

# **CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES OF DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY ADULT PART-TIME B.TECH SOMATOLOGY LEARNERS**

by  
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## DECLARATION

I declare that the whole dissertation entitled:

**CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES OF DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY ADULT PART-TIME B.TECH SOMATOLOGY LEARNERS**

is representative of my own work.

  
.....  
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I hereby declare that this dissertation has been submitted for examination  
with my approval.

  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The study focused on adult learners in the Bachelor of Technology: Somatology degree (B. Tech) at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). It served to establish the characteristics and experiences of part-time, predominantly adult women learners in order to facilitate their and future generations of formal higher education life-long learners retention, throughput and success rates at DUT. This is in response to national policy directives from the Department of Education and communiqués from various non-profit organisations (NPO's) and political groups.

The aim of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that motivate, facilitate and detract from part-time learner's formal learning experience in order for the Department of Somatology at DUT to consider ways to address these needs.

A questionnaire and focus group discussion were used to acquire data from the current cohort of B. Tech. Somatology learners. The taped discussion was subsequently transcribed and the data obtained was analysed and interpreted by means of thematic analysis. Three major themes that related to the literature, the conceptual framework and the title of the study emerged as descriptions of the adult women learners' characteristics and experiences within their communities, their work and DUT.

The dissertation concluded with a summary of the findings which directly related to the testimony of the adult learners' experiences as continuing formal higher education part-time learners. Recommendations which were recognised as facilitating successful lifelong learning in institutions of higher learning and which could be adopted by DUT's academic and administrative sectors were suggested.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	-	African National Congress
B.TECH	-	Bachelor of Technology
COSATU	-	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DOE	-	Department of Education
DUT	-	Durban University of Technology
ETDP	-	Education, Training and Development Practices
M.TECH	-	Master of Technology
NEPI	-	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	-	Non-government organization
PQM	-	Programme Qualification Mix
S. A.	-	South Africa
SAQA	-	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	-	Sector Education and Training Authority
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UT	-	University of Technology

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

The study focuses on adult learners that are registered for the Bachelor of Technology: Somatology programme (B. Tech: Somatology) at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). The discussion begins with an overview of the discipline and then continues with an explanation of the position of Somatology within the general South African business and educational context.

### **BACKGROUND TO SOMATOLOGY**

Somatology is a programme of study offered at only four of the Universities of Technology and one Comprehensive University in South Africa. Somatology is defined in The Chambers Dictionary (1994:1644) as ‘the science of the human body’. It is a field of learning that encompasses teaching and learning in aspects of complementary health and wellness. Disciplines include aromatherapy, reflexology, aesthetic enhancement, physical education, nutritional management, facial treatments, minor surgical removal procedures, electrical and mechanical body contouring, massage, stress management and product coordination and marketing (Durban University of Technology, 2006). It is a predominantly female profession. Graduates have the options of becoming therapists in clinics, spa’s, gyms, and corporate wellness centers, and in game lodge and international shipping lines hydro’s. They may also become assistants to cosmetic surgeons and dermatologists for pre and post surgical therapeutic treatments.. Lecturing in public and private institutions of higher education is another option open to qualified Somatologists. Alternatively they may work as representatives and trainers in pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies. In many instances small, micro and medium businesses incorporating the above positions have been initiated and are owned by entrepreneurial somatologists.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN SOMATOLOGY**

Somatology has, since its inception, had a variety of names and levels of qualification. It was originally a six month 'beauty culture' course which consisted of a module of 'manicure' and a module of 'pedicure' i.e. hand and foot care treatments, run by the then Technikons. It is currently offered at four of the Universities of Technology, and one Comprehensive University in South Africa. These institutions of higher learning include Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Central University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Johannesburg. The current complimentary health and wellness qualifications are internationally benchmarked and recognised by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). They comprise a three year full-time (360 credit) undergraduate diploma and a postgraduate two year part-time (120 credit) Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) degree (South African Qualifications Authority, 2000a). Johannesburg Comprehensive University and Tshwane University of Technology now also offer a three year part-time full research Masters in Technology : Somatology (M.Tech : Somatology) degree. To date, all bar one of the learners who have registered and qualified from these universities have been women.

DUT's Department of Somatology has the space, facilities and human resources to accommodate forty learners in the first year of the diploma. With attrition, less than 40% of this intake ultimately graduates with a diploma. The result of this is that the DUT Department of Somatology cannot currently fulfill its local direct industry as well as the associated industries' human resource needs for therapists qualified with a three year Diploma in Somatology. It is believed that most undergraduate Somatology learners have guaranteed full-time employment from the time they complete their final diploma examinations (Borg, 2006). This may account for some of the problems in recruitment, retention and throughput rates for the B. Tech: Somatology. The lure of a position in industry, the concomitant salary and the associated financial self-sufficiency are often more

attractive at this stage of an individual's life than a desire to fully realise one's intellectual and professional pursuits.

"Bound by a specific code of conduct and requiring specific academic training" (Gerdes, Moore, Ochse and van Ede 1988: 244), Somatology is a burgeoning and developing profession. It is coupled to the associated allopathic and complementary medical professions through its diverse curriculum which include aromatherapy, reflexology, dermatology, pharmacy, plastic and cosmetic surgery. The Somatology profession is also linked to the recreation, leisure and hospitality industries through their common promotion of health and wellness. This has resulted in the higher education Somatology qualifications being well considered and contributing to many diverse positions in industry. National and international medical practitioners, owners, operators and managers of businesses have indicated, through various mechanisms, their need and desire for graduates with qualification levels higher than the three year Somatology diploma (South African Qualifications Authority, 2000a). It has been recognised by these groups that B. Tech graduates are more advanced, qualified and equipped to fill a variety of posts related to the operational function, management, advancement and promotion of health, wellness and leisure in both South Africa and abroad. Basic requirements as well as promotional opportunities for and within these posts therefore very often depend on a postgraduate B.Tech: Somatology degree.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The South African Department of Education's (DOE) (2001) national plan for higher education and its new funding formulae initiated in 2004 have brought about pressure on departments and programmes within higher education institutions to increase the retention, throughput and success rates of their learners. Mature adult learners especially have been recognised as requiring special consideration in institutions of higher education (Department of Education, 1997). Demands by the Department of Education on public institutions of higher learning for graduates with higher qualifications are now greater as the need for

this caliber of personpower in South Africa is highly recognised and sought after (Ralphs, 1998 and Ralphs & Buchler, 1998). The associated government funding for academic programmes at higher levels is therefore greater.

For the purpose of this study 'retention' means the ability to keep learners in a programme for which they are registered. 'Throughput rate' is understood to mean that learners will graduate within a minimum period of time. This means that a Somatology learner should take three years to complete a full-time undergraduate diploma and one year to complete a full-time, or two years to complete a part-time postgraduate B. Tech. degree. In turn 'success' is the term applied to graduates who obtain early and satisfactory employment in the Somatology and related health, wellness and leisure industries. The Department of Somatology at DUT is therefore professionally and strategically bound to include in its qualification mix the three year full-time undergraduate diploma and the two year part-time B. Tech degree. As a means of progression for both the department and learners, the M. Tech full-time research based Somatology degree should be considered for inclusion as a course of study in the future. This will assist in the promotion of the local Somatology profession as well as the wellness and leisure industries. This progression will require relevant institutional structures and the design of an integrated curriculum that is true to the philosophy of post-graduate higher education, the learners and the profession which it serves.

## **B.TECH SOMATOLOGY PROGRAMME**

The postgraduate Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) 120-credit programme in Somatology at DUT has existed in the university's Programme Qualifications Mix (PQM) since 1997. Only four learners, through part-time studying and with full-time work commitments, have graduated, one and two at a time with this qualification since 2000. In real terms this constitutes less than a fifty percent

throughput rate for this level of learners as more than double that number of learners registered for the part-time degree in the past five years.

The B. Tech to some extent consists of a mixed or blended mode of delivery. The reason for this is that the B. Tech is mainly directed at practicing full-time employed somatologists who wish to advance their level and scope of practice and their professional standing through the additional subject matter as well as the research components of the B. Tech programme. The mixed mode delivery accommodates to some extent these part-time learners' working hours and helps to alleviate the pressure which the additional commitments add to their personal lives. The mixed mode of delivery encourages learners to use 'real' opportunities at their places of work in order to fulfill learning outcomes. These opportunities may involve the application of theoretical information, or continuing the practice of task based aspects of their practicum.

Access to the B. Tech programme requires a National Diploma: Somatology. Preference is given to those applicants with two years working experience in the Somatology or related wellness industries. The curriculum is made up of five subjects comprising of Research Methodology, Soma Techniques, Soma Techniques Project, Biotics and Nutrition. Research Methodology constitutes the theoretical research methodology instructional portion of the programme. Soma Techniques Project in turn consists of the applied research study that must be conducted in the field and the subsequent mini dissertation that learners must complete. Soma Techniques is the major subject that relates to the theoretical and practical aspects of the profession. Soma Techniques consists of specialised electro-therapy, minor surgical cautery procedures, complementary healing theories and practices and specialized manual therapeutic massage techniques. Nutrition covers 'special needs' nutrition related to conditions covered in the B. Tech somatologist's scope of practice. Biotics is the subject made up of applied anatomy and exercise physiology. Biotics also encompasses exercise prescription for clients with 'special needs'. Registration for the part-

time programme is on an annual basis. Provision for all subjects except Research Methodology is based on an alternating annual cycle. This annual cycle results in a back to back offering of subjects. This is designed to maximise class sizes. This means that depending on when in the alternation cycle learners register for the B. Tech, they will either complete Research Methodology, Nutrition and Biotics in their first year or Research methodology and Soma Techniques. Their second year would then subsequently consist of either Soma Techniques and Soma Techniques Project or Soma Techniques Project, Nutrition and Biotics. Research Methodology is offered every year by another department who combines Somatology learners with those from their programme (Borg, 2006). The reason for Research Methodology being offered every year is to give learners the opportunity to acquire the theoretical knowledge required to complete a proposal, undertake a research study and complete a dissertation by the end of their two years of study. Except for the Research Methodology and the Research Project all the learners are familiar with and have graduated with Biotics, Nutrition and Soma Techniques as subjects at the lower diploma level. They are therefore familiar with the general outcomes associated with these subjects and are usually easily able to complete off-campus learning on their own. Research methodology and the dissertation do not offer the same levels of familiarity and learners tend to have some problems with these components of the course.

With the expansion of the South African economy as a whole and the developments in the Somatology and related industries of late, the DUT's Department of Somatology was gratified to be able to accommodate a cohort of seven full-time employed adult women, eager to become continuing part-time formal learners at the annual 2006 registration. A further fifteen, full-time employed Somatologists have made enquiries for registration in the B. Tech. programme for 2007. Each of these cohorts constitutes more than a hundred percent increase in numbers from previous years.

## **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The increase in numbers to the B.Tech. programme is welcomed by the DUT's Department of Somatology. Encouraged by the needs of the profession and industries it serves, and cognisant of the requirements of the Department of Education (Department of Education, 1997 & Department of Education, 2001), the Somatology department is desirous to working with learners to achieve their goals and those of the Department of Education, the role players and stakeholders in the South African economy and the profession as a whole. It is surmised from the previous poor retention and throughput rates that these postgraduate learners have different challenges, characteristics, experiences, perceptions, attitudes, motivation and needs from their predominantly adolescent undergraduate counterparts that the Department is accustomed to dealing with (Wlodkowski, 1993; Woolfe, Murgatroyd & Rhys, 1987). As the researcher is both the head of the Somatology Department and an adult part-time learner, the decision was made to produce evidence by means of this study, for the department, to establish and address the needs of self directed adult learners interested in 'flexible, further continuous learning' (Wade, Hodgkinson, Smith & Arfield, 1994). In turn it is hoped that this study will contribute to a sustainable, relevant B. Tech. programme, from which more graduates will emerge to meet industries human capital requirements. It is also hoped that an ethos of lifelong learning, research and the promotion of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) will be encouraged within each group of adult learners, the DUTs' Department of Somatology, and the somatology profession as a whole.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The overall questions that guide the research are as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of part-time DUT adult B. Tech Somatology learners?



2. What factors motivate DUT postgraduate learners to continue with their B. Tech. Somatology?
3. What facilitates and detracts from the part-time learning experience?

## **OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION**

A conceptual framework and literature review describing the context of the study and the factors that impact on the characteristics and experiences of Durban University of Technology adult part-time B. Tech. Somatology learners will be laid out in Chapter 2. The literature that was reviewed examined adult learning as a concept and adult learners as a subject. As all Somatology adult part-time learners are women, particular interest and emphasis was placed on the conflicts, challenges and factors that impact on adult women learners continuing with a formal learning programme in public institution of higher learning.

The methodology and analytical framework of the study will be presented in Chapter 3. The phenomenological nature of this qualitative investigation will be discussed in this chapter. A focus group was used as a tool to explore the key questions and acquire data. This method of collection was deemed the most appropriate process to use given the limitations in terms of time and resources available for the study and the group size and dynamic. All seven participants were familiar with and comfortable in one another's company. They all had full-time work commitments, a common undergraduate qualification, purpose as continuing adult learners and common contact periods. Time during one of the common contact periods was utilised for the focus group discussion.

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to detail the findings of the study that were established through thematic and construct analysis. This data was interpreted against the background of the literature, key questions and the conceptual framework.

Conclusions were presented in chapter 5. In addition findings emanating from the thematically constructed data analysis and the literature study were raised. Recommendations made, related to the findings over which the department has some influence and control at DUT.

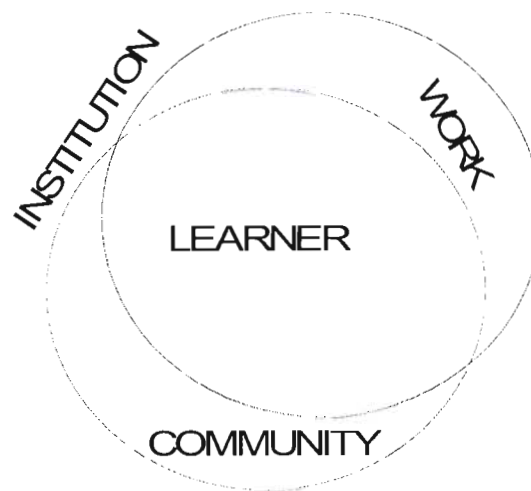
Books, journals, press and web articles used in the study were listed in the reference section. A list of Annexures comprising the ethical certificate; letters of correspondence; and the basic outline of the focus group format and the biographical questionnaire were included after the reference section. The statistical summaries of the questionnaire and the demographic make up of the diploma and the B. Tech learners were also attached as part of the Annexures.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### INTRODUCTION

This study, to establish the characteristics and experiences of Durban University of Technology adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners, is conducted within the framework of the self-directed adult learner (Knowles, M.S., Elwood, F., Holton III, Richard, A. & Swanson, R.A. 1998) as and at the centre of three domains. The following Venn diagram represents the three domains titled Work, Community and Institution which affects each postgraduate part-time adult learner. The interlocking and overlapping nature of a Venn diagram serves to graphically illustrate what is assumed to be the dynamic interplay and challenges that learners experience in relation to family, friends, colleagues, work and the university contexts.



**Figure 1:** Venn diagram illustrating position and interplay between domains (Lazarus 2000:6).

The learner as and at the centre of the domains represents the focus of this study, namely, the adult individual embarking on formal, self-directed, continuing learning at a South African University of Technology as a part-time learner. It also investigates the learners' reasons, motivation and preparedness for self-directed, postgraduate part-time formal learning.

The community domain incorporates the supports and obstructions that impact on an adult learner. One's background, current commitments, family and friends can all constitute helpful or obstructive community factors. It investigates the real and perceived roles and responsibilities and the personal learning environments, which adult women involved in part-time formal learning have to deal with, on a day-to-day basis (Gravett, 2001).

The work domain represents factors that affect the learners' quality of work life within their specific occupational and work place situations. These factors include hours of work, duties and responsibilities and their relationship with colleagues and clients.

Finally the Institution represents the policies, procedures, relationships and philosophies of the administrative and academic ambits that are relevant to adults returning to formal postgraduate learning within a public institution of higher learning.

As indicated by the Venn diagram the factors that affect the contexts of the community, work and the institutional domains overlap with those of the individual adult learner. There are therefore few clear lines of order or demarcation of topics and sub-topics within the discussion that follows. The overlapping and integration of issues may well result in aspects of a particular domain being discussed in more than one place. Each of these domains has a particular influence on the adult learner. In turn, it is understood that each of the adult

women learners investigated in this study has a unique context, self-concept and perception of her own roles and circumstances within these domains.

## **THE DOMAINS**

### **THE LEARNER**

#### **Self Esteem**

A description of self esteem or self-concept according to Burns (1979: 3) "is a composite image of what we think we are, what we think we can achieve, what we think others think of us and what we would like to be". It is summed up by Gerdes *et al.*, (1988) as being made up of features of social, moral, physical, psychological and intellectual self concepts against the background of gender. Each of these concepts has bearing on the characteristics and experiences of the adult as a continuing learner completing a formal learning programme in an institution of higher learning.

Intellectual, physical and psychological self as concepts most relevant to adult learners and learning will be discussed in this review.

#### **Intellectual Self**

Intellectual self-concept embodies a person's perception of their talents, skills and abilities. Individuals often judge their own intelligence by comparing themselves with others with whom they work, study, live and socialise. Comparisons used by individuals, against the background of work and educational peers, or against family, friends and acquaintances are conducted within ones predominant social context. Intellectual self is closely related to one's thoughts and the insight thinking brings to the understanding one has of one's personal perceptions and circumstances. As one develops from adolescence to adulthood, individuals mature and begin to consolidate their formal 'operational thinking' (Santrock, 1997). As adults, individuals become more systematic in their approach to problems and more competent in language,

thinking and logical skills. As adults, individuals also develop a pragmatic approach to reality. According to Perry (1970), adulthood gradually results in an awareness of the diversity of opinions. This results in 'dualistic' thinking giving way in varying degrees, to 'multiple' thinking and the understanding that there may well be many perspectives to any one subject, issue or factor.

Intellectual abilities and personal perceptions often relate to the career and educational choices an individual makes in life. These choices often directly correspond to one's ultimate levels of formal learning. What is meant by this is that the more intelligent one thinks or perceives oneself to be, the higher most probably will be one's aspirations (Wlodkowski, 1993). This is a concept that will be more thoroughly investigated within this study as it is linked to motivation and the processes that drive an individual to undertake and perform bigger and better acts and tasks in their lives. Perceived intelligence, personal motivation, career choices and pursuits of learning are vehicles required by adults to achieve promotion, improve their status and acquire the benefits associated within these (Longworth & Davies, 1996).

### **Physical Self**

Physical self is an intermittently changing self. One physically grows and develops and shrinks and decays at different rates throughout life. When one reaches adulthood one continues to change, albeit in most cases at a slower rate than during childhood or adolescence. In most instances the changes result in a decline. This reality of an ever declining physical self may or may not influence the concept and cycle of self-worth. This cycle often results in varying decisions made by the individual regarding their future. By the very nature of their profession and occupations within the health, wellness and leisure industries, Somatologists have a fairly heightened concept of physical self as they are often expected to act as fit and healthy role models for their clientele.

## **Psychological Self**

The attributes of extraversion or introversion as personality dispositions; characteristics of cheerfulness or aggression, despondency or motivation and temperamental qualities which affect one's emotional arousal, levels of excitability or calmness are components closely linked to one's psychological self-concept or levels of self-esteem. One's psychological self in turn is linked to the cycle of perceptions and assessment of personal attributes such as intelligence and body image or physical self.

These concepts or levels of esteem as discussed influence our identities and make us who we are. They are to some extent, however, perceptions, representing a mixture of objective and subjective factors (Woolfe, *et al.*, 1987). These factors are very often highly influenced by the support or lack thereof from families, friends and colleagues in work, leisure and other community situations. These factors may in turn be highly influential in persuading or discouraging an individual from considering, continuing with and completing a formal educational programme. The view that an individual therefore has of him/her self may be highly indicative of his/her ability to remain in and deal with the challenges formal learning poses to his/her life.

## **Motivation**

Like character and personality, motivation is a difficult concept to define. It is, as explained by Wlodkowski (1993), "a hypothetical construct", a created definition that provides an explanation of behaviour. It is, according to Beder and Valentine (1990: 39), "a force that drives adults to learn". When the force is strong it stimulates one to overcome barriers, but when weak, involvement and accomplishment are unlikely. Within the context of learners and learning, motivation is an important concept to understand, as it describes the processes that can stimulate, direct, continue or select a particular type of conduct, performance, response or action. For most economically active adults like the participants investigated in this study, a motivated response culminates in

learning and the positive accomplishments that are associated with the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and expertise. These rewards or accomplishments may include promotion and/or a salary increase within a work situation. It may mean autonomy and independence in general or specific circumstances. In some instances it may also mean the correction or redress of problems, challenges or needs that have arisen from their personal roles and responsibilities (Gravett, 2001; Longworth & Davies, 1996).

Within the context of adult education or adult learning, there are, according to Wlodkowski (1993), no major research studies that have comprehensively investigated the relationship between adult motivation and learning. Research conducted on pedagogic education and motivation has, however, consistently shown a positive correlation between successful educational accomplishments and high and positive levels of motivation. In addition motivation is seen as being both a cause and effect of learning. In other words learning happens because motivation encourages us to learn, and once we have learned, we are more motivated to fulfill our responsibilities or learn further.

Within the context of continuing adult learning, the decision to take on and achieve new learning opportunities and their concomitant benefits is influenced by a number of factors. These factors are explained by two theories. The first theory is related to one's life style factors and is referred to as the socialising theory (Beder & Valentine, 1990). In this theory it is proposed that motivation is not the product of individuals' psychological needs but rather a product of societal expectations or the need to fulfill behaviour and attitudes related to one's adult roles in an ever changing world. The second theory is based on expectations and is referred to as the expectancy valence (Knowles, 1980). This theory proposes that individuals are purposeful beings and select and interact with their circumstances with a view to making personally meaningful changes in their lives. According to Knowles (1980: 150) "valence is the value a person places on



an outcome and expectancy is the belief a person has that certain efforts will lead to outcomes that get rewarded”.

Within the context of formal adult education it is most often a personal decision on the part of the individual to take on and achieve new learning opportunities. Self motivated lifelong learning embodies the idea that each individual has the ability to develop to his or her own “learning potential” (Longworth & Davies, 1996 : 21). Learning is believed to add value and confidence to the individual's life through the inculcation and application of new knowledge, skills and attitudes. Knowledge will supply facts and details. Skills will incorporate practical professional base skills as well as life skills such as information handling, thinking, vision, decision making, problem solving, critical judgment, and the ability to learn. A positive attitude should in turn promote flexibility, adaptability, versatility, creativity, empathy, tolerance and the development of a sense of humour. Collectively these should improve the individual learner's way of life through improved career opportunities, personal recognition and self esteem (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996 and Longworth & Davies, 1996). These skills, knowledge and concomitant opportunities may well be best promoted through a combination of a part-time formal learning and a practice-based learning career pathway, as was undertaken by the participants in this study.

Further aspects of motivation as a factor that influences career and learning choices will be addressed in the discussion of other domains.

### **Adult Education and Adult Learners**

To embark on formal learning in adulthood as a definite path towards individual self improvement, takes among other things, motivation, maturity and courage. As previously discussed, these are factors that are associated with a positive and healthy sense of self. Maturity, too, is an underlying assumption of andragogy or adult education as described by Knowles (1980). According to Thorpe, Edwards and Hanson (1993) editors of the *‘Culture and Processes of Adult Learning’*, the

term andragogy to describe the concept of continuing adult education was coined by Alexander Kapp, a German in 1833 and promoted and originally defined by Malcolm S. Knowles. Having originated from the Greek 'Auer' meaning 'adult' and 'agogos' meaning 'teacher of' and interpreted as the 'art and science of teaching adults', andragogy is a catchy term used as a distinction from pedagogy 'the art and science of teaching children'.

According to Knowles and Associates (1984) the distinguishing features between andragogy and pedagogy are maturity and motivation. Knowles (1980) developed and based his models of adult learning on the following assumptions

- As a person matures their self-concept moves from dependency towards self-direction and autonomy.
- Maturity brings an accumulation of experiences that become increasingly rich sources for learning.
- As a person matures, readiness to learn is increasingly orientated towards their development tasks and social roles.
- As a person matures, the orientation towards learning becomes less subject-centred and increasingly problem-centred. There is also a change in time perspective; from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application.
- Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
- Even though adults are often motivated to learn by external motivators (promotion, higher salary, etc), the most powerful motivators are internal pressures (quality of life, job satisfaction, etc.).

Andragogy ideally leads the mature learner to "a strengthened identity within a distinctive field of practice and enquiry" (Tennant, 1997: 7). At the same time self-directed learning, learner-centredness, independence, autonomy, and

needs-meeting are terms used by Tennant (1997) to advocate his belief that independent learners whose autonomy was promoted in the learning situation, were more likely to be critical, reflective lifelong learners.

As populations throughout the world continue to age, the shift from a youth to a mature or an adult orientated society has brought about a need to educate adults for roles and positions important to the political, economic, social and cultural structure of societies (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Within this framework the terms 'adult or mature learner' as the subject and 'adult education and lifelong learning' as the process have different meanings for different milieu, places and times (Tennant, 1997).

As a starting point the term 'adult' may be considered problematic. This is due to a number of reasons. Firstly 'adult' is a concept difficult to define as it has various meanings in different societies owing to its many variables namely; age, role within the family and society, as well as levels and degrees of responsibility associated with the tasks and positions assigned to individuals (Gravett, 2001). Secondly 'mature' is a term often used interchangeably with 'adult' in both the context of learning and education as well as within general usage. In conjunction with this, the terms 'adult education' and 'adult learner,' are considered ambiguous (Knowles, 1980), as they are sometimes considered to be different terms for the same concept, and at other times they are considered to be different concepts. In response to these problems, terminologies have been coined by many writers in order to attempt to create a more specific explanation for any particular nuance of the expressions used. The following are just some of the more common applications: Continuing Education (Woolfe, *et al.*, 1987); Flexible Learning (Wade *et al.*, 1994); Lifelong Education/ Learner (Chapman & Aspin, 1997); Mature Learner (Gravett, 2001); Recurrent Education (Rogers, 1992) and Self-directed Learning/Learner (Knowles, 1980).

In addition to these, the term lifelong learning seems also of late to have become a popular all encompassing term. Defined as;

“...the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers *individuals* to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environments”.

(Longworth & Davies,1996:22)

lifelong learning describes the adult learner in a very positive light; as an individual able to encompass and complete a range of human experiences for him/herself throughout his/her life.

For the purpose of this study, and to place it into the context of the South African educational system, adult education will be understood to mean a planned “formal educational programme for adults who wish to continue their education beyond the point reached through the system of formal initial education during their youth” (National Education Policy Investigation, 1993:8). For clarity and simplicity in this study, ‘mature’ and ‘adult’ will be used interchangeably as will ‘learning’ and ‘education’. The mature adult lifelong learner will also be based on the andragogic criteria of Knowles (1980:24) who classified a person as “adult when they firstly perform social roles typically assigned by our culture to that of worker, spouse, parent, responsible citizen, soldier and the like, and who perceived themselves to be responsible for their own lives”. In addition, the continuing, self-directed, lifelong learner or any of the number of terminologies used to describe the adult or mature learner will be understood to possess the following skills:

- The ability to develop and be in touch with curiosities (the ability to engage in divergent thinking).

- The ability to formulate questions, based on one's curiosities, that are answerable through inquiry (in contrast to questions that are answerable by authority or faith). This skill is the ability to engage in convergent or inductive-deductive reasoning.
- The ability to identify the data required to answer various kinds of questions.
- The ability to locate the most relevant and reliable sources of required data.
- The ability to select and use the most efficient means to collect the required data from the appropriate sources.
- The ability to organize, analyse and evaluate the data so as to get valid answers to questions.
- The ability to generalise, apply and communicate the answers to the questions raised.

(Knowles, 1980: 267)

In this study an adult part-time learner will specifically be a learner who has completed a formal full-time 360 credit undergraduate diploma in Somatology at a South African University and is currently registered for the formal postgraduate, part-time B.Tech: Somatology degree at the Durban University of Technology.

Whilst adults differ from each other in their needs, desires and reasons for the continued learning they have embarked on (Thorpe *et al.*, 1993), they do have a number of characteristics in common. They, the adult learners tend to be more self-directed than younger learners and have more and varied degrees of experience (Burns, Scott & Cooney, 1993 and Devlin, 1996). Knowles also acknowledges that adults have a readiness to learn once the reason, need or motivation is understood and accepted (Knowles & Associates, 1984 and Knowles, 1986). For these characteristics to be of value to the adult learner, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) argue that the learner must be open and desirous of new experience and use observation and reflective skill to analyse the new information and to make practical use of it. This structure fits in well with Kolb's experiential learning model (Sutherland, 1997) and Schön's concept of reflective

practice (Jarvis, 1999). Devlin (1996) and Burns, Scott and Cooney (1993) found adult learners' progress to be 'exemplary'. They established that adult learners had a higher proportion of course completion than younger learners and further degrees were undertaken by a higher proportion of mature learners than younger learners.

At the same time adult learners have many challenges common to them. These include financial and time limitations due to other roles and concomitant commitments. For women learners in particular these varying roles' or the 'second shift' comprising of child and home maintenance (Spalter-Roth & Merola, 2001), often conflict with one another. Unlike men, women learners often lack emotional support and practical assistance from family, friends, colleagues and employers (Santrock, 1997 and Spalter-Roth & Merola, 2001). This lack of support may result in an associated lack of confidence in her own emotional, intellectual and physical abilities. Adult learners may experience problems dealing with new and ever changing technology in their personal lives as well as in their learning contexts. They may feel a sense of frustration and ineptitude in youth-orientated institutions that rarely cater in their learning programmes for the learning and experience adult learners bring with them. Adult learners are also frequently disappointed by the content of their learning programmes in that the content often lacks relevance to, and immediacy of application to their workplace situations (Burns, *et al.*, 1993; Brookfield, 1995; Kember, Armour, Jenkins, Lee, Leung, Li, Siaw & Yum, 2001; Knowles, 1980; Mitchell, 1996 and Taylor, 2005).

## **WORK**

Adults very often find themselves following a path of what seems like an unchanging and long plateau of sameness. For others, adulthood is a time of life when one can develop a distinct occupational identity and establish oneself in one's career path. "It is a time when cognitive development enables one to attain purposeful and organised mastery of personal lives and work situations" (Santrock, 1997: 437). Women, in particular, have since the 1960's taken hold of

the concepts, opportunities and changes in the workplace as a means to improve themselves socially, politically or economically. In the last forty years women throughout the world have moved from occupying fewer than 30% of the positions in the economic workforce to more than 60% (Swiss & Walker, 1993). This has occurred despite lower pay in occupations with the same amount and levels of work and responsibilities as their male counterparts, as well as the subtle 'glass ceiling' in management positions (Paludi, 1995).

There are multiple reasons for the increase in the number of women in the international and national business sector. One overriding factor is the great strides taken in the political and sexual emancipation of women in the nineteenth century. A second factor is based on the general growth and development of national and international economies. Linked to the general increase of the world's economy is the increase in growth in the service sectors of these economies, sectors to which women have gravitated and are potentially well suited (Brennan, et al., 1996 and Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). A third reason for more women entering the work force is personal economic circumstances. By necessity, many women have to work outside of their homes to contribute to their families' finances. With more rights being offered to women in terms of legislation controlling the 'quality of work life' and rights of employees (Santrock, 1997), more women are encouraged and prepared to pursue their careers. A fifth reason for women entering the workplace is based on individual women's more personal needs and interests. These factors are associated with motivation and include incentives such as financial benefits, autonomy, control, promotion and status (Brennan, *et al.*, 1996 and Longworth & Davies, 1996). The result of women becoming more economically active, promises positive outcomes for both women and the South Africa economic sector in the future. These developments were promoted by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) as early as 1993 in the National Education Policy Investigation (1993). They have since been reiterated in the Department of Education's, Education White Paper 3; A programme for the

Transformation of Higher Education (1997) and in The National Plan for Higher Education (2001).

## **COMMUNITY**

The Community domain represents the learners' social background and support systems in relation to their continuing education. As such each individual must be viewed primarily within a social context (Gerdes *et al.*, 1988). This is because every person is grounded within a family community and an extended social community that involve exchanging social connections which influence, bind, constrain, promote or advance desires, roles, duties and identities on an ongoing and dynamic basis. To add to this mix are the varied roles and identities a woman may have at any one time as mother, daughter, wife, housekeeper, employee, employer, colleague and learner to name but a few (Swiss & Walker, 1993). To this blend is added the moral self or the way each person conducts him/herself within his/her ethical milieu and the way he/she respond to his/her socialisation or his/her internalised links to the values of the society in which they live (Woolfe *et al.*, 1987). This will relate to the way the individual conducts him/herself within society in general and more specifically in his/her work and learning environments.

Education and learning have long been considered the prerogative of the middle class (Griffin, 1983). Women have only established gender parity as part-time learners in institutions of higher education in the United States of America in the last decade (Swiss & Walker, 1993). Financial and time constraints particularly restrict women from continuing their education and fulfilling their learning needs and desires. Many women, like their family and friends consider their primary roles, functions and responsibilities to be those of home-maker, wife and mother (Santrock, 1997). More positively however, the following characteristics have been identified by Campbell (1992: 2-3) in families who encourage learning:

- A feeling of control over their lives.



- A frequent communication of higher expectations to children.
- A family dream of success for the future.
- Recognition of hard work as a key to success.
- An active lifestyle.
- A perception of the family as a mutual support system and problem solving unit.

Women who are engaged in formal learning therefore may well reap unexpected benefits from their participation in the realm of continuing lifelong education.

## **INSTITUTION**

A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) representative survey of American Universities established that the 'graying' of campuses with part-time adult learners increased fairly steadily from 10% of the total student body in the 1960s to more than 40% in the 1990s. It also found that as many women as men were lifelong learners, women having previously only made up a small portion of the total adult learner population (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 and Swiss & Walker, 1993). This increasing participation of adult women as lifelong learners in institutions of higher education is a key objective of governments, including the South African government. Social, political and economic conditions underlie the increasing participation in higher education by more mature learners. As the service sector of the world's economies have grown and developed, so too have the career opportunities for women, as women are seen as particularly suited to these types of occupations. As political reform has occurred and impacted on social reform, so have the opportunities for women improved and increased. As families' social and financial needs have increased and impacted on women, so have these women been forced to delve into offerings of higher educational institutions as a means to provide for their needs.

In South Africa various policy documents have made much reference to the need for transformation of the economic, political and social sectors through the democratisation of the education system. Recognition has been given in the Education White Paper 3 to the need to “increase access to blacks, women, and disabled and mature students, and generate new curricula and flexible models of teaching and learning, including modes of delivery, to accommodate a larger and more diverse student population” (Department of Education, 1997: 1). This policy by direct interpretation promotes the increase in participating rates of adult women in institutions of higher learning.

The world’s political and social developments, economic growth, and subsequent increase in numbers of formal part-time adult learners have impacted on educational institutions. In the main the institutions have had to become flexible (Wade *et al.*, 1994 and Dunn, 2006) and efficient with regards to their academic and administrative policies and procedures. The ensuing lists are a summary of the points that are considered important for institutions to include and inculcate as measures to promote an increase in registration, retention and throughput rates of learners, especially those learners as earmarked by the Education White Paper 3. The first list includes academic policies and procedures which should encourage and endorse...

- Course content that is relevant, up to date, rigorously evaluated and quality controlled.
- Course structure that involved selection of appropriate teaching and assessment strategies.
- Mandatory learner guides for all courses or modules that are well developed for self-study course delivery methods and include clear learning outcomes, assessment criteria, notional hour and credit accumulation tracking systems.
- Support structures for contact distance and mixed learning modes that are established through efficient, reliable, affordable, accessible and relevant

correspondence mechanisms, media services, information technology, and study groups.

The second list includes administrative policies and procedures which should uphold...

- Publicity and public relations systems and structures that encourage and take into consideration continuing formal adult learners as individuals important to the vision and mission of the institution and policies recommended by various government and non-profit organisations (NPO's).
- Course information that is promptly supplied and available through a number of easily obtainable options.
- Selection criteria that are clear and precise and take into consideration Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit accumulation obtained through a variety of experience and work based mechanisms.
- Enrolment and registration procedures that are simple and efficient.
- Administrative information such as registration, term and semester dates, examinations dates, times and venues that are communicated well in advance for individual planning purposes.
- Examination results that are correct and clearly depicted for curriculum vitae purposes.
- Records that are systemically kept and updated for tracking purposes.
- The understanding that Information which is confidential, will only be disseminated with permission from the learner where and when relevant and necessary.
- Examination security procedures that are scrupulously followed to maintain institution and qualification integrity.
- Certification procedures that are worthy of the qualification for which they are bestowed and relevant to the learner's investment.

The third list is one which can be managed by departmental programme systems and procedures which should ...

- Arrange pre-acceptance information sessions and interviews scheduled and held with each prospective learner in order to adequately prepare them for the potential changes to their personal and professional lives.
- Establish criteria for appropriate work place learning sites and experiences.
- Document and disseminate said criteria to prospective learners in order that they have the facilities, equipment and support systems to conduct and compute off campus learning.
- Set up policies and systems for negotiation of dates, times and location of learning opportunities where appropriate and applicable.
- Introduce, promote and facilitate mentors and peer support.
- Promote research between individuals, their work, the community and the institution.

In addition to these it is important that the management of these institutions become visible and accessible to learners in order to hear and respond to their needs. Management should also take cognisance of the voice of the businesses that employ and often sponsor the learners and the institution, as these stakeholders are often able to contribute to the knowledge and skills of academic programmes. Community engagement and service learning opportunities which are encouraged and visibly endorsed by management contribute both to the local community which supplies relevant learning opportunities in order to obtain benefit from the institution (Ralphs & Buchler, 1998) and to the institution which obtains good press and media exposure for their good works. Lecturers in turn need to develop relationships built on facilitation and guidance of learning opportunities with learners, the local industry and the profession as a whole (Dunn, 2006). Finally, the learning contexts, situations and facilities which are used to achieve the learning outcomes, should be designed to satisfy the adult learner's need for immediacy and relevance (Burns *et al.*, 1993; Brookfield, 1995;

Kember *et al.*, 2001; Knowles, 1980; Mitchell, 1996 and Taylor, 2005). Together, lecturers, businesses, communities and students should begin to foster an ethos of community of practice as championed by Wenger (1998) in order to strengthen active collaboration, identity, creativity and active participation within and between one's industry, profession and institution of higher learning.

## **THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

The changing structure of the family and individual support systems, employment opportunities, work place situations, gender and participation rates, demographic and population changes, specifically the increase in ageing populations, technological advancements and the shrinking global village have all resulted in the need for continuing education throughout adult life. This was made particularly evident in an article on the slow down in the South African population growth rate as reported in *The Independent* on Saturday (SAPA, 2006:4). In this article some of the South African population statistics were highlighted. Of relevance to this study was the information regarding the 23,1 million adult women, and 15,3 million children younger than fifteen years of age who make up 81% of the total population of 47,4 million people. If one extrapolates meaning from these figures, an increase in the number and level of educated adult woman will be required in the future in order for the South African economy to grow and develop in relation the worldwide markets.

In South Africa there is also a particular need for continuing adult education to redress historical imbalances and promote political, economic and social development in the country. Many non-profit organisations (NPO's) such as the Joint Education Trust (JET) (Ralphs, 1998), the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (The Education, Training and Development Practices SETA, 2005 and The National Education Policy Investigation, 1993) consider adult education as not only an individual's right, but a necessity for South Africa to play a larger part in the global economy.

In summary, ageing populations, changing societies, individualisation and self fulfillment to mention but a few, have necessitated a change in view and approach to the domains as factors affecting adult lifelong learners.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter a conceptual framework has been described to support the theoretical concepts that were used in the outline of the study. This was followed by a review of literature with respect to each element of the framework which has an impact on adult learners. Neither the factors within the domains nor the issues discussed in the literature were dealt with equitably; rather the content was covered in the depth and quantity relevant to the title and key questions posed in the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The research that was conducted focused on the cohort of learners who were currently registered for their B. Tech: Somatology in the Department of Somatology, Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT. The data that was collected was based on learners' characteristics and perceptions of their experiences as DUT adult part-time B.Tech Somatology learners.

#### **INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM**

The study took a phenomenological approach within an interpretive paradigm, using a qualitative research design. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 153) "a phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people, perceptions, perspectives and an understanding of a particular situation". A qualitative interpretive paradigm was well suited to this investigation as the subjective experiences and the means by which the learners understood and dealt with their circumstances (Merriam & Simpson, 1995) was the focus of the investigation. It was hoped that a greater understanding of learners' experiences as ascertained by this study would assist both the learners and the institution.

The rich description of participants' realities (Mouton, 2001) was gathered by means of a focus group discussion and required the researcher to utilise her listening and interpretation skills intelligently in order for the information to be analysed in a meaningful way. In Merriam and Simpson's (1995: 98) view, the researcher must be well positioned to collect the data and "consider the total context of the phenomenon". This means that the researcher must have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the subject matter that has been studied. This was true of this study as the researcher was both the head of

department of the undergraduate Diplomas and postgraduate B.Tech Somatology programmes and a current adult part-time learner.

## **COLLECTION OF RESEARCH MATERIAL**

A focus group was the tool employed to gather the data. A focus group uses the dynamic interactions within a group to best pursue the thoughts and feelings of participants. Confidence obtained through group support, especially support which is fostered within a small cohort, allows for freedom of conversation and encourages true reflection and honest input (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2005). Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) have the view that many researchers believe that participants will divulge and share more about themselves in a bigger group than during a one-on-one interview situation. Morgan (1998a) believes that because participants are interested in each others' lives they themselves delve into and will pursue a matter to their own satisfaction, which in turn provides insight and interpretation into their own and others' characteristics and experiences. The seven adult B. Tech Somatology learners fell within the parameters of what is considered to be an ideal number of participants for a focus group.

A pre-piloted focus group was conducted with a similar cohort of learners. Its purpose was to establish if a phenomenological approach using just the title of the study as an introduction and the key questions as the open ended questions was an appropriate means of eliciting enough of a discussion to acquire the data for a 'rich description' of experiences needed for the interpretation and analysis of the study. The practice in focus groups of using only a minimum amount of prompting from the moderator is a characteristic of a phenomenological approach to a research study (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999 and de Vos *et al.*, 2005).



It was hoped that during the ensuing focus group discussions that individuals would be persuaded by means of the moderator, and empowered and supported by the group, to participate and express their views without the feeling of being pressurised to agree with others (Greenbaum, 2000).

The pilot study proved to be successful save for a lack of information regarding participants' backgrounds. This was highlighted in the practice round of the analysis phase of the pilot process. During this preparatory exercise the researcher found it very difficult to contextualise the information she had without the knowledge of the participants' background situations. The biographical questionnaire as submitted in the proposal and to the ethics committee was therefore used to substitute the information obtained in the focus group discussion that was conducted with the current B. Tech Somatology adult learners. This provided the researcher with an essential understanding of the years of experience, work hours, social circumstances and living conditions of each participant.

Having established through the pilot study that a focus group was an efficient means of gathering data (Morgan, 1998a), a carefully planned and moderated discussion was conducted with the B.Tech Somatology learners in a private, quiet and neutral area at a convenient time agreed upon by all. The discussion commenced with the researcher introducing the title of the study and broaching the key questions as a broad outline to guide the discussion. The researcher as the moderator then appealed to participants to 'listen and learn' from each other (de Vos *et al.*, 2005). Thereafter the moderator's participation was limited to probing, prompting, redirecting and summarising the information where necessary to focus the discussions in order to efficiently and productively elicit data relevant and pertinent to the title and key questions of the study. The discussion took just less than two hours to complete and produced a great deal of data in this short period of time. After the focus group discussion, a follow up questionnaire was found to be a necessary addition to elicit participants'

perceptions of their own personalities (Morgan, 1998b). This was done as this data was found to be lacking from the focus group discussion.

## **SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

As the B. Tech group was so small, all the current B. Tech: Somatology learners were invited to participate in one focus group discussion. Fortunately the whole group agreed to participate. This was important to the research being conducted in order to develop comprehensive themes and meanings of all the learners' experiences, feelings, thoughts and contexts (Collins, 1998).

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

A letter of request for permission to conduct the study was supplied to the Dean of Health Sciences as the authorising representative of the University, the faculty and department (See Annexure 3). The Dean granted the request in writing with no conditions other than those supplied by the researcher. (See Annexure 4).

### **UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

A standardized ETHICS CLEARANCE APPLICATION FORM (HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES) was completed and submitted to the ethics committee for the internal review process of the Faculty of Education. This was approved with a suggestion and qualifier in a letter entitled "Consideration of Ethical Clearance for student" (See Annexure 1). A response to this has been included in the section entitled Data Handling which follows the discussion on participants later in this section of the dissertation. A certificate containing the Ethical Clearance Approval Number: HSS/06/434 was later received and is attached as Annexure 2.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

In order to remain within the parameters of good ethical practices, participants were informed of and supplied with the following:

- A verbal introduction to the proposed study which in turn included;
  - A request to participants to be honest and forthcoming in the discussion that would be held, in order for the researcher to have data that was as correct and as comprehensive as possible for the analysis and findings of the study to be of any value and worth.
- A written invitation to participate which in turn included;
  - An explanation as to how the data would be collected, stored and processed.
  - The proposed venue and time of the focus group.
  - Participant's right to refuse to participate without sanction. (This was also emphasised and verbally reiterated just prior to the commencement of the focus group data collection discussion.)
  - An explanation as to how participants would remain anonymous and how confidentiality would be maintained.(See Annexure 5)
- A consent form which each participant completed in her own time and returned by a due date.(See Annexure 6)

All participants agreed to participate without reservation. A time and date was negotiated and agreed upon for the focus group meeting, as was the venue.

Just prior to the commencement of the focus group the researcher who acted as moderator took time to verbally remind the participants of the permission and written consent that was obtained from them at this meeting. Participants were also reminded of the need for true and open disclosure of their opinions and experiences.

## **DATA HANDLING**

### **BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

The broad characteristics of the group were established through a short biographic profile which was collected by means of a short easy-to-complete questionnaire just prior to the focus group discussion. As previously mentioned, the helpfulness of this background information for the interpretation of the data became evident during the data analysis process of the pilot study.

The information on the marital status and living conditions as highlighted by the Faculty of Education's Research Committee was retained in the biographical data section of the questionnaire (See Annexure 7). Answers to these questions were seen as paramount to establishing an understanding of the 'facilitating and detracting' factors that influence the context of the learners' lives. The importance of these factors was highlighted in the literature review in which roles and life circumstances were seen as major detractors and inhibitors to women's formal learning experiences. Not to have had this background information would have resulted in major gaps in the findings and data analysis of this study.

### **FOCUS GROUP**

In order to ensure a comprehensive collection of the ensuing focus group conversation and subsequent pool of data, an electronic voice recording was made of the group interview. The voice recorder was also used to prevent the need and subsequent distraction that concurrent written documentation sometimes causes during any type of interviewing process. The use of the recorder allowed the moderator the freedom to concentrate on what was being

said and the way in which it was being said (de Vos *et al.*, 2005). Prior permission was received by the group for the recording and confidentiality of the recorded material was re-emphasised at the beginning of the discussion. A very small sound recorder was used for the recording of the discussion. Its size and the inconspicuous position in which it was set up resulted in it being unobtrusive. This resulted in the optimum capture of the discussion and did not in any way act as a distracter from the discussion as participants continued to readily engage in the discussion without paying any attention to the device.

## **TRANSCRIPTION**

The discussion was transcribed verbatim and checked as soon as possible after the group met in order to ensure accuracy and soundness of information. This concept of soundness is important in qualitative research. It equates to principles of validity and reliability in quantitative research. In turn it provides credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability to the data (de Vos *et al.*, 2005).

Confidentiality was maintained by omitting the participants' names in both the transcript as well as the personal data that was collected. The tape recorded information, transcript and the biographic questionnaires have remained under lock and key, when not being used by the researcher, in the researcher's personal safe at her home. It would also only be through a close relationship with each and every participant that any person outside of the group would be able to identify individual participants through the original material.

A copy of the transcription was made available to participants on request prior to the data being analysed. Copies of the research will be available in the department of Somatology on completion of the dissertation.

The few gaps in the participants' reports of their perceptions of their personalities was filled with information from a follow-up questionnaire that was conducted with participants at a later stage. This information was added to the data.

## **ANALYSIS**

The approach that was used to interpret the data began with the researcher reviewing the biographical data and listening to the full length of the recorded focus group discussion. Thereafter the transcript was carefully read and re-read in order for the researcher to become as familiar with the text as possible (Barnett, 2006). With every reading, each time a term, topic or theme appeared to be repeated or became evident, it was highlighted with different coloured markers on the script and noted on a separate sheet of paper under a relevant title. At the conclusion of this familiarising exercise, these preliminary 'topics' were then further refined into themes and sub-themes and classified as such in a word document. The purpose for this Construct (Stemler, 2001) and Thematic analysis was for the researcher to view the data in relation to the literature, key questions and related title of the study in order to "build a valid argument for choosing the themes and to make inferences" (Aronson, 1994 : 4).

## **LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY**

Limitations to the research were recognised.

The first limitation was that only the current cohort of Durban University of Technologies adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners' characteristics and experiences were investigated. This was due to the constraints of time and resources which limited the study to only this cohort of learners. Linked to this limitation was that only one focus group meeting was held with the current cohort of learners. Although a great deal of data was collected from the one meeting, it is surmised that given time and a chance to reflect on the discussion, learners may well have had other or more in-depth information to share at a subsequent discussion.

The second limitation is that the researcher is unsure whether or not the group dynamic acted as a restraint or catalyst to the discussion or whether it had any affect whatsoever (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). This said, up until and including

the time of the focus group discussion the group appeared to have had a very cohesive relationship. This appeared to be the case also during the focus group conversation as was observed by the researcher and is evident in the transcription. The reason for this being tagged as a possible limitation is that subsequent to this focus group discussion it became evident that there was some discord within the group. Also, as was made evident in the findings, the participants are highly independent individuals who did not see the need for peer support.

A third limitation entailed the involvement of the researcher as the moderator. As a lecturer of part of a subject that the learners cover in their B.Tech and as Head of the Somatology Department, there may have been a fear or reluctance on the part of the participants to be forthcoming about negative perceptions of the university, the department, the programme or the lecturers. To minimise this factor, I endeavored to make my position within this study as clear as possible. This included my sincere request on a number of occasions to participants, to be as honest as possible in their responses to the questionnaires and during the discussions during the focus group meeting.

A fourth limitation to this phenomenological study is that as an adult learner myself, I may have had personal preconceived perceptions and information that may have affected the themes and the interpretation of the data (de Vos *et al.*, 2005). This factor required me to curtail my participation during the focus group discussion. It also involved me constantly reminding myself of any personal perceptions that I may have on the matter at hand. I also had to minimise my perceptions during the analysis process through self reflection and the careful consideration of the available data. It is understood however, that there most often is a certain amount of bias during the analysis and interpretation of a qualitative research study (de Vos *et al.*, 2005).

## **CONCLUSION**

Data collection in a phenomenological study has to be well planned in order that the introduction to or the orientating framework of the study (de Vos *et al.*, 2005) and any questions posed to participants do not suggest a preconceived or 'preferred' response to the researcher. Using a focus group and introducing the study through the title and key questions was an effective means of acquiring a rich description of participants' understanding of their experiences. The researcher believes this was achieved and was reflected in the findings as detailed in the next section.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Having followed the analysis process described in the last chapter the following main themes were identified

- Working and living the experience as an adult learner
- Motivation for continuing learning
- The Institution

These themes correlate to the title of the study, the conceptual framework, the literature review and the key questions.

The first theme entitled 'Working and living the experience as an adult learner' is related to both the 'Work' and 'Community' domains as described in the conceptual framework in chapter two. This theme highlighted the factors that assisted and impeded the Somatology adult learners' B. Tech part-time learning experience. These factors also covered two of the key questions posed in chapter one of the study. These questions were: What are the characteristics of part-time DUT adult B. Tech Somatology learners? and What facilitates and detracts from the part-time learning experience? As will be seen from the analysis of the data, adult women continuing with their learning experience have both many 'detractors' and 'facilitators' that emanate from their work and community situations. It would appear from the results of the analysis that their characteristics have a great deal to do with their utilisation of the positive factors in their lives that support their desires. So too do the results suggest strength of character in the light of those factors that serve to hinder the attainment of their goals.

Theme two, 'Motivation for continuing learning' encompasses the information reviewed in the literature regarding self-concept, psychological self and motivation against the backdrop of the three domains of 'Work', 'Community' and 'Institution'. It supplies information with regards to the key question that was posed in chapter one of the study which asked 'What factors motivate DUT postgraduate learners to continue with their B. Tech. Somatology?'

The 'Institution' as the third theme directly reflects the domain that represents DUT as the public institution of higher learning in which the adult learners are registered in order to complete their B. Tech. Somatology degree. Within this theme many factors were identified as being motivators, facilitators and detractors to the participant's adult learning experience.

## **BIOGRAPHIC RESULTS**

The results that follow may be considered inclusive as all the relevant learners participated in the focus group discussion and bibliographic data collection processes.

All participants were female, the average age of whom was just less than 25 years of age. There was representation from each of the major South African racial groups with 1 African, 1 Coloured, 2 Indian and 3 Whites making up the group.

The racial mix is interesting as it is different from the undergraduate mix which has an average percentage split in the undergraduate Somatology programme of 45% African, 43% Indian, 8% White and 4% Coloured. Although the B. Tech. Somatology programme was beginning to address continuing adult education as promoted by the ANC and COSATU prior even to the democratisation of South Africa (National Education Policy Investigation, 1993), the racial mix is disproportionate to the demographics of the general South African population, as well as the regional demographic make up of KwaZulu-Natal. It also does not

redress the changes in education and industry that are desired by political, economic and social bodies (Department of Education, 1997; Department of Education, 2001 and National Policy Investigation, 1993).

Of relevance to the transformation process in education and society as promoted by political and social groups in South Africa, is that all the B. Tech. Somatology learners and participants in this study were women. As women have been recognised as being marginalised in industry and in educational institutions since the 1960's (Paludi, 1995; Merriam & Caffarella 1999) due to their and others' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in society (Santrock, 1997), it was interesting to work with a group of women in a female dominated industry.

Of the participants in the study, two were single women living at home with their parents. They were independent in that they contributed to household expenses and paid for their own education with salaries earned through their full-time positions as somatologists. Two women were married, one with a child. One other participant was a single, unattached mother living with her child with few support systems and having to bear the full responsibility of her child on her own. Two of the participants were engaged to be married at the time of the study and were living with their respective fiancés. They too were self supporting. One of the engaged participants was concomitantly arranging her forthcoming marriage, working full-time and studying part-time. This was with no additional support for her as her immediate family and friends were living overseas at the time.

A forty-hour working week was the average number of hours worked by each member of the group at her respective place of employment. The highest number of hours reported in the study was 60 hours. This was the figure reported by one participant who owned her own business, and who included some of her study commitments as part of her working hours. At the other end of the scale, a contract lecturer, employed at a private education institution,

recorded only the contact lecturing hours she was being paid for . As part of this commitment at the private institution, however, she had hours and hours of additional preparation and marking to complete in her own 'non-remunerated unrecorded' time.

As all participants had been employed immediately after completing their diploma, the number of years of work experience of the participants equated to the number of years since the completion of their undergraduate studies. This averaged out to 3 years, with a variance of 1 to 6 years- enough of a time gap to make the return to formal learning a salient change in each participant's life.

## **THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

### **WORKING AND LIVING THE EXPERIENCE AS AN ADULT LEARNER**

After introducing the aim and key questions of the study to the focus group, the participants were requested to generally run with a discussion of their 'characteristics and experiences as part-time postgraduate adult learners'. With no further prompting the dialogue began with the learners' feelings about returning to formal learning. As continuing learners with full-time, average forty hour week work commitments, they felt that what contributed most to their learning experience, were their positions in industry as practicing Somatologists. Being able to immediately relate learned concepts and skills and put them into professional practice on a day to day basis was both rewarding and helpful to them as therapists and learners wishing to practice and perform procedures new to them. This was felt to be more of an advantage than maturity or experience. This directly relates to Wenger's (1988: 264) "dimensions of educational design" in which he recognised the need to combine theory with practice. It also links to the teachings and concepts of Kolb's experiential learning model (Sutherland, 1997) and Schön's concept of reflective practice (Jarvis, 1999).

- *"Yes, it is an advantage to study at a later stage but it is more important to work in a clinic while you are studying".*

- *“So.... not totally so much coming into study at a later stage but more important to be working at a clinic while you are studying”.*

This acknowledgment by the participants of their studies being germane to their professions relates to one of the underlying principles of andragogy as developed by Knowles (1980). In his writings Knowles recognised and acknowledged that adult learners were more interested in the relevance of information and the immediacy of application than in theoretical content. Tennant (1997:7) too supported this concept, and in turn stated that learning leads adults to “a strengthened identity within a distinctive field of practice and enquiry”.

- *“... being able to go into the workplace straight after a lecture like on a Monday and start putting into practice everything that you learned, so that it is reinforced in your mind”.*

At the same time these adult learners conceded to the difficulties that they experienced in returning to post-graduate formal learning.

- *“I think it is right to go and work first. But it is harder when you come back to get into learning”.*
- *“I found that I have to be on the ball all the time”.*

This to some extent was expected and understood by all. This was due mainly to the new and increasing demands placed upon them as learners.

- *“....working hours are until 7- home at 8 and straight to do some work. The days that I am off are the days that I am here. So there is no time off”.*
- *“There are no weekends off”.*

A need for constant juggling, adjustment to time management practices, self discipline, self-direction and a re-organisation of priorities was foreseen. Time and the financial and traditional roles ascribed to and carried out by women were recognised as constraints to adult women learners. Women have the attitude and belief that their roles include not only the tasks and responsibilities of their work life, but also the tasks and responsibilities of their personal lives. These roles and responsibilities include amongst other things, housekeeping, family obligation and childcare. They also involve the promotion and organisation of kinship, socialising and recreation (Santrock, 1997 and Spalter-Roth & Merola, 2001).

- *“I schedule therapy; admin and tech work into my day. I am very disciplined”.*
- *“For me I am quite structured. I am used to long hours and then I make time to use specifically for my studying”.*

The learners with husbands, fiancés and children found that this continuing learning was not given the same consideration as undergraduate studies, salaried positions, family and social commitments

- *“This is seen as less of a priority than a salaried job”.*
- *“You don’t need to get a good mark on the assignment”.*
- *“Don’t hand it in”. That’s the attitude”.*

- *“My fiancé says that my studies are my mistress, and when will he be able to spend some time with me because I am constantly on the computer”.*
- *“No support to date. No questions about assignments or nothing. I rely a lot on my family with regards to my daughter, but if, like everyone, you don’t want to leave them [your children] with just anyone, their answer is – its your problem, hire a babysitter on a Sunday, we are not interested in helping”.*
- *“My family and husband were supportive of me verbally and in actions before I had my child. But when I had my child, he (my husband) wanted me home”.*
- *“I see my studies as my responsibility. It is my job to get it done. No one to help me. I don’t get much encouragement from my husband he sees it as my problem”.*
- *“I am getting married. It has been very difficult to study, get assignments done, working at same time and arranging a wedding where I don’t have help because my family is overseas”.*

In addition, some of the learners recognised that no amount of experience or maturity had changed bad habits carried over from their undergraduate days.

- *“I am not disciplined at all”.*

- *“Not disciplined - depending on what’s on TV. Time runs away - but I also need to follow family life at home”.*
- *“I don’t like thinking too far ahead. I am like a blind man and then things catch up. So even though I am more mature, with the big picture I am are still falling back on old habits”.*
- *“Time management and procrastination, you would think it would have gone away, and with maturity levels you would combat it. But it’s still there”.*
- *“I’m the same. I work with pressure.*

In contrast to these somewhat surprising statements, however, participants were more positive than negative when describing their characteristics and personalities. Positive verification of their traits were congruent with each one’s personal decision to continue formal learning whilst being employed and having work, family and social roles and responsibilities to fulfill. The terminology used by each participant to describe herself was captured as an adjunct to the focus group data. These included words and phrases such as ‘ambitious’, ‘goal driven’, ‘motivated’ and ‘hardworking’. Other equally positive terminologies suggesting each participant’s ability to stick to the programme and overcome the difficulties encountered and involved with this potentially conflicting additional role, were words such as ‘confident’, ‘self dependent’, ‘independent’, ‘considerate’, ‘patient’ and ‘accepting’.

Descriptions used by the participants of attributes less conducive to their likelihood of succeeding as adult learners were words such as self critical, poor time management, procrastination, anxious, over-enthusiastic and laid-back.



These characteristics were recognised by Brookfield (1995: 01) in his overview of adult learners when he stated that it is a myth “that adult learning is inherently joyful, that adults are innately self-directed learners.’ Rather, he argued, other variables such as personality or culture have far more influence on learning.

Another influence identified in this study was the specific need by some participants to acquire the qualification in order to get a particular position in the workplace. This was particularly pertinent to one learner who had to work to contribute to her family’s finances. She was continuing her studies mainly to be eligible for a better position which would give her an improved financial package. In recognition of the necessity for her employment and to be true to herself, her profession and her employer, she felt she had to make her paid work commitment her priority.

- *“Had to make own notes in new job as lecturer. Had my homework and work from work. Double homework. My work was more important”.*

Despite this being both an unselfish and loyal attitude to have, qualities congruent to personality, as suggested above by Brookfield (1995), personal situations may also well dictate priorities other than those which are desired by the learner.

This was made evident by another learner, for whom formal learning was the only avenue to a particular position that she desired. This position required a B. Tech as a minimum requirement for the lecturing post she wished to acquire at a private institution of higher learning. She was only persevering with the B. Tech programme in order to become eligible for the position.

- *“I want out, but am hanging in until the end of the year to get it over with. Then I know I will be able to lecture”.*

During the closing minutes of the discussion participants all took the time to describe their learning experience in positive terms. They indicated that they had been stimulated by the learning process and challenged by the quantity and level of the work expected of them. They recognised their increased levels of maturity and their improved personal and professional position that the B.Tech afforded them.

- *"Huge, in personal growth although it has only been six months".*
- *"I have grown generally".*
- *"We have grown up. We are on a level".*
- *"It's about opening your mind up. It's not just about another set of skills".*
- *"Being pushed into difficult situation is part of the B.Tech learning process".*
- *"I found I was so extremely bored not studying. A lack of stimulation".*
- *"I am going to use my B.Tech to make changes that can't be made without the qualification".*

They were also reminded of professional standards set and promoted by the academic department in the learning programme that are not necessarily adhered to or maintained in industry.

- *“Coming back reminds me of high standard. Because so many people out there work with such low standards you get used to that and this [learning experience] brings back the high standards. And you feel up there now”.*

These sentiments are gratifying, especially in light of the amount of work that is recognised as still needing to be done by the Department of Somatology in order to fulfill the requirements of ‘The National Plan for Higher Education’ as promulgated by the Department of Education (DOE) in 2001. The staff of the Department of Somatology are confident that, with more resources in terms of space, time and expertise, they will be able to begin to fulfill the department’s growth and developmental goals through the B.Tech programme.

In respect to the information incorporated in this theme, it appears that working and living as an adult learner is difficult especially for women who have multiple roles and responsibilities (Gerdes *et al.*, 1988 and Spalter-Roth & Merola, 2001). Given the choice over again, the researcher believes all the participants would be in the same position as they find themselves now; busy, overworked, learners, mothers, wives, partners but nevertheless self satisfied individuals who are proud of their decisions and inspired by a sense of achievement for having embarked on the journey of formal lifelong learning.

## **MOTIVATION FOR CONTINUING LEARNING**

Despite the many responsibilities and constraints to continuing formal learning for adult women, the decision to continue with their studies for most of the participants was a personal decision, not propelled by external obligations. The personal need that some individuals have to improve their qualifications is both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated (Wlodkowski, 1993). Intrinsic motivation is fuelled by pride and status and increased self esteem and empowerment. Extrinsic motivators are boosted by professional accomplishments through

increased levels and depth of knowledge and skills. Between these motivators they have the potential to improve and increase professional scope of practice, concomitant rank, financial benefit and a sense of self satisfaction and pride (Longworth & Davies, 1996), features which satisfy personal, social and economic aspects of any individual's life.

- *"It's more a case of wanting to come back and learn more about the industry. And learning about who you are as a Somatologist".*
- *"I will have status within myself".*
- *"I need this for me to be fulfilled".*
- *"Before pressure was keeping up with others now is more an internal pressure. You want to be better".*
- *"You definitely get a higher status with clientele".*
- *"It is a different motivation. Doing my undergrad was just to get the certificate. But as adult learners we have different things going on. So like motivation is more about the betterment of self rather than just finding out how I can do this and test my abilities. Plus there are more job opportunities".*
- *"At the moment I will only employ somatologists. People are starting to realise the difference and like the idea of people having a B.Tech".*
- *"Clients feel you are better if you have a B.Tech".*

Motivation supplied the initial impetus which drove the need for many of these continuing adult learners to return to university. This according to Gravett (2001) provides an explanation of response and action. Continuing personal support from family, friends and work colleagues can, however, make the process a great deal easier and a more positive experience for each learner. A few of the participants were fortunate enough to be encouraged by others to continue their learning and complete their course of study.

- *"I found that my family is encouraging with my studies. They are impressed that I carried on and that I want to get the most out of my field".*
- *"I have probably had more encouragement from my family, friends and fiancé than with my diploma. This in order for me to further my potential. Because I probably won't stop at this stage".*

The influence of peer pressure on adult learners and the adult learning experience was raised during this discussion. Of interest to this study is that it was only one participant who felt at a loss for want of the positive influence that fellow peers can contribute to one's life as a formal learner. She expressed these sentiments at two heartfelt junctures.

- *"I was better as an undergraduate than now. Having more peers and a day to day routine helped. I never understood how they [other learners] did not do things. But now I understand".*

- *"I had a very organized friend. Now I have lost that structure and I forget some things. Plus there is something to do everyday with never enough time"*

The rest of the participants, whilst recognising the influence of positive and negative peer pressure on their undergraduate learning experience, felt that peer pressure was not a factor in their postgraduate learning experience.

- *"Peer pressure was a factor as an undergraduate but not as a post graduate."*
- *"Peer pressure as an undergrad but not now. But there were positive and negative effects".*
- *"Peers can be negative. Like for me in first year. But in second year [my] friends were more academic, so I studied more. Now no effect".*
- *"Before pressure was keeping up with others now is more an internal pressure. You want to be better".*

Age was the differentiating factor between the majority of participants who felt that peer pressure was immaterial in their lives as learners and the one participant who felt the loss of close and positive peer influence. The participant who missed her peers was the youngest of the group and the learner who had had only one year gap between her undergraduate and postgraduate learning experience. The habit of requiring support was obviously still with her and one that she surely lacked. Her feelings of loss are interesting, particularly in the light of Wenger's (1998) promotion of a community of practice. In becoming "self-dependent, ambitious and confident", terminology used by the participants to

describe themselves, it appears as if these learners have lost the need or the ability to rely on and trust others for mutual benefit.

In line with the above way of thinking, the generally negative attitude received from most workplace colleagues seemed to act as a motivating factor for many of the participants. As often happens during hard times, the human spirit rallies to overcome and conquer adversity. This is what seems to have happened to participants who have had to put up with negativism within their work situations. Perhaps their “confident, patient, accepting and empathetic” personalities may be a factor in this regard.

- *“Colleagues and friends don’t understand. Colleagues feel that we will earn more than them. Jealousy”.*
- *“With work colleagues there is a lot of jealousy. They see you have more knowledge [than them] in certain aspects and thus don’t want to introduce new things and change things”.*
- *“You know too much”*

It appeared from these excerpts that the majority of learners would be motivated to continue with their learning no matter what occurred within the context of their family and work lives. It substantiates Beder and Valentine’s (1990: 39) description that “motivation is a force that drives adults to learn and when strong it overcomes barriers”. In light of the benefits of a “community of practice”, mentioned previously as been promoted by Wenger (1998), however, the participants as a cohort may well benefit from the positive influences and support that peers can provide. This seems to have been given particular attention in the



literature which addressed the detractors and deterrents to continuing learning for adult women (Swiss & Walker, 1993).

## THE INSTITUTION

In addition to motivation, work and family, the institution in which the learner is registered may act as a more or less compromising factor to continuing adult learning. If the administrative and academic systems and structures of the university are too unwieldy, and due recognition is not given to the adult learners' characteristics and experiences, postgraduate and continuing learning programmes may fail to attract and retain adult learners. Failure to encourage, promote, support and retain adult learners is in opposition to the Somatology industry's human resources needs as well as the political, economic and social needs of South Africa as a whole (South African Qualification Authority, 2000b; Education Training Development Practices Sectional Education and Training Authority, 2005; National Education Policy Investigation, 1993; Department Of Education, 1997; Department of Education, 2001 and Ralphs, 1998).

### Administrative System

Differences between the administrative and academic systems and support structures were recognised by learners. In this study, it was ascertained that the learners found the administrative sector of the university's registration process to be a particularly difficult process for learners to engage with and complete. One participant went so far as to suggest that had she been a stranger to the institution she would not have registered at DUT.

- *"Now I am more nervous registering. You are sent from pillar to post. If I had transferred from say Wits, I would have run back home".*



Others too found the process to be inefficient and negative, a discouraging, arduous and daunting experience.

- *“As far as registration goes I felt the same as I did in first year. Every year there is something different and you don’t know what is going to be thrown in”.*
- *“The administrative people running registration don’t know what they are doing”.*
- *“In the past things were more structured. You knew where to go and who to speak to. Now as a B.Tech. [learner] no one in the registration department knows where you should go or who you should speak to”.*

It would be prudent for universities’ administrative sectors to recognise the many difficulties, particularly time constraints, that adult learners have. This acknowledgment would facilitate the adoption and integration of procedures that identify the characteristics and needs of adult learners (Knowles, 1980; Gravett, 2001 and Longworth & Davies, 1996). Hopefully, the administrative sector would then be encouraged to develop and implement meaningful changes. At minimum, an administrative system and approach that promote public relations within their enrolment system (Chapman & Aspin, 1997 and Rumble, 1986) would be one such positive and welcomed change.

### **Academic Departments**

Academic departments responsible for course structure, delivery modes and time-tables must also take cognisance of adult learners’, particularly adult women’s countless commitments if they wish to pay more than just lip service to the needs of the country and the policies of the Department of Education. Not to do so would be counter-productive to the needs of the individual, the

department, the institution and the industry as a whole. As part of this process the staff of the Department of Somatology has tried with their limited human and space resources to address some of these needs.

Interventions adopted by the department included outsourcing the Research Methodology course to another department that had the necessary research experience and expertise. It also involved designing course work for all subjects along the lines of distance learning course work (Rumble, 1986), as a means for learners to maximise their learning hours in times and places more convenient to them. To facilitate participant attendance at lectures, Sundays were chosen as the day of delivery for the major subjects' contact time. Late afternoon and evening lectures were arranged for some other subjects. These were based on previous B. Tech learners' inputs and desires and were negotiated and agreed upon with the current cohort of learners. Having the postgraduate cohorts' lectures outside of peak times also reduced the pressure on the already limited venues available to the department.

Some but not all these interventions worked. Firstly the outsourced Research Methodology subject initially had a lecturer who was unable to relate the research subject matter to the learners' contexts or give advice on the learner's choices or content of projects.

- *"It's just research as a subject. Because she comes from another profession".*
- *"She can't give comment on subjects or projects or material".*

The teaching of Research Methodology by another department had been identified as a problem through other mechanisms prior to the focus group discussion. This was addressed by the department by linking subject specialists

to individuals and projects and by having group and individual discussions with learners during other times. This will probably continue to be a problem until such time as the department has the capacity to provide a researcher with a Somatology background as the research facilitator.

The mixed delivery mode of the course work, with less contact time and more self study making up the notional hours, was appreciated by all.

- *“Being given a basic recipe and a lot of assignments and case studies to do between weeks is not a problem because the Somatology lecturers give support”.*
- *“Evening lectures every second week. Getting notes, going home and doing work. More like self study. She did a little lecturing but generally handed over for self work. It was fine, because we understood that it was at a post graduate level. More independent level. No shocks”.*

Sundays as the day that was chosen for the major subjects contact periods was resoundingly appreciated by three of the seven participants.

- *“I must say Sundays is a good time. Any other day doing the work is a problem. Sunday is a good time”.*
- *“I think Sundays are great”.*
- *“Not a problem for Sunday”.*

The one participant who is married with a child, whilst agreeing to Sundays did, however, acknowledge that finding a caregiver for her child was sometimes difficult. This particular point relates back to the multitude of roles perceived by women as being their responsibility (Spalter-Roth & Merola, 2001).

- *"I think Sundays are okay - baby is a bit of a problem".*

It also links to the lesser importance given to continuing learning by many of these participants' colleagues, family and friends (Santrock, 1997).

- *"You don't need to go to the lecture".*

Two participants would have preferred other days. This was completely understandable as one participant has a child in a crèche that operates until early into the evening and has a Saturday morning child care facility as well. The other participant works in a business in which it would have been easier for her to negotiate Mondays as her weekly day-off because that is the day that is traditionally quiet in Somatology clinics.

- *"I think Saturday or late on Friday".*
- *"Maybe Monday".*

One participant realising that negotiation was the compromising route to follow during this part of the discussion, suggested splitting Sundays with other days. This is a small example of how the more mature adult learner can gather and process information to solve problems and can diplomatically suggest such solutions.

- *"Split Sunday. Sunday is good for some, not for others. But I understand the need to negotiate".*

The preferred day and times for contact periods that require extended periods of time, is a particular problematic issue. It is an issue for which a consensus will probably never be reached by a cohort of learners. The lecturers from the Department of Somatology, however, depending on the needs of individuals, have been available at short notice, to make changes, with the consensus of the group. This has happened on a few occasions when participants were unable to attend lectures due to unforeseeable circumstances. As all participants realised the necessity to attend the set classes in order to continue with learning in their own time, co-operation and negotiation of set dates and times was always accomplished when sufficient notice had been given.

- *“Yes, we would need to continue the negotiating systems”.*
- *“As far as lectures go I find them more relaxed which I enjoy. Just the structure and changes sometimes throws me out of balance. But I have a big whiteboard that I use for my schedule”.*

The B. Tech Somatology is split over two years primarily in order to give learners the opportunity to continue working and obtaining experience in the workplace. Subject choices are therefore split over two years with Research Methodology always offered in the first of the two years. Depending in which cycle the learners join, they could be registered for Research Methodology and Nutrition or Research Methodology, Biotics and Soma Techniques. Many participants found the second options difficult and would have preferred to complete Research Methodology as a single subject in the second of their B. Tech years. This would equate to learners registering for Biotics, Nutrition and Soma Techniques in the first year of their B. Tech and registering only for Research Methodology in the second year of their B. Tech.

There are two reasons for these two options, which includes Research Methodology in the first year, being given to learners. Firstly Research Methodology is always offered in the first year as the research project, which the learners have to conduct after the initial methodology course, most often takes longer than one year to complete. Starting the project in the first year of the B. Tech allows time for the project to be extended over to the second year for completion if necessary. This alleviates the necessity for learners' to extend their registration into a third year if the research has taken longer than expected. Secondly it has been recognised that learners' who have completed Soma Techniques, the major and applied subject in the first year of their B. Tech, and who battle to complete the research project in that year do not register for the second year to complete the research project and subsequently the degree (Borg, 2006). These learners essentially enriched their practices with the information gained from Soma Techniques without achieving the qualification. This may well satisfy individuals' professional growth needs. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the profession as these learners do not contribute to the growth of the profession by enhancing the research base so vital to a young and developing profession. The department and the institution also lose from this practice as throughput rates are negatively affected.

- *"I would have liked to have done all my subjects first and then focused solely on research".*
- *"I would have preferred to do research on own as it is a priority".*
- *"Research is the hard part. I think it needs to be in the second year".*

The reasons for the departments' subject package will in future be clearly expressed to learners in order for them to understand the rationale for the choices by the department regarding Research Methodology. Hopefully with time and progress the Department of Somatology will have the expertise, human resources and space requirements necessary to better facilitate the offering of Research Methodology.

The shortcoming of the administrative and academic ambits at DUT in relation to adult learners is recognised by the staff of the department of Somatology (Borg, 2006). With the proclamation by the Department of Education as declared in "The National Plan for Higher Education" (2001) to increase participation of mature adult learners in institutions of higher education, institutions, and the departments of those institutions will need to indicate in their institutional and departmental plans, policies and procedures to increase registration, retention, throughput and successful graduation of targeted categories of learners (Department of Education, 2001).

## **CONCLUSION**

The key questions investigated in this study were asked and answered in this chapter by means of the information obtained from a biographical questionnaire and a focus group discussion. Themes that emerged were well matched to the domains of community, work and institution as highlighted in the conceptual framework and attested to in the literature on adult part-time learners. Of particular interest are the similar difficulties B. Tech somatology learners have to other part-time women learners. Of notable difference was the B. Tech learners stark self-reliance and lack of need of peer support. A summary of the salient findings in each of the themes discussed in this chapter have been extracted for further discussion in chapter five.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **DISCUSSION**

The administrative, academic and personal systems and relationships that are instituted and developed in conjunction with a programme and within an adult learner's personal life can lead to their successful graduation or their premature failure as a formal lifelong learner. Adult woman learners in particular may have uncompromising roles and commitments peculiar to their lives. This investigation to establish the characteristics and experiences of DUT's adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners was conducted by means of a biographical questionnaire and focus group discussion. The study identified the factors that motivated, facilitated and detracted from the learner's part-time learning experience. In particular, the study was a step towards the DUT's Department of Somatology's goals to put into place mechanisms that would support the adult learner's quest to successfully complete his/her B. Tech degree. In turn, the department's retention and throughput rates, to further the human resource needs of the industry and the country as a whole, could be enhanced (Department of Education, 2001; National Education Policy Investigation, 1993; Ralphs, 1998 & South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2000a).

Based on the data gathered and with contributions from the conceptual framework and literature review the following findings and recommendations are made.



## FINDINGS

1. Learners found that working as a somatologist in a therapeutic practice was an advantage and a great assistance to them as learners. It gave them an avenue and opportunities to immediately apply the new skills, attitudes and knowledge that they had acquired in the class/learning situation. It also gave learners the opportunity to utilise 'real' clients, conditions, equipment and products to the distance learning components of the course. These findings support the teachings and beliefs of Knowles (1980); Tennant (1997); Wenger (1998) and Schön and Kolb in Jarvis (1999).
2. Secondly, learners who enjoyed the learning process, and who were happy to cope with the difficulties associated with this additional commitment in their life, had been motivated to register for the programme to fulfill intrinsic and personal needs of pride and self accomplishment. There was a high correlation between the positive and affirming ways they described themselves and their drive for self fulfillment. On the other hand, those learners who felt that they had been coerced into registering due to necessity, were merely staying the course in order obtain the benefits that followed on from the degree. They had a less-than-positive way of describing themselves and their experiences as part-time continuing learners.
3. Thirdly, the problems and challenges that are associated with continuing learning for adult women are real. In most instances these detractors were expected by the learners. Coping strategies and methods were used by all participants to minimise the effect of their learning on friends, family, workplaces and colleagues.

4. Due perhaps to the intermittent contact period and the extensive self study design of the programme, the group had not develop a particularly close or cohesive bond. Peer support was not seen as necessary by most of these learners at this juncture of their academic careers. Based on the very compelling arguments put forward by Wenger (1998), the researcher believes that these learners may have missed valuable learning opportunities by their independent approach to their studies.
5. Inadequate and poorly designed and executed administrative policies and procedures particularly negatively impinge on and frustrate continuing adult part-time learners. With little time available to them, and a heightened level of intolerance for inefficient, incompetent and disorganised systems, enrolling adult learners found DUT's administrative systems lacking with regards to the needs of adult learners.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Arising from these findings the following recommendations are made:

1. The department should continue to give preference to learners with work experience in the industry as these learners will probably either still be working or still have contacts with clients, equipment, products and situations in order to practice and relate new knowledge learned in an authentic setting. In addition a list of relevant facilities, equipment, products requirements and case history scenarios should be made available to applicants in order for them to match their workplace conditions and opportunities to those outcomes requiring case studies and practical application. This would give them an early opportunity to set up systems in their own work environment or arrange opportunities in other environments that would facilitate 'authentic' learning.

2. Learners should be interviewed to ascertain their reasons for pursuing a formal part-time learning programme. If their reasons are not for self-fulfillment and there appears to be a level of duress regarding their registration, additional support and mentoring should be afforded to these learners to assist them in their learning process. Those learners who would make good mentors and who are more positive about their learning should also be encouraged to support their less positive counterparts.
3. A sharing or mentoring meeting should be scheduled prior even to registration in order for current learners or recent graduates to share their 'real' experiences and coping mechanisms with potential learners. This would hopefully give applicants an opportunity to explore their situations and establish means to deal with the complexities that this additional commitment brings to their lives.
4. A concept of the benefits of a "community of practice", as promoted by Wenger (1998), should be introduced to future groups of learners. Such knowledge, gained from this study, is seen as potentially useful for our adult learners and thus should be shared with them.
5. With the evidence gained from this study, DUT's Department of Somatology should work with its associated administrative sectors to develop, introduce and practice policies and procedures as described in Wade *et al.*, (1994), Dunn, (2006) and Ralphs and Buchler (1998) that are user friendly, flexible and efficient. Literature used for the section on the 'Institution' in the literature review in chapter 2 could form the basis of the information required for this task. This would hopefully go a long way to encourage, assist and support adult learners interested in continuing their formal learning in a public institution of higher learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion I would like to congratulate the seven participants who have come so far in fulfilling their dreams of a higher education, despite the many obstacles they face as individuals and as women at the university, in their communities and in their work situations. I am grateful to these learners for participating and sharing their experiences so candidly during the focus group discussion. The findings as depicted in the thematic analysis recognised recurrent characteristics associated with the DUT adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners. It also highlighted and noted factors that motivate, facilitate and detract from the learning experience. It is foreseen that the administrative conditions and academic offering of the programme should change when these factors are taken into account. This should facilitate the increased retention and throughput rates of learners. Hopefully the positive experiences obtained during this formal learning experience will encourage this current cohort of learners to continue their learning. This in turn, will also hopefully result in more successful Somatology graduates becoming role models and mentors to future generations of adults interested in lifelong learning.

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**ANNEXURE 1. Consideration of Ethical Clearance for student.**



04 September 2006

Faculty Research Committee  
Faculty of Education  
Edgewood Campus  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Ms O'Brien,

**Consideration of Ethical Clearance for student:**

Reid, Gillian Janet - 204520900

Your student's ethical clearance application has met with approval in terms of the internal review process of the Faculty of Education.

**Recommended with Qualification** - suggestions for consideration of the student and supervisor (please see the comments of the reviewer below)

**Reviewers comments:**

Of what relevance is marital status and living conditions on the questionnaire?  
Comments for student and Supervisor to consider.

The application will be forwarded for submission to the Ethics Sub-Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Both you and the student will be advised as to whether ethical clearance has been granted for the research thesis, once the Ethics Sub-Committee has reviewed the application. An ethical clearance certificate will be issued which you should retain with your records. The student should include the ethical clearance certificate in the final dissertation (appendixes).

Should you have any queries please contact the Faculty Research Officer on (031) 260 3524 or on the email [buchler@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:buchler@ukzn.ac.za).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. Moletsane", written over a horizontal line.

Professor R. Moletsane  
Deputy Dean Postgraduate Studies and Research

2006-09-21

**ANNEXURE 2.** Ethical Clearance Approval Number Form.



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

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12 SEPTEMBER 2006

MRS. GJ REID (204520900)  
EDUCATION

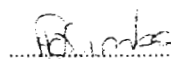
Dear Mrs. Reid

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/06/434**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Characteristics and experiences of Durban University of Technology adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners"

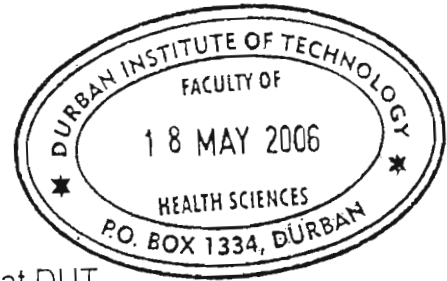
Yours faithfully

  
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA  
RESEARCH OFFICE

- cc. Faculty Research Office (Derek Buchler)
- cc. Supervisor (Ms. F O'Brien)

**ANNEXURE 3.** Copy of correspondence to the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences DUT.

**TO:** Professor N. Gwele  
**FROM:** Mrs. G.J. Reid  
**RE:** Permission to conduct a Research Study at DUT  
**DATE:** 19 May 2006



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I am presently registered for my M. Ed (Higher Education) with the School of Adult and Higher Education Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. To complete the research section of the programme I am required to conduct a study within a chosen field of education and complete a half dissertation.

In order to fulfill this requirement I wish to conduct a study titled: Characteristics, experiences and constraints of Durban University of Technology adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners. Data collection will be accomplished by means of a focus group made up of all or as many of the voluntary consenting current cohort of B. Tech learners as possible. I require permission from you on behalf of DUT to complete this process

I have undertaken to run the focus group at a time and place convenient to all parties. The data will be collected by means of an electronic recorder, transcribed as soon after the event as possible and copies of both the recording and transcription made available to participants prior to the commencement of the analysis and write-up. A copy of the completed half dissertation will be available in the department of Somatology.

Please may I request that you sign a copy of this memorandum as acknowledgement of your approval to allow me to conduct this study in the name of Durban University of Technology.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor Ms F O'Brien through the following options.

Mrs. G.J. Reid  
Tel: 031 2042391  
Fax: 031 2042780  
Email: [shandir@dit.ac.za](mailto:shandir@dit.ac.za)

Ms. F. O'Brien  
Tel: 031  
Fax: 031  
Email: [OBRIEN@uknz.ac.za](mailto:OBRIEN@uknz.ac.za)

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "G.J. Reid", written over a horizontal line.

**ANNEXURE 4.** Copy of letter of permission to conduct the study by the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences DUT.



*Professor N S Gwele, Executive Dean: Faculty of Health Sciences  
P O Box 1334, Durban, 4000, (Tel) 031 – 204 2704, (Fax) 031 – 204 2407*

Mrs G J Reid  
Head of Department:  
Department of Somatology  
Durban University of Technology

24 May 2006

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT DUT**

Dear Mrs Reid,

Your letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> May 2006 refers.

Please be advised that permission is granted to undertake research studies titled "Characteristics, experiences and constraints of Durban University of Technology adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners" at the Durban University of Technology.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "N S Gwele", is written over a horizontal line.

**Professor N S Gwele**  
**Executive Dean: Faculty of Health Sciences**  
**Durban University of Technology**

**ANNEXURE 5.** Copy of correspondence to Participants of the Research Study

**TO:** Department of Somatology B. Tech Learners

**FROM:** Mrs. G.J. Reid

**RE:** Voluntary Participation in Research Study

**DATE:** 11 June 2006

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I am presently registered for my M. Ed (Higher Education) with the School of Adult and Higher Education Faculty of Education University of KwaZulu-Natal. To complete the research section of the programme I am required to conduct a study within a chosen field of education and complete a half dissertation.

In order to fulfill this requirement I am conducting a study titled: Characteristics and experiences of Durban University of Technology adult part-time B. Tech Somatology learners. This in order for the department to obtain and act on information for future generations of B. Tech: Somatology learners. This in turn will hopefully increase the numbers of learners in the B. Tech level which in turn will increase the number of degree graduates in our developing profession. Data collection will be accomplished by means of a focus group made up of all or as many of the voluntary consenting current cohort of B. Tech learners as possible.

I would like you to complete a short questionnaire and to take part in a group discussion. The one off group discussion is not likely to take more than two hours to complete and will be done at a time and place convenient to all parties, preferably during a previously scheduled class session in order that no additional time or expense is incurred by you. I will use a voice recorder which will be transcribed as soon after the event as possible. Copies of the transcription will be made available to you before I proceed with the analysis in order for you to feel confident of your contribution. A copy of the completed half dissertation will be available in the department of Somatology.

I wish to assure you that if you choose not to participate in the study, you will not be disadvantaged in any way. I do, however, encourage you to take part in the study in order that the outcome of the study reflects as many viewpoints as possible. All information will remain confidential and no participants will be identified in the final research report.

If you are willing and able to participate in the study please complete the attached consent form and return it to me on or before the 25 June 2006.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor Ms F O'Brien through the following options.

Mrs. G.J. Reid  
Tel: 031 2042391  
Fax: 031 2042780  
Email: [shandir@dit.ac.za](mailto:shandir@dit.ac.za)

Ms. F. O'Brien  
Tel: 031 2602291  
Fax: 031 2601168  
Email: [OBRIEN@uknz.ac.za](mailto:OBRIEN@uknz.ac.za)

Thank you.

## **Consent Form M Ed Research Project. (Half dissertation)**

I..... (full name)  
herby confirm that I understand the contents of the  
memorandum and the nature of the research project,  
and I consent voluntarily to participate in the research  
study entitled: Characteristics and experiences of adult  
part-time B. Tech Somatology learners at Durban  
University of Technology.

I further acknowledge that I have had time to read,  
understand and question the information given to me in  
my own time with consultation where necessary.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the  
project at any time, should I so desire.

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

.....



**ANNEXURE 7.** Copy of Questionnaire and question for Somatology Focus Group.

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOMATOLOGY  
FOCUS GROUP**

**Please complete the following information that is required in order to establish some of the characteristics of the B.Tech: Somatology Focus Group.**

**A. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

- 1. How old are you? .....
- 2. State your gender. ....
- 3. Name your race and nationality. ....
- 4. State your marital status. ....
- 5. With whom do you live? .....

**B. EDUCATIONAL & INDUSTRIAL BACKGROUND**

- 1. Where did you study Somatology? .....  
.....
- 2. How many years experience do you have in the Somatology industry?  
.....
- 3. Are you presently employed?  
.....
- 4. If you are presently employed what are your total weekly hours?  
.....

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What current factors in your life facilitate your part-time learner experience?
2. What current factors in your life distract from your part-time learning experiences?
3. What factors are the same as those that you had as an undergraduate learner?
4. What factors are different from those that you experienced as an undergraduate learner?
5. What initially motivated you to undertake the B.Tech Somatology?
6. What motivates you to continue your B.Tech?

**ANNEXURE 8.** Copy of Follow-up Question.

**Follow up Questions**

What personal traits do you believe you have that assist you or are an advantage to you as an adult learner?

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What personal traits do you believe you have that hamper you or are a disadvantage to you as an adult learner?

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**ANNEXURE 5.** Copy of correspondence to Participants of the Research Study

**ANNEXURE 9.** Copy of Bibliographic Analysis.

**BIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	All females 7/7
Age	25	25	24	29	22	24	22	$171 \div 7 = 25$ Oldest = 29 Youngest = 22
Race/ Nationality	C	W	W	A	I	W	I	A = 1 C = 1 I = 2 W = 3 All S. A.
Marital Status	S	M	Eng.	M	S	Eng.	S	3 = S (1 with child) 2 = E (living with partner) 2 = M (1 with child)
Residence	1 daughter	husband	fiancé	1 daughter & husband	parents	fiancé	parents	2 children 2 husband 2 fiancé 2 parents
Hours of work	40	45	60	24	47	32	57	$404 \div 7$
Experience	6	5	2.5	5.5	2.5	1.5	1.5	$24.5 \div 7$
Employment								1 self with staff 4 exp. Full time 1 exp. Part- time

**ANNEXURE 10.** Copy of DUT Somatology Diploma Demographics.

	Coloured	Black	Indian	White	Other	Total
1 <sup>st</sup> Years	4	28	30	4		66
2 <sup>nd</sup> Years	1	9	10	2	1 Chinese	23
3 <sup>rd</sup> Years	2	15	10	6		33
4 <sup>th</sup> Years	1	1	2	3		7
Hybrids (2x 2 <sup>nd</sup> years) (3x 3 <sup>rd</sup> years)	-	4	1			5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>134</b>