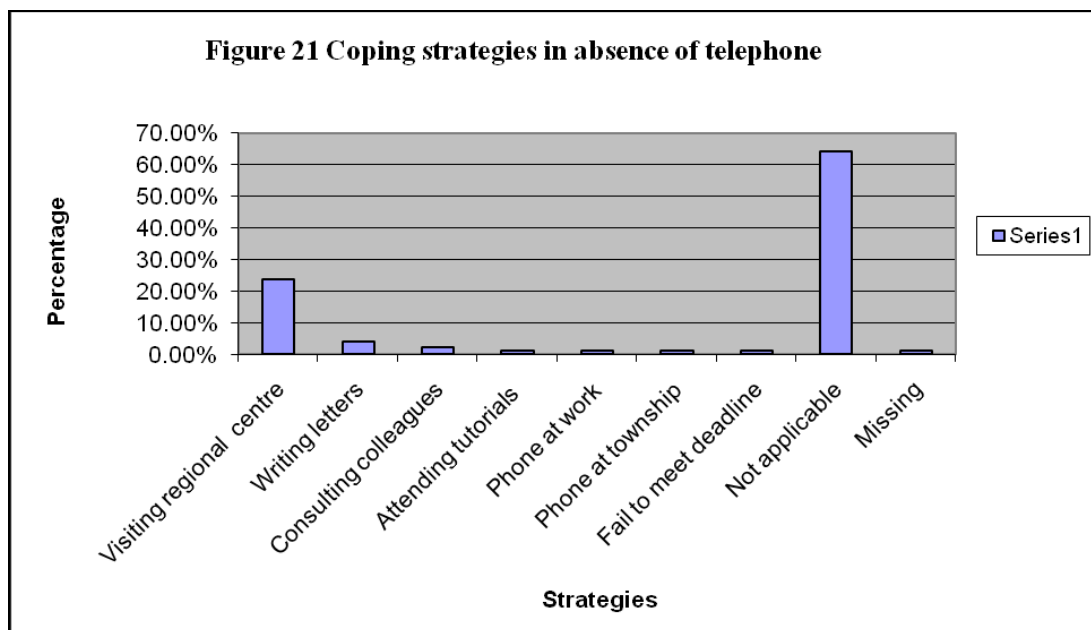


However, Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that access to telephone was not significant to respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

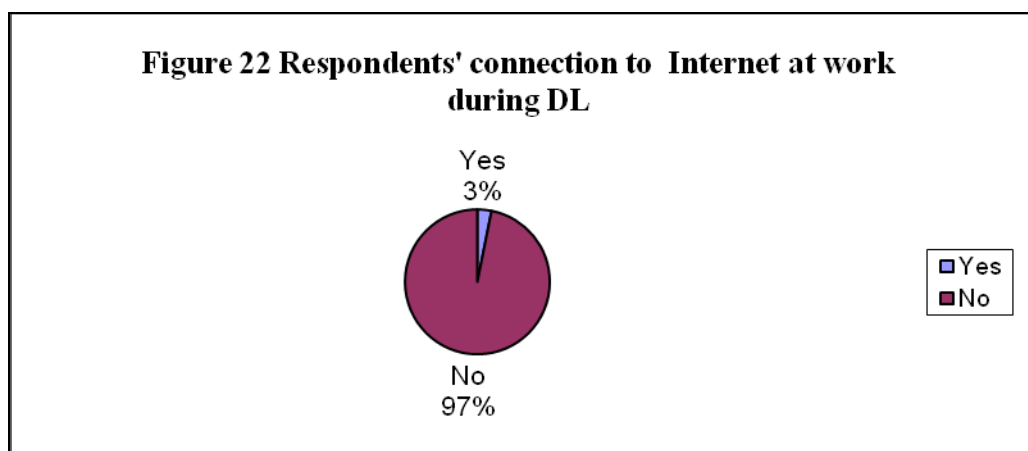
Question 19 asked what strategies students who had no telephone used to communicate problems they encountered during DL. The answers to that question are provided in Figure 21.

Figure 21 shows that among the respondents that had no access to telephone at home: 24% visited the regional centres, 4 % wrote letters to regional programme coordinators, 2% consulted colleagues and 1% each telephoned at the nearest township or at their work places. Other respondents just ignored meeting assignment deadlines.

While respondents used these strategies, Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed no significance between alternative communication strategies and adults' B.Ed. completion time.



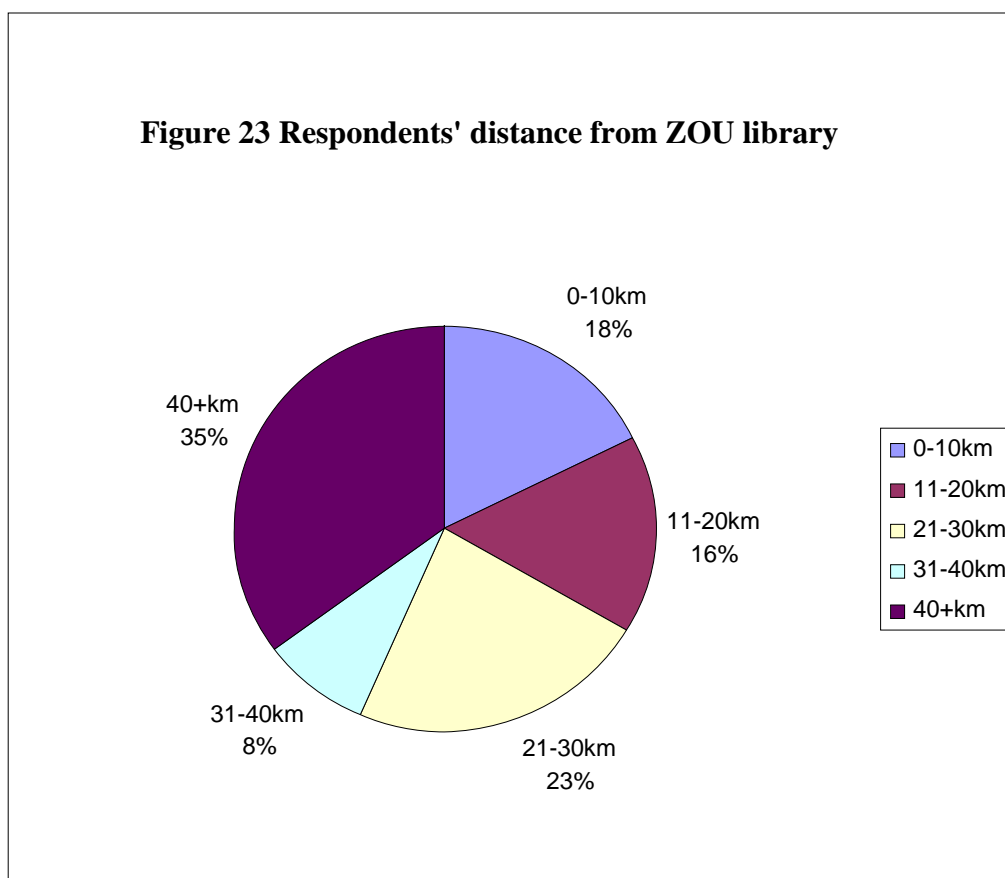
Question 20 asked whether respondents were connected to internet at work when they did B. Ed. through DL. Figure 22 gives the respondents' answers to that question.



In Figure 22, only 3 % of my respondents were connected to internet while 97% were not connected to internet. Whereas having no access to internet put respondents at a disadvantage compared to their colleagues that were connected to internet, Chi-

square test results in Appendix G revealed that connection to internet was not significant to B.Ed. completion time.

The fact that a lot of my respondents were not connected to internet at their work place prompted me to ask the question of their access to the other major source of information in DL, the library. Question 22 asked respondents how far they stayed from the ZOU library during their B.Ed. studies through DL. Figure 23 gives respondents' answers to that question.



For 35% of my respondents the nearest ZOU library was 40+ kilometres away. While 8% stayed 31-40 kilometres from the library, 23% stayed 21-30 kilometres

from the library, 16% were 11-20 kilometres from the library and 18% stayed nearest 0-10 kilometres from the library.

Although Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that distance from the library was not significant to my questionnaire survey respondents' B.Ed.completion time, distance from the library was likely to pose both financial and time constraints to adult students who were also employees. A cross-reference of the questionnaire survey and phenomenological interview results in the discussion chapter could help me to come up with a final conclusion on this factor.

Question 23 asked respondents whether ZOU library had enough books for their B.Ed. programme. Figure 24 gave answers to that question.

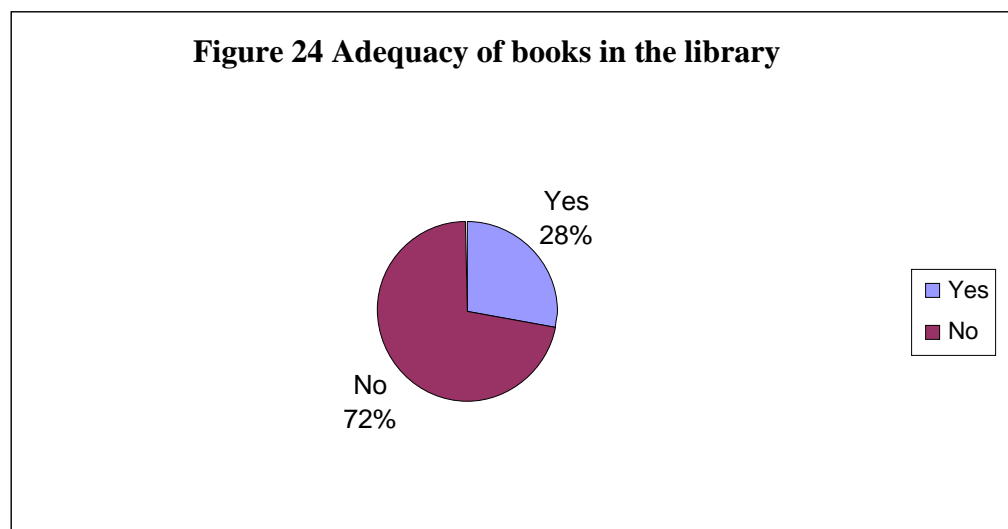
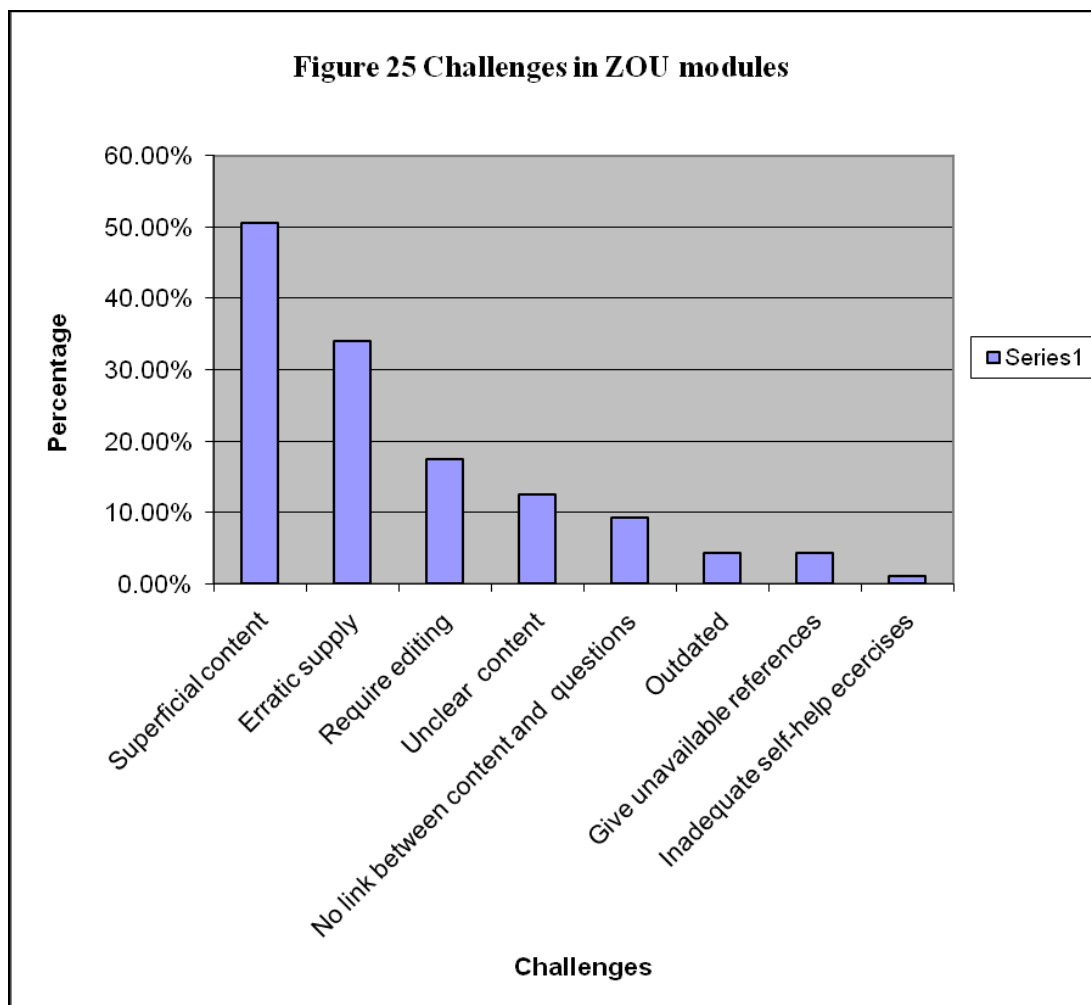


Figure 24 shows that only 28% of the sample felt the library had enough books for the B.Ed. programme while 72% said the available books were not enough. Availability of many library books would enrich the knowledge that adults derived from their enrolment in the B.Ed. programme through DL. However, Chi-Square test results in Appendix G showed that availability of library books at ZOU was not

significant to B.Ed.completion time. These survey results would be cross-referenced with the results from interviews under the discussion chapter to determine the conclusion on this variable.

Question 24 asked for the challenges that adult learners faced in the ZOU modules they used in the B.Ed. programme. Figure 25 gives the list of challenges faced by adults in the modules provided to students in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU.



A frequency distribution analysis revealed that 50% of the questionnaire survey respondents said that the content in the modules at ZOU was superficial. Some 20 % of the respondents were concerned about the supply of modules. They said that there was erratic supply of modules at ZOU. Another 12% of the questionnaire survey respondents said that the modules required editing because some of them had printing errors. For 7% of the questionnaire survey respondents, some parts of the modules at ZOU had unclear texts. For 6% of the respondents, some modules showed no link between the content and questions that they got in either written assignments or examinations. For 2% of the respondents in each case, some of the modules were outdated while other modules gave references that were not available.

The results in Figure 25 were put to inferential statistical analysis to test the significance of respondents' claims on their B.Ed. completion time. Table 27 provides the results of that analysis.

Table 27 reveals that the observed count of the superficial content challenge in the ZOU modules (32) was greater than the expected count (25.5) among respondents that had normal completion of the B.Ed. programme. This confirms association between superficial content in ZOU modules and B.Ed. completion time. The respondents that had delayed completion had a lower observed count (7) than the expected count (8.0). All the same, that lower count than expected had the highest count among the respondents that delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme that attributed their delay to challenges from ZOU modules.

The challenge of erratic supply of ZOU modules had both observed counts for respondents with normal completion (8) and delayed completion (2) lower than the expected counts for normal completion(10.3) and for delayed completion (3.2) respectively.

**Table 27 Crosstab. of challenges from ZOU modules and B.Ed. completion time**

Challenges from ZOU Modules		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Superficial in content	Count	32	7	3	42
	Expected Count	25.5	8.0	8.5	42.0
	% within challenge from ZOU modules	76.2%	16.7%	7.1%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	62.7%	43.8%	17.6%	50.0%
	% of Total	38.1%	8.3%	3.6%	50.0%
Erratic supply of modules	Count	8	2	7	17
	Expected Count	10.3	3.2	3.4	17.0
	% within challenge from ZOU modules	47.1%	11.8%	41.2%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	15.7%	12.5%	41.2%	20.2%
	% of Total	9.5%	2.4%	8.3%	20.2%
Unclear texts in some sections	Count	3	2	1	6
	Expected Count	3.6	1.1	1.2	6.0
	% within challenge from ZOU modules	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	5.9%	12.5%	5.9%	7.1%
	% of Total	3.6%	2.4%	1.2%	7.1%
Some require editing	Count	4	1	5	10
	Expected Count	6.1	1.9	2.0	10.0
	% within challenge from ZOU modules	40.0%	10.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	7.8%	6.3%	29.4%	11.9%
	% of Total	4.8%	1.2%	6.0%	11.9%
No link between content and questions	Count	1	4	0	5
	Expected Count	3.0	1.0	1.0	5.0
	% within challenge from ZOU modules	20.0%	80.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	2.0%	25.0%	.0%	6.0%
	% of Total	1.2%	4.8%	.0%	6.0%
Some are outdated	Count	1	0	1	2
	Expected Count	1.2	.4	.4	2.0
	% within challenge from ZOU modules	50.0%	.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	2.0%	.0%	5.9%	2.4%
	% of Total	1.2%	.0%	1.2%	2.4%
Some give unavailable references	Count	2	0	0	2
	Expected Count	1.2	.4	.4	2.0

	% within challenge from ZOU modules	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	3.9%	.0%	.0%	2.4%
	% of Total	2.4%	.0%	.0%	2.4%
Total Count		51	16	17	84
Expected Count		51.0	16.0	17.0	84.0
% within challenges from ZOU modules		60.7%	19.0%	20.2%	100.0%
% within B.Ed. completion time		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total		60.7%	19.0%	20.2%	100.0%

For the challenge of unclear texts in the ZOU module, the observed count(3) was lower than that of the expected count (3.6) among the respondents that had normal completion. Its observed count (2) for respondents that delayed completion was higher than that of the expected count(1.1) for that category. This shows that it had an influence on respondents' delay in B.Ed. completion time. The other challenge was that ZOU modules required editing. The observed count(4) was lower than the expected count(6.1) among the respondents that had normal completion and the observed count(1) was also lower than the expected count for respondents that delayed completion. This must have contributed to unclear texts.

Some respondents said that ZOU modules' content did not have links with the assignment and examination questions that they were asked. The respondents that had normal completion's observed count(1) was lower than the expected count(3). Among the respondents that delayed completion, the observed count(4) was higher than the expected count (1). This showed association between the challenge in the module and respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

For the challenge that ZOU modules were outdated, the observed count(1) among respondents that had normal completion was lower than the expected (1.2). Those that had delayed completion had no count on that challenge. For the challenge that ZOU modules provided references that were not available, the observed count (2) was higher than the expected count(1.2) for respondents that had normal completion. The respondents that delayed completion had no count on that challenge. Most of the

above frequency distributions reveal association between the challenges in ZOU modules and the respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

Table 28 gives the results of parametric tests of significance of the association between the challenges in ZOU module and respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

**Table 28 Chi-square test of challenges from modules on B.Ed. completion time**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.044(a)	12	.002
Likelihood Ratio	28.133	12	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.787	1	.052
N of Valid Cases	84		

a 16 cells (76.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .38.

We can see from Table 28 that the Chi-square result of 31.044 has a significance level of 0.002. This is a very strong level of significance. So, if the Null hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Chi-square as large as 31.044 in 2 out of every thousand samples. Therefore, we can safely reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant association between challenges from ZOU modules and adult learners' B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002).

These results are compared with those from the interview in the discussion chapter in order to come up with conclusions and recommendations on this variable.

Concerns raised on the ZOU modules prompted questions on how alternative teaching-learning methods compensated for the inadequacies of the module. Question 25 asked whether respondents benefited from the comments made by tutors in their written assignments during the B.Ed. programme through DL at ZOU. Answers to that question are given in Figure 26.

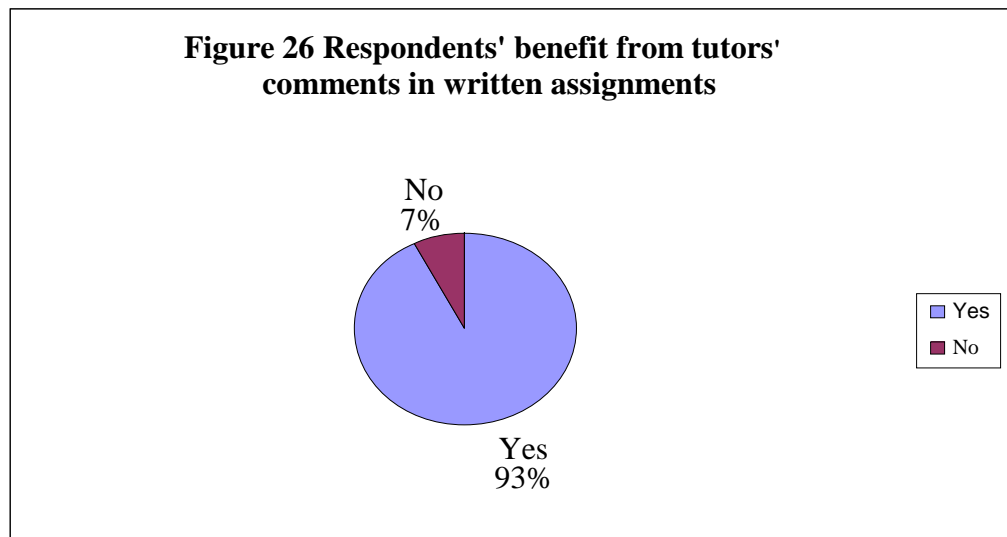
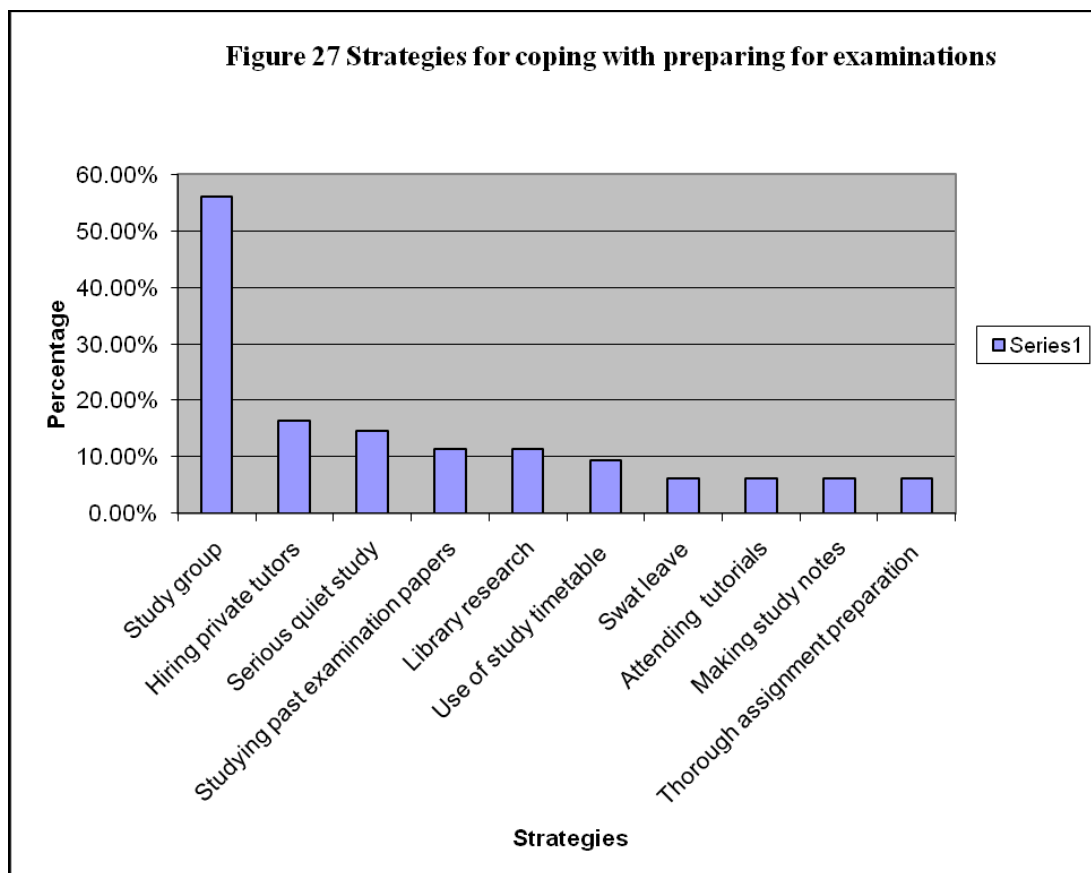


Figure 26 shows that 93% of the respondents said they benefited while 7% did not benefit from comments made by tutors in written assignments. I view written assignments in DL as both a teaching method and an assessment tool towards preparation for examinations. Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that there was no significance between comments made by tutors in marked assignments and adults' B.Ed.completion time.

Question 26 asked respondents strategies they used to cope with preparation for examinations. Figure 27 gives respondents' answers to that question.

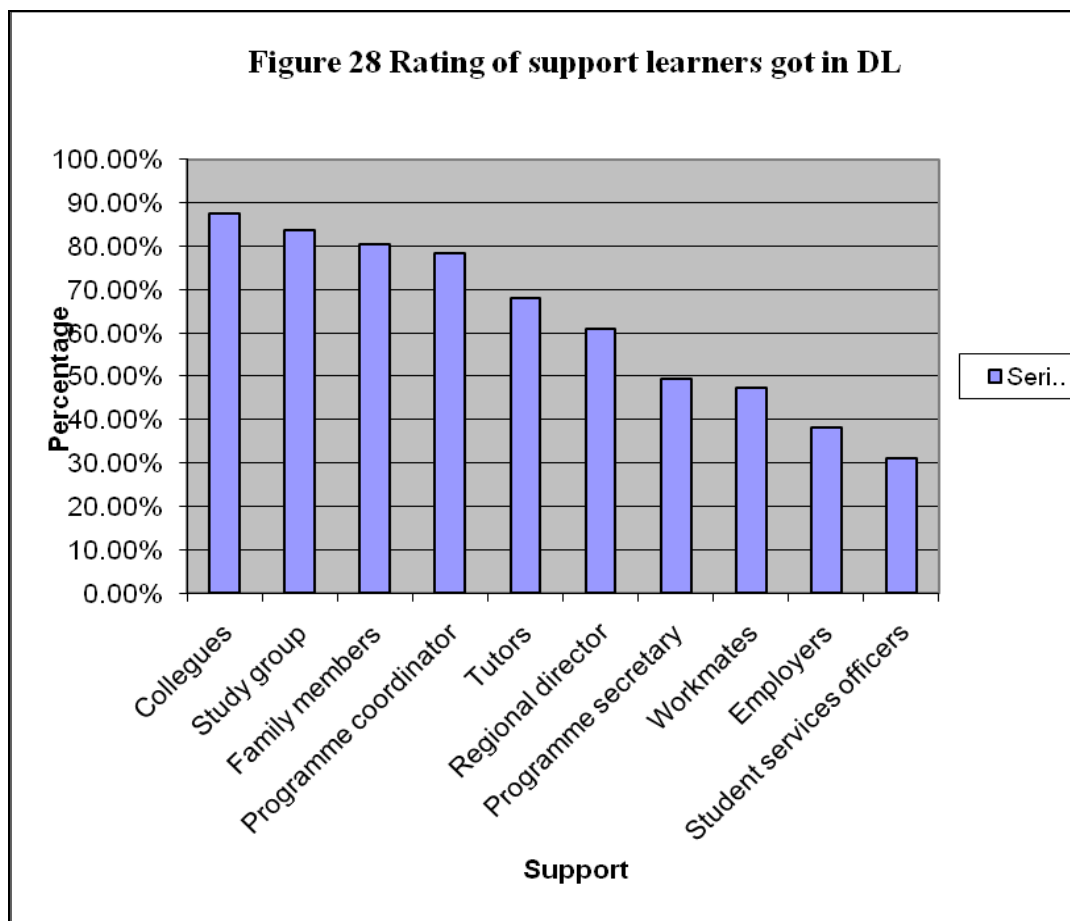
Most (56%) of the respondents used study groups, 16% hired private tutors, 15% engaged in serious quiet study, and 11% each studied past examination papers and carried out library research while 9% used a study timetable. The rest, 6% in each case, used applying for a swat leave from work, regular attendance of tutorials, making study notes and thorough preparation of assignments as strategies for coping with examinations in DL.



While these strategies helped respondents to cope with examinations, Chi-square results in Appendix G revealed that they were not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time.

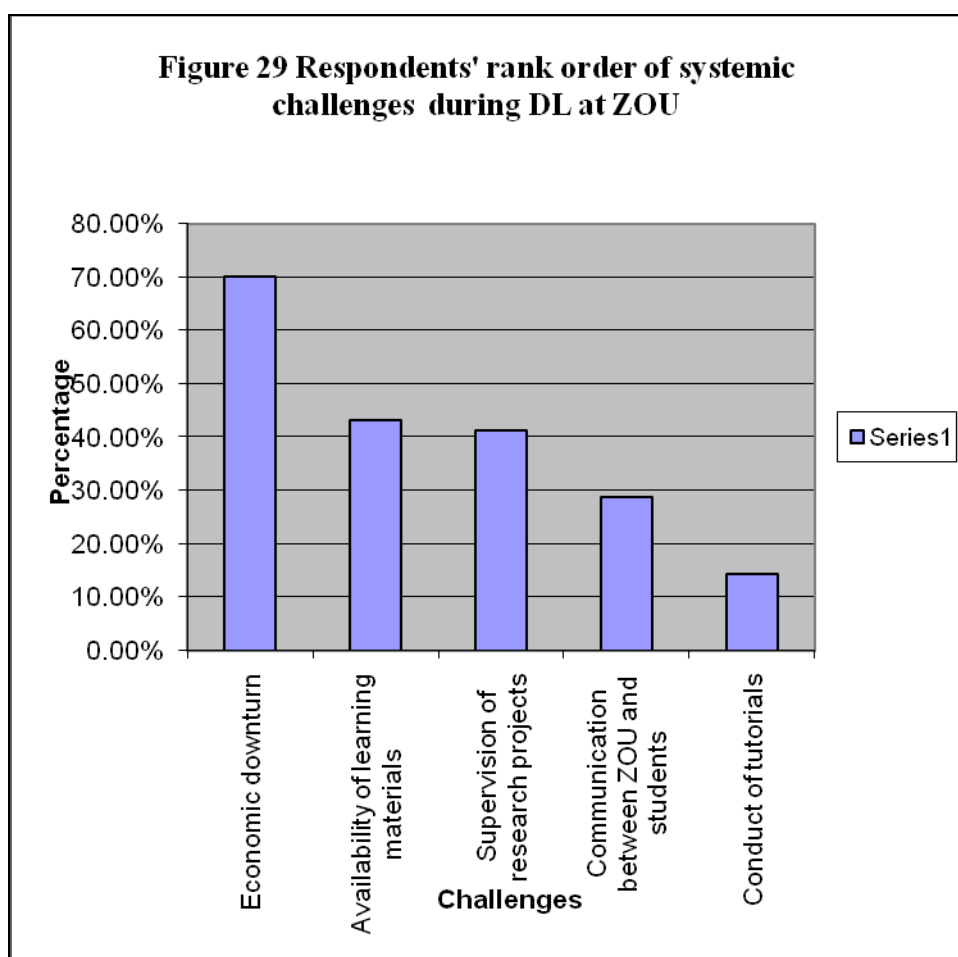
Question 27 asked the respondents to rate ten sources of support that they used to cope with DL. Figure 28 gives respondents' answers to that question on a sliding scale.

I used a sliding scale of frequencies of respondents' rating of each source of support as good and excellent to develop Figure 28. It is interesting to observe in Figure 28 that respondents' highest support was from outside and/or the student's social circle rather than from within the learning institution.



Greatest support was from adults' colleagues (88%), followed by study groups (84%), and then by family members (80%). Their learning institution's support took second position as they rated that from the regional programme coordinators (78%), followed by tutors (68%), then regional directors (60%) and programme secretaries (50%). The third set mixed institutional with external support. This comprised workmates (47%), employers (38%) and least of all students services (30%). These sources of learner support were helpful. However, statistical significance test results in Appendix G revealed that they were not significant to respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

I sought respondents' views on support structures that they experienced challenges from in the B.Ed. programme. In Question 28 I asked respondents to rank order ZOU support systems on a sliding scale 1 to 5 with the one that gave them the most challenges occupying position 1 and the one that gave them least challenges coming into position 5. Figure 29 gives respondents' answers to that question.



According to 70% of my respondents, the economic downturn in Zimbabwe at the time of this study was the most challenging factor. However, the most challenging ZOU support mechanism that was identified by 43% of respondents was availability of learning materials. The next challenging ZOU support mechanism to 41% of my respondents was supervision of research projects. For 29% of the respondents

communication between ZOU and students was a challenging mechanism. The least challenging ZOU sub-system according to 14% of my respondents was conduct of tutorials.

The economic downturn in Zimbabwe at the time of this study was beyond measure. The national treasury and government dropped the use of the local currency and adopted the use of the United States dollar which was very difficult to get by ordinary citizens. However, parametric significance test results in Appendix G revealed that challenges from the economic downturn, availability of learning materials and conduct of tutorials were not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time. They revealed that there was association between challenges from supervision of projects and challenges from communication between ZOU and students and B.Ed. completion time. These are discussed in turn.

Table 32 gives the results of inferential statistics on how respondents rated the challenges they faced from supervision of research projects at ZOU in relation to B.Ed. completion time.

**Table 32 Crosstab. of project supervision challenges and B.Ed. completion time**

		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Most Challenging	Count	16	5	0	21
	Expected Count	13.0	4.0	4.0	21.0
	% within challenges from supervision of projects	76.2%	23.8%	.0%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	27.6%	27.8%	.0%	22.3%
	% of Total	17.0%	5.3%	.0%	22.3%
More Challenging	Count	10	4	4	18
	Expected Count	11.1	3.4	3.4	18.0
	% within challenges from supervision of projects	55.6%	22.2%	22.2%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	17.2%	22.2%	22.2%	19.1%
	% of Total	10.6%	4.3%	4.3%	19.1%

Challenging	Count	7	3	1	11
	Expected Count	6.8	2.1	2.1	11.0
	% within challenges from supervision of projects	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	12.1%	16.7%	5.6%	11.7%
	% of Total	7.4%	3.2%	1.1%	11.7%
Less Challenging	Count	15	2	1	18
	Expected Count	11.1	3.4	3.4	18.0
	% within challenges from supervision of projects	83.3%	11.1%	5.6%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	25.9%	11.1%	5.6%	19.1%
	% of Total	16.0%	2.1%	1.1%	19.1%
Not Challenging	Count	10	4	12	26
	Expected Count	16.0	5.0	5.0	26.0
	% within challenges from supervision of projects	38.5%	15.4%	46.2%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	17.2%	22.2%	66.7%	27.7%
	% of Total	10.6%	4.3%	12.8%	27.7%
Total	Count	58	18	18	94
	Expected Count	58.0	18.0	18.0	94.0
	% within challenges from supervision of projects	61.7%	19.1%	19.1%	100.0%
	% within B.Ed. completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	61.7%	19.1%	19.1%	100.0%

Table 32 shows that the observed count (16) of respondents that said supervision of research projects at ZOU was most challenging was greater than the expected count (13) among respondents that had normal completion of the B.Ed. programme. This was supported by respondents that delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme. Their observed count (5) was also greater than the expected count (4.0). These results confirmed association between the challenges in supervision of research projects and B.Ed. completion time.

For respondents that regarded supervision of projects as more challenging, the observed count (10) was lower than the expected count (11.1) for those that had normal completion while for those that delayed completion the observed count (4)

was greater than the expected count (3.4). The counts also confirmed that there was association between challenges from research project supervision and their delayed B.Ed. completion time.

Among respondents that rated supervision of projects at ZOU as challenging, the observed count (7) was greater than the expected count (6.8) for respondents that had normal completion. This was complimented by those that delayed completion of the programme as their observed count (3) was also greater than the expected count (2.1). Both groups confirm the association between challenges from supervision of projects and B.Ed. completion time.

There were a few respondents that did not experience challenges from supervision of projects at ZOU. Their observed count for those that had normal completion (10) was lower than the expected count (16). For respondents that delayed completion, the observed count (4) was also lower than the expected count (5). Overall, there was association between challenges from research projects and B.Ed. completion time.

Table 33 shows the level of significance between challenges from research projects and B.Ed. completion time. We can see from Table 33 that the Chi-square result of 22.308 has a significance level of .004. This is lower than the 0.05 cut off level of significance.

**Table 33 Chi-square test of project supervision challenges on B.Ed.completion**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.308(a)	8	.004
Likelihood Ratio	24.548	8	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.359	1	.007
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.11.

So, if the Null hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Chi-square as large as 22.308 in 4 out of every hundred samples.

Therefore, we can safely reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant association between challenges in the supervision of research projects and the adult learners' B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002). These results are cross-referenced with those from the phenomenological interview in the discussion chapter to determine the conclusions and recommendations on this variable.

For the association between challenges from communication of ZOU and students and B.Ed. completion time, Table 34 gives t-test group statistics for respondents' rating of challenges from communication they faced at ZOU.

**Table 34 T-test of challenges from communication between ZOU and students**

**T-Test Group Statistics**

Ranking challenges from communication between ZOU and students	B.Ed. programme completion time	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Normal completion	57	3.19	1.093	.145
	Delayed completion	18	3.00	1.534	.362

A t-test compares the scores between mean scores of two groups relative to their spread or variability. A t-test indicates the sample differences by using means and the distribution of sample scores around the mean. The t- test examines whether the means of two groups of data are significantly different from one another. With a t-test the independent variable is nominal or categorical and the dependent variable is measured at interval or ratio scale of measurement (Miller, Acton et al. 2002). In this case, the independent variable is B.Ed. completion time and communication is the dependent variable. We can see that for the 57 respondents that had normal B.Ed. completion time the mean rating of communication with ZOU was 3.19 (sd=1.09), while for the 18 that had delayed B.Ed. completion the mean rating of

communication between ZOU and students was 3.00 (sd=1.53) . Hence the mean difference is 0.19.

Table 35 gives results of the significance level between challenges from communication between ZOU and students and B.Ed. completion time. The t-test determines whether an observed difference in the means of two groups is sufficiently large to be attributed to a change in some variable or if it could have occurred by chance. The principle underlying t-tests and analysis of variance is the assumption that both groups represent samples from a normal distribution (Miller, Acton et al. 2002).

**Table 35 T-test of ZOU communication challenges on adults' B.Ed. completion**

**Independent Samples Test**

Ranking challenges from communication between ZOU and students	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95%Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	6.145	.015	.681	74	.498	.224	.329	-.482	.880
Equal variances not assumed			.575	22.782	.571	.224	.390	-.583	1.031

The independent samples t-test tests whether the means of the dependent variable are significantly different. It operates on the basis that, if “Sig.” is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), the Levene's test indicates that the variances between the two populations are not equal. If “Sig.” is greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), the Levene's test indicates that equal variances can be assumed (Miller, Acton et al. 2002).

Our Levene's test in Table 35 indicates that “Sig.” is 0.015 ( $p < 0.02$ ). This is less than the 0.05 significance level cut off point. The Levene's test confirms that the variances between the two populations are not equal. Hence the difference between

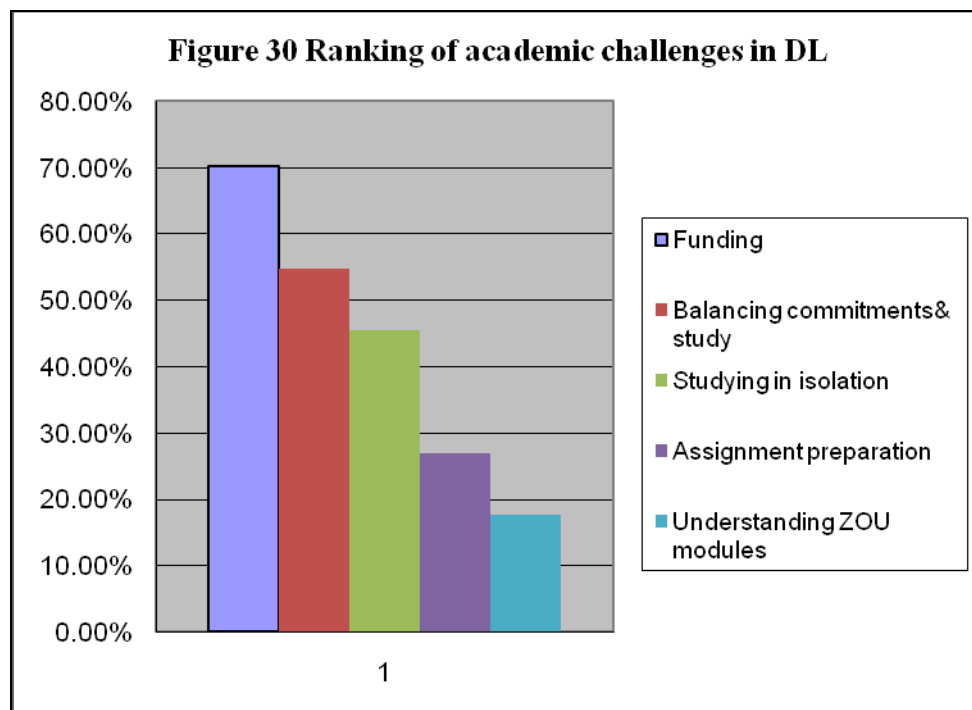
means is significant at  $p < 0.02$ . So, if the Null hypothesis were true we could only expect to find a Levene's F statistic as large as 6.145 at 74 degrees of freedom in 2 out of every hundred samples. Therefore, we can reject the Null hypothesis and conclude that a statistically significant difference exists between the two groups in terms of the communication between ZOU and students. The research hypothesis that the challenges in communication between ZOU and students are significant to respondents' B.Ed. completion time is upheld, and the Null hypothesis is rejected.

These results are cross-referenced with those from the phenomenological interview in the discussion chapter in order to draw conclusions and recommendations from this variable.

The systemic support analysis prompted the evaluation of academic aspects in terms of difficulty in DL. Question 29 asked respondents to rank five academic aspects' difficulty in DL on a sliding scale so that the most difficult occupies position 1 and the least difficult gets into position 5.

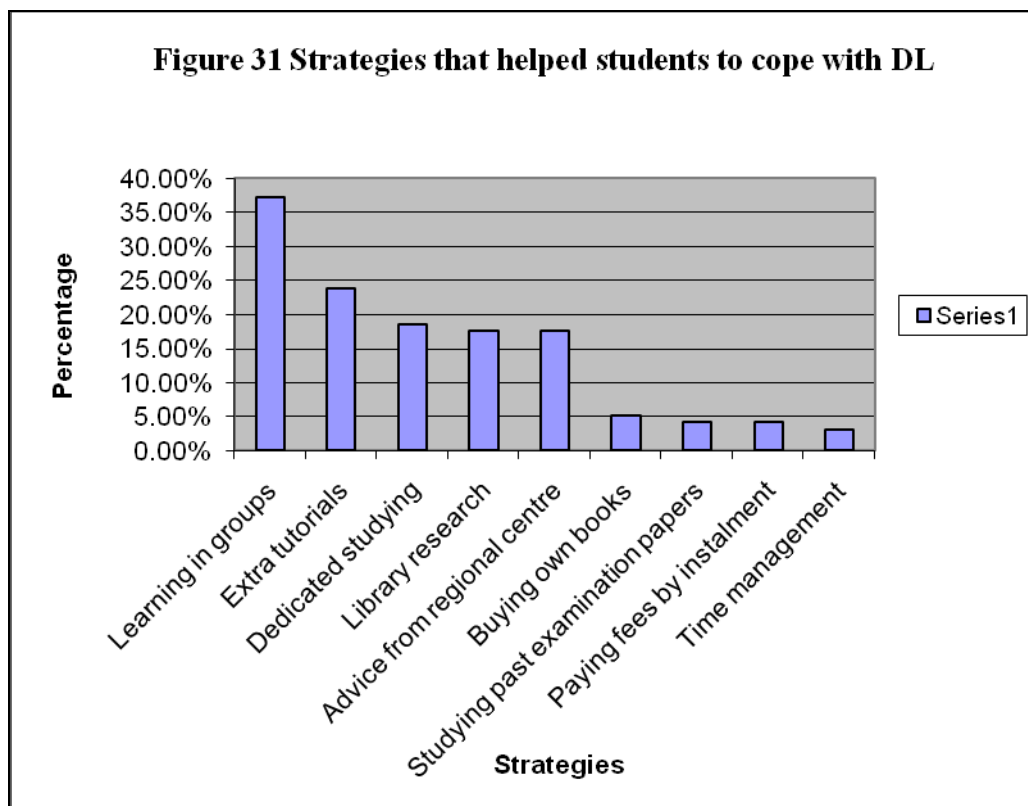
Frequency distribution in Figure 30 shows that the most difficult aspect in the B.Ed. by DL to 70% of respondents was funding the programme. The second and more difficult aspect to 55% of my respondents was balancing multiple roles. The third and difficult academic aspect to 45% respondents was studying in isolation. The fourth and less difficult academic aspect to 27% of the respondents was preparation of assignments. The least difficult academic aspect to 18% was understanding the ZOU module.

Tests for significance results in Appendix G revealed that these difficulties were not significant to B.Ed.completion time.



Finally, Question 30 asked respondents to mention information that helped them to succeed in the B.Ed. programme through DL. Figure 31 gives a summary of the respondents' answers to that question.

Respondents came up with ideas that reinforced the support structures and strategies they used to cope with DL at ZOU. Most respondents (37%) found learning in groups very helpful and 24% of the respondents found extra tutorials very helpful. Dedicated study helped 19% while library research and advice from regional centres were both beneficial to 18% of the respondents. Buying own books helped 5% of the respondents. Studying past examination papers and paying fees by instalment were helpful to 4% each. Good time management was helpful to the last 3 % of the respondents.



Statistical tests in Appendix G revealed that these strategies were not significant to B.Ed. completion time.

### 6.3 Summary

This chapter gave an analysis of the data from the questionnaire survey. The data was sought to complement data from the phenomenological interview data in Chapter 5. Pie charts, bar graphs and cross-tabulations were used to summarise responses for easy reference during the discussion chapter. Results from the data showed that the sample was adequately representative of the adult learners who did B.Ed. through DL at ZOU.

Chi-square and t-test parametric significance tests revealed that eight variables had significant association with respondents' B. Ed. completion time. They are respondents'; age, work experience, B.Ed. Intake, previous DL experience, reasons for delayed completion, challenges from ZOU modules, challenges from supervision of projects and challenges from communication between ZOU and students. Respondents highlighted the support structures and strategies they used to cope with DL in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU. These include, support from colleagues, family members and institutional structures. Among the strategies used are; study groups, extra tutorials, dedicated study, library research, buying own books, advice from regional centre, using study time-table, good time management, studying past examination papers and payment of fees by instalments. I discussed together those from the phenomenological interviews and those from the survey (Bak 2003) in order to draw conclusions and recommendations on this study, the future of the B.Ed. programme and DL in general.

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION

#### 7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 presented and analyzed data collected from three groups of adult B.Ed. students at ZOU. The groups included: students who had unimpeded completion of the programme, students who delayed completion and students who were still on the programme. As beneficiaries of the learner support mechanisms provided by ZOU in DL their perceptions and assessment of the different variables constitute the results under review in this chapter.

I stated from the outset that the focus of my study was to explore the support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with DL. My research questions sought to determine the extent to which students used support structures at ZOU and their own strategies to cope with DL. I also sought the strategies participants used to cope with ICT needs in the B.Ed. programme through DL. Finally, I wanted to know how the strategies used by participants to cope with DL could be used in the development of effective learner support systems at ZOU. My study found out the achievements so far made in learner support and any constraints encountered by the administrators, faculty and other staff in the learning institution and also by the students as beneficiaries. From the findings documented in the previous two chapters, discussion and interpretation of their implications are carried out in this chapter using the research questions (P. 3) and the programme support criteria (P.7) respectively. The interpretation also draws from my assumptions and theoretical framework (P.12).

I discuss results from the phenomenological interviews in Chapter 5 in cross-reference to the results from the questionnaire survey in Chapter 6. I used this approach in order to compensate the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of the other. I based my interpretation on the understanding that surveys produce estimates (Nichols 1991) while quotations from phenomenological interviews enhance the trustworthiness of the evidence (Castles 2004; Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010). In phenomenological interviews, first person reports of lived reality are what make research valid (Moustakas 1994). The combination of the two methods helps me to draw up more comprehensive conclusions than if I had only used one of them. My discussion deals with the results and their significance to each aspect. I state what has been discovered about the subject matter and indicate where future research might be directed (Bowden 2008).

I got answers to my questions by examining how adults benefited from ZOU support mechanisms including: regional centres, communication with ZOU staff, student support services, orientation, availability of learning materials, library, contact tutorials, assessment and financing the programme. I studied strategies that participants used to cope with studying in isolation in DL and also integrated study, employment and family commitments. I also examined the strategies the students used to cope with their ICT needs in DL and finally I sought students' suggestions to improve learner support in DL at ZOU.

Results in Chapter 5 were from participants' descriptions of their experiences in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU in 12 phenomenological interviews. I got results in Chapter 6 from a questionnaire survey in which I got 97 returns out of 100 respondents. My samples in both the interview and survey comprised three sets of adult learners mentioned earlier. The indicator that I used to benchmark learners' coping with DL was unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme as I explained in Chapter 6. While statistical analysis of the survey results showed that some

aspects of the results from the interview were not significant to the B.Ed. completion time, participants' perceptions of those aspects were included in this discussion as they explained the lived reality in DL.

I discuss results from Chapters 5 and 6 in view of the research questions that I was addressing in my study. My main question asked for the structures and strategies students used to study through DL at ZOU. To address that question, I used four sub-questions that formed the bases of my discussion in this chapter.

## **7.2 Support structures used by adults to cope with DL at ZOU**

My first sub-question in this study asked for the extent to which adult learners used support structures at ZOU to cope with the B. Ed. programme through DL. The intention of the question was to establish the ZOU support structures that students used to cope with the DL programme. Probing questions urged participants to identify and explain how the support structures benefitted them and if not, they explained the challenges they faced. This question addressed academic integration that covers all facets of a programme and elements of administrative, academic and collective affiliation between the student and ZOU. Collective affiliation develops through interaction between tutors and students, moral and value integration between the academic conventions and norms of the institution and the perceptions and performance of the student, and normative congruence that results from compatibility between students' performance and programme norms measured by approach to study, motivation and course evaluation (Kember 1995).

In my theoretical framework (P.13), I stated that support structures are institutional arrangements designed to assist learners to succeed in studies without undue hindrances. These can be physical, procedural and/or systematic in nature. Support services are structures and processes which provide students with facilities and

opportunities in their academic endeavours (Willis 1993; Nhundu 1997). These include access to: equipped learning centres with libraries, ICT and study packages, feedback from and encouragement by tutors and counsellors, information through newsletters, receptionists and notice-boards.

At its inception , ZOU indicated (P.3) that its delivery mode included: the module, audio/video cassettes and radio broadcasts, and face-to-face tutorials (Dzvimbo 2001). The programme assessment comprised written assignments, written examinations and the research project. The support services for students included: the national centre, regional centres, study centres, library, and counselling by guidance and counselling specialists as well as by subject coordinators and financial advice for students in addition to information service. Regular communication between the university and its learners was through: radio, television, newspapers, circular letters and newsletters (UZ Undated). The obtainable support services by ZOU were what I regarded as support structures for learners in my study. I indicated (P.13) that appropriate institutional, instructional and relational support should be provided to integrate learners into DL and to ensure degree completion (Lowe 2005).

### **7.2.1 Regional centres**

The regional centre is the students' contact point with the university in DL. I indicated (P.4) that regional centres at ZOU recruit and register students. They provide library and learning materials. They manage written assignments and organize logistical requirements for face-to-face tutorials and written examinations. All participants in my study used regional centre support. In my survey (Figure 28), support from regional directors was rated sixth position out of ten sources of student support at ZOU by 60% of my respondents making directors one of the weak sources of learner support. The next part of my discussion deals with the extent to which participants used regional centre support through orientation, communication, student support services and the library.

### 7.2.2 Orientation

Most participants' responses to my main research question on the structures and strategies they used to cope with DL started with orientation. ZOU's first support structure to integrate and develop self-confidence in new students was orientation. In literature (P.77) we saw that orientation enables students to socially integrate (Kazmer 2000). Orientation involved introducing students to the DL systems and procedures. It informed learners on support services available at ZOU. All new learners met as members of one university. The orientation process involved lectures by academic and administrative staff in different aspects of DL. Alumni also shared their experiences at ZOU as a morale booster.

Six out of my twelve interviewees said the orientation of new students at ZOU adequately prepared them for DL while another six said the orientation did not adequately prepare them (P.147). In my survey, 22% said orientation at ZOU was inadequate while 78% said it adequately prepared them to cope with DL (Figure 16). Although Chi-Square test results in Appendix G revealed that orientation was not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time, I discussed it because it is a crucial student support mechanism into DL. For instance (P.77), Lowe (2005) cites Case and Elliott (1997) who found a 20% rise in student retention at Rio Salado College due to orientation. I also based my discussion of it on phenomenological research method because surveys produce estimates (Nichols 1991) while quotations from phenomenological interviews enhance the trustworthiness of the evidence (Castles 2004; Babbie, Mouton et al. 2010). Moustakas (1994) also argues (P.105) that in phenomenological interviews, first person reports of lived reality are what make research valid and that the interviews emphasize descriptions of meaning structures of lived experience from the perspectives of the involved people (Manen 1990; Osborne 1994; Byrne 2001).

While both my interview and survey results showed that participants at ZOU benefited from orientation, the perceptions of orientation by earlier and later B.Ed. Intakes students were different. On the one hand, two male students that had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme from earlier intakes revealed a positive perception of orientation at ZOU. A school head who had previous DL experience said,

*Those who were-- responsible for orientation were quite encouraging. They encouraged us to study. They gave us some of the problems they had experienced. They highlighted --drawbacks-- which would entice us to stop studying (DT2ZV:388).*

A teacher without previous DL experience also said the orientation informed them on what was expected, “-how to write assignments, research, discuss and exposed them to the knowledge of getting information from the internet and good libraries” (DT2Z:385).

On the other hand, inadequacy of orientation seemed consistent with later B.Ed. Intakes as indicated by two female interviewees. While orientation for new students at ZOU should have taken a full day, a senior teacher who delayed but completed the B. Ed. programme said the orientation time, “- it’s not sufficient because you are oriented--for-- two hours” (DT2A:385). A head of department who delayed completion and was still on the programme confirmed inadequacies of the orientation in later intakes at ZOU by saying,

*-the orientation needs a lot of detail like-- how to write the assignment--we were told that there was a module which would explain-- how to study alone at home and we found out that when we read that module, some of the issues we could not understand (DT2P:387).*

Those comments tilted the orientation at ZOU in favour of earlier than later intakes.

There were clear indicators to better orientation in earlier B.Ed. Intakes than later intakes at ZOU. For instance, five of my six interviewees who said the orientation at ZOU was adequate were from earlier B.Ed. Intakes 1-10 and only one was from later

intakes 11-20. Among the six interviewees who said the orientation at ZOU was inadequate, only two were from earlier intakes while four were from later intakes (Appendix E). Five out of six interviewees who had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme were from the earlier intakes. There were more praises than complaints on the way orientation was conducted in earlier compared to later intakes. Those observations were confirmed by Chi-square test results (Table 13) in which earlier B.Ed. Intakes had better completion rates than later intakes.

That some participants from later B.Ed. Intakes did not get adequate orientation time and failed to understand the module intended for their orientation was counterproductive. Those aspects needed review to meet the orientation needs of learners. In literature review (P.78), a good precaution is to provide orientation which counsels students away from external attribution towards social integration (Kember 1995). Lowe (2005) cites Gibson (1996) who recommends an orientation that introduces learners to procedures for learning at a distance, time management, self-directed learning and studying strategies. Such skills enhance learners' normative congruence (Kember 1995). The earlier DL institutions introduced learners to those new skills, the more beneficial the orientation to learners.

ZOU should encourage all new learners to attend the orientation. The duration for orientation should allow the resource persons to cover all the essential aspects of the orientation exercise. While hiring premises for a long time is expensive, two hours of orientation of adult learners into DL is too short. Adults need longer and more gradual adaptation to change. Two half-day contact sessions while both students and staff are fresh could be more effective. One session could be used for administrative while the other could be used for academic orientation. A single long day might not yield good results as new students tend to get tired and lose concentration soon, and others tend to leave the venue before the end of the day.

Prasad (2001) suggests that, instead of holding a collective institutional session, balance between volume and quality in orientation could be met by holding programme-specific orientation sessions with specialist faculty and resource persons. This is in line with my literature that the transition to the hybrid learning environment is critical to how students perceive the entire experience. There is need to have a strong orientation that predicts student concerns in the future and provides reference material that students would rely on in the programme. During orientation, development of study skills should be emphasized for new learners with suitable printed materials and recorded videotapes (Manning 2001; Pennells 2001). In addition, the orientation programme should acknowledge multiple stages of learner integration (Brescia, Miller et al. 2004).

### **7.2.3 ZOU regional centres' communication with students**

Communication between students and regional centres is an important support mechanism in DL. My interviewees had various experiences with communication between students and the ZOU regional centres (P.150). Some participants enjoyed very good and supportive communication; some found that the communication depended on the mood of the person while others said that ZOU was very poor at communication. The communication challenges faced by participants depended on whether they were from rural or urban areas, whether they belonged to earlier or later B.Ed. Intakes and also on whom they were communicating with at the regional office. Those experiences revealed that adult learners in urban areas faced fewer challenges in communicating with the regional centres than rural ones as they could access telephone and/or travelled to regional centres when the need arose. Earlier B.Ed. Intakes also faced less challenges (P.169) contacting tutors than later intakes at ZOU.

In my survey, 29% of the respondents faced challenges in communicating with ZOU regional centres (Figure 29). Statistical t-test results (Table 35) gave “Sig.” at 0.015

( $p < 0.02$ ) and Levene's test at  $p < 0.02$  levels of significance which confirmed that the challenges from communication between ZOU and students were significant to respondents' B.Ed. completion time.

Organizations cannot operate well without effective communication. Communication takes various forms but it involves the transfer of information from one party to the other. In order for the transfer of information to qualify as communication, the recipient must understand the meaning of the information transferred to them. If the recipient does not understand the meaning of the information conveyed to them, communication has not taken place. In DL, and in Moore's (1990) theory of transactional distance (P.19), good communication reduces the distance and increases dialogue between the learner and the teacher and /or institution. The better the communication, the shorter the transactional distance and the better the academic integration (Kember 1995). Communication is the life source of organizations because organizations involve people. Ineffective communication can create disharmony in organisations while effective communication can lubricate and forestall potential clashes and crushes that could occur. People cannot interact with each other without communication. Its absence causes everything to grind to a halt.

Students' communication with ZOU regional centres served as a medium for both academic instruction and transmission of administrative information. I gave ZOU regional centres on Figure 1 (P.5), officers and their supportive roles. All those posts existed on the understanding that the main difference between DL and residential education is separation between the learner and the teacher (P.18). Thus, DL institutions set up study centres and regional centres in order to be 'near' students (Moore and Kearsley 1996). Most contact with teaching staff is written or electronic, rather than face-to-face (USQ 2005). Thus effective communication is essential for transmission of messages, instruction and learning interaction in DL.

Communication between students and regional centres in DL also facilitates counselling of students to break the isolation of the distance learners. In study groups (P. 169), students phoned tutors to seek clarification on difficult concepts and issues. It has been found that (P.70) increasing the levels of student-tutor contact promotes an impetus to progression on courses that increases programme completion rates (Sherry 1996; Pennells 2001). Tutors can advise students (P. 72) through telephone, letters and email (Aylward 2001; Gaskell and Simpson 2001). Communication boosts morale and confidence to retain students that are likely to drop out on the programme. If ZOU wishes to achieve its objectives (P.7) to satisfy clients and achieve the highest level of excellence and become a world class DL university (Kurasha 2005), it should improve communication through staff development and promotion of a good and client-friendly organizational culture.

#### **7.2.4 Student support services**

Student support services are an element of learner support in DL that enhances academic integration (Kember 1995) through relational support. Relational support is the affective aspect of learning where teachers encourage, motivate, and nurture students (P.69). Relational support is offered emotionally and attempts to strike a balance with the cognitive support (Lowe 2005). ZOU provided tutor counsellors (Nhundu 1997), who provided both the academic and social support of students by individualizing and mediating the DL courses (O'Rourke 2001; Lentell 2001).

Kember's model (P.74) proposes a student support services format that enhances collective affiliation and normative congruence. Student support services staff could build students' normative congruence through tutoring programmes, assisting students to reorient their conceptions of knowledge and adapting to the conventions of tertiary study while enhancing collective affiliation by assisting students with administrative problems, and counselling students on integrating study demands with work, family and social obligations (Kember 1995). ZOU had a dean for student affairs and specialist counsellors (P.6) who served learners in regional centres.

My interviewees' responses on the support they got from students support services at ZOU (P.152) revealed that the department was either ineffective or unknown to students. None of my interviewees had used the student support services units in the regional centres. For example, a female senior teacher that was still on the programme said, *"I haven't been in touch with the student's unit--s/he has not been there for us and we are not even aware of his or her existence"* (DT2C:394). Another female head of department who delayed completion and was still on the programme also said, *"Whatever it is I never consulted it, I don't even know who they are"* (DT2P:394). Those participants' responses confirmed that the regional student support services units did not communicate with students.

My survey results confirmed the ineffectiveness of the student support services department at ZOU. My respondents (Figure 28) rated support from the student support services officers the lowest, tenth position out of ten sources of student support at ZOU and only acknowledged by 30%. In literature review (P.69) DL students were often found de-motivated and inhibited from success by lack of student support services (Lowe 2005; Galusha 2006 ).

On how my participants dealt with challenges they met in their programme without contacting student support services, they confirmed what Lowe (2005) in literature review (P. 75) found that students may be reluctant to initiate contact with a specialist counsellor but may feel comfortable discussing a problem with a tutor or local liaison officer with whom they have established contact. A head of department who delayed completion of B.Ed. and was still on the programme said, *"I usually consulted the--programme coordinator"* (DT2P:394). A senior teacher who was also on the programme said, *"Whatever problems I encountered--I directed them to the programme coordinator"* (DT2C:394). These responses revealed that regional programme coordinators at ZOU did a good job as students relied on them even in

matters that were functions of the student support services department. That was reinforced in Figure 28 where regional programme coordinators were rated as giving the best institutional learner support by 78% of the respondents.

Literature review (P.75), revealed that student support and counselling services minimize involvement of other staff in that function. Existence of student counsellors is a good support mechanism for referring pastoral issues to qualified people appointed for the counselling role. Lecturers often feel that their function is teaching and administrators feel that theirs is devoid of advice to students. However, since DL students tend not to initiate contact when at risk, all faculty and administrators who have contact with students should help in students' collective affiliation to the institution through warmth and perceived competence. A few friendly words can entice students to contact a person if at some later date they need advice. While some staff voluntarily accepts the pastoral role, attitude change among staff should be enhanced by a workshop which trains staff in awareness of the apprehensions of and the problems faced by new students. Students can be encouraged to talk to staff and staff can discuss ways to alleviate concerns by students (Kember 1995).

ZOU should enforce a policy of constant communication between students and tutors. Tait and Mills (2001) in literature review (P.60) found that adult learners need continuous on-course counselling by tutors and more supportive help than students in residential institutions. ZOU should also staff develop all learner support role players on interpersonal skills and adult learner vulnerability. Staff should be taught that trust is earned. They should respond to learners' needs with passion and in good time (Netswera 2001) to be trusted. Tutors should act as spokespersons of learners to course designers and management in matters that students cannot express openly. Staff should reduce transactional distance between themselves and students through regular personal contact (Rapmund 2001; Corry and Lelliot 2001; Kenworthy 2001) .

ZOU student services officers should be both staff developed and closely supervised. They should be trained to appreciate that efficient performance of a student support services unit depends on maintaining a balance between needs of learners and limitations of the system. They should be taught to balance flexibility and maintenance of standards, individualized attention with group services, and central coordination with local autonomy (Randell 2000; Prasad 2001; Goel 2002).

ZOU student support services should improve learner support by engaging in continuous individual counselling of students in need of it. They should provide materials and hold sessions designed to develop study skills and help students to understand course materials and overcome learning difficulties. Student support services must provide facilities and services for students with special needs. ZOU student support services should provide a transparent, learner-friendly environment which entices students to seek their assistance and also develop self-confidence.

### **7.2.5 Library**

ZOU's major DL support service is provision of the library. My interviewees had various experiences with the ZOU library in DL (P.154). The first B.Ed. Intake and remote rural students did not have access to a ZOU library. Many participants said that there were insufficient books in the ZOU library while only one out of twelve interviewees said that the library was good. Some participants faced challenges because the library was either over-crowded or it would not lend books beyond overnight reading. Other participants had a challenge of travel cost and inadequate reading time due to distance from the regional centre libraries.

In my survey, Chi-Square test results in Appendix G showed that neither availability of library books nor distance from the ZOU library was significant to B.Ed.completion time. However, Figure 24 confirms interview results as only 28%

of my sample found books in the ZOU library enough while 72% said the available books were not enough. Figure 23 reveals that over 64 % of my respondents stayed more than 20 kilometres from the nearest ZOU library and others beyond 40 kilometres. Urban participants were nearer to library facilities than rural ones. That situation exposed rural students to more challenges from the library support than urban ones. These included transport cost and also shorter access and reading time. Inadequacy of books and distance from the ZOU library posed financial and study time constraints to adult students who were also employees.

In DL systems where the library had access to internet, in my literature review (P.79), students were impressed by the range of data sources like electronic journals available through links to information gateways (Buckley et al 2010). Poor management of libraries also contributed to challenges experienced in my study. While in literature review, DL students in South Africa found libraries closed at times convenient to employed students after hours, over weekends and public holidays (Selikow 1998), at ZOU, 67% of the students were unhappy with the library service at regional centres (Benza 2001) as 14313 students shared 15000 library books (Maenzanise 2001). ZOU should stock its regional centre libraries with books and also provide access to internet. It should also partner with local educational institutions to facilitate its students' access to their library facilities.

#### **7.2.6 The module**

The ZOU module is the basic instructional support mechanism to enhance the normative congruence element of academic integration in DL (Kember 1995). It is a print text prepared by experts of the course. It helps the learner to study alone. This text gives learners the basics of what is covered at each level of learning. It forms the basis upon which written assignment and examination questions are set (P.153). In principle, every learner receives a learning package that includes modules during registration at the beginning of every semester at ZOU.

My participants used the ZOU module for instructional support in B.Ed. While the ZOU module was good for a few, most of my interviewees (P.161) and survey respondents (Figure 25) concurred that they faced many challenges in using the ZOU modules. In Figure 25, 50% of my survey respondents said that module content was superficial. Twenty percent said that they had erratic supply of modules. Another 12% respondents said that the modules required editing as they had printing errors while 7% said some parts of the modules had unclear texts. For 6% of the respondents, some modules showed no link between content and questions that they got for either written assignments or examinations. For 2% respondents in each case, some respondents said the modules were outdated while others said they gave references that were not available. Table 28 gave a Chi-square test significance level of 0.002 implying that challenges from ZOU modules were very significant to learners' B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002). Six percent of the respondents in Figure 15 attributed their delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme to lack of modules at ZOU.

Results of my study revealed that students from earlier B.Ed. Intakes had better supply of modules than those of later intakes at ZOU. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed that by saying, *"Each one of us had a personal module. It is unlike today where people go almost to the end of the year without a module"* (DT3B:395) while a school head that was an SRC member expressed later intakes students' frustration with unsatisfactory supply of modules at ZOU. He said, *"This year in 2009, we have got assignments but we don't have modules. What do we do?"* (DT5CH:407). Such evidence revealed that challenges from ZOU modules negatively affected students' B.Ed. completion time.

The challenges from ZOU modules had negative implications for the module as a key teaching-learning method in DL. It was ZOU policy that every student received a package that included modules during registration at the beginning of every

semester. Therefore, there was no justification for not giving modules to students that had paid fees and registered. The modules were also supposed to be prepared by experts of each subject. Modules were intended to help the learner to study alone. The modules were the basis upon which students prepared written assignments and prepared for examinations. Hence, the challenges faced by participants from ZOU modules could only be attributed to poor management of the programme.

Literature review showed (P.88) that modules can only have the correct content, be clear and effectively instructive, up to date and meet the requirements of the syllabus when their production is done by qualified personnel (Steyn 2001; Rapmund 2001). Module content should not subject students under undue pressure. Students adapt approaches to learning to the content and the context of the learning. They make use of reproductive approaches in circumstances of: high workloads, surface assessment demands, low intrinsic interest in the course and lack of freedom in the learning environment (Kember 1995). Minimizing surface approach increases pass rates. Programmes that reorient students away from a surface approach are consistent with goals of higher education. Kember (1995) cites Sparkes (1989) who says deep learning entails grasping concepts and being able to use them creatively. For a module to provide meaningful learning, its content should focus on sequencing key concepts of the subject to ensure that students understand major issues. Materials should also be sequenced according to learner readiness. Information needs to create learning environments that let students draw on the internal resources that brought them to college. To do that, materials must create situations where students can gain knowledge and skills in critical thinking and problem solving in their disciplines (Pew 2007). Module content can only be suitable if the principles underpinning module/course design considers the notion that learning occurs in a social context through collaboration, negotiation, debate and peer review. There are certain expectations and experiences that students bring which tutors should be aware of when designing course materials (Buckley et al 2010).

Erratic supply of modules was noted in literature review (P.85) when institutions could not get the materials to new students quickly enough to suit them. Students are eager to begin their studies. Usually delay occurs between the time course materials arrive and the time students are expected to submit their first assignment. Motivation is compromised by lack of direction and knowledge (Lowe 2005). In an extreme case, at ZOU, the funding problems deteriorated in 2008 due to the economic and political challenges that Zimbabwe was experiencing (P.7) that the cost of providing DL modules was unsustainable. To reduce operational costs, the printing of modules was suspended and some courses were done without modules (Kangai and Bukaliya 2010). Sherry (1996) suggests that learning modules should be delivered on time to mesh with the school schedule and that of service providers (P.90).

Literature review (P.89) dealt with modules that had unclear texts. Sherry (1996) cites Shneiderman (1992) who cautions instructional designers to begin with an understanding of their intended users and recognize the difference between their outlook from the designer's own. She quotes Horton (1994:32) who states the golden rule for designers of instructional materials to, "communicate unto others as they would communicate unto themselves". Module materials should be interesting and easy to understand. Sherry (1996) cites Willis (1993) who gives attributes of effective DL material presentation which are: developing appropriate methods of optimizing content and pace, adapting to different student learning styles, using case studies and examples which are relevant to the target audience, being concise, and personalizing instruction. Sherry (1996) draws from Schamber (1988) that material preparation must focus on the instructional needs of the students instead of the content itself.

For modules that had errors, were outdated and showed no link between content and questions that learners got in either assignments or examinations and references that

were not available, Sherry (1996) cites Porter (1994) who states that revision based on feedback from instructors, content specialists and learners should be continuous. Modules must be updated to keep the subject matter current and relevant.

ZOU should review modules regularly to keep them up to date. ZOU should continuously improve and ensure the quality of modules by identifying and eliminating weaknesses. Experts in teaching the subjects at a distance should write the modules. Modules should include diverse concepts and experiences to encourage enjoyment of learning by students. Module content should draw from life experiences and link new knowledge to what students know for it to be easy for learners to understand. Modules should keep instructions simple and to the point (Strunk and White 2000) and new concepts should first be explained in a language that learners understand before linking them to new and more difficult ones. ZOU should make sure that paid up students always get modules at registration.

### **7.2.7 Contact tutorials**

Contact tutorials are a key teaching-learning method and support structure that enhances collective affiliation as learners communicate with the institution through them in DL. Kember (1995) cites Sewart (1981) who found that the human tutor presence is required to adapt the study package to learners and enhance normative congruence since adult learners are very heterogeneous. Real-life contact tutorials (P.92) facilitate pedagogic support through learner-content, learner-instructor and learner-learner dialogue or interactivity (Moore 1989) which promotes constructivist active learning in DL. Learner-content interaction is often extrinsically induced but during tutorials this is enabled by learner-instructor interaction and learner-learner interaction. Moore (1990) argues that physical learner-instructor interaction fulfils: organization of activities, presentation of information, and demonstration of skills. It also models attitudes and values, motivates, stimulates and maintains interest besides

applying what is learnt, evaluating progress, and providing information, support and encouragement (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983).

My interviewees gave various experiences with contact tutorials at ZOU depending on their intakes, tutor preparedness, geographical location, transport facilities and national economic hardships (P.164). All my interviewees found contact tutorials helpful. However, some participants faced challenges of some ill-prepared tutors, high travel cost to tutorial venues, tutors who did not come while others faced economic hardships. In Figure 29, my survey results revealed that contact tutorials were ranked the least challenging ZOU support mechanism acknowledged by 14% of my respondents. Parametric test results in Appendix G revealed that challenges from contact tutorials were not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time.

Students from earlier B.Ed. Intakes expressed more satisfaction with contact tutorials at ZOU than those from later intakes. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, "*We never had -- a scheduled tutorial failing or that there was no tutor*" (DT5B:409). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme also said, "*Everyone was eager to attend-- the tutors were quite good, very sympathetic--they actually helped us*" (DT5ZV:410). In contrast, a senior teacher from later intakes who was still on the programme said of tutors, "*- some are eager to see students pass but some are not. At times, you would attend a lecture where the tutors would not turn up*" (DT5C:409). In worst case scenarios, a deputy school head from later intakes said, "*You couldn't see a tutor until we write the exam*" (DT5E:411).

Students from later intakes had less contact tutorial time than those from earlier intakes. Literature review (P.94) showed that in 2008 ZOU funding was unsustainable due to the economic and political challenges in Zimbabwe ( P.7) and tutorial hours were reduced from 10 hours to 4 hours (Kangai and Bukaliya 2010)

per semester. Meanwhile, B.Ed. Honours at the University of Natal that was also a DL programme supported students with four formal tutorial sessions of six hours each, per module (Bertram 2001). ZOU should provide more tutorial hours to cover the syllabus and revision for examinations with the help of tutors.

The economic downturn could have affected some tutors' and students' attendance to tutorials due to lack of cash. Alternatively, the brain-drain due to the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe (P.7) could have led to employment of under qualified academic staff compromising the effectiveness of tutors. Literature review established (P.94) that part-time tutors were the majority of academic staff at ZOU (Izuagie 2001). Valentine (2002) quotes Caffarella et al (1992:3) who found off campus instructors to be, "a demoralized bunch, perceiving poor working conditions, isolation, personal and professional deprivation". Such tutors are usually not convinced that administration is behind DL as rewards are minimal for the good DL tutors. Valentine also quotes Sherritt (1996: 4) who found that, "Tenure and promotion usually does not recognize excellent off campus teaching". That attitude is hardly conducive to an effective learning environment for the students. Lack of administration and tutor commitment leads to a negative influence on DL (Valentine 2002). The fact that some tutors could be absent for contact tutorials for the whole semester was grossly irresponsible. It revealed lack of supervision and poor programme management. Programme coordinators should regularly supervise tutors.

Under the Zimbabwean economic meltdown, ZOU should decentralize and set up district tutorial centres for rural students to attend contact tutorials (Pringle and Daniel 2009). Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) responded to needs of disadvantaged/rural students by setting up new local study centres (Prasad 2001). Suitably qualified local tutors should be recruited to facilitate the tutorials at district centres. Where local tutors are not available, ZOU should provide tutors with transport to go and teach at district centres. ZOU should also attract and retain

qualified and experienced academic staff by providing incentives, within its means, like contact and sabbatical leave, staff development, housing and car loan schemes.

### **7.2.8 Assessment**

A key ZOU student support mechanism that promoted normative congruence between my participants' needs and the requirements of the B.Ed. programme (Kember 1995) was assessment. The assessment at ZOU comprised written assignments, the research project and examinations (P.6).

Written assignments were an instructional and formative assessment instrument that prepared learners for examinations and guided them through the B.Ed. programme (Mutch 2003). My interviewees confirmed that written assignments were a very good way of making them study. However, the challenges that some participants met (P.172) included: lack of proper induction, not having enough textbooks and the modules lacking relevant information. Some participants externally attributed (Kember 1995) their failure to meet assignment submission deadlines to pressure of work either at their schools or at home. Some participants missed assignments they had submitted while others faced delay in return of marked assignments. Some participants had challenges of: ineffective feedback from written assignments like getting discouraging comments from some lecturers, getting general comments that were not instructive and tutors that gave students a general mark. There were also participants challenged by students that copied other students' assignments.

In my survey, Figure 26 reveals that 93% of the respondents benefited while 7% did not benefit from comments made by tutors in written assignments. Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that tutors' comments in marked assignments were not significant to adults' B.Ed.completion time. However, in Figure 15, family commitments and pressure of work were among the reasons for participants' delayed

completion of the B.Ed. programme that Chi-square test results in Table 17 confirmed to be significant to B.Ed. completion time.

Written assignments help in students' formative assessment. So, ZOU should ensure that programme coordinators supervise tutors and moderate the marking of assignments so that students get helpful feedback. They should also ensure that all assignments are marked on time and returned to students without missing some.

The research project was one of the compulsory courses in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU (P.6). It was supposed to be completed in one year or two semesters. The research project was the practical application of academic integration (Kember 1995) through promotion of normative congruence between the B.Ed. programme and learner needs. Many of my interviewees said that they enjoyed and benefitted from research projects at ZOU. However, some interviewees faced challenges from supervision of research projects (P.183) including: difficulty in accessing supervisors, supervisors who lacked skills and gave inconsistent instructions, supervisors who were not committed and distance from supervisors which made travelling to see them expensive. Some participants felt that the time allocated to the research project was too short and others said outsourcing of typing was expensive and sometimes led to delayed submission of the projects. In my survey, challenges from supervision of research projects were listed among the reasons for delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme by respondents in Figure 15. In Figure 29, supervision of research projects was ranked the third most challenging ZOU sub-system by 41% of my respondents which Chi-square test results in Table 33 confirmed to be significant to adult learners' B.Ed. completion time.

Given that the research project is a compulsory course that consolidates, through application, what students learn in the B.Ed. programme, ZOU should staff develop

and also supervise tutors who supervise students' research projects to motivate learners and improve the programme completion rate.

Students at ZOU were also assessed through written examinations. Examinations are one way to motivate students to learn as well as assess if the learning outcomes were achieved (Pitts 2005; Welch and Reed 2005). While successful participants celebrated their results, others said written examinations at ZOU had challenges such as: insufficient revision time, lack of guidance in preparation for examinations, inadequate time allocated for examination questions and missing results (P. 178). In my survey, 3% of the sample said they delayed completion of the programme due to missing results in Figure 15 which Chi-square test results confirmed to be significant to B.Ed. completion time in Table 17.

In literature review (P.98), we saw that assessment is now accepted as an integral part of the teaching-learning process and not something that is added at the end of the module. Sherry (1996) found significant association between feedback interval and student success. Formative assessment on assignments should be used as a teaching tool which should be part of the programme (Geysler 2004). It should be done properly to help learners cope with DL programmes. Entwistle (1991) cites Thomas (1986) who found that the balance between deep and surface learning for a class can be altered by the assessment procedure. Setting assessment items that demand surface responses leads to adoption of surface approach while questions that demand reflective, analytical and evaluative answers lead to deep learning. Reflective learning draws from learners' experience. Tutors should use assessment items and exercises that prompt learners to seek rather than reproduce knowledge.

Assessments are the tools to help learners monitor their progress and obtain timely feedback on their activities. The fact that some tutors were not good as research supervisors and exhibited inconsistencies and ineffectiveness in the marking of

written assignments at ZOU could have been due to genuine incompetence. In literature (P.59) the ZOU Vice Chancellor, thanked government for support to reduce staff turnover which had risen to 64% in 2008 (Kurasha 2011). Since 2000, ZOU lost many senior, qualified and experienced academic staff. As a state university, ZOU was not spared from political influence which, in most post-colonial countries found senior and experienced academics leaving their countries because government interfered with academic staff appointments in institutions (Domatob 1998). For instance, in 2004 the first Vice Chancellor of ZOU left under mysterious circumstances. In 2007 a Pro-Vice Chancellor and an academic registrar unceremoniously left ZOU on the same day. That civilian registrar was replaced by a former military captain of the Zimbabwe army who got another army captain to manage the corporate services of the university. That situation entailed staff recruitment on political rather than professional basis. Due to high staff turnover, new academics required frequent staff-development (Blumhof, Ock et al. 2002) .

ZOU should provide adequate revision time during which tutors should teach students how to prepare for examinations in line with lecturer's expectations for answering examination questions (Rapmund 2001; Harris 2007). Tutors should also be supervised by programme coordinators to ensure that they mark assignments, supervise research projects and do the revision for examinations effectively. ZOU should develop new forms of assessment and evaluation that include means to insure that the student's work is original and authentic (Sherry 1996).

### **7.2.9 Student funding**

An institutional support structure that could enhance social- academic integration (Kember 1995) in DL is student funding. In literature review (P.99), while the Australian DL system publicly funded courses (Moore and Kearsley 1996 ), student numbers at ZOU declined due to financial hardships (Kurasha 2002). Actually, the Zimbabwe government reduced funding for state universities (Majoni 2005) and by

2008 funding problems led ZOU to suspend printing of modules and reduce contact tutorial hours (Kangai and Bukaliya 2010).

My interviewees' experienced challenges with the financial requirements in DL at ZOU. Due to the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe (P.7), participants' challenges included: salaries that were too low to meet family and programme needs, expensive transport cost for rural students, delayed completion of the programme due to lack of funds and single parents also struggled with multiple financial responsibilities.

In literature review (P. 69), students were inhibited from success by prohibitive start-up costs (Galusha 2006). In Figure 15 of my survey the highest number in the delayed completion category, 9% of my respondents delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme due to financial problems. That view was supported by 70% of my respondents who ranked the Zimbabwe economic downturn as their worst systemic challenge in DL at ZOU in Figure 29. In Table 17, the Chi-square test result of 0.000 level of significance confirmed that financial challenges were significant to respondents' B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002).

Adult learners' salaries were too low to meet both family and DL programme needs. Some participants said that they delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme due to failure to raise money for typing research projects, rural transport and learning materials. Some students dropped out of the programme (Woodley and Parlett 1994) due to failure to pay the tuition fees. Because of competing financial obligations, a single mother and head of department that delayed completion of the programme said, “ *-that's one of the factors that delayed me to complete my studies --my kid was at a boarding school--I ended up failing to pay for my studies*” (DT8P:439). My study also revealed that financial challenges were worse for participants from later intakes than those from earlier intakes. For example, while a male deputy head from earlier intakes said that, “*We were able to pay our fees from our salaries*

(DT8B:437), a school head from later intakes that was still on the programme said, “we had a problem--ZOU would charge amounts which were four times my salary” (DT8CH:438).

While participants used self-financing coping strategies that I discuss under my second research question ZOU, the employers and government should come to the party by assisting students. In my literature review (P.98) Sherry (1996) cites Schlosser and Anderson (1994) corroborated by the Pacific Mountain Network (1994) saying that DL enterprises are partnerships working towards a common goal. There is need for cooperation among business, government and the education sector in order to secure sufficient funding for running the DL programmes because of continuously rising costs of production. Sherry (1996) quotes Cambre (1991:269) who found that, “local productions in 1962 cost about \$165 per 15-minute program. Today, the estimate for high-quality instructional television programs is approximately \$3000 per minute”. Implementation of DL is resource-intensive. Hence enough money and time should be allocated to deliver courses.

ZOU should facilitate student funding in form of scholarships and bursaries through links with banks that give students loans at concessionary interest rates. One way for raising funds could be that ZOU embarks on income generating educational programmes to facilitate fund raising in order to sponsor its students. For example, ZOU is a state university currently without a physical campus of its own. Through the Minister of Higher Education, ZOU could be allocated a farm by government for its own campus. ZOU offers B.Sc. in Agricultural Management. That programme could be used to spearhead productive agricultural research projects that generate income. The farm could create enough space to be used in many ways by students in different programmes to carry out economically productive research projects that simultaneously generate funds and create knowledge.

Employers should sponsor students' DL programmes as they benefit from the transfer of knowledge from the learning programmes to the workplace. Government should also provide funding for students' DL programmes. It is my argument that those adult learners are involved in productive education. They work as employees, care for their families and study to improve their performance at work places in the national interest. Economically, instead of incurring opportunity costs while they are at school, they optimize the use of their skills while sharpening those skills through the educational programme they are engaged in DL. That automatically transfers knowledge from the university to the workplace. If government is unable to give funds directly to adults in DL, ZOU could lobby with government to give either tax relief or exemption to adults enrolled with it. Research into how financial assistance for adults in DL should be provided by key stakeholders is necessary.

My first research question sought the ZOU support structures that adults used to cope with DL. My results revealed that some DL support structures used by students at ZOU were significant to B.Ed. completion time while others were not. Regional centres, orientation, student support services, library and contact tutorials support students but they were not significant to B.Ed. completion time. Communication between ZOU and students, modules, assessment and student funding were significant to B.Ed. completion time and needed improvement at ZOU.

### **7.3 Strategies used by students to cope with DL at ZOU**

My second sub-question asked how B. Ed. students used their own strategies to cope with DL at ZOU. The question arose from a realization that adults had employment, family and social responsibilities that compete for time (Kember 1995) with DL at home away from their teachers. The question sought adults' lived experiences and the strategies they used to harmonize the tripartite demands of the student's social circle, the DL institution (ZOU) and employment in the Zimbabwean economy

(Figure 2) to cope with the B.Ed. programme. In other words, the question sought strategies used by adults for social and academic integration (Kember 1995) in DL.

Literature review (P.58) revealed that the DL context is the environment set by the teachers and the institution, through the course structure, curriculum content, methods of teaching and assessment. Students perceive and interpret the teaching context and adopt an approach to study that helps them to meet the demands of the teachers and the courses (Tam 1999). All my B.Ed. programme participants were employed adults who financially sponsored themselves. Apart from ZOU, adults got support from their social circles comprising: the family, employers, workmates, colleagues, relatives and friends. Literature review (P.59) established that new adult students face emotional and social circumstances that significantly impact on their learning (Merriam 2001). For instance, women in Tanzania were found lacking confidence in their ability to cope with tertiary DL (Bhalalusesa 2001).

In both my phenomenological interviews and the survey, I used context as the learning environment under which the adult learners did DL at ZOU, at their homes and in Zimbabwe (Figure 2). This included the teaching-learning system, geographical space and the time they did the DL programme. Context also included material, social and psychological support provided to learners by family, friends, colleagues, employers and the learning institution (ZOU). I conducted my study with a belief that the DL context influenced how adults cope with the B.Ed. programme. My discussion covers how adults integrated studies with other life responsibilities.

### **7.3.1 Social integration**

My participants were employed adults (P.2) traditionally excluded from university education (Tait and Mills 2001) who sought to upgrade themselves through DL because DL : enables studying in the comfort of one's home without disrupting family life, is user friendly as learners control their studies, protects learners from

opportunity costs as they learn while working, could be cheaper than campus-based learning as students learn while earning income, offers educational advancement to those with minimum qualifications, affords in-service academic and professional growth of employees, and enhances educational and social status of learners (P.121). Social integration encompasses enrolment encouragement, study encouragement and family environment. It involves adaption of the students' entry characteristics to the study programme, work, family and other environmental commitments. Students with adverse characteristics, in this domain, will have greater difficulties in integrating the demands of study into the home environment (Kember 1995).

My participants' responses on their experiences of studying through DL varied with their personal characteristics, educational backgrounds and expectations of higher education in general and DL in particular. One of my interviewees confirmed the challenge of multiple roles faced by adults studying through DL when she said, "*-it's unbearable-- I am working. I am a mother. I am also a student--assignments will be due*" (DTIC:370). A school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme testified lack of confidence as he said, "*-it was a great challenge, especially after the last academic qualification which was almost about 15 years*" (DTIBV: 369). Four out of my twelve interviewees were comfortable with DL. Three participants found DL very challenging. Another three participants found DL interesting but with some challenges. Altogether, eight interviewees found studying through DL challenging. Six of the eight participants who faced challenges with DL were female and two were male. Five of the eight participants who faced challenges in DL came from later B.Ed. Intakes while three were from earlier intakes. The fact that students from later B.Ed. Intakes at ZOU faced more challenges than those from earlier intakes is confirmed in the survey where Chi-square test results in Table 13 revealed that respondents' B.Ed. intakes were significant to B.Ed. completion time.

Survey statistical analysis results in Appendix G confirmed that my respondents' personal characteristics like gender (Figure 3), marital status (Figure 5), entry qualifications (Figure 6), work station (Figure 7), employment position (Figure 8), duration between school and DL (Figure 10) and regional centres (Figure 11) in which students enrolled were not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time while age (Figure 4), years in employment (Figure 9), intake (Figure 12) and previous DL experience (Figure 13) were significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time. I included all the above characteristics in my discussion as necessary.

The key strategy used by adults that had unimpeded completion of B.Ed. through DL was establishment of social contracts to integrate work, family commitments and study (Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001; Moore and Kearsley 1996). Students established tripartite social contracts of mutual understanding with families and employers. Central to adult learners' strategies to achieve socio-academic integration was mutual understanding within the family. That understanding was also necessary between the adult learners and those at their places of work.

A school head with previous DL experience that had unimpeded completion of the programme emphasized that he succeeded because he established a tripartite social contract among himself, his family and the employer. He urged other adult learners thus,

*--first thing-- make sure that the family understands that you are on a-- programme--to afford you support socially and educationally, --at work, the teachers--and the district education officers should understand that this man is now on a programme that requires-- their support (DT7BV:431).*

This enabled family members, workmates and the employer to support him by reducing his involvement in less important functions and facilitating him study time. Survey results (Figure 28), rated learner support from adults' colleagues (88%), followed by study groups (84%), and then by family members (80%) the top three

sources out of ten possible sources of learner support in DL at ZOU. Workmates (47%) and employers (38%) also substantially supported adult learners in DL.

A teacher from earlier intakes without previous DL experience that also had unimpeded completion of the programme used communication with the family to his advantage. He said, *"I used to work-- with my spouse and family members soliciting for their support"* (DT7Z:432). On the issue of visiting extended family members interrupting studies, a head of department in later intakes said that, *"the students need to explain to their relatives that they are students-to be understood by the extended family"* (DT7P:434).

Evidence exists in literature review that without mutual understanding within families, cases occurred where partners' studies were frustrated by marriage partners that sought revenge on adult learners for giving insufficient attention to their children bringing disquiet in homes (John 2001). Literature review (P.45) suggests that the attitudes of family, employers, workmates and social colleagues are important in determining the success of integrating study into their lives. If these attitudes are sufficiently supportive, adverse circumstances can be overcome (Kember 1995). At the beginning of the programme, the learner needs to modify existing patterns of life to allow for study. Fellow workers, family and friends can either support the adjustment process or hinder integration. For DL to be assimilated, those in the student's environment also have to make some adaptation (Kember 1995).

Support from the employer is important in reinforcing the student's goal commitment. Extrinsic motivation strengthens if the employer promises that successful completion of the course will lead to promotion. Some employers support DL students by allowing them to go into workplaces on Saturday to study. Students can find attending face-to-face tutorial sessions hard if their employers are uncooperative. Indifferent and hostile employers provide neither study time nor

assistance. Where the student's programme is related to employment, supportive senior workmates give latest information and also inform the student of relevant workshops to attend (Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001). Supportive families make changes to their lifestyle to facilitate the study process to the extent of sleeping with the light on. Children are usually an impediment to study. Supportive spouses or other family members take over child care duties to allow the DL student time for study and attend classes. An equilibrium position must be established which allows study to progress and also maintain family time and family relationships. It takes sacrifices from both sides and such sacrifices indicate a supportive family environment (Moore and Kearsley 1996; Moodley, De Lange et al. 2001).

### **7.3.2 Planning**

The other strategy that helped adults with multiple responsibilities to cope with the B.Ed. programme was planning. Six of my participants shared the view that planning was an effective strategy to cope with socio-academic integration in DL. A school head that had unimpeded completion said that, *"In fact, 50% of the success comes from planning"* (DT1ZV:381). A female senior teacher who had previous DL experience, delayed but completed the programme said that the best way to cope with multiple commitments and DL was to, *"Plan on how you are going to do your household work--your studying and how you are going to cope at your place of work"* (DT1A:380). A deputy school head from earlier intakes with previous DL experience and unimpeded completion of the programme also said that, *"I made sure I--stick to my timetable--I realised that we needed to-- scale down-- social demands"* (DT7B:431).

Using a timetable as a planning and enforcement tool was echoed by many participants as it ensured commitment to study and making provision for other activities. For instance, while a senior teacher would always, *"sleep late, in order to*

*cope with the assignments as well as to read” (DT7C:432), a head of department would, “study early in the morning” (DT7R:433). A school head who had unimpeded completion of the programme also stressed commitment to the use of the timetable when he said, “If you are a head-- a teacher--finish up with your work-- then concentrate on your studies” (DT7ZV:436). There were also others from multi-shift schools who said, “-when I am off session at school, I concentrate --on my studies” (DT7P:436).*

In literature review (P.63), Tough suggests that the self-drive in adult DL students to set own deadlines, get the proper resources and find the time to learn, increase motivation to learn (Baugmarter 2003). Valentine (2002) cites Threkeld and Brzoska (1994) saying that success comes with ability to tolerate ambiguity, to be autonomous and flexible. She also cites Hardy and Boaz (1997) who found that, compared to face-to-face learning environments, DL requires students to be more focused, better time managers and to be able to work independently and in groups.

The most effective tool in planning studies was using a study timetable and committing oneself to it. This ensured that respondents managed their time properly. It instilled self-discipline in adult learners. As a result they allocated family, work and studying the appropriate time so that none of them suffered. In other words, once the study timetable started operating, they made a solemn promise to stick to the times as planned. They entered into a personal contract on the use of time. This was made possible by getting one’s priorities right, respecting the time allocated for social activities and making the timetable known and acceptable by family and friends (Mapfumo 1995).

Adults have inescapable multiple roles that compete with study for time. It is advisable that those who want to cope with DL programmes should focus on self-organisation first. They should plan how to integrate their work, family and student

roles (Kazmer 2000) without compromising any of them. Adults doing DL should create an enabling environment in which demands of study and work are communicated to families. They should also commit themselves to good time management through use of a mutually agreed study timetables with their families.

### **7.3.3 Strategies for coping with lack of self-confidence in DL**

In literature review (P. 59) we saw that new adult students face emotional and social circumstances that significantly impact on their learning (Merriam 2001). Women in Tanzania were found lacking confidence in their ability to cope with tertiary DL (Bhalalusesa 2001). Hence, adults need continuous counselling and more supportive help than students in residential institutions (Tait and Mills 2001) to socially and academically integrate (Kember 1995).

My participants' responses on the strategies they used to cope with their fears in DL revealed that they benefited from: assurance of institutional support during the orientation, learner-learner support in study groups, tutor support and motivation from tutor feedback on marked assignments and projects.

A male school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme advocated for constant assurance of learner support by the institution during orientation as he said,

*-there is need during orientation for an assurance that even if you seem not to be understanding but with time you are likely to cope--it will plant a lot of confidence in students(DTIBV:372).*

Such assurance would be a proactive psycho-therapy to encourage the adult learners to venture into their studies knowing that they had someone to fall back on should they blunder.

Study groups were considered motivational as they enabled students to share their academic information, anxiety and happy moments and also helped them to develop

self-confidence. A school head in later intakes corroborated the importance of study groups in learner motivation. For instance, one person understands information which someone fails and when they discuss, it becomes very helpful. He said that is, " *important to us as students because there is tendency to encourage each other*" (DT1CH:372). Study groups are a morale booster among adults. Not only do they share scarce learning resources, they also encourage those who would otherwise drop out due to disenchantment. The relationship that grows among colleagues as a result of sharing everything to do with studies makes group members to learn from one another and in turn blend their vision. The shared vision motivates all the members of the group to work hard towards success.

Constant communication between tutors and adult learners helped study groups to ensure that they were always doing things correctly. Students also assumed their andragogical and constructivist responsibility of their learning. This was viewed as enabling groups to be more productively engaged by a female deputy head from earlier intakes that said, " *at times we had to face a problem of what is really wanted and no one could explain*" (DTIS:372). A male school head from earlier intakes also indicated that feedback from tutors boosted learners' confidence when he said, " *it was after the assignment had been marked, - when, one would say, ah, I have it*" (DT1BV:372). This adult learner would have been in a non-believer's mindset until his work was approved by the tutor. This emphasizes the lack of self-confidence that prevails in adults who never had opportunity to go to university education immediately after high school and often for reasons other than intellectual incapacity. The strategy suggested by these participants reinforces the point made by Tait and Mills (2001) that adult learners need continuous on-course counselling and supportive help by tutors.

Adult learners could have deep-seated apprehensions about their capacity to do the B.Ed. programme through DL in line with Bhalalusesa (2001) who found women in

Tanzania lacking confidence in their ability to cope with tertiary DL. Adult learners' fear of the unknown in university education was genuine and justified. Some students, 74% of the survey (Figure 13) and six of my interviewees (Appendix E) lacked confidence to do DL because they had no previous DL experience. Although it was a case of 50% against 50% among interviewees, in Table 14 of my survey, comparison between completion rates of adult learners that had and those that did not have previous DL experience was in favour of those that had previous DL experience. This was confirmed in Table 15 where a Chi-square test showed that previous DL experience had a significance level of 0.048 ( $p < 0.05$ ) to B.Ed. completion time. Hence results corroborated Galusha (2006) in literature review, who found that students with prior experience were more likely to succeed in DL programmes than those with conventional experience only.

Although Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that the duration between serious study and DL was not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time, the fact that 26% of the survey had more than 10 years after serious study (Figure 10) contributed to students' lack of confidence. A case in point was a school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme who exhibited lack of confidence as he said, "*it was a great challenge, especially after the last academic qualification which was almost about 15 years*" (DTIBV: 369). The fact that 80% of my survey were above 40 years of age (Figure 4) suggested that most of them started school during the colonial era. Besides that, 66% of my survey (Figure 6) and ten out of twelve of my interviewees (Appendix E) were primary school trained teachers.

Colonial education in Zimbabwe trained primary teachers after Grade 7/ Standard 6 and Form 2 only (Mutumbuka 1983). There was neither provision nor prospect of such teachers doing further studies let alone university education. They were regarded as and made to believe that they were unsuitable to do university education. That mystical label stuck in their minds and created a basis for fear of university

education in line with Bhalalusesa's (2001) findings on women in Tanzania lacking confidence to cope with tertiary DL.

The fact that those adults had not gone straight to university from high school contributed to their lack of confidence. In colonial Zimbabwe's bottleneck discriminatory education system some high school pass grades were used to attribute personal incapacity on students who were not recruited into higher education studies. Hence, people who did not get places in universities were made to believe that they were incapable of doing university education. This instilled fear of university education in most of them. This is in line with Merriam (2001), in my literature review (P.59), who says that adult students face emotional and social circumstances that significantly impact on their learning. Such mindsets required support from orientation, tutors and other learners through consultation and in study groups to emancipate them, demystify university education and instil confidence in them to cope with DL.

Adults' capacity to cope with DL also varied with age (Figure 4). In Table 3, age was confirmed to be significant to B.Ed. completion time. Significance of age on adults' DL programme completion rate was justifiable. In Table 2 results revealed that the respondents in the 41-50 years age group performed better than those in the 31-40 years age group. Those in the 51+ age group had the best performance of them all. These results corroborated the qualitative results from interviews in Appendix E where out of the six interviewees that had unimpeded completion of the programme, three were over 50 years of age, two were 41-50 years and one was below 40 years. In Table 3, Chi-square test results revealed that age had a significance level of 0.02 confirming that age was significant to B.Ed. completion time. This is in line with literature that students over 50 years have higher course completion rates than that of younger age groups of DL students (Galusha 2006). They usually have less life preoccupations and could be more focused on their programme (Jarvis 1995) than

younger ones who study under pressure of domestic chores, child rearing, employment and study.

ZOU should promote new students' quick social integration with the DL institution and programmes by promptly allaying their fears through: assurance of constant institutional support at orientation, learner-learner support in study groups, tutor support and motivation from tutor feedback on marked assignments and projects.

#### **7.3.4 Strategies for coping with studying in isolation**

In literature (P.60) we saw that DL students often enter unfamiliar learning environments which they should adapt to in order to succeed. Students learn without classrooms and with limited face-to-face contact with teachers and peers. Computer and audio-conferencing permit class discussions without classes meeting. Phone calls and e-mail replace visits to lecturers' offices. This creates a problem of isolation from the cognitive and affective domains provided by human contact (Galusha 2006). This psychological gap introduced by the separation of learners from educators accounts for challenges faced by most of the adult learners in DL.

In order to cope with the challenges of studying in isolation in DL, my participants used the following strategies: planning, self-discipline, commitment and consultation with colleagues and tutors.

Six of my interviewees viewed planning as a key factor for success in DL. A school head from earlier intakes with previous DL experience and unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme emphasized the importance of planning as instrumental to success in DL when he said that,

*50% of the success comes from planning because--some people would like to wake up very early. Some people read up till late-- it depends on what suits you. But, planning is very, very, very important (DTIZV:381).*

A deputy school head with previous DL experience that also had unimpeded completion of the programme survived because he committed himself to a personal study time table to cope with studying in isolation. He said, *“I was able to read from 10.30 pm every day to about 12.00 o’clock” (DT1B:431)*. A female head of department from later intakes that had temporarily withdrawn from the B. Ed. programme confirmed the negative consequences of lack of planning in DL. She attributed her delayed completion of the programme to the fact that, *“I lacked planning” (DT1P:380)*.

Although statistical results in Appendix G revealed that it was not significant to B.Ed. completion time, Figure 30 shows that the third most difficult aspect in the B.Ed. programme by DL to 45% of my respondents was studying in isolation. Hence, in my survey (Figure 27), 15% engaged in serious quiet study and 9% of my respondents used a study timetable to cope with their preparation for examinations in DL. In Figure 31, good time management was also helpful to 3 % of the respondents in coping with DL. Emphasis in this strategy was in line with Kazmer’s (2000) suggestion in literature review that prioritization and commitment to the implementation of a study timetable helps adult learners to cope with DL.

In addition to planning, there is need for self discipline on the part of the learner to create time to concentrate on the DL programme. There is need for good time management. Adult learners need to prioritise their activities. They also need to reduce commitments that interfere with their concentration on studies. A school head that had unimpeded completion of B.Ed. said that, *“If one drinks and does not put effort into stopping you won’t cope with distance studies” (DT1ZV:385)*. In literature review (P.76), stress on DL students’ self-organization is made by Lowe (2005) who cites Gibson (1997) arguing that learners who are socialized to be passive recipients of information, need orientation for: time and stress management skills, self-

direction, responsibility for learning, cognitive and metacognitive strategies for which they are not prepared.

Five of my interviewees concurred that commitment is necessary for adult learners to cope with DL. A school head who had unimpeded completion of the B.Ed. programme boasted that, *“I am never the same. The programme is good. But, it needs one to be --committed”* (DTIBV: 380). A deputy head that also had unimpeded completion of the programme emphasized that learners should have, *“-the desire to do it and -- to give time to the learning part of it”* (DTIB:380). For the female head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme, her experience was illustrative of the need for commitment in coping with DL as she said, *“I have failed to complete my studies at the intended time because--I lacked commitment”* (DTIP:380). Emphasis on this strategy was in line with Jarvis (1995) who argues that adults often succeed in DL because they have goal-focused commitment in their studies. In literature review (P.68), Lowe (2005) cites Tallman (1994) and Gibson (1996), who concur that the level of commitment improves academic integration and student persistence in DL.

When learners faced challenges studying in isolation they also consulted colleagues and tutors. Students' performance in DL can be improved by academic integration (Kember 1995). In literature review (P.68), Lowe (2005) cites Tallman (1994) and Gibson (1996), who found that early faculty contact, academic developmental strategies like self-confidence and self-perception, and affective support for emotional encouragement and motivation to students are significant to student persistence in DL. According to one school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of B.Ed., when confronted by difficulty while studying in isolation, *“--initially you would look at colleagues --you would-- phone the tutors and -- other people who have-- experience in distance education to assist you”* (DTIB:384). This also confirms the importance of study groups (Bertram 2001). A

female deputy head from later intakes that delayed completion of the programme underscored the importance of study groups while studying in isolation as she said “- *it was hard but we could make groups*”(DTIE:383).

The fact that participants used self-discipline, planning, commitment and effective time management to cope with DL was an admission that there are challenges in it. Hence coping with DL requires self-control, self-direction (Merriam 2001) and determination. Learning in isolation requires the learner to be organized and resolute. It means sacrificing (Kember, Ying et al 2005) some of the usual pleasures and replacing them with serious study. The participants’ descriptions of suggested strategies for coping with learning in isolation urge adult learners in DL to take full responsibility of their learning in line with Rowntree (1992) who states that coping with DL bestows the responsibility to initiate and organize the place, time, amount and manner of study on the learner while meeting the requirements of the learning programme. The participants’ descriptions of strategies they used to cope with the DL context also emphasize and uphold the idea of learner autonomy and independence (Rowntree 1992; Merriam 2001; Aylward 2001).

### **7.3.5 Study groups**

A mainstay strategy for academic integration in the DL context is the use of study groups (Kember 1995). Study groups are a way of enhancing collective affiliation. In literature review (P.95), group membership benefits students from: group entropy, shared goals, social and psychological support. Group membership encourages regular attendance and creates a sense of being part of a learning community where colleagues can be contacted outside class time (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983). Study groups provide for communal constructivism (Holmes and Gardner, 2006) whereby learners become active parts of a learning community. As a result, study groups were popular among both my interviewees and in the survey. They were one of the major strategies that were used by adults to cope with DL.

While Chi-square results in Appendix G revealed that study groups were not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time, my survey results (Figure 28), rated learner support from adults' colleagues (88%) and study groups (84%) making them the top two sources out of ten possible sources of learner support in DL at ZOU. Most (56%) of the respondents also used study groups to prepare for examinations (Figure 27). In corroboration to the above, eleven out of my twelve interviewees used study groups during their B.Ed. through DL at ZOU.

Study groups were voluntary and motivating. They created a suitable environment for students to share scarce resources, academic information, problems and happiness thereby developing mutual trust and self-confidence among group members. A school head that was still on the programme confirmed this view by saying, *"That is important to us as students because there is tendency to encourage each other"* (DTICH:372). Actually study groups increased student productivity, benchmarking of attainment and motivation (Bertram 2001; Cory and Lelliot 2001)). Sharing ideas in discussions improved learners' understanding. In literature review (P.96) discussion groups are places where learners draw on colleagues' experiences to develop and learn new skills. They demonstrate broad ways in which knowledge can be interpreted and be seen beyond the academic dimension. In group discussions, students benefit others in reflecting upon themselves as learners adapting to a new academic environment. This is influenced by open-ended discussion topics set by tutors on the course after seminars, which encourage students to focus on their experiences and apply them to theoretical principles (Buckley et al 2010).

Studying in isolation became easier when one was aware that there were other people that felt the same strain but continued to work towards a set goal. In my literature, at OUHK feelings of isolation were found to be one of the causes of the high dropout rate (Aylward 2001). A female deputy school head substantiated the importance of

study groups in controlling dropouts from the programme as she said studying in isolation “-was hard, but we could make groups” (DTIE:383). The feeling of being among others removed the shyness and fear of failure and being despised. It became even more empowering if group members allocated one another topics to prepare and present for discussion during the meetings. Such learner-learner support gave hope to those that would otherwise drop out due to lack of confidence. Groups were very important as they encouraged those who might not get support at home. They fostered collaborative learning in which learners took responsibility for their own learning. Such interactivity benefited learners with both academic and moral support (Bertram 2001).

In literature review (P.97), deep learning is associated with peer group discussions (Entwistle 1991). Students who work in cooperative study groups are inclined to deep learning, to asking challenging questions, and to performing quantitatively and qualitatively better than those who study alone. Cooperative learning is the utilization of learner groups in order to enable students to maximize their own learning and that of others (Bitzer 2004).

Learner-learner interactivity increased students' interest. It improved cognitive processes and developed group learning skills. It enabled better understanding of different perspectives. It enabled learners to compare their progress with their counterparts as well as with set standards. It increased opportunities for reflection and a deeper engagement with the topic through interaction with other learners. Group members brought different skills. Some found facts while others analyzed them. Groups worked on self-made deadlines that kept learners on schedule. Personal friendship developed among members as a result of group-work. A major advantage in groups was that the student no longer felt alone, but became part of a community of students that also had problems and fears (Kincross and Morgan 2001; Zerke and Leach 2005).

In study groups, learners shifted from an external to an internal locus of control. They got intrinsically motivated as they felt in control of what they learned. That stimulated them to unlock and liberate their inquisitiveness. Consequently, they got motivated by their connectedness to one another in the group (Rapmund 2001). The constructivist relationship that grew among colleagues as a result of cooperating and sharing everything to do with studies made group members learn from one another and developed a shared-vision (Tam 1999; Aylward 2001). That motivated members of the group to aim and work hard in competition towards success.

Study group participants also communicated with tutors to ensure that they were always doing things correctly. This enabled groups to engage more productively. A female senior teacher confirmed the need for constant communication with tutors in study groups as she said that, *“We discuss in groups and then we contact them (tutors) to clarify other issues” (DT5C:412)*.

Although the study group sometimes had a weakness of active members carrying along less committed and non-productive members (Spur and Mocker 1984; Sherry 1996), it helped to empower second chance learners with self-confidence (Thompson 2000). The study group promoted andragogical engagement in productive learning among members (Finlay and Aulkner 2005; Thomson and Ingis 1993).

While orientation and study groups were effective ways of adapting new learners into the DL context, groups should be formed on the basis of mutual understanding. All the group members should commit themselves to work hard to achieve success. Group members should avoid free riders or non-productive members (Rust 2002).

Discussion on DL context covered the participants' perspectives on B.Ed. programme experiences and the strategies they used for coping with lack of self-

confidence in doing university education as adult/second chance learners, the impact of studying in isolation and the use of study groups to enhance academic integration. This theme included participants' socio-academic integration into DL as adults require family approval to enrol and prevent potential conflict that often arises when students isolate themselves while studying and when they incur financial expenditure towards the programme.

### **7.3.6 Strategies for coping with communication in DL.**

In my theoretical framework (P.16), the hallmarks of DL are the separation of teacher and learner in space and/or time (Perraton 1988), the control of learning by the student rather than the distant instructor (Jonassen 1992), and communication between the student and the teacher that is mediated by print or some form of technology (Keegan 1986). Farrell (2003) stresses that teaching at a distance is done with a variety of 'mediating processes' used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment. My participants indicated that they experienced communication challenges in DL at ZOU (P. 262).

Considering the communication challenges between ZOU and its students, the strategies my interviewees used to cope with DL included: writing letters, using telephone from the nearest township or police station and /or travelling to the regional centres. In my survey 67% of the sample had access to telephone while 33% did not have access to telephone at home (Figure 20). Figure 21 revealed that among the respondents that had no access to telephone at home: 24% visited the regional centres, 4 % wrote letters to regional programme coordinators, 2% consulted colleagues and 1% each telephoned at the nearest township or at their work places. Other respondents just ignored meeting assignment deadlines. While respondents used these strategies, Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that alternative communication strategies to telephone were not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time. However, statistical t-test results (Table 35) gave "Sig." at 0.015 ( $p < 0.02$ ) and Levene's test at  $p < 0.02$  levels of significance which confirmed

that communication between ZOU and students was significant to respondents' B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al. 2002) .

Some rural students like the female head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, "*There was no telephone-- we communicated through letters*" (DT2R:392). A male teacher in a similar situation said, "*I used telephones from the police station*" (DT2Z:392).

In literature review (P. 70), higher levels of contact between students and the college are associated with student success. Significant relationship was found between feedback interval and success. Increasing the levels of student-tutor contact increases programme completion rates (Kember 1995). Sherry (1996) argues that while faculty blame the high dropout rate among post-secondary students on poor time management and procrastination, in a study of the effectiveness of university-level courses in Alaska, Sponder (1990) found that the university support network, miscommunication between students and teachers, and lack of course relevance to students also have negative repercussions. Kember's model says that student progress is enhanced by tutor-student contact as it helps in collective affiliation while advice helps students in social and academic integration. ZOU should promote effective communication with its students in order to improve DL programme completion rates.

### **7.3.7 Strategies for coping with shortage of learning materials**

Some of my participants faced inadequate supply of modules and library books (P.156) which led them to devise strategies for coping with DL at ZOU. In Figure 24 only 28% of the survey said the library had enough books while 72% said the books were not enough. While enough library books would enhance adults' coping with DL, Chi-Square test results in Appendix G showed that availability of library books at ZOU was not significant to B.Ed.completion time. Figure 25 also revealed that

50% of the survey said that the content in the modules at ZOU was superficial while 20% said that there was erratic supply of modules at ZOU. In Table 28, Chi-square test result (0.002) confirmed a strong significance of challenges from ZOU modules on adult learner s' B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002).

Strategies used by my interviewees to cope with challenges they faced in availability of learning materials were: buying own books, borrowing books or texts from friends who had gone through the programme, using other universities and local authority libraries, sourcing information from internet, borrowing books on Friday and returning them to the library on Saturday, and photocopying chapters from books and articles from journals.

In order to cope with inadequate learning materials in the DL programme, some respondents like a rural female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme had to, "*buy some textbooks*" (DT3V:397). Five participants including a female deputy school head from earlier intakes that had delayed completion of the programme borrowed books, "*-from friends*" (DT3S:397). Four of the interviewees like the female head of department from later intakes that was still on the programme relied on materials borrowed from, "*-other students who have already completed the programme*" (DT3C:396). The other learners used, "*-books from other universities*" (DT3A:394) and also, "*-photocopying books*" (DT3BV:284) to cope with DL. Participants like the female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme, "*-would get some information from the internet*" (DT3V:397). In regional centres where library books were too few for the enrolled students, students could only borrow books and return them to the library overnight. A female head of department from earlier intakes said, "*I would just borrow on Friday and return the book on Saturday*" (DT3R:401).

Participants from earlier intakes had easier access to library books than those from later intakes. ZOU still had inter-library linkages with other institutions. For instance, a deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that, during their time in the programme, *“Once you were a member of ZOU, you would use any library free of charge like; Parliament, Seke Teachers College and the University Library” (DT3B:398).*

While students’ self-help efforts are appreciated, ZOU should adequately stock its regional centre libraries with books, offer students’ access to internet, and partner with local educational institutions to facilitate students’ access to library facilities.

Apart from administrative challenges, my participants faced academic challenges with the ZOU teaching methods like the module and contact tutorials that necessitated crafting of personal coping strategies. The following section deals with students’ coping strategies in those areas.

### **7.3.8 Strategies for coping with the challenges in ZOU modules**

Figure 25 revealed that 50% of the survey said that the content in the modules at ZOU was superficial, 20% said that there was erratic supply of modules, 12% said that the modules had printing errors, 7% said parts of the modules had unclear texts, 6% said some modules showed no link between the content and questions that they got in either written assignments or examinations while for 2% of the respondents in each case, some of the modules were outdated while other modules gave references that were not available. Hence, Table 28 confirmed, through a Chi-square test result (0.002), that there was a very strong significance of challenges from ZOU modules on adult learners’ B.Ed. completion time (Miller, Acton et al 2002).

My participants used the following strategies to cope with the challenges from ZOU modules:

- Some students bought their own textbooks to supplement modules,

- Some got information from the internet and researched from the library,
- Some students photocopied parts of library books and journals, and
- Others borrowed books from friends.

ZOU needs to ensure that modules are written by experts and also regularly reviewed to keep up to date and standard. The modules should also be supplied in time and adequate amounts for the enrolled students.

### **7.3.9 Strategies for coping with challenges in contact tutorials**

In Figure 29 of my survey results, the least challenging ZOU sub-system according to 14% of my respondents was conduct of face-to face tutorials. In addition to that, significance test results in Appendix G revealed that challenges from the conduct of tutorials were not significant to adults' B.Ed. completion time. However, when I asked interviewees for the strategies they used to cope with the challenges they faced in contact tutorial sessions. They gave strategies like:

- Hiring private tutors due to little contact time that they had with tutors,
- Asking tutors to give them questions to work on in preparation for subsequent tutorial sessions, and
- They complained to management about ineffective tutors.

Seven of my twelve interviewees hired private tutors to make up for the inadequate contact tutorial time. At the time of this study ZOU officially provided 6 hours per semester per course contact time between students and tutors (Chimedza Undated ). A female senior teacher from later intakes who was still on the programme said, “*we contacted -- private tutors-- so that we-- understand the subject better because of the of little contact time that we have with tutors*” (DT3C:396). Other students benefited from questions for pre-preparation for subsequent tutorials. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*Students should be given questions to go and work on-- when you meet the next weekend, students are going to participate by presenting*” (DT5BV:412).

When students found ineffective tutors during contact sessions and ‘blew the whistle’ to the programme management, they usually got management’s cooperation. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed that as he said, “-*once we complained we got another tutor who was able--to take us from the ordinary life level to the technical concepts wanted*” (DT5B:412).

While students’ coping strategies are commendable, ZOU should ensure that tutorial sessions are given adequate time and supervised so that students derive the value for their money and also improve programme completion rates in DL.

An academic aspect that posed challenges to DL students was assessment. The next section deals with strategies used by adults to cope with challenges they faced in written assignments, supervision of research projects and examinations at ZOU.

### **7.3.10 Strategies for coping with written assignments**

The challenges faced by some of my participants in written assignments (P.276) included: lack of proper induction, lack of textbooks and relevant information in modules. Some participants externally attributed (Kember 1995) their failure to meet assignment submission deadlines to pressure of work either at their schools or at home. Some faced missing assignments, delay in return of marked assignments and ineffective feedback from comments on assignments. Some participants had lecturers who gave discouraging comments that were either general or not instructive and others that gave students a general mark. In my survey, Figure 26 revealed that 93% of the respondents benefited while 7% did not benefit from comments made by tutors in written assignments. While, Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that tutors’ comments in marked assignments were not significant to adults’ B.Ed.completion time, family commitments and pressure of work (Figure 15) were among the reasons for participants’ delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme and

Chi-square test results in Table 17 confirmed that those factors were significant to B.Ed. completion time.

Hence participants used the following strategies to cope with challenges in written assignments in DL:

- Working in groups,
- Hiring private tutors,
- Sourcing textbooks from friends and former students of the programme,
- Reading library literature and books from other universities and colleges, and
- Some students copied other students' assignments.

Participants relied on study groups to help one another to develop answers for written assignments. A senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme said that, *“You get together as a group, you map out the way forward as far as the assignment is concerned”* (DT6C:418). When the assignment question was difficult, participants hired private tutors who guided them in preparing answers for the assignments. A senior teacher that was still on the programme said, *“-we hire and pay private tutors—so that we pass – assignments”* (DT3C:396).

Another strategy that helped participants to cope with written assignments was reading literature borrowed from previous students of the B.Ed. programme. They also read library books from other educational institutions. A head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme said, *“I could source-- texts from other students who had gone through the programme* (DT3P:397). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme also said, *“I used --modules and information from UNISA”* (DT3ZV:398).

In addition to other sources, participants in management positions benefited from what they experienced at their work places. Students who were school heads, deputy heads and education officers relied a lot on their practical knowledge in preparation

of answers in written assignments. A rural school head that had completed the programme confirmed that, “-because the programme was educational, we had to use much of what we experienced as school heads” (DT3BV:396). Chi-square test results in Table 9 confirmed that respondents’ years in employment were significant to their B.Ed. completion time.

ZOU should ensure that programme coordinators supervise and moderate marking of assignments so that they are marked on time, tutors give motivating instructive comments and also help learners improve their performance and understanding of course material through comments on assignments.

#### **7.3.11 Strategies for coping with the research projects in DL**

The research project was a compulsory course meant to be completed during the last two semesters of the B.Ed. programme at ZOU (P.6). It was used for the practical application of academic integration (Kember 1995) through promotion of normative congruence between the B.Ed. programme and learner needs.

While many of my interviewees said that they enjoyed and benefited from research projects at ZOU, some of my participants faced challenges from supervision of research projects (P.272) including: difficulty in accessing their supervisors, some supervisors lacked skills and gave inconsistent instructions, some supervisors lacked commitment, distance made travelling to see supervisors expensive, some felt that time allocated to the research project was too short and others said that outsourcing of typing was expensive and could lead to delayed submission of research projects. In my survey (Figure 15), challenges from supervision of research projects were among the reasons for delayed completion of the B.Ed. programme given by respondents. In Figure 29, supervision of research projects was ranked the third most challenging ZOU sub-system by 41% of my respondents. Chi-square test

results in Table 33 confirmed that challenges from supervision of projects at ZOU were significant to adult learners' B.Ed. completion time.

Students used various strategies to cope with the challenges from supervision of research projects at ZOU. Establishment of supervisor-supervisee rapport was at the top of the list. One senior teacher confirmed this point as she said, "*relationship between the student and the lecturer is important--lecturers need to understand the problems that students face*" (DT6P:429). Literature review (P.98) revealed that students prefer supervisors' approachability, availability and interpersonal skills more than their academic skills (Gaskell and Simpson 2001).

Planning in advance also helps to avoid rushing against time or delaying submission. Starting to prepare for the project early and commitment helped a senior teacher from later intakes that delayed but completed the programme. She said, "*find the topics well before you finish so that you work on the project, while doing other program areas-- when you complete you complete everything*" (DT6A:425). Planning and determination are central in coping with research projects because time, travel expenses and effectiveness of supervision also depend on the student's planning, budgeting and preparedness to learn.

In addition to students' personal input in coping with research projects at ZOU, new supervisors should be trained while old ones are regularly staff-developed (Johnson 1998 ) on project supervision. Research supervisors need training in planning and handling one to one supervision sessions. They must learn to assist learners in time management skills. They must also learn to motivate and inspire learners not to give up hope in their research (Netswera 2001; Blumhof, Ock et al. 2002).

Staff development should also train supervisors in detecting learner expectations, student learning skills, teaching and empathetic skills and inculcate supervisor

approachability. Supervisors should also be trained in ability to understand and respond to students' feelings of hesitancy, uncertainty and inadequacy (Gaskell and Simpson 2001). Supervisors should be regularly supervised for quality assurance. In DL quality means giving students a good experience by supporting them, not necessarily by adding more personal supervision contact time, but by always putting the student at the centre of one's thinking (Kanwar and Daniel 2009).

It cuts cost and time if a supervisee is allocated to a supervisor that stays within reasonable distance provided the supervisor knows the area of study. Students should be trained in use of computers so that they can type and search information for themselves. That reduces outsourcing of typing and the challenges associated with it. It also makes students' access to information easy. This is in line with the view that ICT makes it possible to make effective pedagogic interventions for providing unlimited flexible learning options to different constituencies of learners (Kanwar and Daniel 2009). In that vein, students should be taught ownership of research projects so that they do the research themselves while supervisors assist them.

#### **7.3.12 Strategies for coping with written examinations**

Written examinations were one way to motivate students to learn as well as assess if academic congruence (Kember 1995) and/or learning outcomes were achieved (Pitts 2005; Welch and Reed 2005). While successful participants in my study celebrated their results, others complained about challenges in written examinations at ZOU. It was found in my literature review that ZOU faced examinations management challenges since it was unable to publish examination results before registration every semester (Izuagie 2001). The challenges faced by my participants were: insufficient revision time, lack of guidance in preparation for examinations, inadequate time allocated for examination questions, and missing results (P. 277). In my survey (Figure 15), 3% of the sample attributed their delayed completion of the programme to missing results. Chi-square test results in Table 17 confirmed that missing results were significant to B.Ed. completion time.

To cope with challenges in preparation for examinations in DL, Figure 27 shows that 56% of the respondents used study groups, 16% hired private tutors, 15% engaged in serious quiet study, and 11% each studied past examination papers and carried out library research while 9% used a study timetable. The rest, 6% in each case, used applying for a swat leave from work, regular attendance of tutorials, making study notes and thorough preparation of assignments.

In corroboration with the survey results, my interviewees said they used the following strategies (P.180) to cope with challenges they faced in written examinations in DL at ZOU:

- Seeking official and private tutors' help during revision for examinations,
- Revising in groups,
- Studying past examination papers,
- Resourcefulness in accessing information, and
- Appealing against missing results.

Eight of my participants relied on seeking help from both ZOU's part-time tutors and privately hired tutors to cope with examinations in DL. Some students sought help from former students of the B.Ed. programme. A school head from later intakes that was still on the programme appreciated the support that he got from the tutors at ZOU in preparing for examinations. He said, "*in fact two ladies, they went so far as to teach us how to write and prepare for examination*" (DT6CH:424). A senior teacher from later intakes hired private tutors to revise for examinations. She said, "*at times, we contact other private tutors, who we hire and pay so that we actually pass the exams*" (DT3C:396). Private tutors included former ZOU students and those from other universities that taught at the request of learners' study groups.

In addition to seeking help from tutors, students also used their resourcefulness. They studied in groups answering self-prepared questions from their course

materials. They also worked out answers to past examination papers and questions prepared for them by their tutors. A head of department from later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme said that, “*-towards examination we could source-- past exam papers to get information to revise*” (DT3P:397). A school head from later intakes that were still on the programme advocated for students’ resourceful to cope with DL. He said, “*-we are saying the student has to be resourceful--that’s the skill that should be promoted by any university* (DT6CH:424). A senior teacher that was still on the programme also said, “*We summarised topics-- answer questions-- in the module and the group -- work on the questions that we will have been given by the tutors*”(DT6C:424).

Another strategy used by adult learners to cope with preparation for written examinations was serious studying using timetables to revise. For instance, while a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*-one has got to go to the exam when properly prepared*” (DT6ZV:423), a head of department from later intakes said that, “*towards examinations, I would wake up around 2.00 am or 3.00 am to study*” (DT6P:425).

In the event of failure during first attempt on an examination, participants found recourse in supplementary examinations. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*That you would-- write a supplementary exam -- many of us were able to cope*” (DT6B:412). Participants also indicated that they appealed to the academic registry when they were not satisfied with their results on written examinations. A head of department from later intakes that delayed completion and was still on the programme said, “*-if I had just kept quiet without following the result of Educational Policy Making Process--it means I could have re-written it with a pass on it*” (DT6P:425).

While some participants applied for swat leave, in worst case scenarios other participants absented themselves from work under flimsy pretexts to prepare for examinations. *“At times you-- absent yourself from work when the examinations are around--so that you cover-- topics” (DT7C:432).*

While students’ efforts are appreciated, ZOU should provide adequate revision time during which tutors teach students how to prepare for examinations in line with lecturer’s expectations for answering examination questions (Rapmund 2001; Harris 2007). The academic assessment at ZOU should ensure that tutors are supervised by programme coordinators in marking assignments, supervising research projects and doing revision for examinations effectively. ZOU should develop new forms of assessment and evaluation that include means to ensure that students’ work is original and authentic (Sherry 1996).

### **7.3. 13 Strategies for coping with financial challenges**

Many of my interviewees faced challenges with the financial requirements of the DL programme (P. 140), especially single parents and students from rural areas who had enrolled in later B.Ed. Intakes. They sponsored their own studies and met family financial obligations while Zimbabwe’s economic meltdown had reached a world record of more than 231% inflation rate (Reporter 2008). Their challenges included:

- Salaries that were too low to meet family and programme needs,
- Expensive transport cost for rural students,
- Lack of funds that contributed to the delayed completion of the programme,
- Single parents struggled with multiple financial responsibilities, and
- The negative impact of the national economic decline in Zimbabwe.

Although significance test results in Appendix G of my survey revealed that challenges from the economic downturn were not significant to adults’ B.Ed. completion time, there was corroboration between Figure 29 where 70% of my respondents ranked the economic downturn in Zimbabwe during this study the most

challenging systemic factor at ZOU and Figure 30 which revealed that the most difficult aspect in DL to 70% of my respondents was funding the programme.

My participants' strategies used to meet the financial requirements of the DL programme revealed that it was a family matter that required social integration (Kember 1995) to achieve. Adults would not register in a programme unless they secured the cooperation of the family on its funding.

Participants revealed (P.144) that they borrowed money from friends and relatives. Some engaged in self-help income generating projects like: market gardening, vending and poultry. Others had to practice collective financial planning and family budgeting to manage financial obligations during the DL programme. In Figure 29 of my survey, some respondents benefited from paying their fees by instalments.

Only one married female head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that during her time she managed to fund her own education because, *"things were not as expensive as they are today—my salary would suffice for the fees and for the family"* (DT8R:327).

Eleven of my interviewees used strategies that included:

- Financial planning within the family,
- Borrowing money and /or being helped by relatives, and
- Engaging in income-generating projects.

A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme engaged his wife in family budgeting in order to cope with DL. He said, *"- we had to sit down with my wife--B.Ed., I need so much, school fees for the children --every month"* (DT8ZV:441). Another school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme echoed the importance of collective

financial planning within the family as he said that, *“one had to make sure that the family understands -- to be supported—financially”* (DT3BV:399).

Financial borrowing took different forms among the interviewees. A female head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that, *“--during my time you would access loans from banks through ZOU”* (DT2R:390). A female senior teacher that delayed but completed the DL programme said that, *“-the money that was required for a semester was the whole month’s pay-- first month all that money would go to the studies* (DT8A:437). This implies that money for other use by the family had to be borrowed. A rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the DL programme stressed the role played by borrowing and family relations in supporting adult learners to cope with the programme as he said, *“My initial fee-- I had to borrow it from my uncle— because-- finances were a problem”* (DT8BV:440).

A widow school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the DL programme stressed the importance of support by the family as she said, *“I would borrow money-- to register and-- some family members would assist”* (DT8V:440). Another widow deputy head that delayed but completed the programme had a son who was doing mechanical engineering at a technical training college. Her son required a mechanical kit in form of a tools box for practical lessons. At the same time she was supposed to pay her tuition fees for the DL programme. She could not raise the money. She sought extended family member’s support in kind in order to cope with the demands of both programmes as she said, *“I had to borrow from my brother’s son-- his tool box so that my son would go and do practical work while I pay ZOU”* (DT8E:439).

A female senior teacher that was still on the programme echoed the importance of family support in order to cope with DL as she said, *“-the ZOU fees, it is my spouse*

*who actually pays for that because my salary is not enough to cover my expenses” (DT8C:329).* A male deputy head that had unimpeded completion of the DL programme said that many adult learners relied on financial donations and assistance from relatives. He pointed out that, *“if it were not for our children--we would not be able to pay the fees-- one is-- in UK-- and the other one-- in Germany (DT8B:440).* Support from relatives who worked in the diaspora was helpful especially after the Zimbabwean economy had collapsed in 2008.

Another popular strategy used by my participants to cope with financial requirements in DL was engaging in self-help income generating projects. A rural school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“I had to embark on a poultry project in order to support myself (DT8BV:440).* Another rural teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme said that he supplemented his salary with money, *“-from the market gardening as another source of income” (DT8Z:441).*

Urban adult learners also engaged in small scale commercial self-help enterprises to cope with the financial requirements in DL. While a female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme had to, *“--sell-- wares like sweets -- at school, chips, so that I get the fares to attend—tutorials” (DT8C:441)* another female deputy head from earlier intakes that delayed and was still on the programme said, *“I engaged in being a vendor at times. I could sell freezits, tomatoes to raise funds” (DT8S:441).*

These results show that seven of the interviewees relied on the support from the family to cope with the financial requirements in DL. The rest used either bank loans or income generating projects to raise funds. While significance test results in Appendix G revealed that gender and marital status of participants had no significance to adults’ completion of the B.Ed. programme, results of this study

revealed that challenges from financial requirements in DL affected female single parents harder than their male counterparts. ZOU should establish partnerships with banks and government in order to facilitate adult learner financial support.

#### **7.4 Strategies used by students to cope with ICT needs in DL**

My third sub-question in this study (P.3) asked for the strategies B. Ed. students used to cope with ICT needs in DL at ZOU. The question arose from my theoretical framework understanding that the key element distinguishing DL from other forms of learning is separation of the teacher from the learner during the teaching-learning process which necessitates mediation to link them(P.19). That mediation is mainly through the use of ICT besides print material. ICT is a key learner support resource that connects the distant learner to the educational institution. It is said that by using ICT you can achieve wider access, higher quality and lower cost of DL at the same time (Daniel, Kanwar et al. 2009). Hence I discuss the strategies used by adults to cope with ICT needs DL at ZOU in this section.

In DL, Knowledge media also provide the opportunity to change the emphasis from the classroom and teaching to the individual and learning (Phipps 1998). My literature review (P.80) has evidence of significant positive association between students' both deep and strategic approaches to study and students' perception of networked learning and negative association with a surface learning (Sherry 1996, Valentine 2002). Students were positive about the incorporation of technology but had concerns about access to ICT and the time provided to become sufficiently competent. Students viewed the online forum as a site where they benefitted from sharing of personal experiences (Buckley et al 2010).

##### **7.4.1 Access to telephone during DL at ZOU**

In my survey, Figure 20 revealed that 67% of the sample had access to telephone and 33% did not have access to telephone at home during their B.Ed. through DL.

Although Chi-square test results in Appendix G revealed that access to telephone was not significant to respondents' B.Ed. completion time, the fact that a substantial number had no access to telephone compromised the effectiveness of communication as a key learner support in DL. It had negative impact especially to those that needed immediate programme information and instructional assistance.

#### **7.4.2 Access to internet during DL at ZOU**

ZOU expected distance learners to use internet to search information for research. Yet Figure 22 in my survey shows that only 3 % of my respondents were connected while 97% were not connected to internet. The B.Ed. programme had a course called Computer Applications that was meant to train students to use computers for their typing and accessing information on internet in general and for the research project.

ICT practical lessons revealed a difference in learner support between earlier and later intakes in Table 13 where Chi-square test results confirmed that the respondents' B.Ed. intakes were significant to their B.Ed. completion time. During its early years ZOU did not have computers of its own. Students had to do the practical lessons and ZOU outsourced facilities for the Computer Applications lessons for its earlier intakes from private institutions that had computer laboratories. However, ZOU provided limited students' access to internet in its libraries.

Participants' experiences were such that, while a school head from earlier intakes said, "*We were exposed to the use of computers for two weeks at a technical college in Marondera*" (DT4BV:291), a female head of department from later intakes said,

*I had --problems on that course. I only did theory--and not the practical of it. I had no access to computers-- to go to private colleges to study the computers, I had no money-- so, I could only write the exam-- (DT4P:404).*

To sum up learner access to ICT at ZOU in later intakes, a male school head and member of SRC that was still on the programme said, “*At ZOU the computers are only accessed by their workers*” (DT4CH:404).

In literature review (P.81) we saw that the ideal situation is where ICT connectivity at the university, students’ homes and work-places all work together (Kazmer 2000). In New Zealand the ICT for DL is unbundled so that students and their facilitators choose to access what they want when they want it (Butterfield 1999). Sherry (1996) also cites Milbank (1994) who found in Alaska that introduction of ICT in DL raised student retention from 20% to about 75%. All my participants acknowledged attending a course in Computer Applications. However, they had different experiences of the same course. Some said that they had an introduction to the computer. Some said they were exposed to the use of computers for two weeks. Some said they went to High Glen, a World Links outsourced centre, for practical lessons. Others said they only did the theory for a semester without doing practical.

My literature review revealed that student technological coping includes: training, appropriate ICT use and its effect on school work (Kazmer 2000; Dorman and Burton 2001). Training of students in the use of ICT was part of the B.Ed. curriculum. However, my participants’ experiences revealed that at best ZOU outsourced the facilities for practical lessons in Computer Applications and at worst students only did theory and did not do the practical component. At the ZOU library, an urban female head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme attributed her lack of access to internet to too many students using few computers. She said, “*I could not access because there were so many of us*” (DT3P:404). Students had to be innovative to pass.

The strategies my participants used to cope with ICT needs in DL included:

- Sourcing assistance from those who knew computing,

- Reliance on their children who had done computers at school,
- Students from regional centres without internet traveled to Harare, and
- Paying money for operating computers at computer shops.

Among my participants were those who shared the experience by a deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme and said, “-we had to use other people to get the information for us” (DT4B:403). A female school head that also had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “I was relying on my son who had done computers at school-- to get information I wanted” (DT4V:405). Participants from regional centres without ICT had to travel to urban regional centres to retrieve information from internet. A female senior teacher from earlier intakes in Mashonaland Central (Figure 1) said, “I used the Internet. I used the Harare library” (DT4A:395). Students who used private ICT facilities sponsored themselves. A female deputy school head from earlier intakes that delayed completion and were still on the programme said, “--you were required to pay money for operating a computer at computer shops” (DT4S:405).

While students experienced difficulties accessing ICT (Jackson 2003), there were computers that were used by ZOU clerks and secretaries. These were the computers that the member of SRC said were only accessible to ZOU staff and not to students. He was actually raising a concern by students. In big regional centres like Harare which enrolled thirty percent of ZOU’s more than 22 000 students, there was a data capture clerk/ secretary per programme. Hence, apart from those used in the regional administration office and by programme coordinators; there were as many computers as the number of clerks. Clerks would usually be busiest at registration and during capturing of assignment marks towards examinations. They were not involved in capturing examination marks. That means once registration and assignments were over, they had less work. In most cases they typed private work like students’ projects or assignments to subsidize their low salaries.

My literature review says that ICTs are a driver of change but, without good policy and careful supervision, they can have unintended consequences (Balasubramanian, Clarke-Okah et al. 2009). My participants raised the point that some students copied other students' projects or assignments. While rare cases would occur that students would connive with friends or spouses to have their assignments copied, it was also possible for unscrupulous clerks to save some well written projects for sell to students facing difficulties. That amounts to copying without the consent of the original authors. If ZOU students could type for themselves such abuse of ICT would be minimized. While experienced lecturers would catch students who copy other people's assignments or projects, preventing the practice requires strong institutional will, policy and systems (Dusen 2000; Clarke-Okah 2009; Kanwar and Daniel 2009).

In spite of economic downturn, one reason why ZOU and B.Ed. students did not take the practical lessons for the Computer Applications course seriously was that the practical lessons were not considered in the examinations weighting of the course. In my literature review (P.81) Kangai and Bukaliya (2010) found that the majority of ZOU students were neither ready nor prepared to use ICT. Only 34% of ZOU students were computer literate, 5% had personal computers, 12% had access to computers either at home or at the workplace. Literature review further shows that while Hong Kong is a technologically oriented place, OUHK students' non-performance in ICT was found less due to access than because it did not count towards assessment (Aylward 2001). We saw in literature review (P.8), that there could also be a tendency to consider DL support systems from the institution's rather than the learners' viewpoint (Sweet 1993). This study revealed that the B.Ed. degree transcript at ZOU purports that its graduates are qualified in Computer Applications when most of them would not distinguish between a mouse and a keyboard. When such graduates are practically tested, they compromise the credibility of their qualification and the institution.

ZOU should provide at least 10 computers per regional centre with a local area network for students to access internet. That can help students better in facilitating access to information with the limited library books at ZOU than students going to other institutions' libraries. The Computer Applications course should also be examined practically for learners and tutors to take it seriously. It benefits learners a great deal in the knowledge society that we are heading for.

ZOU should establish partnerships with business and other international institutions for purposes of exchange of knowledge through research and securing funding for its development programmes as well as advancement of its current educational curriculum. For example, at the time of writing this section of my thesis, a high powered Chinese delegation had visited Zimbabwe in search of investment opportunities. China and India are leading emerging economies that specialize in ICT. As a state university, ZOU could use the influence of the Minister of Higher Education to establish partnership with companies that invest in ICT. Such a partnership could facilitate ZOU establishing an ICT research institute. ZOU should research into how it can establish an ICT institute since it is a critical aspect of DL that can create research opportunities, job opportunities and marketable products to raise funds for the university and help in national development in many ways.

### **7.5 Use of strategies used by adults in learner support at ZOU**

My fourth sub-question asked how strategies used by students could inform the development of effective learner support structures and strategies at ZOU. This question arose from a belief that experience is the best teacher. The fact that many students successfully completed the B.Ed. programme through DL at ZOU using those strategies implied that subsequent students and ZOU as an institution could also benefit from them.

### **7.5.1 Participants' advice to ZOU**

In business they say, the customer is the king. So is the learner in education. Whatever institutions do should put learners' interests first. My participants were all professionally qualified and experienced teachers. Some of them openly expressed their excitement in doing the degree programme through DL. Hence, I worked on the assumption that participants were proud of the programme and gave genuine views on what needed improvement in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU. I used phenomenological interviews and appreciated my participants' emic understanding of effective learner support better than relying entirely on my etic perspective of it (Leedy 1997; Cutz and Chandler 2000). Hence, I felt that participants' views would help ZOU to improve its learner support policies and practices.

Basing on their experiences and the strategies they used to cope with DL, in my fourth research question I asked participants what ZOU should do to improve adult learner support in DL programmes. They gave answers that covered administrative, academic and technical issues. The general view was that ZOU should support the students more than it was doing. Participants appealed for improvement of learner support in provision of suitably qualified academic and administrative staff, communication, orientation, learning materials, outreach facilities and funding. They suggested that ZOU should improve learner support by doing the following things:

- Administrators should communicate more with the students,
- ZOU should recruit suitably qualified academic and administrative staff,
- The student orientation process should adequately cover administrative, academic and technical aspects required for learning in isolation at a distance,
- ZOU should ensure effective guidance and counselling takes place in the student support services department,
- Libraries should provide enough books, internet and inter-library access,
- Modules should be regularly reviewed to keep them up to date,

- Tutors should prepare up to date handouts instead of learners relying on outdated modules,
- Tutors should be supervised in their attendance during tutorials, marking assignments and supervision of students' research projects,
- ZOU should cost-effectively localize tutorial centres and increase time for tutorials and revision for examinations,
- ZOU should pay attractive salaries to reduce brain drain among qualified and experienced academic staff, and
- Also assist students in fees payment to improve programme completion rate.

### **7.5.2 Improvement of communication with students**

Learners' experiences revealed inadequacies in ZOU's communication system especially where sudden changes in the programme were involved. They revealed that sometimes they went for tutorial sessions only to be told that the tutors were not coming. This happened after students had travelled long and expensive distances to regional centres. It would be more cost-effective if students were advised about such eventualities before they left their homes. They said that more written communication was preferred and that academic staff should lead by example by observing tutorial timetables. A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme confirmed this view. She suggested that, *"ZOU organizers-- it's critical that they communicate more with the students"* (DT9B:442). In addition, a school head that also had unimpeded completion said, *"I-- loved to see some-newsletters, coming from ZOU"* (DT2BV:392). A newsletter could circumvent non-availability of telephone and update rural students on developments at the learning institution.

### **7.5.3 Recruitment of suitable administrative and academic staff**

Adult learners' experiences revealed short-comings among ZOU academic and administrative members of staff. While a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *"-- they must have good tutors"*

(DT9ZV:444), a female head of department that delayed and was still on the programme suggested that, “-lecturers need to be staff developed. Those who play administrative roles, they need again to be staff developed” (DT9P:443). That revealed the need for recruitment of suitably qualified staff able to establish positive rapport between the students and the lecturers and students and administrators.

The relevance of my participants’ suggestions became evident when examination results that had been published as failed suddenly turned out to have passed. A student that delayed completion and was still on the programme gave evidence of staff incompetence in the examinations department as she said,

*When the results came-- all the components had F and I went to the academic registrar--had an argument there-- only to discover that the result on Educational Policy Making was given. But at first, I was told that I had an F (DT6P:425).*

The fact that the student only got correct results after complaining indicated a weakness in the management of the examination system. If that happened to many candidates, it could put the results under suspicion of manipulation. That could also in turn compromise the credibility of the results and the reputation of the institution. Such situations could be avoided by recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Staff development in such matters is the best intervention.

We saw in literature review that ZOU faced examinations management challenges since it was unable to publish examination results before registration every semester (Izuagie 2001). Examinations are a very sensitive aspect of the education process. It is good practice to be thorough in processing of examination results. Long delays in the publication of results have the negative effects of subjecting candidates to undue anxiety and also making candidates miss opportunities that might require the immediate use of those results. Therefore, early publication of authentic examination results should be part of a progressive educational and institutional culture.

ZOU should carry out staff development with administrative, academic and examinations managers and officers to improve their performance. Strict supervision of staff should be matters of policy and good practice. Research could also be carried out on best examinations management practices to improve the system at ZOU.

#### **7.5.4 Improvement of the student orientation process**

Some suggestions were proffered by my participants to improve the orientation process of new learners in DL. More orientation time was necessary to enable tutors to: expose new learners to the programme requirements, highlight potential setbacks and their solutions, assure new learners of continuous institutional support and train new learners in the use of ZOU communication channels. A senior woman from earlier intakes that delayed but completed the programme said, “*-it should take-- a day or two so that—students discuss with lecturers how to write assignments*” (DT2A:385). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, “*--orientation should --drill on-- challenges that distance students—meet*” (DT2BV:442). An SRC member that was still on the programme said that ZOU orientation was supposed to prepare students not only for learning in isolation and coping with their fear of the unknown in DL but also, “*inform them where, when and how to get materials*” (DT2CH:386). The orientation at ZOU should provide new learners with adequate time and information on where to get materials, support on written assignments and other challenges they might face.

#### **7.5.5 Guidance and counseling of learners**

Participants’ experiences in DL revealed that students meet unique challenges that could even threaten their retention on the programme. As a result they suggested that adult learners required constant guidance and counselling to help them cope with the DL programmes. A school head from later intakes that was still on the programme suggested that, “*--students need to be oriented in survival skills*” (DT9CH:443). A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme

confirmed that view as he said, “- *we had a lecturer who helped a number of students who were going to drop-- guidance and counselling-- is required for distance learners*” (DT9BV:442). This suggestion shows that adult learners, who, some of them had been labelled incapable of doing university education, require constant confidence-building in order to persist on the programme.

#### **7.5.6 Provision of books and internet access at regional libraries**

Most participants experienced inadequacy of books, journals and lack of access to internet at ZOU regional centres. For example, a school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, “-*the libraries must be packed with a lot of books.* (DT9ZV:448). Another school head from later intakes that was still on the programme suggested the idea of inter-library loans in areas with scarce literature as he said, “*ZOU --could work in conjunction with other libraries to enable us to access books*” (DT9CH:443). A teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, “*ZOU should also ensure that it provides regional centres with some internet facilities*” (DT9Z:444). Participants also suggested that it would be helpful if ZOU provided additional materials on tapes and videos that students could borrow from the library. An SRC member that was still on the programme said, “*I think there could be taped material, which you can play on tape etc, videos,*” (DT5CH:408). Participants’ suggestions revealed the inadequate supply of literature that should be improved by ZOU.

#### **7.5.7 Reviewing of modules**

My interviewees’ revealed that ZOU students were concerned that some modules that had outdated, unclear and inaccurate information continued to be used without being reviewed. Some of the modules continued in use with typographical errors, misprints, omissions and missing pages. A school head from later intakes that was still on the programme said, “*the modules should not remain the same modules that were read in 1980,--they need some editing to update them and-- eliminate printing errors* (DT5CH:386). This was echoed by a female senior teacher from later intakes,

that was still on the programme as she cited specific modules that gave B.Ed. adult learners problems and said, “-- revise your modules once in a while--especially the *Statistics Module as well as that on Computers*” (DT9C:443). Where modules had some irregularities, participants suggested that tutors should prepare relevant handouts. A head of department from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, “-if there are any chapters that they feel the students need to read, they can photocopy for the students” (DT9R:443). Regular reviewing of modules is necessary to keep them up to date and relevant.

### **7.5.8 Localization of contact tutorials**

At the time of data collection in this study, Zimbabwe’s economy was very bad. A school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “-the economic situation at the moment is very, very difficult” (DT9ZV:444). Things were so difficult that Zimbabwe had abandoned its currency and was using the United States currency. It was expensive and unaffordable for rural students to travel to regional centres to attend contact tutorials. That contributed to de-motivation and absenteeism to contact tutorial sessions. Hence interviewees suggested that ZOU should devise ways to reduce travel expenses and motivate adult learners. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, “There should be-- de-centralisation so that a lot of students are not discouraged” (DT5ZV:445). That suggestion was supported by a female deputy school head that delayed completion and was still on the programme as she said, “-they should localize tutorial centres -- to make it convenient” (DT9S:445).

Adult learners felt that the contact time with tutors in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU was insufficient. It needed to be increased. It was 6 hours per course per semester including revision for examinations (Chimedza Undated). A female senior teacher from later intakes that was still on the programme suggested that, “I actually urge them to add to their tutorial periods” (DT9C:443). A school teacher from earlier

intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme added another dimension to the improvement of contact tutorial sessions. He suggested that, “*ZOU must revive its system of making tutors conduct the revision-- like it used to do during the 90s*” (DT9Z:444). To that effect, a school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, “*-the tutors—should-- be able to give guidance on preparation for examinations*” (DT6ZV:391). These suggestions could improve the quality of contact tutorials if adopted by ZOU.

### **7.5.9 Supervision of academic staff**

My participants revealed that there was lack of academic staff supervision at ZOU. That compromised DL. Hence, they made suggestions to improve the situation.

A female deputy head that delayed but completed the programme revealed that academic staff needed supervision in their attendance during contact tutorials. She said that ZOU should ensure that, “*-- a Statistics person, he is there when you come to tutorial sessions*” (DT9E:443). Participants argued that supervision of academic staff should go beyond attendance to include the quality of tutoring, marking of assignments, conduct of revision for examinations (Harris 2007) and supervision of research projects. A head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme confirmed that argument. She said that some, “*-students get other students' assignments and write-- shows that there are some discrepancies there*” (DT6P:416). In view of the above, a participant that was in third year suggested a system to ensure that assignments are marked on time, proper standard of assignment writing is maintained and that could catch up with the cheating students. She suggested that, “*one marker marks and then there is a moderator, so that there is fairness*” (DT6C:420).

With regards to research projects, many participants concurred with the female school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme. She suggested that, “*-students need more supervision—in-- research. Some might*

*fear carrying out research-- if the supervision is-- lacking” (DT9V:444).* Most of their experiences revealed that adult learners’ success in research projects relied more on close supervision than other factors. Hence, a school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme suggested that, *“-tutors must be supervised in the way they supervise their students” (DT6ZV:445).* Another school head that also had unimpeded completion of the programme supported that view as he said, *“ZOU should sample and see whether the work that has been recommended by the supervisor is it the one that we are endeavouring?” (DT6BV:445).*

Since the inception of semesters at ZOU, supplementary examinations were stopped. Experiences of some of my participants from earlier intakes revealed that supplementary examinations helped adult learners to complete the DL programme fast. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme lamented that, *“That you would -- write a supplementary exam -- many of us were able to cope” (DT6B:412).* ZOU should consider these observations to improve evaluation of its processes.

#### **7.5.10 Educational funding in DL at ZOU**

We saw that students and tutors from rural areas travelled long distances to and from the regional centres for contact tutorials in an ailing Zimbabwean economy. Participants’ experiences also revealed that adults’ success in the DL programme was compromised by poor quality of teaching due to the brain drain of experienced academics. A senior teacher that was in third year suggested a way to retain good academic staff. She urged ZOU to, *“-give more salaries to the tutors-- so that they actually get motivated to give students more” (DT9C:443).* Some adult learners found it hard to cope with the DL programme due to failure to pay fees due to other financial obligations in addition to the programme. A deputy head that delayed completion and was still on the programme suggested that, *“ZOU--should have a*

*strategy where it assists its students with terms of payment because most people fail to complete their study because of financial problems” (DT9S:436).*

Another cost cutting option was to shift travel cost from learners to the learning institution by making tutors visit local centres to conduct tutorials. A female deputy head who delayed completion and was still on the programme said, “- *it’s better for a tutor to come to Chitungwiza than make 10 people go to Harare” (DT8S:444).* Given that adult learners have other financial obligations and that their self-advancement contributes to national development, learning institutions should engage the state to assist in the alleviation of adults’ educational funding burden.

#### **7.5.11 Participants’ advice to students**

From participants’ experiences and strategies used to cope with DL, they offered advice to students on or intending to join DL at ZOU. Such advice would help students individually and ZOU to effectively support learners. The advice varied. However, the most common views were that students should:

- Strike a balance between social and educational commitments,
- Plan their finances and commit themselves to personal study timetables,
- Form groups to collaborate in research for assignments and projects,
- Avoid copying other students’ assignments and projects, and
- Be resourceful and join other libraries to cope with shortage of literature.

#### **7.5.12 Self-organization and planning**

Participants’ experiences revealed that most of the challenges faced by DL students were a result of poor self-organization. Hence they suggested that adult learners should organize their commitments properly in order to cope with DL. A deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme advised, “*ZOU students to try and strike a balance between their social life and their education -- so that they pass in the programme as well as continue lives in a normal manner” (DT10B:446).* A school head that had unimpeded completion of the

programme suggested that students should, *“make sure that the family understands that you are -- on an academic programme -- to be supported socially, educationally and financially”* (DT7BV:446).

Adult learners are expected to participate in all social activities in their families and communities. Hence, a female head of department that delayed completion and was still on the programme advised that, *“- students need to explain to their relatives that they are students to be understood by the extended family or their relatives”* (DT10P:447).

Some participants suggested that adults should plan their social commitments and use personal study timetables to cope with the DL programme. A senior woman that delayed but completed the programme said, *“- because studies shouldn't interrupt your work,- studies shouldn't also interrupt how you do your things at home—so plan and give yourself time to study and to do everything”*(DT10A:445).

### **7. 5.13 Learner commitment to studies**

My participants' experiences revealed that in order to cope with the DL programme adults needed to complement planning with commitment to their plans. A deputy head that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, *“It needs -- determination and it's not a programme where you want to do luxury things”* (DT10B:446). A female head of department that also had unimpeded completion of the programme advised students, *“-to be fully committed when doing distance education because you will be adults and-- you need self-discipline”* (DT10R:447). In addition to commitment, a male teacher from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme also cautioned DL students as he said, *“I would advise them to be patient-- because they might meet some obstacles”* (DT10Z:448). A female senior teacher who was in third year also encouraged adult learners that, *“I-- urge them to soldier on”* (DT10C:446) because DL requires endurance.

A deputy school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said that commitment meant taking the programme seriously at all times. That included reading the modules, preparation of assignments, carrying out the research project and also preparation for examinations. In advising DL students, he said “-we survived because we were reading and taking all our courses seriously” (DT6B:446). A school head that had unimpeded completion of the programme emphatically stressed the importance of commitment as he said, “Concentrate, concentrate! When you start studying, go ahead and complete!” (DT10ZV:449).

#### **7.5.14 Studying in groups**

Many participants’ experiences revealed that study groups were an effective way for adults to cope with DL. Hence they advised students to use them. A deputy head that had an unimpeded completion of the programme said, “-that people-- share as groups, read the same chapter, meet, then discuss what you have read-- helps people to understand-- better” (DT10B:446). A female school head from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme concurred that, “study groups are very effective” (DT5V:415). A teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme advised DL students, “- to make some groups in which they collaborate in coming up with research for assignments and even the research projects” (DT10Z:448). Cooperative learning yields a more comprehensive understanding of what is learnt than learning in isolation.

#### **7.5.15 Shun copying other people’s assignments and research projects**

My participants’ experiences revealed that some adults copied other students’ assignments and research projects to cope with DL and discouraged those who would be tempted to copy and reproduce other people’s work. A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme advised that, “-the temptation to get someone’s assignment and copy it, I would say to students, that has got to be avoided” (DT6ZV:449). The same point was echoed by a deputy head from

earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme as he said, “- *students should do the learning themselves instead of simply-- borrow someone’s assignment-- and submit it*” (DT10B:446).

A school head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme also said, “*Never ever-- copy someone’s project because -- you are not going to be proud of it - because it’s not your-- work. Go into the field and research*” (DT10ZV:449). A senior woman that delayed but completed the programme advised students on a strategy to overcome the constraints often met in the research project. She advised DL students to, “- *find the topics well before you finish so that you work on the project while doing other program areas so that when you complete you complete everything*” (DT6A:426).

#### **7.5.16 Student resourcefulness**

Other good learning practices that helped some of my participants to cope with the DL programme were self-drive and resourcefulness. A school head from later intakes that was an SRC member and was still on the programme said that, “*I used to run around--libraries in other ministries-- In other words, we are saying the student has to be resourceful*” (DT3CH:443). If learners found that their institution did not have the relevant books for their programme, a deputy head from earlier intakes that had unimpeded completion of the programme said, “*I urge them to join other libraries*” (DT10B:446). A teacher from earlier intakes that also had unimpeded completion of the programme added that, “*I - also advise them to source- information from various libraries-- where they can access-- internet*” (DT10Z:448). Resourcefulness teaches skills of survival that enhance individual independence.

These suggestions drawn from experience by my participants offer a lot to help improve students’ capacity to cope with DL. They also gave hints to ZOU on areas of administrative and academic learner support that needed improvement.

## **7.6 Summary**

This chapter discussed my phenomenological interview results in cross-reference to the survey results. My participants' responses to my first question revealed that they used ZOU support structures like the regional centres, the library, student support services, student orientation, programme coordinators, the modules, contact tutorials and assessment pointing out their weaknesses and also providing suggestions for their improvement. Responses to my other questions revealed that adults got essential support from their families, employers, workmates, colleagues, relatives and friends. My participants also studied in groups, planned and committed themselves to personal study timetables and engaged in self-help income-generating projects to raise funds to cope with all the family and educational financial requirements in DL under difficult economic circumstances. My next chapter deals with conclusions and recommendations on this study.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 8.1 Introduction

The support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with DL, my research questions and criteria outlined in Chapter 1 were investigated, interrogated and evaluated. I cross-referenced results from 12 phenomenological interviews that I carried out in Mashonaland Central, East, West and Harare Regional Centres with results from 97 B.Ed. respondents to my questionnaire in ZOU's ten regional centres in Zimbabwe (Figure 1). I made conclusions taking into account Buckley et al's (2010) view that research findings should be considered within the complexities of their location and context and thus should be used as heuristics or 'thinking tools', rather than as representing an absolute truth. I now present a summary of conclusions and recommendations on the results of my study in relation to DL at ZOU.

#### 8.2 Conclusions

##### 8.2.1 ZOU support structures used by adults to cope with DL

My first sub-question sought the extent to which adults used support structures at ZOU to cope with the B. Ed. programme through DL. From the concurrence of the interview and questionnaire results I conclude that adults used the following ZOU support structures to cope with the B.Ed. programme through DL in ways that varied with their B.Ed. Intakes and regional centres:

- Assistance from regional centre administrative and academic staff,
- Orientation of new students into DL,

- The ZOU print modules,
- The ZOU library,
- ICT,
- Face-to-face- tutorials,
- Written assignments,
- Written examinations and
- Research projects.

However, some students expressed concern about the ineffectiveness of communication between ZOU and its students. Others were concerned about the inadequacy of tutorial time as well as the orientation time and process. The most serious concern was raised about the ineffectiveness of the Student Support Services Department. Most participants did not know that it existed at ZOU. Some students complained about the erratic supply, incomprehensible texts and the outdated state of some ZOU modules. Concerns were also raised about the ZOU library's lack of books, journals and access to internet. Most participants only did theory in a Computer Application Course which was supposed to have a practical component. Participants raised a general concern about the professional inadequacy in the supervision and marking of written assignments, research projects and authenticity of examination results since some of them would be missing at the end of the semester.

### **8.2.2 Students' own strategies to cope with DL**

My second sub-question sought how B. Ed. students used their own strategies to cope with DL at ZOU. Cross-referencing results from both the interview and the questionnaire survey led me to conclude that adults at ZOU used the following own strategies to cope with DL:

- They established social contracts with families and employers to integrate and balance employment , family and study commitments ,
- Adults formed study groups to motivate one another in order to overcome and cope with challenges posed by studying at a distance,

- They also used planning, commitment, perseverance and dedicated use of the personal time-tables to cope with studying in isolation,
- Adults borrowed books from friends and became members of other institutions' libraries to supplement inadequacies and non-availability of the ZOU modules and library books,
- They hired private tutors to give them extra tutorials in their study groups to supplement inadequate tutorial time and content from the official tutorials,
- They helped one another in discussion groups and sought advice from both private and official tutors to prepare for assignments,
- Adults' study groups sought assistance from private and official tutors and also discussed past examination papers to prepare for examinations,
- They established good rapport with supervisors , committed themselves and managed time properly to cope with supervision of research projects, and
- Adults practised collective family budgeting, established social contracts with families and employers, bought own books, borrowing money, engaged in income generating projects and made arrangements with ZOU to pay fees by instalment to cope with funding in DL.

### **8.2.3 Students' strategies to cope with ICT in DL.**

My third sub-question sought the strategies that B. Ed. students used to cope with ICT needs in DL. Apart from the print module, ICT is the other major link between the distant learner and teacher in DL. Cross-referencing results from both interview and questionnaire led me to conclude that adults faced serious challenges in ICT at ZOU since they did not have computers of their own. Hence they used the following strategies to cope with ICT needs in DL:

- Adults in rural areas without telephone connection used ICT at the nearest shopping centres or police stations to communicate with ZOU,
- Some either posted letters or personally visited the regional centres,
- Due to lack of computers at ZOU, adults outsourced ICT services,

- Due to ICT illiteracy, some learners relied on their children who had done computers at school while others were assisted by those who knew how to surf information for them either from the library or internet shops/cafes,
- Adults from rural centres without ICT travelled to towns for ICT services,
- Some adults paid money for using computers at computer shops, and
- Most of my participants paid private typists to type their research projects.

#### **8.2.4 Use of strategies used by adults in developing learner support at ZOU**

My fourth and final sub-question sought to find out how strategies used by students could inform the development of effective learner support structures and strategies at ZOU. My interview and questionnaire survey results complement each other on how strategies used by adults could inform the development of distance learner support. That gave me confidence to conclude that the strategies used by adults to cope with DL can help ZOU in particular and DL in general by including the following aspects in the development of adult learner support:

- Ensuring that administrators communicate regularly with the students,
- Recruiting qualified and competent academic and administrative staff,
- Ensuring that orientation of new student is given adequate time and the process covers all the aspects needed by adult distance learners,
- Providing continuous guidance and counselling for learners in need of them,
- Providing libraries with enough books, internet and inter-library access,
- Regular reviewing of modules to keep them relevant to learning objectives,
- Ensuring that tutors use current and not to rely on outdated materials,
- Supervising tutors' attendance during tutorials, marking assignments and supervision of research projects,
- Localizing tutorial centres and providing optimum time for tutorials and revision,

- Curbing brain drain of academic staff by improving their working conditions, and
- Assisting students with funding arrangements to improve programme completion rate.

Further to strategies used by participants informing ZOU on student support, evidence from interview and questionnaire results made me to conclude that students could cope with DL better if they used the following strategies in their study:

- Strike a balance between social and educational commitments,
- Plan their finances and committing themselves to personal study timetables,
- Form study groups to collaborate in research for assignments and projects,
- Research and study instead of copying other students' assignments and projects, and
- Be resourceful and join other libraries to cope with shortage of literature.

### **8.3 Recommendations**

Drawing from my findings in chapters 6 and 7 as well as my conclusions above, I made the following recommendations:

- ZOU should clearly streamline and inform students at orientation about the communication channels and different functions of its regional centre staff in order to alleviate the haphazard state of confusion under which it is operating. It is very strongly recommended that sensitive matters concerning adult student counselling be professionally dealt with by the student support services section while regional programme coordinators attend to academic matters. Administrative issues should be referred to administrative staff and programme records issues should be dealt with by data capture clerks.
- Instead of appointing personnel in the regional centres on the basis of political connection, extensive research into the need, feasibility and utility of staff should be carried out before posts are introduced and staff appointed.

- ZOU should revise doing business as it were that is currently dominant and imbedded in the human resources section. If ZOU wants to resuscitate its image, it must bite the bullet, fearlessly weed out obsolete academic and administrative staff and replace them with innovative ones.
- ZOU is operating in an unfamiliar territory of DL and heavily depends on under qualified academic and administrative staff. I recommend that officially programmed, in-service, faculty-based as well as competence-oriented staff development carrying promotional and/or remuneration attachments must be policy until sufficiently qualified academics and administrative staff are adequately available.
- Since DL programmes recruit heterogeneous students who are unfamiliar with its operational mode and academic expectations, the orientation of new students cannot be done piecemeal. New students cannot optimally benefit from academic aspects of the orientation which are timetabled at the end of the day when students are tired, hungry and anxious to go home. I strongly recommend that ZOU dedicates an academic orientation session to new students by academic specialists (Prasad 2001), on its own day while both students and lecturers are fresh. This session adds to the currently too short tutorial time and consolidates the initial orientation. The major orientation must inculcate in new learners the importance, skills and art of taking responsibility of their own learning. Students should be taught how to constructively engage and persuade their families and employers in order to secure their by-in the programme and thus earn their financial, academic and moral support throughout the learning programme. Orientation must instil in new students the spirit and capacity of self-drive and self-organisation which enable them to plan and commit themselves to their studies. Learners should be taught the importance and use of study groups, financial budgets, personal study timetables and doing their own research and preparation of assignments and projects rather than rely on copying from other students.

- I recommend that standard quality ZOU modules be prepared by subject experts and be punctually supplied to learners (Pew 2007). Regular review of ZOU modules should be critical matters of policy and good DL practice.
- Continuous supply of up-to-date books and internet access facilities in regional libraries should be a routine practice at ZOU.
- Given that currently nothing beats ICT in linking the distant learner to the learning institution and that ZOU seeks to prepare graduates for the twenty-first century global knowledge economy, it cannot continue to have its students depend on outsourced ICT training and services. The fact that students can pass a practical course without doing practical lessons subjects the B.Ed. programme to a mockery and should not be tolerated. Continuation of the course without computers for practicals can only be attributed to abnormality of enthusiasm rather than professionalism. ZOU should improve its and the B.Ed. programme's image, and in the long term, benefit its graduates better by aggressively kick-starting the revitalisation of the B.Ed. Computer Applications Course by providing at least 10 computers per regional centre. This enables students to acquire basic ICT skills essential for typing their own assignments and research projects which forestall probable copying of assignments and projects as well as delays in submission that compromise programme completion. ICT skills also enable learners to surf information from internet, e-mail, engage in online chats, video and teleconferencing with colleagues and lecturers (Sherry 1996; Valentine 2002).
- Research should investigate the relevance and input–output relations of the DL processes at ZOU. ZOU cannot continue to take staff supervision for granted. Programme coordinators must, as a matter of policy and custom of good practice, supervise the preparation and attendance of contact tutorials, marking of assignments, revision in preparation for examinations and supervision of research projects by tutors.

- The security of any brand resides in its trademark. I strongly recommend that ZOU protects its image and that of its qualifications by research, training its staff and devising mechanisms to avoid missing and/or dubious results at all cost. ZOU should research and install effective mechanisms in examinations management, processing and publication of results that are foolproof (Rapmund 2001).
- With the majority of ZOU adult students employed to serve the economy while self-financing their studies amid multiple-financial commitments, I recommend that ZOU approaches key stakeholders of DL like government to consider some form of tax relief for those who enrol on programmes that benefit national development and establish partnerships with banks and non-governmental organisations to secure students' financial assistance to alleviate student attrition due to non-payment of fees and enhance high programme completion rates in DL.

#### **8.4 New knowledge**

While there was no spectacular discovery of new information from this study, the role of the adult learners' social circle in supporting adults in DL has been found to be more important than hitherto understood and recognized. Support by colleagues turned out to go beyond academic in study groups to social, psychological and emotional support that propped up would-be dropouts in DL. The study also revealed that the adult's family was a major support mechanism that approved enrolment, helped finance the programme, provided time and space for study and was a steadfast morale booster throughout the arduous duration of the programme. Similarly, employers, workmates and friends augmented adults' colleagues and family support efforts in peculiar ways that are often taken for granted in education.

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**APPENDIX A: ZOU DATA COLLECTION CLEARANCE**

From the Office of the Registrar  
Mr. T. E. S. Benza

30<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Mr. M.J. Mugabe  
Zimbabwe Open University  
P.O.Box 1119  
Mount Pleasant  
Harare

Dear Mr. Mugabe

**RE: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON ASPECTS COVERING THE ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY**

Authority is granted for you to do your assignment covering aspects of the Zimbabwe Open University, however, please note that information regarding salary scales for any member of staff and that of conditions of service thereof is highly confidential and therefore cannot be accessible.

We wish you the best in your endeavours.

Please note that the information you gather is highly confidential.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T.E.S. Benza'.

**T.E.S. BENZA**  
Registrar

/cd



4<sup>th</sup> Floor Stanley House Corner J. Moyo Avenue/1<sup>st</sup> Street Harare  
P. O. Box MP 1119 Mount Pleasant  
Tel: 263-4-793002/3/7/9 / 251518 Fax: 263-4-703679

## APPENDIX B: UKZN ETHICS CLEARANCE



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL : [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

6 MAY 2009

MR. MJ MUGABE (202526545)  
ADULT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Mugabe


**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0094/09D**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project, noted that independent contact information should have been included on the informed consent document:

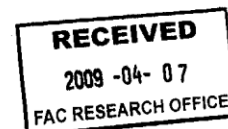
*"Support structures and strategies used by adults to cope with distance learning"*

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
**MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA**

cc. Supervisor (Prof. C Mbali)  
cc. Dr. V Chikoko  
cc. Derek Buchler



## APPENDIX C

### University of KwaZulu-Natal

### Faculty of Education

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS

Many adult learners face challenges in completing programmes in distance and open learning (ODL). I am carrying out a Ph D study with the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal on the support structures and strategies used by adult learners to cope with the B Ed programme through ODL at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). The study seeks to explore strategies that enable learners to complete their programmes. You have been chosen to participate in this interview because of your experience in the B. Ed. Programme. It is within your right to withdraw from participating in this study should you wish to do so without any consequences for yourself. The information you provide will be treated most confidentially and used for no other purpose besides this study. Should you want to confirm anything about this study, my contact numbers are 2634250157/8, mobile 26311780706 and email [jacobmugabe@rocketmail.com](mailto:jacobmugabe@rocketmail.com) . My supervisor's contact numbers are: Professor Charlotte Mbali 0027836552415, email mbali @ukzn.ac.za; Fax 0027 31 260 1340.

Sir/Madam,

Learners in DE use different strategies to cope with studies and other obligations.

1. How do you find studying through distance learning? Please give concrete examples to illustrate your experience.
2. Comment on how you used support mechanisms offered by ZOU and how useful each was to you.
3. What aspects, resources and ideas of your own have you used to help you cope with studies? Please describe how you used them and explain how useful each was to you.
4. How do you describe your experience and explain strategies you used to cope with each of the following aspects of distance learning at ZOU?
  - Studying in isolation and orientation to open and distance learning
  - Access to and use of information and communication technology in distance learning
  - Access to learning materials, libraries and tutors

- Distance teaching-learning methods including the module, weekend tutorials and study groups
- Distance learning assessment through written assignments, supervision of research projects and written examinations
- ZOU administrative requirements at the regional centre, student services unit and programme co-ordination
- Balancing B.Ed studies with your work and family commitments and
- Financial requirements of the distance learning programme.

Finally, what advice would you give, to students for coping with ODL and for the improvement of student support at ZOU?

THANK YOU.

## APPENDIX D

### University of KwaZulu-Natal

#### Faculty of Education

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Many adult learners face challenges in completing programmes in distance learning (DL). I am carrying out a Ph D study with the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal on the support structures and strategies used by adult learners to cope with DL. The study seeks to explore strategies that enable learners to complete distance learning programmes with minimum challenges. You have been chosen because of your experience in the B.Ed. programme at ZOU. It is within your right to withdraw from participating in this study should you wish to do so without any consequences for yourself. The information you provide will be treated most confidentially and used for no other purpose besides this study. Should you want to confirm anything about this study, my conduct numbers are 04-250157/8, mobile 011780706 and email [jacobmugabe@rocketmail.com](mailto:jacobmugabe@rocketmail.com). My supervisor's contact numbers are: Professor Charlotte Mbali Tel:0027836552415, Fax 0027 31 260 1340 and E-mail [mbalivc@gmail.com](mailto:mbalivc@gmail.com).

#### Instructions

Always encircle the number for your appropriate answer and tick inside the box to the answer of your choice as advised.

#### SECTION A

##### Personal information

Q1. What is your gender? 1. Female 2. Male

Q2. What is your age? 1. 21-30 years 2. 31-40 years 3. 41-50 years 4. 51 years +

Q3. What is your marital status? 1. Single 2. Married 3. Divorce 4. Widowed  
5. Separated.

Q4. What professional qualifications did you have when you joined the B.Ed. programme at ZOU? 1. C E Primary 2. C E Secondary 3. D Ed Primary  
4. D Ed Secondary 5. Other, specify-----

Q5. Where are you currently working? 1. Primary school 2. Secondary school  
3. College 4. University 5. Other, specify-----

Q6. What was your employment position when you joined the B.Ed programme?  
1. Class teacher 2. Teacher in charge 3. Head of department

4. Deputy head      5. School head   6. Other, specify-----
- Q7. How many years have you been employed?  
1. 0-10 years   2. 11-20 years   3. 21-30 years   4. 30 years +
- Q8. How many years had you stayed without serious study between attainment of a professional qualification and joining the B. Ed. Programme at ZOU?  
1. 0-10 Years   2. 11-20 years   3. 21-30 years   4. 30 years +
- Q9. At what regional centre did you enrol for B.Ed at ZOU?  
1. Harare   2. Mashonaland West   3. Mashonaland Central   4. Mashonaland East  
5. Manicaland   6. Masvingo   7. Midlands   8. Matabeleland South  
9. Bulawayo   10. Matabeleland North

## SECTION B

### Programme information

- Q10. In which B.Ed intake were you enrolled?-----
- Q11. Had you studied by distance education before enrolling at ZOU?  
1. Yes   2. No
- Q12. How many semesters did you take to complete your programme? 1. 8 Semesters   2. 10 Semesters   3. 12 Semesters   4. 14 Semesters  
5. Still on programme
- Q13. If you took more than 8 semesters to complete the B.Ed programme, what TWO reasons would you attribute your delayed completion to?-----
- Q14. Did the orientation of new students at ZOU prepare you adequately to cope with studying in isolation at a distance? 1. Yes   2. No
- Q15. How would you describe the place where you stayed while doing B.Ed studies?  
1. Urban area   2. Peri-urban area   3. Rural area   4. Remote rural area
- Q16. Did you have electricity where you stayed doing B. Ed studies? 1. Yes   2. No
- Q17. If your answer to Q16. is No, give ONE strategy you used to study at night ----
- Q18. Did you have access to telephone at home when you were doing B. Ed studies?  
1. Yes   2. No
- Q19. If your answer to Q18 is No, give ONE strategy you used to communicate when you faced problems during your studies-----
- Q20. Were you connected to internet at work when you did B.Ed? 1. Yes   2. No.
- Q21. If your answer to Q20. is Yes, give TWO ways in which you used the internet to help you to cope with B.Ed studies-----
- Q22. How far is the ZOU library from where you stayed while doing the B Ed programme? 1. 0-10km   2. 11-20 km   3. 21-30 km   4. 31-40 km   5. 40km+
- Q23. Does the library have enough books for your programme? 1. Yes   2. No
- Q24. What TWO challenges did you face in the use of ZOU modules in the B.Ed programme?-----
- Q25. Did you benefit from comments made by tutors in your written assignments at ZOU? 1. Yes   2. No
- Q26. Give TWO strategies you used in coping with challenges you faced during the preparation for B. Ed examinations at ZOU? -----

Q 27. Tick, in the appropriate box, your rating of the support that you received from the following people in your B.Ed programme at ZOU?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor
The regional director					
Programme coordinator					
Tutors					
Student services officers					
Family members					
Programme secretary					
Colleague					
Study group					
Employer					
Workmates					

28. Rank the listed ZOU subsystems from 1 to 5 in the boxes provided so that the one that gave you most challenges is in position 1 and the one that gave you the least challenges is in position 5.

Subsystem	Position
Availability of learning materials	
Communication between ZOU and students	
Coping with effects of economic downturn	
Conduct of tutorials	
Supervision of research projects	

Q 29. Rank the listed aspects of distance learning from 1 to 5 in the boxes provided so that the one that was most difficult is in position 1 and the one that was least difficult is in position 5.

Aspect	Position
Understanding ZOU modules	
Financing the B.Ed. programme	
Balancing roles as worker, householder and student	
Studying in isolation	
Preparation of assignments	

Q30. Add any other information that you feel helped you to succeed in the B. Ed programme-----

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

## APPENDIX E

### CASEBOOK OF INTERVIEWEE DATA

#### Interviewees' pseudonyms

Angeline	A		Bee	B
Bvu	BV		Charity	C
Chibayo	CH		Eusabia	E
Petty	P		Rutendo	R
Sharon	S		Varaidzo	V
Zed	Z		Zvinaiye	ZV

#### Interviewees' bio-data

Name	Gender	Age Years	Marital Status	Residential Area	Interview venue
Angeline(A)	Female	31-40	Married	Urban	Home
Bee (B)	Male	51 +	Married	Urban	Home
Bvu (BV)	Male	51 +	Married	Rural	School
Charity (C)	Female	31-40	Married	Urban	Regional centre
Chibayo(CH)	Male	41-50	Married	Peri-urban	Regional centre
Eusabia (E)	Female	51 +	Widow	Urban	School
Petty (P)	Female	41-50	Divorcee	Urban	Regional centre
Rutendo (R)	Female	31-40	Married	Rural	Home
Sharon (S)	Female	41-50	Married	Urban	Home
Varaidzo (V)	Female	41-50	Widow	Rural	Home
Zed (Z)	Male	41-50	Married	Remote rural	Regional centre
Zvinaiye(ZV)	Male	51+	Married	Urban	Regional centre

**Interviewees' employment data**

Name	Qualification	Work experience	Work station	Position into B. Ed	Current position
Angeline	DEP	0-10 years	Primary school	Teacher	TIC
Bee	CEP	21-30 years	Primary school	Deputy head	Head
Bvu	DEP	11-20 years	Primary school	Head	Head
Charity	DEP	0-10 years	Primary school	Teacher	Senior teacher
Chibayo	DEP	11-20 years	Primary school	Deputy head	Head
Eusabia	CEP	30+ years	Primary school	Deputy head	Deputy head
Petty	CES	11-20 years	Sec. school	HOD	Senior woman
Rutendo	DES	11-20 years	Sec. school	HOD	Deputy head
Sharon	CEP	21-30 years	Primary school	Deputy head	Deputy head
Varaidzo	CEP	21-30 years	Primary school	Head	Head
Zed	CEP	11-20 years	Primary school	Teacher	ZOU Program coordinator
Zvinaiye	CEP	30+ years	Primary school	Head	ZOU Admin. Officer

**Interviewee programme data**

Name	B Ed Intake	Regional Centre	Previous DL	Previous Study to DL	Programme Completion
Angeline(A)	14	Mash Central	Yes	Less than 10	Delayed
Bee (B)	2	Harare	Yes	More than 10	Completed
Bvu (BV)	1	Mash East	Yes	Less than 10	Completed
Charity (C)	18	Harare	No	Less than 10	Still on
Chibayo(CH)	20	Harare	Yes	Less than 10	Still on
Eusabia (E)	13	Harare	Yes	Less than 10	Delayed
Petty (P)	11	Harare	No	More than 10	Delayed on
Rutendo (R)	5	Mash Central	No	More than 10	Completed
Sharon (S)	5	Mash East	No	More than 10	Delayed on
Varaidzo (V)	9	Mash West	No	More than 10	Completed
Zed (Z)	3	Mash Central	No	Less than 10	Completed
Zvinaiye(ZV)	1	Mash Central	Yes	More than 10	Completed

**APPENDIX F****DATA TREES**

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## **DT1: DISTANCE LEARNING CONTEXT (DLC)**

### **REASONS FOR STUDYING THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING (RDL)**

ANGELINE A

it was cheaper and you can work and study at the same time.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.43% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.17% Coverage

due to family needs and financial commitments.

Reference 2 - 0.26% Coverage

found it comfortable to study at home while working for the family.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.17% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.17% Coverage

to enhance his teaching skills.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.35% Coverage

to further her education and improve her current qualifications while working .

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.52% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.52% Coverage

to qualify for his administrative post and further his education while working.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.33% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.33% Coverage

it enabled her to continue earning a living while studying .

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.13% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.13% Coverage

could not get a place to do the degree at the conventional universities and she did not want to disturb her family.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.71% Coverage

it was easier to study while she continued working to earn money to pay her fees.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.63% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.63% Coverage

to further her education while working to take care of her family.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.56% Coverage

it is user friendly and to enhance professional and academic growth.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.32% Coverage

to improve both his educational status and his position in employment.

## **ADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING (ADL)**

### **ANGELINE A**

it is cheaper and you can work and study at the same time.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.23% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.23% Coverage

further his education while working.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.97% Coverage

while you are working you earn a living and at the same time you pay your , you manage to pay your fees, for buying books and doing, going for lectures. If you take a study leave ,

Reference 2 - 0.11% Coverage

your pay will be cut

Reference 3 - 0.24% Coverage

it is a bit cheaper because you earn a living

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.29% Coverage

believed that B. Ed through distance education was flexible, and accommodated adults who are workers.

Reference 2 - 1.29% Coverage

Studying through distance learning is quite helpful, helpful in the sense that it accommodates the adults who are workers as well and it also accommodates those who have at least minimum qualifications . For example, those who joined ZOU when it started. Later years, they had certificate in education and also with 'O' Levels. That was quite encouraging since most of us couldn't get places into conventional colleges. So it is quite helpful.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.64% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.92% Coverage

I think distance education maintains the family socially because you will be staying with your family. Eh- there is no disruption in, say in your way of living because you will be coming from home.

Reference 2 - 0.72% Coverage

you will have to organize your family and then you can do your studies.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.11% Coverage

you will be taking care of your family and you will be on full salary and you are able to meet people you can discuss with.

[<InternalsZED Z>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.38% Coverage

distance education because it is user friendly

Reference 2 - 2.08% Coverage

distance learning is quite beneficial to learners because they learn at their own pace, at their own pace meaning that they take their time and they also try to cope with other responsibilities in the home comprising families and other relatives as well.

## **PERSPECTIVE ON DISTANCE LEARNING EXPERIENCE (PDLE)**

### **ANGELINE A**

Studying through distance learning for me it was very difficult. For example, I had to go to work. At that time I had a child who was around nine months. So, work, the child, and the studying. It was very difficult for me.

BEE B

I had completed a distance course in personnel management with a college in the UK. So maybe, I had a bit of experience studying and doing homework and so forth on my own, so that when this came, maybe I was just adding on to what I was or what I had just done a few years down the line in terms of distance learning. So, so it was not quite new.

Reference 2 - 0.30% Coverage

all in all, I think, I didn't find a lot of challenges learning at a distance.

[<InternalsBVU BV>](#) - § 5 references coded [4.23% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.59% Coverage

It's so challenging and difficult considering that one will be at work. In my case, being a school head.

Reference 2 - 1.39% Coverage

it was a great challenge, especially after the last academic qualification which was almost about 15 years and one finds oneself now embarking on this programme when one had last done an assignment in the last 15 years. So it was so challenging.

Reference 3 - 0.90% Coverage

Yes, it needed a lot of dedication because the study met with a lot of excitement from me. Because, we have always been craving to attain higher qualifications.

Reference 4 - 1.12% Coverage

the zeal for us to attain this unique qualification especially in my case, the last academic qualification was at Form 2 and then distance 'O' level, distance 'A' level and now this degree programme.

Reference 5 - 0.22% Coverage

But, we were driven by much excitement.

[<InternalsCHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.64% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.64% Coverage

distance learning is quite challenging and at times it's unbearable . At times you think of dropping out because of the demands of the programme. Ok, like in my case, I am working. I am a mother. I am also a student. At times assignments will be due and because of the session that we get for tutorials , we only get 6 hours per semester , the contact time per semester between students and tutors.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [3.16% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.40% Coverage

in my case I only went through formal education up to Grade 7

Reference 2 - 0.30% Coverage

I find that I actually enjoy distance learning

Reference 3 - 2.46% Coverage

tutors are only accessible as far as tutorials are concerned. After that, their one or two hours, each one goes their way and telephoning doesn't seem to help.

I think the institution seems to be remote from the students(He laughed). They seem only to communicate through examinations and assignments. And-----otherwise, the sense of belonging in terms of being students tends to be when you wear your gowns when graduating. So, in other words we are learning without the institution. Maybe. It's because of the economic problems.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.77% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.17% Coverage

is tiresome or what, very hard

Reference 2 - 0.60% Coverage

doing my JC then doing 'O' Level, then going to Seke Teachers' College then B.Ed. It was all distance education.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.29% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.29% Coverage

Studying through distance learning is quite helpful, helpful in the sense that it accommodates the adults who are workers as well and it also accommodates those who have at least minimum qualifications . For example, those who joined ZOU when it started. Later years, they had certificate in education and also with 'O' Levels. That was quite encouraging since most of us couldn't get places into conventional colleges. So it is quite helpful.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.69% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.69% Coverage

Studying through distance education is quite simple when you have the resources

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.23% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.23% Coverage

it's a bit challenging.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.43% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.57% Coverage

studying through distance learning is very interesting. But, it's quite challenging, because you have got a lot of problems.

Reference 2 - 0.47% Coverage

I went to school up to Form 2 only. And after that I started studying what we used to call correspondence

Reference 3 - 0.38% Coverage

And also the experience and that love to keep on going with studies, that helped me.

### **LACK OF CONFIDENCE**

BVU BV

Reference 1-0.57% coverage

being a new programme, one could only derive confidence if one's ideas were supported by colleagues.

Reference 2 - 0.79% Coverage

if you are on your own you are working on an assignment, you, you are not very sure whether what you are putting down is the right material.

Reference 3 - 0.62% Coverage

I was not very sure whether what I was writing was relevant, was the actual requirement as endeavoured by ZOU.

Reference 4 - 0.30% Coverage

it was just a question, sometimes of trial and error

Reference 5 - 1.14% Coverage

Sometimes we would not get anybody who could actually be a guide. It was a question of just tumbling on our own but without acknowledging whether what we are working on is the requirement of the study.

Reference 6 - 0.24% Coverage

But, we were driven by much excitement.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.53% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.53% Coverage

At the end of the day, you have to probe further on your own in order to actually understand the demands of the subject.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.10% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.34% Coverage

At times you find yourself having some questions whereby you fail to get maybe answers since you will be on your own.

Reference 2 - 0.75% Coverage

it's quite difficult to study in isolation. And since it's also my first time to study alone at home, I could meet some problems of not understanding the demands of the question that I was given and also the idea of studying at home. It's not very conducive.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.20% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.20% Coverage

As someone who will be doing distance education, who will be working on her own, or who is, he needs proper and quite fruitful induction.

### **CONFIDENCE INTERVENTIONS (LCI)**

BEE

Reference 1-0.91% coverage

But then the attack to the question was challenging. That's why sometimes you would need someone to help you understand the question or answering it because sometimes you would answer it in a few pages and pages without answering the question.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.36% Coverage

it was only after the assignment had been marked, that's when, one would say, ah I have it. And therefore, if I got this mark, I think I am reading within the parameters of the requirements of ZOU. And that then gave me a lot of confidence.

Reference 2 - 1.45% Coverage

there is need during orientation for an assurance , that even if you seem not to be understanding , but with time you are likely to cope up. Given that support , given that assurance, then it will plant a lot of confidence, academic confidence in students.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.69% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.14% Coverage

Because in study groups students share information. One person captures, understands certain information which someone fails and when they discuss it becomes very helpful.

Reference 2 - 0.55% Coverage

That is important to us as students because there is tendency to encourage each other.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [5.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.43% Coverage

Go and do this assignment. You don't know what an assignment is, and what do you do? So, I think if they had more time with their students, drafting exactly how an assignment should be done, what is needed and all sorts of things. All that is required for someone to learn, giving them the actual and equipping the person with the actual skills needed or knowledge needed in doing the study.

Reference 2 - 1.61% Coverage

I think, if they engage with a tutor it will be more profitable unlike doing it at their own because at times we had to face a problem of what is really wanted and no one could explain.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.04% Coverage

well those who were still responsible for orientation were quite encouraging. They gave us, you know, they encouraged us to study. They gave us, some of the

problems they had experienced. They highlighted some of the things, you know, drawbacks, eh-, some things which would entice us to stop studying, a very good example, because some of the people could say, look at me, I now have a PhD. I started doing this level up to the present day. So with that, personally, I said, oh fine, I want to be like Mr. So and so. And also the other thing which encouraged me was the fact that you move from a certain society and join the academics. Say, when you are in the community, you don't feel embarrassed. You mix with everyone. You say, he has got masters. I also have got masters. Ok. I can fit anywhere. That itself gave encouragement, so that I can fit in any society. Rather than say, Baba vanhingi (father of so and so) you have been invited to a party. But at that party there are doctors and you say, uh--, go and tell them I am busy. But you see, this time I can say ok fine, I will be there with confidence.

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY ADULTS IN DISTANCE LEARNING**

### **BVU**

It's so challenging and difficult considering that one will be at work. In my case, being a school head.

Reference 2 - 0.94% Coverage

in some cases one would travel some distances in which we had to board the bus in order to go and interact with that one that had done an almost similar programme.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 2 references coded [4.81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.07% Coverage

like in my case, I am working. I am a mother. I am also a student. At times assignments will be due and because of the session that we get for tutorials, we only get 6 hours per semester, the contact time per semester between students and tutors. That time on its own does not actually enlighten us about the contents or technicalities of the subject. At the end of the day, you have to probe further on your own in order to actually understand the demands of the subject

Reference 2 - 2.74% Coverage

I had problems especially on the module on Statistics as well as that of Computers. It is actually abstract. It doesn't explain in depth how we go about it. No wonder why I was now suggesting more, more time with the tutors because the modules are not clear, especially the Statistics one and the Computer one. I think they need to be revised because they are not clear enough. I also asked the Intake eh--, the previous intakes like Intake 16 and those who are in the masters programme. They also say that they had problems with those modules. They are not clear enough. They are not explaining in the layman's language.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.67% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.35% Coverage

this year in 2009 we have not yet received our modules.

Reference 2 - 1.17% Coverage

the tutors at ZOU are literally inaccessible. You find that they change from time to time. They tend also to flow with the tide. When teachers are on strike, they are also on strike.

Reference 3 - 1.15% Coverage

I am saying the tutors are only accessible as far as tutorials are concerned. After that, their one or two hours, each one goes their way and telephoning doesn't seem to help.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 14 references coded [7.62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.75% Coverage

it's quite difficult to study in isolation. And since it's also my first time to study alone at home, I could meet some problems of not understanding the demands of the question that I was given and also the idea of studying at home. It's not very conducive.

Reference 2 - 0.24% Coverage

At times noise and many other things, especially when one is a lodger at a place.

Reference 3 - 0.70% Coverage

the orientation, on--- the venues, in fact the orientation venue was very far away from us. Some of the students could not get on the orientation venue on time. And that affected most of the students since they did not attend the orientation.

Reference 4 - 0.67% Coverage

on the orientation , we were told that there was a module which would explain on B. Ed and how to study alone at home. And we found out that when we read that module , some of the issues we could not master. We could not understand.

Reference 5 - 0.62% Coverage

those lecturers that we were allocated, most, some of them were not very accommodative. They could ask why did you not attend the orientation? Or they could also say you were orientated but why didn't you understand?

Reference 6 - 1.28% Coverage

I had quite some problems on that course. I only did theory part of it and not the computer, the practical part of it because, I had no access to any of those computers. And to go to private colleges to study the computers, I had no money on that one. And so, I could only write the exam theoretically or study the course theoretically not practically. At the moment, I can only operate a computer because of the access that I have at school.

Reference 7 - 0.25% Coverage

some of the modules lack a lot of detail. A lot of information, like the computer one.

Reference 8 - 0.29% Coverage

lacks a lot of detail in relation to the exam questions or assignment questions that one is given.

Reference 9 - 0.52% Coverage

most of the students I had discussion with would also say that I had never read the module because it didn't have any information related to the assignments that students are given

Reference 10 - 0.17% Coverage

especially those in the first and second semesters modules

Reference 11 - 0.34% Coverage

Those ones at times they show that they are drafts because a lot of details left because they need some improvement.

Reference 12 - 0.13% Coverage

in our culture, there are extended families

Reference 13 - 0.89% Coverage

members of the families come, the student may fail to, to withstand the pressure that they get from the relatives when they visit. Like, a visitor can come when the student has got a lecture to attend, or tutorials to attend, some of them could fail to attend those tutorials which are helpful in their studies

Reference 14 - 0.78% Coverage

the student need to , to explain to their relatives, that they are students. They are working on something that they want to achieve. So, that transparency , is important to the, be understood by the extended family or those people , their relatives, they have at home

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 5 references coded [7.43% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

I was in a rural area and sometimes in an urban area.

Reference 2 - 0.91% Coverage

Ah--, it was very difficult because we used candles at the place where I was. There was no electricity.

Reference 3 - 3.98% Coverage

I faced a challenge because there was no enough revision since it was distance education. But, at times when you are studying you need someone to assist you in, when you are reading you have to ask if say, you don't understand a topic, you have to ask how should I go about this thing. So, it's distance education you will be doing it on your own with no one to ask and you have to face an exam whether you are well equipped or not . You will be in doubt.

Reference 4 - 0.65% Coverage

At times I had to ignore family problems and concentrate on B Ed studies.

Reference 5 - 1.42% Coverage

At times, the demands of the work could be so high and ZOU maybe the due date would be due and you failed to meet the deadline because of the demands of work.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.57% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.86% Coverage

meeting some transport costs and also being a student and at times being employed as well. You have demands for-- at work place and demands for the programme and also demands of the family needs.

Reference 2 - 0.71% Coverage

I think it was around 300kilometres from where I was working to Chinhoyi?

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.42% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.42% Coverage

in my case, as a family man. I had to look for the money to pay for all my studies. I had to look for money to care for my family. Also time, I had to look for time. Apart from the fact that I was employed. I had to look for time to read, go to church and also to look after my family. So, it's quite challenging.

## **DIFFICULTIES FACED IN DISTANCE LEARNING**

### **ANGELINE A**

Studying through distance learning for me it was very difficult. For example, I had to go to work. At that time I had a child who was around nine months. So, work, the child, and the studying. It was very difficult for me.

Reference 2 - 0.78% Coverage

in Bindura we don't have the internet. We have to go to Harare if you want to access internet.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.49% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.49% Coverage

we have got assignments but we don't have modules. What are we going to do?

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.21% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.13% Coverage

I had to first of all consider my daughter,

Reference 2 - 0.24% Coverage

I could pay her school fees, buy some of the materials that are needed at school,

Reference 3 - 1.85% Coverage

I could decide to raise the money so that I could register for my studies. But at times, I couldn't raise that money. And I also said that students who are lodgers, I am a lodger at my place. And my student's financial demands again. I could not meet these at times. So I ended up failing to pay for my studies and that delayed me in my studies. And also, eh--, with the typing of the, of the research project. I had also a lot of expenses, not ---yet through and I could discuss that with the typist, maybe the typist could also abandon the, the typing without even telling me because at times I could fail to meet the, the ---

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 3 references coded [3.38% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.24% Coverage

there was no telephone.

Reference 2 - 0.68% Coverage

I would personally come and sometimes we communicated through letters.

Reference 3 - 2.46% Coverage

it was sort of difficult because ZOU would not give you, the library would not give books for a week. They would just give you for overnight. So, since I was coming from the rural areas, I would just borrow on Friday and return the book on Saturday.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 4 references coded [4.59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.55% Coverage

The mechanism was quite conducive at times but, later, because of financial constraints we could not manage to go to the tutorials given by the tutors at the centres provided.

Reference 2 - 0.87% Coverage

it was very difficult because we used candles at the place where I was. There was no electricity.

Reference 3 - 1.27% Coverage

It was through my efforts. To be where a computer is, where you used, you were required to pay money for operating a computer at computer shops.

Reference 4 - 0.89% Coverage

It was, the Mashonaland East one was roughly 50 kilometres from where I was. I used to go to Harare.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.18% Coverage

When I started the programme I was actually working in Mash East and, I was doing my programme in Chinhoyi, that's Mash West.

Reference 2 - 0.70% Coverage

I think it was around 300kilometres from where I was working to Chinhoyi?

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 3 references coded [5.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.32% Coverage

To cope with the need for electricity for studying , what I did , I bought a motor car battery and some globes , some electric globes which I used for lighting.

Reference 2 - 2.68% Coverage

If ever I went to Muzarabani before collecting the modules from Mashonaland Central Region, floods could keep me away from coming to the region to get the modules on time to such an extent that in most cases I used to collect the modules during the end of March and had to rush writing my assignments during the first semester.

Reference 3 - 1.71% Coverage

I was divorced from that kind of communication because of the nature of area where I was based. So to communicate with my region I used letters in most cases and sometimes telephones from the police station.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.73% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.42% Coverage

in my case, as a family man. I had to look for the money to pay for all my studies. I had to look for money to care for my family. Also time, I had to look for time. Apart from the fact that I was employed. I had to look for time to read, go to church and also to look after my family. So, it's quite challenging.

Reference 2 - 0.72% Coverage

That question to me is very painful, painful in the context that my supervisor did not , wasn't honest enough to tell me that this piece of work is not worthy it.

Reference 3 - 0.59% Coverage

I had not been properly supervised. So, personally, I think the tutors must be supervised in the way they supervise their students.

Ah, in the urban area , the challenges are limited because everything is nearby unlike those in the rural areas . Only that in Bindura we don't have the internet. We have to go to Harare if you want to access internet.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF COPING WITH DL**

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.10% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.10% Coverage

I started in a rural set up , where one finds himself almost isolated from colleagues who will be pursuing the same studies. So, it was a great challenge, especially after the last academic qualification which was almost about 15 years and one finds oneself now embarking on this programme when one had last done an assignment in the last 15 years. So it was so challenging.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.53% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.53% Coverage

My place is peri-urban. I am within 20 km from Harare. The place is electrified.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.56% Coverage

Like some of us in urban centres, eh—when you study at a place where you are a lodger, at times there might be a lot of noise and that is not a good environment for, conducive for studying.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.95% Coverage

I was fortunate because the rural area I was staying there was electricity. So, there was no problem when it comes to studying. And also, the school was near the road so transport was not a problem.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.49% Coverage

It was roughly 50 kilometres from the place where I was.

Reference 2 - 0.49% Coverage

I was in a rural area and sometimes in an urban area.

Reference 3 - 0.91% Coverage

Ah--, it was very difficult because we used candles at the place where I was. There was no electricity.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.68% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.68% Coverage

I think it was around 300kilometres from where I was working to Chinhoyi?

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.62% Coverage

very remote rural area because it was 7km away from the Mozambique border.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.23% Coverage

the urban area, it has got its own disadvantages too

Reference 2 - 2.75% Coverage

a lot of noise. When you are studying, some people don't care. They will be blowing out their radiograms . You have got to accept that, you see. That was the most important one. As I said, some people could not understand the fact that you know, I've got this time to study. You could just find a friend coming to say, come on, how is he? An so forth and yet, sometimes, I had to lie. To tell my wife to say he is not here. At times, I had even to hide my vehicle, my car and park it somewhere. And when my wife says he is not here, people could then believe, just because I wanted to concentrate on my studies.

## **RURAL LOCATION COPING STRATEGIES**

BVU.

I started in a rural set up , where one finds himself almost isolated from colleagues who will be pursuing the same studies

Reference 2 - 0.94% Coverage

in some cases one would travel some distances in which we had to board the bus in order to go and interact with that one that had done an almost similar programme.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.88% Coverage

the library would not give books for a week. They would just give you for overnight. So, since I was coming from the rural areas, I would just borrow on Friday and return the book on Saturday

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.39% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.85% Coverage

it was very difficult because we used candles at the place where I was. There was no electricity.

Reference 2 - 1.54% Coverage

Maybe they could provide gas lamps or the new system of lighting, whereby one, like this light, solar energy maybe could do. Because candles at times kill the sight of people.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 2 references coded [4.01% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.63% Coverage

very remote rural area because it was 7km away from the Mozambique border.

Reference 2 - 3.37% Coverage

To cope with the need for electricity for studying , what I did , I bought a motor car battery and some globes , some electric globes which I used for lighting. Then for other strategies I used, I used to study on my own by means of using the module as a source of information which was self-contained , in which I used those self-assessment tasks to help me revise the module and other sources of information.

## PLANNING (P)

### ANGELINE

they should plan their things. Plan on how you are going to do your household work, do your reading, maybe your studying and how you are going to cope at your place of work. Because your studies, shouldn't eh--,your studies shouldn't interrupt your work. And also your studies shouldn't also interrupt how you do your things at home. So you have to plan and give yourself time to study and to do everything.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.00% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.01% Coverage

planning appropriately, how you prioritise what you want to do. That means you have to leave out a number of things so that you cope up with the demands of the learning programme as much as possible. And, I think also, you need to give time to the learning part of it.

Reference 2 - 0.99% Coverage

The idea that I think was very useful to me was to have a personal time table. I gave myself about one and half hours to work with my materials , whether there was a test or no test, I made sure that during each day I had one and half hours to work on my materials.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 2 references coded [7.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.56% Coverage

one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 2 - 6.51% Coverage

The reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times. The family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially. Once the family understands that then they are going to afford you as much support and at the same time they are not going to interfere with your reading time. Then at work, the teachers , that I used to lead, I had to address them that , you are going to notice a bit of a difference in as far as my leadership is concerned because I am embarking on this programme, and the programme also requires their support. And I remember again, even the district education officers (DEO), we had to tell them that we needed their support. We needed them to understand that, sometimes if they found any area of uncovered

work, although we tried to balance, that we did not do injustice to our profession. But we would make our DEOs understand that if they demand so much from us sometimes, we fail to meet some of their requirements because of the new commitment,

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.83% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.16% Coverage

It needs a lot of planning on the part of the student.

Reference 2 - 0.44% Coverage

I could not meet , especially on financial aspect because , I lacked planning. I started studying when my student, when my child was at a boarding school

Reference 3 - 0.24% Coverage

it created a lot of problems for me since I could not meet the financial demands.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.74% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.74% Coverage

Planning is very, very important. It's very, very important. In fact, 50% of the success comes from planning because this is the way I look at it, you must know when to do this and when to do that. And then you must have a timetable. Some people would like to wake up very early. Some people read up till late. So it depends on what suits you. But, planning is very, very, very important.

## COMMITMENT (C)

### BEE

I think strategy number one , is perhaps having the desire to do it, and then planning appropriately, how you prioritise what you want to do. That means you have to leave out a number of things so that you cope up with the demands of the learning programme as much as possible. And, I think also, you need to give time to the learning part of it.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.72% Coverage

I am never the same. The programme is so good. But, it needs one to be so dedicated , to be so dedicated, to be so committed.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

I actually urge them to soldier on. There is nothing that is done in life whereby one doesn't have to sweat.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.84% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.14% Coverage

students, they need at least a lot of commitment

Reference 2 - 0.20% Coverage

commitment in the sense that they have to start an aspect and finish it

Reference 3 - 0.49% Coverage

I have failed to complete my studies at the intended time because I could not, at times, I lacked commitment. The problems that I went through demoralised me in my studies

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.46% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.25% Coverage

What I am trying to say is, “Concentrate, concentrate!”

Reference 2 - 0.21% Coverage

When you start studying, go ahead and complete.

## STUDYING IN ISOLATION

**ANGELINE A**-Reference 1 - 0.95% Coverage

Studying in isolation is a little bit challenging compared to what we used to do at college, at teachers colleges.

Reference 2 - 1.90% Coverage

But studying alone is challenging and it also gives you the ability to be time conscious. You have to be time conscious. You have to make sure that you complete your assignments before the due dates or you have to plan your things.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) -reference 1 - 0.46% Coverage

I think was good because it gave me as a person, time to deal with the materials on my own and at most I would always have

Reference 2 - 0.27% Coverage

a time table that I would use to look at my materials as much as possible.

Reference 3 - 0.71% Coverage

once in a while you would not find it easy to grasp the concepts at once, so you would meet challenges here and there and you would need someone to assist you in understanding the concepts.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 2 references coded [6.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.10% Coverage

I started in a rural set up , where one finds himself almost isolated from colleagues who will be pursuing the same studies. So, it was a great challenge, especially after the last academic qualification which was almost about 15 years and one finds oneself now embarking on this programme when one had last done an assignment in the last 15 years. So it was so challenging.

Reference 2 - 4.44% Coverage

It was difficult, because, you know, being a degree programme, being a new programme, one could only derive confidence if one’s ideas were supported by colleagues. Now, if you are on your own you are working on an assignment, you, you are not very sure whether what you are putting down is the right material. And yet, I remember in my first assignment, I was not very sure whether what I was writing was relevant, was the actual requirement as endeavoured by ZOU. So, it was just a question, sometimes of trial and error (We both laughed). And yet, it was only

after the assignment had been marked, that's when, one would say, ah I have it. And therefore, if I got this mark, I think I am reading within the parameters of the requirements of ZOU. And that then gave me a lot of confidence.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.94% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.56% Coverage

Maybe, in my case I only went through formal education up to Grade 7. Then from there

Reference 2 - 0.27% Coverage

I actually want to be alone when studying.

Reference 3 - 0.11% Coverage

I find it easier

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.20% Coverage]

I found it was hard, but we could make groups.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.18% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.18% Coverage

I think challenges were only of time because, since I was fully employed, eh- I had to organize myself so that I would also have time to visit the library, the ZOU library and this was mainly during weekends and holidays.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [6.41% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.43% Coverage

is not so viable because, at times you fail to, say you are reading, you fail to get the concept of what is being said by what you are reading . So, when you have others, you have a chance to discuss what is really stated by the question, whatever matter you are dealing with. .

Reference 2 - 3.98% Coverage

I faced a challenge because there was no enough revision since it was distance education. But, at times when you are studying you need someone to assist you in, when you are reading you have to ask if say, you don't understand a topic, you have to ask how should I go about this thing. So, it's distance education you will be doing it on your own with no one to ask and you have to face an exam whether you are well equipped or not . You will be in doubt.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.34% Coverage

I find it quite interesting to study on my own because when I was doing B.Ed programme I was still working in Muzarabani where I could hardly meet other students. I used to go it alone and I took it as a challenge that could help me to come to the top in terms of the academic world.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.57% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.57% Coverage

studying in isolation in the first place needs someone who is responsible, to have enough time. There are a lot of challenges.

## **ISOLATED STUDY CHALLENGES (ISC)**

### **PETTY**

At times you find yourself having some questions whereby you fail to get maybe answers since you will be on your own.

Reference 2 - 0.75% Coverage

it's quite difficult to study in isolation. And since it's also my first time to study alone at home, I could meet some problems of not understanding the demands of the question that I was given and also the idea of studying at home. It's not very conducive.

Reference 3 - 0.23% Coverage

At times noise and many other things, especially when one is a lodger at a place.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.11% Coverage

At times you find yourself having some questions whereby you fail to get maybe answers since you will be on your own.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.80% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.58% Coverage

Approximately, I used to travel about 180, at least 180 kilometres .

Reference 2 - 0.23% Coverage

**Z:** One way. Single trip.

## **STUDYING IN ISOLATION INTERVENTIONS (SIII)**

### **BEE**

initially you would look at the other students, colleagues. You would once in a while phone the other tutors, lecturers and you would also have even other people who have some experience in distance education to assist you better than you would have done.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.98% Coverage

I went through a module. I did not even understand the, those questions which are at the end of the, every chapter what they require. I was at the verge of actually dropping out because I was stuck. So, I asked the other group members those who had completed and those who were in Intake 16, 17 and those who were doing their masters how they went through their studies. So they actually advised me to contact other group members so that we would actually read the topic and then we carry out discussions with other students within the area. That's how I actually managed to cope with the, the assignments as well as other topics that I had come, come across during my studies.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.20% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.20% Coverage

it was hard, but we could make groups

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.60% Coverage

if one drinks and does not put a lot of effort into stopping that, you would find that you won't be able to cope up with private or distance studies. You have got to prune, I would call it prune down some of the habits, which will deter you from doing your studies. In my case, from the experience from 'O' Level up to 'A' Level and also UNISA, I had got that discipline. You have got to be well disciplined. So, that if you say after work I must relax, after that from this time to this time I must be on my books, you just have to do that or else you won't cope with studying.

## **DT2: ZOU SUPPORT MECHANISMS (ZSM)**

### **ORIENTATION INTO DISTANCE LEARNING**

#### **IMPORTANCE OF LEARNER ORIENTATION (ILO)**

##### **ANGELINE**

I think it should take some time. Maybe a day or two so that, for example, the students must go to their areas of study and then maybe they will discuss with their lecturers on how to write assignments because assignments differ with subjects and areas of study. So I think, each lecturer or each area has got its way of writing assignments. So I think they should have time with their lecturers before being given assignments.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [4.23% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.23% Coverage

The orientation is very necessary to students because it informs them of what is expected of them so that when they come into, when they are now studying they will be knowing exactly what will be expected of them. They will be knowing how to write assignments, how to research and how to discuss and even they will also be exposed to the knowledge of getting information from the internet using the computers and they will also be informed of the very good libraries where they can access some helpful information.

#### **ADEQUACY OF ZOU'S ORIENTATION OF NEW LEARNERS (AZONL)**

##### **BVU**

Reference 1 - 0.76% Coverage

I must say the orientation didn't help so much but only it just gave us the platform from where we, we had wanted to go and work.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [3.41% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.15% Coverage

it enables -----to show someone the physical facilities, the officers in those offices and to face any -----For example, there is a dean for students. What is his function? You find that-----like student reps. For example , students are failing to get their modules but there hasn't , that information, while students pay,

Reference 2 - 0.33% Coverage

ZOU should prepare students-----to get materials.

Reference 3 - 0.92% Coverage

for example we have got assignments but we don't have modules. What are we going to do? Eh--, I think orientation should cover these things.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.85% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.85% Coverage

Yes, I would like to believe that, because during orientation you were given the course outline. So, if you want to read ahead, it was up to you because you would know, eh-- what to read.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.78% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.78% Coverage

Eh--, orientation is not quite--they do it not deeply. It's at a low level. As someone who will be doing distance education, who will be working on her own, or who is, he needs proper and quite fruitful induction. When we went to be enrolled, we were just given modules. Go and do this assignment. You don't know what an assignment is, and what do you do? So, I think if they had more time with their students, drafting exactly how an assignment should be done, what is needed and all sorts of things. All that is required for someone to learn, giving them the actual and equipping the person with the actual skills needed or knowledge needed in doing the study.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.42% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.42% Coverage

I would personally say yes, because we were actually told that this was distance learning and most of the things you had to find them out on your own.

## **RATING OF ZOU'S ORIENTATION OF NEW DISTANCE LEARNERS (RONDL)**

### **ANGELINE**

Reference 1

U-uh, it's not sufficient because you are oriented maybe for some two hours. But what you expect and what you do during the studies is totally different.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.68% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.68% Coverage

the orientation didn't help so much but only it just gave us the platform from where we, we had wanted to go and work.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.04% Coverage

yes it does , because they actually warn us of the problems that we are going to face as we will be involved in our studies but unfortunately, these strategies that they, the mechanisms that they support I don't actually support the support they give during the orientation. They actually tell us that during your learning period you may actually lose friends, husbands and whatever. They warn us of that but they don't actually provide the support which will actually deter us from losing our friends as well as our family members because of the little time , contact time that we have with our family members as well as our friends because of the pressures involved in the learning period.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.04% Coverage

I don't know by now. But , at the time I started in 2001, eh--, the orientation was quite alright because you were advised that you can't study while you are alone. You must have a group/pgroups.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 4 references coded [3.25% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.26% Coverage

Hugh, eh--, according to my own point of view, I think the orientation needs a lot of detail like-----to the programme. I couldn't understand some of the concepts especially student -----because , I found that I could not meet my lecturers adequately. And that makes it quite difficult for me. Also the orientation on how to write the assignment, that was, I couldn't really understand at that time when we were orientated but later own.

Reference 2 - 0.70% Coverage

the orientation, on--- the venues, in fact the orientation venue was very far away from us. Some of the students could not get on the orientation venue on time. And that affected most of the students since they did not attend the orientation.

Reference 3 - 0.67% Coverage

on the orientation , we were told that there was a module which would explain on B. Ed and how to study alone at home. And we found out that when we read that module , some of the issues we could not master. We could not understand.

Reference 4 - 0.62% Coverage

those lecturers that we were allocated, most, some of them were not very accommodative. They could ask why did you not attend the orientation? Or they could also say you were orientated but why didn't you understand?

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.60% Coverage

orientation is not quite--they do it not deeply. It's at a low level.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.04% Coverage]

## Reference 1 - 5.04% Coverage

well those who were still responsible for orientation were quite encouraging. They gave us, you know, they encouraged us to study. They gave us, some of the problems they had experienced. They highlighted some of the things, you know, drawbacks, eh-, some things which would entice us to stop studying, a very good example, because some of the people could say, look at me, I now have a PhD. I started doing this level up to the present day. So with that, personally, I said, oh fine, I want to be like Mr. So and so. And also the other thing which encouraged me was the fact that you move from a certain society and join the academics. Say, when you are in the community, you don't feel embarrassed. You mix with everyone. You say, he has got masters. I also have got masters. Ok. I can fit anywhere. That itself gave encouragement, so that I can fit in any society. Rather than say, Baba va ngingi (father of so and so) you have been invited to a party. But at that party there are doctors and you say, uh--, go and tell them I am busy. But you see, this time I can say ok fine, I will be there with confidence.

## **SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE DISTANCE LEARNING ORIENTATION (SIDLO)**

### **ANGELINE A**

## Reference 1

I think it should take some time. Maybe a day or two so that, for example, the students must go to their areas of study and then maybe they will discuss with their lecturers on how to write assignments because assignments differ with subjects and areas of study. So I think, each lecturer or each area has got its way of writing assignments. So I think they should have time with their lecturers before being given assignments.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [6.23% Coverage]

## Reference 1 - 6.23% Coverage

what ZOU should do is, this is distance learning. The orientation should actually, drill on some of the challenges that distance students are likely to meet. In particular, one is a family person. How does one cope? One is a school head or one is a school teacher. How does one cope? One has got family commitments. One has got other challenges, social challenges. How does one cope? Because if one is not doing very well as evidenced by how one is faring in the assignment, you know, when we began, sometimes we got very discouraging comments from some lecturers. I remember a colleague of mine getting 10 out of 100 and was almost dismissed as a useless student. But, when we actually met with him and gave him encouragement, he became one of our best students. It was from we, the colleagues, and yet the lecturers had almost dismissed him. So, there is need during orientation for an assurance, that even if you seem not to be understanding, but with time you are likely to cope up. Given that support, given that assurance, then it will plant a lot of confidence, academic confidence in students.

## Course module

ANGELINE A

The modules were very useful. They had almost everything , but also I had to go to the library for my assignments and other reading materials.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 9 references coded [5.81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.48% Coverage

And also the university or the open university had enough materials that supported us in carrying out our assignments as it were.

Reference 2 - 0.43% Coverage

During our time, the tutors seemed to be very interested in us and they were very enthusiastic about the programme.

Reference 3 - 0.27% Coverage

They would visit us at our local areas which I don't see today anywhere.

Reference 4 - 0.42% Coverage

all you needed that time, was to organize yourselves as a group , and you call a tutor and the tutor would come.

Reference 5 - 0.67% Coverage

each one of us had a personal module to use. It is unlike today where people perhaps go almost to the end of the year without a module. In our case you would always have a module.

Reference 6 - 0.44% Coverage

Fortunately, when our coordinators heard about them, we don't know what happened there but we got other tutors coming

Reference 7 - 1.30% Coverage

I think it was very good. At least we were always informed of what was happening. We used to receive communication both written and telephone communication. We never had things just happening when you were not aware. We had ours done methodically and you were able to plan because things were not changing abruptly or irregularly as we have today.

Reference 8 - 0.68% Coverage

you would get direct communication from tutors, coordinators and also the student body. We had very good student representatives who communicated, which I think is a far cry today.

Reference 9 - 1.13% Coverage

You find even where you need results, we always had our results sent to us and we wouldn't bother to go and look for them. Though you would see maybe on the board, or whatever, but you would know you were going to receive a copy of your results. But today, if you don't look for it you will not get it

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.12% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.12% Coverage

The modules were good.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.32% Coverage

support mechanisms I am referring to are tutorial lessons. These are a sort of eye openers to the contents of the subjects. They only scratch on the surface. But they don't go any deeper, because of the contact time. So they support to a certain extent , to a lesser extent than we expect of them .

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.80% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.32% Coverage

I am given modules which will guide me to study.

Reference 2 - 0.48% Coverage

modules are very important because they allow you to learn at your pace.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.87% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.10% Coverage

contact tutorials with lecturers.

Reference 2 - 0.26% Coverage

the modules that we were given as well, assisted us in learning or mastering the concepts

Reference 3 - 0.51% Coverage

Since I found that there was a problem on that I could consult my lecturers and programme coordinators. That, so that I would well be explained on how to write those assignments

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [4.73% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.73% Coverage

ZOU used to organize some visits to provinces where students would assemble and then they would have discussions with ZOU tutors. And again, during examination time, people would have discussions which were also lead by tutors from ZOU. And ZOU also organized financial support through loans from banks. I don't know whether it is still happening today. But, during my time you would access loans from banks through ZOU. Right, and also we were given a lot of handouts by tutors.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.55% Coverage

The mechanism was quite conducive at times but, later, because of financial constraints we could not manage to go to the tutorials given by the tutors at the centres provided.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.09% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.09% Coverage

We tried to make use of the support system given by ZOU through some study circles and discussions with others.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.25% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.25% Coverage

we used to meet as a group. By the way Intake 3, we could meet our tutors who could be either part-time or full-time. They could arrange us for revision

programmes for the various courses where we could interact with them and share our work experiences and academic experiences with them. The problems we were facing during our studies and we could come up with new ways of going round the problems.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.07% Coverage

the support I used I got from ZOU were, one, I was exposed to the library where we had to collect books but the books were very few and in most cases we had to photocopy books so as to supplement the services of the library. And we also had tutors to whom we referred to all the time we were in had some problems and also guidance from them. And apart from that, personally, I had also some friends who were interested in what I was doing, who encouraged me.

### **COMMUNICATION WITHIN ZOU (CIZ)**

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 4 references coded [5.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.00% Coverage

It was very poor. Very poor. You see, during our time, ZOU used to appear on air on just, was it once a week? Depending on whether one had a radio. Even if one had a radio, one would not have the batteries. It was a rural set up. So, information, ZOU was very poor at dissemination of information. Ah, you would almost want to depend on hunting from colleagues to find out whether, there was any newest information concerning the programme. As far as rural students are concerned, I think dissemination of information was very poor.

Reference 2 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 3 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 4 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [3.89% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.32% Coverage

The computers are only accessed by their workers.

Reference 1 - 0.28% Coverage

the tutors at ZOU are literally inaccessible.

Reference 2 - 1.15% Coverage

I am saying the tutors are only accessible as far as tutorials are concerned. After that, their one or two hours, each one goes their way and telephoning doesn't seem to help.

Reference 3 - 2.46% Coverage

I think the institution seems to be remote from the students(He laughed). They seem only to communicate through examinations and assignments. And----- otherwise, the sense of belonging in terms of being students tends to be when you wear your gowns when graduating. So, in other words we are learning without the institution. Maybe. It's because of the economic problems.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.67% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.67% Coverage

I want to thank ZOU again on communication. They are able to communicate with students especially, when one is able to visit the centre here in Harare. They are a lot of information pinned there that one could write and if one could see could convey that information to other students. I think on that one they are excellent. Only that they need to staff develop some of the administrative staff here. Eh-, especially those of the lower ranks who usually meet students need to be developed on certain issues that are relevant to the day to day running of the , the university.

### **COMMUNICATION FACILITIES IN RURAL AREAS(CRA)**

**RUTENDO R**

there was no telephone.

Reference 2 - 0.68% Coverage

I would personally come and sometimes we communicated through letters.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.71% Coverage

I was divorced from that kind of communication because of the nature of area where I was based. So to communicate with my region I used letters in most cases and sometimes telephones from the police station.

### **COMMUNICATION INTERVENTIONS (CI)**

**BVU BV**

I would have loved to see some more bulletin in the form of newsletters, coming from , from ZOU, yes.

### **ZOU ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS(ZAR)**

**ANGELINE A**

I think they were enjoyable.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.85% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.85% Coverage

I have been in touch with my programme coordinator. She actually gives us a, and especially when we report to her that maybe , our tutor is away. At times she actually comes in , maybe she, when she is not ah—she is not , the one in charge of the subject she can just be there and then ask us to work in groups. They have been quite supportive, the programme coordinators and others, like ah-----ah---. I am not quite

familiar with names . But they have been quite helpful, especially when we went to the orientation programme. But as for the clerks, there when we come to look for our assignments, we have had problems with one clerk , whom the group members when we were in year two, people were actually on the verge of actually demonstrating as far as the coordination was concerned. As for now there has been a change when that complaint was made to the administrators.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.19% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.19% Coverage

I have not met any challenges.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.86% Coverage

at the centre, you could find say your assignments are not there. Some will say, you go and look at. You just look into other intakes maybe there was a mix up

Reference 2 - 0.43% Coverage

it depends according to the mood of the person. Some are good . some are what.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.53% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.18% Coverage

majority of them were quite accommodative, and could assist me

Reference 2 - 0.68% Coverage

especially registration on research projects ,especially for those students who are re-writing it or those who could not manage to finish and re-register , eh, you find that some of the administrative staff lack information on that one.

Reference 3 - 1.67% Coverage

I want to thank ZOU again on communication. They are able to communicate with students especially, when one is able to visit the centre here in Harare. They are a lot of information pinned there that one could write and if one could see could convey that information to other students. I think on that one they are excellent. Only that they need to staff develop some of the administrative staff here. Eh-, especially those of the lower ranks who usually meet students need to be developed on certain issues that are relevant to the day to day running of the , the university.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.14% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.14% Coverage

Ah- not all.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.79% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.37% Coverage

Oh yes, I did. I faced a lot of problems.

Reference 2 - 1.42% Coverage

At times, the demands of the work could be so high and ZOU maybe the due date would be due and you failed to meet the deadline because of the demands of work.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.08% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.08% Coverage

Ah- no.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.07% Coverage

Ah, no.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.31% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.31% Coverage

I didn't meet any challenges except one where we said, no to the one who said once you get a book today tomorrow you bring it back. We said it can't even work. Why can't you give us a week? So, I think that is one thing where we actually helped. I think it is being practised that you can't ask these books over night. Mind you, these people have other things to do. We do understand the books are few. And then the other thing was to photocopy. It is expensive but again it's one way of building up your library.

## **STUDENT SERVICES UNIT(SSU)**

### **CHARITY**

I haven't been in touch with the student's unit.

Reference 2 - 1.03% Coverage

Whatever problems I encountered during my programme , I actually directed them to the programme coordinator and not to the student representative. He or she has not been there for us and we are not even aware of his or her existence.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.40% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.20% Coverage

Whatever it is I never consulted it, I don't even know who they are

Reference 2 - 0.12% Coverage

I usually consulted the project coordinator

Reference 3 - 0.08% Coverage

Programme coordinator sorry.

## **DT3: LEARNING RESOURCES (LR)**

### **ANGELINE**

The ZOU library had some materials but they were not enough. We had some materials but they were not enough. We had to look around other libraries from other colleges and from Harare. And I think also the students , there comes a time when the library is over-crowded. There are too many students.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 4 references coded [4.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.40% Coverage

resources like textbooks, I happened to have had a few friends who had gone to university education that time

Reference 2 - 0.23% Coverage

I had enough, perhaps textbooks to rely on during the lessons

Reference 3 - 3.37% Coverage

Our access to tutors was very high, that time. I bemoan that. During our time, the tutors seemed to be very interested in us and they were very enthusiastic about the programme. Wherever they were, you would ask them. They would come. They would visit us at our local areas which I don't see today anywhere. Because all you needed that time, was to organize yourselves as a group, and you call a tutor and the tutor would come. And I know, in most cases, we didn't even pay for anything. I remember very well Dr Mortimer, Dr Mahere, carrying us through some sessions. So, all in all, I think our access to tutors was very high. And the scheduled weekend tutorials, we never had cases where we would have a scheduled tutorial failing and then it was never done or that there was no tutor. I think we always had people who were ready to assist us during that time. So we had adequate access to tutors.

Reference 4 - 0.95% Coverage

we had enough modules to use though they were still in the draft form. But each one of us had a personal module to use. It is unlike today where people perhaps go almost to the end of the year without a module. In our case you would always have a module.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.29% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.29% Coverage

I think our library. You hardly find a book.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.24% Coverage

The books were not enough.

Reference 2 - 1.32% Coverage

We used to ask from friends. When we met at tutorials you could ask someone, you can say, do you have this book, whatever literature one has would help.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.49% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.49% Coverage

In Marondera the books were not enough but in Harare the books were OK because I would go to Seke Teachers' College or Victoria Memorial Library in town.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.22% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.22% Coverage

the libraries must be packed with a lot of books.

## **LEARNERS' USE OF OWN IDEAS AND RESOURCES (LOR)**

**ANGELINE**

I used the Internet. I used the Harare library, the UZ (University of Zimbabwe) library and also I used some other books from other universities to cope with studies.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.92% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.92% Coverage

The idea that I think was very useful to me was to have a personal time table. I gave myself about one and half hours to work with my materials , whether there was a test or no test, I made sure that during each day I had one and half hours to work on my materials. I think that helped me a lot in my studies rather than just ploughing through or working as it were. And also maybe, as a group, we decided we were going to have sessions where we would lecture to each other and so on. I think we also benefited a lot because of that as it gave us a lot of time to read around the topic and then we present to other students and then, I think we would then discuss as a group. Whether we were on the right track or wrong track altogether and correct one another as much as possible.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.72% Coverage

one had to source books, from our own. Most of it was out of photocopying and you know, the, the situation in which we were exposed, because the programme was actually educational and much of it had to do with what went on in our system. So, we had to use much of what we experienced as school heads, as teachers, in order for us to actually zero ourselves down to understanding the requirements of the programme. Eh-, compounded by actually sourcing for learning materials from colleagues, photocopying books. I want to say, like we had no exposure of library, especially being first intake, we didn't have any libraries at all. So, it was a question of trying to find out where one could find anybody who had done B.Ed through the conventional way and then try to find out whether they, whether they had the relevant materials that we could use and in some cases one would travel some distances in which we had to board the bus in order to go and interact with that one that had done an almost similar programme.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.99% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.99% Coverage

I have asked for summaries from other students who have already completed the programme. And we have also contacted other sort of tutors , private tutors as groups , so that we, we actually understand the, the subject better because of the of little contact time that we have with tutors. So, at times, we actually, contact other private tutors, who we have to hire and pay a certain amount of, that we actually pass the exams as well as assignments.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.21% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.21% Coverage

I used to run around to the British Council, libraries in other ministries, that's what I did. And last year they asked a question pertaining to food in relation to land redistribution . I went to the GMB(Grain Marketing Board). I went to the Ministry of Agriculture. I went to the statistical office. I read magazines and I found quite a lot of information. In other words, we are saying the student has to be resourceful. In other words that's the skill that should be promoted by any university.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.15% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.15% Coverage

I could source some textbooks or texts from other students who had gone through the programme or visit local authority libraries which are in our residential areas so that I could research on whatever topic or whatever assignment that I had. And also I could source some past papers so that, especially towards examination we could source those past exam papers to get information to revise.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.32% Coverage

We used to ask from friends. When we met at tutorials you could ask someone, you can say, do you have this book, whatever literature one has would help.

### **EUSABIA E**

Mr Madzimure give us a topic on say Staff Development . Then we could just give him a token of appreciation.

Reference 2 - 0.30% Coverage

a teacher at Glen View 5 who could help with Statistics

Reference 3 - 0.45% Coverage

he could come in the afternoon, after school. Then from 2 o'clock to four o'clock

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.62% Coverage

I funded my own education and maybe, I sacrificed my own time.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.79% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.45% Coverage

money, other books from libraries and from friends.

Reference 2 - 1.34% Coverage

We used to ask from friends. When we met at tutorials you could ask someone, you can say, do you have this book, whatever literature one has would help.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.08% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.08% Coverage

We had to buy some textbooks. At times you would get some information from the internet and going to the library.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.02% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.02% Coverage

I used to buy some textbooks from bookshops in Harare and to photocopy some journal materials from the University of Zimbabwe.

[<InternalsZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.10% Coverage

I had a lot of books.

Reference 2 - 0.16% Coverage

the resources I used were books.

Reference 3 - 0.34% Coverage

I have got a lot of modules and information from UNISA. So that helped me.

## **LEARNING MATERIAL COPING STRATEGIES(LMCS)**

BEE B

Some of those aspects, maybe will be difficult today

Reference 2 - 0.40% Coverage

resources like textbooks, I happened to have had a few friends who had gone to university education that time

Reference 3 - 0.23% Coverage

I had enough, perhaps textbooks to rely on during the lessons

Reference 4 - 1.35% Coverage

the universities were still coordinated, where once you were a member of ZOU, you would use any library free of charge, like Parliament Library, Seke Teachers College Library, and the University Library. So those, I think made our research much easier because you didn't need to pay any extra money to be on those institutions' libraries to use their resources.

Reference 5 - 2.20% Coverage

I had friends who were teaching or at the library or at the local University of Zimbabwe in Teacher Education where most of the books were also found. So, I would simply take my card there and use that same card to borrow books. The Seke Teachers' College, again we could use it very easily. And even the council library had books which we could borrow from, and I think it was easier to use libraries. The Parliament Library, we were also able to access these. Maybe we were few and we were allowed to use the library very easily. So, so I think, access to the library was not a problem.

[<InternalsBVU BV>](#) - § 4 references coded [5.01% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.73% Coverage

we had no exposure of library, especially being first intake, we didn't have any libraries at all. So, it was a question of trying to find out where one could find anybody who had done B.Ed through the conventional way and then try to find out whether they, whether they had the relevant materials that we could use and in some cases one would travel some distances in which we had to board the bus in order to go and interact with that one that had done an almost similar programme.

Reference 2 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 3 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 4 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.52% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.52% Coverage

I have accessed past exam papers through the library as well as modules, as well as other handouts from the library.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.61% Coverage

Besides offering the library which is sponsored by ZOU itself, maybe they could work in conjunction with other libraries to enable us to access books. It's only a problem of economic hardships, which disables ZOU to supply us with adequate books in their libraries. And also I think that if those study projects, what do we call those, research projects could be bound and submitted to the library.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.28% Coverage

It was hard. But, I got most help from the library

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 5 references coded [1.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.25% Coverage

some of the modules lack a lot of detail. A lot of information, like the computer one.

Reference 2 - 0.29% Coverage

lacks a lot of detail in relation to the exam questions or assignment questions that one is given.

Reference 3 - 0.52% Coverage

most of the students I had discussion with would also say that I had never read the module because it didn't have any information related to the assignments that students are given.

Reference 4 - 0.22% Coverage

It's about post colonial education. That module again, needs some revision.

Reference 5 - 0.60% Coverage

especially those in the first and second semesters modules---that, that are written draft. Those ones at times they show that they are drafts because a lot of details left because they need some improvement.

## **LIBRARY CHALLENGES (LIB)**

BEE B

ZOU had a small library,

Reference 2 - 0.13% Coverage

I don't remember using the library

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.80% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.66% Coverage

I want to say, like we had no exposure of library, especially being first intake, we didn't have any libraries at all.

Reference 2 - 0.13% Coverage

it was almost 30 km.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 6 references coded [2.78% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.46% Coverage

I wasn't aware that I could go to a library and use their computers. We were not enlightened on that.

Reference 2 - 0.13% Coverage

when we went to the library,

Reference 3 - 0.36% Coverage

, we were only told that we would actually access the books and not the internet.

Reference 4 - 0.14% Coverage

the library, ah it's quite ok.

Reference 5 - 0.30% Coverage

It's about 20 km because I live in Glen Norah. So, the only obstacle

Reference 6 - 1.40% Coverage

we now have is because of transport problems. This semester, I think we are going to face problems because of the hiking of fares and the charging of fares in foreign currency. But prior to that, when we were in our first and second year we didn't have problems accessing the library because it was quite affordable.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.11% Coverage

I think our library. You hardly find a book. Because modules are there to give you a framework, and the library will enable you to study with more depth, more understanding

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.04% Coverage

it's, it lacks a lot of access because there are a lot of students that want to use the computers. And you would find that most of the students have no chance to use them because they are very few. Like, I came one other day, specifically for that purpose. I could not access because there were so many of us. I think, in that area, it is at least lacking.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.53% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.53% Coverage

Uh--, it was sort of difficult because ZOU would not give you, the library would not give books for a week. They would just give you for overnight. So, since I was coming from the rural areas, I would just borrow on Friday and return the book on Saturday.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.14% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.89% Coverage

It was, the Mashonaland East one was roughly 50 kilometres from where I was. I used to go to Harare.

Reference 2 - 0.24% Coverage

The books were not enough.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.89% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.40% Coverage

Actually, from where I was there was no library. I would only be in a position to get to a library when I went to Marondera or when I came to Harare.

Reference 2 - 1.49% Coverage

In Marondera the books are were not enough but in Harare the books were OK because I would go to Seke Teachers' College or Victoria Memorial Library in town.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.79% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.79% Coverage

The library facilities were also a challenge to me because of distance from the regional centre.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.33% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.19% Coverage

in the library, there were very few books

Reference 2 - 0.71% Coverage

except one where we said, no to the one who said once you get a book today tomorrow you bring it back. We said it can't even work. Why can't you give us a week?

Reference 3 - 0.43% Coverage

We do understand the books are few. And then the other thing was to photocopy. It is expensive

## **STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH LIBRARY CHALLENGES (SCLC)**

BEE

I happened to have had a few friends who had gone to university education that time

Reference 2 - 0.23% Coverage

I had enough, perhaps textbooks to rely on during the lessons

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.09% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.09% Coverage

Right, what I would do was to photocopy chapters that I would have read and I would also borrow from friends.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.86% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.86% Coverage

What I used to do, I was, I could collect my modules and key references for various sources so that I could go to Harare and photocopy some material from the University of Zimbabwe Library and the World Bank Library in Harare.

## **DT4: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

### **BEE B**

Some of those aspects, maybe will be difficult today

Reference 2 - 0.40% Coverage

resources like textbooks, I happened to have had a few friends who had gone to university education that time

Reference 3 - 0.23% Coverage

I had enough, perhaps textbooks to rely on during the lessons

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 2 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 3 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.67% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.67% Coverage

Eh--, there was a course on computers in which the B.Ed programme, so maybe, it introduced me to the computer and from there, I had to work with the computer on my own.

## **ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (AICT)**

### **ANGELINE**

We used ICT to, maybe to find information for the assignments but not to communicate with lecturers.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 4 references coded [4.22% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.19% Coverage

Some of those aspects, maybe will be difficult today

Reference 2 - 0.40% Coverage

resources like textbooks, I happened to have had a few friends who had gone to university education that time

Reference 3 - 0.23% Coverage

I had enough, perhaps textbooks to rely on during the lessons

Reference 4 - 3.40% Coverage

it was challenging. Many of us did not have this IT skills that you people have during that time. And we were also part of that group. Maybe one of our courses involved Computer Application. But many of us didn't have access to computers. So you would find that in most cases you would go into a library or to someone with a computer and then tell the person exactly what you want. Then the person would find the information for you on the computer, download the information and then maybe you then had a hard copy. It was very rare for us that time to get the information directly from the computer as we have it on computer technology, but our skills were still very low in using the computers. The ability to access them, I think were also very low. Even the speed with which we were working on the internet I think was very low that time. So we had to use maybe other people to get the information for us.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 5 references coded [3.27% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.80% Coverage

We were only exposed to the use of computers just, just for about two weeks at, at one of the technical colleges in Marondera . That was that.

Reference 2 - 0.19% Coverage

I am still at elementary level.

Reference 3 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 4 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 5 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 5 references coded [4.27% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.55% Coverage

I am not even aware of the information and technology the ZOU offers besides the "ZOU on Thursday" that used to appear in the Thursday Herald some years ago when I joined the programme. As for the internet, and other information technology I am not aware of that. Is there any? I am not aware of that. And they don't even enlighten that to us as well.

Reference 2 - 1.18% Coverage

we have done that course. But it was more abstract than theoretical. It was more abstract than real, because we did not get access to computers whatsoever. It was only theory. We had a module. And then our tutor brought a computer once. He actually taught us the basics.

Reference 3 - 0.16% Coverage

And the module itself is not clear.

Reference 4 - 0.82% Coverage

I haven't got the chance to use their technology as such besides getting books only. I wasn't aware that I could go to a library and use their computers. We were not enlightened on that.

Reference 5 - 0.54% Coverage

when we went to the library, going there we, we were only told that we would actually access the books and not the internet.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.89% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.89% Coverage

At ZOU let me say, there are none. The computers are only accessed by their workers. When they are not accessible to me, I will say there are none. So, in other words we don't have that facility at ZOU. And I say maybe the college maybe finds it difficult to provide us with such a facility.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.89% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.17% Coverage

we were taught at the college .

Reference 2 - 0.73% Coverage

We went to High Glen for practical lessons. Here we have computers but time does not allow. But I can print. A small letter I can print.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.39% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.07% Coverage

I had no access at all.

Reference 2 - 1.28% Coverage

I had quite some problems on that course. I only did theory part of it and not the computer, the practical part of it because, I had no access to any of those computers. And to go to private colleges to study the computers, I had no money on that one. And so, I could only write the exam theoretically or study the course theoretically not practically. At the moment, I can only operate a computer because of the access that I have at school.

Reference 3 - 1.04% Coverage

it's , it lacks a lot of access because there are a lot of students that want to use the computers. And you would find that most of the students have no chance to use them because they are very few. Like, I came one other day, specifically for that purpose. I could not access because there were so many of us. I think, in that area, it is at least lacking.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.74% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

No. I didn't have knowledge of operating a computer.

Reference 2 - 1.27% Coverage

It was through my efforts. To be where a computer is, where you used, you were required to pay money for operating a computer at computer shops.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.43% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.43% Coverage

Actually, I was relying on my son who had done computers at school. He would assist me to get whatever information I wanted by the use of the computer.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.71% Coverage

I was divorced from that kind of communication because of the nature of area where I was based. So to communicate with my region I used letters in most cases and sometimes telephones from the police station.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.84% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.71% Coverage

at UNISA, they had trained me to use cassettes and you tape yourself where you don't understand. For instance, you read something and you don't quite understand it. They trained us to read it into the tape and then when you are relaxed you just listen to that. And also we had to go to the internet and do my research there. Where I didn't get books, I had to go to the internet.

Reference 2 - 1.13% Coverage

I would go to a friend and say, look here, can you do one, or two for me and then when things are on the screen I would say, ok. But, in B.Ed we had a course, in B. Ed. At the moment I can say, though I am not very good at it, I can operate a computer.

## **TRAINING IN USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

ANGELINE A

No. I was not able to use the computer.

Reference 2 - 0.49% Coverage

There is an area where we studied computers for a semester.

Reference 3 - 0.21% Coverage

Yah, I am now comfortable.

## **DT5: DISTANCE TEACHING-LEARNING METHODS (DTLM)**

## THE MODULE (TM)

### BEE B

the modules by and large, were simple enough to be understood. But maybe the, what was a major challenge for us was the use of the technical language associated, maybe with higher education. So that when you read education or evaluation and so forth, the terms perhaps would be a bit challenging. But, I think by and large, they were simplified enough to be understood as much as possible. We didn't get lost as much as some of us would have got lost

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.12% Coverage

The modules were good.

Reference 2 - 0.50% Coverage

the modules were very handy. They gave us the basis on which to work on our programmes.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.54% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.23% Coverage

I find them very, very effective .

Reference 2 - 0.48% Coverage

modules are very important because they allow you to learn at your pace.

Reference 3 - 1.83% Coverage

what I feel is that , the modules should not remain the same modules that were read in 1980 because I find that lecturers sometimes provide us information which cannot be backed up by a module , and which cannot be backed up by books because there are also no books in the library.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.15% Coverage

At first it was very hard to

Reference 2 - 0.19% Coverage

to find information from the module.

## THE CHALLENGES IN THE ZOU MODULE

### CHARITY C

It was more abstract than real, because we did not get access to computers whatsoever. It was only theory. We had a module. And then our tutor brought a computer once. He actually taught us the basics.

Reference 2 - 2.74% Coverage

I had problems especially on the module on Statistics as well as that of Computers. It is actually abstract. It doesn't explain in depth how we go about it. No wonder why I was now suggesting more, more time with the tutors because the modules are not

clear, especially the Statistics one and the Computer one. I think they need to be revised because they are not clear enough. I also asked the Intake eh--, the previous intakes like Intake 16 and those who are in the masters programme. They also say that they had problems with those modules. They are not clear enough. They are not explaining in the layman's language.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.14% Coverage

I think , they need some editing to update them. And also to eliminate some printing errors which are there and missing pages which are faulty when you are writing assignments.

Reference 2 - 0.35% Coverage

this year in 2009 we have not yet received our modules.

Reference 3 - 0.49% Coverage

we have got assignments but we don't have modules. What are we going to do?

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.06% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.25% Coverage

some of the modules lack a lot of detail. A lot of information, like the computer one.

Reference 2 - 0.29% Coverage

lacks a lot of detail in relation to the exam questions or assignment questions that one is given.

Reference 3 - 0.52% Coverage

most of the students I had discussion with would also say that I had never read the module because it didn't have any information related to the assignments that students are given

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.92% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.92% Coverage

Ah-, some of them were not detailed. So, you had to supplement with textbooks and since I was from the rural areas, it was quite a challenge because finding the textbooks was not all that easy.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.42% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.42% Coverage

The modules were, I should say they were not so detailed enough, because at times you had to find a book to supplement in whatever assignment you needed to write.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.51% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.51% Coverage

some of the modules did not have all the information that I was requiring as a student. Hence I would have to look for other books to beef up the writing of assignments or studying for examinations. I could actually say , there was need for modules to be improved.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.88% Coverage

one challenge which I used to meet was that of getting the modules, especially during summer season because the semester used to start in January. If ever I went to Muzarabani before collecting the modules from Mashonaland Central Region, floods could keep me away from coming to the region to get the modules on time to such an extent that in most cases I used to collect the modules during the end of March and had to rush writing my assignments during the first semester.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.61% Coverage

some modules were not quite good. But some were very good. I think in our case, the writers did not have much knowledge in the writing. But at the moment they are better. It was quite challenging because some of the things were not good, were not detailed enough. The level of B.Ed, it was not quite, you know, quite at B.Ed level. It was more of low level.

### **THE MODULE COPING STRATEGIES (TMCS)**

CHIBAYO CH

I think there could be more matter. Like, eh--, taped material, which you can play on a tape etc, videos, things like that,

Reference 2 - 0.66% Coverage

it can give us one copy which we can photocopy for ourselves. Or else the government should chip in.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.73% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.22% Coverage

It's about post colonial education. That module again, needs some revision.

Reference 2 - 0.17% Coverage

especially those in the first and second semesters modules

Reference 3 - 0.34% Coverage

Those ones at times they show that they are drafts because a lot of details left because they need some improvement.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.16% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.16% Coverage

I could use people, tutors and maybe some other literature you could find suitable for whatever the assignment you are undertaking.

### **WEEKEND TUTORIALS (WT)**

ANGELINE A

Weekend tutorials were a challenge for others. For example, those who were coming from Mt Darwin, others were coming from Harare. Because of the transport system, others couldn't make it. And also the tutors, sometimes they were not able to come. Maybe because of transport. I don't know. Maybe because of different

challenges. But the weekend tutors were, if the tutors come and you were present , they were very useful.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.95% Coverage

weekend tutorials, we never had cases where we would have a scheduled tutorial failing and then it was never done or that there was no tutor. I think we always had people who were ready to assist us during that time. So we had adequate access to tutors.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.21% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.21% Coverage

Despite the fact that distance was an impediment, but they were so helpful, because they afforded us the chance, one, to get guidance from the lecturer, to interact on our own as students and to share experiences.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.72% Coverage

weekend tutorials benefit a lot, especially those which are given by dedicated tutors. You see, the tutors that we come across at times, some are eager to see students pass but some are not very eager. They also complain that ZOU is short changing them because they say that they are not getting enough. The amounts that you give them are not enough to cover their transport costs especially the last semester that is when they were complaining when the inflation rate went up. It actually maybe trebled. That's when they were complaining . At times, you would attend a lecture where the tutors would not turn up . So, at the end of the day you would be having hardships because of the hardships , the economic hardships. But prior to that, we would actually have , eh tutors who would be eye openers as far as material in the module is concerned.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [3.68% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.92% Coverage

I find those very helpful , though not so challenging. As far as they go, because most of the lecturers have a tendency of repeating what is already in the modules which is maybe because as part-timers , they don't have sufficient time to research and to find information which is above the module.

Reference 2 - 0.56% Coverage

That is important to us as students because there is tendency to encourage each other.

Reference 3 - 1.20% Coverage

I didn't meet any challenges. Besides the fact that some lecturers regurgitate what is in the modules. But they help to clarify some points. And I don't see any challenges as it were.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.27% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.27% Coverage

I was comfortable with those ones. But, some of the venues were far from, they were not central

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.37% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.37% Coverage

The weekend tutorials were also quite helpful because the tutors used to come very well prepared and share their expertise with us and they could also make use of tutorials in their approach to teaching of students in which they gave us the chance to prepare some work for delivery to other students so that other students could also give their input and the tutors could round up their students' presentations.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 3 references coded [5.67% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.15% Coverage

Some were very good. Some, well as teachers, teachers are different. At one time, I am not happy to say this but, at one time I went to the regional director and said we don't think Mr. So and so is helping us because we don't understand what he is saying.

Reference 2 - 2.67% Coverage

everyone was eager to come and attend. In fact, what we thought at that time was that we would have the tutor there lecturing and so forth. But, as time went on we discovered that these people are only there to beef up what we will have read. We must do our own research there. And then when we come, we ask questions about where we don't understand. But, I must say well, some of the tutors were quite good, very sympathetic. Each time we met they didn't have problems at all. They were not there for money. I am sure they were there to help and when they came to help they actually helped us.

Reference 3 - 1.86% Coverage

in Mashonaland Central, for someone to travel from Muzarabani to here for tutorials, I feel that, that is a little bit too expensive. I would suggest that we have days when we say those tutorials will be in Mt.Darwin (district 65kms from centre) to try and cut expenses. So that we don't discourage students due to expenses. There should be a lot of de-centralisation so that a lot of students are not discouraged.

## **CHALLENGES FACED IN WEEKEND TUTORIALS(CWT)**

BEE B

once in a while, we had queer tutors maybe, let me say, who would want to show us that they have gone through the mill and, but fortunately enough when we complained about those tutors, they were changed.

Reference 2 - 0.48% Coverage

the whole group of ours almost got lost after he was going through his jargon and so forth and we were going at variance with him.

Reference 3 - 0.57% Coverage

The other tutors, I think, like I had said, were relying on what they had done themselves. They were failing to teach us from the known to the unknown.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.28% Coverage

I must say perhaps the challenge of distance and the challenge of sometimes getting lecturers who come to make presentations when they are ill-prepared. And sometimes one could just ask you to just read the module and the like .

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [4.19% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.12% Coverage

lecturers sometimes provide us information which cannot be backed up by a module , and which cannot be backed up by books because there are also no books in the library.

Reference 2 - 1.15% Coverage

I am saying the tutors are only accessible as far as tutorials are concerned. After that, their one or two hours, each one goes their way and telephoning doesn't seem to help.

Reference 3 - 1.92% Coverage

I find those very helpful , though not so challenging. As far as they go, because most of the lecturers have a tendency of repeating what is already in the modules which is maybe because as part-timers , they don't have sufficient time to research and to find information which is above the module.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.96% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.79% Coverage

You couldn't see a tutor for four weeks until we write the exam. But the first two years of my B.Ed, it was most of the tutors were most available.

Reference 2 - 0.18% Coverage

It was hard. Transport and time.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.92% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.92% Coverage

The weekend tutorials, they were quite a challenge because that's when you would also want to do your private errands and then you were wanted at ZOU. So, I think on my part I would like to congratulate myself (Both of us laughed) because, I had to see that I have attended the tutorials on weekends.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.55% Coverage

The mechanism was quite conducive at times but, later, because of financial constraints we could not manage to go to the tutorials given by the tutors at the centres provided.

Reference 2 - 0.50% Coverage

It was roughly 50 kilometres from the place where I was.

Reference 3 - 0.89% Coverage

It was, the Mashonaland East one was roughly 50 kilometres from where I was. I used to go to Harare.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.20% Coverage

When I started the programme I was actually working in Mash East and, I was doing my programme in Chinhoyi, that's Mash West.

Reference 2 - 0.68% Coverage

I think it was around 300kilometres from where I was working to Chinhoyi?

## **WEEKEND TUTORIAL COPING STRATEGIES (WTCS)**

**BEE B**

fortunately enough when we complained about those tutors, they were changed.

Reference 2 - 0.58% Coverage

once we complained we got another one. A tutor who was able to water down things to our level so that we understood. I think we benefited a lot from him.

Reference 3 - 0.44% Coverage

Fortunately, when our coordinators heard about them, we don't know what happened there but we got other tutors coming

Reference 4 - 0.41% Coverage

these were then able to take us maybe, from the ordinary life level to the technical concepts that we wanted.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.96% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.96% Coverage

when you know you are going to meet in the next weekend, students should be given areas to read or presentation questions to go and work on, so that when you meet the next weekend, students are also going to participate by presenting on the research they will have made on the topics assigned and then, because we are trying to create a bee hive of a situation in which students are going to be given confidence for presenting on what they have been researching and sand witched with what is going to come from the lecturer.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.35% Coverage

venues could be central and that could reduce some walking distance and lateness of students to the tutorials.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.55% Coverage

I would just advice them to find a day during the week where they can fulfill some of their obligations so that they leave the weekend free for the tutorials.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.76% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.76% Coverage

And their centres , maybe they should localize tutorial centres , say for example if they have students of the same intake in Chitungwiza, it's better for a tutor to come

to Chitungwiza than make 10 people go to Harare. I think it should strategize to have local centres for students to make it convenient for them.

## **STUDY GROUPS (SG)**

### **CHALLENGES FACED IN STUDY GROUPS**

#### **CHARITY C**

because of the transport costs, we now have dropouts. And at times, other group members fail to turn up because of the bus fares.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.94% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.94% Coverage

Eh-, since the group was comprised of adults with families, some of them would not turn up, eh- on the agreed dates, because of social problems . And sometimes we would assign each other to go and research , and others maybe would not also come prepared because they would have other commitments.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.08% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.08% Coverage

We- e-, at times we lacked proper teaching because it was student to student with no one who had more knowledge to deliver.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.65% Coverage

Eh-, at times, eh- other members of the group did not have the necessary commitment. At times they would report for the discussions late or would not come for the discussions.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.73% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.09% Coverage

I didn't because of my isolated environment in Muzarabani. Furthermore, other students who were in the programme , were in Intake 1 and Intake 2 . They were found in Upper Muzarabani and I was cut away from them because of floods from January to February.

About 80 kilometres, Chawarura. He was in Intake1. Unfortunately he is now late

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.62% Coverage

There were not big challenges except one whereby we discovered that there was one lady who did not want to study. But when she came into the study group , she would ask questions in such a way that we were actually feeding her with information and yet she would not respond and not participate much in the discussion. She spend most of her time knitting and so forth. When she came, she would draft a number of questions. As she asked, we would be feeding her with information. When we discovered that, then we, were avoiding her until she discovered that we had got aware of her trick

## STUDY GROUP COPING STRATEGIES

BEE B

I benefited more from those kind of discussions. Because what others perhaps corrected me on and the references from the module or from the textbook..

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.51% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.51% Coverage

in my case, I had to find colleagues to team up with. So every Saturday , then we had to meet as a group of six learners where we had to give each other topics to present and this is how we actually helped each other in making sure that we understand the programme.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.39% Coverage

We discuss in groups, and then we contact them to clarify other issues which will occur.

Reference 2 - 1.21% Coverage

maybe, if ZOU would also provide rooms where we would carry out group activities rather than getting into the park, there where maybe we would be mugged by the street kids or get affected by the demos and other strikes out there when things are not that well in the country.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.02% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.02% Coverage

In the school where I am teaching, where I am heading , it's in a rural setting. It's very difficult to find others. So I had to learn to be studying alone.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.94% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.36% Coverage

We could ask Mr Madzimure to help us. We could give him our topics.

Reference 2 - 0.57% Coverage

That is the way you can help yourself. You just make groups. While you are one, it will be very hard.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.26% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.26% Coverage

if they engage with a tutor it will be more profitable unlike doing it at their own because at times we had to face a problem of what is really wanted and no one could explain. If there is someone with the knowledge, maybe the discussion would be quite good.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 2 references coded [3.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.13% Coverage

We would make some questions and give each other tasks to carry out in our study circles and then we would discuss the different questions that one would have come across during the study when we met at our discussion centres.

Reference 2 - 1.85% Coverage actually the study groups were found to be very helpful, but what is needed is commitment from all members of the group so that you don't overburden others by researching on almost every question.

## **DT6: DISTANCE LEARNING ASSESSMENT (DLA)**

### **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (WA)**

ANGELINE A

Written assignments, I had no challenges with written assignments. Only that sometimes I failed to meet deadlines because of pressure of work at my school or at home. But written assignments I had no problems with them.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.43% Coverage

the written assignments were a very good way of making us study and work. And they made us study, actually very well.

Reference 2 - 0.91% Coverage

But then the attack to the question was challenging. That's why sometimes you would need someone to help you understand the question or answering it because sometimes you would answer it in a few pages and pages without answering the question.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.81% Coverage

To be honest, the demand of the examination and the assignments, of the assignments themselves they have been so simple .

### **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT CHALLENGES (WAC)**

BEE

The tutor would give people a mark from this to this and you were all lumped there. And that was a bit discouraging, I can say. Because you would think, you had done a lot of work and the assignment you would want to see a reflection of that. But, though the comments were sometimes going to be helpful but once in a while you would have a tutor putting a general comment which was not instructive.

Reference 2 - 0.55% Coverage

I see a number of cases where most students tend to borrow assignments from others and work on it and improve it and then someone says, ah well done

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.78% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.78% Coverage

the challenge was that, I had to change the format which I used when I was studying maybe commercials in business studies

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.83% Coverage

It was very challenging because some lecturers could not mark the, your assignments in time. You could, you have submitted your assignments before due date

Reference 2 - 0.23% Coverage

Some could not even find their assignments.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 7 references coded [3.40% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.29% Coverage

lacks a lot of detail in relation to the exam questions or assignment questions that one is given.

Reference 2 - 0.52% Coverage

most of the students I had discussion with would also say that I had never read the module because it didn't have any information related to the assignments that students are given

Reference 3 - 0.33% Coverage

in my third year and fourth year, some of the lecturers, they marked these assignments, they lack concentration.

Reference 4 - 0.12% Coverage

they don't mark students' work in detail.

Reference 5 - 1.72% Coverage

I don't hide that students discuss assignments or that students get other students' assignments and write. You would find that some of the students who get other students' assignments without making any -----yet, duplicating the same assignments and that assignment is marked by another lecturer and you would find that this student who had originally written the assignment which had been copied by the other student may fail. When the same assignment is given to another lecturer, you would find that the student would pass. So, it shows that there is, there are some discrepancies there.

Reference 6 - 0.14% Coverage

That would end up disadvantaging the student.

Reference 7 - 0.29% Coverage

lecturers do not concentrate when they mark students' assignments and that demoralises the students.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.92% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.92% Coverage

Time (She laughed). Because you have to prepare for your lessons. I was a full-time teacher. I had to prepare. I have to do marking. Or my work was supposed to be up to date and there was the due date for the assignments. So, you would spend maybe sleepless nights trying to write the assignments.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [4.34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.93% Coverage

Right, at first we didn't know what was really required in the writing of assignments as I have said before. There was no proper induction done. So, the first assignments were just writing as if we were writing compositions when we did 'O' level. So later as I went on with the course, that's when we knew how to write an assignment.

Reference 2 - 1.42% Coverage

At times, the demands of the work could be so high and ZOU maybe the due date would be due and you failed to meet the deadline because of the demands of work.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.19% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.19% Coverage

At times we did not have enough textbooks and the modules did not have the necessary information and also we failed to meet deadlines for submission of assignments due to distance from where we were supposed to submit the assignments.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.30% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.30% Coverage

The challenge, like I said earlier on, one, that one of collecting modules and course outlines for the courses. But, I had to go round that challenge by delaying to go to my work place so that I could get my course outline and modules before going to Muzarabani where I was based.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.86% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.86% Coverage

one challenge is the temptation to get someone's assignment and copy it. Now, I would say, to students, that has got to be avoided. You don't do that because at the end of the day you may get an A or a B, but that is not your work. It's someone's work. When that same question comes in the exams, surely one cannot pass. So, I say it's a big challenge which is a temptation to try and copy someone's assignment.

## **FEEDBACK FROM WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (FWA)**

### **BEE B**

Reference 4 - 2.58% Coverage

in a few cases, where some of us thought we had done a lot of work in terms of the assignment you would find perhaps, whoever was marking either himself was mediocre or the work was mediocre. I am not sure. But you would find a general mark. The tutor would give people a mark from this to this and you were all lumped there. And that was a bit discouraging, I can say. Because you would think, you had done a lot of work and the assignment you would want to see a reflection of that. But, though the comments were sometimes going to be helpful but once in a while you would have a tutor putting a general comment which was not instructive. So that you can improve on what you would have got.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 6 references coded [10.65% Coverage]

## Reference 1 - 1.36% Coverage

it was only after the assignment had been marked, that's when, one would say, ah I have it. And therefore, if I got this mark, I think I am reading within the parameters of the requirements of ZOU. And that then gave me a lot of confidence.

## Reference 2 - 1.49% Coverage

sometimes we got very discouraging comments from some lecturers. I remember a colleague of mine getting 10 out of 100 and was almost dismissed as a useless student. But, when we actually met with him and gave him encouragement, he became one of our best students.

## Reference 3 - 5.53% Coverage

some of them were encouraging but others were so discouraging. I want to say. I want to repeat, you are taking the calibre of students. Now, if a comment is that very discouraging, one can easily pull out. But if you get a comment that says even if you have not done well, but we have picked one, two, points that are so good, and if you could improve on this, then it is going to encourage the student. But, I want to say some comments, I still want to repeat to say some comments especially we would share assignments and sometimes one would say, come and see what has been written on my assignment. I remember one DEO (District Education Officer) whom I shared a room with, when we had a chance of getting another orientation at the university. He said, "I will never want to hear anything about reading". And he actually dropped after he had been given a very discouraging comment in one of his assignments. So, lecturers should make sure that, the comments are so encouraging.

## Reference 4 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

## Reference 5 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

## Reference 6 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.71% Coverage]

## Reference 1 - 3.71% Coverage

you really wonder what actually happens as far as the marking of assignments is concerned. You get together as a group, you map out the way forward as far as the assignment is concerned. You only change maybe the layout or the flow of ideas. But at times, as group members, the other students would actually excel and then some would actually fail. But the matter, that was eh--, compiled was compiled by students as a group. At the end of the day, it is maybe others who fail while others sail through but the ideas will be the same. I don't actually understand what happens there as far as the marking is concerned. I know they are, are what do they call them? Those ah---, where the important points will be jotted down. Yes I think the

markers do consult that guide. There are also discrepancies in the way allocation of marks is concerned.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.85% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.82% Coverage

Mr. Matingo, he actually wrote comments where I was wrong. When I followed those comments, although I didn't do well in that assignment, when I followed those comments, in all other assignments, I had top marks. There is another lady again who taught me to write assignments.

Reference 2 - 1.04% Coverage

in fact two ladies, they went so far as to teach us how to write and prepare for examinations. And I, she actually opened myself to become a natural student.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 8 references coded [3.01% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.08% Coverage

in my first and second year

Reference 2 - 0.28% Coverage

the lecturers that marked my work, may be they did it thoroughly or maybe I was more committed

Reference 3 - 0.06% Coverage

I enjoyed my learning

Reference 4 - 0.33% Coverage

in my third year and fourth year, some of the lecturers, they marked these assignments, they lack concentration.

Reference 5 - 0.12% Coverage

they don't mark students' work in detail.

Reference 6 - 1.72% Coverage

I don't hide that students discuss assignments or that students get other students' assignments and write. You would find that some of the students who get other students' assignments without making any -----yet, duplicating the same assignments and that assignment is marked by another lecturer and you would find that this student who had originally written the assignment which had been copied by the other student may fail. When the same assignment is given to another lecturer, you would find that the student would pass. So, it shows that there is, there are some discrepancies there.

Reference 7 - 0.14% Coverage

That would end up disadvantaging the student.

Reference 8 - 0.29% Coverage

lecturers do not concentrate when they mark students' assignments and that demoralises the students.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.11% Coverage

Yes. Those who write comments, yes I benefited. Because some they would just write satisfactory (We both laughed).

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.11% Coverage

From the corrections , the comments from the first assignment, you could read the comments written by the tutor , from there I could develop from there , enrich yourself basing on them

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.13% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.13% Coverage

The comments were largely helpful because the tutors used to mark the work thoroughly. They took their time to mark the work. They could write very narrative comments which showed my areas of strength and weaknesses and they could also even give a way forward.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.32% Coverage

one challenge is the temptation to get someone's assignment and copy it

Reference 2 - 2.67% Coverage

What I discovered was that, in some cases, some tutors were not thorough , and gave a mark , let's say 90% and one would be very comfortable with the 90%. And yet the stuff which is there is not worthy 90%. It could be worthy 45% or 50%. Now, to me , I took that as , you know, I didn't like it because I wanted the tutors to be very honest. If I got 30%, then the 30% would make me sit down and find out where my weaknesses are. And then I will work very hard to say now next time I don't want to get 50% or 30%.. I must get 60% or 70%, a genuine mark, rather than a mark which pleases me you know.

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT FEEDBACK SUGGESTIONS (WAFS)**

### **CHARITY C**

one marker marks and then there is a moderator, so that there is fairness as far as allocation of marks is concerned.

Reference 2 - 1.66% Coverage

Some markers do not at all. They just put a grade. They say maybe, Good. That's not a good comment because it does not actually highlight the weaknesses or strengths of what the writer would have put down. But other markers actually comment on strengths and weaknesses which actually are the strategies or tools used by the student in future as s/he writes the next assignment.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.96% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.96% Coverage

Maybe to specify what is satisfactory. If I get a 60 maybe to inform me why I did not get an 80.

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT COPING STRATEGIES (WACS)**

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 2 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 3 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 3 references coded [6.44% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.21% Coverage

I used to run around to the British Council, libraries in other ministries, that's what I did. And last year they asked a question pertaining to food in relation to land redistribution . I went to the GMB(Grain Marketing Board). I went to the Ministry of Agriculture. I went to the statistical office. I read magazines and I found quite a lot of information. In other words, we are saying the student has to be resourceful. In other words that's the skill that should be promoted by any university.

Reference 2 - 1.40% Coverage

when you try to revise the answer, you find that when you have to go back to read again, that in itself enables you to understand a lot. So, I find that the environment of assignment writing helps very much in writing.

Reference 3 - 1.82% Coverage

Mr. Matingo, he actually wrote comments where I was wrong. When I followed those comments , although I didn't do well in that assignment , when I followed those comments , in all other assignments, I had top marks. There is another lady again who taught me to write assignments .

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.60% Coverage

towards examinations, I would wake up around 2.00 am or 3.00 am to study. Or, I could try to make a timetable that during the day I could visit the library or private places to discuss questions with others.

Reference 2 - 0.51% Coverage

Since I found that there was a problem on that I could consult my lecturers and programme coordinators. That, so that I would well be explained on how to write those assignments

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [3.12% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.11% Coverage

From the corrections , the comments from the first assignment, you could read the comments written by the tutor , from there I could develop from there , enrich yourself basing on the comments given by the tutor on the previous assignment.

Reference 2 - 1.01% Coverage

You could delay , at times I delayed handing in my assignments or would go visit the centre and launch my apology.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.68% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.68% Coverage

We had actually to go and see whoever your tutor was and talk to him or her about why you were late in submitting your assignment . Most of the time they were very cooperative.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.34% Coverage

I had to go round that challenge by delaying to go to my work place so that I could get my course outline and modules before going to Muzarabani where I was based.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.89% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.89% Coverage

you have to read widely. You need a lot of books. Even when you are writing your assignments , you don't depend on the module only. You have to read widely so that you can get a lot of information.

## WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS (WE)

ANGELINE A

They were a bit challenging but if you read the module ,there were no challenges.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.53% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.53% Coverage

the exams that time were genuine. They were still exams so that if you had not prepared for them you would flop and if you had prepared you would pass. Once in a while, I think I told you I had two supps. Those were in areas where I thought I was a fundi. I was quite experienced in those areas. I was helping others. But I suppose, when I answered the questions, I missed the questions and I flopped.

And the second one was supplementary exams like I was talking about. That you would be able to write a supplementary exam before the term started and I think many of us were able to cope up.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.60% Coverage

You know what? We used to complain about the period for the exam. Sometimes it was just one and half hours vis a vis the requirements of a question. And in most cases we would complain that there is a mismatch between the demands of time and the material required by the question.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.30% Coverage

To be honest, the demand of the examination

Reference 2 - 0.24% Coverage

themselves they have been so simple .

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.06% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.06% Coverage

some were very difficult. Some were easy. Eh--, one has got to go to the exam when properly prepared. And then at that time, well we did not have many problems at all. And then the other thing is that, the tutors , they should also be able to give guidance on preparation for examinations. As I was saying, if one spends the whole night in a night club and tomorrow you are writing an exam, one is cheating him/herself. The students must be given a lot of guidance regarding that. If one is addicted to beer then one is advised to stop for the whole week and finish the exams then you go to drink. But in our case, we did not have problems at all in as far as exams were concerned.

## WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS CHALLENGES

PETTY P

lacks a lot of detail in relation to the exam questions

Reference 2 - 0.92% Coverage

Yes that one I had some other, I was very happy. Others I was disappointed. I think your sampling was very much correct . I had ----- I call them again in examination. There is this other course, Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness that we, is done together with Educational Policy Making Process. I registered the course, those two courses and wrote examinations. When the results came , eh, all the components had 'F' and I , looking at, when I saw the results I cried and went to the academic registrar

Reference 3 - 0.42% Coverage

had an argument there then only to discover that the result on Educational Policy Making was given. But at first, I was told that I had an 'F'.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.30% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.30% Coverage

Ah—a—a, not quite. But at the end, I was a ZIMSEC(Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council) marker. At the end the dates would, they sort of collide with those of ZIMSEC and I remember once writing my exams not at my centre in Mash West.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.98% Coverage

I faced a challenge because there was no enough revision since it was distance education. But, at times when you are studying you need someone to assist you in, when you are reading you have to ask if say, you don't understand a topic, you have to ask how should I go about this thing. So, it's distance education you will be doing

it on your own with no one to ask and you have to face an exam whether you are well equipped or not . You will be in doubt.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 2 references coded [3.54% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.42% Coverage

Yes, there were a lot of challenges during examination preparation because at times some courses had too many areas to be touched and when you were preparing for your examinations, you find you would not know where actually to put most of your attention.

Reference 2 - 1.12% Coverage

you find that when examinations came , maybe one or two questions would come up when you had done the whole textbook.

## **WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS COPING STRATEGIES (WECS)**

BVU BV

Yes, because this is distance learning , although I know time is part of the exam. But, you see, I suggest that the designers of the exams should actually make sure that, much more time is created so that students are afforded the time to give as much as they can.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.28% Coverage

I have engaged in groups as I have told you. We have summarised the topics. We summarise the topic. We answer questions that is in the module and dwell on them for a much longer time. Like, for example, maybe in a week, the group read a chapter per week and answer questions to that. And ask our tutors. And then we also work on the questions that we will have been given by the tutors during the tutorial sessions. That's how I, and we also ask other members who have gone through the programme, the B. Ed programme.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 2 references coded [4.25% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.21% Coverage

used to run around to the British Council, libraries in other ministries, that's what I did. And last year they asked a question pertaining to food in relation to land redistribution . I went to the GMB(Grain Marketing Board). I went to the Ministry of Agriculture. I went to the statistical office. I read magazines and I found quite a lot of information. In other words, we are saying the student has to be resourceful. In other words that's the skill that should be promoted by any university.

Reference 2 - 1.04% Coverage

in fact two ladies , they went so far as to teach us how to write and prepare for examinations. And I, she actually opened myself to become a natural student.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.60% Coverage

towards examinations, I would wake up around 2.00 am or 3.00 am to study. Or, I could try to make a timetable that during the day I could visit the library or private places to discuss questions with others.

Reference 2 - 0.73% Coverage

if I had seated and just kept quiet without following the result of Educational Policy Making Process , if I had sat, it means I could have re-written it with a pass on it. So I think there are some problems in examinations. It needs a lot of improvement

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.92% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.92% Coverage

I think we survived because we were reading (We both laughed) and taking all our courses seriously.

## **SUPERVISION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT (SRP)**

ANGELINE A

access to the tutor was very difficult.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 4 references coded [2.10% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.29% Coverage

I was fairly lucky at the B. Ed level that my supervisor perhaps was helpful.

Reference 2 - 0.26% Coverage

We had not done any supervised research or any research paper before.

Reference 3 - 0.71% Coverage

we relied more, I think on the tutors advising us or helping us to do research. And unfortunately, it's only after we had finished that we finally understood what we were supposed to be doing

Reference 4 - 0.84% Coverage

We only understood it after we had gone through the project. Sometimes we thought the tutors and the lecturers were being cruel and fail to agree with them and thought we were doing things for them rather than for us to learn

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.49% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.03% Coverage

That was very poor. That was very poor. I remember myself. I think I ended up having 4 supervisors. One, you could not find the supervisor. And sometimes there was no serious marking.

Reference 2 - 0.46% Coverage

Let alone, of suggestions that you are given in order to work on the next chapter.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.50% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.50% Coverage

I am actually in a, in a state of fear because I have actually heard that eh--, supervisors at times give you hell

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.99% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.21% Coverage

But some were good. For example my tutor

Reference 2 - 1.78% Coverage

I could go and submit and she marks and she tells you what to do. Again, in another book, she would correct, then she would say alright, you go to Chapter 2. You write Chapter 2 and she correct it. You re-write in a book pad. After the booklets are complete up to Chapter 5 then she would say, alright, you completed just in time.

[<Internals/PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.22% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.22% Coverage

that one it's quite a burning one. I could have finished my degree long back

[<Internals/SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.72% Coverage

my tutor was very far from the place where I was. He was stationed in Kuwadzana. So, at times I could fail to get money for bus fare to go there and he was not so effective. At times you could go there and find him he had not marked the research project. He would give you another date and it was very expensive.

[<Internals/ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.55% Coverage

The experiences were quite exciting and intellectually challenging because my supervisor was based at the regional centre. He was a full time tutor. I could arrange with him a convenient time for research supervision and we used to meet during the school holidays. So I had all the time in the world to meet him.

[<Internals/ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.66% Coverage

to me is very painful, painful in the context that my supervisor did not, wasn't honest enough to tell me that this piece of work is not worthy it

## **CHALLENGES FACED DURING SUPERVISION OF RESEARCH PROJECTS(CSRP)**

ANGELINE

Availability of tutors during the time of, when we were studying other areas it was ok. But I had problems when it came to my research project. There comes a time when we went to the ZOU university to see a tutor. You cannot find him. And it, access to the tutor was very difficult.

Reference 2 - 1.50% Coverage

my tutor was staying in Glendale and I could not communicate with him. So I had to go to the university to just check if he was there. Maybe on the day I went there, he was not there.

Reference 3 - 3.36% Coverage

The other challenge was time. The research project is also given one semester. For example, you are given the topic and topic is approved and you are expected to hand in that semester and the time is not enough. So, I think the research project you

should find the topics well before you finish so that you work on the project, while doing other program areas. So that when you complete you complete everything.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 3 references coded [0.82% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.19% Coverage

Some of those aspects, maybe will be difficult today

Reference 2 - 0.40% Coverage

resources like textbooks, I happened to have had a few friends who had gone to university education that time

Reference 3 - 0.23% Coverage

I had enough, perhaps textbooks to rely on during the lessons

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 4 references coded [4.18% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.90% Coverage

I think I ended up having 4 supervisors. One, you could not find the supervisor. And sometimes there was no serious marking. It was just a question of just presenting Chapter 1. And you could easily tell that somebody has not been thorough with marking. Let alone, of suggestions that you are given in order to work on the next chapter.

Reference 2 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 3 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 4 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.71% Coverage

I am actually in a, in a state of fear because I have actually heard that eh--, supervisors at times give you hell.

They may even take time to approve your , your chapters as you will be going through the project. And, ah , at times because of the distance maybe between the supervisor and the student they say, other students who have gone past the research project , they say you may fail to submit your project in time because of the e--, the e--, time that you are given to complete the project. I don't know how far true it is. But that's my fear. Because I understand, it is the toughest part of the course.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.09% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.09% Coverage

when you are doing your research project , you need to be shepherded very seriously. And from my experience in my other programme, I found that I couldn't get that help.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.30% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.20% Coverage

Some could not even finish the project

Reference 2 - 0.66% Coverage

typing a project, just scripts it was very expensive. You just find the tutor would just cancel and you go and start again.

Reference 3 - 0.43% Coverage

in our group of ten most dropped because of tutors who were demanding a lot.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 12 references coded [6.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.09% Coverage

I should have completed in 2003

Reference 2 - 0.23% Coverage

I was first allocated to a lecturer. This lecturer went away out of the country

Reference 3 - 0.18% Coverage

he could not tell the students that he was leaving the country

Reference 4 - 0.20% Coverage

I had to re-register the project. I was allocated to another lecturer

Reference 5 - 0.14% Coverage

I could not meet him. He was too busy to meet me

Reference 6 - 0.19% Coverage

he could give a lot of excuses if you made appointment to meet him

Reference 7 - 2.75% Coverage

I told my, my programme coordinator . I was again asked to write the topic and re-register the project again. So, I had to re-register and took another topic. I had to change. Then I was allocated the other lecturer. This other lecturer was very far away from my place. And I could make efforts to meet him where he was teaching. So, I wrote Chapter 1, 2, chapter 4 and he asked me to bring the project while it had been typed. And I had finished every detail and everything that the project need to be accepted . I did that. And when I took it for typing, it was typed but the typist took a lot of time. Then she was giving excuses of, eh—electricity black outs which were mostly common during those days, the past two years. And, it was completed. Then, I phoned that the project is now complete and I have made the necessary corrections. So, “Can I bring it so that you can see it?” And this lecturer could scold me over the phone. He scolded me.

Reference 8 - 0.76% Coverage

I tried to explain to him that I had, some of the problems that I had faced were not of my making. But he said that I could have finished that project within six months according to him. And he doesn't want to attend to students who had not finished the project.

Reference 9 - 0.12% Coverage

he asked me to consult ZOU. So here I am

Reference 10 - 0.17% Coverage

I could not continue without consulting him with the work.

Reference 11 - 0.74% Coverage

it is very expensive transport to move up and down and you would not, even if the lecturer is far away at times, the other problem which the lecturers have, they at times, do not be able to tell the student what they really want at the particular time

Reference 12 - 0.55% Coverage

topics maybe approved by the lecturer and when you come again to the project coordinator, the programme coordinator might say, this topic has been done by so many students can you change it

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.79% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.79% Coverage

I, my tutor was very far from the place where I was. He was stationed in Kuwadzana. So, at times I could fail to get money for bus fare to go there and he was not so effective. At times you could go there and find him he had not marked the research project. He would give you another date and it was very expensive.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.62% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.62% Coverage

at times we failed to get our tutors and we also had to go to their homes which we felt was a little bit disturbing because one might be having some other business to do.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.70% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.70% Coverage

That question to me is very painful, painful in the context that my supervisor did not, wasn't honest enough to tell me that this piece of work is not worthy it. And I just wrote, compiled everything. And when it went for marking, the marker or the supervisor (examiner) was very honest enough to say, look here, you were not properly supervised. You go back and re-write this. This is not B.Ed.stuff. So that disappointed me very much because the tutor was not honest enough. In fact, I doubt if he ever read my project. You see, because from the Chapter 1 up to the last chapter, he said come here (The examiner). Let's discuss this. What did you mean here? And I discovered that you know, I had not been properly supervised. So, personally, I think the tutors must be supervised in the way they supervise their students.

## **SUPERVISION OF RESEARCH PROJECTS INTERVENTIONS (SRPI)**

### **BVU BV**

ZOU should actually monitor their supervisors and check. Just sample, sample, sample, you have a group of students, the supervisors of ZOU should sample and see whether the work that has been recommended by the supervisor is it the one that we are endeavouring?

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.71% Coverage

I actually had planned to –ah work on my project in time so that I don't rush , when the due date is just around the corner. As well as the, I have chosen topics which are current, which have, a lot of matter which can be , which I can research on either in the library, news papers as well as interviews. So that those which have related material so that I don't get stuck along the way.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 7 references coded [2.12% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.13% Coverage

it depends on the lecturer that one is given

Reference 2 - 0.33% Coverage

lecturer-student relationship which should be created so that the lecturer can accommodate the students' problems

Reference 3 - 0.44% Coverage

lecturers that might be nearer to the area the students come from. Those ones I think, if possible, I say if possible , should be allocated the students

Reference 4 - 0.30% Coverage

it is very expensive transport to move up and down and you would not , even if the lecturer is far away

Reference 5 - 0.49% Coverage

To cut trans port costs and time, because as students, we are also teachers and workers, they need to be at their work place as well as carry out studies at the same time

Reference 6 - 0.25% Coverage

relationship which have said, between the student and the lecturer is quite important

Reference 7 - 0.19% Coverage

lecturers need to understand the problems that the students face

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.44% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.44% Coverage

I would suggest, eh-, all the work for students should be done maybe at the college or at some designated places instead of homes or their work places.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 2 references coded [3.21% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.98% Coverage

I would say to students , never ever go to the library and copy someone's project, because at the end of the day, you are not going to be proud of that project because it's not your piece of work. That's my piece of advice. And then when it comes to research, he must actually do the research, find out what people think about what you want to do. People must actually go into the field and research. I think that's my advice to students.

Reference 2 - 1.23% Coverage

I would say the tutor must tell the student what exactly is required from the topic, right down to the last sentence. The tutor must give the student a clear picture of what's required. Then the student, if he is properly lead and helped, should follow what the tutor says.

## **DT7: SOCIO-ACADEMIC INTEGRATION (SAI)**

ANGELINE A

You had to plan. What I usually did was ,I would go to work to school from 7.00 to 12.00. Then after school when others are doing maybe co-curricular activities I will be in my classroom reading. Then after 4.00 pm, I will come back home,cook for the family, do everything. Maybe, by 9.00pm , I go to sleep and then I will sleep until up to 3.00 am. From 3.00 to 6.00 am or maybe 5.00 I will start maybe to do the household chores.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [4.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.95% Coverage

I think it was a bit tricky but the one thing that I made sure I would do was to try and stick to my timetable to read at night. I would never do my distance education during the day, because then you would have a lot of interruptions and disturbances and so forth. But, I was able to read from 10.30 pm every day to about 12.00 o'clock. I would be reading ZOU work. Whether it was making notes, doing this or that, though sometimes you would have the assignment taking you the whole night, and so forth. But, it was all due to personal poor planning or other things interfering with what you wanted to do. And also, I think some of us quickly realised that we should have scalled down on some of the things like the social demands , going to church. To relinquish all positions in church and even going to clubs. To reduce the number of activities that I will be doing in a club so that I am just a member. I would attend if I was free to attend. If I didn't attend, it didn't affect the programme. So you would scale down on some of those things. Perhaps only those social things like deaths in the family and so forth would then affect you. But then there is not always a death in the family continuously. You will be affected for a short while and then you will be able to make up for that period where you will have lost time.

BVU BV

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 2 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 3 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [4.30% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.30% Coverage

the past three years have actually been hectic. I have abandoned my social life. Attending parties, I have since stopped that. And, at times I even miss my , those

church services in order to attend those group sessions I was talking about. And, at times to attend tutorial sessions as well as ah-, attend the private lessons that are offered by those private tutors that we hire and we have to, I have to sleep late, in order to cope with the assignments as well as to read so that I actually contribute something when we attend those group sessions or when I attend the tutorial session. So, at times, it's actually stressful. At times you have to –ah—absent yourself from work when the examinations are around the corner so that you actually cover, the, all the topics that are in the module. It's quite strenuous and hectic and it has been hell and I, (She laughed). I actually, I actually, sometimes I wonder how I have actually managed to go by the programme up to this day.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.51% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.51% Coverage

as I am in a peri-urban place where there is electricity, I am able to enjoy every minute of time from-----up to 12.00. And also as a teacher, sometimes we leave school at 1.00pm. There is plenty time for me to study. Plenty time.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 4 references coded [1.17% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.18% Coverage

fortunately enough, I have one child and also as a single mother

Reference 2 - 0.18% Coverage

my—daughter was at boarding school. And I was left alone at home

Reference 3 - 0.16% Coverage

left alone at home and that gave me enough time to study

Reference 4 - 0.64% Coverage

it was an incentive or something that forced me to study. And at work, eh, our school is a school that has hot seating and I had at least some time to look at my work or to write assignments since my school is hot seating

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.65% Coverage

During my first year in 1995, I was not yet married. So everything was very manageable. So, I began to get some challenges from 1996 up to 1998 when I was now a family person. But I used to work hand in glove with my spouse and immediate family members soliciting for their support so that I could pull through the programme.

## **SOCIO-ACADEMIC INTEGRATION CHALLENGES (SAIC)**

EUSABIA E

It was very hard. I had a class. I was a class teacher, an administrator at the school.

Reference 2 - 0.53% Coverage

One day I spent up to two o'clock in the morning while writing an assignment. It was on Statistics.

Reference 3 - 2.58% Coverage

It was very challenging that while you are writing you had, maybe you could have three assignments. At work, you had to mark the books. You had to teach. You had to do the correction. Administration, I had to be called for all meetings in the school. On finance meeting, I am a member. I was one of the signatories. You could be sent at the bank to collect money for children to go to a trip. Those were challenges. And the assignment date for submitting the assignments is nearing.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.65% Coverage

At times I had to ignore family problems and concentrate on B Ed studies.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.02% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.02% Coverage

This was a very difficult situation that we went, that I was in because at times you would find, eh- one area being ignored, or one area would suffer. For example, at times, I had to do my assignments whilst in the office. That means school work suffered. At times I had to spend, maybe the whole night, eh- writing some assignments. That means, family needs were a bit ignored. But at times we had to talk and discuss some of the issues with the family. At the work place, it actually shows I was stealing some time from, my work

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.15% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.15% Coverage

Planning is very, very important.

### **BALANCING STUDIES WITH OTHER COMMITMENTS (BSC)**

RUTENDO R.

Eh--(She laughed), when I did my B. Ed, my family was still small. I had only one child. So, I think the demands were sort of fewer. But with time balancing time for work and ZOU , I had to work very hard, because I had to work from 7.30 to 16.00 doing my work. And then from there I would start doing my studies. So, I used to study early in the morning or late at night.

### **TRANSPARENCY (T)**

BVU BV

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 2 - 4.80% Coverage

Once the family understands that then they are going to afford you as much support and at the same time they are not going to interfere with your reading time. Then at work, the teachers , that I used to lead, I had to address them that , you are going to notice a bit of a difference in as far as my leadership is concerned because I am embarking on this programme, and the programme also requires their support. And I remember again, even the district education officers (DEO), we had to tell them that

we needed their support. We needed them to understand that, sometimes if they found any area of uncovered work, although we tried to balance, that we did not do injustice to our profession. But we would make our DEOs understand that if they demand so much from us sometimes, we fail to meet some of their requirements because of the new commitment,

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 2 references coded [1.97% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.38% Coverage

in our culture, there are extended families. So you find that if there are some, members of the families come, the student may fail

Reference 2 - 1.59% Coverage

to withstand the pressure that they get from the relatives when they visit. Like, a visitor can come when the student has got a lecture to attend, or tutorials to attend, some of them could fail to attend those tutorials which are helpful in their studies. So I would say that the student need to , to explain to their relatives, that they are students. They are working on something that they want to achieve. So, that transparency , is important to the, be understood by the extended family or those people , their relatives, they have at home.

### **SEEKING ADVICE (A)**

PETTY P

seek for advice so that they can complete their studies

if one of the students could tell the truth on why they could not finish this aspect and why they met certain problems

Reference 2 - 0.28% Coverage

approach the, their, the, for help or to seek for advice so that they can complete their studies.

### **GENDER-RELATED CHALLENGES (GRC)**

ANGELINE A

I faced many challenges , mainly at home. For example, I had to cook for the family , wash for the family and study and attend to the children so the time to study was very limited. So I had to wake up during the night to read and write assignments. So the challenge was mainly at home.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.17% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.17% Coverage

Ah- not at all.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.45% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.45% Coverage

Ah-. Not exactly. The treatment was just the same.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.05% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.05% Coverage

No.

### **GENDER-RELATED COPING STRATEGIES IN DISTANCE LEARNING (GRCS)**

**ANGELINE A**

The strategy that I used was that, I would do everything before I go to sleep. Then I sleep maybe until 3.00 am. At 3.00, I wake up and start to read maybe from 3.00 up to 6.00am.

### **SOCIO-ACADEMIC INTEGRATION COPING STRATEGIES (SAICS)**

**BEE B**

Some of those aspects, maybe will be difficult today

Reference 4 - 4.95% Coverage

I think it was a bit tricky but the one thing that I made sure I would do was to try and stick to my timetable to read at night. I would never do my distance education during the day, because then you would have a lot of interruptions and disturbances and so forth. But, I was able to read from 10.30 pm every day to about 12.00 o'clock. I would be reading ZOU work. Whether it was making notes, doing this or that, though sometimes you would have the assignment taking you the whole night, and so forth. But, it was all due to personal poor planning or other things interfering with what you wanted to do. And also, I think some of us quickly realised that we should have scaled down on some of the things like the social demands, going to church. To relinquish all positions in church and even going to clubs. To reduce the number of activities that I will be doing in a club so that I am just a member. I would attend if I was free to attend. If I didn't attend, it didn't affect the programme. So you would scale down on some of those things. Perhaps only those social things like deaths in the family and so forth would then affect you. But then there is not always a death in the family continuously. You will be affected for a short while and then you will be able to make up for that period where you will have lost time.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 3 references coded [2.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 2 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 3 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 2 references coded [0.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.38% Coverage

I could attend to my work and after school, when I am off session at school, I could concentrate on my assignments, on my studies

Reference 2 - 0.17% Coverage

when my kid was at school I could be alone at home studying

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [3.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.65% Coverage

At times I had to ignore family problems and concentrate on B Ed studies.

Reference 2 - 3.01% Coverage

I would advise the students to budget their time well and concentrate more on study because it's for a short period. Family problems are long term things and work also a long term thing but study you will be working within a short specified time. So, it's better to concentrate more on work on your study than put more time on family problems.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.19% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.19% Coverage

I used to work hand in glove with my spouse and immediate family members soliciting for their support so that I could pull through the programme.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.19% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.19% Coverage

50% of the success comes from planning because this is the way I look at it, you must know when to do this and when to do that. And then you must have a timetable. Some people would like to wake up very early. Some people read up till late. So it depends on what suits you. But, planning is very, very, very important. You must know when to do this, when to do this, when to. Well, there are things like deaths, you cannot plan that. We must accept that, but to plan when to do this and that time for studies is very, very important. And another thing is do your work. If you are a (school) head, you are a teacher or what, finish up with your work and forget about it. Then concentrate on your studies.

## **SUPPORT FROM FAMILIES, COLLEAGUES AND EMPLOYERS**

### **BEE B**

Some of those aspects, maybe will be difficult today

Reference 2 - 0.40% Coverage

resources like textbooks, I happened to have had a few friends who had gone to university education that time

Reference 3 - 0.23% Coverage

I had enough, perhaps textbooks to rely on during the lessons

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 3 references coded [7.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.56% Coverage

being a new programme, one could only derive confidence if one's ideas were supported by colleagues

Reference 2 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 3 - 6.51% Coverage

The reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times. The family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially. Once the family understands that then they are going to afford you as much support and at the same time they are not going to interfere with your reading time. Then at work, the teachers, that I used to lead, I had to address them that, you are going to notice a bit of a difference in as far as my leadership is concerned because I am embarking on this programme, and the programme also requires their support. And I remember again, even the district education officers (DEO), we had to tell them that we needed their support. We needed them to understand that, sometimes if they found any area of uncovered work, although we tried to balance, that we did not do injustice to our profession. But we would make our DEOs understand that if they demand so much from us sometimes, we fail to meet some of their requirements because of the new commitment,

## **DT 8: FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS (FR)**

[<Internals\ANGELINE A>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.81% Coverage

Ah ( She laughed), it was very difficult. For, maybe at that time the money that was required for a semester was the whole month's pay. So I used to pay. The first month all that money would go to the studies. And then maybe after that then I would recover. Maybe I would have borrowed from friends. Then I would give them back their money.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.40% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.40% Coverage

the payments that we were making that time were manageable. We were able to pay our fees from our salaries.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.31% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.78% Coverage

I think because of inflation, before we pay, the salary is increased. And even for 2009, those who paid in December, we had done what the rest of the population in Harare is doing, eh-, "Burning money", if you understand what I mean. So, people are paying, "Peanuts" to ZOU

Reference 2 - 0.53% Coverage

when I was doing another course sometimes I failed even two semesters to pay ZOU.

## FINANCIAL CHALLENGES (FC)

[<Internals\ANGELINE A>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.51% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.78% Coverage

in Bindura we don't have the internet. We have to go to Harare if you want to access internet.

Reference 2 - 1.73% Coverage

Ah ( She laughed), it was very difficult. For , maybe at that time the money that was required for a semester was the whole month's pay. So I used to pay. The first month all that money would go to the studies .

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.98% Coverage

that time, I could manage to send my children to boarding schools and also pay my fees which were minimal that time. But a student enrolling now, will not be able to pay for students locally. If you have any children attending boarding school anywhere, you may fail to pay that amount of money. And also the charges that ZOU, perhaps is demanding today, perhaps are rather higher than what many of the students are able to pay. Whether it's due to inflation or economic meltdown I am not sure. But I think it's more challenging.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.50% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.93% Coverage

in some cases one would travel some distances in which we had to board the bus in order to go and interact with that one that had done an almost similar programme.

Reference 2 - 0.13% Coverage

it was almost 30 km.

Reference 3 - 0.44% Coverage

I tell you it was borrowing from John to pay Peter, and from Peter to pay Mary

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.74% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.74% Coverage

It's about 20 km because I live in Glen Norah. So, the only obstacle now that we now have is because of transport problems. This semester, I think we are going to face problems because of the hiking of fares and the charging of fares in foreign currency. But prior to that, when we were in our first and second year we didn't have problems accessing the library because it was quite affordable.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.66% Coverage

financially , we had a problem at first where ZOU would charge amounts which were four times my salary.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.08% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.24% Coverage

when we started the amounts were affordable

Reference 2 - 1.84% Coverage

My son was doing a diploma in motor mechanics. He wanted two books including spanners from spanner number 1 to spanner number 32. But we had to stay. One month you buy this spanner. And I had to borrow from my brother's son who had finished motor mechanics to borrow his tool box so that my son would go and do practical work while I pay ZOU.

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 7 references coded [2.91% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.14% Coverage

photocopying also was expensive during that time

Reference 2 - 0.36% Coverage

I had no access to any of those computers. And to go to private colleges to study the computers, I had no money on that one.

Reference 3 - 0.69% Coverage

that's one of the factors that delayed me to complete my studies because I had a lot of demands because my kid was at a boarding school. And so, I could not raise money to register for studies. I had to first of all consider my daughter ,

Reference 4 - 0.58% Coverage

Later on I could decide to raise the money so that I could register for my studies. But at times, I couldn't raise that money. And I also said that students who are lodgers, I am a lodger at my place.

Reference 5 - 0.21% Coverage

I ended up failing to pay for my studies and that delayed me in my studies

Reference 6 - 0.76% Coverage

typing of the, of the research project. I had also a lot of expenses, not -----yet through and I could discuss that with the typist , maybe the typist could also abandon the, the typing without even telling me because at times I could fail to meet the, the -

Reference 7 - 0.16% Coverage

costs. So, on financial aspects, I had a lot of problems

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.22% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.22% Coverage

During my time, things were not as expensive as they are today. So my salary would suffice for the fees and for the family.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 5 references coded [5.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.95% Coverage

Sharon temporarily withdrew from the programme in the fourth year due to illness and financial constraints.

Reference 2 - 1.09% Coverage

because of financial constraints we could not manage to go to the tutorials given by the tutors at the centres provided.

Reference 3 - 0.49% Coverage

It was roughly 50 kilometres from the place where I was.

Reference 4 - 1.27% Coverage

It was through my efforts. To be where a computer is, where you used, you were required to pay money for operating a computer at computer shops.

Reference 5 - 1.25% Coverage

my tutor was very far from the place where I was. He was stationed in Kuwadzana. So, at times I could fail to get money for bus fare to go there

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 4 references coded [4.43% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.26% Coverage

meeting some transport costs

Reference 2 - 1.20% Coverage

When I started the programme I was actually working in Mash East and, I was doing my programme in Chinhoyi, that's Mash West.

Reference 3 - 0.70% Coverage

I think it was around 300kilometres from where I was working to Chinhoyi?

Reference 4 - 2.27% Coverage

We had a lot of financial constraints so much that at times, when my husband was still alive, I would borrow money from him to register and to buy textbooks and also some family members would assist with the financial needs of the programme.

### **FINANCIAL COPING STRATEGIES (FCS)**

[nternals\ANGELINE A>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.35% Coverage

that time the money that was required for a semester was the whole month's pay. So I used to pay. The first month all that money would go to the studies . And then maybe after that then I would recover. Maybe I would have borrowed from friends. Then I would give them back their money.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.22% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.70% Coverage

I have seen many of them relying on donations and assistance from relatives and so forth to make their payments. Like I have a wife currently on the programme, if it were not for our children who are supporting the family, then we would not be able to pay the fees. We are able to pay the fees because someone is playing a hand on the family needs and also on the education of their children. It becomes lighter to be able to pay the fees to the university.

Reference 2 - 0.52% Coverage

one is currently working in UK working there and the other one is a student in Germany but is able to once in a while support the family.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.54% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.54% Coverage

my initial fee which was required by the university, I had to borrow it from my uncle. It was a question of borrowing , borrowing, borrowing and because definitely the finances were a problem, I remember, I had to embark on a poultry project in order to support myself.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.44% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.44% Coverage

I have to sell some wares like eh---, sweets when I am at school, some chips, so that I get the fares to attend maybe some tutorial lessons. But as for the fees, ZOU fees, it is my spouse who actually pays for that because my salary is not enough to cover my expenses that are involved in the day to day running of the family.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.66% Coverage

it can give us one copy which we can photocopy for ourselves. Or else the government should chip in.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [3.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.89% Coverage

I engaged in being a vendor at times. I could sell freezits, tomatoes to raise funds for the project.

Reference 2 - 2.76% Coverage

And their centres , maybe they should localize tutorial centres , say for example if they have students of the same intake in Chitungwiza, it's better for a tutor to come to Chitungwiza than make 10 people go to Harare. I think it should strategize to have local centres for students to make it convenient for them.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.67% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.67% Coverage

when my husband was still alive, I would borrow money from him to register and to buy textbooks and also some family members would assist with the financial needs of the programme

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.71% Coverage

I used to get, to sponsor myself from the salaries we got from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture and sometimes from the market gardening as another source of income which we used to have in Harare.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.15% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.15% Coverage

as a family man, we had to sit down. Before I even joined B.Ed. we had to sit down and say now look, with my wife, now B.Ed, for me to finish up this course, I need so much. For the children , we need this. As I said earlier, there were things we had to prune out. Is it necessary to buy a suit now? It's not necessary. So, I am not buying a suit now. I must pay my fees. So, this is how I went through it, the financial problems. We are having school fees for the children. Why can't we stop doing one, two, three , four? Even visits, instead of going to Mutare where I come from and I often go now and then, we were cutting and saying , we will go after every six months instead of going every month.

## **DT9: ADVICE TO ZOU (ATZ)**

ANGELINE A

to the ZOU staff, I would advise them to, maybe listen to students and to listen to students' problems and make time for the students for example when you are doing your project and make time for students. For example, you give a tutor the project, then you say maybe we will meet on such a date. When you meet on that date, the tutor has not marked your project. Then you say maybe you should come some other time. Maybe that other time you will not find the tutor. So I say they should give the students time and when they make appointments, they should make sure that they adhere to that time they would have promised.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.31% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.31% Coverage

the ZOU organizers, I think it's critical that they communicate more with the students. Because what we find happening today, there is little communication. You get students are going for a tutorial only to be told tutors didn't come or sent a message that he is not able to come or what. Then, people come back and then go back again on another day or rescheduled day and so forth. Maybe the communication, I know it's expensive. But written communication is always good or a schedule as it were. Just like students would need to make a timetable, and try to stick to it as much as possible, I think it will help.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.63% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.63% Coverage

they need to support the students as much as possible. The guidance and counselling, I don't know whether it's still there. I remember we had a lecturer who actually helped guide a number of students who were going to, almost drop. The guidance and counselling, especially the counselling part is required for distance learners. Because, one may fail to submit the assignment on the due date. Perhaps there could have been a series of deaths in the extended family. And therefore if ZOU does not understand that students are unique, they meet with unique challenges and unique experiences. Sometimes they will throw away students because one has not actually submitted assignments on the required date. So, ZOU needs to do a lot of support. Lucky enough, now ZOU has a library. What I don't know is facilities for photocopying. Because now with the cost of books, most students need to depend on the photocopying. Sometimes photocopying on the relevant chapters in order to work on the assignments.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 2 references coded [4.52% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.85% Coverage

ZOU should increase its tutorial periods, from say those 6 hours only maybe to, half the semester, as contact between tutors and the students. I understand, prior to my joining ZOU, ZOU had more contact time with students than it has now. I don't know why, but from the information that I gathered, I understand that there were

free revision weeks, free tutorial weeks , which consisted of more hours than we have now.

Reference 2 - 2.68% Coverage

I actually urge them to add to their tutorial periods as well as maybe, give more salaries to the tutors, to those tutors who give tutorial sessions on a 6 hours per semester so that they actually get motivated to give students more . As well as re-visit your, revise your modules once in a while, so that they actually enlighten the students more than they do. Work on the areas that are falling short. Those that are highlighted by the students, especially the Statistics Module as well as that on Computers so, that they will be a change in the pass rate as far as computers and maybe statistics is concerned

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 5 references coded [4.80% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.11% Coverage

So I think eh--. Besides offering the library which is sponsored by ZOU itself, maybe they could work in conjunction with other libraries to enable us to access books.

Reference 2 - 0.87% Coverage

And also I think that if those study projects, what do we call those, research projects could be bound and submitted to the library.

Reference 3 - 2.36% Coverage

the examination should not be to ask particular facts. Because I don't think that is the purpose of a degree programme---. Application, and also, I think that students eh-- , unfortunately for B.Ed, there are not enough books. But in commercial studies there is a lot for students to read. When they go back to their modules they will find out that it's very easy.

Reference 4 - 0.14% Coverage

Maybe the coordination

Reference 5 - 0.32% Coverage

students need to be oriented in survival skills.

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.36% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.36% Coverage

a Statistics person, he is there when you come to tutorial sessions

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.66% Coverage

lecturers need to be staff developed. Those who play administrative roles, they need again to be staff developed, so that there is rapport which is positive between the students and the lecturers and students and administrators.

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.35% Coverage

Eh-- , maybe on reading materials for ZOU, I think they should look for more books and maybe if possible, if there are any chapters that they feel the students need to read, they can photocopy for the students and the students can pay for the photocopying services. And also if tutors could make use of handouts so that students can use them.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [4.34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.58% Coverage

To ZOU, I should think it should have a strategy where it assists its students with terms of payment because most people fail to complete their study because of financial problems.

Reference 2 - 2.76% Coverage

And their centres, maybe they should localize tutorial centres, say for example if they have students of the same intake in Chitungwiza, it's better for a tutor to come to Chitungwiza than make 10 people go to Harare. I think it should strategize to have local centres for students to make it convenient for them.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.64% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.64% Coverage

To ZOU, I would say, students need more supervision especially in areas where research is done. Some might fear the carrying out researches especially if the supervision is a bit lacking. And also the materials for carrying out research, I think should be thoroughly be prepared.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [4.97% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.97% Coverage

ZOU, for its support to the students, it must revive its, but not forgotten system of making tutors conduct the revision course programmes like it used to do during the 90s in which the students could get the wealth of academic experience from their tutors. They could also share experience with other students. At the same time, ZOU should also ensure that it provides regional centres with some internet facilities so that the B.Ed students could also be exposed to internet as a vital source of information at an early stage rather than to have it at, when they are doing higher degree programmes.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 2 references coded [3.36% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.96% Coverage

One thing to improve its support to students is, they must have good tutors. Then they must have a lot of, eh—the libraries must be packed with a lot of books. And then, the economic situation at the moment is very, very difficult. For instance, in Mashonaland Central, for someone to travel from Muzarabani to here for tutorials, I feel that, that is a little bit too expensive. I would suggest that we have days when we say those tutorials will be in Mt.Darwin (district 65kms from centre) to try and cut expenses. So that we don't discourage students due to expenses. There should be a lot of de-centralisation so that a lot of students are not discouraged.

Reference 2 - 0.41% Coverage

If we decentralize, we go a little bit near the student. I think it will be more helpful.

## **DECENTRALIZATION (D)**

BVU BV

ZOU having identified a study group, in Wedza, ZOU should also formulate questions that can be given to the study group. And when I read that ZOU was

trying to cascade down to the district, it was going to assist the study groups in the district. Because the study groups normally are found in the district, and if there could be a lecturer who could be assigned to a study group to assist, then it would help.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 2 references coded [2.55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.53% Coverage

their centres , maybe they should localize tutorial centres

Reference 2 - 2.02% Coverage

if they have students of the same intake in Chitungwiza, it's better for a tutor to come to Chitungwiza than make 10 people go to Harare. I think it should strategize to have local centres for students to make it convenient for them.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.41% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.41% Coverage

If we decentralize, we go a little bit near the student. I think it will be more helpful.

### **STAFF DEVELOPMENT (SD)**

BVU

ZOU should actually monitor their supervisors and check. Just sample, sample, sample, you have a group of students, the supervisors of ZOU should sample and see whether the work that has been recommended by the supervisor is it the one that we are endeavouring?

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.66% Coverage

lecturers need to be staff developed. Those who play administrative roles, they need again to be staff developed, so that there is rapport which is positive between the students and the lecturers and students and administrators.

[<Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.36% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.36% Coverage

I think the tutors must be supervised in the way they supervise their students.

### **DT10: ADVICE TO STUDENTS (ATS)**

ANGELINE A

The advice that I would give to students is that they should plan their things. Plan on how you are going to do your household work, do your reading, maybe your studying and how you are going to cope at your place of work. Because your studies, shouldn't eh--, your studies shouldn't interrupt your work. And also your studies shouldn't also interrupt how you do your things at home. So you have to plan and give yourself time to study and to do everything.

[<Internals\BEE B>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.39% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.39% Coverage

one, major advice , I think, I should think students should do is to learn to do the learning themselves. To do, if it is an assignment, they need to do the assignment themselves. I think I see a number of cases where most students tend to borrow assignments from others and work on it and improve it and then someone says, ah well done and so forth. Again maybe that credit may would maybe to the tutors that we had. Maybe because we were few and we read , this assignment to the tutor might discover that this assignment passed through the office. Students need the courage to do the work themselves and give time to the assignments, instead of simply saying there is an assignment and they go hotchpotch today and quickly go through it or borrow someone's assignment and complete it and submit it. Maybe there is need to work themselves. And also the idea of making personal timetable on the ZOU activities or learning programme. I think it's essential because many of us want to actually pass without working very hard. The students to get to the exam time before even finishing to read the module. I think people need to give time to reading the module itself and trying to understand it as much as possible. And also the aspect that people need to share as groups, read the same chapter, meet, then discuss what you have read. Maybe it helps people to understand the ideas properly and make the concepts sink better as much as possible.

[<Internals\BVU BV>](#) - § 4 references coded [3.37% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.63% Coverage

first thing, one had to make sure that the family understands that you are now embarking on an academic programme

Reference 2 - 0.72% Coverage

reason why you want to make sure that the family understands you, so that you are going to isolate yourself during reading times

Reference 3 - 0.93% Coverage

family should understand that now father is now working on an academic programme and therefore the father has to be supported socially, educationally, and financially

Reference 4 - 1.09% Coverage

to those that would like to pursue ,one , the programme is so good. I am never the same. The programme is so good. But,it needs one to be so dedicated , to be so dedicated, to be so committed.

[<Internals\CHARITY C>](#) - § 1 reference coded [2.48% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.48% Coverage

I actually urge them to soldier on. There is nothing that is done in life whereby one doesn't have to sweat. Even if I was to engage on a degree on full time basis, it was also going to be challenging. So, I advise all the ZOU students to try and strike a balance between their , between their social life , their educational life as well as the other responsibilities so that they have so that they actually strive to get the best out of the, the responsibilities that they have so that they pass in the programme as well as continue their lives in a normal manner.

[<Internals\CHIBAYO CH>](#) - § 1 reference coded [0.18% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.18% Coverage  
a student should be diligent

[<Internals\EUSABIA E>](#) - § 3 references coded [1.39% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.18% Coverage

I urge them to join the libraries.

Reference 2 - 0.22% Coverage

It is easier when they join the libraries.

Reference 3 - 0.98% Coverage

you have to be determined that you want to do the programme. It's a challenging one. It needs a lot of time, determination and it's not a programme where you want to do luxury things

[<Internals\PETTY P>](#) - § 9 references coded [3.03% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.16% Coverage

It needs a lot of planning on the part of the student.

Reference 2 - 0.44% Coverage

I could not meet , especially on financial aspect because , I lacked planning. I started studying when my student, when my child was at a boarding school

Reference 3 - 0.11% Coverage

I could not meet the financial demands

Reference 4 - 0.31% Coverage

I have failed to complete my studies at the intended time because I could not, at times, I lacked commitment

Reference 5 - 0.66% Coverage

students fail to approach their lecturers. Like programme coordinators at the regional centres, eh--, they fail to express themselves truly because you find that some of the students could lie, the kind of problems that I had met

Reference 6 - 0.16% Coverage

seek for advice so that they can complete their studies

Reference 7 - 0.12% Coverage

in our culture, there are extended families

Reference 8 - 0.29% Coverage

the student may fail to, to withstand the pressure that they get from the relatives when they visit

Reference 9 - 0.78% Coverage

the student need to , to explain to their relatives, that they are students. They are working on something that they want to achieve. So, that transparency , is important to the, be understood by the extended family or those people , their relatives, they have at home

[<Internals\RUTENDO R>](#) - § 1 reference coded [1.64% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.64% Coverage

And also I would just ask students to be fully committed when doing distance education, because you will be adults and in distance education you need self-discipline.

[<Internals\SHARON S>](#) - § 3 references coded [6.63% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.34% Coverage

I think, if they engage with a tutor it will be more profitable unlike doing it at their own because at times we had to face a problem of what is really wanted and no one could explain. If there is someone with the knowledge, maybe the discussion would be quite good.

Reference 2 - 3.01% Coverage

I would advise the students to budget their time well and concentrate more on study because it's for a short period. Family problems are long term things and work also a long term thing but study you will be working within a short specified time. So, it's better to concentrate more on work on your study than put more time on family problems.

Reference 3 - 1.29% Coverage

Eh—to students, I would say learning requires endurance. They have to be committed. Eh--, do away with other things and concentrate on your work.

[<Internals\VARAIDZO V>](#)

- § 1 reference coded [1.83% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.83% Coverage

To the students, I would want to say this one is a great challenge. They should try and test how far they can go in carrying out some studies through distance learning. It's actually interesting.

[<Internals\ZED Z>](#) - § 1 reference coded [7.93% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 7.93% Coverage

To the students, I would advise them to be patient when ever they are embarking on distance and open learning because they might meet some obstacles as they will be carrying out their programmes. I would also advise them to work with others who will be, if ever they have got some colleagues who will be near them they might need to make some groups in which they collaborate in coming up with research for assignments and even the research projects as well. I will also advise them to source a lot of information from various libraries such as the UNESCO Library , in Newlands Harare. The World Bank Library which is found in corner 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Nelson Mandela Avenue and even the University of Zimbabwe Library and other Better Schools Programme libraries if ever they are still functional. They can get a lot of information. And even , they can also make use of the World Links at the provincial education centres where they can access information from the internet.

[Internals\ZVINAIYE ZV>](#) - § 8 references coded [6.85% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.89% Coverage

you have to read widely. You need a lot of books. Even when you are writing your assignments , you don't depend on the module only. You have to read widely so that you can get a lot of information.

Reference 2 - 2.21% Coverage

the only challenge (s) that one has, is that one has to read and I would say , one challenge is the temptation to get someone's assignment and copy it. Now, I would say, to students, that has got to be avoided. You don't do that because at the end of the day you may get an A or a B , but that is not your work. It's someone's work. When that same question comes in the exams, surely one cannot pass. So, I say it's a big challenge which is a temptation to try and copy someone's assignment.

Reference 3 - 1.98% Coverage

I would say to students , never ever go to the library and copy someone's project, because at the end of the day, you are not going to be proud of that project because it's not your piece of work. That's my piece of advice. And then when it comes to research , he must actually do the research, find out what people think about what you want to do. People must actually go into the field and research . I think that's my advice to students.

Reference 4 - 0.79% Coverage

The moment you register , you must know that some of the things which are very interesting or the things which may entice you and so forth can make you fail to do your studies

Reference 5 - 0.12% Coverage

“Concentrate, concentrate!”

Reference 6 - 0.42% Coverage

study as much as possible. And then your children will also copy from you. They will emulate.

Reference 7 - 0.24% Coverage

put a lot of commitment. Set a standard for yourself.

Reference 8 - 0.21% Coverage

When you start studying, go ahead and complete

## APPENDIX G :QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSIS TABLES.

**NOTE : Accept cut tables . They are insignificant to my discussion.**

**Table1 Crosstab of gender of respondents and B.Ed. completion time**

		B.Ed. programme completion time			Total	
		Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program		
Gender of respondents	Female	Count	28	10	8	46
		Expected Count	28.1	8.7	9.2	46.0
		% within Gender of respondents	60.9%	21.7%	17.4%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	48.3%	55.6%	42.1%	48.4%
		% of Total	29.5%	10.5%	8.4%	48.4%
	Male	Count	30	8	11	49
		Expected Count	29.9	9.3	9.8	49.0
		% within Gender of respondents	61.2%	16.3%	22.4%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	51.7%	44.4%	57.9%	51.6%
		% of Total	31.6%	8.4%	11.6%	51.6%
Total	Count	58	18	19	95	
	Expected Count	58.0	18.0	19.0	95.0	
	% within Gender of respondents	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.671 <sup>a</sup>	2	.715
Likelihood Ratio	.673	2	.714
Linear-by-Linear Association	.081	1	.776
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.72.

**Table4 Crosstab of marital status and B.Ed. programme completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Marital status	Single	Count	2	1	0	3
		Expected Count	1.8	.6	.6	3.0
		% within Marital status	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	3.5%	5.6%	.0%	3.2%
		% of Total	2.1%	1.1%	.0%	3.2%
	Married	Count	47	13	15	75
		Expected Count	45.5	14.4	15.2	75.0
		% within Marital status	62.7%	17.3%	20.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	82.5%	72.2%	78.9%	79.8%
		% of Total	50.0%	13.8%	16.0%	79.8%
	Divorced	Count	2	2	0	4
		Expected Count	2.4	.8	.8	4.0
		% within Marital status	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	3.5%	11.1%	.0%	4.3%
		% of Total	2.1%	2.1%	.0%	4.3%
	Widowed	Count	6	2	3	11
		Expected Count	6.7	2.1	2.2	11.0
		% within Marital status	54.5%	18.2%	27.3%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	10.5%	11.1%	15.8%	11.7%
		% of Total	6.4%	2.1%	3.2%	11.7%
Separated	Count	0	0	1	1	
	Expected Count	.6	.2	.2	1.0	
	% within Marital status	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	.0%	5.3%	1.1%	
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	1.1%	1.1%	
Total	Count	57	18	19	94	
	Expected Count	57.0	18.0	19.0	94.0	
	% within Marital status	60.6%	19.1%	20.2%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	60.6%	19.1%	20.2%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.284 <sup>a</sup>	8	.406
Likelihood Ratio	8.258	8	.409
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.638	1	.201
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .19.

**Table5 Crosstab of professional entry qualifications and B.Ed. completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			T
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Professional qualifications on entering B.Ed. programme	CEPrimary	Count	23	6	3	
		Expected Count	19.3	6.3	6.3	
		% within Professional qualifications on entering B.Ed. programme	71.9%	18.8%	9.4%	1
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	41.8%	33.3%	16.7%	
		% of Total	25.3%	6.6%	3.3%	
	CESecondary	Count	9	4	2	
		Expected Count	9.1	3.0	3.0	
		% within Professional qualifications on entering B.Ed. programme	60.0%	26.7%	13.3%	1
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	16.4%	22.2%	11.1%	
		% of Total	9.9%	4.4%	2.2%	
	DEd Primary	Count	15	4	9	
		Expected Count	16.9	5.5	5.5	
		% within Professional qualifications on entering B.Ed. programme	53.6%	14.3%	32.1%	1
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	27.3%	22.2%	50.0%	
		% of Total	16.5%	4.4%	9.9%	
	DEd Secondary	Count	5	1	3	
		Expected Count	5.4	1.8	1.8	
		% within Professional qualifications on entering B.Ed. programme	55.6%	11.1%	33.3%	1
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	9.1%	5.6%	16.7%	
		% of Total	5.5%	1.1%	3.3%	
Other	Count	3	3	1		
	Expected Count	4.2	1.4	1.4		
	% within Professional qualifications on entering B.Ed. programme	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	1	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	5.5%	16.7%	5.6%		
	% of Total	3.3%	3.3%	1.1%		
Total	Count	55	18	18		
	Expected Count	55.0	18.0	18.0		
	% within Professional qualifications on entering B.Ed. programme	60.4%	19.8%	19.8%	1	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time					
	% of Total					

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.508 <sup>a</sup>	8	.301
Likelihood Ratio	9.108	8	.333
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.546	1	.060
N of Valid Cases	91		

a. 7 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.38.

**Table 6 Crosstab of current work station and B.Ed. completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Current work station	Primary School	Count	36	9	13	58
		Expected Count	35.8	10.5	11.7	58.0
		% within Current work station	62.1%	15.5%	22.4%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	62.1%	52.9%	68.4%	61.7%
		% of Total	38.3%	9.6%	13.8%	61.7%
	Secondary School	Count	11	4	4	19
		Expected Count	11.7	3.4	3.8	19.0
		% within Current work station	57.9%	21.1%	21.1%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	19.0%	23.5%	21.1%	20.2%
		% of Total	11.7%	4.3%	4.3%	20.2%
	College	Count	4	1	1	6
		Expected Count	3.7	1.1	1.2	6.0
		% within Current work station	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	6.9%	5.9%	5.3%	6.4%
		% of Total	4.3%	1.1%	1.1%	6.4%
	University	Count	5	1	1	7
		Expected Count	4.3	1.3	1.4	7.0
		% within Current work station	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	8.6%	5.9%	5.3%	7.4%
		% of Total	5.3%	1.1%	1.1%	7.4%
Other	Count	2	2	0	4	
	Expected Count	2.5	.7	.8	4.0	
	% within Current work station	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	3.4%	11.8%	.0%	4.3%	
	% of Total	2.1%	2.1%	.0%	4.3%	
Total	Count	58	17	19	94	
	Expected Count	58.0	17.0	19.0	94.0	
	% within Current work station	61.7%	18.1%	20.2%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.7%	18.1%	20.2%	100.0%	

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.998 <sup>a</sup>	8	.857
Likelihood Ratio	4.092	8	.849
Linear-by-Linear Association	.290	1	.590
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .72.

**Table7 Crosstab of employment position at enrolment and B.Ed.completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	Class teacher	Count	33	10	13	56
		Expected Count	34.2	10.6	11.2	56.0
		% within Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	58.9%	17.9%	23.2%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	56.9%	55.6%	68.4%	58.9%
		% of Total	34.7%	10.5%	13.7%	58.9%
	Teacher in charge	Count	4	1	3	8
		Expected Count	4.9	1.5	1.6	8.0
		% within Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	50.0%	12.5%	37.5%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	6.9%	5.6%	15.8%	8.4%
		% of Total	4.2%	1.1%	3.2%	8.4%
	Head of department	Count	11	2	1	14
		Expected Count	8.5	2.7	2.8	14.0

		% within Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	78.6%	14.3%	7.1%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	19.0%	11.1%	5.3%	14.7%
		% of Total	11.6%	2.1%	1.1%	14.7%
	Deputy school head	Count	5	1	1	7
		Expected Count	4.3	1.3	1.4	7.0
		% within Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	8.6%	5.6%	5.3%	7.4%
		% of Total	5.3%	1.1%	1.1%	7.4%
	School head	Count	5	3	1	9
		Expected Count	5.5	1.7	1.8	9.0
		% within Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	55.6%	33.3%	11.1%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	8.6%	16.7%	5.3%	9.5%
		% of Total	5.3%	3.2%	1.1%	9.5%
	Other	Count	0	1	0	1
		Expected Count	.6	.2	.2	1.0
		% within Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	5.6%	.0%	1.1%
		% of Total	.0%	1.1%	.0%	1.1%
Total		Count	58	18	19	95
		Expected Count	58.0	18.0	19.0	95.0
		% within Employment position on entering B.Ed. programme	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.927(a)	10	.447
Likelihood Ratio	8.985	10	.534
Linear-by-Linear Association	.916	1	.339
N of Valid Cases	95		

a 13 cells (72.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .19.

**Table 10 Crosstab of years between professional qualification and B.Ed com**

			B.Ed. programme completion time		
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program
Years without study between professional qualification and joining B.Ed	0-10 years	Count	44	14	15
		Expected Count	44.6	13.8	14.6
		% within Years without study between professional qualification and joining B.Ed	60.3%	19.2%	20.5%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	75.9%	77.8%	78.9%
		% of Total	46.3%	14.7%	15.8%
	11.20 years	Count	10	3	3
		Expected Count	9.8	3.0	3.2
		% within Years without study between professional qualification and joining B.Ed	62.5%	18.8%	18.8%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	17.2%	16.7%	15.8%
		% of Total	10.5%	3.2%	3.2%
	21-30 years	Count	4	0	1
		Expected Count	3.1	.9	1.0
		% within Years without study between professional qualification and joining B.Ed	80.0%	.0%	20.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	6.9%	.0%	5.3%
		% of Total	4.2%	.0%	1.1%
	30 years plus	Count	0	1	0
		Expected Count	.6	.2	.2
		% within Years without study between professional qualification and joining B.Ed	.0%	100.0%	.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	.0%	5.6%	.0%
		% of Total	.0%	1.1%	.0%
Total	Count	58	18	19	
	Expected Count	58.0	18.0	19.0	
	% within Years without study between professional qualification and joining B.Ed	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.558 <sup>a</sup>	6	.475
Likelihood Ratio	5.528	6	.478
Linear-by-Linear Association	.051	1	.821
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .19.

**Table 11 Crosstab of regional centre and B.Ed completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Regional centre where registered for B.Ed.	Harare	Count	22	4	7	
		Expected Count	20.1	6.3	6.6	
		% within Regional centre where registered for B.Ed.	66.7%	12.1%	21.2%	10
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	37.9%	22.2%	36.8%	3
		% of Total	23.2%	4.2%	7.4%	3
	Mashonaland West	Count	3	0	1	
		Expected Count	2.4	.8	.8	
		% within Regional centre where registered for B.Ed.	75.0%	.0%	25.0%	10
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	5.2%	.0%	5.3%	
		% of Total	3.2%	.0%	1.1%	
	Mashonaland Central	Count	7	4	1	
		Expected Count	7.3	2.3	2.4	
		% within Regional centre where registered for B.Ed.	58.3%	33.3%	8.3%	10
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	12.1%	22.2%	5.3%	1
		% of Total	7.4%	4.2%	1.1%	1
	Mashonaland East	Count	3	2	2	
		Expected Count	4.3	1.3	1.4	
		% within Regional centre where registered for B.Ed.	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%	10
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	5.2%	11.1%	10.5%	
		% of Total	3.2%	2.1%	2.1%	
Manicaland	Count	3	0	0		
	Expected Count	1.8	.6	.6		
	% within Regional centre where registered for B.Ed.	100.0%	.0%	.0%	10	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	11	2	0		
	% of Total	7.9	2.5	2.6		
Masvingo	Count	84.6%	15.4%	.0%	10	
	Expected Count	19.0%	11.1%	.0%	1	
	% within Regional centre where registered for B.Ed.	11.6%	2.1%	.0%	1	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	4	2	3		
	% of Total	5.5	1.7	1.8		
Midlands	Count	44.4%	22.2%	33.3%	10	

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.877 <sup>a</sup>	18	.237
Likelihood Ratio	24.998	18	.125
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.601	1	.206
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 23 cells (76.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .38.

**Table18 Crosstab of adequacy of orientation and B.Ed. completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Adequacy of orientation	Yes	Count	45	12	14	71
		Expected Count	43.2	13.9	13.9	71.0
		% within Adequacy of orientation	63.4%	16.9%	19.7%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	80.4%	66.7%	77.8%	77.2%
		% of Total	48.9%	13.0%	15.2%	77.2%
	No	Count	11	6	4	21
		Expected Count	12.8	4.1	4.1	21.0
		% within Adequacy of orientation	52.4%	28.6%	19.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	19.6%	33.3%	22.2%	22.8%
		% of Total	12.0%	6.5%	4.3%	22.8%
Total	Count	56	18	18	92	
	Expected Count	56.0	18.0	18.0	92.0	
	% within Adequacy of orientation	60.9%	19.6%	19.6%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	60.9%	19.6%	19.6%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.454 <sup>a</sup>	2	.483
Likelihood Ratio	1.369	2	.504
Linear-by-Linear Association	.270	1	.603
N of Valid Cases	92		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.11.

**Table 19 Crosstab of residential area while doing B.Ed. and completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Residential area while doing B.Ed. programme	Urban area	Count	32	8	10	50
		Expected Count	30.5	9.5	10.0	50
		% within Residential area while doing B. Ed. programme	64.0%	16.0%	20.0%	100
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	55.2%	44.4%	52.6%	52
		% of Total	33.7%	8.4%	10.5%	52
	Peri-urban area	Count	7	2	1	10
		Expected Count	6.1	1.9	2.0	10
		% within Residential area while doing B. Ed. programme	70.0%	20.0%	10.0%	100
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	12.1%	11.1%	5.3%	10
		% of Total	7.4%	2.1%	1.1%	10
	Rural area	Count	12	6	5	23
		Expected Count	14.0	4.4	4.6	23
		% within Residential area while doing B. Ed. programme	52.2%	26.1%	21.7%	100
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	20.7%	33.3%	26.3%	24
		% of Total	12.6%	6.3%	5.3%	24
	Remote rural area	Count	7	2	3	12
Expected Count		7.3	2.3	2.4	12	
% within Residential area while doing B. Ed. programme		58.3%	16.7%	25.0%	100	
% within B.Ed. programme completion time		12.1%	11.1%	15.8%	12	
% of Total		7.4%	2.1%	3.2%	12	
Total	Count	58	18	19	95	
	Expected Count	58.0	18.0	19.0	95	
	% within Residential area while doing B. Ed. programme	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100	
	% of Total	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100	

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.085 <sup>a</sup>	6	.912
Likelihood Ratio	2.144	6	.906
Linear-by-Linear Association	.424	1	.515
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.89.

**Table 20 Crosstab of availability of electricity during B.Ed and completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Availability of electricity during B.Ed studies	Yes	Count	39	12	13	64
		Expected Count	39.1	12.1	12.8	64.0
		% within Availability of electricity during B.Ed studies	60.9%	18.8%	20.3%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	67.2%	66.7%	68.4%	67.4%
		% of Total	41.1%	12.6%	13.7%	67.4%
	No	Count	19	6	6	31
		Expected Count	18.9	5.9	6.2	31.0
		% within Availability of electricity during B.Ed studies	61.3%	19.4%	19.4%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	32.8%	33.3%	31.6%	32.6%
		% of Total	20.0%	6.3%	6.3%	32.6%
Total	Count	58	18	19	95	
	Expected Count	58.0	18.0	19.0	95.0	
	% within Availability of electricity during B.Ed studies	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.1%	18.9%	20.0%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.014 <sup>a</sup>	2	.993
Likelihood Ratio	.014	2	.993
Linear-by-Linear Association	.006	1	.941
N of Valid Cases	95		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.87.

**Table 21 Crosstab of alternative light to electricity and B.Ed. completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time		
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program
Alternative to light from electricity	Candle	Count	13	4	4
		Expected Count	12.9	4.1	4.1
		% within Alternative to light from electricity	61.9%	19.0%	19.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	22.8%	22.2%	22.2%
		% of Total	14.0%	4.3%	4.3%
	Paraffin	Count	2	2	1
		Expected Count	3.1	1.0	1.0
		% within Alternative to light from electricity	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	3.5%	11.1%	5.6%
		% of Total	2.2%	2.2%	1.1%
	Solar	Count	3	0	0
		Expected Count	1.8	.6	.6
		% within Alternative to light from electricity	100.0%	.0%	.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	5.3%	.0%	.0%
		% of Total	3.2%	.0%	.0%
	Studying during the day	Count	1	0	1
		Expected Count	1.2	.4	.4
		% within Alternative to light from electricity	50.0%	.0%	50.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	1.8%	.0%	5.6%
		% of Total	1.1%	.0%	1.1%
Not applicable	Count	38	12	12	
	Expected Count	38.0	12.0	12.0	
	% within Alternative to light from electricity	61.3%	19.4%	19.4%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%	
	% of Total	40.9%	12.9%	12.9%	
Total	Count	57	18	18	
	Expected Count	57.0	18.0	18.0	
	% within Alternative to light from electricity	61.3%	19.4%	19.4%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.3%	19.4%	19.4%	

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.769 <sup>a</sup>	8	.782
Likelihood Ratio	5.694	8	.681
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000	1	.996
N of Valid Cases	93		

a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .39.

**Table 22 Crosstab of access to telephone and B.Ed. completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Access to telephone during B.Ed.programme	Yes	Count	37	12	15	64
		Expected Count	39.5	12.3	12.3	64.0
		% within Access to telephone during B.Ed.programme	57.8%	18.8%	23.4%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	63.8%	66.7%	83.3%	68.1%
		% of Total	39.4%	12.8%	16.0%	68.1%
	No	Count	21	6	3	30
		Expected Count	18.5	5.7	5.7	30.0
		% within Access to telephone during B.Ed.programme	70.0%	20.0%	10.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	36.2%	33.3%	16.7%	31.9%
		% of Total	22.3%	6.4%	3.2%	31.9%
Total	Count	58	18	18	94	
	Expected Count	58.0	18.0	18.0	94.0	
	% within Access to telephone during B.Ed.programme	61.7%	19.1%	19.1%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.7%	19.1%	19.1%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.434 <sup>a</sup>	2	.296
Likelihood Ratio	2.662	2	.264
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.115	1	.146
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.74.

**Table 23 Crosstab of alternative communication to telephone and B.Ed.**

			B.Ed. programme completion time		
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program
Communication strategy used in the absence of telephone	Visiting regional centre	Count	14	4	4
		Expected Count	13.3	4.2	4
		% within Communication strategy used in the absence of telephone	63.6%	18.2%	18.2%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	24.6%	22.2%	21.1%
		% of Total	14.9%	4.3%	4.3%
	Writing letters	Count	3	1	
		Expected Count	2.4	.8	
		% within Communication strategy used in the absence of telephone	75.0%	25.0%	.0
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	5.3%	5.6%	.0
		% of Total	3.2%	1.1%	.0
	Consulting colleagues	Count	1	1	
		Expected Count	1.2	.4	
		% within Communication strategy used in the absence of telephone	50.0%	50.0%	.0
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	1.8%	5.6%	.0
		% of Total	1.1%	1.1%	.0
	Attending tutorials	Count	1	0	
		Expected Count	.6	.2	
		% within Communication strategy used in the absence of telephone	100.0%	.0%	.0
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	1.8%	.0%	.0
		% of Total	1.1%	.0%	.0
	Using phone at work	Count	1	0	
		Expected Count	.6	.2	
		% within Communication strategy used in the absence of telephone	100.0%	.0%	.0
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	1.8%	.0%	.0
		% of Total	1.1%	.0%	.0
	Phone at nearest township	Count	1	0	
		Expected Count	.6	.2	
		% within Communication strategy used in the absence of telephone	100.0%	.0%	.0
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	1.8%	.0%	.0
		% of Total	1.1%	.0%	.0

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.803 <sup>a</sup>	14	.971
Likelihood Ratio	8.076	14	.885
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.780	1	.182
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 20 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .19.

**Table 24 Crosstab of Internet connection and B.Ed. completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Internet connection during B.Ed. studies	Yes	Count	3	0	0	3
		Expected Count	1.8	.6	.6	3.0
		% within Internet connection during B.Ed. studies	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	5.3%	.0%	.0%	3.2%
		% of Total	3.2%	.0%	.0%	3.2%
	No	Count	54	18	19	91
		Expected Count	55.2	17.4	18.4	91.0
		% within Internet connection during B.Ed. studies	59.3%	19.8%	20.9%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	94.7%	100.0%	100.0%	96.8%
		% of Total	57.4%	19.1%	20.2%	96.8%
Total	Count	57	18	19	94	
	Expected Count	57.0	18.0	19.0	94.0	
	% within Internet connection during B.Ed. studies	60.6%	19.1%	20.2%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	60.6%	19.1%	20.2%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.012 <sup>a</sup>	2	.366
Likelihood Ratio	3.065	2	.216
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.687	1	.194
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .57.

**Table 25 Crosstab of distance from ZOU library and B.Ed.completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Distance from ZOU library during B.Ed. studies	0-10 km	Count	10	4	3	17
		Expected Count	10.5	3.1	3.4	17.0
		% within Distance from ZOU library during B.Ed. studies	58.8%	23.5%	17.6%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	17.2%	23.5%	15.8%	18.1%
		% of Total	10.6%	4.3%	3.2%	18.1%
	11-20 km	Count	9	2	4	15
		Expected Count	9.3	2.7	3.0	15.0
		% within Distance from ZOU library during B.Ed. studies	60.0%	13.3%	26.7%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	15.5%	11.8%	21.1%	16.0%
		% of Total	9.6%	2.1%	4.3%	16.0%
	21-30 km	Count	16	4	1	21
		Expected Count	13.0	3.8	4.2	21.0
		% within Distance from ZOU library during B.Ed. studies	76.2%	19.0%	4.8%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	27.6%	23.5%	5.3%	22.3%
		% of Total	17.0%	4.3%	1.1%	22.3%
	31-40 km	Count	5	0	3	8
Expected Count		4.9	1.4	1.6	8.0	
% within Distance from ZOU library during B.Ed. studies		62.5%	.0%	37.5%	100.0%	
% within B.Ed. programme completion time		8.6%	.0%	15.8%	8.5%	
	% of Total	5.3%	.0%	3.2%	8.5%	
40 km plus	Count	18	7	8	33	
	Expected Count	20.4	6.0	6.7	33.0	
	% within Distance from ZOU library during B.Ed. studies	54.5%	21.2%	24.2%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	31.0%	41.2%	42.1%	35.1%	
	% of Total	19.1%	7.4%	8.5%	35.1%	
Total	Count	58	17	19	94	
	Expected Count	58.0	17.0	19.0	94.0	
	% within Distance from ZOU library during B.Ed. studies	61.7%	18.1%	20.2%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time					

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.414 <sup>a</sup>	8	.493
Likelihood Ratio	9.642	8	.291
Linear-by-Linear Association	.384	1	.535
N of Valid Cases	94		

a. 9 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.45.

**Table26 Crosstab of adequacy of library books and B.Ed. completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Library's adequacy of books for the B. Ed. programme	Yes	Count	17	3	5	25
		Expected Count	15.6	4.5	4.8	25.0
		% within Library's adequacy of books for the B.Ed. programme	68.0%	12.0%	20.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	30.9%	18.8%	29.4%	28.4%
		% of Total	19.3%	3.4%	5.7%	28.4%
	No	Count	38	13	12	63
		Expected Count	39.4	11.5	12.2	63.0
		% within Library's adequacy of books for the B.Ed. programme	60.3%	20.6%	19.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	69.1%	81.3%	70.6%	71.6%
		% of Total	43.2%	14.8%	13.6%	71.6%
Total	Count	55	16	17	88	
	Expected Count	55.0	16.0	17.0	88.0	
	% within Library's adequacy of books for the B.Ed. programme	62.5%	18.2%	19.3%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	62.5%	18.2%	19.3%	100.0%	

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.911 <sup>a</sup>	2	.634
Likelihood Ratio	.972	2	.615
Linear-by-Linear Association	.127	1	.722
N of Valid Cases	88		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.55.

**Table 29 Crosstab of benefit of tutors' comments on assignments and B.Ed.**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Benefit from comments on assignments by tutors	Yes	Count	51	15	18	84
		Expected Count	51.7	14.8	17.5	84.0
		% within Benefit from comments on assignments by tutors	60.7%	17.9%	21.4%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	91.1%	93.8%	94.7%	92.3%
		% of Total	56.0%	16.5%	19.8%	92.3%
	No	Count	5	1	1	7
		Expected Count	4.3	1.2	1.5	7.0
		% within Benefit from comments on assignments by tutors	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	8.9%	6.3%	5.3%	7.7%
		% of Total	5.5%	1.1%	1.1%	7.7%
Total	Count	56	16	19	91	
	Expected Count	56.0	16.0	19.0	91.0	
	% within Benefit from comments on assignments by tutors	61.5%	17.6%	20.9%	100.0%	
	% within B.Ed. programme completion time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.5%	17.6%	20.9%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.325 <sup>a</sup>	2	.850
Likelihood Ratio	.341	2	.843
Linear-by-Linear Association	.309	1	.578
N of Valid Cases	91		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.23.

**Table 30 Crosstab of strategies to cope with examination and B.Ed.completion time**

			B.Ed. programme completion time			Total
			Normal completion	Delayed completion	Still on program	
Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	Study groups	Count	30	9	8	47
		Expected Count	29.7	7.8	9.5	47.0
		% within Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	63.8%	19.1%	17.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	56.6%	64.3%	47.1%	56.0%
		% of Total	35.7%	10.7%	9.5%	56.0%
Hiring private tutors		Count	5	0	1	6
		Expected Count	3.8	1.0	1.2	6.0
		% within Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	83.3%	.0%	16.7%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	9.4%	.0%	5.9%	7.1%
		% of Total	6.0%	.0%	1.2%	7.1%
Serious quiet study		Count	3	3	2	8
		Expected Count	5.0	1.3	1.6	8.0
		% within Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	5.7%	21.4%	11.8%	9.5%
		% of Total	3.6%	3.6%	2.4%	9.5%
Use of study timetable		Count	4	2	0	6
		Expected Count	3.8	1.0	1.2	6.0
		% within Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	7.5%	14.3%	.0%	7.1%
		% of Total	4.8%	2.4%	.0%	7.1%
Studying past examination papers		Count	1	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.6	.2	.2	1.0
		% within Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	1.9%	.0%	.0%	1.2%
		% of Total	1.2%	.0%	.0%	1.2%
Library reserach		Count	6	0	1	7
		Expected Count	4.4	1.2	1.4	7.0
		% within Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	85.7%	.0%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	11.3%	.0%	5.9%	8.3%
		% of Total	7.1%	.0%	1.2%	8.3%
Taking swat leave		Count	2	0	4	6
		Expected Count	3.8	1.0	1.2	6.0
		% within Strategy 1 for coping with examinations	33.3%	.0%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within B.Ed. programme completion time	3.8%	.0%	23.5%	7.1%
		% of Total	2.4%	.0%	4.8%	7.1%
Attending tutorials regularly		Count	0	0	1	1
		Expected Count	0	0	0	0

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.861 <sup>a</sup>	18	.196
Likelihood Ratio	24.543	18	.138
Linear-by-Linear Association	.698	1	.404
N of Valid Cases	84		

a. 26 cells (86.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .17.

**Table 31 T-Test results for Likert Scale Variables**

### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Ranking challenges from availability of learning materials	Equal variances assumed	.556	.458	-1.402	74	.165
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.472	30.746	.151
Ranking challenges from effects of the economic downturn in Zimbabwe	Equal variances assumed	.097	.756	.309	74	.758
	Equal variances not assumed			.302	27.468	.765
Ranking challenges from supervision of projects	Equal variances assumed	.001	.970	.249	74	.804
	Equal variances not assumed			.244	27.542	.809
Ranking challenges from contact tutorial sessions	Equal variances assumed	1.800	.184	-.164	74	.870
	Equal variances not assumed			-.188	36.415	.852

## Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Rating of support from regional director	Equal variances assumed	2.126	.149	.860	74	.393		
	Equal variances not assumed			1.163	54.425	.250		
Rating of support from regional programme coordinator	Equal variances assumed	.312	.578	1.335	74	.186		
	Equal variances not assumed			1.562	38.081	.127		
Rating of support from tutors	Equal variances assumed	2.608	.111	.306	74	.761		
	Equal variances not assumed			.324	31.275	.748		
Rating of support from student service officers	Equal variances assumed	.442	.508	-.483	74	.631		
	Equal variances not assumed			-.421	23.588	.678		
Rating of support from family members	Equal variances assumed	.040	.841	-.378	74	.707		
	Equal variances not assumed			-.385	29.273	.703		
Rating of support from programme secretaries	Equal variances assumed	1.519	.222	-.865	74	.390		
	Equal variances not assumed			-.732	22.830	.472		
Rating of support from colleagues	Equal variances assumed	.357	.552	.970	74	.335		
	Equal variances not assumed			.968	28.273	.341		
Rating of support from study groups	Equal variances assumed	.087	.769	-.528	74	.599		
	Equal variances not assumed			-.531	28.663	.599		
Rating of support from the employer	Equal variances assumed	.645	.424	-.101	74	.920		
	Equal variances not assumed			-.126	44.672	.900		
Rating of support from workmates	Equal variances assumed	.320	.573	.753	74	.454		
	Equal variances not assumed			.928	42.920	.359		

## Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Difficulty rank of understanding modules	Equal variances assumed	.542	.464	.258	74	.797
	Equal variances not assumed			.245	26.307	.808
Difficulty rank of financing the B.Ed. programme	Equal variances assumed	.002	.969	-.519	74	.605
	Equal variances not assumed			-.524	28.799	.604
Difficulty rank of balancing employment, family and studies	Equal variances assumed	.013	.909	-.419	74	.676
	Equal variances not assumed			-.424	28.843	.675
Difficulty rank of studying in isolation	Equal variances assumed	.141	.708	.139	74	.890
	Equal variances not assumed			.133	26.528	.895
Difficulty rank of preparation of assignments	Equal variances assumed	.544	.463	-.295	74	.769
	Equal variances not assumed			-.310	30.918	.758