Cape Peninsula
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Promoting girls' education in South Africa:
with special reference to teen mothers as learners

by

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
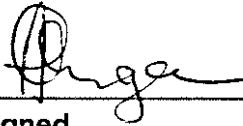
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DECLARATION

I, **Agnes Chigona**, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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Signed   **Date**

Abstract

There are many challenges to girls' education. Each and every barrier is challenging in and of itself. Teenage pregnancy/motherhood is a major cause of schooling disruption. Research shows that about 4 in every 10 girls become pregnant at least once before age 20 (McDowell, 2003). In most cases, teen pregnancy/motherhood has resulted in the discontinuation of education for the girls, leading to the loss of a sustainable future. In South Africa, girls have the right to continue schooling in public schools even after becoming mothers. In the Western Cape, the Education Department introduced the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) which guarantees pregnant or mothering learners a right to remain in public schools. Despite the MLPP, teen mothers face a number of challenges as learners – they feel marginalised by the schooling system. Consequently, it is not easy for the girls to succeed with their schooling. They experience pressure from teachers, fellow learners, parents and society. In most cases, the teen mothers receive very little support and they are usually misunderstood.

Society perceives teen mothers as deviants, failures and irredeemable girls who can contaminate other girls and influence them to behave immorally. Teen mothers are stigmatised. The stigma and discourses that help to construct it are the forces that impact on the schooling processes of the teen mothers. In most cases, responses of educators, parents and communities towards teen mothers are affected by beliefs, values and attitudes situated in the discourses. Unfortunately, most of the discourses are punitive.

Teen mothers need to have a great deal of courage to deal with the challenges. Without physical, social, emotional and academic support, the girls would be unable to fully come to terms with their predicament and continue their education which is crucial to their future financial and social independence. Leaving the teen mothers without support to complete schooling, would mean condemning both the girls and their children to eternal poverty and its effects. The aim of this

research is to examine issues which make it difficult for teen mothers to attend school, hence preventing them from coping and successfully completing their secondary education. Another aim of this research is to suggest measures that may be put in place to facilitate the girls' learning process.

This study was confined to the Western Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa. The research was conducted qualitatively, using mostly semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews and questionnaires were used to supplement the semi-structured interview data. Sampling of the schools was done randomly within the radius of twenty-five kilometers from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Mowbray Campus).

Results of the research have shown that public schools in the province do not dismiss teen mothers but the institutions are likely to do no more than forbid the girls' expulsion from school. Most teen mothers indicated that the support they get from home and school is not enough to facilitate their schooling processes. Sometimes they are unable to satisfy learning requirements due to lack of support for them and their babies. Balancing motherhood and schooling simultaneously is a big challenge for them. The girls require a sense of maturity to combine the role of mother with their responsibilities as learners. Educators in the study noted that they lack skills on how to handle teen mothers at school to enable these girls get education that is comparable to their peers.

While the support from school, families and communities is necessary to minimize the challenges schooling teen mothers face, they themselves need to show a well-developed sense of responsibility towards their predicament. Finally, well-informed policy(ies) combined with efforts of educators, parents, members of the community, school and the teen mothers themselves can ensure minimal disruption to schooling of the girls.

Acknowledgements

Any piece of work of this magnitude that takes years to complete has many people working in the background to support and edge on the 'producer'. Many have contributed to make this work possible and help it come to fruition. To all those who have supported me, I say *zikomo kwambiri* (thank you very much) from deep down my heart.

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Lastly I am very grateful to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology for the scholarship without which this work would have not been possible.

Praise and honour be unto GOD.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my sons (the BOYS): Thandizo and Linga

Glossary of acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Children
DPA	Department of Personnel Administration
EMDC	Education Management Development Centres
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRSC	Human Sciences Research Council
LO	Life Orientation
MLPP	Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy
NCI	National Council on Illegitimacy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC-IOM	National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academies
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAHIMS	Southern Africa Humanitarian Information Management Network
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SCE	Senior Certificate Examinations
SES	Socio-economic status
SLES	Specialised Learner and Educator Support
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNIAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
US	United States [of America]
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Chapter 1

Introduction and background to the study

1.0 Introduction

Educate a woman you educate the society. This is a common saying, but persisting gender discrimination and stereotypes in many societies still limit the access to education for girls and young women. In South Africa, although girls seem to advance more quickly than boys through primary school, the girls' advancement seems to falter during secondary school (Grant and Hallman, 2006). In 2000, there were slightly more girls than boys out of school in South Africa (Unterhalter, 2004). According to UNESCO, in 2002 only 63% of African school–age girls attended primary school and 28% attended secondary school. Although primary education provides a foundation, secondary education is where learners acquire the skills needed to get jobs and thus deliver real benefits to national economies (SAIIA, 2004).

While the number of girls enrolling in secondary school is already small, obstacles, big and small, continue to thwart plans for girls to succeed with schooling. One major obstacle among the girls is teenage pregnancy. Teenage

childbearing in South Africa is high; statistics show that in 1998, 35% of 19-year-olds had been pregnant and 30% were already mothers (South Africa Department of Health, 1999).

Every barrier to girls' education is challenging. Therefore, each and every obstacle to the education process of the girls should be addressed if we are to educate the nation. This research was conducted to understand how teen motherhood, one such obstacle, disrupts the education of girls, and what can be done to minimise the disruption.

Teenage childbearing may ruin a girl's educational ambitions if support from the school, family and community is not available to the adolescent mother. Mwamwenda (1995) argues that unwanted pregnancies in South Africa and many other African countries have led to the termination of some girls' education, resulting in the loss of a bright future for the girls. It is surprising that despite the situation, there is a dearth of research concerning teenage pregnancy/motherhood and schooling in South Africa and the rest of the African continent. However, there has been considerable research on the prevalence of teenage childbearing in the country and other parts of the continent (NRC-IOM, 2005; Singh, 1998; Bingham et al, 1990).

Becoming a teen mother is a huge challenge that affects all aspects of the girl's life: her personal, family, social and school life. While the girl needs to have a great deal of courage to deal with the challenge, what she needs mostly is support. There are many factors which make the teen mothers different from other learners in school and less available to attend classes. The issue here is that without support the teen mothers will be unable to fully come to terms with their motherhood and continue their education, which is crucial to their future financial and social independency (Miranne and Young, 2002).

Teen mothers in this research project mean pregnant or mothering learners at secondary school level. Teen pregnancy, teen childbearing and teen parenting can be separated but, for the sake of this research, I deliberately chose to put

them together because I perceive the issues as components of teen motherhood. The teen mothers under the spotlight of this study are between the ages of 14 and 18 and are from randomly selected public schools in Cape Town in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

The rest of the chapter is organised as follows:

- Section 1.1 explains the research context and the aim of this study;

- Section 1.2 outlines the research questions for the study;

- Section 1.3 provides the contribution of the study to the research body;

- Section 1.4 provides propositions for the study;

- Section 1.5 explains the limitations of the research; and

- Section 1.6 is the outline of the thesis.

1.1 Research Context and Aim of the Study

In South Africa, during the apartheid rule, pregnant girls were not allowed at school. In the post-apartheid era, girls who become pregnant whilst schooling are no longer expelled. Girls are allowed to remain in school if they can manage logistically and financially (Kaufman et al, 2001). The provincial governments in the country have the mandate to implement educational policies within the provinces. In 2003 the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) introduced a policy on managing learner pregnancy in public schools. This policy gives the teen mothers a right to remain and continue their education in the public schools. The policy dictates that schools should ensure that the rights and development of female learners are not curtailed and that special measures are taken in respect of pregnant learners (WCED, 2003).

Generally, teen mothers are perceived differently by various individuals in society. For instance Kelly (2000) argues that, a teen mother is viewed by individuals as:

- a representation of adolescent female sexuality out of control;

- a representation of rebellion against parents and other adults; and

- dropouts, contaminated, lazy and incompetent.

Similarly, Luttrell (2003) argues that teen mothers are perceived as girls who become pregnant easily, who don't care, who are wrong and are failures. Such dominant discourses and representations are meant to stigmatise teen pregnancy and, therefore, serve as a deterrent to sexual activities at a young age (Kelly, 2000). Stigma and the discourses that help to construct it are the forces that greatly impact on the schooling processes of teen mothers. That is, beliefs, values and attitudes situated in discourses affect the response of school, family and community on teen mothers, by creating or limiting educational provisions to meet the needs of the girls as learners.

Discourse is a notion drawn from the French philosopher, Michel Foucault. According to Foucault discourse means "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak... discourses are not about objects; they constitute them and in the practice of doing so, conceal their own interventions" (1977a:49). Foucault calls a set of discourses which are systematically related "discursive fields". These are "competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organising social institutions and processes" that offer a subject "a range of modes of subjectivity" (Weedon, 1987:35). Discursively, teen mothers have been defined as different in the sense of abnormal and/or 'other', hence marginalised in schooling on this basis (Kelly, 2000).

1.1.1 Rationale for the concern about teen mothers

Teenage motherhood is prone to conflict with human capital investment that typically takes place during adolescence by raising the opportunity costs of time spent in education (Grant and Hallman, 2006). In most cases, teenage motherhood imposes long-term consequences on the educational attainment and career development of the young mothers and this is likely to lead to lifetime

poverty, hopelessness and dependence upon others (Mokgalabone, 1999). If the teen mother's academic situation is not dealt with, the passing on of poverty from generation to generation occurs (Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001). Therefore, there is a need to ensure that policies preventing the long–term consequences of teenage motherhood should focus on helping teenage mothers to succeed in their education (Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001). McNeil et al (1980) also note that addressing the reasons why the girls face problems with continuing their education is critical to appropriate policy development.

Many girls who have babies before completing schooling know the importance of education to their socio-economic wellbeing (Kaufman et al, 2001; Miranne and Young, 2002). Therefore, many teen mothers are willing to go back to school after the birth of their babies. In South Africa, in addition to employment prospects, education for women is strongly associated with valuation of 'bride price', and this may encourage parents to send their daughters back to school after becoming teen mothers (Kaufman et al, 2001).

Teenage childbearing is often associated with numerous disruptions for girls, when it comes to school attendance (Theron and Dunn, 2006). The girls need tremendous support to untangle the disruptions. Denying teen mothers the support they need to pursue education, condemns them and their babies to the vicious circle of poverty and ignorance (Kunio and Sono, 1996). If the society expects the girls to succeed with schooling, provisions must be in place to meet the special needs of these learners. From this standpoint, I embarked on this project, examining barriers to education of the teen mothers.

1.1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this thesis is to examine challenges the schooling teen mothers experience. That is, how the school and home respond to the needs of teen mothers, and what impact the policy that grants girls the right to remain in public schools plays to minimise their educational disruptions. This led me to pose questions such as: Are the teen mothers experiencing challenges because

- they have no resources for childcare while they attend school?

- social norms prohibit them?

- schools do not welcome them?

I maintain that conducting research to explain the phenomenon will provide insights to policymakers and educators to understand how the issues impact on teen mothers. Hopefully, the consequence of this understanding will see policies and provisions in public schools that truly support the girls as they continue with their secondary school education.

1.2 Research questions

Through the use of phenomenological interviews with teen mothers and one–to–one semi–structured interviews with parents and principals of randomly selected secondary schools in the Western Cape, I intended to trace the challenges which teen mothers experience when pursuing their education in public schools. Evidence shows that 29% of 14 to 19-year–olds who drop out of school due to pregnancy are able to return to school by age 20, but only 34% of the girls complete Grade 12 (Grant and Hallman, 2006).

I begin by asking questions about why some teen mothers do not succeed with schooling. I thereafter pose questions about the challenges the girls face in pursuing their secondary school education in public schools. The underlying premise of the study is that adequate support to the teen mothers would enable most of the girls to stay in school and succeed in their Senior Certificate Examinations commonly referred to as the Matric Examinations. Such an argument challenges constructions of, on the one hand, teen mothers as recipients of concerted support and, on the other hand, policy, public schools and homes as environments which should provide an uncontested support to the girls.

The main research question is:

> Why do many teen mothers face problems continuing with schooling?

Three sub-questions form the basis for exploring the main question in this study. The sub-questions are:

- What challenges do schooling teen mothers face when they are pursuing their secondary school education? How do the challenges come about?

- How do public schools, parents and communities respond to the needs of teen mothers as scholars? Why are the teen mothers perceived as the 'other' and treated differently at school?

- Why are the teen mothers marginalised at school in spite of a policy that guarantees their right to schooling? To what extent has the policy aided the girls to disentangle schooling disruptions due to motherhood?

1.3 Contribution to the research body

In South Africa, up to now, no research has been conducted using a qualitative approach to understanding the schooling challenges of teen mothers, and where such a study is underpinned by an examination of policy on the education process for the girls.

This study attempts to make the following contributions to the research body:

- It has used the qualitative approach and has incorporated an examination of an educational policy – the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) in understanding the teen mother phenomenon in the Western Cape.

- This research project will provide insights on how schools, parents and communities in South Africa (in particular the Western Cape) respond to the needs of teen mothers as learners, and how the responses impact on the schooling of the girls.

- The study hopes to provide insights on how discourses about teen pregnancy/motherhood negatively impact on the schooling of the teen mothers.

- The study intends to make suggestions on how the negative impacts on the schooling of teen mothers could be addressed.

- The study is expected to establish that there are flaws in the MLPP which contribute to the public schools not making the necessary provisions for teen mothers, and not treating them as learners with special needs. Therefore, policymakers need to revisit this policy in order to ensure support for the girls from their schools. Public schools need to change the way they respond to the needs of teen mothers and ensure that the responses are not based on the discourse about teen pregnancy/motherhood which in most cases have a punitive connotation towards the girls.

1.4 Assumptions

The assumptions that I had about challenges that schooling teen mothers face when I first embarked on this study, include the following:

- Girls, in particular teen mothers, face many challenges in trying to complete their schooling because, besides being mothers, they are expected to attend classes and do their academic work just like all their peers. The challenges may be extreme because, as teenagers, they are in a crucial phase of their lives, as they are experiencing the integration of their personal identities, abilities and opportunities available in the society.

- If there were counselling and childcare facilities available to the teen mothers on their return to school, their challenges could be lessened and they would be able to concentrate and perform well in their academic work.

- Current educational policy on the schooling of teen mothers in public schools is limited in ensuring that the girls are not marginalised and denied the support that they need to prevent disruptions to their education processes.

- Dominant discourses surrounding teen pregnancy/motherhood influence families, communities and schools to respond to the needs of the schooling teen mothers in an ambivalent manner.

1.5 Limitations and challenges of the study for the researcher

The sample for the study was drawn from Cape Town in the Western Cape, one of the nine provinces in South Africa. Therefore, it may not be sensible to generalise for the rest of the country and beyond. In other words, making generalisations from such a limited sample was not intended and is not possible. This section presents briefly the challenges encountered during data collection. A detailed discussion of the limitations is presented in Chapter 4.

Having 37 scheduled individual interviews proved to be a delicate manoeuvre between availability and accessibility. Timing the data collection was challenging. The Provincial Education Department only gives consent for research to be conducted in the first three terms of school. Schools are also too busy for researchers within the final weeks of the terms because of end of term tests and the logistics involved. Since educators' and learners' programmes should not be interrupted, interviews with the teen mothers were limited to after school hours. This may have affected the quality of information from the girls, since most of them were eager to go home to take care of their babies and fulfil their daily chores. Therefore, keeping them after school was perceived by the girls to be a waste of their time. This may also be the reason why one teen mother withdrew from participating in the research. Some of the girls could not make it for the interview appointments because they had to take their babies to clinics for medical attention.

Some educators faced their own personal challenges that often prevented me from conducting interviews with them during the scheduled time. Therefore, *some appointments were rescheduled a number of times. The consequence of this was that time and timing was a constant challenge. In some cases the educators were not keen to participate in the study. For instance, one Life Orientation teacher said, "Researchers just use me but I do not benefit from their work".* It cannot be ruled out that these issues may have compromised the quality of their participation.

The nature of the study was challenging to my position as a researcher. Asking the teen mothers to tell their schooling experiences reminded most of them about the trauma they suffer both at school and home for having children at a young age. Some girls cried as they were narrating their experiences. While the emotions of the girls provided some insights as to how serious their situation is, their emotional outbursts affected my position as a researcher. At times I had to stop the interview process to comfort and encourage the girls to keep on speaking. Situations like these required me to change my position sometimes from a researcher to a counsellor. I had to therefore be careful that the data was not corrupted and that I remained unbiased. I must acknowledge that the situation affected my focus during the interviews. This might have also affected the girls' narration of their experiences in that they were not able to talk more about them [the experiences].

Language was also a limitation, though in a small way. Three main languages – English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa are spoken in the Western Cape. Of the three languages, the researcher is only fluent in English as she was born and raised in Malawi and do not speak any of the South African languages. While many of the research participants could speak English fluently, few parents of the teen mothers could not. Therefore, interviews with the Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking parents required translation. The presence of the third person during the interviews made the parents uneasy because it meant they were telling their stories, which they considered sensitive, to more than one person. One cannot

therefore, rule out the fact that some parents withheld some of the information from their stories.

Despite encountering all these challenges, many were overcome as a result of the iterative nature of the research process and through triangulation of the methods of data collection.

1.6 Outline of the study

This thesis is organised into nine chapters.

Chapter 1 provides the background, context, and aim of the study. I define who the teen mothers are in this chapter and provide the rationale for a focus on the schooling of the girls. I outline the key and supporting questions and briefly describe the methodological and theoretical orientations of the study.

The conceptual underpinnings for the study are outlined in **Chapter 2**. The chapter provides an explanation of the three conceptual underpinnings used in this study. I first discuss the approach which Mac an Ghaill (1988) used in his study of the 'Black Sisters'. His study provided a framework in designing this study. Secondly, I draw on Foucault's ideas of historical, discursive interests, performed through power and bodies. Foucault's (1978) incitement to discourse, and how he discusses the relationship between power and resistance was integral to identifying incitements to discourses that impact on the teen mothers and education. Finally, I embraced Pillow's (2004) approach to the analysis of educational policy and teen mothers. From her approach I obtained an insight into how an educational policy is affected by beliefs, values and attitudes situated in discourses. Her approach provided the analytical framework which I used in Chapter 6 for analysing the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy which guarantees teen mothers in the Western Cape a right to education in public schools.

Chapter 3 reviews literature relevant to the study, specifically secondary sources on teenage pregnancy/motherhood and schooling disruption. It also reviews literature about disruption to girls' education in general, since it is argued that the problem of a teen mother as a learner cannot be separated from the education of all young women. The rationale behind the argument is that the problem of how to educate teen mothers could be partly solved within the larger issue of how to successfully educate all female learners (Pillow, 2004).

Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach I employed in this study. A qualitative research approach was used. In this chapter I offer a rationale for the particular research process followed, and account for the choices I made in gathering and managing the empirical evidence.

The results of the study are presented in **Chapter 5**. The results show that the challenges the teen mothers face both at home and at school impact on their schooling negatively. The findings are discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Based on the results of the study I analysed an educational policy – the Western Cape Education Department Policy on Managing Learner Pregnancy in **Chapter 6**. The chapter has shown how the policy is impacting on the schooling of teen mothers in the Western Cape.

Chapter 7 provides a discussion on how school environments impact on the schooling of teen mothers in the Western Cape. The chapter notes that there is a general lack of respect for teen mothers within the institutions. The main source of the lack of respect is discourses about teen pregnancy/motherhood. In most cases the teen mothers are not respected as learners with special needs by educators; there is a lack of special provisions to accommodate them in schools. The schools are generally inflexible when dealing with the situation of teen mothers.

Based on the research results, **Chapter 8** expounds on how the home environment affects the schooling of teen mothers. The chapter has shown that there are interrelationships between the home and school environments on how

the two respond to the needs of schooling teen mothers. The way the former responds to the needs of the girls could have an impact on how the latter responds and vice versa.

Chapter 9 draws conclusions about the challenges schooling teen mothers face based on the analysis of findings of the study. In this chapter I suggest recommendations on how to address the challenges schooling teen mothers face. I also include recommendations for further research on the phenomenon of schooling teen mothers.

Chapter 2

Conceptual underpinnings

2.0 Introduction

The aim of this research project is to understand the challenges that schooling teen mothers face when pursuing their secondary education in public schools. In order to understand the phenomenon, it was necessary to pose questions about:

- causes of the challenges experienced by schooling teen mothers, and how the challenges impact on the education of the girls;

- existing policies which impact on the teen mothers' education process; and

- the schooling teen mothers' responses to institutional demands.

In order to understand the issues raised and find answers to the research questions, I used the work of three key scholars to form the theoretical underpinning for the project:

- Mac an Ghaill's (1988) study of the 'Black sisters' presented in *Young, Gifted and Black;*

- Pillow's (2004) *Unfit Subjects; and*

- Foucault's notion of power and discourse.

The rest of the chapter is organised as follows:

- Section 2.1 justifies the choice of the conceptual underpinnings;

- Section 2.2 discusses how I have used the study approaches;

- Section 2.3 explains the similarities and differences of the study approach on the Black Sisters (Mac an Ghaill, 1988) and the teen mothers; whilst

- Section 2.4 summarises the chapter.

2.1 Reasons for choosing the conceptual underpinnings

I recognised that any attempt to explain the teen mothers schooling phenomenon would require an explanation of why the girls face the challenges. As I proceeded, it became apparent that one needs to consider the following:

- what makes the teen mothers the 'other' and be treated differently;

- why is it that they are still marginalised at school yet there is a policy that guarantees their right to schooling; and

- to what extent has the policy helped in removing the disruptions to the education process of the teen mothers?

The combination of the approaches of the three theorists offered me insights to understand the issues raised.

Pillow (2004) offers an insight into how educational policy is affected by beliefs, values, and attitudes situated in discourses, which in turn impact on schools' responses which could create or limit the educational options of learners. This work also enlightened me as to how the discourses about teen pregnancy/motherhood are constructed, how the discourses work, and what

educational opportunities the discourses may suppress or open up for schooling teen mothers.

Mac an Ghaill's (1988) study on the 'Black Sisters' offers insights into examining concerns around the schooling of black young women. His work shows how the young women face schooling challenges due to social divisions which include class, gender and race. Mac an Ghaill's work foregrounds how to focus on young women's strategies of institutional survival that develop in response to the social division that pervade their schooling and that of their social lives (Mac an Ghaill, 1988). In other words, it provides an appropriate design which can be used to great advantage when studying schooling challenges faced by girls.

My research is similar to that of Mac an Ghaill's in that the girls in his study also faced stereotype-related problems in their schooling processes. While Mac an Ghaill's 'Black Sisters' faced problems due to gender and race, teen mothers in this research face schooling challenges arising from the stigma attached to teen pregnancy/motherhood along with issues around gender and race.

Underdevelopment in conceptions of power in the frameworks above led me to rely on Foucault's notion of power and discourse. The notion provided an insight on understanding the marginalisation of the teen mothers from school. The girls are usually marginalised due to discourses about teen pregnancy/motherhood developed in societies. According to Foucault (1989) power shapes the subject; but power is also what subordinates the subject. The shaping and subordination process occurs simultaneously. For Foucault, subject shaping and subjection takes place in and through discourse. Discourses rest on, and are responses to, power relations (Luttrell, 2003). The discourses work to ensure, regulate and control that which the institutions like schools want to contain. For instance, schools could marginalise teen mothers in order to deter the behaviour of getting pregnant before completing schooling.

According to Foucault (1978:101) "discourses can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block a point of resistance and

a starting point for an opposing strategy". Most influential discourses are articulated within established institutions, which are in themselves spaces of contestation. Discourses surrounding teen pregnancy/motherhood are produced to stigmatise or punish the girls. Foucault's *History of sexuality (1978)* provides an insight into identifying incitement to discourse. I found his work integral to identifying incitements to discourses that impact on the teen mothers' education.

"Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978: 95). Since the discourses surrounding teen pregnancy marginalise the girls, teen mothers resist some regulations imposed on them in the education institutions. They resist some of the regulations because they [the regulations] come about as responses to the discourses. For Foucault, "focuses of resistances are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilising individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain type of behaviour" (1978:96). Foucault's works provide an insight into understanding resistance from the schooling teen mothers. For instance, evidence from this study shows that some pregnant learners do not inform their schools about their status. They do not want to abide by the policy regulation which requires them to bring a medical certificate to school.

2.2 Using the study approaches

While Mac an Ghaill (1988), Pillow (2004) and Foucault's ideas about discourse and power offer different conceptual perspectives on the teen mother phenomenon, they all make a valuable contribution to my project by offering explanatory tools to examine:

- the challenges faced by schooling teen mothers;

- how public schools and communities respond to the needs of teen mothers;

- how policy impacts on the schooling of the teen mothers; and

- how discourses surrounding teen pregnancy/motherhood impact on the schooling of girls.

2.2.1 On examining the challenges faced by schooling teen mothers

I examine the challenges the teen mothers face in their education process, using Mac an Ghaill's (1988) approach on his study of the 'Black Sisters' presented in *Young, Gifted and Black* as a framework. In his study, Mac an Ghaill investigates the academic success of a number of black (of Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin) girls in an English city. The girls perceive schooling as providing them with credentials which will allow them to access good and well paying jobs.

According to the research findings, the 'Black Sisters' face schooling challenges due to their gender, class and race. The girls suffer both sexist and racist stereotypes. This impact on the education process of the girls in a number of ways, for instance,

    a. the teachers' racist and sexist discriminatory responses to the girls lead to the 'Black Sisters' placement in low-status subjects and low streams even when they qualify for higher subjects and streams. The placement results in low status examinations which in turn are seen as preparing the girls for the lower sector of the labour market. But this is what the girls were hoping to avoid (Mac an Ghaill, 1988:25); and

    b. the teachers' racist perception of the girls result in labelling them as low-ability, and troublesome students (Mac an Ghaill, 1988:16).

Both Mac an Ghaill's 'Black sisters' and the teen mothers in this study are 'othered' at school; and the otherness leads to their marginalisation. However, the critical difference between the two sets of girls is their respective home situations. On the one hand, the 'Black Sisters' had acceptance and sympathy at home and in their communities because they were like anybody else in their communities. As such, they were able to share their experiences from school with the parents and other grown-ups at home. Most teen mothers, on the other

hand, lack support and acceptance at home due to their status. Consequently they do not share their negative school experiences with the parents and the people at home.

2.2.2 On analysing the impact of the policy on schooling teen mothers

As indicated in the introductory chapter of the thesis, the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy stipulates that teen mothers have the right to remain in public schools. But the question remains: Is the policy stipulating sufficient information and steps to be followed by schools in responding to the needs of the schooling teen mothers? It was therefore, essential to analyse the impact of the policy on the schooling of teen mothers in public schools.

The analytical framework leaned primarily on Pillow's (2004) *feminist genealogical* approach. In developing the theory, Pillow indirectly drew on Foucault's work which has reconceptualised history, power, subjects and discourse. *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality* (1978) best represent Foucault's genealogical method. In these works, he was concerned with current, local, regional, and marginal struggles - all of these [concerns] *constitute the focus of genealogy.*

Pillow presents a critical analysis of the way in which educational policy defines and addresses teen pregnancy. Her work is a critique of 'Title X'; a USA policy that provides specific provision and language governing provision of education for *school-age mothers (Pillow 2004:.xiii). The 'Title X' policy guarantees teen* mothers in the USA a right to education equal to that of their peers.

Using a *feminist genealogical* perspective which encompasses Foucauldian theories of historical power and bodies, Pillow traced what is said about teen mothers, and how they are perceived by society. Thereafter, she traced what these mean for the development and implementation of educational policy affecting schoolgirl mothers.

While Pillow gave a framework on how to critically look at the extent to which the policy has helped in removing the disruptions to the education process of the teen mothers, her approach does not provide insights on how the policy for teen mothers can affect other learners at school. For instance, the MLPP gives the right to pregnant learners to continue attending school. However, the policy does not state how other learners can be protected, for example, should a pregnant learner give birth prematurely at school. Evidence from this study shows that at least at one public school such an incident has occurred. Witnessing the process of giving birth could be traumatising to the other learners.

2.2.3 On 'otherness' leading to marginalisation of teen mothers

Mac an Ghaill's 'Black Sisters' were 'othered' on the basis of race, class and gender at school, and this led to their marginalisation. The basis of the 'othering' of the girls in my study is their status as teen mothers. At this point, it may be necessary to explain what 'othered' means; and what is wrong with 'otherness'.

Many individuals may have had experienced 'otherness' at one time or another. That is being in a situation where one is perceived as strange or different. However, the processes of 'othering' have specific connotations when used to marginalise certain individuals. De Beauvoir (1989) in her book, *Second Sex* refers to the 'other' as a minority and the least favoured ones. She defines the term as that which turns someone off from the norm. In addition, Cahoone (1996) argued that some phenomena or units are represented as foreign or 'other' through an active process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchisation which the unit could privilege or favour, and the 'other' is devalued in some way.

The teen mothers in this research project experience otherness which impacts on the schooling of the girls negatively. The otherness is exacerbated by discourses surrounding teen pregnancy. Pillow (2004) presented a few discourses in the society that make the teen mother the 'other'. These include:

- Teen mothers were identified as "children having children", as irresponsible and promiscuous;

- Teen mothers were presented as the welfare mothers;

- Teen pregnancy was associated with a cycle of poverty and resituated as a social welfare issue; and

- Teen pregnancy was marked as an epidemic (Pillow 2004: 35).

Through the process of othering, teen mothers are disempowered and lose the right to be accepted by their families as other legitimate children are, due to the predicament they find themselves in. In most cases, obtaining an education for teen mothers is no longer perceived by the society as a right, but something that the girls owe society because education prevents them becoming welfare dependent and a burden to the taxpayer (Pillow, 2004). Nevertheless, education will help the girls obtain the knowledge required by the labour market, hence empowering themselves socially and economically.

2.2.4 On the impact of discourse, and resistance by schooling teen mothers

The marginalisation of schooling teen mothers is due to the discourses surrounding teen motherhood operating against them within their communities and learning institutions. It therefore might be argued that the social barrier "results in the young women being located at the bottom of the power structure within the school" as was the case with the 'Black Sisters' (Mac an Ghaill, 1988:26).

In his discourse on power, Foucault (1978:95) argued that "where there is power there is resistance". That is, power can be seen as something that generates points of resistance against itself, and inadvertently generates opposition. Here, Foucault is not suggesting resistance to the general principle of the society, but rather a refusal of the principle when some individuals experience its unfairness. According to him, the refusal may only be possible if people know how the

principle is constituted and what the dynamics of power are and knowledge inherent in its formation is (Foucault, 1978).

Giroux (1983: 108) argues that resistance adds a new theoretical depth to Foucault's (1977) concept of power and that it "works to be exercised on and by people within different contexts that structure interacting relations of dominance and autonomy". That is, "power is never uni-dimensional; it is exercised not only as a mode of domination, but also as an act of resistance" (Giroux, 1983: 108). According to Giroux, resistance is a behaviour that should have a revealing function that contains a critique of dominations and supplies theoretical opportunities for self reflection and struggle, with the aim of self-emancipation and social emancipation (Giroux, 1983: 109).

Since the teen mothers feel marginalised both at home and at school as learners, they may develop modes of resistance against the discriminations and/or institutional demands, which in most cases are responses to discourses aimed at stigmatising and excluding them [teen mothers] from school. Mac an Ghaill's 'Black sisters' had their own "specific mode of resistance within accommodation which involved a pro-education/anti-school stance", in response to the stereotypical institutional demands that the schooling made on them (1988:26). It is interesting to examine the mode of resistance and/or accommodation the teen mothers employ and if such practice helps them to succeed academically or channels them towards failure.

The discourses that have emerged surrounding teen mothering and the effects they have on the education experiences of the girls are many. The common examples include the discourses of 'education as a responsibility' and the discourses of 'contamination' that develop from the idea that the immorality of the teen mothers will contaminate other girls at school and influence them to become mothers as well (Pillow, 2004). Discourses are "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them" (Weedon, 1987:

108). Through discourse, meaning and human subjects are produced and power relations are maintained and changed (Kenyway et al, 1993). "Discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling–block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1978:101).

Foucault's approach poses socio-political questions about why and how discourses surrounding schooling teen mothers are produced, asking radical questions on the legitimacy of the discourse and the adoption of the discourse in the structure, and a cognitive inquiry into the relationship between power and knowledge existing in the discourses. The argument here is that such discourses surrounding teen mothers may emphasise the 'otherness' and deny the girls their rights as normal learners at school thus marginalising them in a number of ways. This may lead to the unsuccessful schooling of the teen mothers. In other words, it might be argued that such discourses produce barriers, which result in the teen mothers being located at the bottom of the power structure within the school, a reflection of the institutions not welcoming the girls. Such practice may result in these girls developing an anti-school perspective. In this study evidence shows that after a short period of trying to fit into the school system and due to the extreme marginalisation the girls suffer, they give up attending school. This is not because they are not interested in education but rather because they have developed an anti-school stance. Some teen mothers interpret the school environment as unfavourable to them because of what they experience there.

2.3 Study similarities and differences: the 'Black Sisters' and the teen mothers

While I embraced most of the research of Mac an Ghaill's study on the 'Black Sister', there are similarities and differences between his study and my project. Mac an Ghaill's study is concerned with the schooling of the black youth but he focuses much on the race relations in explaining the youths' position in the education system. He emphasises that the major problem in the schooling of the black youth is not their culture but the phenomenon of racism which pervasively

structures their social world. According to him, racism is mediated via the operation of 'race' special mechanisms like the process of racist stereotyping, which in turn is gender specific. The 'Black Sisters' "were aware of how the discriminatory practices ... operated against them within their secondary school" (Mac an Ghaill, 1988:26).

Similar to Mac an Ghaill's (1988) study on the 'Black Sisters', my study is concerned with the schooling of girls, in particular the teen mothers. This study focuses on the challenges these girls experience while trying to complete their schooling. One of the hypotheses of the study is that the problems in schooling of the teen mothers could be due to:

a. the stigma attached to teen motherhood; and

b. the teen motherhood itself which may be a source of discriminatory practices operated against them within their schools and homes.

Therefore, without support they can hardly succeed academically.

According to constructivists like Bruner (1966), social interaction is important for learning. Bruner argues that the teacher in the learning process is just a facilitator who encourages learners to discover principles for themselves and construct knowledge usually in collaboration with other learners. In his study of the 'Black sisters', Mac an Ghaill used shorter interviews with a small group of young white women to gain comparative material. In my study, I have included the classmates (both boys and girls) of the teen mothers in order to gain information about social interaction between learners (i.e. interaction between teen mothers and their fellow classmates). It is interesting to investigate how teen mothers at school collaborate with their teachers and fellow learners although they may be placed at the bottom of the power structure within the school, due to the discourses around teen mothering and schooling.

Mac an Ghaill's research used semi-structured interviews supplemented by two sets of questionnaires. The participants included the black schooling girls, their parents and teachers. He complemented his data collection method by

administering two sets of questionnaires to the 'Black Sisters'. Comparative information was gained from shorter interviews with a small group of black middle class girls and white girls.

Embracing Mac an Ghaill's approach, I collected data qualitatively for my thesis whereby semi-structured interviews were used. The informants included schooling teen mothers, their parents and teachers (including school principals). Like Mac an Ghaill's study, my interview data was complemented by two sets of questionnaires. Mac an Ghaill's questionnaires were administered to the 'Black Sisters' at different times while my questionnaires were administered to classmates and teachers of the teen mothers.

The limitation in Mac an Ghaill's approach is that he did not analyse educational policies impacting on the schooling of the 'Black Sisters'. In my study it was essential to include the policy(ies) in place that directly impact on the education process of the teen mothers in public schools. This led me to include education department officers, who deal with the policy, as informants.

Another limitation in Mac an Ghaill's approach is that he was not interested in investigating sources of help available to the girls in combating some of their schooling challenges. In order to find out what sources of help (apart from their families and school) are available to schooling teen mothers in my study, I included two non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These NGOs render their services to teen mothers in Cape Town.

2.4 Chapter summary

My interest in understanding the difficulties teen mothers face when schooling led me to pose questions around the challenges and how the girls respond to institutional demands, and existing policy(ies) which impact on the teen mothers' schooling. In order to answer the questions, I embraced three underpinning approaches.

I first considered the approach which Mac an Ghaill (1988) used in his study of the 'Black sisters'. This was helpful in designing my study about schooling challenges of teen mothers. Mac an Ghaill's study also hinted that, when girls face challenges at school because they are 'othered', they are likely to develop forms of resistance to the institutional demands that schooling makes on them. This influenced me to also investigate modes of resistance applied to the demands that the learning institutions make on schooling teen mothers.

Secondly, I drew on Foucault's ideas of historical, discursive interests performed through power and bodies. According to Foucault (1989), subject shaping and subjection takes place in and through discourse, and discourses are believed to be responses to power relations. The discourses are produced to regulate and control that which institutions want to contain. This shows that there is a link between discourse, power and resistance. Since the marginalisation of schooling teen mothers is due to the discourses surrounding teen motherhood operating against them within their communities and learning institutions, it was vital to understand the link. It could be argued that the utilisation of the discourses contribute to the challenges the schooling teen mothers face. Therefore, Foucault's incitement to discourse, and how he discusses the relationship between power and resistance was integral to identifying incitements to discourses that impact on the teen mothers and education.

Finally, I embraced Pillow's (2004) approach to the analysis of educational policy and teen mothers. The approach provided an insight into how an educational policy is affected by beliefs, values, and attitudes situated in discourses. The discourses impact on institutions' response to the teen mothers. Pillow's approach has also offered an insight into what educational opportunities the discourses may suppress or open up for schooling teen mothers. Her approach provided the analytical framework which I used when analysing the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) in Chapter 6.

Chapter 3

Literature review

3.0 Introduction

Teen motherhood often prevents the successful schooling process of girls. In most cases this hinders the girls preparing themselves for good jobs in the labour market. According to Hotz et al (1997), more than 60 % of teen mothers, who begin their families before age 18, never complete high school. While in some parts of the African continent getting pregnant still marks the end of schooling of the girl, in South Africa since 1996, teen mothers are allowed to remain in school if they can manage logistically and financially (Kaufman et al, 2001). Hallman and Grant (2003) reported that 32 % of 14 to 19–year–olds who were teen mothers were then attending school in South Africa. But, why is it that very few teen mothers remain in school and even fewer succeed with schooling?

Kaufman et al, (2001) show that there are factors that influence whether or not a teen mother is able to continue schooling after the birth of the baby. Most of the factors depend on the girls' ability to manage logistics associated with mothering and schooling simultaneously (Kaufman et al, 2001). The girls' difficulty in coping with schooling is attributable to their babies, and also to the fact that educators

and parents often give up on them and fail to take their plans seriously once the girls have children (Schultz, 2001: 598). Similarly, Arlington Public School (2004) reports that adolescent mothers face a great number of difficulties, and experience undue pressure from parents, peers and teachers. On the one hand they receive very little support from school and from their homes. On the other hand they are usually misunderstood by parents, teachers and fellow learners. According to the Canadian *Ministère de l'Éducation* report (1998), for a schooling teen mother to deal with the challenges, she must have a great deal of courage and determination; however, what she needs most is support from school and home.

This chapter reviews the available literature which deals with teenage pregnancy/motherhood and schooling disruption. It also reviews literature about disruption to girls' education in general since this also has an impact on the teen mother as a learner.

The rest of the chapter is organised as follows:

- Section 3.1 reviews literature on teen motherhood and schooling;

- Section 3.2 explains some of the causes of teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls;

- Section 3.3 discusses challenges of teen motherhood and schooling;

- Section 3.4 outlines other barriers besides teenage pregnancy on girls' education;

- Section 3.5 explains why it is important to promote girls education; and

- Section 3.6 summarises the chapter.

3.1 Teen motherhood and schooling

Though the situation concerning teenage pregnancy and schooling problems is insufficiently accounted for in South Africa (Hallman and Grant, 2006), it has been considered globally (Pillow, 2004; McDowell, 2003; Luttrell, 2003; Chevalier

and Viitanen, 2001; Ornstein and Levine, 1997; Lesko, 1995; Van Vuuren, 1990). Mokgalabone (1999) argues that the situations relating to pregnancies and schooling disturbances are inevitably associated with societal problems. The problems can range from ignorance and moral collapse (Helge, 1989) to the sexual abuses of powerless female adolescents (McGurk et al, 1993), and public ignorance about early menarche (De Villiers, 1991; Creatsas, 1993).

To date, in most of the developing countries, the majority of girls and women are losing the struggle for equal access to secondary education. In South Africa 61% of the uneducated adult population are women (James et al, 2000: 18). Like many other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries (e.g. Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana), South Africa is experiencing teenage pregnancy as one of the major hindrances to the educational success of girls and women (Kaufman et al, 2001).

Hallman and Grant (2006) assert that, although studies in South Africa have shown that girls advance more quickly than boys through primary school, they [girls] begin to falter at the secondary level. Teenage pregnancy is perceived as one of major stumbling blocks in the education process of the girls. Unfortunately, teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls in South Africa is escalating. For instance, it was reported in the *Sunday Times* of the 20th May 2007 that one secondary school in the country reported 144 cases of pregnancy among its pupils in 2006.

One of the challenges of teenage childbearing is that it often leads to girls dropping out of school. The end to the education process may be dictated by policy, or sometimes by social norms or material conditions (Kaufman at al, 2001). In the study about the struggle for equal access to education, Meena (2003) blames the governments of the sub-Saharan countries for making little effort to eliminate the discrepancies in the area of access to secondary education for girls. One way the girls are denied access is when they fall pregnant and when they become teen mothers (Meena, 2003). Wolpe et al (1997) indicate that

some schools refuse to allow pregnant girls and young mothers to attend classes, even though everyone has the human right to education.

Some teen mothers do return to school but the girls may not get support here. The following sub-section outlines the exclusion and/or experiences of the teen mothers trying to go back to school after the birth of their babies.

3.1.1 Returning to school following a pregnancy

The school environments, its policies, practices, curricula, expectations and communication play a role in academic success or failure of the girls (WEEA, 2000). There has been a growing body of research documenting gender biases in the school environment. For instance, there have been cases where young teen mothers have not been allowed to return to school in South Africa (Wolpe et al, 1997) while young fathers are never barred from attending school. A few years ago, the prevailing policies in public school systems in many parts of the world required that pregnant learners be expelled as soon as the pregnancy was known (Luttrell, 1997).

The practice was a response to discourses surrounding teen pregnancy/motherhood and schooling. Pillow (2004) and Wolpe et al (1997) argue that such discourses include, 'discourses of contamination' that emerge from the perception that the immorality of the teen mothers will contaminate the student body i.e. send wrong messages to other girls that it is acceptable to get pregnant while at school. Another is the 'discourses of education as responsibility' that are based on the idea that obtaining an education is not a right for teen mothers, but something that these girls owe society, so that they do not become a burden to the taxpayer through welfare dependence (Pillow, 2004).

In 2000, the Gender Commission on Gender Equity reported to the National Department of Education in South Africa that they had received a number of complaints from pregnant learners concerning the manner in which their schools were treating them. According to the report, some forms of discrimination

including suspension from class were reported (Ministry of Education, 2000). Such forms of discrimination are also manifested in the other parts of the SADC region. For example Chilisa (2002) concludes that in many countries in the sub-Saharan Africa, the practice of expelling pregnant girls from school continues to date. He argues that in some societies the practice is enshrined in law; in others it is maintained by informal customs, so that only a small number of girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy re-register for schooling. Chilisa (2002) further argues that given the competition for school places in some societies, expulsion of teen mothers becomes a way of creating space for boys, hence widening the gender imbalance in education.

Although refusing pregnant girls a chance to schooling could be a violation of their human right to education (UNESCO 2003), authors like Wolpe et al (1997) have stated that school committees in South Africa are often unwilling to allow the girls to continue attending classes for fear that they may influence other learners by their 'immoral behaviour'. What the society should bear in mind here is that by denying the teen mothers access to education, this "only condemns them to... a vicious cycle of poverty and ignorance" (Kunio and Sono, 1996:41).

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has worked since 1992 to promote women's education through advocacy, concrete actions and policy reforms. In the mid-nineties, FAWE successfully lobbied the ministries of education in several African countries to change policies which excluded pregnant girls from re-entering school. For instance, in Malawi, since 1995 teen mothers have been allowed by the Ministry of Education to continue their education after pregnancy, as a result of the FAWE lobbies (Monsen, 1998). However, it has been reported that the processing of applications for re-admission often takes more than a year. This is another setback for girls already contending with social pressure to get married rather than to return to school (United Nations-IRIN, 2002). The longer the process of getting a teen mother back to school, it seems, the more pressure the girl faces, forcing her to get married rather than to go back to school.

In May 2007 the *Sunday Times* reported that the National Minister of Education is preparing a policy which states that schooling teen mothers may be required to take leave of absence of up to two years from school in order for the girls to take care of their babies. The requirement may affect teen mothers negatively - Hallman and Grant (2006) found that with every year that passes after school drop-out, teen mothers are significantly less likely to return to school.

One factor that could dictate whether the teen mothers return to school or not following the birth of their babies is the availability of resources for childcare while they attend school. Hallman and Grant (2006) report that in South Africa, household composition is one of the significant determinants on whether a teen mother is able to return to school or not. Teen mothers residing in households with an adult female aged 25 to 49 or aged 60 or older are more likely to return to school than those in households lacking an adult female. The rationale for these ages is that 25 to 49-years-old are said to be prime ages and economically active, so they can afford to provide financial resources for babysitting or crèche, while women aged 60 or older have a source of income because they are eligible for the state old-age pension in South Africa (Hallman and Grant, 2006).

While pregnancy and teen mothering are some of the major causes of secondary school drop-out among girls (Kaufman et al, 2001), social, economic and cultural issues also make girls' school attendance a complex decision for parents (Kaufman et al, 2001; USAID, 1999). Some parents may not send girls to school because they consider the benefits of education for girls to be limited and the cost of sending them to school to be unnecessary for the family budget. Sometime the parents feel insecure about their daughters - they believe their daughters may have difficulty succeeding in a system where the majority of teachers are male and even in some instances the majority of students are male (USAID, 2003).

3.1.2 Need to support teen mothers' schooling

Regardless of pregnancy or being a teen mother, all girls should be encouraged to attain a high school certificate because educated women are better informed about their rights, are more likely to exercise them, and are more likely to participate in the formal political system (World Bank, 1993).

Teen mothers and their children are two particularly vulnerable groups in our society. Their long-term life chances are interconnected. Both groups are at critical points in their lives, where their living courses may either be shaped towards wellbeing, stability and productivity, or towards eternal poverty and dependency. That is, without support for these teen mothers to complete their high school, many of them will struggle with poverty and its effects (Stephens et al, 1999; Kunio and Sono, 1996; Mogotlane, 1993).

It has also been argued that many children of teen mothers are destined to have the experience of being in a single parent family, and are more likely to be at risk of living in poverty, poor housing and suffering from poor nutrition. The children of teen mothers may also be likely to become teen parents themselves (Health Development Agency, 2002; UNICEF, 2001).

There have been concerns expressed by various scholars and community-based organisations that gender issues in many sectors including education have been largely neglected in the process of transformation in South Africa (Gaganakis, 2003). The National Gender Summit (2001) and several women's organisations have shown concern about gender inequalities at school. For instance, the National Gender Summit (2001) reported that:

> 21% of teenage girls drop out of school due to pregnancy. The Commission on Gender Equity has received complaints about girls being expelled while their male counterparts are allowed to continue with their studies undisturbed. Negative attitudes towards girls, sexual abuse in institutions of learning, and channelling girls into non–scientific programmes are some of the other indicators of discrimination against girl child learners. Without good

education girls will not be able to reverse the discrimination in employment
and life beyond school (National Gender Summit, 2001).

Based on this report, countries need to ensure that girls are not discriminated
against in the process of education. According to a 2003 UNESCO report, equal
education is important for girls because it helps to increase women's productivity
to a significant extent, thereby adding to household incomes and reducing
poverty. It also increases personal and social well–being. Educated mothers
have healthy and well-nourished children so that they have a greater chance of
going to school and performing well in class. Making sure that the girls get proper
education now will help in ensuring a successful education of the future
generation (UNESCO, 2003).

3.2 Causes of teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls

Teenage pregnancy may be a result of a number of factors that include lack of
sex education during adolescence, and social and cultural practices.
Researchers (Wood and Jewkes, 1997; and Varga and Makubalo, 1996)
investigate events leading to pregnancy, including negotiation, sexual
networking, and coerced or forced sex. The researchers find that in most cases
girls do not want to become pregnant at an early age. Girls may not wish to
become pregnant because teenage childbearing is associated with poor
educational achievement of the schoolgirls; but due to poverty some girls may
not be able to avoid teenage pregnancy (Theron and Dunn, 2006; Health
Development Agency, 2002). The following subsections present other causes of
teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls. The causes will include adolescent phase
and lack of sex education, and social–economics and cultural practices.

3.2.1 Adolescence phase and lack of sex education

The teenage schoolgirls are at a crucial phase of their lives, because, as
teenagers, they are experiencing the integration of "earlier identifications, abilities
and opportunities offered by society" (Gouws and Kruger, 1994: 83). In addition,
as adolescent girls they are at a time of heightened psychological risk (Brown

and Gillgan, 1992). At this age the girls are at a phase of life between childhood and adulthood, when radical developmental changes are taking place and other types of changes are faced in order to make the adolescent mature and find her own identity within the society (Gouws et al, 2000). Furthermore, there is evidence that adolescents mature earlier these days and are more sexually active; this behaviour has resulted in very young teenagers getting pregnant (Olivier, 1996).

De Villiers (1991) reports that some pregnant adolescents had no previous knowledge of female decision-making regarding early sexual involvement. Kaufmann et al (2000) report that many teens rely on their peers for information about sex matters. The authors argue that this is related to the lack of communication about issues concerning sexual matters between parents and their children. Nonetheless, this lack results in sexuality ignorance (Helge, 1989).

Due to cultural practices, communication about sexuality matters is not easy because the culture perpetuates the old notions of secrecy and respect for elders (Wood et al, 1997:6). Consequently, the adolescents turn to their peers for sexual knowledge, but the fact is that parents are a better source of this knowledge than peer influence (Wood et al, 1997; Kaufman et al, 2001). Research has shown that teenage girls influenced by their friends on sexual knowledge have a high rate of teenage pregnancies (Kunio and Sono, 1996). Newcomer and Udry (1985) argue that if teenagers had proper information about their sexuality, they would understand the dangers of early sexual involvement and would, therefore, postpone indulging in sexual activities until they were older.

Raphael (1972) shows that a range of underlying issues leading to the conception of unwanted children could be psychological. According to Raphael, the issues may include: depression, replacing a loss, deprivation and hostility in childhood, uncertain femininity and self-punishment. In some cases, the death of a significant person, the separation/divorce of parents or any other major change such as moving house or changing schools can bring about depression in

adolescents - this may lead to vulnerability (Luttrell, 2003). This vulnerability may sometimes result in adolescents getting into behaviour that seeks to make up for the emotional loss with the aim of finding comfort (Abernethy, 1980).

In some instances, even when contraception is being used, girls reported the tendency to become clumsy about its use (Twist, 1994). Motivation to ensure against a pregnancy is often influenced by the perceived lack of alternatives available to girls from impoverished backgrounds (Theron and Dunn, 2006). The sexual activity is often symbolic of the deeper needs and a resultant pregnancy may be an attempt to fill the need for love from the mother i.e. someone to love her but who won't hurt her (Kelly, 2000).

3.2.2 Socio—economic and cultural practices

The Health Development Agency (2002) reports that teenage pregnancy in lower social classes is ten times more prevalent than in higher social classes. Hallman and Grant (2006) show that teenage pregnancy is strongly associated with low economic status.   Similarly, Theron and Dunn (2006:492) narrate that "adolescent childbearing is heavily concentrated among poor and low—income teenagers". It is believed that many girls from poor households become pregnant so that they can be recipients of the child—support grant available to children younger than 14 who come from poor families (HSRC, 2005).   Though this fact may be controversial, Hallman and Grant (2006) argue that no evidence is available to date to support or refute this hypothesis. In their research, Hallman and Grant (2006) report that some girls communicated that the benefit of receiving the grant was more important than the additional hardship that having a baby imposed upon their lives.

In families and societies with low socio-economic status, teenage girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual activities, becoming pregnant for social, cultural and economic reasons and possibly leading to them contracting HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and teenage pregnancy. Greater risk arises from practices that encourage girls to

accept older men as partners (for economical reasons) in preference to their peers as partners (Kaufman et al, 2001; UNAIDS, 2000).

Swainson et al (1998) argue that there is a risk that leads parents to keep their daughters out of school. The risk relates to the harassment of girls on their way to and from school, especially where travel distances are long. Girls may also be coerced into sex by male educators in exchange for educational advancement or other favours. A study in Tanzania found that a quarter of schoolgirls reported having sex with adult men, including teachers; receiving money or presents was one of the reasons for engaging in sexual activity (UNAIDS, 2000). Twenty-two percent of schoolgirls in Uganda and 50% in Kenya anticipated receiving gifts or money in exchange for sex (UNAIDS, 2000). Obviously, with older men, these sexual relations put the girls at risk of HIV infection and teenage pregnancies (World Bank, 2002).

Culturally, in some communities there are practices which speed up adolescents' maturity into adulthood. These practices may include engaging in sexual activity at an early age (Helge, 1989). Such practices are learnt during traditional initiations which take place during puberty to prepare the youth in matters of sexual life and marriage (Wood et al, 1997). After being exposed to these practices "many teens choose to engage in sexual activity at an early age" which in many cases lead to teen pregnancies (Helge, 1989:14)

3.3 Teen motherhood and schooling

In South Africa, teen mothers are allowed to return to school once they have delivered their babies (Kaufman et al, 2001). However, mothering, peer pressure and the school environment may negatively affect young teen mothers in their attempt to cope with academic work. Research conducted by the United States Department of Education (1992) and in South Africa by Hallman and Grant (2006) have shown that both pregnancy and parenting are the leading reasons girls give for dropping out of school. Some specific factors that seem to influence more female dropouts than male dropouts include: need for household labour,

educational level of their mothers, the girls' low academic achievements and low self-esteem (U.S. Department of Education, 1992; Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001; Hallman and Grant, 2006).

Teen motherhood changes the context in which the girls live and make decisions. They have to allocate time to household chores, including care giving responsibilities (Hallman and Grant, 2006). According to the report by Arlington Public School (2004), continuing with schooling may sometimes prove to be an unyielding burden for pregnant teens who live in unstable home environments. The report adds that teen mothers face an overwhelming number of difficulties. The difficulties may be exacerbated by parental and peer pressures, which are far more common than support and understanding. As such the teen mothers require mature, adult decisions in order to care for their babies and devote adequate time to school work (Arlington Public School, 2004).

Teenage mothers are likely to be at greater risk of socio-economic difficulties in their lives than those who delay childbearing until their twenties. They are generally less educated and tend to have bigger families, and have higher levels of out of wedlock unwanted births (McDowell, 2003). Since teenage motherhood cuts short the education process of the girls, hence reducing their chance of participating in the labour market, policies aiming at encouraging the young mothers to return to school should be put in place (Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001). It is believed that long–term consequences of teenage pregnancy could be efficiently reduced through participation in the labour market where they could earn an income (Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001).

Pillow (2004) argues that data available on who the teen mother is as a learner confirms that the problem of teen pregnancy/motherhood cannot be separated from the education of all young women. She situates the problem of how to educate the adolescent mothers within the larger issue of how to successfully educate all female learners. She argues that "as teen pregnancy is a gender equity issue, any de–emphasis upon gender equality has the potential to

negatively impact on pregnant/mothering teens' experiences in school" (Pillow, 2004:224). Based on such arguments, the literature in the following subsections is about education for all young women.

3.3.1 Learning environment and school curriculum

The learning environment is a critical dimension of learners' success in education. According to Croninger and Lee (2001:569), teachers, through their daily interactions with learners, can provide them [learners] with emotional support and encouragement, especially when school-related difficulties undermine their confidence in themselves as learners. In general, a good learning environment provides students time to think and space to be creative. It must be gender sensitive, healthy and safe for all learners to be able to spend maximum amount of time on learning.

3.3.1.1 Learning processes

Constructivists like Bruner (1966) consider learning as a process whereby the learner consciously constructs new concepts based on the knowledge gained in the past and present. Ormrod (2003) believes that learning involves constructing one's knowledge from one's own experiences. That is, constructive learning is seen to be a personal endeavour. Bruner (1966) argues that the teacher is involved in the learning process as a facilitator who should encourage learners to discover principles for themselves and to construct knowledge by working to solve realistic problems. This knowledge is usually constructed when working jointly with other learners - this (collaboration) is known as knowledge construction as a social process. Bandura (1977:22) states: "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do".

While this social process may have some benefits in the learning process, teen mothers may not have full access to collaboration with the other learners because of the stigma attached to teen motherhood whilst schooling. As a result

of this they feel shy to talk in class and because they are so quiet it is hard for them to:

- work to clarify and organise their ideas so that they can voice them to others;

- have the opportunities to elaborate on what they have learned; and

- be exposed to the views of others and discover flaws and inconsistencies. (Ormrod, 2003)

Furthermore, Jones (1988) based on Douglas Barnes' work on communication in the classroom, argues that

> talking is a central ingredient in learning, that through talking we remake knowledge for ourselves. The more the learner is given the opportunity to 'think aloud', the more she can formulate explanations and interpretations and evaluate her own knowledge. To learn we need to 'know what we know'; and talking gives us a chance to represent our knowledge to ourselves (Jones, 1988:146).

However, the fact that the teacher as an instructor has the duty of transforming information to be learned into a format which is appropriate to the learner's current state of understanding, makes it a need for the learner and instructor to engage in an active dialogue (Bruner, 1966). Freire (1972) in his text, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* emphasises dialogical education. He argues that dialogue involves respect and should involve people working with each other and not one acting on another. According to him, dialogue is both important for deepening understanding and as part of making a difference in the world, as well as for building social capital (Freire, 1972).

Jones (1988) argues that, because some girls are shy to talk (or be involved in dialogue) in class and also avoid eye contact with teachers in class, they [the teachers] become apparently sensitive to the discomfort their questioning

causes. Consequently, the teachers ask the girls few questions and generally give them [the girls] less attention than the boys. In the case of teen mothers, Schultz (2001) argues that teachers simply give up on the girls. The consequence here is that the instructors ultimately penalise the girls' knowledge of 'how to be a student', in that it contributes to the girls' failing to master curriculum knowledge (Jones, 1988:148). When girls are not motivated by their teachers to learn, learning cannot be effective (Theron and Dunn, 2006). It is through the girls' interaction with their teachers that they have an "opportunity to learn and practise the skills of interpretive thinking – skills rewarded by the school examinations" (Jones, 1988:148).

Bruner (1966) recommends that a theory of instruction needs to address four major aspects:

- predisposition towards learning;

- the ways in which a body of knowledge can be structured so that it can be most readily grasped by the learner;

- the most effective sequences in which to present material; and

- the nature and pacing of rewards and punishment.

In other words, it is the duty of the teacher as an instructor to see to it that the girls as learners are learning or grasping whatever is expected of them in order to master the curriculum knowledge which will enable them to succeed academically (Jones, 1988).

3.3.1.2 Girls' experiences in the learning environment

In some school settings, boys and some girls abuse other girls verbally. Lees (1987) argues that the language of sexual abuse enables boys to define the school and its resources as part of their public sphere to the exclusion of girls. When girls are not willing to be bullied by boys, they are called insulting names

by the boys. "Girls' participation in the classroom is unwelcomed; and they are at best ignored, or at worst ridiculed, or put down" (Lees, 1987:181). Luttrell (2003) writes about shaming practices and undue hostility in the school environment, that require particularly teen mothers to cope with their tainted identities, and result in psychological dislocation. Consequently, optimal functioning is prevented and this influences school work negatively (Theron and Dunn, 2006). Unfortunately, according to Lees (1987), most teachers ignore verbal abuse and show little understanding of the dynamics of the social life of the school.

In his ethnographic study, Rout (1992) finds that in co-education schools, as boys go through the process of learning to be and see themselves as masculine, they harass girls both verbally and physically. Verbal hassling includes good-natured bantering or harassment such as name calling; making a comment about hair style, clothes and making cruel jokes about someone. Physical hassling includes bullying, play fighting and fighting. These cause discomfort to the girls in school and consequently many of them are traumatised by it (Rout 1992:176).

3.3.1.3 Girls and the curriculum

Sometimes girls in classrooms may feel left out because teachers focus on curriculum content which is generally not gender-balanced. Alton-Lee (1992) argues that teachers pay very little or no attention to other hidden dimensions of gender bias in educational practice. For instance, there is the problem of male dominance. Boys actively exclude girls at almost every educational level, dominating teacher time, attention and verbal space. This means boys and girls are not getting or taking the same chances to participate in the classroom.

With reference to the above treatment, Jones (1988) argues that there are two effects of the girls being given less attention than the boys. Firstly the girls are not getting the same opportunities to learn school knowledge, and secondly they are learning different things about the process of learning and their role and ability in the processes.

Therefore, as Kenway et al (1993) recommend, there is need to reconstruct the learning environment and the curriculum in order to remove any impediments to girls' access to, and success in any aspect of schooling in which they become involved. In response to this, single–sex classrooms are becoming commonplace as an attempt to ensure gender balance in all classes. Another recommendation is the development of whole-school and/or departmental policies on the equal use of space, time, resources and on the use of gender-balanced materials like literature and language, which offer girls new insights into gender, power and about themselves in society as gendered beings (Kenway et al, 1993:72).

In addition, Clark and Page (2002) also argue that the school curriculum should change with time and changes in the society and, therefore, should be continually examined and adapted to ensure that it is appropriate, particularly in relation to issues of gender balance. She further argues that women and girls are still not visible in the curriculum and calls for immediate attention so that females are represented in the curriculum.

Nevertheless, Schuster and Van Dyne's (1984) 'stage theory' has been adopted and used by gender-inclusive curricula developers in different subjects. In History, for instance, Tetreault (1985, 1987) presents phases of thinking about women over time, ranging from male-defined history whereby females were completely left out in the curriculum - as if they had never existed. The second phase is contribution to history. At this phase we see famous women being included in the curriculum, though too few to make an impact on the curriculum. The third phase is bifocal history. It is at this phase that we can see gender differences being emphasised. Fourthly, it is the histories of women phase – here we have multicultural studies. Finally, there is the histories of gender phase which is lodged within a multicultural holistic perspective studies framework.

Clark and Page (2002) argue, however, that there is need to be careful when developing gender-balanced curricular so that the effects of constructed

femininity and masculinity do not affect individuals in a manner which may limit their access to all learning areas. For instance, in the course of learning, it may be possible to identify examples which show how the ways in which knowledge is organised, selected and valued, reinforces a world view in which masculinity and male perspectives, male experiences and histories, may be depicted as central and normal, while female and non-dominant groups' perspectives, experiences and histories are constructed as 'other' and marginal (Clark and Page, 2002).

According to Kuzmic (2000:105) educators need to formally question "how textbooks, as curricular and cultural texts, construct and define masculinity in particular ways", and need to look closely at "the ways in which schools serve as social, political, and cultural sites where patriarchy is both manifested and maintained". In other words, the curriculum helps to maintain the patriarchal power which is exercised over women in order to keep them subjugated. Foucault perceives power as something *exercised,* existing in actions and substrata upon which the economy, the modes of production, governing and decision–making and forms of knowledge are conditioned (Foucault, 1978:94). Many textbooks still being used today in the school curriculum have biased language that oppresses and excludes women, for instance, in words involving government in politics and involving church in religion. These, though not mentioning man, imply masculinity (Sanford, 2002).

In addition, Gaganakis (1999:152) argues that "many school texts assume the sexual division of labour and tend to stress stereotyped and consistent images of women, rather than emphasising the diversity of women's subject positions". That is, the textbooks dominating the school curriculum usually represent women in passive roles and not as active subjects in a diversity of fields. When the women's figures appear in these textbooks, they are likely to be in low positions or second rate employment, which are limited in chances and not wide in range (Gaganakis, 1999). She further narrates that there is a strong emphasis on women within the household or family affairs showing that the woman's life is limited to the private sphere.

3.4 Other barriers to girls' education

Over and above teen motherhood, there are numerous other barriers to girls' education. These include early marriage, HIV/AIDS, conflict and violence in schools. For instance, in some developing Asian countries, 40% of girls are married by the age of 15 (UNESCO, 2003). Similarly, in many African societies girls are under pressure to be forced into marriage soon after puberty and once they fall pregnant (Swainson et al, 1998).

3.4.1 HIV/AIDS and girls' education

In most African countries, the rate at which teenage girls are infected by HIV/AIDS is five times higher than that of teenage boys; this may be linked to widespread exploitation, sexual abuse and discriminatory practices (UNAIDS, 2000a).

HIV/AIDS may also affect girls' access to education. Due to the impact of AIDS in many families, girls are more likely than boys to be retained at home for domestic work when household income drops as a result of AIDS deaths or to care for sick relatives (World Bank, 2002). Thus HIV/AIDS reduces girls' already low enrolment in secondary education. In most sub-Saharan African countries, secondary school enrolment rates, particularly for girls, are already extremely low (UNESCO, 2000; Swainson et al, 1998). With girls in secondary education more likely to contract the disease and drop out earlier than boys, the epidemic is also worsening the gap between male and female within the professional labour market (World Bank, 2002; Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001).

3.4.2 Conflict and violence against girls

While schools can be outstanding places for promoting the rights of children and women, they can also be places in which rights are compromised (Fineran et al, 2000). Bullying, violence, harassment, gender and HIV/AIDS–related discrimination and sexual abuse must be recognized in schools and appropriate

measures taken to eliminate the malpractices so as to allow girls to attend school without fear.

In South Africa 40 to 47 % of sexual assaults are perpetrated against girls aged 15 or younger (UNAIDS, 2000). According to Human Rights Watch (2001), many South African girls face the threat of multiple forms of violence at school. This is of concern to many parents who fear for the safety of their daughters at school. The threats include rape, sexual abuse, sexualised touching and emotional abuse. Girls also encounter constant highly sexualised verbal degradation in the school environment (Lees, 1987). These forms of gender violence are largely committed by other learners and in some instances by teachers or other school employees. Even outsiders target young girls on their way to and from school (Human Rights Watch, 2001). In addition, the young mothers experience many more abuses than other girls.

The South African Government has acknowledged the severity of the problem and made significant efforts to improve the state response to violence against women. But the Human Rights Watch Report (2001) found that school officials still fail to protect their girl pupils from rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment. The government does not even collect data on the incidence of sexual violence and harassment occurring in schools, or on the number of girls who leave school due to such violence (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

3.4.3 Socio—economic status of the family

About 113 million school—going children do not attend school in developing countries; two-thirds of them are girls (World Bank, 2002). Research shows that girls from the poorest households are least likely to be enrolled in school (World Bank, 1995). Girls attending secondary school in most instances come from higher socio-economic backgrounds than boys. Lack of finances has been the most frequently mentioned excuse given by parents, children and teachers for non-enrolment and dropout of school, particularly amongst girls (Swainson et al, 1998). Most working class households are too poor to provide for their children's

education and the indirect costs of sending them to school. The costs of school uniforms and fees, for example, have been argued by several studies as a deterrent to parents to send girls to school (Swainson et al, 1998).

Davison and Kanyuka (1992) found that many families consider girls' education to be less important than that of boys. The reason given by some parents is that they consider boys to be generally more intelligent than girls as the boys perform better in school. Davison and Kanyuka further found that parental educational levels also influence failure rates; parents with little or no formal education do not see the need to emphasise their children's education as much as educated parents do. At school, teachers feel that girls are less productive; this reflects social biases against girls' schooling. So the negative attitude towards girls' academic success contributes to girls' disillusionment towards the school system: this attitude forces girls,

> who although they may have high educational aspirations, know that realistically they will have few chances for educational advancement once they complete primary school. (Davison and Kanyuka, 1992:464).

Furthermore, the need for girls' labour at home is considered one of the major constraints to girls' education. Girls spend more time and energy than boys on domestic chores, hence limiting time available for school assignments. Unfortunately, this practice seems to reinforce the girls' expectations of an inevitable domestic role in the future, defined as 'a woman's job' (Gaganakis, 2003; Sey, 1997).

For these girls, their socialisation is simply inscription i.e. one comes to experience herself as an oppressed subject through the investment of institutional power (Foucault, 1977). The girls are disadvantaged because it is difficult for them to cope with the pressure of academic work and household chores. The situation becomes worse when domestic duties are used to reinforce the girls' anticipation of a domestic role in the future (Gaganakis, 2003).

Due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, some children are living in inadequate economic conditions. Illness caused by HIV/AIDS prevents family members from earning an income, and what little money is available for school fees often goes to cover boys' costs first (Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, 2004). There are currently an estimated 15 million AIDS orphans around the world, and the number is expected to reach 25 million by the year 2010. Most of them will be unlikely to have the resources to pay school fees (UNICEF/UNAIDS, 2003).

In South Africa, in 1998 alone, over 100,000 children became AIDS orphans. Kinghorn and Steinberg (1999) predicted that by the year 2005 there might be as many as 1 million maternal orphans in the country, where orphans are children under 15 years old. It seems girls are more affected by the epidemic than boys (UNICEF, 2003). In many situations girls rather than boys take the adult responsibility of trying to make ends meet. The girls take on the role of care-givers to ill adults or to younger siblings, a burden that often makes it difficult or impossible to be available for schooling (Health24, May 2006). In this way, HIV/AIDS has disproportionately impacted on the equality of opportunity, as girls' educational opportunities are affected by the epidemic (UNICEF, 2003). It is also problematic because the children may not have the skills and they are under-age to be employed to earn money for their families. Because the children are unemployable, they may, in return for money or food, be exploited physically, emotionally and sexually by individuals. Sexual abuse may result in teenage pregnancy and contracting HIV (Moletsane, 2003). Unfortunately, as the girls take the responsibility of childcare, they may have little or no time to attend school.

3.5 Importance of promoting girls' education

Education is important not only to an individual who is acquiring it, but also to his/her nation for sound development. Arguing for the individual case, Croninger and Lee (2001:549) state that

the consequences of not completing high school have become increasingly serious for young people. Students who drop out face substantially higher unemployment rates, lower lifelong earnings, higher incidents of criminal activity and a greater likelihood of health problems than students who complete high school or go on to college.

The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that education is a vital and basic right of all children; and in particular, education for girls gives women more power in society. This view was echoed by the South African Deputy-President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the 4th annual Women's Parliament Conference in August 2007 when she said "educate a woman, you educate a nation". Women with some education are likely to share their learning with their children and others in their community, and they are able to practise political and civil rights afforded to them. Research shows that middle class urban black girls perceive schooling as the only way they can "develop their own individuality and unique destinies and feel enabled and in control of their lives and futures" (Gaganakis, 2003:285).

At national level, education of citizens is critical for both economic growth and development. All nations need to put much effort towards achieving equal access to education for both boys and girls, because of the importance education has for a country's viability and the critical role it can play in preventing epidemics like HIV/AIDS. The following subsections elucidate the benefits a country could have by educating girls.

3.5.1 Education helps to improve social economic development

The importance of education towards improving national development has been echoed by politicians in the media as well as in academic writing. According to the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan (2003), "there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls". As an initiative for promoting girls' education in South Africa, Oprah Winfrey, in 2007, opened a school for disadvantaged girls near Johannesburg. In her speech, during the

opening of the school she said, "I wanted to give this opportunity to girls who had a light so bright that not even poverty could dim that light".[1] This is evidence that the education of the girl child is widely acknowledged as the foundation of national development, and plays an important role in ensuring a safer, healthier, more environmentally sound world.

Girls and/or women who are educated are fundamental to South Africa's socio-economic development. Generally, education, combined with proper macro-economic policies, is a key factor in promoting social well–being and poverty alleviation. This is because education directly affects the nation's productivity, which in turn determines living standards and a country's ability to compete in the global economy (Krueger and Mikael, 2000). Furthermore, poverty in a country cannot be alleviated unless all its children have access to, and can complete, a primary education of adequate quality. The role of education in economic growth is also elaborated in most of the macro– and micro-economic literature (Krueger and Mikael, 2000).

Vinovskis (1970: 550) argues that although there is no consensus on the rate of return on investment from education, most economists agree that education is one of the major factors in economic growth. Education is important for economic growth because it expands a worker's capacity to perform tasks or to use productive technologies (Quinn and Rubb, 2006). Educated employees can adapt to new tasks or to changes in old tasks more easily than their less educated counterparts. Education also prepares workers to work more effectively in teams because it [education] enhances their ability to communicate with and understand their co–workers. Therefore, education is vital for promoting social cohesion. An example where this is echoed is in the goals of the 2000 Lisbon Strategy where education was one of the three objectives aiming at making the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy because, apart from providing knowledge and developing skills, education

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[1] Oprah Winfrey's speech on the 2nd January, 2007 when opening the Oprah's Leadership Academy which she had built for poor South African girls.

shapes attitudes and empowers young people to adapt to rapidly changing social and economic conditions (European Commission, 2005).

Education is also important in improving the employment outcomes of individuals. A prominent belief within sociology of education "has been the metaphorical ladder of individual social mobility that school enables one to climb by exchanging a highly valued commodity – qualifications – for a 'good' job" (Mac an Ghaill, 1988:35). Research has shown that education improves workers' employment stability, enabling more educated workers to maintain their jobs or to quickly find new jobs in the face of changing economic conditions (Hunter, 1996).

There is a strong belief that placing more girls into school is the first step to reaching global development goals. This means that without accelerated actions to place more girls in school, global goals to reduce poverty and improve the human condition will not be reached (UNICEF, 2004). A study of 100 nations by the World Bank shows that increasing the share of women with a high school education by 1% boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points. This is a significant economic growth considering that per capita income gains in developing countries rarely exceed 3% a year (Dollar and Gatti, 1999).

Education enables women to manage and control resources. According to Coleman (2004), giving women more control over resources is important. The rationale behind that is that women tend to invest more in the family than men do. When women control income, more money is devoted to education, health and nutrition–related expenditures, and less is spent on alcohol and cigarettes, hence improving the wellbeing of their families (Coleman, 2004).

In addition, research since the 20th century has shown evidence of a substantial social and private payoff to investment in education. The evidence points to a positive association between economic growth and change in education i.e. the more the population is educated, the more the economy grows, and vice versa (Bundy, 2002). So far, no nation has achieved economic growth without first assuring the education of its females.

On the importance of education, Kofi Annan during his speech to the National Assembly of Lesotho in Maseru on 28th August 2002, said:

> One of the prerequisites to fighting poverty in the long term, as study after study has shown us, lies in education. We know that in the course of the past century, countries committed to universal primary education – for boys and girls – have been far more successful in escaping poverty. They have enabled their people to lead more fulfilled, productive lives. They have given their people the chance to make better use of democratic opportunities.

According to Coleman (2004), economists recognise that nothing is more central to development than the economic, political and social participation and leadership of women. This is particularly true in post-conflict societies, where women often make up the majority of the population and have primary responsibility for raising the next generation. Coleman (2004) argues that raising the standard of female education, increasing their control over resources, and lifting their political voice is vital to development.

In South Africa, although many black adolescent girls complain about "restraints of school life, and the odd teacher, the violence in many township schools and the fact that 'school is a prison', most see schooling as the only way to get up and out" (Gaganakis, 2003:284). Evidence shows that educated women can generate more income and are more likely to educate their children than women with little or no schooling, thereby breaking the cycle of vulnerability and poverty as well as dependence on the state (Coleman, 2004).

On the family level, the education of girls in many societies that require a bride price when the girl is getting married can be a strong determinant of the price. Kaufman et al (2001) emphasised that among black South Africans, education is strongly associated with valuation of bride price. That is, the more educated the girl is, the higher the bride price.

Nevertheless, countries where HIV/AIDS has significantly reduced average years of schooling or enrolment rates, the epidemic's impact on education alone will seriously constrain economic growth (Bundy, 2002). The schooling years of many children have been reduced because many orphans (due to the HIV/AIDS

epidemic) are unable to afford school fees, uniforms and other necessities which lead to their withdrawal from school (Moletsane, 2003). In addition, sometimes the girl child is asked to absent herself from school so that she can take care of the sick at home.

3.5.2 Education empowers women

Education is central to the achievement of greater equality in society. It [education] enables women to use and extend their capabilities, develop skills, improve their livelihoods and increase their earning potential. Education also empowers women to participate in decision–making and in the transformation of their lives (Gaganakis, 2003). Gaganakis further argues that education enables girls and women to improve the conditions of living that many of them are still facing today in South Africa, due to conservative patriarchal customs that have caused some societies to marginalise women and girls by placing their rights at the bottom of the list (Gaganakis, 2003).

Helping children, especially girls, enrol and complete schooling beyond the primary level is important. Secondary school education is what really has an impact on increasing age at marriage, delaying first sexual encounters, improving negotiation for protected sex and promoting other risk-reducing behaviours (World Bank, 2004).

According to Odaga and Heneveld (1995), the benefits of educating women and girls include reduced infant and maternal mortality, enhanced family health and welfare and increased economic productivity. That is, education provides girls and women with a greater understanding of basic health, nutrition and family planning as well as their own potential. Educated women have great potential in preventing labour trafficking, sexual and other forms of exploitation of children (UNESCO, 2004).

Research by Dodoo et al (2003) indicate that education has positive affects on young people's reproductive lives, girls in particular. Women and girls who are

educated are more likely, in comparison to their peers, to delay marriage and childbearing, have fewer children and healthier babies, enjoy better earning potential, have stronger decision-making and negotiation skills as well as higher self–esteem, and avoid doing commercial sex work (Dodoo et al, 2003; Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001; Odaga and Heneveld,1995).

Furthermore, it is clearly documented that ensuring girls' access to secondary school is also a key to better employment opportunities for women, and often an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and reduce the risk of exposure to HIV and AIDS and other related diseases (World Bank, 2002; Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001). In South Africa, girls value academic qualifications highly as a means of getting into the labour market and as an escape from traditional black working–class female work (Gaganakis, 2003:283). A study in the United Kingdom shows how the 'Black Sisters' praise academic qualifications as credentials which enable them to get more sophisticated and better paying jobs (Mac an Ghaill,1988).

3.5.3 Education helps in the prevention of HIV/AIDS

Provision of education to girls, can help "change the face of a nation. Girls who are educated are less likely to get HIV/AIDS, and in this country which has such a pandemic, we have to begin to change the pandemic"[2]. A Report by *Southern Africa Humanitarian Information Management Network* (SAHIMS) (2004) shows that the number of people living with HIV increased from 35 million in 2001 to 38 million in 2003 globally. In 2003, almost 5 million people were infected with HIV and close to 3 million died of AIDS. Most of the people living with HIV/AIDS are in Sub–Saharan Africa – an estimated 25 million. Three million people in 2003 in the region were infected with HIV and 2.2 million died of AIDS-related illnesses (SAHIMS, 2004).

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[2] Winfrey's speech on 2nd January, 2007 at the Oprah academy in South Africa.

Education is perceived as key in the fight against HIV/AIDS, not only in South Africa but also universally (Coombe, 2000; Michael Kelly[3], 2000; World Bank, 2002). Education could be, as Michael Kelly (2000: 9) suggests, "the single most powerful weapon against HIV transmission". Schools' formal curriculum, guidance and life skills programmes seem the most likely and accessible environments where messages of safe sex can be conveyed. The expectation is that such information can influence boys and girls in making healthy decisions concerning their own lives, bring about long-term healthy behaviours, and provide women and girls an opportunity for economic independence and hope (World Bank, 2002).

Schools can be the primary and the most accessible environments where messages of preventing HIV/AIDS may be conveyed. Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale (2003) explain why formal school settings can be a primary source of information about prevention methods in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Schools are recognised as the largest single site where youth can be reached and, therefore, naturally, the most obvious spaces for dissemination and mediation of preventive messages. As postulated by the Global Campaign for Education (2004), if all children received a complete primary education, the economic impact of HIV/AIDS could be greatly reduced and around 700,000 cases of HIV in young adults could be prevented each year — seven million in a decade. The Global Campaign for Education (2004) has also shown that in many of the world's poorest nations, the more educated and skilled young people are, the more likely they are to protect themselves from risky behaviors that lead to contracting HIV/AIDS. It is believed that education in and of itself can reduce vulnerability to HIV/AIDS by increasing literacy and general educational level, by enhancing a sense of connectedness and security, and by providing access to trusted adults. Educated youth are more likely to use condoms than peers with less education, and are less likely to engage in casual sex, particularly in countries with severe epidemics (UNAIDS, 2000). The significance of education come from actual

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[3] First name has been included to distinguish two different authors with same surname and publishing in the same year 2000.

knowledge that learners gain about HIV, from training in negotiation and life skills and from their increased ability to think critically and analyse situations before indulging in risky behaviors.

The World Bank (2002) has reported that education has powerful poverty–reducing synergies. The report indicates that one year of schooling for women lowers birth rate by about 10%, while one or two years of schooling for mothers reduces child mortality by 15% (World Bank, 2002).

3.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature dealing with teenage pregnancy/motherhood and schooling disruption. Most of the literature is not local due to the dearth of research on education of teen mothers in this country. Researchers are of the opinion that a birth by a teenage girl in South Africa and around the world results in an abrupt end to education and to the promise of modern–sector employment. Since the problem of teen mothers as learners cannot be separated from the education of all young women, the problem of how to educate the adolescent mothers could be partly solved within the larger issue of ensuring quality education for all female learners. For that reason, I also reviewed literature on how the formal curriculum and the school environment negatively impact on girls in general; giving much attention to those with special needs like the teen mothers. In this chapter I have also discussed the importance of promoting girls' education. It is believed that education of a woman can benefit individuals, their families and society.

In Chapter 4 I will discuss the methodology used to collect and analyse data for this thesis.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

Though teenage motherhood is perceived as a barrier to the educational success of many girls (Kaufman et a,l 2001; Pillow, 2004), teenage motherhood has hardly been situated as an educational issue globally. Most research available about teen mothers is situated as a psychological, health, or social welfare issue and not as an educational issue (Pillow, 2004:4). One contributory factor to the scarcity of the educational research is that schools do not keep records about teen mother or pregnant learners. This thesis is interested in exploring the educational issues, especially concerns and challenges teen mothers as learners face in the process of trying to complete their schooling. As such, I collected and analysed primary data using a qualitative approach. I opted for a qualitative approach as opposed to quantitative due to the exploratory nature of this research.

Rubin and Babbie (1989) argue that the qualitative approach as an inductive approach is eminently effective in determining the deeper meaning of experiences of human beings and in giving a rich description of the specific phenomena that are being investigated in reality. However, Kinner and Taylor

(1996) point out that the use of qualitative approaches pose a disadvantage in that the results are not easy to generalise to a wider population due, in part, to its lack of known statistical properties. Although the extent of the bias present in qualitative approaches cannot be underestimated, this problem can be minimised by randomly selecting the respondents from the targeted group whereby every member of the group has an equal chance of being selected (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990). Furthermore, Bogdan and Biklen (1998:34) argue that as a qualitative researcher:

> You need to be open to being shaped by the research experience and to having your thinking be informed by the data. The data argues with your general notions, so your thinking is necessarily shaped by the empirical world you are exploring. You need to be open to this and not defensive of what you bring to the research.

In order to obtain the complete picture of the research problem, participants were approached in their own natural contexts as in the schools and places of work, so as to holistically determine their perceptions (Morse, 1991).

This chapter is divided into six main sections as follows:

- Section 4.1 discusses the research design;

- Section 4.2 provides a detailed discussion of participants. These participants are categorised into six groups: schooling teen mothers, heads of school, Life Orientation teachers, parents of the schooling teen mothers, Non-Governmental Organisations' representatives, and the Education Management Development Centre (EMDC), which is clustered together with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). It also provides detailed procedures used during data collection;

- Section 4.3 discusses the sources used to gather data;

- Section 4.4 explains the data analysis process of the study;

- Section 4.5 discusses how validity was achieved in the data collection process;

- Challenges encountered in the process of gathering data are supplied in Section 4.6; and

- A summary of the chapter is outlined in Section 4.7.

4.1 Research design

This research was conducted using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is defined as "the use of qualitative data such as interviews, documents and participant observation data to understand and explain social phenomena" (Myers, 1997). Due to the nature of this study a phenomenological approach was used on the teen mothers in order to understand and describe their lived experiences about the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

Participants like teen mothers, heads of school, life orientation teachers, teen mothers' classmates, and teachers were drawn from five randomly selected high schools which are within the radius of 25 kilometres from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the city of Cape Town, in South Africa where the researcher is based as a postgraduate student. This radius was chosen based on convenience and availability of time to complete this research.

4.1.1 Convenience

On this point the researcher bore in mind the fact that she could get to selected schools only by using public transport which sometimes was not reliable; this means that if the public transport was not available the researcher had to hire a taxi to get to the schools on time for the interview appointments. Another reason was that I should be able to meet participants from different schools on the same day should the dates of their preferences for the interviews coincide. For instance, on the 26th August 2005 I had an appointment with the principal of a school in Mowbray at 9:30 a.m. and the principal at a school in Gugulethu at

12:00 noon on the same date. I was able to make it promptly for both interview appointments because the distance between these schools is not far (about 18 kilometres). So the radius was also considered because time and dates of interviews were to be proposed by the respondents so that they could choose the time they felt was the best to accommodate me for interviews.

4.1.2 Availability of time

The way this research was conductedrequired the researcher to make a number of trips to each selected school. On average, eight trips were made to each participating randomly sampled schools. This meant a lot of time was spent in the field so, by making the distances closer to the university, I was able to maximise these scarce resources on the actual data gathering rather than on travelling. Short distances also helped in reducing transport costs and fatigue such that I was able to get to the schools feeling alert and able to concentrate better on the interviews.

4.1.3 Sampling of schools

Sampling of the schools was done randomly. Using the list of schools in Cape Town available on the internet, and placing this against the map of Cape Town, I mapped all the public high schools which are within the radius of twenty five kilometres from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Mowbray Campus). I printed the list and separated the names of the schools. All the names, except the boys only schools, were put in a 'hat' and six schools were randomly selected.

The result of the sampling was: three schools located in the townships of Guguletu and Athlone while the other three are in the suburbs of Mowbray, Wynberg and Claremont. However, the principal of the school in Claremont denied me access to the school even though I had permission from the Education Department to conduct research at the school. After this incident I

went back to the list of schools and randomly selected one more school and the result was a school in the township of Bridgetown. I randomly picked six letters from the alphabet and use them to name the schools for anonymity of the institutions (see Table 4.1).

One of the two schools in the suburbs has almost 100% black learners while the other is white learner-dominated and the remaining four schools have black learners and coloured learners. Three of the schools in the townships are dominated by coloured learners and the rest of the learners are black; and the fourth school is black learner-dominated. Table 4.1 provides the description of the randomly selected schools where the respective heads of the schools granted me access for the purpose of this study. The participants were sampled by randomly picking an equal number of names from the lists of names of teen mother learners provided by the principals. That is, four girls were randomly sampled from each list of names. The process of picking the names was performed in the same way as the names of the participating schools had been randomly picked from the comprehensive list.

Although race is not the focus of this study, I have observed that the black learner-dominated schools had longer lists of names compared to the coloured learner-dominated schools (see Table 4.1). The principal of the white learner-dominated school, which also happened to be a girls' school, reported that there was no teen mother registered at the school during the 2005 academic year; this is the year I embarked on my field research. Nevertheless, I was not satisfied with the principal's response because I was informally told by some girls attending this school that there were girls who had children. However, it may be possible that the school does not officially know about these teen mothers' status.

Table 4.1: shows the randomly selected schools where the researcher was granted
access.

School location		Dominant race of learners	Anonymous label	No. of teen mothers on the list	No. of teen mothers actually interviewed
Name	Classificat ion				
Gugulethu	Township	Black	G	12	3
Wynberg	Suburb	White	W	none	none
Athlone	Township	Coloured	N	10	2
Bridgetown	Township	Coloured	B	9	3
Mowbray	Suburb	Black	T	10	4
Athlone	Township	Coloured	A	7	4

4.2 Participants and data gathering process

A number of units of analysis were used in this research so that a more
comprehensive picture would emerge (Cohen et al, 2000). Furthermore, Cohen
and colleagues argue that "where possible, studies combining several levels of
analysis are to be preferred" (Cohen et al, 2000:114). The use of more than one
unit of analysis serves as a 'methodological triangulation' (Denzin 1970, cited by
Cohen et al, 2000:113). The following were the groups of participants in the
study:

1. Teen mothers
2. Heads of school
3. Life orientation skills teachers
4. Two NGOs which deal with issues relating to teenage pregnancy
   (Pregnancy Help Centre and Sisters Incorporated)
5. Western Cape Education Department (WCED) policy management

6. Education Management Development Centre (EMDC)[4]

7. Teen mothers' parents

8. Teen mothers' classmates

9. Randomly sampled teachers

Interviews and questionnaires were used to obtain information from the participants. Most of the interviews were audio-recorded, and in all the cases I obtained consent from the respondents to record the interviews. Prior to the interviews, most of the interviewees were provided with semi-structured questionnaires, which were used during their respective interviews (detailed discussion is provided in section 4.3). I opted to give them the questions in advance so that they had time to think about the answers and to consult their records before the actual interviews. They were also better informed so that they could decide whether or not they still felt comfortable about continuing participating in the research project after knowledge of the questions.

4.2.1 Description of the participants

4.2.1.1 Teen mothers

The teen mothers were the focus population in this research. These were the girls that got pregnant and had babies before completing their secondary education. These girls had to continue schooling despite the pregnancy, or they came back to school after the birth of their babies, that is, if they temporarily dropped out of school due to pregnancy. During the data collection, this focus population were between the ages of 14 and 19, and were in the Grades between 8 and 12.

Sixteen teen mothers from the randomly selected schools were individually interviewed. In order to identify girls who are teen mothers, I contacted the five principals of the selected schools and asked for lists of names of teen mothers in

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[4] This is a sub-unit within the Western Cape Education Department

their respective schools. However, it was not a straightforward issue for the principals to provide the lists of teen mother learners because schools do not keep records of teen mothers. Therefore, they were careful to provide only the names of those who have been to their offices acknowledging their status, and those they knew were teen mothers but had never reported to the offices were omitted. From each list of names provided, I randomly selected four girls (see Table 4.1 for the size of the lists). Each girl was individually asked to voluntarily participate in the study as an interviewee.

Surprisingly, all but two girls approached agreed to participate in the research study. Eighteen girls who agreed to participate in the research were given letters to deliver to their parents asking them for their consent to interview their daughter for the project (see appendix:VI). This was done because most of the teen mothers at school are minors. Out of 18 letters of consent sent to the parents, seventeen were signed, giving me consent to continue with the interviews. After receiving consent from the teen mothers' parents, I had to make appointments with those girls whose parents signed the consent form. While fourteen of the interviews took place according to schedule, three of the interviews had to be rescheduled each to a week later because, on the day of the interview appointments, the girls could not come to school as they had to take their babies to health clinics for medical attention. It was unfortunate for me because in all the three cases I learnt about the girls' failure to be interviewed only after I had arrived at the appointment venues.

One of the three girls I had rescheduled an interview appointment session with withdrew from participating on the day of the appointment. She stated that she was not sure if she really wanted to be interviewed. The only thing I could do then was to honour her decision and assure her that her choice of not participating in the research as planned was her right.

The interviews with the teen mothers took place in their respective schools for the following reasons:

- Since the interviewees belonged to the schools, and the schools are public, it helped in minimizing the risk of 'stage fright' in the interviewees and interviewer (Cohen et al, 2000);

- it was easy to find a room with no interruption from outside; and

- the girls did not have to travel as the interviews took place soon after classes.

The heads of school were kind enough to provide quiet and private rooms at their schools. In all the schools it happened to be the room where they keep books and records and, although this room was probably unfamiliar to most girls, at least it was situated in the school area and some sort of privacy could be obtained. At one school, I was offered the use of the principal's office but, as this was definitely a place of authority, I preferred the former alternative. In addition, I thought if I chose the office, I would run the risk of being interrupted by the principal and may have been disturbed by other members of staff and learners looking for the principal. I could have also run the risk of being interrupted by phone calls coming to the office.

4.2.1.2 Heads of school

The heads of the randomly selected schools were interviewed. In their capacity as heads of school, they were asked to provide information about re-enrolment of the teen mothers who temporarily drop out of school due to pregnancy, and how their respective schools manage the situation of the teen mothers who, according to the Western Cape Education Department's Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy, are learners with 'special needs'. In addition they were asked to provide information about support put in place for these girls since, as mothers and learners, they may not have had as much time for schoolwork as their classmates do.

Apart from being interview participants, the heads of school gave me the opportunity and space[5] to conduct research at their respective campuses. They also provided lists of teen mothers enrolled in their schools.

4.2.1.3 Life Orientation teachers

Life Orientation teachers are responsible for teaching life skills and maintaining the social wellbeing of learners. Among other things, they provide guidance to the learners on how to deal with difficult situations while at school. When learners have social problems, they can approach these teachers for assistance. These teachers try as much as possible to be open to learners and to encourage them to talk about the problems which may jeopardise their learning processes.

These teachers were chosen to participate in this study because they are a rich source of information about social problems that students generally face at school. Being guidance teachers, learners approach these teachers for help when in social crisis at school. However, their discussions with learners are usually confidential so that other teachers may not be aware of what is happening to some learners at their school. While some issues they discuss with learners are confidential, the teachers were able to give examples of what teen mothers experience at school. However, they did not identify any learner by name.

Some of these teachers were eager to speak to me while others were not. One, in particular, complained that researchers just use her while she personally gains nothing from it. This teacher cancelled interview appointments twice.

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[5] This refers to special rooms where interviews with teen mothers took place where minimal disturbances could be encountered.

4.2.1.4 Non-Governmental Organisations

In the course of data collection I also gathered data from two non-governmental organisations. These include Sisters Incorporated and the Pregnancy Help Centre which, amongst other duties, give advice to teen mothers.

4.2.1.4.1. Sisters Incorporated

Sisters Incorporated was founded in 1959. This is a group of women helping women to help themselves. The organisation provides counselling, care and shelter to people who come to them for help. Their aim is to help every woman, teenager and child who approaches them in crisis to heal physically, emotionally and spiritually.

At this shelter, which is located in Kenilworth, a suburb in Cape Town, I interviewed the social worker who is responsible for all people who come to seek assistance from the shelter. She welcomed me warmly and was eager to respond to my questions about teen mothers at their shelter. She provided information about how teen mothers are taken care of and are encouraged to continue with their schooling while at the shelter. She said that while teen mothers are there, they are encouraged to continue with their schooling – some have sat for their matric examinations on the site.

Pregnant teens who were schooling before coming to the shelter may continue attending school if they wish to. Though there are volunteers who help the shelter to collect school work for the girls and monitor their performance, the shelter is in need of a qualified teacher who could voluntarily guide the girls with their school work at the premises.

4.2.1.4.2 The Pregnancy Help Centre

The Pregnancy Help Centre assists pregnant women (both young and old) to make decisions about their pregnancy. Clients at the centre are often women

who do not know what to do about their pregnancy due to their circumstances. Usually the clients at this centre are teenagers. Support provided by this centre includes: terminating pregnancy, giving the baby up for adoption and keeping the baby. The organisation offers counselling to the clients depending on the option chosen.

At this organisation I interviewed one director, who is also a counsellor at the organisation. From her, I wanted to know:

1. the level of awareness amongst pregnant girls about the services offered by the organisation; and

2. how pregnant teens are using the service.

However, because this organisation is in the Wynberg suburb, many girls who may need their service from the townships do not know about it. As a result most of their clients are from the suburbs.

4.2.1.5 Western Cape Education Department policy management personnel

This office is responsible for creating the 'managing learners' pregnancy in public schools policy' (MLPP) which was adopted in 2003. The policy states that it is "imperative that school managers and governing bodies ensure that the rights and development of female learners are not curtailed and that special measures are taken in respect of pregnant school girls (see MLPP, Appendix: IX). I contacted the WCED office to help me understand the meaning of the policy. My interview with the personnel was unstructured, it was an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 273).

It is important to look at the policy because it is this policy that guarantees teen mothers the right to remain in school. However, the policy does not seem to indicate how the teen mothers will be helped by the school in dealing with schooling challenges due to motherhood. I attempted to schedule an interview

with the person in charge of this policy at the Western Cape Education Department, but getting hold of her for interviews was not easy because she is usually busy in the field. Interview appointments with the officer who is in charge of the policy were cancelled twice because she is so busy. As an alternative, I talked to the second-in-charge of the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy in public schools who warmly received me in her office.

4.2.1.6 Education Management Development Centre

This was the EMDC Central Metropole to which most of the randomly sampled schools belong. At this office I contacted the education specialist coordinator for HIV and Aids Life Skills, as teenage pregnancy at schools is included in her portfolio. The aim of the interview was to ascertain what the office had observed regarding both the teenage pregnancy situation in schools and the adoption of the policy on managing learners' pregnancy at learning institutions.

4.2.1.7 Parents

Parents[6] of teen mothers were purposely included in the research study in order to find out how they support and facilitate the schooling of their daughters who have babies. Letters were sent to the parents (whose daughters had already been interviewed for this study), inviting them to participate in this study. Thirteen of them replied but only seven agreed to be interviewed. Surprisingly, all seven who agreed were women. Does this mean fathers and male guardians are not concerned about teenage pregnancy? Or that teenage pregnancy is simply a feminist issue?

As respondents, the parents were asked to choose venues convenient to them. Four of the parents preferred to be interviewed at their respective homes in Guguletu, Delft, Heidevield and Bridgetown; while two parents chose church premises after Sunday services in Athlone and Mowbray, for convenience

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[6] These also include guardians of the teen mothers

purposes. I met the remaining one at her place of work during her lunch break. All but two of these interviews took place over weekends. Most of the parents asked for a token of appreciation in exchange for information about their daughters who were in need of financial support to raise their babies. I told them that I could not promise anything, but I would appreciate their participation in the research.

What I wanted to know from the parents was the kind of support they offered to their daughters to make sure that the challenges these girls faced in the course of trying to complete secondary schooling were being addressed. I found that different parents respond to this issue differently depending on how much they value education, which also depended on how educated they were.

4.2.2 Ethics

According to Cohen et al (2000: 56) ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others (citing Cavan, 1997). Consideration was taken to comply with ethical requirements in the course of conducting research of this topic, which in many cases might turn out to be sensitive. In order to ensure the safety and rights of the participants, they were made aware of the prevailing ethical considerations. For instance, informed consent of the Education Department, the participants and their parents, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality were all taken seriously in the course of data collection (Berg, 1995).

According to the rules of the Education Department in the Western Cape, one has to apply for permission from the department to conduct research in schools in the province. The application for permission in this case needs to be accompanied by the research proposal which clearly states the data collection procedures. My application was approved subject to the following conditions:

1.   Principals, educators and learners were under no obligation to assist me in my investigation.

2.   Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.

3.   I had to make all the arrangements concerning my investigation.

4.   Educators' programmes were not to be interrupted.

5.   No research was to be conducted during the fourth term as schools were preparing and finalising syllabi for examinations (October to December).

Based on the above conditions, I made my appointments with the participants either during their lunch break or after school hours. This ensured that no lesson or school programme was interrupted.

I obtained informed consent from each participant. This was obtained in writing, although oral consents are sometimes acceptable after the participant has had the opportunity to carefully consider the risks and benefits and to ask any pertinent questions. The informed consent was an ongoing process.   For instance, before switching on the tape recorder during interviews, I asked the participant if it was fine to use it.   Sometimes during interviews, when respondents indicated discomfort by their body language to answer some questions, they were reminded of their rights and that they were not forced to give information if they did not want to do so.

Privacy and confidentiality concerns were given the deserved consideration (Cohen and Manion, 1994). I was sensitive to not only how information was to be protected from unauthorized observation, but also if and how participants were to be notified of any unforeseen findings from the research that they may or may not have wanted to know.

The ethical principle refers to the obligation on my part as the researcher to respect each participant as a person capable of making an informed decision regarding participation in the research study. I ensured that the participants had received full disclosure of the nature of the study, benefits and alternatives, with an extended opportunity to ask questions.

For informed consent to be ethically valid, the following components were taken into consideration:

- **Disclosure:** Each potential participant was informed as fully as possible of the nature and purpose of the research, the procedures to be used, the expected benefits to the participant and/or society, the potential of reasonably foreseeable risks, stresses, and discomforts, and alternatives to participating in the research. There was a statement that described procedures in place to ensure the confidentiality or anonymity of the participant.

- **Understanding:** I made sure that the participant understood what I explained and was given the opportunity to ask questions. To enhance the understanding, the informed consent document was written in lay language, avoiding any technical jargon.

- **Voluntariness:** The participant's consent to participate in the research was voluntary and free of any coercion.

- **Informed consent:** Every potential participant was asked to authorise his/her participation in the research study, preferably in writing, although at times an oral consent was acceptable. In the case of minors, parents were asked to sign the consent form.

It has been argued that "dealing with ethical issues effectively involves heightening awareness, negotiation and making trade-offs among ethical dilemmas rather than the application of the rules" (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Bearing the ethical issues in mind, no research participant was coerced into participating in the data-gathering process.

The next section 4.3 discusses in detail the materials which were used in this research and explains why the materials were preferred.

4.3 Materials used in the research

The principal method of gathering information for the research project was by interviews, supplemented by questionnaires. This section discusses in detail why these materials were produced and used.

4.3.1 Interviews

Interviews as a method of data collection were chosen for this project because there was a need to collect information on people's experiences, perception and motivations. Cohen et al (2000: 269) define research interviews as:

> A two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by the researcher on content specified by objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation.

When using interviews for collecting data, the issues of validity and reliability come immediately to the fore because the interview depends on verbal self reporting. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) state that:

> Qualitative data with their emphasis on people's 'lived experiences', are fundamentally well suited for locating meanings people place on the events, processes and structure of their lives and connecting these meanings to the social world around them.

Further, Cohen et al (2000) citing Kitwood (1977) explain three conceptions of interviews. These are conceived as follows:

- the interview is perceived as a potential means of getting original or first-hand information. This approach tries to eliminate sources of bias on the part of the interviewer by recording in an unmediated manner the words of the interviewees as they are spoken.

- the interview is conceived as a "transaction which inevitably has bias, which is to be recognized and controlled". It is the interpersonal aspects of

interviews that are perceived as obstacles to sound research and therefore, should be removed, controlled or at least harnessed in some way.

- An interview is defined as "an encounter necessarily sharing many of the features of everyday life". This perception is driven by the fact that citing of interpretations of the interview with the interviewees is adequate, as compared to success, reliability and validity of the interview process (Cohen et al, 2000: 267).

I was driven by the first and third conceptions because I wanted to understand the experiences which include the challenges and coping skills of teen mothers while schooling.

Participants (except the Education Department officers and social workers from NGOs) who were interviewed received a semi-structured interview schedule containing questions which were used as a guide in personal audio-recorded interviews. This interview schedule, which they received a few days before the day of the interview, was also meant to help them prepare for the interview. Probing was also done when I found it necessary to get deeper information or clarification of what the respondents meant. The same set of questions was used for participants in the same category. This strategy allowed comparability of one interview with another. The standardised protocol in the interviews was followed as a way of establishing reliability (Cohen et al, 2000).

While most interviews in this research followed a standardised protocol, my interview with the WCED policy management personnel was unstructured. This was so because what I wanted to acquire from this respondent was a clarification of the statements as they appear in the policy so that I had a better understanding of this policy on managing learner pregnancy in public schools in the Western Cape.

The majority of interviews within the selected schools took place between the months of July and September 2005. Each interview followed the same format. I began by thanking the interviewees for agreeing to participate in my research; then I briefly described the research aims. After describing the interview process including the consent form (see Appendix: VII) which they were asked to sign as an agreement for their participation and allowing the conversation to be audio recorded, I asked each interviewee if they had questions or concerns before we started. After each participant had read over the consent form, I verbally reviewed it before they signed.

While simple random sampling was used to select the schools and teen mothers, purposive sampling as is described by Fraenkel and Wallen (1990) was used to choose heads of school, life orientation teachers, and parents to be interview participants for this study. That is, only those who had a relationship of some kind with the randomly sampled teen mothers and could best respond to the research questions were purposively sampled and included in this study. These were included in the study so that the information gathered can be informative and rich in description.

4.3.2 Questionnaires

One set of questionnaires was administered to randomly selected teachers and another to a group of learners in classes with teen mothers in the selected schools. That is, learners who responded to the questionnaire were purposively sampled (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990). The questionnaires were accompanied by a letter explaining the aim of the research project, instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and advising them on their rights as respondents.

The questionnaires were administered in the month of September 2005, that is, after the majority of interviews with teen mothers were completed. Most of the questions were based on the teen mothers' narrations about their relationship with the teachers and fellow learners. This questionnaire was sent out in order to

supplement and verify the teen mothers' narrations. I chose this approach so that I would be able to reach a large number of teachers and fellow learners of teen mothers in the selected schools within a short time and be able to get their views on how they accept and relate to teen mothers in their learning institutions. A questionnaire[7] was administered to 120 learners (64 boys and 56 girls) and 33 teachers.

The questionnaire respondents (learners) were drawn from classes where at least one of the learners was a teen mother. Thus the learners were able to respond to the questions based on their observations and experiences as they were in contact with their teen mother classmate(s) on a daily basis. The learners answered the questionnaire in their respective classes soon after the final lesson of the day. In this way I was able to explain the questions to the respondents whenever they needed clarification.

The response rate from the learners was surprisingly very high - 85% of the questionnaires were handed back with responses. An explanation to this could be that the questionnaires were administered to the respondents in classroom situations. Similarly, the response rate from the teachers was also good - 63.6% of the questionnaires were handed back with responses. However, more females than males in both cases responded to the questionnaire. I assume more males than females distance themselves from issues of teen pregnancy. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the response rate.

Table 4.2: Shows questionnaire response rate from the two groups of respondents

Respondents	No. of questionnaires administered	No. of questionnaires returned with responses	Percentage returned
Learners	120 (56 girls, 64 boys)	102 (50 girls, 52 boys)	85%
Teachers	33 (18 females, 15 males)	21(13 females, 8 males)	63.6%

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[7] The questionnaires were administered to the selected classes in the randomly selected schools soon after classes for the day had ended.

The reason for the good response rate here could be the fact that I handed the questionnaire to the teachers personally and asked them when I could come back to fetch the completed questionnaires. For those who claimed to have lost their questionnaires, I provided them with new copies. This strategy helped to improve the response rate. However, this strategy proved to be very expensive because I had to make many trips to the schools in order to collect the responses. Another reason for the high response rate could be the way the teachers perceived me. I verbally introduced myself to them as a student, but with secondary school teaching experience. Using my experience, I acknowledged how busy the teachers could be, and I expressed my appreciation for their time. Consequently, they perceived me as an insider, someone who they could trust to understand and appreciate them.

4.3.3 Technical instruments used

The following technical instruments were used during the research project:

- A tape recorder was used to audio record the interviews and then to transcribe the tapes.

- The internet was used for searching the list of public schools in Cape Town and their contact details.

- The computer was used as a tool for managing textual data, for the storage and retrieval of information.

- Email was used for receiving (as e-mail attachments) the following documents:

  o an approval letter from the Education Department in the Western Cape Province to conduct research in randomly selected schools in Cape Town

  o Statistics about teenage pregnancy from the Pregnancy Help Centre.

- The telephone was used for booking and confirming appointments with the interview respondents other than teen mothers and some of their parents who do not have ready access to a telephone.

4.4 Data analysis

A phenomenological data analysis technique was used. The main participants of the study are schooling teen mothers and the research is also about their experiences as learners. Phenomenology is concerned with interpreting the meaning of the lived experience, our life world (Van Manen, 1990). In addition, Creswell (1998), states that a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon. The main aim of this approach is to transform personal meaning and experiences from interview texts into disciplinary understanding (Van Manen, 1997).

According to Creswell (1998), phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. In this study, I set aside all prejudgments, bracketing the experiences and relying on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of teen mothers' experiences (Creswell, 1998; Van Manen, 1997). The data from teen mothers as learners and the challenges they go through to complete schooling was collected.

Factual coding was used in the analysis of data from other participants of this study. This is the process of developing categories of concepts and themes emerging from the data gathered. It is referred to as factual coding because it represents ideas that lean more towards the concrete, such as actions, definitions, events, properties, settings, conditions and processes (Kerlin, 2002).

After completion of each interview, I transcribed the tape recordings. This transcription process helped me to get closer to the data - I was able to think about what the interviewee was saying and how this was said. Then I read each

typed transcript several times while listening to the corresponding audio tape to ensure accuracy of the transcription and to come to a better overall understanding of each participant's experience. This process of transcribing and listening also prompted additional questions for subsequent sets of interviews.

I used the 'highlighting' approach according to Van Manen (1990) to uncover the thematic aspects of the teen mothers' schooling experiences. In this approach, I read the text several times and statements that appeared to be revealing about the phenomenon were highlighted. Themes were identified by highlighting material in the interview transcripts that spoke to the teen mothers' experiences. Then I selected each of these highlighted phrases or sentences and tried to ascertain what meaning was put forward in the highlighted material.

After identifying the themes, I embarked on the process of recording the themes and describing how they were interrelated. Rewriting continued until I felt that the themes and the relationship between the themes were identified as accurately as possible.

Since the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) guarantees teen mothers the right to remain in public school, it became necessary that I should analyse the policy and see how it impacts on the girls' education process. As indicated in Chapter 2, I embraced Pillow's (2004) feminist genealogical approach as employed in the analysis of her study about the educational policy impacting on the provision of education to teen mothers in the USA. The analysis of the MLPP is presented in Chapter 6.

4.5 Validity

Cohen et al (2000: 105) state that recently validity has taken many forms. They note that data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participant approach, the extent of

triangulation, objectivity of the researcher and careful sampling. Cohen et al (2000:107) agree with Hammersley (1992) when they maintain that:

> Validity in qualitative research replaces certainty with confidence in our results, and that, as reality is independent of the claims made for it by researchers, our account will only be representations of that reality rather than reproductions of it.

In order to establish internal validity, the interview transcripts were taken back to the respective respondents and they were asked to verify if that was really how they wanted to respond to the respective questions. Most of the respondents adhered to what they had said during the interviews. The few respondents who wished to change their responses did so, but the changes were regarding semantics and the choice of words used.

Similarly, coding of the raw data was done by two persons independently. I asked a student who is doing her Doctoral Degree in Sociology of Education to code the data and then we compared our codes. There were obviously discrepancies on some codes and we worked together till we had reached agreement on nine tenths of the codes. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that while check-coding aids definitional clarity, it is also a good reliability check.

Caution was taken to make sure that research participants are those that are knowledgeable and are close to teen mothers' experiences, the events, actions, process and setting – the concern of this thesis. This idea echoes Miles and Huberman (1994) when they posit that data from some informants is 'better' than others, especially when the informants know the situation very well or have experienced it.

Therefore, teen mother learners and their educators were my best informants and their data was given more weight than other participants in the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). However, the accounts by parents, fellow learners, and the NGOs included in this study are used to verify the teen mothers' data. These informants are reliable because they are knowledgeable and close to

experiences which teen mothers encounter every day. The Education Department was another relevant sector to be included because it is the producer of the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) in public school.

4.5.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour (Cohen et al, 2000: 112). In this research, interviews and questionnaire data collecting techniques were used. The data from the two techniques correlated with each other. In addition, this research also used multiple data sources whereby different levels and groups of individuals and organisations were informants.

4.6 Challenges encountered

There were a number of challenges encountered in the field in the course of this research study. These are discussed in the subsequent sections:

1. Getting permission from the Education Department;

2. Rescheduling interview appointments;

3. Being denied access to premises; and

4. Unwillingness of parents to participate in the research.

4.6.1 Getting permission from the Education Department

Getting permission from the Western Cape Education Department was not easy. After applying for permission[8] from the Education Department to conduct research in public schools, it took me four weeks to get a reply. This came in the final days of the second school term so that I had to wait till the following term to start making contact with participants in the selected schools.

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[8] The application was dropped at the education office by the researcher. The reply was received as an e-mail attachment.

4.6.2 Re-scheduling interview appointments

Some participants did not keep their appointments. I would get to the appointment venue only to be told that the participants (especially Life Orientation teachers and Heads of school) were too busy for the interviews then, but could schedule another appointment. This resulted in the researcher spending more time on data gathering than planned and it negatively influenced the data collection plan in terms of time.

Some teen mothers could not attend the interview during the first appointment because their babies needed medical attention and they had to take them to health clinics. In addition to the challenges, one interviewee withdrew from participating during the time of the interview appointment, when I had already travelled to the venue. She said she had a headache, but she would not make any other appointment for interviews because she perceived the exercise as embarrassing. In situations like this, Bogdan and Biklen (1998:99) advise that researchers should avoid hurting their participants by forcing them to participate in the study or trying to push them to talk about topics that may be upsetting, hurtful, or humiliating.

4.6.3 Being denied access to premises

One principal denied me access to his school though I had already received permission to conduct research at the school. He said both he and the school did not have time for researchers. As head of the school, he has the right to protect learners from any exposure he might think will not be beneficial to them within the school premises. Ethically, I had to respect his reasoning. From this incident, I have learnt that even if permission is granted from the authorities, without first checking with those below (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998:75), you may not succeed with your plans. I realised that the arrival on the scene with a research permission slip from the Education Department could offend someone.

It is better to first negotiate with the institutions before getting permission from the central office.

As a result of being denied access to this particular school, I had to go through the process of randomly selecting another school and getting permission from the Education Department once again for the newly selected school. It took me a fortnight to get this whole process done. However, within this period I had already finished making initial contacts with the other schools and had started data collection.

4.6.4 Unwillingness of parents to participate in the research

While parents of the teen mothers were purposely included in the research, it was not easy to find parents who were willing to be interview respondents. One of the reasons was that some felt embarrassed about the topic due to the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy. Some commented that they just did not have time for the interviews. Only seven out of 16 parents approached agreed to be interviewed. However, some of them said that they would participate if they were going to get some material or financial benefit for their participation. I told them that I could not promise to give them anything. Nevertheless, I gave a pack of groceries worth R50 to each one of the seven parents to show my appreciation for their participation. I handed this unexpectedly to them during my departure from the interview venues. I did this because I did not want the parents' participation to be influenced by the gifts which could impact on the quality of information given – some might have felt obliged to exaggerate their stories to please me.

Three of the participating parents did not like the idea of having the interviews with them tape-recorded. When I asked their consent they said they did not feel comfortable about it. One reason given for the discomfort was that they felt embarrassed that their daughters have children while very young so they would not want people listening to their stories repeatedly. In such situations, I relied on

note taking. However, it was surprising that two of seven participants, who claimed to be guardians of teen mothers, were happy to have the interviews with them tape recorded.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology employed to collect and analyse data for the study. Table 4.3 provides a summary of participating groups in this research study. The table also describes the participants and outlines the data collection technique used on each group during information gathering.

Table 4.3: Summary of the description of participants and methods used

Participants	Description	Technique used to collect data
16 Teen mothers	These are randomly chosen girls who fell pregnant and had babies before completing their secondary education; they are continuing their schooling.	An average of 20 minutes per personal audio-recorded semi-structured interview
5 Heads of schools	These are principals of the randomly selected schools where some of the learners are teen mothers.	An average of 42 minutes per personal audio-recorded semi-structured interview
5 Life orientation skills teachers	These are special teachers responsible for the social wellbeing of learners in the randomly selected schools.	An average of 38 minutes per personal audio-recorded semi-structured interview
Pregnancy Help Centre	This organisation helps pregnant women (both young and old) make decisions about their pregnancy. Decisions include abortion, adoption, and keeping the baby. The centre also provides counselling to all its clients.	30 minute personal audio-recorded unstructured interview
Sisters Incorporated	This is a shelter for women, teenagers and children who approach them in crisis to heal physically, emotionally and spiritually. They also encourage teen mothers to continue with their schooling while at the premises.	35 minute personal audio-recorded unstructured interview
EMDC Officer	This was the EMDC Central Metropole to which most of the randomly sampled	40 minute personal audio-recorded

	schools belong. The contacted representative is the coordinator for HIV/AIDS life skills who also deals with teenage pregnancy in public schools.	unstructured interview
WCED Policy Management personnel	This office is responsible for the development of policy on 'managing learner pregnancy in public schools' in the Western Cape.	30 minute personal audio-recorded unstructured interview
7 Parents	These are parents of the schooling teen mothers.	An average of 22 minutes per personal semi-structured interview
120 Teen mothers' classmates	These are learners in the randomly selected schools who have teen mothers as their classmates.	Questionnaire to be completed
33 Teachers	These are randomly sampled teachers in the selected schools.	Questionnaire to be completed

All the interviews were transcribed. Then the researcher had to collate all the data for analysis.

The findings of the research are outlined in Chapter 5 and the results are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 6 offers an analysis of the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) and on how it impacts on the schooling of teen mothers in the Western Cape.

Chapter 5

Results

5.0 Introduction

This research is about the challenges which teen mothers in the Western Cape face as they pursue their schooling. In Chapter 4 I described in detail the methodology which was employed to conduct this research. The previous chapter presented a detailed discussion of participants who are categorised into four groups as follows:

1. Teen mother learners;

2. Educators and fellow learners;

3. Education department officials and organisations dealing with matters relating to schooling teen mothers; and

4. Parents.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the research. The chapter is organised into five main sections:

- *Section 5.1 reports on what teen mothers experience and perceive as* challenges while they are continuing with schooling;

- Section 5.2 presents the observations of educators and fellow learners on the teen mothers' schooling challenges. The section also outlines the reactions and attitudes of these informers towards the teen mothers;

- Section 5.3 outlines responses by the Provincial Education Department officials and non-governmental organisations that participated in the research;

- Section 5.4 reports on the support and encouragement the teen mother learners get from parents at home; and

- Section 5.5 summarises the chapter.

5.1 Teen mother learners' responses about their schooling challenges

From the analysis of the interviews, it is clear that teen mothers experience a number of challenges both at school and at home with regard to school related work. According to the teen mothers, the common challenges are:

- lack of time to study and do schoolwork at home;

- missing classes due to demands of motherhood;

- fear, stress and loneliness at school;

- lack of professional counselling; and

- being misunderstood by some teachers and learners.

5.1.1 Lack of time to study at home and do homework

Of the teen mothers 75% (12 of the 16) interviewed indicated that they did not have enough time to do their homework and to study at home. With regard to lack of time for school-related work, some teen mothers said:

> ...being a mother and schooling is hard. When sometimes I want to do school work I don't have time... so it is hard to find time and have the energy (Grade 12 teen mother).

> I failed English, Mathematics and Afrikaans due to having a baby at home, because I don't have time to do most of the school work (Grade 9 teen mother).

According to the girls, it is not easy to have time for their studies because, when they come back from school, their relatives who take care of the children want to be free from the babies and the babies also want attention from their mothers when they arrive from school. On this issue, a teen mother in Grade 11 said:

> ...sometimes I do not have time to do my homework. I try to take my baby to my boyfriend's mother to do the school work but ... the baby always wants to be with me so I just ignore the school work because I can't do homework when I am with the baby (Grade 11 teen mother).

South African researchers have emphasised that returning to school after giving birth is not easy for teen mothers, because of the hardship in organising time for both studying and parenthood (Kaufman et al, 2001). A similar sentiment was echoed in the United Kingdom, where it was argued that early motherhood has negative effects on educational achievement, thus, in most cases the schooling attainment of the girls was significantly reduced (Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001). Similarly, in the United States of America, Arlington Public School (2004) showed that balancing time with baby or childcaring and devoting adequate time to school work is not an easy task for teen mothers. They need tremendous support, especially in taking care of their babies, so that they can devote enough time to school-related work when they are at home. Unfortunately, teen mothers typically come from less favourable socio–economic backgrounds; most of their families cannot afford to engage a babysitter so they can have time to study and do their homework (Hallman and Grant, 2004).

As girls, teen mothers are usually required to do household chores when they come back from school. This exacerbates the teen mothers' situation of lacking enough time for assignments due to motherhood. Sey (1997) has shown that the need for girls' labour at home is considered one of the major constraints to girls' education. Sey has argued that girls spend more time than boys on domestic chores hence limiting time available for the girls' related schoolwork at home.

Because the girls do not have time for homework during the day, the only time they can do their schoolwork is at night. But in some cases the families do not have electricity. In such cases the girls use candle light if available. But still in some households girls do not have a room to themselves because the whole family share a single room. Stressing this point, a Grade 10 teen mother said:

> ...we are a number of us in my family but we all live in just one room so it is also hard for me to do my homework at night but during the day I am also busy with the household work...

Swainson et al (1998) are of the opinion that most working class households are too poor to provide for their children's education and the associated costs of sending them to school. The costs of school uniforms and fees and baby sitting for grandchildren, for example, have been expressed by several studies (Davison and Kanyuka, 1992; Swainson et al, 1998) as factors which deter parents from sending girls [back] to school. In some cases, parents have preferred that teen mothers should be providing the labour at home and not be allowed back to school because they fear that the girl could become pregnant again if she is allowed to spend much time out of the home (Swainson et al, 1998).

5.1.2 Missing classes due to demands of motherhood

Motherhood takes much of the teen mothers' time so they may not be able to attend classes. It has been indicated by 62.5% (10 of the 16) of teen mothers in the study that in most cases, when a baby falls sick, the teen mother has to take it to hospital. If the baby has to be admitted to the hospital, the teen mother misses classes for the time the baby is in hospital. On this point, the teen mothers said:

> ...sometimes you need to be a student sometimes a mother and to balance the two is hard, but the mothering takes much of you because like when the child is sick you have to think about the child all the time; and for me it is hard to keep the baby at the back of my mind when I am at school so it is really much more difficult just to break away from my child (Grade 9 teen mother).

Unfortunately, in most cases, teachers are not flexible enough to go through the missed lessons with the girls when they return to school after being absent due to

motherhood responsibilities. Kelly (2000) noted that schooling teen mothers need flexibility from their schools with regard to such things as attendance and workload expectations. It has been argued that dealing with absenteeism has not been easy because "schools do not have written policies explicitly addressing *how to make decisions about absences for mothering students,*" *consequently* the decisions are left to the discretion of individual teachers (Pillow, 2004: 124). Nevertheless, inflexibility on the part of the schools contributes to the girls' lagging behind in mastering the curriculum – this usually results in teen mothers failing to perform well in examinations.

5.1.3 Fear, stress and loneliness at school

In some cases, teen mothers fear participating in class discussions such as during 'Life Orientation' programmes. When topics like 'teenage pregnancy' arise, the teen mothers become particularly uncomfortable thinking that everybody is talking about their situation. A teen mother commented on her experience when she returned to school after the birth of her baby:

> It was a shock because first I was afraid other students [would] be laughing at me... Sometimes people talk things behind your back... and laugh at you because you have got a baby (Grade 11 teen mother).

In her research report, Pillow (2004: 100) shows that some teen mothers cite harassment by fellow learners and teachers at their schools as problematic. Pillow argues that unless schools have policies to explicitly define such harassment as unacceptable and as a form of sexual harassment, the teen mothers will always lack support in attempting to deal with such instances.

In order to avoid this harassment, 50% of teen mothers in this study indicated that they tried as much as possible to keep their pregnancies invisible whenever leaving their homes because they did not want their teachers and fellow learners to know their status. However, these girls indicated that they spent their time at school in fear of being discovered by fellow learners and teachers. They also spent most of their time anxious about their pregnancies and the whole process of giving birth. One teen mother said:

I could not concentrate because I was always afraid people would discover that I am pregnant and I was also anxious about the whole thing... so I was usually lost in class and my performance was very much affected (Grade 12 teen mother).

Regarding this situation, Luttrell (2003: 58) notes that such girls face the struggle of representing themselves and their pregnancies so as to 'break the gaze' of those who would judge or belittle them. Keeping the pregnancy invisible or being secretive about it can help to avoid judgement from people. According to Foucault (1978), it may be wiser in some circumstances to remain silent rather than to create truth, for knowledge of this may be used against you and/or provide information for social control which in some cases may result in one being marginalised. Luttrell (2003) further notes that the pregnant body itself is a condition for some teachers to convey negative messages to teen mothers because teen pregnancy is perceived as a manifestation of the girl's bad conduct. Pillow (2004) argues that such subtle practices like the unwelcoming atmosphere of the school to pregnant teens create a situation of stress and surveillance for these girls who are already experiencing stress due an unplanned pregnancy. Because the foetus grows and begins to show, the girl's body may no longer conform and this worries her. The girl is worried because schools view the pregnancy of a schoolgirl as a result of misconduct. Luttrell (2003) states that the girl's anxiety may be exacerbated by the fear that she would be labelled 'bad'. The problem with this labelling is that it makes her unworthy of protection as a learner.

Many teen mothers, especially those who temporarily drop out of school due to pregnancy, are afraid to come back to school because they would suffer ageism (that is, being discriminated against on the grounds of age) and other practices of discrimination that limit educational options for them. In this research, all teen mothers who temporarily dropped out of school due to pregnancy are not in their normal peer groups; they are attending school with younger learners than themselves. Teen mothers reported their reluctance to go back to school because of the fears they had:

I was afraid of my friends because the youth are too judgemental...they do not see how much you are struggling...they don't see what you are going through (Grade 10 teen mother).

I was afraid to come back because the friends I had were now two classes ahead of me, and it meant that I will be with people who I do not know; and I would be probably the oldest in the class and therefore people will be laughing at me and calling me their mother... actually some learners have been calling me names (Grade 11 teen mother).

Researchers agree that teen mothers are prone to being teased in regular schools (Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004). Pillow noted that establishing separate or special programmes for teen mothers would help to combat the problems which teen mothers face in regular school. More than half the teen mothers who participated in this research indicated that given a chance they would prefer separate schooling rather than in their normal ones because:

There I would learn better without any fear of being laughed at like here at school sometimes other students laugh at you when you make a mistake just because you are a teen mother (Grade 10 teen mother).

I think there I would be more free because like sometime in the classroom situation you are learning about something like reproduction and everybody is just looking at you ... this makes me not feel happy (Grade 11 teen mother).

I would love to learn at the pace I can cope and of course be taught by people who understand the situation I am in (Grade 10 teen mother).

However, Zellman's (1981) assessment of special programmes for teen mothers is sobering. She found that academic learning in some of the programmes is secondary. In other words, the curriculum used is not equal to that being offered in regular schools. But the teen mothers have different views about separate schooling. About 20% of interviewed teen mothers did not like the idea of separate schooling. The main reason they gave was that they did not want everybody in the community to look at them as teen mothers. One of the teen mothers who was of the opinion that separate schooling would be good for them narrated that:

I would not like the idea because if you go to that place (school) ... everybody will know you are a girl who has a baby...because the communities do not

respect girls who are not married and have got babies, they just see you as a
prostitute of which I don't think I am (Grade 10 teen mother).

In line with the teen mothers perception above is Luttrell's (2003) argument which
says *special programmes can serve to re–stigmatise those who enrol.* Here
learners are tainted because of pregnancy and, then again, because of a special
programme and its associated isolation from regular school. Stamm (1998: 1207)
argues that 'special treatment' for teen mother learners in the form of separate
schools, is historically linked to invidious discrimination against pregnant girls,
and the many proffered rationales for separate schools. For instance 'pregnancy
as a disease' discourse is seen to be "built upon deeply embedded stereotypes
and assumptions" (Stamm, 1998:1227).

5.1.4 Lack of professional counselling

All the respondents indicated that they returned to school without receiving
professional counselling on how they could cope with their stigma, parenthood
and the schooling. According to a respondent,

> ...nobody offered counselling to me and even the teachers did not counsel me
> when I came back to school (Grade teen 10 mother).

It has been argued that school administrators reinforce an ideology that teenage
pregnancy or parenting is not something educators or schools should deal with,
rather it is a medical and behavioural issue (Pillow, 2004:98). Educators with
such ideology do not make an effort to assist teen mothers to go through
counselling which is available in the education system. According to the
Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP), pregnant learners must have
access to counselling by professionals of the Specialised Learner and Educator
Support (SLES) and the head of the school must manage and co–ordinate the
process. Therefore, the ideology contradicts the MLPP. Since all interviewed
girls are continuing with their schooling without professional counselling, many of
them are not sure about how to face their new situation as school-going mothers.
Consequently, some teen mothers are overwhelmed with their situation and their
education is impacted on negatively. Researchers argue that schooling is

affected because females are more emotionally involved in sexual matters than males; when undergoing sexual transition, girls become pre–occupied with shame, feelings of guilt, fear, anxiety, embarrassment and even disgust (Traeen and Kvalem, 1996; Helge, 1989; Day, 1992).

5.1.5 Lack of empathy by some teachers and learners

More than half of the teen mothers in this study feel that some teachers do not have empathy with their situation. Teachers often misinterpret the girls' actions. The teen mothers feel the teachers think they do not attend classes regularly and do not finish homework on time due to laziness, not because they have parental responsibilities. The teen mothers indicated that their teachers expect them to complete their homework and behave just like their fellow learners. One teen mother reported that:

> ...because my baby is crying all the time ... I don't have time to do my homework, teachers are nagging, I come to school sleepy, ... because they don't know your situation they really attack you .... Sometimes you feel like you have got all the world on your shoulders... so you break from school for a week or two (Grade 9 teen mother).

Sometimes when a teen mother has not satisfied the class requirements or makes mistakes in class, she is ridiculed in front of her classmates and picked on for her motherhood status. A Grade 12 teen mother narrated that:

> When I do something wrongly in class some teacher say things to me... sometimes the remarks make you feel you are the most useless person in the class... they treat you like you are stupid ... sometimes when you ask questions in class they think you did not understand because you were busy thinking about your child (Grade 12 teen mother).

Of the teen mothers 37.5% (6 out of 16) indicated that when they quarrel with other learners, they [the other learners] usually pick on the teen mother's situation as a schoolgirl mother. Such attacks not only make the teen mothers feel bad about themselves but also make them feel that they are not fit for schooling. A Grade 9 teen mother reported that:

> Some girls and boys do give me a tough time at school because I am a mother, ...when we have a small fight they used to remind me I am a mother so I

should behave... even when I make a mistake in class they scold me... (Grade 9 teen mother).

These results correlate with the literature stating that teen parents are prone to facing an overwhelming number of challenges. In fact, peer pressure is commonplace, while support and understanding is rarely rendered to the teen mothers (Arlington Public School, 2004). The institution shows that the emotionally pressured teens really need mature decisions if they are to cope. In addition, Lees (1987:181) reports that boys and girls verbally abuse 'othered' girls at school. The girls' participation in class is also unwelcome, and they are, at best, ignored or, at worst, ridiculed or put down by the perpetrators. The language which the boys and girls use on the teen mothers is sometimes sexually abusive. For instance, one teen mother reported being called a 'whore' and sometimes a 'slag' by some of her fellow learners. With such language, the boys and girls define the school and its environment as part of their public sphere to the exclusion of the teen mothers. These negative attitudes affect the teen mothers' attempts to carry on with their schooling.

Another form of lack of empathy the teen mothers face is when educators force them to make choices against their will. An example of such choices is to drop out of school because educators perceive pregnancy as a hindrance to the girl to work hard at school. Because she cannot work hard, educators conclude that the girl will fail examinations. Although public schools can no longer expel girls on the grounds of pregnancy or mothering, there was one principal who said he encourages girls who fall pregnant during Grade 12 to stop attending school or not to sit for the matric examinations at their school. When asked to clarify why he does this, he said:

My school actually adopted a policy unofficially that if you are a learner in Grade 12, one of your responsibilities is to make sure that you do not fall pregnant because if you are pregnant you miss a lot of classes... and in the end you fail exams... now the problem is a reflection on the school on Grade 12 because every failure will result in the percentage graph fall (Principal, School B).

This school (School B) has its own policy which denies pregnant girls in Grade 12 sitting for the matriculation examinations as full-time learners for fear of having a large number of Matric failures which portrays underperformance of the school. In this case the school perceives the girls as incapable, lazy and irresponsible learners (Luttrell, 2003) who cannot perform well in their matric examinations, hence tarnishing the image of the school. The principal is not empathising with the girls, instead he is concerned with the image of his school.

From the analysis of the interviews with the girls, it can be concluded that there are many practices that cause barriers to successful schooling of teen mothers. Table 5.1 summarises the responses of the teen mother on what they perceive as their schooling challenges.

Table 5.1: A summary of the responses by teen mother learners

Challenges encountered by teen mothers as learners
• Lack of time to study and do school-related work at home due to child caring; • Missing classes and loss of concentration in class due to sickness and/or medical attention of the baby; • Lack of professional counselling to prepare them for schooling and parenthood; • Fear of participating in class discussions and experiencing stress and social isolation due to other learners' judgements; and • Misunderstanding by some teachers and fellow learners, resulting in teen mothers feeling unfit for schooling.

5.2 Observations on the teen mothers' schooling challenges by educators and other learners

This section presents the responses by educators and fellow learners of the teen mothers about their observations on these girls' schooling challenges. The section also outlines the reactions and feelings of some of these respondents

towards these girls when they interact at school. Sub-section 5.2.1 will present the results from the interviews with the Principals and Life Orientation teachers of the teen mothers; sub-section 5.2.2 outlines the responses by other teachers and fellow learners of teen mothers to the questionnaires (see Appendices I and II). The grouping in the sub-sections is based on the method and instruments used to collect information from the participants. Thus sub-section 5.2.1 presents the interview results and sub-section 5.2.2 outlines results from the questionnaire.

5.2.1 Responses by Principals and Life Orientation teachers

According to the Principals of schools and LO teachers, some of the challenges the teen mothers experience are:

- Lack of skills on the part of teachers to handle teen mothers as learners;

- Lack of support to deal with the stigma attached to teen motherhood;
- Irregular class attendance due to parenthood;
- The community's perception of teen mothers as having low morals; and
- Lack of resources on the part of the school to handle teen mothers as learners with special needs.

5.2.1.1 Lack of skills to handle teen mothers' situation at school

According to the principals' observations, teen mothers are usually disadvantaged at school because many teachers lack skills on how to handle them and their situation. For example, teachers do not know how to handle teen mothers when they cannot attend lessons or are too tired to be attentive in class, due to motherhood and/or pregnancy. The following is what one principal, who also teaches regularly, said regarding this issue:

> She [the teen mother] could stay home for a week... come back and say, "sorry, I was with my baby in Red Cross Hospital so I couldn't come to school", and so I would not say "alright then my baby we did this last week". No! No! It's her own business. All I say to her is, "ask other learners what we have done and try to do your best..."

> ...when the pregnant girls are dozing during class the teacher cannot do anything, we just leave them like that ... because these kids are very touchy

once you say something, she will report you that you are harassing her
because she is that way ...you just ignore her and continue with the
lesson...(Principal, School T).

According to the Principal of School T teachers do not know how to keep
pregnant learners awake when they sleep during lessons. When the teachers try
to reason with the girls to stay awake, they [girls] feel harassed. When this
happens, some pregnant learners usually report the teachers to gangsters who
might avenge the girls' 'harassment'. As such, many teachers do not attempt to
keep pregnant learners awake in class for fear of being attacked. It could be
speculated that teachers' inability to control the girls is exacerbated by the fear of
being attacked by the gangs.

Regarding allowing the pregnant girls to sleep during lessons, Jones (1988:148),
in a similar situation, argues that by giving less attention to some girls in class,
"the teacher ultimately penalises these girls' knowledge of 'how to be a student'
in that it contributes to the girls' failing to master curriculum knowledge". Zellman
(1981) argued that many educators believe that pregnancy and early motherhood
forecloses the possibility of educational and career success of a girl. "Having
wasted her potential, many staff do not want to invest a great deal of effort in her"
(1981:95).

This study has found that teen mothers are usually prejudiced against by both
teachers and fellow learners at school. They perceive the teen mothers as
irresponsible, uncontrollable and prostitutes. According to some of the
interviewed teachers, the school atmosphere which the pregnant girls find
themselves in is not at all pleasant:

When the girl continues coming to school she experiences a lot of peer
pressure, peer ridicule... and prejudice from both the learners and teachers
(LO teacher, School B).

They [other learners] make the learning process of these teen mothers a hell,
because they are under pressure, they are not happy, they are lonely because
the other learners do not want to associate with them [teen mothers] (LO
teacher, School N).

The experience is similar to what is portrayed in the literature where "teen mothers are often described as and assumed to be 'poor students' or 'incapable students'" (Pillow, 2004: 111). Some media have also portrayed the adolescent mother as "a failure – the 'bad' girl, who behaved uncontrollably, irresponsibly, and immorally" (Pillow, 2004:116). This has resulted in the social and geographical marginalising of these girls, and, in effect, discriminating against them on the basis of their teen motherhood (Luttrell, 1997).

Luttrell (2003:15) argues that despite teachers' frontline position in issues relating to teenage sexuality and parenting, these teachers have been curiously quiet. She further argues that teachers have a vital role to play in helping teen mothers in their psychological survival and their management of stigma, but they have remained silent. According to Bloem (2000), perhaps what the teachers need are professional skills to manage teen mothers and their situations; the educators also need in-service training to keep abreast of changes which the society is facing.

5.2.1.2 Lack of support to deal with stigma attached to teen motherhood

The Principals and the LO teachers indicated that teen mothers at school are stigmatised. As such the girls need support, for instance, proper counselling on how to deal with the stigma and schooling. Without counselling they usually get overwhelmed with the situation and eventually stop attending school. The principals indicated that since schools do not provide professional counselling, the girls are left to deal with their situation on their own. The responses of two principals to this category are:

> ...we don't have any provision of professional counselling as a school, but people could get counselling from the society like from the priests or something like that but parents do not want to publicise this to the society, they don't want the whole community to know their situation, so they try to contain that to themselves because of the stigma attached to it. ...There are quite a few of them when they come back for a while and see things are not working for them, they decide to drop off school (Principal, School A).

> ...we don't have any counselling for these teen mothers and at home the
> parents are too busy to look for a counsellor. They are busy trying to stop the
> rumour from spreading; and when the child is ready to be back to school they
> will just send her to school...so the child is expected to adjust to her new state
> on her own (Principal, School G).

Pillow (2004) notes that counselling is one form of support teen mothers need. They need professional counselling to meet their specific needs like the need to fight against stigma. Research conducted by the US Department of Education (1992) shows that both pregnancy and parenting are the leading reasons girls give for dropping out of school. Other specific factors that influence more female dropouts than male include: having a large number of siblings, low educational level of their mothers, their [the females'] own low academic achievements and low self-esteem (US Department of Education, 1992; Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001).

According to LO teachers, the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy also has an impact on the parents of the girls. In most cases, parents of pregnant girls feel embarrassed with their daughter's situation. Consequently, some parents stop supporting their daughters as a reaction to the embarrassment.

> Some parents would just ignore her needs for the baby and try to turn away
> from her by telling her that they [parents] didn't make a decision for her to have
> a child so that is her responsibility and should know what to do, because that is
> what she wanted... (LO teacher, G school)

Pillow (2004:11) argues that "all teen mothers need help and support. They need the support that any mother parenting as a single-parent with limited income needs". But in some cases the opposite of Pillow's argument occurs – teen mothers are expected to be responsible for their mistakes. The girls have to fulfil simultaneously the parental and learner responsibilities with little or no support. For a teenager this is difficult to accomplish.

About three quarters of the teachers I interviewed indicated that there is a pattern – many teen mothers at school have parents who themselves were also teen mothers. Research in South Africa shows the same (Mokgalabone, 1999). Due to the parents themselves being teen mothers, they often lack proper parenting

skills. Consequently, they cannot adequately guide and provide for the needs of their children. Some of these parents shout at their girls, telling them that when they [parents] were teen mothers, they used to do everything for themselves so why shouldn't these girls take the responsibility for their children. The parents' claims are unlikely to be true because, in their time, teen mothers were not allowed to attend school. On the issue of lack of proper parenting skills, one principal reported that:

> Generally, the parent skills of many South Africans are very weak, so there isn't really enough support coming through to these girls and very often there are complicated relationships between the parent and the teen mother ... becomes a granny when she is not ready to be a granny...she hasn't matured not even as a mother, ...she doesn't have the social parenting skills to make a good job of parenting a fifteen year old and if that fifteen year old falls pregnant she inherits that very bad manners or bad parenting techniques from her mother (Principal, School N).

The problems of poor parenting seem to be passed on from one generation to the next. The parents do not understand demands placed on their children. Parental involvement in their children's education is very minimal and in some cases is absent. For most teen mothers, continuing with schooling may prove to be an unyielding burden because there is a lack of support and encouragement (Arlington Public School, 2004).

The interviewed LO teachers in this study have observed that most schoolgirls tend to have low self-esteem once they become teen mothers. The teachers are also of the opinion that low self-esteem negatively affects the girls' schooling. One LO teacher said:

> Most of the times we find out that the child comes back with a negative self-esteem and they fail to withstand the situation (LO teacher, School G).

Emler (2001) notes that among factors that have impacted on self-esteem are success and failures. According to Kenway (1990:131) "low self-esteem is a problem, that is a problem [sic] for and of certain individuals, and that it prevents them making the best of their schooling and their lives". In addition, there is a belief that low self-esteem is a risk factor of a wide range of behavioural and

psychological problems (Emler, 2001). He further argues that low self-esteem increases the risk of behaviour damaging to health among young people (as such they engage in drug and alcohol abuse) because it increases vulnerability to negative peer group pressure. Therefore, to prevent the aforementioned problems, there is a need to boost the girls' self-esteem. Marsh and Craven (2006) believe that enhancing self–esteem is a vital mediating factor for desirable outcomes, including academic achievement.

5.2.1.3 Irregular class attendance due to motherhood

Sixty percent of the teen mothers indicated that they do not attend classes regularly; consequently their academic performance is usually below average. Corresponding to what the teen mothers said, all principals interviewed in this research said very few teen mothers succeed in their Matric/School Certificate Examinations. The principals perceive irregular class attendance as one of the major factors that contribute to the girls' failure. Regarding the irregular class attendance of the girls, one principal stated that:

> ...the time they fall pregnant they have to miss some classes for some time when they come back it will be a lot for them to deal with, so as to catch up; and it is quite involving to be a mother and at the same time schooling, it is quite a big challenge for these girls (Principal, School G).

Commenting on the success rate of teen mothers at matric level, one principal noted:

> ...I would say the success rate is not high because they seem to lose the motivation with the baby around they can't really cope. They really can't get down studying, so you find out that the success rate is low because most of them are not really ready for the exams (Principal, School A).

Table 5.2 provides statistics[9] of teen mothers registered for Grade 12 from 2003 to 2005 at School B. According to the principal of the school, these girls do not include pregnant girls, but rather those who had children already by the time the girls were registering for the grade. All the schools participating in this research

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[9] The numbers registered reflect only those girls that the school officially knew of their status as teen mothers.

were asked for this information but only School B provided the data. The other schools indicated that they do not keep special detailed academic records of teen mothers.

Table 5.2: Number of teen mothers who enrolled for Grade 12 and passed Matric at B school

Academic year	No. of teen mothers enrolled for Gr. 12	No. completed Gr. 12	No. passed Matric
2005	3	3	1
2004	1	0	0
2003	3	1	0

5.2.1.4 The community's perception of teen mothers as having low morals

The communities in which teen mothers live have a great influence on their lives. The community usually treats these teens as the 'other' girls, 'those that have low morals'. Consequently, the community does not like to see teen mothers learning with other learners in the same school or class. In addition, women in the community complain about the manner the pregnant learners dress when going to school. According to the school's regulations, every learner is required to be in school uniform when coming to school. Since the design of the uniform is perceived culturally inappropriate for a pregnant woman, the community want the schools to suspend the girls. One LO teacher narrated:

> according to the morals there are people who come from the township to school complaining that why do teachers allow learners with big tummies to come to school wearing uniforms... (LO teacher, school G).

Due to the discourse of 'contamination' that develops around teenage pregnancy, other parents do not feel safe to have their children learning at the same institution as teen mothers. Based on this discourse, two LO teachers reported

that parents and educators usually perceive teen mothers as a danger to other learners. The perception is that these teen mothers can influence other schoolgirls to also become pregnant. As a result, the parents of other learners try to force the schools to expel pregnant girls.

> Actually some girls are reported to this school by parents of some learners that they are pregnant because the parents are worried that if pregnant girls are allowed to come to school, then what sort of message the girls are sending to their children who they are learning together with in class... (LO teacher, school G)

Society does not like to see teen mothers with their big stomachs going to school. This is one of the reasons (refer to Section 5.1.3) why the girls resort to keeping their pregnancies hidden. If hidden, nobody at school and within the community will treat them as second class citizens who are not fit for education. However, the problem is that by keeping their pregnancies invisible, the girls are freeing the school from making any special accommodation for them. Pillow (2004: 134) has also commented that by keeping the pregnancies invisible ...until birth or when the pregnant body stops fitting in at the school, the girls support school practices of 'pregnancy as a cold' whereby no 'special' attention is given to pregnant girls.

5.2.1.5 Lack of resources in school to handle teen mothers as learners with special needs

According to the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) teen mothers are supposed to be treated as learners with special needs. In reality, schools and teachers treat the teen mothers just like any other learner, i.e., without according them special attention befitting a learner in a difficult situation. For instance, despite the growing body size, a pregnant learner is still expected to sit on a class desk just like all other learners; this is the case even when the class desks are designed in such a way that a wooden desk and bench are joined making them inflexible and not big enough to accommodate comfortably the growing body of a pregnant girl. The schools do not take into consideration the comfort of teen mother learners.

Stamm (1998) argues that such subtle forms of neglecting the teen mothers' needs discourage them from continuing with their schooling. Such practices occur at administrative as well as at classroom level and may include failing to provide teen mothers with information, failure to provide various accommodations like bathroom breaks or provision of classroom seats that can accommodate a changing and growing pregnant figure, and also failure to provide childcare facilities (Pillow, 2004). In addition, as the Principal of School T said, the public schools do not allow pregnant learners to change the design of their uniform to a form which accommodates a pregnant body comfortably.

Although girls are allowed to come to school whilst pregnant, schools do not have resources to handle a situation if the girl were unexpectedly to go into labour. The Principal of School T indicated that in the year 2005 one of the pregnant girls gave birth in the girls' toilet at the school. Such an incident can have a detrimental impact on the girl and her newborn baby, and other learners at the institution. Firstly, the teen mother and her baby could be at a health risk. Secondly, the incident could result in a negative social impact to both the girl and other learners. That is, they [other learners] could be traumatised by being exposed to a process of childbirth. For the teen mother, the incident could be embarrassing and as a result she may not feel comfortable coming back to the same school.

According to the principal, School T had no equipment or materials necessary to assist the girl when it was known that the girl was in labour in one of its toilets. Worse still, the school had no car to rush the girl to hospital. However, up to date nothing has been done to make any special provisions for pregnant girls at the school. There is not even a private room where the girls could sit or lie down for a rest.

5.2.2   Questionnaire responses by other teachers and fellow learners of teen mothers

The questionnaire administered to the fellow learners and teachers contained questions which required them to indicate how they feel towards, relate to, and accept teen mothers in their schools. Subsections 5.2.2.1 and 5.2.2.2 present the results obtained from fellow learners of teen mothers and teachers respectively.

5.2.2.1 Responses by fellow learners of teen mothers

This section outlines the responses of classmates of teen mothers. The responses provide a picture on how the girls are affected at school and at home. Regarding how the teen mothers are affected at school, the analysis of the questionnaire (see Appendix: I) shows that:

- More girls than boys are embarrassed associating with teen mothers in their classes. And more boys than girls feel at ease associating with the teen mothers. But fewer boys than girls feel sorry for the teen mothers.

- Boys attack teen mothers verbally more frequently than girls do.

- Both boys and girls have observed that most of the times teen mothers have enormous fear participating in class discussions. The learners also think that teen mothers are more challenged academically than an average learner, because they feel embarrassed for themselves and rejected by teachers, fellow learners and their families.

- Fifty percent of the fellow learners observed that teachers are not sure how to handle teen mothers in their classes, and they [teachers] also reduce the academic support to the girls because of their status. The fellow learners do not see the teen mothers' interactions with the teachers and classmates improving with time.

- Three quarters of the fellow learners have the opinion that having a day care service at school would help teen mother learners improve their class attendance because most of them are usually absent from class because they do not have a child minder at home.

With regard to how the teen mothers' schooling is affected by their families, the analysis of the questionnaire to the fellow learners shows that:

- Responding learners, who are closely related to teen mothers, feel embarrassed and sorry for the relative [teen mother]. The learners feel that the girl needs emotional, physical and extra academic support in order to succeed with her schooling.

- Sixty percent of the fellow learners observed that teen mothers are usually rejected by their families.

5.2.2.2 Responses by teachers

With regard to the teachers' perception and observation on how teen motherhood affects the girls [teen mothers] at school, the analysis of the questionnaire (see Appendix: II) shows that:

- Three quarters of the teachers observe that teen mothers are afraid of participating in class discussions most of the time. The teachers noted that the girls feel uneasy during discussions like morality, HIV/Aids and safe sex. The remaining quarter observe that the girls are always fearful.

- All teachers feel sorry for teen mothers in their class. Based on their teaching experiences all teachers noted that the academic performance of teen mothers is generally below average.

- Eighty percent of the teachers think that the provision of childcare services within the school would help to improve the academic performance of teen mothers as most of their time is spent caring for their babies. Twenty percent think that such provision would not help to improve their academic performance because the girls are 'just lazy and dull'.

- In terms of relating to teen mothers academically, over 70% of the teachers are not sure how to handle the girls in the classroom situation. The rest of the teachers relate to the girls easily.

- Only 20% of the teachers are willing to help teen mothers cope with academic work and make up for missed lessons due to motherhood. Eighty percent state that they do not have time for making up lessons with the girls.

- The teachers noted that teen mothers are usually rejected by their fellow learners because their peers feel embarrassed associating with them. However, according to some of the teachers, integration with the girls' classmates and their teachers improve with time, especially when they know about the hardships the girls are experiencing.

- They have also noted that boys generally enjoy teasing and bullying the teen mothers at school, while girls generally disassociate themselves from the teen mothers.

With regard to how the teen mothers' schooling is affected by their families, the analysis of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire shows that teen mothers are usually rejected by their families – the rejection also contributes to their poor performance at school.

From the responses to the questionnaires (by both teachers and learners), the highest predictors of poor performance in class among teen mothers have been noted to be (listed in order of importance):

- prejudice by both learners and teachers;
- lack of acceptance by fellow learners;
- lack of acceptance by teachers; and
- loneliness.

Both groups have also observed that girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy do not have difficulties getting re–admission to school after giving birth. However, the onus to manage logistically and financially is solely on the girl.

5.2.2.3   Summary of responses of educators and fellow learners of teen mothers

Table 5.3 provides the summary of the responses of the principals, teachers, and fellow learners of teen mothers on what they observe to be the causes of schooling challenges among teen mothers.

Table 5.3: Summary of the results of the observations of educators and fellow learners of teen mothers on the schooling challenges of teen mothers

Respondents	Responses about teen mothers' schooling challenges
Educators (Principals and Life Orientation teachers)	Teen mothers do not have enough time to balance the needs of motherhood and schooling.
	They lack support to deal with the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy.
	Teachers lack skills on how to handle the teen mothers' situation as learners.
	Teen mothers suffer peer pressure and ridicule in the school environment resulting in very low self esteem.
	Schools lack resources to treat teen mothers as learners with special needs.
	The perception of the community about teen mothers as girls with low morals forces them to drop out of from school.
Fellow learners and other teachers of teen mothers	Many learners, especially girls, disassociate themselves from teen mothers at school.
	Frequently teen mothers are verbally attacked by boys.
	In most cases teen mothers' performance in class is below average.
	Teachers are not sure how to handle teen mothers in class.
	Prejudice, rejection and loneliness are the highest predictors of poor performance among teen mothers.

5.3 Responses by the Department of Education officials and NGOs about schooling teen mothers

This section outlines responses by Department of Education officials who participated in this study. The section also reports on what the NGOs – the Sisters Incorporated and the Pregnancy Help Centre – are doing to assist teen mothers. The NGOs that participated in this research assist women when they

need help. Among other things, the NGOs assist when a woman wishes to place her baby up for adoption, and offer pregnant women/nursing mothers shelter when they do not have anywhere to stay. Teen mothers as young women get help from these organisations. Sub–section 5.3.1 reports the result of the survey with the Education Management and Development Centre (EMDC) and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) office responsible for the policy on Managing Learner Pregnancy in public schools. Sub–section 5.3.2 enumerates the assistance the Sisters Incorporated and Pregnancy Help Centre offer to teen mothers.

5.3.1 Department of Education officials' responses

This section presents the responses by officials from the regional Department of Education: one official from EMDC (Central Metropole) and the other from the WCED office responsible for Managing Learner Pregnancy in public schools policy.

5.3.1.1 EMDC's observations on teen mothers at school

5.3.1.1.1 Availability of encouragement to schooling teen mothers

According to the EMDC Officer, the rate at which teen mothers return to school differs in different geographical locations. She said that, unlike the situation in the townships, most of the girls who fall pregnant in the suburbs do return to school. This is usually a result of the levels of support and encouragement available in schools. For instance, she said:

> one of the schools in the city has a pregnancy policy...all the girls know about it, parents know about it... In the city schools we get attached to NGOs in the area, so we have NGOs like Pregnancy Help Centre... so they come in to render their services.

The officer argues that that some principals may not have complied with the policy because they do not understand or they decided to ignore it, and as a result the parents and the girls may also have not been informed about the policy. Angula and Grant-Lewis (1997) ascribe policy adoption problems to a lack

of will to act, limited understanding, lack of skills and lack of support. Other researchers have contended that policies fail because conditions to facilitate dialogue and organisational learning are absent (Reimers and McGinn, 1997).

The EMDC Officer also indicated that much of the support to teen mothers is offered by NGOs and most of these are currently located in the suburbs and this makes it easy for the girls in the suburbs to access the organisations. The suburbs may be preferred by the NGOs instead of the townships for security reasons. She said that, despite enormous need to support schooling teen mothers, the Department of Education has not put in place enough structural amenities to support teen mothers at school:

> ...but the Department of Education ...has not allocated any money towards teenage pregnancy....

This shows there are no resources to implement the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy. As Jansen (2001) argues, the lack of conformity between policy and practice is usually ascribed to the lack of resources, the legacy of inequality and the lack of capacity to translate the policy intent into practical reality. Further, explaining policy gaps, he invokes the construct of political symbolism to argue that the failure of a policy is a direct result of the over-investment of the state in the political symbolism of policy and not in its practical implementation (Jansen, 2001).

According to the EMDC Officer the ideal would be for the schools to have a crèche so that teen mothers can bring their children to school and can see and breastfeed them during break time. However, there has been a counter argument by some people in society protesting against the ideas of making life easy for teen mothers arguing that:

> what you are saying to a young person is that it is OK to have a baby or be pregnant because you will be taken care of...(EMDC Officer).

The argument above is echoed in Luttrell (2003). The teacher who favoured a tough love approach to the girls was of the opinion that providing childcare to the

teen mothers was a mistake because this [provision] made it too easy for the girls (Luttrell, 2003:21).

5.3.1.1.2 Inadequate availability of counselling

Professional counselling is usually not available to the girls when they fall pregnant or become mothers. Counselling is usually available to the girls only when they are traumatised. However, even in that situation, counselling is not readily available because there are too few psychologists to cater for counselling needs of all schools within the region. The EMDC Officer commented that:

> If only they are traumatised, yes. But like this area we have 200 schools and only six psychologists who can offer that counselling, so you can imagine how hard it is to get an appointment and they do not deal with teenage pregnancy issues only, they also deal with abuse, drug abuse, individual behaviour management.

The EMDC Officer indicated that counselling could be offered only to the girls who come forward to ask for it within their schools. She said it is the duty of the principal to make the necessary arrangements for professional counselling when a learner needs it. However, it has been observed that in most cases the teen mothers do not ask for the counselling because they are ashamed.

Stamm (1998) has argued that there is evidence that there are practices which discourage teen mothers from staying at school. The practices include the schools failing to provide the necessary information to teen mothers. From the interviews with teen mothers it is evident that they are not aware of professional counselling available to them through their schools. Furthermore, the attitudes of the school personnel who in most cases perceive teen mothers as unfit for schooling, could affect the girls' decision on whether to ask for counselling or not.

5.3.1.1.3 Parents and teen mothers do not inform schools about pregnancy

The EMDC Officer observed that teen mothers and their parents are reluctant to inform the schools of the girls' pregnancies. The girls hide their pregnancy so that the schools do not know about it until the birth of their babies. One of the

reasons given is that both the parents and the girls are embarrassed with the situation so they do not want many people to know about it. According to the EMDC Officer,

> some poor community parents do not really care, so the girl has to inform the school...but sometimes parents do not report because they are disappointed and embarrassed with the situation.

Some girls keep their pregnancies invisible so that they are able to attend classes all the time without confinement. The officer indicated that the girls perceive that being present for lessons is better than learning on their own. Consequently, the girls do not get medical certificates for school because they are afraid that the certificate may indicate that they should be home for a longer period than they would wish to be. So they choose to resist the regulation which requires them to present a medical certificate to school during and after the birth of the baby. According to Pillow (2004) some pregnant girls remain secret about their status so they can stay in school as long as they can. And for those who plan to give their babies up for adoption, they would not want to be seen as teen mothers (Pillow, 2004).

The EMDC Officer noted that, although it may be improper not to inform the schools about pregnancy,

> ...those who continue coming to school perform better because they are able to listen to the teacher and collaborate with fellow learners about what they are learning.

The officer indicated that most of those who temporarily withdraw from school due to pregnancy return later to school. However, she is not sure about their success with schooling. What she has observed is that:

> some do and some don't but I can't give statistics on that but the majority do come back to school.

Agreeing with the officer, I have observed that most schools do not keep accurate records of teen mothers' returns to school. Consequently, the

Provincial Education Department does not have accurate records which can give a clearer understanding of this complex issue.

5.3.1.1.4 Teenage pregnancy is related to economic status

It is believed that teenage motherhood is much more an issue of class than scholars have been willing to admit: low socio-economic status children become parents, high status children do not [sic] (Dryfoos, 1988:213 quoted in Luttrell, 2003). The EMDC Officer indicated that teenage pregnancy is a very serious problem among the lower socio-economic class learners in Cape Town. She said that the problem seems to be more common among the learners in lower grades at high school level. She said:

> ...one of our schools last year had 40 pregnancies in one grade. It seems to happen in Grade 8 and 9 quite a lot and few in 11 and 12...it is frightening because it is common in townships...

She indicated that the school she is referring to is in the township of Langa. As in any other township in the city, many people are relatively economically challenged. She noted that many girls in the townships may deliberately want to fall pregnant so that when they have a baby they may access the child grant. But she reported that the child grant is usually not used to meet the baby's needs but rather that the girls use it for their own needs and wants.

Disagreeing with the Education Officer on the issue of child grant is the report which appeared in the November 2006 *Sunday Times*. The media article reported that "according to the Department of Social Development, initial results of a probe into the 'alleged increase' in teen pregnancies do not support the theory that teenagers are deliberately falling pregnant to secure child–support grants". But research done in the United States of America shows that, although teen mothers may be a small proportion of the welfare dependent population at a given time, 55 percent of all welfare dependents were single mothers who had given birth as teen mothers (Wertheimer and Moore, 1998). Nevertheless, Bingham et al (1990) noted that "socio–economic status, culture and personal

expectations regarding normative life events such as marriage and having children determined the extent to which teens could postpone involvement in sexual activities". Some girls from financially challenged families may perceive the benefit of receiving the child grant to be more than offset by the challenges that having a baby could impose upon their lives (Hallman and Grant, 2006).

5.3.1.1.5 Inadequate parenting skills among teen mothers' parents

In some cases, the girls' schooling is affected due to improper parenting skills in their homes. The EMDC Officer said that in some cases in the townships, teenage pregnancy is due to rape. But then the parents of the girls cannot make mature decisions to help the girls to combat such incidents. According to the officer what happens is:

> adults having sex with children... a man from this house can rape a girl from the neighbouring house and when caught he would just give money to the parents to shut their mouth ...and so the rape case go without laying any charges.

She further commented that as a result the problem is a vicious cycle; young women with no parenting skills are having children. Due to poor parenting skills the offspring are also likely to bear children while still young and the circle continues. As a result of lack of parenting skills, parents do not monitor the schooling progress of their children. She noted that:

> As a parent you are twenty something [and] your child is 13, you want to do all sorts of youth stuff like partying... you do not have time to be involved in the schooling of your children, you do not monitor the school progress of your children, as such children do whatever they want to do, as a result the girls fall pregnant at a very young age.

A number of researchers have documented the impact of poor parenting on children's education (Day, 1992; Smith, 1993; Nebot et al, 1997). These researchers show that poor parenting is an undermining factor for girls – as they are unable to imagine the disruption a baby brings to the schooling process.

5.3.1.2 WCED office on Managing Learner Pregnancy policy

This office is responsible for formulating the policy on managing learner pregnancy in public schools in the province. The aim of the interview with this office was for the researcher to understand what the policy expects of the schools and teen mother learners, and what support it offers to teen mothers to be successful with their schooling.

The respondent indicated that the policy was introduced in the schools in the province in 2003. According to the respondent, this policy replaces the school regulations which previously required pregnant girls to be expelled from school once they were discovered to be pregnant. The old regulation was meant to avoid the teen mothers sending wrong messages to other learners i.e. the other learners may have thought it was acceptable to have a baby while schooling.

However, she noted that based on the Bill of Rights as contained in the 1996 South African Constitution, all policies have to be aligned with what the Constitution says. For instance, Sections 28 and 29 of the Constitution affirms the rights of children and the right to education respectively. Consequently, the 2003 MLPP guarantees teen mothers their right to continue schooling.

The officer indicated that, according to the policy, school managers and school governing bodies are obliged to ensure that the rights and development of female learners are respected. In case of learner pregnancy, special measures should be taken with respect to not curtailing the learners' rights. She further said the policy guarantees that pregnant learners can remain in school as long as it is medically advisable. In addition, during the confinement period the leaner should get learning material and support from the school.

She postulated that the pregnant learners should be treated as learners with special needs. This means that there should be interventions such as accommodating the learner in a comfortable way and providing an environment conducive to learning. She noted that these should be coordinated by the

respective principals of the schools where the pregnant learners are schooling. She reported that it is the duty of the principal to organise counselling for the pregnant girls.

The officer also mentioned that according to the policy the learner is not allowed to bring her baby to school. She indicated that the policy does not dictate what needs to happen with regards to the baby's care i.e. the Department of Education does not take responsibility to decide on that. The Department does not have any specialised support on caring for the baby while the girls attend classes.

When asked about the effectiveness of the policy in schools, she responded that the office has not yet received feedback from the schools on how the policy has been effectively adopted. However, she said her office has noted, through individual enquiries, that communities and school personnel still want to know more about what schools should do with learners who are pregnant. According to the officer, this shows either that the principals have not read the policy, or they read it but do not understand it properly, or they just ignore it. Consequently, her office is not yet sure whether all schools are complying with the policy.

5.3.2 Responses by NGOs – Sisters Incorporated and Pregnancy Help Centre

During the research interviews with the NGOs, I wanted to ascertain:

- how teen mothers are taken care of and encouraged to continue with their schooling while with the Sisters Incorporated;

- the level of awareness about the services offered by the Pregnancy Help Centre amongst pregnant girls; and

- how pregnant teens are using the service.

5.3.2.1 Sisters Incorporated's assistance to teen mothers

The Sisters Incorporated in the southern suburbs of Cape Town was established over forty years ago. The shelter has the capacity to provide refuge for a maximum of 28 women and their children at a time. The shelter was originally founded to assist single, young, pregnant women, and has now included women who are victims of rape, physical and emotional abuse and domestic violence.

The social worker at the shelter reported that they have many teen mothers at the premises. She indicated that some of the reasons why teen mothers come to the shelter are:

> Sometimes it is because they have been pushed out of their homes, sometimes
> it is because they have been raped or there has been incest or the teenager
> had a boyfriend, got pregnant and the mother said no you can't stay here.

She pointed out that clients to the shelter are referred from different sources such as churches, people who know about the shelter and other NGOs e.g. the Pregnancy Help Centre and schools. She also reported that depending on the area the teen mothers come from, some of them continue with their schooling. That is, teen mothers who come from areas around Kenilworth (where the shelter is located), are able to continue attending classes within their respective schools, while those who come from far may have to interrupt their schooling. In some cases, when girls cannot continue attending classes, where and whenever possible, volunteers collect appropriate work from their respective schools to take to the girls, and then take back completed work to school for marking and assessment. When the shelter does not have volunteers to collect the work from school, the schooling process of the girls is interrupted.

The shelter is planning to have volunteers who are teachers so that they could help teen mothers at the premises. The social worker mentioned that the shelter is looking for professional teachers because:

> ...during the end of pregnancy the girls are tired and concentration is not good
> so we need people who could help with their studies.

Burman and Preston-Whyte (1992) concur with the results above by noting that lack of concentration is one of the problems adolescent mothers face in coping with schoolwork. Brunson (1981) also found that pregnancy and motherhood have a crippling effect on schooling because the demands of these statuses reduce the girls' concentration on educational pursuance.

5.3.2.2 Pregnancy Help Centre's assistance to teen mothers

The Pregnancy Help Centre was established in 1996 soon after the South African Government legalised the termination of pregnancy (abortion). The aim of the organisation is to assist women wanting to terminate their pregnancies by offering counselling about abortion and its consequences. The social worker at the centre indicated that every year a large number of teen mothers visit the centre for pregnancy tests. Some girls who have already confirmed their pregnancy also come to the centre to seek assistance. Those who test positive for pregnancy are advised on the available options which are:

a) abortion;

b) parenting; and

c) placing the baby up for adoption.

The social worker indicated that all the services offered at the centre are free of charge because the aim of the organisation is to help women who are poor and helpless with their pregnancies. She added that counselling is offered to all clients depending on what decision the client has made. In some cases the counselling may be extended to partners and/or parents of the client. She said in most cases it is helpful when the parent of a teen mother is available for counselling, especially when the client chooses to keep the baby.

Table 5.4 presents statistics provided by the Pregnancy Help Centre on how teen mothers have used the centre from 2003 to 2005. The table shows the options which teen mothers decide to follow when tested positive for pregnancy. Many pregnant teens prefer abortion to parenting. However, comparing parenting and placing the baby up for adoption, parenting is preferable. The table also shows

that there are some pregnant teens who could not make a decision. Unfortunately, these girls never returned to the centre for counselling or any assistance.

Table 5.4: Shows 3 year statistics of teen mothers visiting the Pregnancy Help Centre.

Year	Total teens	Pregnancy test					Decision			
		Tested	+ve	Already Pregn	Total Pregn	-ve	Abortion	Parenting	Adoption	Unknown
2003	127	90	37	37	74	53	39	18	5	12
2004	179	106	38	73	111	68	61	19	5	26
2005	128	82	38	46	84	44	32	24	8	20

When a client chooses to place her baby up for adoption, the centre refers her to social service agents such as the Sisters Incorporated where she will be assisted with the adoption procedures. However, as shown in Table 5.4, not many teen mothers choose placing their babies up for adoption. This in line with Osofsky (1968:63) who noted that the non–white girl rarely places her infant up for adoption. Most of the schooling teen mothers live with their babies at their parents' homes while others stay with relatives and in–laws if the girls are married (Hallman and Grant 2006).

For those who choose abortion, everything is done by the centre. Before carrying out the abortion, the client is advised about the physical procedures, advantages and disadvantages and then a decision is made about whether to proceed with the abortion or not. After the abortion procedure, the client goes through another phase of counselling.

The social worker also indicated that the centre is planning to be involved in schools in Cape Town by creating life skills based school programmes. For instance, she said the centre has plans to begin holding discussions with teen

mothers on how they can cope with teenage pregnancy as learners. The programmes will equip the girls with life skills on how to deal with:

- stigma attached to teenage pregnancy;
- attitude of parents during teenage pregnancy; and
- parenting skills.

She indicated that the centre is hoping that schools will be inviting the organisation to give counselling talks to teen mothers whenever there is a need. If the schools do not invite them, they will approach the schools to enquire if they need their assistance.

When asked about the level of awareness among girls and women, the social worker indicated that the organisation advertises the centre in the telephone Yellow Pages directory, and they put posters in hospitals and schools. She noted that most of their clients come from the southern suburbs and few come from the townships. In terms of racial profiling, she noted that the centre is approached by more coloured teens than teens of other races combined.

Table 5.5 provides the percentage of teen clients by race who visited the centre between 2003 and 2005. She attributed the low numbers of girls and women from the townships to:

- not knowing about the centre;
- transport costs to and from the centre; and
- being unsure about how the people will treat them at the centre due to cultural differences. (Almost all the counsellors at the centre are white; and many clients from the townships are black).

Table 5.5: Shows the race of the teen clients at the Pregnancy Help Centre expressed as percentages

Year	Race of the teen clients		
	Black	**Coloured**	**White**
2003	32.2%	53.2%	14.6%
2004	35.1%	54%	10.9%
2005	24.8%	68.5%	6.7%

5.4 Parents' responses on support and encouragement to teen mothers

Interviews with parents of teen mothers reveal that parents do not provide enough support and encouragement to the teen mothers during their schooling process. Parents and siblings rarely understand the girls' situation and, instead of supporting them, they put pressure on them.

5.4.1 Parents' attitude

Some parents of teen mothers are often unwilling to provide support for their daughters. The parents have little sympathy for what their daughters are experiencing. As a result, the parents do not help their daughters to deal with the situation. Worse still, the parents distance themselves from these girls because they feel embarrassed regarding what the child has done. One parent said:

> I was so shocked to know that she was pregnant and embarrassed that my daughter got pregnant at such a very young age... Sometimes I do help her with the baby but sometimes because I want to take a break from the baby then I just tell her to know what to do because that is what she wanted she just has to face the consequences... she really has to learn a lesson that, that was a very bad thing to do... sometimes I do not provide her with everything she wants because I still feel bitter with what she did (Parent to Grade 10 teen).

Some parents go to the extent of chasing their daughters from home when they discover that the girls are pregnant. In some cases any support to the girls is

withdrawn, leaving them helpless. Usually the parents take such action out of anger with the girl. The parents feel betrayed especially in cases where the parents perceive that they have given moral guidance against premarital sexual behaviours. When one parent discovered that her daughter was pregnant, she said:

> I felt let down and I don't want anything to do with her because I used to advise her not to get engaged in sexual activities because she could contract Aids and could also get pregnant (Parent to a Grade 10 teen mother).

In the cases where parents stop providing assistance to teen mothers, an adult relative or family friend may be required to come in to intervene or else the girl is doomed and that could mean the end of her schooling. The intervener could either try to reason with the parents, or may take over parental responsibility and make sure the girl continues her schooling. A guardian of a Grade 10 teen mother who intervened in a situation like this was of the opinion that:

> ...her parents chased her from their home so that she should go and stay with the boy responsible for her pregnancy but the boy denied responsibility and I decided to intervene and reasoned with the parents because they were acting out of anger as they said she has embarrassed them and the more she stays at the home the more they would feel let down and lose dignity in their community (Guardian to a Grade 10 teen).

Some parents think that this kind of attitude toward the pregnant girl sends a strong message to the other girls in the nuclear and/or extended family that becoming pregnant as a teenage scholar is undesirable.

5.4.2 Communication breakdown

Sometimes parents show favour to the siblings of a teen mother as a way of punishing her. For example, some parents pay for private lessons for the other siblings on top of their regular schooling and not for the teen mother on the grounds that she has a baby. Whenever the teen mother tries to complain at home, everybody reminds her that she has brought shame to the family. As a result she may not be helped with some school needs or there is nobody to share her experiences with about school. In replying to the question *Does your daughter*

complain about mocking and bullying by fellow learners and teachers? a parent of a Grade 11 teen mother noted that:

> I know she does face such problems but she cannot come to me to complain anything about that because she knows I would tell her that that is what she wanted, she just has to face the consequences... so she keeps all that to herself ... and as a parent I cannot be going around pleading with people to stop harassing my daughter because she has a baby ... she has already embarrassed me and I do not want people to be laughing at me all the time...

This is a crucial finding, which previous researchers did not emphasise. The communication breakdown may occur not only with parents but also with the siblings, thus leading to further isolation of the girl. Therefore, her dependency on the advice she gets from the school social worker or the life orientation teacher could impact on the girl's life.

5.4.3 Economic status of the family

It has been argued that many teen mothers come from financially challenged families (Pillow, 2004). As such the parent(s) cannot afford babysitting for the grandchild. This puts pressure on the teen mother when none of the relatives is available to assist in looking after the baby. In most cases this means missing classes or not being able to complete homework. Concurring with this view one parent mentioned that:

> ...when I have to go out to work then she has to take care of the baby herself...she has to stay home looking after her child. I don't have money to send the baby to a crèche or to hire a babysitter (parent to a Grade 10 teen mother).

Because the daughter brings another mouth to feed to the already financially burdened home, the parent(s) find it hard to cope economically. This situation is even worse in single parented homes (usually the mother is the single parent). One single mother blamed her daughter saying:

> actually she is ... burdening me financially because I have three children to look after plus her baby... but I don't have a husband and a stable job (parent of a Grade 11 teen mother).

Pillow (2004: 117) has argues that "teens most impacted by teen pregnancy are young women who are already living in impoverished conditions prior to becoming pregnant". Coinciding with this statement are Shaeff and Talashek (1995) who note that many pregnant teenagers come from dysfunctional or non-intact families. In addition, Bingham et al (1990) find that the absence of the biological father and in some cases the presence of a stepfather increases the chance of teenage pregnancy.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the results of the research. It has outlined what the teen mother learners perceive to be their schooling challenges. The chapter has also presented the observations on the teen mothers' schooling challenges by educators and fellow learners of teen mothers. It further outlined the reactions and attitudes of these observers towards these girls. There is also a presentation of responses by some education department sectors and NGOs on what these institutions are doing to help teen mothers. Finally, the chapter has outlined the attitudes, lack of support and encouragement of the parents to the schooling teen mothers.

An analysis of the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy in public school will be presented in Chapter 6. Based on the results in this chapter the discussion on how the school and the home affect the schooling of teen mothers will be presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6

The Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) and schooling of teen mothers

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter I analyse the policy on Managing Learner Pregnancy and how it impacts on the schooling of teen mothers in the Western Cape. The analysis is based on the results of the study as presented in Chapter 4. The Western Cape Education Department formulated the Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) which has guaranteed teen mothers a right to education in public schools from 2003.

Ball (1994:10) defines policy as "both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended". Ball (1990) argues that policies are the operational statement of values and project images of an ideal society. In South Africa, De Clercq (1997:145) extends the description of policy to include "decisions, courses of action and/or resource allocation designed to achieve a particular goal or resolve a particular problem". De Clercq goes on to analyse policies either as rational activities aimed at resolving group conflict over

allocation of resources and values, or as exercises of power and control and the authoritative allocation of values between different social groups.

The MLPP was formulated to resolve the teen mothers' problem of not being allowed in public schools as learners. Based on Ball's (1994) description of policy, it is essential that, when analysing policy, the focus should be on discourses and the interpretation which links the policy text to its implementation in the practical situations.

In the analysis, I will use Pillow's *feminist genealogy* which encompasses Foucauldian theories of historical and discursive interests performed through power and bodies. The feminist genealogy will help me to unravel the perceptions of the schools and communities with regards to teen mothers, and what this means for interpretation and implementation of the MLPP in public schools in the province. According to Pillow (2004), genealogy as a form of analysis interrupts simple reversal strategies of displacement. In addition, Ferguson (1991:327) notes that genealogy displays how what is taken for order is described by flux and discord.

On the one hand, Foucault's work has reconceptualised history, power, subjects and political discourse. *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality* (1978) represent his genealogical method best. On the other hand, Pillow's feminist genealogy builds upon Foucault's work by focusing her analysis upon historical and cultural decision-making with particular attention to how gender, race, sexuality and class shape the policy process (Pillow, 1997). Pillow notes that genealogy repeatedly questions conditions under which policy is produced, and this makes it a significant method in policy analysis.

The idea here is that educational policies, like the MLPP, do not develop in a vacuum, but rather are affected by beliefs, values and attitudes situated in discourses. The discourses in turn affect schools' interpretation and implementation of the policies (Pillow, 2004). That is, the societal values and

beliefs have an impact in the shape of policies because these [policies] cannot be divorced from interests, conflict, domination and/or justices (Ball, 1990a:3). Nevertheless, in some instances events can change the values of the society, for instance the transition of the South African government from apartheid to a democratic dispensation in 1994 enhanced the respect for human rights e.g. everybody having the right to education. Because of this principle of equality and inclusion, teen mothers can no longer be expelled from public schools due to their status.

The chapter is organised as follows:

- Section 6.1 explains the feminist genealogical method used in the analysis of the MLPP and how I gathered data about the policy;

- Section 6.2 explains the drafting of the MLPP and gives a detailed description of the policy;

- Section 6.3 discusses the strength and weaknesses of the policy;

- Section 6.4 discusses how the language of the MLPP has impacted on the provision of education to teen mothers in public schools; and

- Section 6.5 summarises the chapter.

6.1 Method of analysis

A feminist genealogical approach was used to analyse the impact of the MLPP on the education processes for teen mothers based on the theories of Pillow (2004). Thereafter, I provide details about data gathering for the analysis of the MLPP.

6.1.1 Feminist genealogy approach

Based on the later works of Foucault (e.g. *History of Sexuality* appearing in volumes 1, 2 and 3), genealogy is concerned with current, local, regional and marginal struggles. When using a genealogical approach, the analysis traces not only presences in policy discourse and practice, but also absences i.e. what is not made available (Pillow, 1997). Such analysis admits that "policy is as much constructed by denials of needs as by meeting them" (Gordon, 1990:11). Using this approach, I will trace the presences and absences (i.e. strengths and limitations) in the MLPP. This is important because the tracing of the construction of absences displays a proliferative relationship between what is made and what is absent in the discourses constructing teen mothers and teenage pregnancy as a social problem (Pillow, 2004). In addition, Pillow notes that what is articulated and what is not during debates about teen mothers reproduce each other in a binary relationship. In other words, discourses are constituted by exclusions as well as inclusions, by what cannot as well as what can be said. Pillow argues that understanding the proliferative relationship between binary discourses is key to tracing the discourses locating teen pregnancy. For instance, there are discourses that characterise schooling teen mothers as deviant and therefore allow punitive ideological construction of policy responses to the girls; at the same time, some discourses locate teen mothers as learners with special needs and therefore needing support.

Ball (1990a) cautions that policy-making in a plural society is often unscientific and irrational, whatever the claims of policymakers may be to the contrary. That is, in some instances, abstract accounts incline towards tidy generalities and often fail to capture messy realities of influence, pressure, conflict, compromise, resistance, error, opposition and pragmatism in the policy process (Ball, 1990: 9). In the analysis of the MLPP I shall identify the exclusions [omissions] and inclusions in the policy and discuss how these impact on its implementation, hence affecting teen mothers' education.

According to feminist genealogy, the formulation of policies is about regulation, reproduction and surveillance of certain bodies. In the case of the MLPP the bodies refer to pregnant and mothering teens. This body is socially seen as sexually active, and as a site of debate, alarm, fear, scorn and shame; and a symbol of all that is wrong (Pillow, 2004:10). All these necessitate the bodies to be controlled. Foucault (1978:146) argued that control of sexuality is "becoming the theme of political operations, economic interventions and ideological campaigns for raising standards of morality and responsibility". Teen pregnancy is constructed as a social problem (Nathanson, 1991) and as a problem it "embodies particular economic and social interests as well as normative assumptions about cultural meaning and what constitutes legitimate expression" (Trudell, 1993). In most cases, teen pregnancy leads to single parent families and/or poor families which result in poor environments for creating self-sufficient, rational and upwardly mobile children (Pillow, 2004). All these justify the containment and control of the teen mothers.

6.1.2 Data gathering for the analysis of MLPP

Using the feminist genealogical approach, I traced the origins of the MLPP based on interviews with the WCED officer who co-ordinated the drafting and dissemination of the policy to public schools. From this interview I wanted to find out:

a. What triggered the formulation of the MLPP?

b. Who was involved in the drafting of the policy?

c. What was the perception of society after the introduction of the policy?

d. Why were pregnant girls being expelled from school before the MLPP?

e. What were the socio and political values that influenced the old regulation on the expulsion of pregnant girls from school?

I was interested in this information so that I could relate it to the implementation of the policy, that is, how the policy is impacting on the schooling of the teen mothers. With this in mind, I was also interested in tracing how schools have managed to replace the old regulations on learner pregnancy with this new policy. This information was gathered through interviews with principals of sampled schools in this study. Finally, I analysed the policy document, relating it to information gathered from schools during interviews. I needed to trace all this information so that I could understand how public schools are complying with and implementing the MLPP in relation to teen mothers' schooling.

6.2 Drafting and description of the MLPP

Prior to 2003 the conduct of public schools vis-à-vis issues related to teen pregnancy was governed by the section on teenage pregnancy contained in "Circular 0077/98: *General Manual for Suspension and Expulsion of Learners from Public Schools (excluding public schools for learners sent or transferred thereto in terms of the Child Care Act, 1983 [Act 74/1983] and or the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 [Act 51/1977]*)" (see Appendix: X). Under this regulation, pregnant girls were expelled from school because pregnancy out of wedlock was considered bad conduct. That is, the pregnancy meant that the girls had been sexually active, the behaviour which the school and the society considered to be a misconduct. Expulsion was also meant to prevent the spreading of the bad behaviour to other learners.

The MLPP replaces the section on teenage pregnancy contained in *Circular 0077/98: General Manual for the Suspension and Expulsion of Learners from Public Schools*. The section recommended that public institutions force pregnant girls to withdraw from school. This regulation was implemented based on the apartheid system of government (pre-1994) which did not have much respect for human rights, and it discriminated against people based on race. The other races had less educational opportunities than the whites. Now that the country is democratic, everybody, regardless of race or gender, has equal human rights,

such as the right to education. Since 1994 the country has initiated a plethora of education policies that are pulling together strands of diversity in terms of racial, gender, cultural, educational, economic class backgrounds and interests. Sayed and Jansen (2001: 281) state that the policies rely heavily on stated claims to address inequalities, confront the apartheid legacy and to promote equity, redress democracy, transformation, lifelong education and training and access [to education] for all. The post-apartheid education policies have been described as symbolic, substantive and redistributive (De Clercq, 1997). Thus, the new South African education policies spell out what the government should do and aim to change the allocation of resources among social groups so that every citizen has equal opportunities.

6.2.1   Factors that triggered the formulation of the MLPP

According to the WCED officer responsible for the co-ordination of the MLPP, the new constitution and the South African Schools Act, 1996, triggered the formulation of the policy. The two entities emphasise the rights to education of all citizens in the country.

6.2.1.1   Role played by the new constitution in the formulation of the MLPP

Chapter 2 of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees fundamental rights to every citizen. These are rights that people of the country are entitled to as human beings. The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and many nations including South Africa accept that all people are entitled to fundamental rights which, among others, include the right to education and equality as stated in Section 29 and 9 of the Bill of Rights as contained in the Constitution of the RSA Act 108/1996 respectively.

After adopting the new constitution, many policies were revised to be in line with the Bill of Rights. The section on teenage pregnancy contained in Circular 0077/98: *General Manual for the Suspension and expulsion of Learners from*

Public Schools contradicted the right to education as stated in Section 29 in Subsection 2 of the Bill of Rights:

> In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives taking into account
>
> (a) equity;
>
> (b) practicability; and
>
> (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

The section about teenage pregnancy in Circular 0077/98 was introduced based on discriminatory laws and practices of apartheid. As such, equity was not taken into account. Since it was normal to treat individuals unequally, denying some individuals access to education before 1994 was not forbidden in the country. However, Section 9 Subsection 2 of the Bill of Rights states that "equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms" and subsection 3 states that:

> The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, **pregnancy,** marital status, ethnic or social origin, age, disability, religion, language and birth.

Based on these rights, there would have been a contradiction if public schools continued to deny pregnant and/or mothering learners access to schooling in the post-apartheid South Africa. According to the Bill of Rights that affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom, the girls could no longer be treated unfairly or be excluded from school on the grounds of pregnancy or mothering. As such the section about teenage pregnancy contained in Circular 0077/98 which recommended the expulsion of these girls had to be revised. In the Western Cape Province, the Department of Education replaced the section with the MLPP. The new policy was introduced in public schools in 2003.

6.2.1.2 Role played by South African Schools Act, 1996

The South African Schools Act, 1996 aims at providing "for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools; to amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools; and to provide for matters connected therewith". After the transition to the democratic government in 1994, South Africa required a new Schools Act which would redress past injustice in educational provision and provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners. Chapter 2 of the Act under admission to public schools Subsection 1 states that:

> A public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way.

According to this section, public schools have the obligation to admit learners and make sure that their educational requirements are met. This means that pregnant learners who in the past were not allowed in public schools now have the right to be at school; and the school should make sure that the learners' educational needs are not curtailed. Because girls [including teen mothers] have the right to education, it was essential to change the old school regulation which required pregnant girls to withdraw from public schools.

6.2.2 The drafting of the MLPP

The WCED officer, who co-ordinated the drafting of the MLPP indicated that the need for revision of the policy affecting the schooling of teen mothers initially arose from parents' complaints that schools were denying their daughters access to schooling due to their pregnancy. These parents were probably aware of their human rights and the right to education as stated in the Bill of Rights. Based on the statistics that showed an increasing number of schoolgirls falling pregnant, and complaints from parents, the regional education department saw it necessary to come up with a policy to address the problem.

Participants at the drafting meetings were principals of schools, members of the representative council, and District Education officials. International organisations like UNESCO, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), provided the framework or basis of thinking during the drafting of the policy. After the drafting, the policy was submitted to the department's legal advisor to check the legality of the draft. The necessary changes were made and finally the draft was submitted to the provincial Minister of Education for signature before it was disseminated to public schools in the province. It is interesting to note that the voice of stakeholders such as teen mothers and their parents were not included in the formulation of the policy.

6.2.3 MLPP description

The MLPP recommends that the individual school's regulations and the code of conduct for learners should make provision for pregnant and mothering learners within the framework of the document. For instance, it recommends that:

(i)   matters relating to learner pregnancy must be treated with great sensitivity and confidentiality; and

(ii)   the learner must be considered to be a learner with special needs and should have access to professional counselling.

When the pregnancy has been reported to the principal of a school, and the learner chooses to continue attending school, the policy requires that the principal should ask the parents and/or the pregnant girl herself to obtain a medical certificate for official use at the institution. The certificate should provide possible dates of confinement, i.e. the date from which it would be medically advisable for the learner to be absent from school before and after confinement.

The policy also recommends that the school and parents of the pregnant learner should sign an agreement which clearly states that during the time the girl attends school, she is doing so at her own risk; i.e. the school is indemnified from

accountability from any pregnancy-related injuries or accidents and that no alternative or logistical arrangements can be demanded from the school. It could be argued that agreements like this could be the reason why schools don't consider the needs of the girls. The policy also requires the principal to make it clear to the teen mother that when she returns to school after the birth, she will not be allowed to bring the baby with her.

With regard to the Grade 12 pregnant learners, the policy recommends that those who would be 32 or more weeks pregnant on the 1st October could:

(a)   write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations (SCE) in a separate room at the school or in a separate venue in the vicinity (of the school);

(b)   write the SCE at another centre as a private candidate if she chooses to terminate full-time school attendance; or

(c)   enter for the supplementary examinations in the following March.

In cases where the pregnancy is less than 32 weeks advanced on 1st October and the learner chooses to sit for the SCE, the policy recommends that she could:

(a) write the October/November SCE at her own school;

(b) write the SCE at another school in the vicinity or at a special examination centre; or

(c) write at a special examination centre as a private candidate should she decide to terminate full-time school attendance.

According to the policy, the educational consequences of learner pregnancy and parenting do not just stop with the girls; rather they are bound to have a negative impact on the girls' offspring as well. In other words, without proper education, the teen mothers will not have skills needed to become self-supporting and

economically productive citizens. This often results in their children entering the education system with economic and developmental disadvantages. Therefore, schools should act cautiously in matters of learner pregnancy. It is important that the school handles the situation from an educational and value driven perspective so that the teen mother's future as well as that of her offspring is not jeopardised.

6.2.4 Implementation of the MLPP

Although public schools can no longer deny teen mothers access to schooling per se, they may limit these girls' educational successes by restricting or barring their ability to participate in some educational activities. For instance, there is evidence in this study and elsewhere (Schultz, 2001) that schools and communities look on teen mothers as unfit subjects for education. No special programmes or facilities are provided to support the girls' schooling processes (Brake, 1994).

The MLPP affirms that teen mothers have a right to education, but what this necessitates has not been precisely established under case law. The interpretation of the policy has been left to individual schools. This is noted as a flaw in the policy since the schools' understanding of the policy can sometimes exclude the girls' right to educational processes. Although the policy makes it imperative that schools ensure that rights of female learners are not curtailed and that special measures are taken in respect of pregnant and mothering learners in public schools, there is no case law to guide the provision of equal schooling processes to such girls, or to determine implementation guidelines for schooling of teen mothers under the policy. Pillow (2004) argues that lack of case law in situations like these may be linked with societal thinking and school personnel's attitude towards the education of teen mothers. The attitudes develop in the discursive climate which questions the provision of teen mothers' education in the public schools.

The discursive climate is made up of the discourses of contamination and 'othered' subjects. The former justifies the exclusion of teen mothers from public schools based on the fear that the girls might spread their 'sexual immorality' to other learners. The latter involves the shift between discourses and policies that consider education for teen mothers not as a right but rather as a responsibility (Luttrell, 1997). The problem here is that such discursive climates affect the interpretation and implementation of the educational policy for teen mothers.

An analysis of the MLPP and how it is implemented in the public schools show that the policy is in some instances strong and in others weak. The strengths and limitations of the MLPP and how they affect the provision of quality education to teen mothers are discussed in Section 6.3.

6.3 Strengths and limitations of the MLPP

There are a number of strengths and limitations within the policy. Section 6.3.1 spells out the strengths of the policy with regards to provision of education to teen mothers, while Section 6.3.2 discusses the limitations of the policy.

6.3.1 Strengths of the MLPP

According to my analysis, the MLPP has four major strengths vis-à-vis promoting teen mothers schooling. These are:

(i) The policy guarantees teen mothers the right to remain in school during pregnancy or after becoming mothers;

(ii) It recommends provision of professional counselling to teen mothers;

(iii) It recommends that pregnant learners should get schoolwork during the time when the learner is medically unfit to come to school; and

(iv) It provides definite steps to be followed by schools and pregnant SCE candidates.

These will be discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

6.3.1.1 The MLPP guarantees teen mothers the right to remain in school

The MLPP clearly states that teen mother learners should have access to education comparable to other learners in public schools. The policy emphasises that it is imperative that the schools ensure that the rights of female learners are respected and special treatment is accorded to pregnant learners. That is, whether or not school personnel and communities think teen mothers are fit schooling subjects, the MLPP guarantees the right of the girls to an education equal to their peers. This means that any practice that excludes the girls from schooling is illegal.

Because the girls have the right to remain in schools, no one has the right to force them to stop attending classes or to transfer to another school (which could be far from their homes). However, should the pregnant or mothering learner choose to change schools or drop out of school for whatever reason, for instance embarrassment with her status, she is free to do so.

Regardless of the learner's choice, the MLPP obliges the principal of the school to supply comprehensive information to the learner and her parents concerning all the appropriate health and guidance services available in the community, in the school system and the EMDCs. This coincides with what the National Council on Illegitimacy (NCI) advocated in the USA in 1968, that "the public school alone, or in conjunction with other community institutions, has an obligation to furnish her (the teen mother) with separate facilities, educationally centered, and enriched through health and welfare services". Unfortunately, the public schools that participated in this research do not consider such enlightenment and provision as their obligation. Instead the schools regard anything to do with pregnancy or mothering of school girls as a private matter.

6.3.1.2 Provision of counselling to teen mothers

The MLPP requires public schools to consider pregnant learners as 'Learners with Special Needs' with access to professional counselling. The counselling is provided within the EMDCs by professionals of the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES). The policy requires that principals should co-ordinate the counselling whenever there is a pregnancy case in their respective schools.

More than 80% of educators who participated in this study agreed that professional counselling is necessary to schooling teen mothers. They [educators] perceived that the counselling would help the girl deal with the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy, which in most cases affects the ego of the girl, resulting in very low self esteem. According to Lerner (1985), who theorises from a psychologist's perspective, low self esteem is a major cause of low academic achievement. She further argues that "self esteem is based on success in meeting the test of reality measuring up to standards at home and in school" (Lerner, 1985). In addition, the theory of self esteem maintains that individuals need to feel good about themselves in order to perform well, and that is why all learners need positive self esteem (Vitz, 1995). The argument here is that counselling services for teen mothers would help to deal with the stigma, hence taking away the cause of low self esteem among these girls. If the girls are freed from the stigma against teen motherhood, they would feel good about themselves and be able to perform well in school.

However, according to the teen mothers who participated in this study, schools do not make this provision available to them and they [teen mothers] actually know nothing about the counselling service. It may be speculated that the principals do not furnish the teen mothers with this information because they [principals] do not understand the policy, or it is simply negligence on the part of the principals. That is, some principals may choose not to act according to the policy because the process could be time-consuming and this may require them

to put their usual tasks of serving hundreds of learners on hold just to serve one learner.

6.3.1.3 Pregnant learners can access schoolwork during confinement

The policy provides pregnant learners with two options concerning their schooling. The options are:

(i) To continue attending classes as long as it is medically permissible. During confinement the school should make learning materials and support available to the learner; or

(ii) To withdraw from school and take own responsibility for continued education.

The former option looks appealing to those who would like to minimise disruption due to pregnancy because it allows the girl to cover the curriculum at the same time with her peers. She could therefore manage to finish secondary school with her class or within one year of the intended graduation. In addition, this option does not only save the learner valuable time, but also avoids the problem of ageism. However, in practice this option may not be easy. The reasons behind this are twofold. First, with regards to complying with the MLPP, many schools would go only as far as not expelling teen mothers from school. That is, the schools are not providing any extra support to teen mothers as stipulated in the policy. For instance, teachers do not make schoolwork or lessons available to absent girls due to pregnancy or mothering. Further, the policy does not specify who should bring the learning materials to the girl during confinement. It may not be a straightforward matter for school personnel to organise and send the schoolwork because the personnel often situate the issue of pregnancy as outside the realm of the school. As Pillow (2004: 98) has argued, school administrators reinforce the ideology that pregnancy is not something the school or educator should deal with. Considering these issues, not many schools would make the effort to make learning materials available to teen mothers during

confinement. Limited resources in schools could also account for the lack of implementations. The issue of resources is developed in Chapter 7.

6.3.1.4 Provision of definite steps to be followed by pregnant SCE candidates

Clause 3 of the MLPP is clear on the steps a public school should follow when a full-time Grade 12 learner falls pregnant. The principal of the school should report the pregnancy and submit a medical certificate as proof to the Examinations Director. As explained in Section 6.2.3, if the pregnancy will be 32 or more weeks advanced on 1st of October, the learner can choose to write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations at her school but isolated from other candidates, or she can choose to sit for the examination as a private candidate.

In this case [where the girl is at least 32 weeks pregnant], the candidate is given options about when and where to sit for the examinations, with definite steps that can be followed by the school and the learner. The steps make it easy for the schools to implement the requirement. This study has evidence on this practice. From the interviews with principals it was learnt that some public schools have had such processes implemented in their schools. The schools followed exactly what is spelled out in the policy document. For instance, the principal of School T narrated that:

> Two years ago we had a girl who was heavily pregnant during the Matric Examinations, so we let her sat for the examination ... but she was writing the examinations in a separate room from other candidates, because we did not want to disturb other candidates in case something happens to the pregnant girl during the examinations.

According to Clause 3 of the MLPP, what the principal did was exactly what the schools should do when they have candidates who are 32 or more weeks pregnant when sitting for the matric examinations.

6.3.2 Limitations of the MLPP

Despite the explicit protection of access to schooling under the MLPP, there is evidence, as the research results in Chapter 4 reiterate, that exclusionary practices against teen mothers in schools continue to date. These practices continue, probably due to the weaknesses of the policy. The analysis of the policy in this study identified the following three limitations:

(i) It does not define how schools are to interpret and implement the issues for provision of quality education to teen mothers;

(ii) It is silent on some issues pertaining to teen mothers' education; and

(iii) There is a lack of monitoring of the implementation of the policy.

6.3.2.1 Leaving the interpretation and implementation to individual schools

The interpretation of the MLPP on some issues was left to the individual schools. In the cases where the interpretation is voluntary, the schools have used the policy ambivalently, resulting in insufficient assistance to the teen mothers in public schools. For instance, Clause 2.1.1 of the MLPP states that:

> the learner must be considered to be a Learner with Special Needs with access to counselling by professionals of the Specialised Learner and Educator Support component within the EMDC. The principal must manage and co-ordinate this process.

The clause requires that schools should make provisions to aid the schooling of pregnant learners. Although there are a number of special needs that learners require for successful learning, the clause has mentioned only counselling, hence leaving the rest to the schools to identify and define a course of action for the other special needs. Examples of such needs are the provision of special seats for pregnant learners for their comfort in classrooms, allowing the girls to put on loose clothing instead of the usual uniform which may be too tight for the growing

belly, and a flexible curriculum which could allow teen mother to make up lessons missed due to demands of parenthood.

Responses from school principals and teachers in this study have shown that many public schools are doing little with regard to complying with the MLPP. Although schools stopped expelling pregnant or parenting female learners, there is limited support provided to the girls during their schooling. This happens despite the fact that teen mothers are supposed to be treated as learners with special needs. My results are in line with Zellman's (1981) study done in the USA which revealed that public schools did not dismiss teen mothers but were most likely to do no more than forbid the girls' expulsion from school. The actions and ambivalent use of the policy by public schools can be argued to be tantamount to a form of constructive expulsion of the girls. That is, the actions are in a way forcing the girls out of school.

Leaving the interpretation of the policy to the schools may have also resulted in the individual schools not being sure about who exactly is responsible for meeting the educational needs of the teen mothers. For instance, is it the schools' responsibility? Or is it the responsibility of social welfare agents and community organisations?

Also affecting the interpretation and implementation of the policy is the lack of case law to enforce or to guide the provision of equal educational services for teen mothers. Case law regarding this provision could have brought to the surface the "intricacies of what it means to have access to equal educational opportunity... and which daily practices of schools are discriminatory" (Pillow, 2004: 62). On the question of why there have been no cases regarding access to equal education for teen mothers, Pillow (2004) suggests that legal challenges are lengthy, time-consuming and costly. In addition, many girls may not be aware of their educational rights or may not have the support to challenge the schools' accountability. It is argued that the lack of case law on the education of teen mothers speaks loudly about the status of education of the girls and means that

decisions on what to do with these learners continue to be left to the individual educators in the schools (Luttrell, 2003). In the South African context, culture could play a big role on why such case law may not be available. For instance, many rape cases are either never reported or withdrawn within two days after reporting them to the police – why? It is because the rape survivors are treated so badly by so many (Smith, 2004:1). Based on this argument, teen mothers at school may also not report their harassment to school authorities, for fear of being mistreated by others.

Determining accountability of schools with regards to implementing the MLPP is very limited due to unavailability of data about teen mothers in schools. The lack of data also makes it difficult to determine the schooling experiences of the girls. As a result of limited accountability, "schools and school communities, working in the discursive climate surrounding schooling of teen mothers, continue to question and challenge whether teen mothers fit into public schools" (Pillow, 2004: 57).

For an effective interpretation, the MLPP framers should have foreseen these negative effects and clarified the document before handing it to schools. There is need for the policy to include or develop programmes which schools should follow when dealing with teen mothers, if these girls are to receive education comparable to that of their peers.

6.3.2.2 Omissions in the policy

Analysing the MLPP and relating it to interviews I had with teen mothers and their educators, I discovered that some necessary information which some clauses of the policy should deal with is omitted. The policy does not specify some issues and how things could be done in order to successfully achieve the final goal – which is to help teen mothers continue with their education with as little disruption as possible. Table 6.1 provides some clauses of the policy and what I noted to be

omitted within the recommendations. The discussion in this section is based on the omissions as summarised in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: shows some clauses of the MLPP and what they omitted within the recommendations

Policy clause	Contents	Omission
2.1.4 (f)	The principal must convene a meeting with the learner and her parent(s) or guardian(s) to make it clear that, when the learner returns to school after the birth, she will not be allowed to bring the baby with her.	There is no indication what the girl should do with her baby when she returns to school.
2.4.2	It is essential for the learner concerned that her education should continue with as little disruption as possible. Alternatively suitable arrangements must be made to cover the curriculum. This means that lesson notes and assignments must be made available to her and that she must take responsibility for completing and returning the assignment to the school for continuous assessment (CASS).	The clause does not specify who should be responsible for the task of transporting the assignments.
4	In order to balance the parental responsibilities and educational needs of learners who are parents, partnerships with Education Support Services, Social Service and Health should be forged within the EMDCs.	Policy does not specify how these partnerships could be forged, where the structures would be, or who would fund them.
—	—	No guidelines to how schools can deal with absenteeism of teen mothers due to parenting issues.
—	—	There is no provision of counselling to parents of teen mothers.
—	—	Teachers need to be equipped with knowledge with regards to handling teen mothers.

As shown in Table 6.1, clause 2.1.4(f) of the policy states that a principal of a school should make it clear to the learner and her parents that when the girl returns to school after the birth, she will not be allowed to bring the baby with her. While it is clear that bringing the baby to class could be disruptive to the learning process of both the girl and the other learners, the policy does not clarify what the

girl should do with her baby while she is attending classes. This omission could be critical because childcare is one of the reasons many teen mothers fail to attend classes regularly. As Pillow (2004) notes, childcare is consistently listed as one of the major obstacles a teen mother encounters during schooling. Therefore, the silence of the policy on the way forward for the girl and her baby could be interpreted that schools should assist the girls on child caring so that they can attend classes regularly and/or complete schoolwork on time. Or the teen mother should solve this issue on her own.

Clause 2.4.2 states that lesson notes and assignments must be made available to the pregnant learner during confinement. This is important because the learners should be continuously assessed just like their fellow learners attending classes. This also means little disruption on the girls' education process. However, the policy does not specify who should be responsible for bringing the schoolwork to the pregnant girl. Such omissions create loopholes, allowing schools to evade making the schoolwork available to the girls, since, as Wolf (2002) notes, schools demonstrate ambivalences toward education of teen mothers; educators are unsure whether the girls' schooling processes are really the school's responsibility or the responsibility of the social welfare agencies and community organisations. Zellman's (1981) study about responses of schools to teen pregnancy and parenthood found that in most cases schools develop assistance programs for teen mothers only under external pressure.

Clause 4 states that in order to balance the parental responsibilities and educational needs of learners who are parents, partnerships with Education Support Services, Social Service and Health should be forged within the EMDCs. More than four years after the policy was introduced in schools, the research interview with the EMDC office shows that there has as yet been nothing put in place to help teen mothers with parental responsibilities. Schools could in a way account for such absence because they [schools] are usually reluctant to report matters such as asking for help for teen mothers since pregnancy issues may reflect a lack of discipline in the institutions.

The silence of the policy on how these partnerships could be forged, where the structures would be, or who would fund them, could be reasons why nothing has been done. Without provision of funds to support development of school-based programmes for teen mothers, schools and communities have little incentive to proactively develop such programmes (Pillow, 2004). The absence of physical support in caring for the babies while teen mothers attend classes prevent many girls from utilising their right to continue with education. In other words, the MLPP would hardly achieve its goals if structures assisting teen mothers to take care of their babies remain unavailable to the girls.

The policy is also silent on the point of dealing with the absenteeism of mothering teens from school. For instance, how would a school deal with absenteeism of the teen mothers due to parenting, for example, when a girl has to take her baby for medical attention or when the baby cannot be allowed into a crèche because it has an infectious disease? Since the policy is silent on absenteeism, often teachers do not volunteer to assist teen mothers to catch up on any missed schoolwork.

Another issue affecting teen mothers at school is teasing. Most of the girls I interviewed expressed concern about some of their fellow learners who perpetually tease them because they have babies. Unfortunately, the girls do not know where they can report such issues. They do not feel comfortable reporting this to their teachers, since some of the teachers also scold them in front of the other learners.

Teachers and other learners may be aware that teen mothers have the right to be in school because the policy says so. But they may also be aware that the policy does not indicate consequences relating to the mistreatment of the girls. The maltreatment results from the discourse of contamination which implies that the girls are unfit for schooling. Due to the discourse of contamination, schools also perceive teen mothers as a danger to their fellow learners. This could be a manifestation of what Foucault described as reinstitution of control over the

woman's sexuality and the idea that these bodies are responsible for the sexual morality of the society. The people in the schools do whatever they can to push the girls away and avoid any association with them because they are 'abnormal' bodies which need 'normalisation' (Foucault, 1978).

The argument here is that the policy is silent on how schools can deal with their discrimination against teen mothers. Just by instructing schools not to expel the girls on the basis of pregnancy or mothering does not take away the discrimination the schools show against teen mothers. The ideal would have been for the policy to spell out the consequences for mistreating teen mothers on grounds of their status.

While the MLPP specifies that schools should ensure that teen mothers and their boyfriends (if they are schooling) have access to professional counselling by the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES), there is no provision of the same to parents of the teen mothers. Parents are usually emotionally affected when their daughters fall pregnant such that they [parents] may need counselling vis-à-vis accepting the girls and the situation, if they are to be of assistance in the girls' schooling.

Another issue is that the policy does not say anything about the need for in-service training for public school teachers and administrators on how to retain and offer continuous education to teen mothers. Results of this study have established that many teachers lack skills in dealing with teen mothers at school. Because teachers don't have the training to deal with the girls in a classroom situation, they [teachers] judge them in an uninformed way. The decision-making is in most cases influenced by the social ideologies that go against the idea of providing the girls with education not as 'a right', but rather as a responsibility for their children (Luttrell, 2003: 21). Some teachers do not respond to the educational needs of the teen mothers in the same manner as they do to other learners. Instead, punitive measures and derogatory messages are sent to the girls. In some cases the measures are worse when the girl's pregnancy is

showing, since, as Luttrell (2003) argues, the pregnant body provides a site for some teachers to convey negative messages to the girl. Luttrell further notes that such responses are manifested within the political climate and pressures of their communities which do not like to see teen mothers learning together with other learners. The actions of the teachers result in marginalising the teen mothers' access to equal educational opportunities.

6.3.2.3 Lack of provisions to monitor implementation of the policy

The office that co-ordinated the formulation of the MLPP indicated that it does not know whether the schools are effectively complying with the policy or not. Now, four years after the policy was sent to schools, there has not been any follow-up or monitoring on how the schools are complying with and implementing the policy. Looking at the implementation of the MLPP closely makes one aware of the limits to access to equal educational opportunity experienced by teen mothers.

There is evidence in this research and similar studies that schools interpret educational policies about teen mothers within limited scope – and they choose to take a passive stance toward provision of special services (Stamm, 1998). For instance, interviews with Life Orientation teachers and principals revealed that teen mothers are not treated in any special way in their schools, so that the schools make no special provisions to these girls. Schools do not make any effort to ensure that teen mothers' education continue with little disruption. Nothing is done to restore the girls' low self-esteem due to stigma attached to teenage pregnancy. Physically, regardless of the growing bodies of the pregnant girls, they still have to sit at the class desks just like all other learners. In addition, all the schools which participated in this study do not have bathroom breaks for pregnant learners, or childcare facilities.

If there were monitoring on the implementation of the policy, then the policy makers would have known that the schools are not fully complying with it, as is

the case at the Western Cape schools in this sample. Actions could have been taken to ensure that schools do comply with the policy so that teen mothers are treated with the respect they deserve as stipulated in the MLPP and are granted their right to education.

Table 6.2 gives a summary of the strength and limitations of the MLPP in relation to teen mothers' education processes.

Table 6.2: Summary of the strength and limitations of the MLPP

Strength of the policy	Limitations of the policy
It advises schools not to expel learners on grounds of pregnancy or motherhood because the girls have the right to education in public schools.	There is a lack of elaboration on how schools should interpret and implement some items for provision of education to teen mothers.
It recommends that a pregnant learner should have access to professional counselling once the school is aware of the pregnancy.	It does not itemise issues pertaining to teen mothers' education e.g. how schools should deal with absenteeism of teen mothers due to parenting.
It recommends that schoolwork should be made available to a pregnant learner during the dates she is medically unfit to be at school.	There is a lack of provision to monitor implementation of the policy so the Education Department cannot tell whether the schools are complying with the policy or not.
For pregnant learners who wish to sit for the SCE, it provides definite steps to be followed by schools and the candidates.	

6.4 The impact of the MLPP on teen mothers' education

Based on the analysis of the responses of the informers in my research, it can be argued that the MLPP is affecting schooling teen mothers both positively and negatively. It has been positive because the number of teen mothers attending

school is believed to be proportionally[10] bigger now than before the introduction of the policy.

The impact of the MLPP on teen mothers' education cannot be detached from the conceptions of the society on the problem of teenage pregnancy. Though the impact of the policy could be measured in terms of the number of teen mothers attending and completing school, its implementation is affected by what society says about teen mothers and what it [society] presumes about the girls as learners. In other words, the perception of the society contributes a great deal to the ambivalent use of the policy.

6.4.1 Number of teen mothers attending and succeeding with schooling

Under the MLPP all girls who fall pregnant or become mothers while schooling have the right to continue with their education. My interviews with the educators revealed that schools no longer dismiss girls because they are teen mothers. However, there is a lack of recorded data and account on these girls as learners. Consequently, questions like: how many teen mothers complete their secondary education, how many succeed, and how many fail to cope and drop out of school, cannot be answered with certainty.

However, my interviews with the principals and teen mothers show that the policy has positively impacted on the number of girls [teen mothers] coming back to school after the birth of their babies. Interviews with principals of schools (refer to Section 5.2.1) show that, in comparison with the years before 2003 and after, many of the girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy are continuing their education in the same schools. Though teen mothers in the research indicated that they were ignorant about the policy, they stated that they came back to their schools to continue with their education because they heard and also had seen that now public schools allow teen mothers to continue their education.

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[10] There is anecdotal information that before the MLPP some teen mothers who could afford to travel to schools far from their homes used to change schools after becoming mothers, so that their new schools did not know about the girls' status.

Unfortunately, many of these girls find it hard to balance the needs of parenthood and schooling and they eventually drop out before getting to the final year of their secondary school education. One of the principals in the study indicated that in most cases the success of the teen mothers

> depends on what level they were when they fell pregnant... most of the girls who get pregnant in Grade 11 and 12 [many] complete their secondary education but may not be successful. Those who fall pregnant in Grade 8 and 9 do not complete their secondary education (Principal, B school).

However, the limitations of the policy impact negatively on the girls' success. As argued earlier (Section 6.3.2) some of the limitations result in the girls not receiving quality education comparable to their peers. Schools may take advantage of the weaknesses of the policy to marginalise the teen mothers. Unfortunately the policy does not spell out the consequences the schools could face if they do not comply. Therefore, it can be argued that the limitations of the policy are contributing towards the failure of teen mothers to cope with schooling.

6.4.2 Schools' ambivalent use of the MLPP

As noted earlier, the interpretation of many aspects contained in the MLPP is left to the individual schools. As a result, schools have used the policy ambivalently. Most schools in the province are not doing anything more than allowing teen mothers to continue their education in the institutions. Unfortunately, there is no monitoring from the Education Department to ensure that schools are really complying with the policy, and the lack of monitoring enhances the ambivalent use of the policy.

The rules in the policy are meant to pave the way for education of teen mothers in public schools. Research by Weatherly et al (1985) has shown that educators often regard the presence of teen mothers at school as a problem but at the same time, they [educators] do not have adequate knowledge about the legal rights of the girls or about effective educational models for them. The problem of

educators not having sufficient knowledge could be dealt with if the policy recommended in-service training to equip teachers with the necessary skills on how to handle teen mothers in schools.

The interpretation and use of the policy is affected by what is said and what is presumed about teen mothers as learners. For instance, school personnel question if it is really the responsibility of the school to educate teen mothers, and if teen mothers are fit for education in public schools. One teacher indicated that:

> ...it is not the school's responsibility to make special provisions for teen mothers to attend classes regularly rather it is a private issue.

As argued earlier, attitudes like this result in the schools not complying effectively with the policy. School personnel are less likely to take initiatives to make any special provisions for teen mothers. Similar to the response by the teacher above, is what one principal of a public school in Pillow's (2004: 102) research in the USA said:

> We can't handle teen mothers at this school. We have enough going on at our school—you have been here in the hallways—it is not safe for a teen mother to be here when she is pregnant.

Such comments discourage pregnant learners from coming to school. And even after the pregnancy, teachers do not consider the girls as learners with special needs. For instance, the results of my study have shown that teachers do not revise missed lessons with a teen mother even when the reasons for missing classes are genuine. In such instances, teen mothers, in a way, lag behind with their schoolwork and in most cases it is difficult for them to make up for the missed lessons. As a result, the girls do not perform well during examinations which determine whether they should proceed to the next grade or not.

One example of ambivalent use of the MLPP is an incident which took place at Rocklands Senior Secondary School (one of the formerly disadvantaged schools in the province) at the beginning of 2007. The *Saturday Weekend Argus* 10

February, 2007 reported that the principal of the school refused a 17 year-old pregnant and married girl from returning to the institution at the beginning of the 2007 school year. The girl took the matter to the Department of Education. The department intervened and the girl was later allowed back to school. But the reversal of the principal's initial decision upset the girl's fellow learners and their parents. It was reported in the *Cape Argus* of the 13th February, 2007 that the girl was taunted on her first day back at school. The other learners did not want her at their school because she was pregnant.

According to the *Saturday Weekend Argus,* the principal indicated that there are no guidelines or specifications on how the school should handle pregnant and married learners. He further stated that his decision to expel the girl was based on her status as a married person and not on her being pregnant. However, the principal's argument is difficult to believe because during an interview with the paper, the District Education Director indicated that this learner is not the only married teenager in school in the province. He further commented that there are many others, especially in the formerly disadvantaged schools. Based on what the director said, it can be argued that this shows that the principal denied the girl access to schooling because she was pregnant; and that he made his initial decision with respect to the societal expectations of isolating a pregnant learner from others, to avoid contamination.

6.4.3 Societal influence affecting the use of the MLPP

The production of policies like the MLPP is usually influenced by values and attitudes embedded in societal discourses. In reverse, the discourses affect the school policy in creating or limiting the general policy options (Pillow, 2004). That is, "there are serious implications in many of the everyday decisions individuals make" which could be the "grounds for creative and unconventional forms of political and organizing struggle" (Mann, 1994:32). The Rocklands Senior Secondary School incident is a case in point. The reversing of the principal's

decision resulted in instability whereby other learners and their parents allegedly objected to the department's decision and planned to take action against the girl.

The instability arose because the director's decision, which is in line with the MLPP, was in conflict with the parents' and learners' conception which informed the principal's initial use and interpretation of the policy. The interpretation confirmed how the community conceptualises and characterises equal educational opportunities for teen mothers. That is, some parents and learners do not want the presence of pregnant girls in the public schools for fear of contamination. In addition, the pregnant body is considered to be abnormal and therefore in need of control, just as Foucault (1978) regards female sexuality and reproductivity as pathological and the sexuality and sexual activity of this body needing to be regulated and controlled.

The policy recommends that it is imperative that public schools should not dismiss girls due to pregnancy or motherhood. At the same time their presence among other learners is regarded as dangerous according to the discourse of contamination. Therefore, it is rational within this mindset for the parent body and the learners to use any means to force such girls out of school. After all, the policy does not recommend punitive actions against anyone who forces teen mothers out of the public schools. It can be speculated that the parents and the learners of Rocklands School were planning to take action against the pregnant learner because they did not see any negative consequence on their part should they force the girl to stop learning at the institution.

One of the aspects that influenced the old regulation that forced teen mothers out of school was the discourse of contamination. As such it can be argued that the policy may have underestimated the impact of the discourse when deciding where the education of teen mothers should take place. Evidence in this research has shown that many teen mothers are victimised at school due to the discourse. This means the girls' schooling is negatively influenced.

In order to create a learning environment free from the consequences of the contamination discourse, the policy could recommend that the girls be given a choice. This would mean choosing to continue with their schooling in the schools they attended before falling pregnant, or in a separate school where such girls could continue with their schooling. Those who feel they can cope within the normal school can stay but those who feel being separated from the normal will help them succeed with schooling, should be given a chance to be in separate institutions. However, the separate schools should be developed in such a way that the type and quality of education is comparable to the one in the mainstream school (Luttrell, 2003).

If the teen mothers were allowed to learn separately from other learners, the institution may recognise the needs of these girls and pay attention to them, unlike in the normal school where teachers are not able to give the teen mothers the attention they deserve. It may be argued that the teen mothers do not get attention in the normal school because teachers are often overworked and they [teachers] have to deal with many learners at a time.

The advantages teen mothers would have by schooling separately from other learners are that the learning environment and material would be designed to accommodate the needs of the girls, and teen mothers would avoid prejudices from other learners in the mainstream school. Because the learners have similar experiences, they could share their experiences and encourage one another not to give up on schooling.

Providing education to teen mothers in a separate environment could be a remedy for gender inequities, which are justified by the discourses that develop surrounding teen pregnancy/motherhood, in the normal school environment. In particular the discourses of 'contamination' and a teen mother as a 'wrong girl' justify why the girls are perceived as unfit in the mainstream school environment (Pillow, 2004; Luttrell, 2003). The separate learning environment for the teen

mothers, however, should be provided to ensure educational equity and not out of discourses influencing separation and contamination.

6.5 Chapter summary

Policy is what is enacted as well as what is intended. The MLPP is an educational policy which intends to encourage pregnant learners to continue with schooling and allow those who drop out of school due to pregnancy to come back to their schools to carry on with their education. This chapter has analysed the MLPP by tracing its origins and formulation and relating these to its implementation. The analysis of the policy itself has shown that some omissions in the policy have resulted in the schools not fully complying with it, hence marginalising the girls' access to education. The chapter has also discussed how the aspects of the policy affect teen mothers' schooling in the province.

Since the interpretation of the policy is left to individual schools, the analysis shows that schools are doing no more than forbidding the girls' expulsion from school. In other words, public schools are doing little to comply with the MLPP, and this is impacting negatively on the schooling of teen mothers in the schools.

Chapter 7 will give a detailed discussion on how the school environment affects the schooling of teen mothers. How the home environment impacts on the schooling of the girls is discussed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 7

Impact of the school environment on teen mothers

7.0 Introduction

Most of the features of teen motherhood are challenging and problematic. One of the most important of these features is the teen mother's capability to pursue education at least to the point of completing secondary school successfully (Ministère de l'Éducation,1998). The completion is very important for breaking the cycle of teenage pregnancy and poverty (Chevalier and Viitanen, 2001). Only by staying in school will the girls acquire the qualifications they need to enter the job market, where, increasingly, the demand is for skilled workers (Ministère de l'Éducation,1998).

In most cases, teen mothers, even those who may be mature, clever and competent for their age may not find it easy negotiating pregnancy, then caring for a baby and keeping up with schooling. Becoming a mother as a teenager is an enormous challenge that affects the particular components of the girl's life: her personal, family, social and school life. To meet the challenge, she must have a great deal of courage and determination; however, what a teen mother needs most is support from school and home (Ministère de l'Éducation,1998).

Schools on their own may affect teen mothers' success, depending on how much support they render to the girls. Similarly, how much support the home environment provides in terms of schooling, may affect their success. That is, the home environment may have an impact on how the school, and vice versa, responds to the teen mothers as learners. For instance, if the home environment does not provide opportunities for the girls to complete their academic assignments (homework), teachers would equate the incompletion with misbehaviour and\or laziness. On the other side, when this shows on the learners' school reports, parents usually give up on teen mothers. Figure 7.1 illustrates how the two environments affect teen mothers. This chapter concentrates on the impact of the school environment on teen mothers. The impact of the home environment is the focus of Chapter 8.
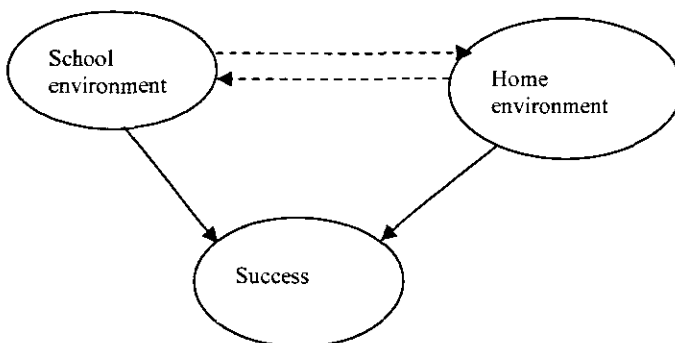
Figure 7.1: An illustration of how the school and home environments affect teen mothers

There is need on the side of the educators to assist the teen mothers come to terms with their motherhood (Luttrell, 2003). Schools are obliged by policy to offer teen mothers possibilities of continuing their education, which is crucial for the girls in order to be independent and self-sufficient. In other words, if schools could recognise the educational requirements of teen mothers and be empathetic and flexible in addressing their needs, that could be of great assistance to these learners. However, despite the schools' obligation and need to assist these

vulnerable learners, the analysis of interviews with teen mothers and educators in my research shows that teen mothers usually receive little support from school.

Academic qualification is important for the girls in order to be self-reliant. Therefore, it is necessary that schools ensure that teen mother learners have access to the full range of educational opportunities given to their counterparts (Pillow, 2004). In addition, schools need to treat teen mothers as learners with special needs in order to overcome aspects contributing to their [teen mothers'] decision to leave school during pregnancy. The teen mothers face changes occurring in their bodies and the discomforts associated with pregnancy. The discomforts make the teen mothers different from other learners and force them to attend classes irregularly. There are also psychological changes, whereby they have to adapt to their new situation and rapidly acquire maturity, judgment and a sense of responsibility (Ministère de l'Éducation,1998; Luttrell, 2003). Unfortunately, the transition to mature quickly may be incompatible with the activities of their counterparts and this may lead to their social life being subjected to conflict (Ministère de l'Éducation,1998).

This study has found that, in general, public schools in the Western Cape allow teen mothers to remain in school even during pregnancy. However, there is a general lack of respect for these girls within the institutions. For instance, in most cases they are not respected as learners with special needs by educators, there is lack of special provisions to accommodate them in schools, and the schools are inflexible when dealing with the situation of teen mothers. However, in some instances, the girls have exacerbated the situation by not taking full responsibility for their choices. Some teen mothers do not accommodate their new roles into their roles as learners.

The rest of the chapter is organised as follows:

- Section 7.1 analyses the impact of educators and fellow learners on teen mothers' schooling;

- Section 7.2 discusses the availability and deployment of special provisions to accommodate teen mothers in schools;

- Section 7.3 analyses the impact of public schools' inflexibility towards teen mothers;

- Section 7.4 discusses the role played by teen mothers in the scenario; and

- Section 7.5 summarises the chapter.

7.1 Impact of educators and fellow learners on the schooling of teen mothers

In most cases educators perceive teen mothers as badly behaved learners because their pregnancies confirm their sexual activity. Actually, (as stated in Chapter 6) this was the reason why in the past the learners were expelled from school. When the MLPP was introduced, the perception of the educators about teen mothers did not change. There have not been efforts by schools in conjunction with the Department of Education to revisit this perception. Consequently, despite their frontline position as service providers for the daily decision-making by the girls that impact on their educational experiences (Pillow, 2004), the teachers have retained the old perception, so their support of the teen mothers is usually insufficient. In some instances, the teen mothers are prejudiced against by their teachers and fellow learners at school.

7.1.1 Lack of support from educators

One way the teen mothers lack support at school is when their teachers are not willing to go through the lessons these girls miss due to demands of motherhood. For instance, in some cases a teen mother has to be absent from school for a length of time because she has to take her baby for medical attention. If the baby's health condition requires it to be hospitalised for a number of days, the teen mother has to miss classes for that whole period. On returning to class, some of these girls ask their teachers if they could go through what they have

missed during the time they were absent. Usually the teachers just advise the girls to go and ask their classmates about the lessons and nothing more is offered by the teacher. One LO teacher said:

> If it means missing out lessons, then the teacher will only tell her to consult her friends about what they have been learning when she was absent and if she has got questions she may ask the teacher but not that the teacher would go through the whole material again... and most teachers do not really feel sorry for a teen mother when she misses lessons because she was busy with her baby, because she is facing the consequences of her own behaviour (LO teacher, School B).

Denying the teen mothers the opportunity to make up for missed classes is one way public schools pressurise or force teen mothers to drop out of school or at least feel they are unfit for schooling. The denial could be a result of:

- educator's perception of teen mothers as bad role models, considering them a burden on the system because they need to be accommodated in a special way if they remain in schools; and

- prejudice against pregnant teens.

Nevertheless, it should also be acknowledged that in most public schools, teachers are usually overloaded with work as they have large numbers of learners in a class. Consequently, the teachers may not be able to assist teen mothers and other learners in a special way.

Some principals of schools force pregnant girls not to sit for the matric examinations at their schools, despite the girls' right to an education. The principals take such action allegedly to spare the school the embarrassment of having a high number of failures since pregnant learners are perceived to be lazy by educators, and the pregnancy itself as having a negative impact on academic performance. Such perceptions contradict research findings by Luttrell (2003) and Schultz (2001). These researchers found that pregnancies, the presence of

the children in the teen mothers' lives and the parental responsibility the girls felt gave them motivation to work hard at school.

It may be argued therefore, that the perception that teen mothers do not perform well during examinations because they are lazy, may not always be true. In the first place, the teachers are not willing to make up for missed classes, and this means the girls lag behind and are unable to master the school curriculum. Secondly, the principals are only concerned with the image of the school in terms of academic performance. They are not concerned with how they can support the teen mothers so that the girls are able to perform well during examinations. The principals choose a shortcut in order to maintain the good image of their schools.

If they were given the support necessary for their special needs, the teen mothers' schooling would not be disrupted so much. That would give them a chance to perform according to their real academic potential in their examinations. In other words, educators do not present themselves as a source of social capital to some learners, in this case teen mothers who are likely to be socially and academically at risk of failure. Croninger and Lee (2001:569) conclude that "supportive relationships and guidance from teachers increase the likelihood that socially and academically at-risk students complete high school". Croninger and Lee believe that social capital through positive and supportive relationships with educators has beneficial effects for all learners, including those who are at risk of failure. Access to social capital represents an important resource for learners with academic difficulties encountered due to social problems; and the more social capital such learners can get from educators the more likely they are to complete their schooling (Croninger and Lee, 2001).

Unfortunately, this study has found that usually educators do not empathise with the teen mothers in their schools. One of the reasons based on anecdotal information could be that some teachers, especially males, may not empathise with the girls for fear of being suspected they are having love affairs with the girls.

Some teachers, including females, do not show empathy because they do not want to be seen as condoning the teen mothers' immoral behaviour. For fear of the negative perceptions they [teachers] might suffer, they therefore distance themselves from the girls. In most cases the educators consider the teen mothers to be bad learners who need to be punished because of their sexuality. As Luttrell (2003) states, educators view pregnancy solely as a barrier to learning, achievement, and success. Thus, the educators have foreclosed on questions such as, "What would schools look like if educators took a stance of interest and curiosity rather than discipline and punishment toward girls' fertility?" (Luttrell, 2003:176). If educators could take a stance of interest, they could perceive the girls' sexuality and pregnancy/motherhood as a burden with meaning and potential insights. Educators could provide necessary attention aimed at assisting the girls to develop interest to succeed despite their predicament.

While we may expect educators to be supportive to teen mothers, they [educators] are not, because the teachers are not, "immune to the ... popular culture discourses constructing who the teen mother is and what her problems are" such that when dealing with the girls' situation, they enact such discourse in practice (Pillow, 2004: 218). The discourses influence the educators' lack of empathy. Through such discourses, they view the girls' sexuality and pregnancies and/or motherhood as a cause for correction and discipline, not for curiosity (Luttrell 2003). The correction and disciplining of the teen bodies is done because,

> teen sex raises fear in parents, school personnel and policy makers. Teen pregnancy in its embodiment is evidence that adolescent sexuality has not been contained and the pregnant teen body causes discomfort, morally and viscerally. The term 'teen pregnancy' indicates a pregnancy that is marked as wrong ... The pregnant body of the teen is visual evidence of what we fear and her changing, swelling, leaking body becomes the target and repository of these fears and

beliefs. Thus it is this body ... which we seek to control and contain, because the evidence of this body is literally in front of us (Pillow, 2004: 64).

Such sexual disciplining is also discussed by Foucault (1978: 30-31) who argues that,

> social controls, cropping at the end of the last century which screened the sexuality of couples, parents and children, dangerous and endangered adolescents – undertaken to protect, separate, and forewarn, signalling perils everywhere awakening people's attention to call for diagnoses, piling up reports, organising therapies.

Foucault furthers argues that in order to discipline the bodies and regulate society there was the construction of 'sexualisation' of children and 'medicalisation' of women. The 'sexualisation' of children was accomplished in the form of a campaign for the health of the race. On the other hand, the 'medicalisation' of the women's bodies was conducted in the name of the responsibility they [women] owed to the health of their children.... and the safeguarding of society (Foucault, 1978: 146-7).

The teen mothers pursuing their education in public schools have been subjected to such control, discipline and punishment because the discourses situate them as infectious and linked with inherent immorality, irresponsibility and social welfare dependency. Therefore, education for them is redefined as a social responsibility and not as a right. The educators respond to the teen mothers under an ideology of "equal to what they deserve" (Pillow, 2004:74). In some cases the educators have used a 'tough love' approach to the teen mothers. Thus, the girls got themselves into such situation and therefore, should be responsible for it. The discourses such as 'education as a responsibility' have reinforced the notion of teen mothers as unfit public schooling subjects hence lack of empathy by educators toward the girls.

7.1.2 Prejudice of teachers

In most cases teen mothers suffer negative reactions from their educators and fellow learners. The reactions take the form of shaming practices and undue hostility so that girls experience rejection which subjects them to being regarded as unfit schooling individuals.

The analysis of data in this research has shown that sometimes teachers ridicule teen mothers for simple mistakes in front of their fellow learners. In most cases the teachers use judgemental language when ridiculing the girls. The teachers are judgemental because the girls have become mothers. However, the teachers expect them [teen mothers] to be extra careful in their behaviour and not to make any mistakes. The teachers want the teen mothers to show their best behaviour all the time because they are perceived to be there [in school] not because they have a right to, but rather they have a responsibility to be educated.

Another reason why the teachers expect the teen mothers to be on their best behaviour is because society expects everybody parenting not to behave like a child. Although the teen mothers are in reality children (children having children), society does not spare the girls but expects them to assume their role as parents which means behaving like responsible adults. With respect to social values, teachers expect the girls to behave like responsible adults even in the classroom situation. As a result, teen mothers are watched more than other learners and the practice of surveillance increases stress on the girls. Even though the teen mothers are treated differently, with prejudice, they have a right to be treated with dignity like any other learner under the MLPP.

The embarrassment which the teachers cause to teen mothers due to being ridiculed in front of their fellow learners could have a negative impact on the girls. As discussed above, society regards teen mothers as adult individuals; therefore, it pains the girls to be insulted like little children by the teachers in front of their

fellow learners. The girls know that society views them as adults and therefore others should not treat them as little children.

Another impact the embarrassment may have on the girls is that many of the teen mothers are already experiencing the stress of unplanned parenthood, so some teens may respond to the teachers' attitude by choosing to drop out of school because school seems not to be a place for them. Cangelosi (2000:123) citing Ginott (1972), has shown that judgemental language that focuses on personalities is particularly detrimental to a climate of cooperation. Thus judgemental language has negative consequences.

Some teen mothers get annoyed and resist the teachers' use of judgemental language in the presence of the fellow learners, and retaliate at the negative remarks or attitudes they encounter. The teachers usually misinterpret the teen mothers' responses. They [teachers] interpret the teen mothers as being problem learners who are not worthy of empathy. Luttrell (2003: 18) observes that the regulation of 'proper conduct' for 'girls in their condition' (and the girls' resistance to this regulation) is a recurring source of conflict between the teachers and the teen mothers.

7.1.3 Prejudice of fellow learners

Some learners, especially boys, tease the teen mother learners about their condition. On the other hand, girls ostracise pregnant or mothering learners from social groupings at school. The fellow learners act this way because they do not want the teen mothers in their schools. The learners perceive the teen mothers as morally bad and that is why they got pregnant. Apparently, the way teachers respond to the teen mothers in school also impacts on how the fellow learners respond to the girls. For instance, when the teacher ridicules a teen mother in the presence of fellow learners, the action enhances the learners' perception that the teen mothers are bad and not fit for schooling.

In most cases, when the fellow learners are teasing the teen mothers, they [fellow learners] use sexually abusive language which defines the school as an environment which disempowers and excludes teen mothers as learners. Some teen mothers in this study indicated that they are helpless in the face of such maltreatment; they further noted that even though they face such harassment or misjudgements by their fellow learners, they cannot do anything about it but have to tolerate it. Such situations have a negative impact on the learning process. Cangelosi (2000) argues that due to threats e.g. teasing in the schoolyard, schools may be a frightening place for the affected learners, so they worry more about protecting themselves than they do about learning. The victimised learners cannot concentrate on their learning and this usually results in low performance in class (Lambert and McCombs, 1998).

Unfortunately, the teen mothers have nowhere to report their grievances. They cannot report their fellow learners' malpractice to the educators because the teen mothers have lost trust in their teachers; and they see the teachers as collaborators with the fellow learners against them as teen mothers. The girls know if they turn to the teachers with such complaints, the teachers will not side with them. If anything, the teachers will rebuke or embarrass them in front of the perpetrators. The flaw in this situation is that schools do not have policies which could define such response to the teen mothers as unacceptable. There are also no policies which could define the procedures teen mothers could follow when they feel wronged regarding their status. The absence of such policies or grievance procedures has left the girls with no support to deal with much of the harassment they encounter at school due to prejudice.

It may be argued that the absence of a grievance procedure at school could be a driving force for some teen mothers to look for justice elsewhere when they suffer harassment, especially when they are embarrassed because they are pregnant or mothering. Some of them report their cases to the gangs who could avenge them. However, such actions may well backfire and do more harm to the girls

than good. For instance, for fear of the gangsters, some teachers have responded to the teen mothers' action [reporting] by ignoring most of the things the girls do at school. For example, when a pregnant learner sleeps during a lesson, the teachers do not ask the learner to keep awake and concentrate because they fear the girl could misinterpret the encouragement for harassment. While it is clear that the teachers' action is driven by fear for their lives, they are at the same time excluding the girls from learning in class.

Since most of the teachers who participated in this study disclosed that they lack the skills to manage teen mothers in their classes, it may be argued that the teachers' attitudes towards the girls (which is sometimes construed as harassment) is such because they lack the knowledge. For example, the problem could be the unprofessional manner in which the teachers approach the teen mothers when they sleep in class. It may be necessary that teachers undergo in-service training so that they can be equipped with the proper skills to handle teen mothers in difficult classroom situations. The training may also help to lessen the teachers' prejudices towards the girls.

To avoid being prejudiced against at school (by both teachers and fellow learners) some girls resort to keeping their pregnancies invisible. This has been proved effective in combating prejudice (according to some teen mothers in my study), but the girls do not have peace of mind at school when hiding the pregnancy. They spend most of their time anxious for fear of being discovered. The anxiety may affect the concentration of the girls in class. As Lambert and McCombs (1998: 19) state, intense negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, panic, and insecurity) and related thoughts (e.g. fearing punishment, ridicule or stigmatising labels) generally detract from motivation, interfere with learning and contribute to low performance.

7.2 Provisions to accommodate teen mothers in schools

Schools and school policies usually relate to the provision of special needs or accommodation with some definition and understanding of disability (Pillow, 2004). Teen mothers can be provided with special services or accommodation in school only if they are special or disabled in some way. In other words, if teen motherhood (i.e. pregnancy and/or early parenting) is seen as a disability or a disease, then the girls can be provided with special accommodation in school.

According to the Department of Personnel Administration's (DPA) (2003) *Pregnancy Disability Law,* an individual is considered disabled if she is unable to perform one or more essential functions of her duties due to her pregnancy, childbirth or related health condition. As postulated by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) (2007) a disability relating to pregnancy may be one of the following types:

- Disability due to the pregnancy itself. This is when some women suffer side effects such as nausea, vomiting, indigestion, dizziness, and swollen legs and ankles, which may cause temporary or partial disability. These problems are usually minor. Labour and delivery may also cause temporary or partial disability.

- Disability due to complications of pregnancy. More serious complications such as infection, bleeding, early labour, or early rupture of the amniotic sac that surrounds the foetus during pregnancy may cause disability.

Pregnant teens are not immune to these factors that cause pregnancy-related disabilities. Nevertheless, the analysis of data for this study has shown that none of the public schools consider learner pregnancy as a disability. Schools treat the teen mothers as normal learners, despite the MLPP, which legitimised the educational rights of the girls [teen mothers], instructing that schools should treat

them as learners with special needs. It may be argued that the public schools in the province look at the pregnancy of the learners as having 'a cold'. When pregnancy is considered as 'a cold', as Pillow (2004:99) argues, then it [pregnancy] is temporary, not serious, and cannot inhibit learning; and while the pregnancy may impact on their school attendance, it will only briefly influence the girl's normal life as a learner. Thus, like a cold, there are no special accommodations for pregnancy; the learner should recover on her own. In addition, when the schools are influenced by the discourse of pregnancy as 'a cold,' it means that the teen mothers will not be entitled to any special treatment even after the birth of her baby. This also means that the girls do not have a right to special provisions, although pregnancy is viewed as an obstacle to learning (Luttrell, 2003).

Treating teen motherhood as having 'a cold' raises questions like:

- Is learner pregnancy really like having a cold?
- Can the teen mothers succeed with schooling without special treatment?
- What happens to teen mothers when they are not considered as learners with special needs?

These questions are explored in the subsequent sections of the chapter.

7.2.1 Professional counselling

According to the MLPP, the teen mother learner "must be considered to be a learner with special needs with access to counselling by professionals of the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES)". The policy states that the principal of the school where the teen mother is a learner must manage and coordinate the counselling process. However, the interview data for this research has shown that the teen mothers are not provided with the required counselling. The principals do not make an effort to ensure the girls go through the counselling though they [principals] acknowledge that counselling may help to deal with the stigma attached to teen motherhood. The principals perceive the stigma as the cause of the learners' low self-esteem which affects the girls'

academic performance. As stated earlier on, psychologists like Lerner (1985) also perceive low self esteem as a significant cause of low academic performance.

According to the EMDC officer, teen mother learners do not go through the professional counselling because the girls do not ask for it. This could mean that the principals do not organise or coordinate the counselling for the teen mothers because the girls do not request it. However, as shown in the analysis of data for this study, the teen mothers do not know that they have a right to professional counselling through their school. This means, the schools or principals have not shared this information with the learners. It is interesting to consider why the principals choose not to make this information available to teen mothers.

It may be argued that the principals do not agree with the idea that teen pregnancy/motherhood is more than 'a cold'; they still have the attitude of pregnancy or teen mothering as a 'cold' something which affects the girls for a short time and from which they recover within a short period of time. As such the teen mothers do not require any special treatment like counselling. The schools may choose to work under this discourse, which may mean not complying with the MLPP on the provision of counselling to the teen mothers, because they find the process of coordinating such provisions to be time-consuming. Coordinating counselling for a teen mother may mean putting their [principals'] usual tasks of serving hundreds of learners to a halt just to serve one learner. Since learner pregnancy among girls at a school does not happen at the same time, attending to each of the girls may be problematic. That is, if the principal has to pay attention to the coordination of counselling the learners as they get pregnant, then much of his/her time will be spent on this. As most of the educators who participated in this study indicated, they already do not have enough time for their duties so they cannot spare time to sort out problems of a teen mother. As one LO teacher narrates:

> I think learners today have got many social and psychological problems and there is need for every school to have a psychologist and a social worker because what happens is; I as a teacher identify a child with a problem which needs professional counselling I cannot leave the 39 learners and say take this one to a psychologist I have a job description which I need to fulfil like finishing the syllabus (LO teacher, School G).

According to this educator, the problem is that schools do not have psychologists and social workers who could be readily available for such provisions as counselling. Apart from teaching, educators do not have time for attending to other needs of the learners.

For some educators it is not really a question of time; rather they think schools should not engage in such business because the girls are deviant. Such educators view teen mothers within the discourse of 'wrong-girls' which scrutinizes pregnant teens' motivations as distinct from older (and especially married) women's motivations (Luttrell, 2003:27). The 'wrong-girl' motivations are understood as individual flaws e.g. a wish to receive unconditional love from a dependent object (the baby) or as a means of getting a "love object to ward off a depression or to counteract it" (Landy et al.1983 quoted in Luttrell, 2003). Luttrell argues that the discourse directs our understanding of the flaws as the source of the girl's problem. However, the 'wrong-girl' discourse has a choice-making version i.e. the girl is perceived to have an opportunity of making choices which could either be bad or good. The choice-making version blames the girls who make 'choices' that do not adhere to 'normative' life trajectories (i.e. finish school, get a job, find a male partner, marry, and have children) (Luttrell, 2003:28).

Influenced by this discourse, the educators view the teen mother as those who do not want to follow the normal life trajectories; they are deviant and therefore, they must be accountable for their bad choices. Due to having the attitude that the teen mothers are in this situation because they are deviant, educators like the principal of school T see no reason why these girls should be given professional

counselling or be treated as learners with special needs. When asked if her school provides professional counselling, she said:

> No! Why should we? Nothing! Why should we? We never said she must fall pregnant. ...I do not think there is a need because I have an attitude towards girls falling pregnant whilst at school...why don't they wait... there are all sorts of things like AIDS but they keep on falling pregnant.

The response of some girls who fall pregnant also enhances the schools' ideology of 'pregnancy as a cold' when responding to the needs of teen mothers as learners. Some girls resort to keeping their pregnancies secret in order to avoid being prejudiced against by educators and fellow learners at school. While the girls' intention is to safeguard themselves from prejudices, keeping pregnancies invisible reinforces the ideology of 'pregnancy as a cold'. The ideology is also reinforced when the girls falsely deny being pregnant when confronted by educators. Formally, the school cannot make any provision in such cases because it has no formal evidence. An example of such a situation was narrated by the Principal of School B:

> some girls even when you approach them, when you see signs of pregnancy on them, they would deny ...and there some who could give birth on Friday by Monday they would be back to school ...they come back with nothing like medical certificate or whatever...but you cannot send them back because you do not have evidence (Principal, School B).

What the principal is saying here coincides with what some girls said (see Section 5.1.3). Three girls reported that they kept their pregnancies secret so that nobody at school knew that they were mothers. They said that, at the time when they had to give birth, they were absent from school just like any other learner who could be absent from school due to illness or other problems. In all three cases, their teachers eventually discovered that they were mothering because they were absent from class so often.

It is tempting to argue that since the three girls hid their pregnancies, it is their fault that schools did not accord them any special treatment. I contest that that argument is wrong because the girls were forced by circumstances to act in that

particular manner. All they tried to achieve was to shield themselves from the educators' and fellow learners' prejudice.

Denying the girls access to professional counselling actually triggers a series of events which may eventually lead to failure or leaving school. As illustrated in Figure 7.2, when the schools prevent teen mothers from going through professional counselling, they [schools] punish the girls because they are denied the means of dealing with the stigma attached to pregnancy. The stigma the girls bear leads to low self-esteem and this negatively affects their academic performance. Low academic performance in turn fuels the girls' low self-esteem so that the girls get trapped in this circle. Figure 7.2 illustrates the vicious circle in which the teen mother learners find themselves when the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy is not dealt with. When the girls are in this trap it becomes hard for them to escape and make their way forward, thus they fail to succeed with their schooling. The figure also shows that if there is lack of physical support during pregnancy and mothering, the teen mother will be likely to fail in school. Section 7.2.2 discusses some of the most important amenities needed by teen mothers in order to succeed with schooling.
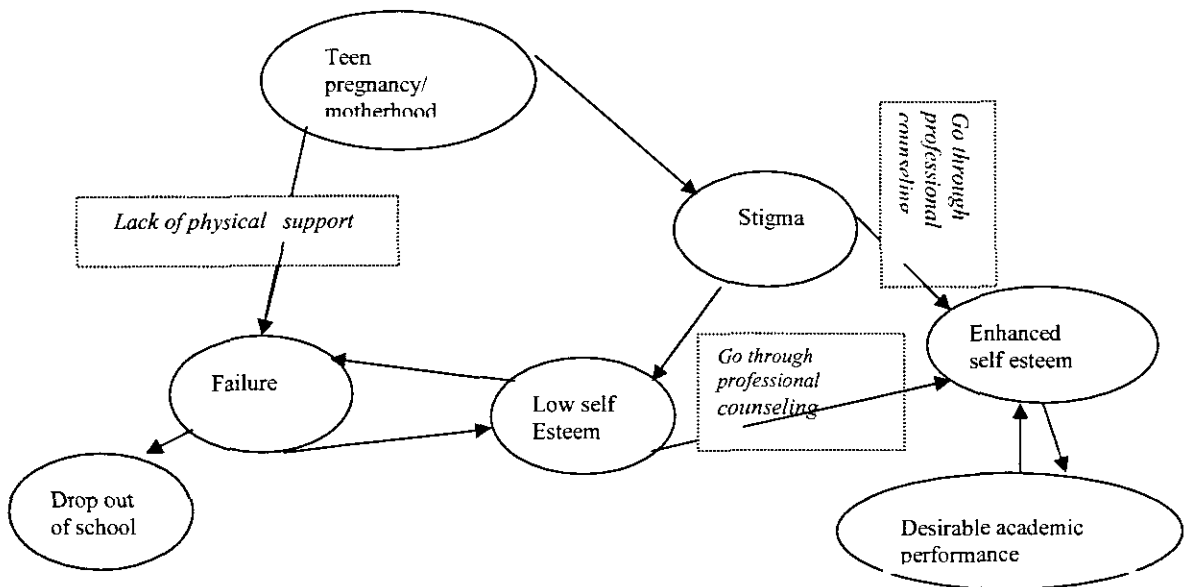
Figure 7.2: An illustration of how teen pregnancy/motherhood affects schooling of the girls and how counselling can help

7.2.2 Lack of amenities for teen mothers in schools

It is not easy for teen mothers to manage the pressures of schooling and mothering simultaneously if they do not have enough support from the school and home. As illustrated in Figure 7.2, pregnant and mothering teens are likely to perform badly in school if enough physical support is not provided to them. There are a number of amenities which could be provided by schools so that teen mothers' learning processes continue with minimum disruption. Some of the common things that the school can provide in order to make the learning process of teen mothers comfortable are:

- comfortable class desks;
- loose fitting uniform;
- bathroom breaks;
- child care facilities;
- flexible curriculum which would allow the girls to make up missed lessons; and
- school policies on managing absenteeism of teen mothers.

Although public schools allow pregnant girls to continue attending classes, there is little evidence that the schools consider the well-being of the girls vis-à-vis the learning processes. For instance, the schools do not provide pregnant girls with comfortable seats; rather the girls are expected to sit on a class desk just like any other learner in class. Some girls stop attending school because they are not comfortable when they are seated in class, especially when the wooden desk and bench are joined. Such seats are absolutely inflexible and not spacious enough, therefore they cannot accommodate the growing bellies of the pregnant girls.

Teachers know that the class desks are uncomfortable for the pregnant learners but they [teachers] still expect the girls to sit on them just like any other learner in the classroom. It could be argued that the teachers are responding to the girls in

this manner simply because the schools do not have the resources to accommodate the girls comfortably. The response could also be perceived as a way of showing the girls that schooling is incompatible with pregnancy. However, the ideal could be for educators to ask the girls to be responsible for their life choices. That is, if schools do not have the resources, then the girls could be advised to (if they can afford it) get themselves comfortable seats; which should not inconvenience the rest of the class.

Another area in which the schools could cater for pregnant girls is to allow them to put on loose fitting gown-like uniforms. Unfortunately, schools expect the teen mothers to behave like any other learner during school time. Thus, they are expected to be in school uniform whenever attending classes, even when the foetus is growing and starts showing. Unfortunately, in most cases, the design of school uniforms is not suitable for a pregnant body. The principals participating in this study indicated that if they allowed the girls to convert their uniform into a maternity gown, it would not be the proper uniform because it would be different from the rest. The principal of School T said: "we expect them to be in uniform just like any other learner, not in a gown".

The message here is that if a pregnant girl cannot fit into the recommended uniform she should stay at home. This could be argued that it implies that the girl is simply not fit for schooling. However, allowing pregnant girls to put on uniforms designed as maternity gowns does not demand any resources from the school. It can be argued that the schools' attitude towards teen mothers is not only based on scarcity of resources – rather it is just a way of perpetuating the old regulation which did not allow such girls to be in school.

Although there have been cases whereby some pregnant girls have given birth or their amniotic fluid has broken while at school, no public school that participated in my research has a provision of bathroom breaks which the girls could use should such things happen. The principal of School T indicated that the school had a case where a girl gave birth in the girls' toilet. The lack of bathroom breaks

forces some girls to stop attending school long before the end of the confinement period. They are not willing to take a risk The need to urinate quite often is also a concern for the pregnant girls. In most cases the girls fear the teachers would not allow them [pregnant girls] going out of the class frequently.

Challenges of teen mother's schooling life increase when they give birth. Since they cannot take their babies with them to class, they need childcare facilities. Unfortunately, the Department of Education (both national and provincial) has not made any provision for such facilities in schools. Miranne and Young (2002) argue that finding childcare for infants is a challenge for mothers of all ages, and in most cases teen mothers seek care for small babies. According to Miranne and Young, childcare services should be linked to schools and other educational settings to help address the issues of quality and accessibility. If the school provided this facility, teen mothers would be able to breastfeed and even just to see their babies during breaktime. This would assist in taking away the anxiety the young mothers may have if they can not see their babies for a long period of time. A grade 10 teen mother noted that:

> If we could have a childcare facility close by the school, could be nice because I would not need to go other directions in the morning just to take my baby to crèche. I would also have a chance of checking on her during the day because sometimes I daydream about her during lessons.

Pillow (2004) also finds that schooling teen mothers desire on-site childcare for reasons such as convenience and closeness to their children. An advantage of the school providing the facility for teen mothers would be that girls who do not come to school because they cannot afford babysitting, would have a chance of continuing their education. As Miranne and Young (2002) recommend, access to adequate, dependable, and affordable childcare must be in place in order for teen mothers to attend school.

The last two common issues, listed above, which schools can make available for the comfortable learning process of teen mothers are discussed in the following section.

7. 3   Public schools' inflexibility

Despite the MLPP recommendation that teen mothers should be treated as learners with special needs, schools have remained ambivalent in providing services for the pregnant and/or mothering teens. The analysis of the data for this study shows that schools do not want to play an active role in learner pregnancy or motherhood. At the same time the schools are inflexible when it comes to accommodating the changes which the girls are experiencing physically, socially and emotionally. At best, schools treat teen mothers just like any other learners, at worst, they are not wanted in the schools. In some cases the teen mothers are treated by their schools with little dignity because they are perceived as 'wrong girlsor bad learners. In some instances the girls have been stigmatised so as to discourage their wrongdoing of being sexually active at a wrong time. As Kelly (2000:67) stated, some individuals "believe that adolescent pregnancy should be stigmatised as a deterrent to early sexual activity and welfare dependency".   It is important that teenage pregnancy should be discouraged; however, this could be done in a friendly manner instead of making the girls feel worthless. Because the girls feel this way, they may not be able to regain their self-esteem and be able to succeed with schooling, which could lead them to become responsible citizens and be able to support their children.

Teen mothers are likely to miss classes quite often because of complications during pregnancy or demands of motherhood. For the girls not to lag behind with the learning process, there is a need for schools to make provision for making up the missed lessons. However, schools do not make such provisions and most teachers are not willing to assist the teen mothers because it is too much work to repeat a lesson. Another reason is that the teachers perceive that their [teen mothers'] problem of missing classes stems from the girls' unruly and unredeemable sexual activity.   They do not see why they should exert themselves to help the girls to catch up.   Luttrell (2003:21), citing the WEEA Equity Resource Centre report (2002), blames schools for discriminating against

pregnant and mothering teens: one of the egregious ongoing discriminatory practices cited is "denying pregnant students the opportunity to make up missed classes".

From the interviews with educators, I noticed that schools have not developed policies to deal with absenteeism due to illness during pregnancy or motherhood responsibilities.   In the absence of such policies, teachers are using their individual discretion, which in most cases is influenced by the ideologies of teen mothers as 'wrong girls' (thus the ones who deserve to be punished) and as 'incapable students' (thus, those who only need basic or minimal education) (Luttrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004:111).

The schools' inflexible attitude to the teen mothers marginalises the girls on the grounds of their pregnancy or motherhood.   Society refuses to provide the teen mothers with education as 'a right'; instead it should be their responsibility to get education so that they can redeem themselves from their problematic status as teen mothers and be able to provide for their children (Luttrell, 2003).   However, by not giving teen mothers the opportunity to make up schoolwork, the girls may find it difficult to remain in the public school environment.   The teen mothers' perception is that they are denied the right to learning opportunity equal to that of their peers.   This perception is often attributed to their teachers, who the girls blame for harbouring prejudices and negative feelings towards them.   Thus, the inflexibility of the teachers has indirectly effectively removed teen mothers from school.

7.4   The role played by the teen mothers

While it is essential that school and/or society should assist teen mothers solve their schooling challenges, the girls also need to take responsibility.   It is argued that in most cases, girls who become teen mothers are 'wrong-girls' "who make 'choices' that do not adhere to a 'normative' life trajectory" i.e. get educated first then have children (Luttrell, 2003:28).

The principal of School T echoed Luttrell (2003) when she noted that many teen mothers at her school are deviant and it is this behaviour that led them to become pregnant. According to the principal, such learners should be subjected to intensive discipline otherwise it will be hard to redeem them from their predicament as the behaviour might cause them to become pregnant again. The girls should not expect the society to take full responsibility of their new roles as parents and learners, because many of them [the teen mothers] are in this situation due to the bad choices they made.

Teen mothers need to work extra hard on their studies. For most of the girls who have the responsibility of primary care-giving of their babies, they may need to concentrate and use this time for their studies if they are to maintain their performances in class. As one Grade 12 teen mothers explains,

> before I had a baby I was involved in many sporting activities at school but now I do not have time for those...I also do not have enough time just to be with my friends and have fun ... I now use all this time to do my homework and study...so to some extent I am a lonely person but if I don't do this then I would all the time be behind with my homework.

Perry (2003) agrees with this idea when she shows that it is the teen mother's responsibility to complete homework before other activities such as watching television or surfing the internet. In addition, Pillow (2004) posits that it is up to the teen mothers to accommodate herself and her changing self and roles, to fit the existing structures of schooling, if they are serious about attaining education.

Some teen mothers show a lack of maturity. They do not adapt to their roles as learners who are parenting. For instance, some girls I interviewed noted that sometimes they absented themselves from school just to take a break from negative responses they [the girls] got from their teachers and fellow learners. Such teen mothers need to be strong and mature in their reasoning. Perry (2003) advises the girls to note that it is their responsibility to attend classes as scheduled. After all, they put themselves in this situation.

Some teen mothers who are serious about their education talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament, showing the learners that what they [the teen mothers] did is a mistake which is disrupting their education. The learners learn from the girls the consequences of having babies while schooling; at the same time the fellow learners understand what the girls are going through, consequently they respect the teen mothers' presence in their classrooms. One Grade 10 teen mother said:

> They [the learners] really prejudice against you… but I realised that it not about what they think about me but its about how you feel about yourself… and I got tired with the prejudices and one day I talked to the whole class whilst crying telling them they can go on judging me … but I will not give up because I know why I am here and the fact that I have a baby gives me more reason to ensure that I succeed here…its really a tough going and if I were you [fellow learners] I would consider my [the teen mother's] situation as a lesson and make sure I do not make such a mistake.

Talking to the fellow learners could teach them not to be prejudiced against the teen mothers. After she had talked to the fellow learners the girl (quoted above) noticed a positive change in the way they [fellow learners] responded to her.

Keeping a pregnancy secret, for some pregnant girls, is an initiative they take so that they can attend classes throughout the pregnancy, without limitations from school regulations. Public institutions require pregnant girls to bring to school a medical certificate giving the possible date it would be medically advisable for the learner to be absent from school before confinement, and the date when it would be medically advisable for her to return to school (WCED, 2003). Pregnant girls should develop a sense of responsibility to their situation. As was stated by a Grade 11 teen mother:

> I decided to keep my pregnancy invisible because I didn't want to stop coming to school to learn. Sometimes when your belly is really big teachers can tell you to stop coming to school. …but also you attract attention of everybody to always be talking about, this makes you uncomfortable to come to school.

In some instances, teen mothers need to make decisions and be able to act without assistance to reduce barriers to attending school. Though hiding the

pregnancy may be uncomfortable for the girls, those who adopt the practice believe the idea is good because they are not 'othered' at school. Some of the girls I interviewed noted that they feel like they do not have babies when they are at school, because learners and teachers do not know about their pregnancy. Most girls who followed this pattern had a mother or aunt at home to take on primary caretaking of the babies. Similarly, Johnson-Hanks (2002) in his ethnographic study in Cameroon showed that young women sent their children to live in the father's household or otherwise relinquished parental rights to other relatives in order to continue their education. Those who could not have this service within the extended family, could place their babies in foster homes. Placing the baby up for adoption is another option. Unfortunately, according to the social worker I interviewed at the Sisters Incorporated, this practice is socially discouraged in many Black South African cultures.

7.5 Chapter summary

Many teen mothers know that completing secondary education successfully is important for their economic well-being. If however, society expects the girls to complete their schooling, special provisions must be in place to meet the needs of the pregnant and mothering teens, many of whom may face social pressure to drop out of school and get married at a young age or find employment. Schools are obliged to put the provisions in place. Special provisions include amenities like comfortable chairs in classrooms for pregnant girls, affordable (preferably onsite) childcare service, and professional counselling. The last provision would help the girls deal with the stigma they experience due to teenage pregnancy. The stigma leads to low self-esteem which has a negative impact on the academic performance of the girls.

Schools also need to be flexible when dealing with issues concerning teen mothers. For instance, schools need to devise ways of making up missed classes by teen mothers. Teachers and other learners need to understand the

difficulties the teen mothers experience and stop the prejudice against them since this behaviour alienates the teen mothers at school.

While schools need to be flexible to accommodate teen mothers, the girls themselves should show a sense of responsibility within their situation. They need to accommodate their new role of motherhood into their role as learners. They need to develop a sense of maturity and try to deal with some of the barriers they face in their schooling.

Chapter 8

Impact of the home environment on the schooling of teen mothers

8.0 Introduction

The challenges which teen mothers experience may be hard to bear because, in most cases, the support they receive from their homes and communities is insufficient to facilitate their schooling. Schultz (2001) states that the difficulty in achieving academic goals among teen mothers is attributed to their babies and also to the fact that teachers and parents often give up on them and fail to take the girls' schooling plans seriously. In most cases parents get angry with the girls because of the predicament they find themselves in at such an early age. Out of anger and frustration, parents may stop supporting the girls; in some cases parents disown the girls. Consequently, the girls are too poor financially and emotionally, to continue with their education. The girls usually find themselves so stressed that it becomes impossible to continue attending school.

In this chapter I will provide an overview of literature about general parental involvement in children's education, and about general community perceptions on teen mother learners. I will also discuss how the attitude of parents, the socio-

economic status of the families and the perceptions of the community affect the schooling of teen mothers in the Western Cape. The rest of the chapter is organised as follows:

- Section 8.1 provides an overview of literature on parental involvement in children's education; and the community's perception on teen mother learners;

- Section 8.2 outlines parental impact on teen mothers;

- Section 8.3 analyses the effect of the perception of the community about teen mothers at school;

- Section 8.4 elucidates the interrelationship of the home and the school environment as they impact on schooling teen mothers; and

- Section 8.5 summarises the chapter.

8.1 Overview of literature on parental involvement and perception of the community

For one to fully understand the role which the home environment plays in teen mothers' education, one needs to be informed of the literature about the role of parental involvement in the education of children. Therefore, in this section I will provide an overview of the research on parental involvement in children's education and its relation to the academic success of girls. In the section I will also outline what the literature says about the community perception on teen mother learners.

8.1.1 Parental involvement in children's education

Frisby (1998:68) citing Baurmind (1973) explain two important dimensions of home child-rearing climate: one is the degree of parental guidance and control and the other is the amount of emotional support and encouragement children get from their parents. Frisby argued that there is evidence that homes high in both parental guidance and support lead to greater academic performance in high school.

Research shows that parents are the learners' first educators and play a critical role in their children's educational experiences (Wu and Qi, 2006). Epstein (2001) asserts that parental involvement can have a positive impact on learners' academic work at all grade levels. It is not surprising, therefore, that a growing number of researchers in education (e.g. Epstein, 2001; Barnard, 2004; Caspe et al, 2006 and Wu and Qi, 2006) are turning to the families in search for solutions to academic under-achievement of learners.

Wu and Qi (2006) find that parental expectations of children's highest educational attainment, and parental beliefs in children's academic competency, have the most consistent and significant effects on children's academic achievements. Apart from positively impacting on the learners' achievement, attitudes, and behavior, parental involvement also has a positive impact on school staff when dealing with the learners (Epstein, 2001; Cotton and Wikelund, 2001). Parental involvement and interest in their children's schooling, model for the learners the importance of education. This may lead to positive academic behaviour in their children (Epstein, 2001). Theron and Dunn (2006) argue that if learners feel that their parents do not support their education process, they can hardly perform well academically. The learners may feel that parental apathy is proof of their lack of worth and/or scholastic inability and this may contribute to their poor performance (Theron and Dunn, 2006:493)

Studies on the effectiveness of parental involvement with teenagers have often focused on issues like parents monitoring homework, helping learners make post-secondary plans and selecting courses which support these plans (Caspe et al, 2006). Researchers note that parental guidance and involvement in their children's homework is important (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2004). In most cases, helpful and appropriate support to children when doing homework result in the learners' improved performance in the classroom (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2004). Cooper et al (2001) argue that, when parents have a positive attitude toward homework and use homework as an opportunity to teach study skills and time

management, children are more likely to believe that homework will help them learn.

In addition to improving academic performance of learners, parental involvement has also been shown to prevent children from engaging in bad behaviour (Domina, 2005). This suggests that parental involvement in children's schooling in a way socialises the children to exercise control and self-discipline. However, effective parental guidance in homework requires an understanding of the mechanisms that affect parents' ability to enhance learning (Domina, 2005).

8.1.2 Literature on community's perception on teen mother learners

The communities where the teen mothers live and/or attend school have an impact on the academic lives of the girls. The impact may be either positive or negative. Theron and Dunn (2006) argue that well-functioning social support within communities may contribute positively to a learner's success. However, in most cases the communities have negative attitudes towards teen mothers and these affect the girls' schooling. The attitudes are usually guided by the negative perceptions of the communities about teenage pregnancy. For instance, some members of the community have perceptions that teen mothers don't care, that they have resorted to having babies, and dropping out of school (Schultz, 2001). The community members perceive teen pregnancy as a sign of failure or dysfunction; and identify the teen mothers as 'children having children', as irresponsible and promiscuous, often the result of a decline of the responsible family unit (Pillow, 2004:35). Such contentions fail to acknowledge the complexity of the identities of the teen mothers (Schultz, 2001; Luttrell, 2003).

Teenage pregnancy is almost invariably framed as a social problem and much of the discourse surrounding this [teenage pregnancy] draws on complex images of 'wrong' or 'wronged' girl (Luttrell, 2003:115). In addition, Schultz argues that teenage pregnancy is a regulated discourse – regulated by media and adult professionals (Schultz, 2001). Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) quoted in Schultz (2001) observed that:

Science claims to describe a population in order that they can better be governed. The rise of sciences therefore is not simply about academic disciplines, but, as we shall see, it is about the development of specific practices through which families, mothers, children, might be "known" in order to better regulate them.... However, as in all struggles for power this knowledge is constructed out of an uneasy compromise.... Regulation is not neutral, but is about the knowledge which suppresses and silences other "knowledges" in producing its own vision (2001: 587).

When teenage pregnancy is perceived as an epidemic by the society, teen mothers are pathologised and portrayed as failures (Pillow, 2004; Schultz, 2001). Consequently, schools, parents, community and the learners themselves often give up on a learner when she becomes pregnant (Schultz, 2001). Often there is an interrelationship between the home and the school environments on how these [environments] influence each other to either give up on teen mothers or invest in their education.

In the next section I will discuss the impact of parents on the schooling process of teen mothers.

8.2   Impact of parents on the schooling of teen mothers

The analysis of data of this research shows how parents' reactions, attitudes, parenting skills and socio-economic status of the family have impacted on teen mothers' schooling. It has been shown that parents react differently to teen mothers. Some parents accept the situation and continue to support the teen mothers accordingly, such that they [the teen mothers] experience minimal disruption in their schooling process. Other parents react with punitive measures and stop supporting the girls.   Such attitudes may negatively affect the performance of the teen mothers and at worst may lead to the girls giving up on schooling.

8.2.1 Attitude of the parents towards teen mothers

The initial reaction of almost all parents upon learning of their daughters' pregnancy is shock. For some, their shock turns into anger with the girl for not heeding their advice on culturally unacceptable sexual behaviours. My analysis shows that what make a difference to the teen mother's schooling is how the parent reacts and whether or not the parent recovers from the initial shock.

8.2.1.1 Impact of parents who recover from shock

Some parents recover from the initial shock and continue supporting the girls physically, emotionally and academically. For instance, one participating parent whose daughter fell pregnant when she was in Grade 10 and was at the time of the interviews in Grade 12 and confident of passing matric, said:

> When I discovered that my daughter was pregnant I was really shocked, I felt like abandoning her. But after some days I realised that, should I do that she would end up on the street, so I told her she should continue with her education and I will take care of the baby.

The disruption to the education process of teen mothers with parents like these is mitigated. Firstly, the responsibility of taking care of the baby is shared with the parents, and in some cases parents take total responsibility of the baby thereby according the girl time to concentrate on her schoolwork. Secondly, the girl has the chance to attend classes regularly. All these give the teen mother a chance to perform well in class, as is the case with the daughter of the parent quoted above; when she reached matric level, she was confident she will perform well.

Teen mothers may also benefit emotionally if their parents recover from the initial shock. Usually when parents recover from the shock, they understand the situation their daughters are in. The parents may become good listeners to the girls. Teen mothers are usually prone to social isolation by their fellow learners and teachers at school. When the girls' home environment is academically and emotionally supportive, the girls have people to share their experiences with, hence relieving stress encountered at school. Small et al (1994) show that

providing 'a listening ear' is therapeutic to individuals in need of emotional support. However, being a good listener involves empathy, the capacity to identify with the individual and make the person feel understood.

Emotionally, teen mothers need their mothers' acceptance as Luttrell (2003:134) argues "the power of mother-daughter feeling – struggles between knowing and not knowing, managing divided emotions (i.e., sorrow and joy), and efforts towards mutual recognition or at least a making of peace – are key to the girls' self– and identity–making process". Such mutual relationships help to reduce stress levels experienced by the girls at school.

Parents play an important role in the success of the teen mothers' education. The school alone cannot do it. Parental interest, involvement, support and guidance are very important to the teen mother learners in order to succeed academically. Cotton and Wikelund (2001) argue that research has overwhelmingly demonstrated that parental involvement in the children's schooling process is positively related to academic success. Their research has revealed that the more intensively parents are involved, the more likely the children succeed academically. For instance, the teen mother who got pregnant when she was in Grade 10 and who was able to proceed to Grade 12 successfully, said:

> I was willing to continue coming to school, but still my parents made the decision that I must carry on with my education and that everything for my baby will be taken care of by them... actually my son is just like my brother because my mum almost adopted him like her own son. So I have as much time as any other learner for schoolwork ...my performance in class is even better now than before I had a baby because I work so hard because I know I need to set a good example to my baby and be able to pay for his education.

She was determined to work harder than before she had the baby because of the emotional and physical support her parents gave her. It can be argued that the fact that she had a baby may in itself be a driving force to succeed with schooling as Schultz (2001) narrates that some teen mothers' success or persistence in school is due, in part, to their children. Another factor which may encourage the

girl is supportive parents. Girls who receive support from their parents may feel obliged to perform well as a way of paying back the parents' kindness.

8.2.1.2 Impact of parents who do not recover from the shock

The education process of teen mothers is negatively impacted when parents take too long to recover or never recover from the initial shock upon learning about the daughters' pregnancy. Such parents in some cases reach a point of disowning the girls and requesting them to leave their homes. One of the reasons parents give for doing this is the embarrassment which the pregnant daughters have put them through, since there is a stigma attached to teenage pregnancy in most societies. The stigma arises because in some cases the society perceives the family of the teen mother to be at fault and failing to bring up children in a proper manner. Dash's (1989:12) interview with a teen mother shows that

> When girls get pregnant, it's either because they want something to hold onto that they can call their own or because of the circumstances at home. Because their mother doesn't pamper them... some of them do it because they resent their parents.

This shows that some girls intentionally get pregnant as a means of rejecting the lifestyle they are leading in their families (Luttrell, 2003), for instance, in the case of getting pregnant in order to receive "unconditional love from a dependent object, in this case, the baby" (Gordon, 1990:349 quoted in Kelly, 2000:74) or as a way of averting depression (Luttrell, 2003). Regardless of the driving forces the girls have for getting pregnant, parents get shocked by the news and feel embarrassed with the situation. The parents are embarrassed because society perceives them as failures for not providing the girl with the love they needed.

When parents overreact to the situation of a teen mother, the girl finds it hard to continue with her education because there is no financial and emotional support from the parents. In instances where the parent has withdrawn support or disowned the girl, it makes a difference if a grown-up relative is available, willing to step in and take the parental responsibility. The relative needs to support the

girl physically, emotionally and academically so that the teen mother is able to continue attending school (Grant and Hallman, 2006).

In cases where no relative is available to assume parental responsibility of the teen mothers, some NGOs may render support. For instance, as will be discussed in Section 8.3.1.1, the Sisters Incorporated provides shelter for pregnant girls who have been rejected by their parents.

For the abandoned teen mothers who do not have anybody to assist them, managing their role as mothers while simultaneously meeting the demands of school becomes an obstacle course that is difficult to negotiate. Such girls usually drop out of school and there is a great risk of some of them going into prostitution in order to fend for themselves and their babies (Cunningham and Boult, 1996).

8.2.2 Effects of parenting skills and the socio-economic status of the family on schooling of teen mothers

Research has identified multiple factors that are believed to have contributed to children's academic 'failures'. These factors include family socio-economic status (SES), family structure (Cherian and Malehase, 2000; Johnson, 1992) and parental involvement in children's education (McWayne et al, 2004; Pezdek et al, 2002). The effects of these factors are far worse on teen mothers than on their siblings in the family. Seemingly, the general consensus is that, the demographic factors such as low SES of the family, single-parent family and lack of parental involvement are some of the significant risk factors for learners' academic achievement.

As revealed in the findings of this study, even though most of the parents do not physically disown the teen mothers, they disown the girls emotionally. They stop being actively supportive and involved in the girls' academic life. Usually, parents of teen mothers make themselves unavailable as a source of social capital to the girls. Social capital defines ways in which social organisation – in the form of small networks of relationships and broad societal patterns of interaction –

enhance the productive capacity of individuals and groups (Croninger and Lee, 2001: 552). According to Croninger and Lee (2001) such relationships are important to adolescents, who often require adult guidance and assistance to succeed in life. In some instances, teen mothers may lack social capital at home due to poor parenting skills, and/or due to the socio-economic status of the family.

According to the data analysis in this study and as is also documented in the literature, most girls who become teen mothers come from single-parent households, usually female-headed (Sheaff and Talashek, 1995; Mokgalabone, 1999). Luttrell (2003) citing Dryfoos (1988) shows that teenage parenthood is often associated with low socio-economic status. Most of the parents of teen mothers I interviewed in this research were single mothers with a very low income or with an unstable source of income. Such families can hardly afford to pay for most of the services a grandchild requires if the child's mother continues attending school. For instance, the parents indicated that they could not afford to hire babysitters to look after their grandchildren when they were unable to take care of the baby due to work commitments. In such situations, the teen mother has to miss school in order to take care of her baby.

According to some principals of schools, some parents do not have proper parenting skills. Most parents who fall into this category were teenagers when they mothered the teen mothers so they themselves are not skilled enough to parent adolescents. The parents are usually financially poor and in most cases they did not complete their schooling. Theron and Dunn (2006:492) argue that "adolescent childbearing is heavily concentrated among poor and low-income teenagers, most of whom are unmarried". They add that although low-income teens may not intend to fall pregnant, they may not be sufficiently motivated to avoid falling pregnant. As such we have a scenario which repeats itself over generations. Figure 8.1 summarises how socio-economic status and teenage pregnancy and parenting skills influence one another to maintain the scenario.

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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│ Low parenting   │ ───► │ Teenage         │ ───► │ Low socio       │
│ skills          │ ◄─── │ pregnancy       │ ◄─── │ economic status │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
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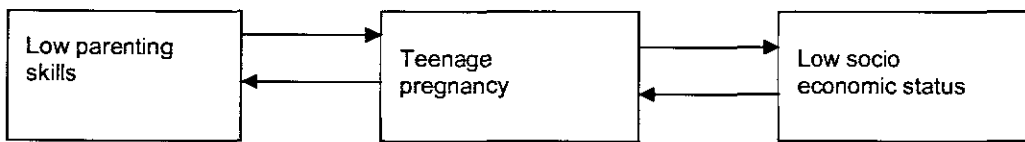
Figure 8.1: Reciprocation of socio-economic status and teenage pregnancy and parenting skills.

Since the parents are usually socially, economically and physically unavailable for the teen mothers, they [the parents] expect the girls to do things for themselves just like they did when they became mothers. Thus, the girls are expected to know what to do with their babies because they [the parents] took care of them [the girls] when they were babies with not much support from their families. The parents lack appreciation of balancing the demands of mothering and schooling simultaneously since during their time they were not allowed to remain in school when they became mothers and they had time to mind their babies. The schooling teen mothers, on the other hand have the right to remain in school even after becoming mothers.

In some cases, parents' appreciation of balancing the demands of mothering and schooling simultaneously is limited to the time the girls are actually at school. They fail to appreciate that the girls also need support and time to do homework. The parents demand of the girls to take over the minding of the babies as soon as they return from school. The parents feel that the teen mothers should take responsibility and/or face consequences for their 'immoral' behaviour; otherwise the girls would think it is permissable for teenagers to have babies. Such parents do not consider creating a sound educational environment at home for teen mothers as a priority because of the complexity of the home situation.

The parents' attitude may have a ripple effect on the teachers' attitude towards the teen mothers. Since the teen mothers do not have time to concentrate on their schoolwork at home, they often produce nothing or meagre work; this in turn annoys their teachers. They [teachers] think the girls do not complete tasks which should be done at home because they are incompetent. The teachers label the teen mothers as shirkers or disobedient because they do not obey the

teachers' instructions to complete homework.   In most cases the teachers blame the girls for their status and often give up on them academically. Shultz (2001: 584) narrated that "too often, pregnancy during high school is a signal for school personnel and families to abandon young women, designating them as school failures".

Often, teen mothers in situations like this drop out of school because they feel disconnected from teachers, since they do not care about the girls and are usually unwilling to understand their [teen mothers'] situation to help with their problems.   Theron and Dunn (2006) argue that if a learner's home culture is incongruent with the school's culture, the learner's chances of success at school decreases. When the school environment and the home environment differ, the learner may not fit in comfortably – consequently she may struggle to engage in the learning process (Theron and Dunn, 2006:494)

8.3   The impact of the community on the schooling teen mothers

According to the findings of this study, communities in which teen mothers live both positively and negatively impact on the girls. On the one hand, the teen mothers may have a chance of being referred to or find their way to shelters that provide assistance to teen mothers who are in need of help. On the other hand the impact is negative especially when the communities force schools to withdraw teen mothers from attending school. In Section 8.3.1 I will discuss the positive impact of the community on the teen mothers and in Section 8.3.2 I will explore how the community may negatively impact on the teen mothers.

8.3.1   Positive impact of the community on the teen mothers

My analysis shows that the community has a positive impact on the teen mothers through the help of the NGOs namely the Pregnancy Help Centre and Sisters Incorporated.   The latter provides assistance and shelter to single young pregnant women while the former aims at helping women who want to terminate their pregnancy (see Section 5.3.2).

8.3.1.1 The assistance offered by Sisters Incorporated to teen mothers

Teen mothers who stay at the shelter are assisted academically whenever possible. The shelter tries as much as possible to assist the girls who had been attending school to continue their schooling during their time at the shelter. In some cases the girls cannot attend school because of the distance between the shelter and their schools, while in other cases the girls do not want people to know they are pregnant. A social worker at the shelter comments on why some choose not to attend school:

> Sometimes we do have girls who come here because they do not want anybody to know that they are pregnant and when the baby is born, it is placed for adoption so, such girls cannot go out anywhere not even to school and they cannot get any school work because they do not want anybody to know they are pregnant and are here... so when they go back no person would know she was pregnant and had a baby.

In other cases, the teen mothers cannot attend school because they are emotionally affected. This is common among girls who fall pregnant due to rape. As the social worker reports:

> Sometimes it also depends on the trauma involved in the pregnancy, for example if the pregnancy was due to rape then the girl is usually traumatized and cannot do any academic work.

In cases like these the shelter provides therapy in the form of counselling to the girls so that they can heal from the trauma. When healing starts, some are reported to be able to concentrate and willing to continue with schooling while at the shelter.

In the cases where the teen mothers are willing to continue with their education, the shelter fetches schoolwork from respective schools and ensures that the girls have completed the work before taking it back to school for assessment. This is one positive contribution the shelter is making to help the teen mothers with their schooling.

Another positive development is that at the time of the interviews with the social worker, the shelter was looking for volunteers with appropriate high school teaching skills. The shelter needs the volunteers to offer professional guidance to

the girls with their schoolwork so that the girls' learning is minimally disrupted and academic performance does not fall.

It is also encouraging that the shelter helps to inspire the girls to continue with their schooling even after leaving the shelter. Some who would otherwise think of giving up schooling because they have become teen mothers, may be saved by the encouragement and make it a point to complete their schooling. However, there is a limit to what Sisters Incorporated can do for the girls. The shelter only works with pregnant girls. After the girls have given birth, they can only stay at the shelter for a few months as they wait for their relocation which is facilitated by the shelter. Another limitation is that the shelter does not make any follow-up visits to the teen mothers when they leave for their homes, or other suitable children's homes if they are not welcome by their families. A follow-up could help strengthen the decision of those who make the decision to continue schooling.

Sisters Incorporated also offers counselling to the parents of teen mothers. The parents, especially those who disown the girls due to the pregnancy, are counselled at the shelter. The shelter invites the parents and tries to reason with them about the situation of their daughters. In most of these cases, the results of the counselling are that the parents come to terms with the situation and reconcile with the daughters. The problem the pregnant girl faces when the parents are adamant they do not want anything more to do with her, impacts on the girl's social and academic life negatively. On this issue the social worker at the shelter notes that:

> It makes it ten times more difficult because the girl is feeling frightened because the mom is angry, is disappointed... we have had young girls who just disappeared from home and came to stay here and in such cases we try to bring the mother and the daughter together... we give counseling both to the mother and the girl and the mothers feel safe when they see that their daughter is at a safe place and come to terms with the girl's situation.

As has been argued in Section 8.2.1.1, the girls need their parents especially the mothers, because "it is their mothers from whom the girls not only seek recognition and connection, but have any hope and even expectations of getting it" (Luttrell, 2003:137). When the parents harbour negative feeling towards the

teen mothers, the girls have little hope or expectation of getting the support they urgently need from their homes.

8.3.1.2   The assistance offered by the Pregnancy Help Centre to teen mothers

The Pregnancy Help Centre assists the girls if they wish to terminate the pregnancy or give the baby away for adoption. Termination of pregnancy or placing a baby up for adoption means the girl will not have to deal with the physical complications of pregnancy and the responsibility of taking care of a baby while schooling. The girl will have time for schoolwork just like any other learner, and has the chance to perform well academically. In addition, the girls who terminate their pregnancies before other people know about their status will be able to avoid the stigma attached to teen motherhood. Researchers like Russo and Dabul (1997) report positive emotions which they refer to as the joyful relief some adolescents experience after having an abortion. Furthermore, Boyle (1997) and Taylor (1997) argue that education is a crucial consideration when opting for abortion among teenagers because they want to complete their education without the disruption of pregnancy and mothering.

The statistics on use of the centre show that most of the teen pregnant girls decide on abortions. Fewer choose parenting and even fewer choose to place their babies up for adoption when they are born (see Table 4.4). Nevertheless, Grant and Hallman (2006) have shown that despite high rates of teenage pregnancy among school girls and the availability of legal termination-of-pregnancy services in South Africa since 1996, many adolescents are not aware of such services; and availability of these services in public facilities such as hospitals and clinics is still inadequate.

For those who choose parenting, the centre is planning to help them by setting up life skills based school programs. The centre has plans to assist the teen mothers by offering them skills so they can cope with teenage pregnancy and motherhood as learners. The centre envisages that the girls will be equipped

with skills on how to handle the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy which usually leads to low self-esteem which results in poor academic performance (see Figure 7.1).

The Pregnancy Help Centre is also planning to embark on an outreach program targeting parents of the teen mothers who choose to keep their babies. The aim of the program is to reason with the parents about the teen mothers' predicament. In most cases, the predicament causes anger in the parents towards the teen mothers. Usually the anger feeds into withdrawing support for the girls. Reasoning with the parents could at least ensure hope for support from home to the girls, so that they can attend school more easily.

The support programs provided by the Sisters Incorporated and the Pregnancy Help Centre to teen mothers are important for pregnant and/or mothering learners to continue accessing schooling. The organisations provide support and information on what one can do during a teen pregnancy and provide physical space for teen mothers especially during pregnancy and the early days of nursing. The organisations also offer counselling support for the teen mothers to negotiate the prodigious demands upon their lives. It is recommended that such organisations should be established in large numbers and within reach of many low-income communities where teen pregnancy is common.

8.3.2 Negative impact of the community on the teen mothers

The community's perception of the girls contributes to the negative image of the teen mothers. As noted in Section 5.2.1.4, the community perceives teen mothers as girls with low morals and, as such, it [the community] does not like to see the teen mothers learning together with other learners in the same school or class. Working on the discourse of contamination, the community fears that other learners might be contaminated with the sexual behaviours of the teen mothers. Due to this fear, the community forces the school to bar the teen mothers from schools, despite the MLPP guaranteeing the girls a right to education.

In order to comply with the MLPP, in some cases, schools resist the demands of the community, to stop teen mothers from attending school. On this issue one Life Orientation teacher commented that:

> Some girls are reported by other parents to school that they are pregnant, because they are worried that if they are allowed to come to school then what sort of message are they [the teen mothers] sending to their children who they are learning together in the same class ... we tell the parent that we are not really supposed to chase this child away from school (LO teacher, G School).

In such cases, some communities resort to their own mechanism to achieve their goal. They find ways to intimidate the teen mothers on their way to and from school in order to prevent them from attending school. As reported by the *Saturday Weekend Argus* (10/02/2007), Rocklands Senior Secondary School's learners and their parents were angry when the provincial Department of Education declared that a 17 year-old pregnant girl be allowed to continue attending classes at the institution. Three days later the *Cape Argus* reported that the girl was taunted on her first day at school. The learners and their parents intimidated the girl in order to stop her from attending classes at their school.

Often, the pregnant teens must confront the negative reactions of women in their communities; the reactions take different forms including disapproving glances or unkind remarks, and even rejection. These reactions force the girls to stay away from school. One of the areas of conflict between the teen mothers and the communities is about the culturally prescribed dress code of pregnant women. According to cultural values, pregnant women are not expected to dress in a way which emphasizes the growing body. Women, who contravene this dress code, not only embarrass themselves, but rather, embarrass the rest of the women folk as well. By dressing in school uniform, teen mothers contravene this code. Older women complain about the manner the pregnant learners dress when going to school.

Unfortunately, the schools argue that if the girls change the design of the uniform (for example, changing the uniform to a maternity gown which could be more comfortable and socially acceptable), then that would no longer qualify as a

school uniform. In this case the values of the school and of the community come into conflict, making it impossible for pregnant girls to continue attending school.

8.4 Interrelationship of the home and school environments

As discussed in Chapter 7 the schools impact on the teen mothers' academic success depends on how much support the school provides to the girls. Likewise, as discussed in this chapter, how much the home environment supports the girls may also have an impact on their success. Therefore, teen mothers' success in education depends on the support from both the home and the school environments. A collaboration of the environments in ensuring that the schooling disruptions for the teen mothers are dealt with would in most cases lead to academic success for the girls.

Evidence from the data analysis shows that support to teen mothers from both the home and school need to be sufficient for the girls to succeed with schooling. The way the home responds to the teen mothers' needs has an impact on how the school responds to the needs of the teen mothers as learners.

Figure 8.2 summarises the impact of the home and school environment on the teen mothers; and also shows how some attributes within the environments influence one another when impacting on the schooling of the girls. For instance, poor parenting and parents' negative attitudes may result in teen mothers not having sufficient time to complete their homework. As discussed in Section 8.2.2, incomplete assignments annoy the teachers who judge the teen mother to be lazy; consequently, the teachers may give up on her, thus affecting negatively her chances of success.

School Environment   **Home Environment**
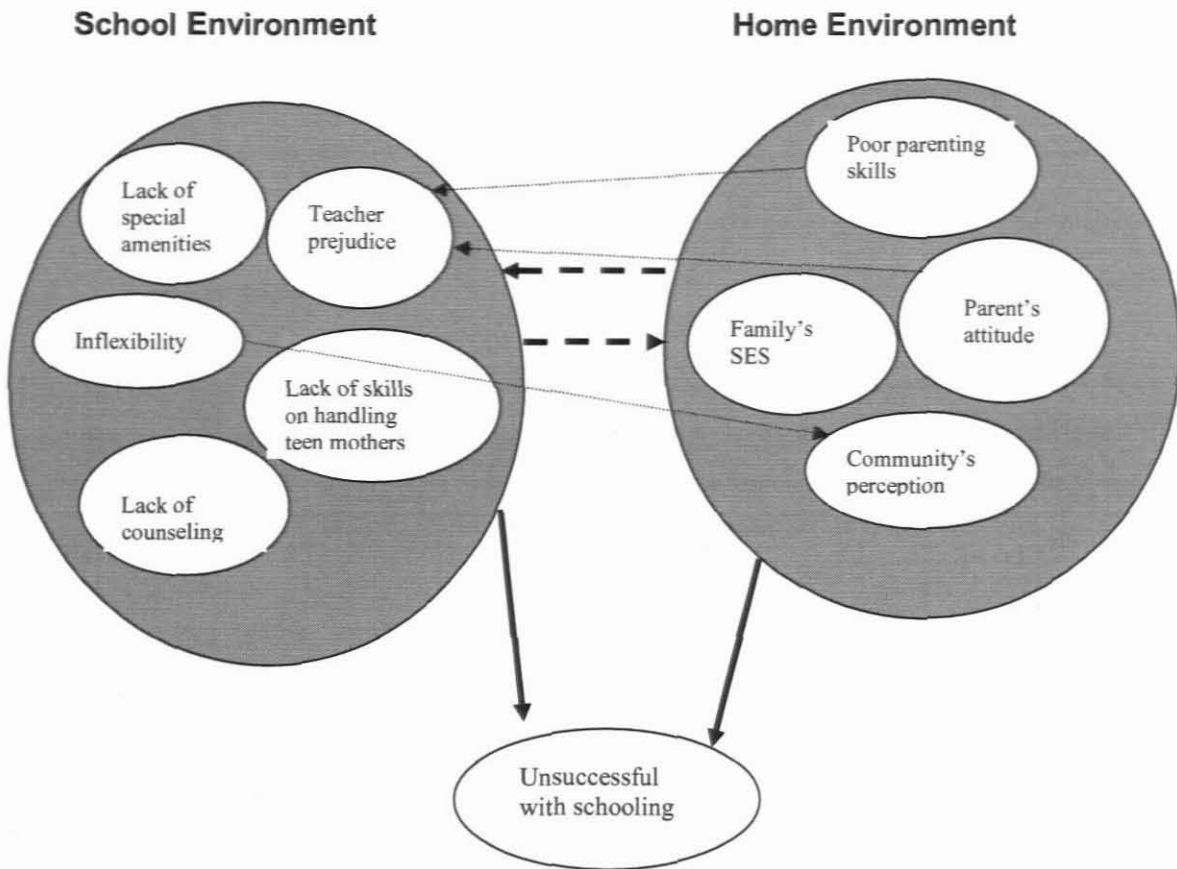
Figure 8.2: Impact of the home and school environments on the schooling teen mothers

The inflexibility of the schools when responding to the needs of the teen mothers affect the community's perception of the girls. For instance, schools require them to be in school uniform, but this causes the girls to not conform with the cultural norms applying to pregnant women.

Usually, the communities despise and condemn teen mothers. Teachers are part of the community and their response to teen mothers at school is partly influenced by the community's perceptions. For instance, society perceives teen mothers as 'wrong-girls' (Kelly, 2000). Based on this perception, teachers view teen mothers as deviants, hence giving up on them.

While acknowledging that girls should avoid getting pregnant whilst schooling, the society should not condemn teen mothers. The society needs to act

positively because it is responsible for the causes of teen pregnancy. Children are usually exposed to sex images through media, for example, on adverts on television at any time or in magazines. As a result of being bombarded with sex images, the children want to try what they see. This is a contributing factor to teen pregnancy.

8.5 Chapter summary

The home environment plays an important role in the success of the teen mothers' education. Parental guidance and support aid the academic performance of teen mothers. Unfortunately, not all teen mothers are offered sufficient guidance and support.

Some parents fail to encourage and support the teen mothers because they [parents] do not have proper parenting skills. Such parents do not have the capacity to create a sound educational environment at home for teen mothers. Consequently, the teen mothers do not have time to concentrate on their schoolwork at home. As a result their relationship with the teachers is negatively affected, because the girls fail to satisfy the learning requirements.

In some cases where teen mothers have been abandoned by parents, the community, for example, NGOs, can help the girls by assuming parental responsibility for the girls or by reasoning with the parents to calm down and come to terms with the daughter and her situation. Adults in the extended families of abandoned teen mothers can provide parental care to the girls and assist them with their schooling process. If there is no one to assume parental responsibility, it is very likely that the teen mothers will not go back to school and will surely fail to qualify at school. NGOs like the Sisters Incorporated can assist the teen mothers by providing them with shelter and assisting with the schooling process. The NGOs in this study assist the teen mother if they wish to place their babies up for adoption. The Pregnancy Help Centre also assists the teen mothers should they wish to terminate their pregnancy. Placing babies up for adoption and termination of pregnancy help the girls in that they would no longer

have the burden of taking care of and parenting a child whilst pursuing their education.

The community can negatively impact on teen mothers especially when the parents of the other learners force the schools to bar teen mothers from attending school for fear of contamination. Sometimes the women in the community ridicule pregnant girls on their way to and from school because their dressing as pregnant mothers is culturally unsuitable and embarrassing to women in the community.

There are interrelationships between the home and school environments as the two respond to the needs of schooling teen mothers. The way the home responds to the needs of the girls could have an impact on how the school responds and vice versa. Therefore, both environments need to respond to the needs of the teen mothers positively, in order to assist them to succeed with schooling. This chapter has provided insight on the impact of the home environment. The next chapter is the conclusion of the thesis and contains recommendations to ensure successful schooling of teen mothers in the province.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and recommendations

9.0   Overview of the study

The current Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP) in the Western Cape allows pregnant/mothering learners to remain in school. However, being allowed to be at school is often not enough to guarantee successful completion of the schooling process.   Teen motherhood is disruptive to the girls' education – so much so that the learner may be referred to as a learner with special needs. Unless a more caring intervention, which is concerned with identifying and overcoming all challenges to effective, continuous and quality participation in education, is efficiently rendered to the teen mothers, they cannot succeed with schooling.

My study aimed at examining the challenges schooling teen mothers face in the process of obtaining high school education in the South African context.   To understand the teen mothers' phenomenon, I embraced three study approaches as a foundation for my research. The approaches are:

- Mac an Ghaill's (1988) study of the 'Black sisters';
- Pillow's (2004) *Unfit Subjects;* and

- *Foucault's theories of historical, discursive interests performed through power and bodies (1977; 1978; 1989).*

While the approaches offered me the capacity of understanding hidden truths in the project, they were limited in some instances. For example, Mac an Ghaill's approach does not provide insights into looking at educational policies which could affect the schooling of the girl. Similarly, Pillow's approach does not offer a way to look at how the policy for teen mothers can affect other learners at school; that is, how the implementation of some elements of the MLPP (for example, allowing a pregnant learner to continue attending classes) can impact on the learners especially should the girl gives birth at school. In such cases one needs to know how the other learners are protected.

Most of the teen mothers who choose to continue with their schooling do so because they consider academic qualifications as a path to participating in the labour market. However, based on the results of this study, it has been noted that, without support, the teen mothers can hardly achieve their dreams of getting the academic qualifications. Teen mothers' schooling is negatively affected by lack of support from their homes, schools and community. Instead of getting support, the teen mothers are often misunderstood and pressurised in their environments. This is difficult for the girls who are emotionally immature when they first fall pregnant (Pearton, 1999). The girls need tremendous support to facilitate their schooling. Concerted support is vital for the girls, because the phenomenon of teen motherhood is linked to several other social problems which affect the school, the parents and the community in which these learners live and attend school.

This study has established that schooling challenges for teen mothers arise due to demands of mothering, the stigma (attached to teenage pregnancy and/or motherhood) and the discourses that aid to construct it and place a value that usually punishes the girls. Using discourses, the society has, in most instances, responded to the situation of the teen mothers in a punitive manner.

In the study, I investigated how school and home environments impact on the schooling of teen mothers. Despite the girls being learners with special needs, schools do not practise inclusive interventions to aid the participation of the teen mothers. The lack of support from school and home environments for teen mothers result in many of them failing to succeed with schooling. Some of the girls drop out of school, and those who continue attending school do not succeed because their performance is usually below average due to insufficient academic, physical and emotional support during schooling.

The MLPP requires schools to make provision for teen mothers so that their education continues with minimum disruption. The analysis of the policy showed that, with all the good intentions, the MLPP has a number of limitations. For instance, the policy does not spell out precise steps and issues to be considered in assisting the teen mothers. Consequently, schools have problems implementing the policy. It [the policy] has little consideration on how schools should respond to special needs of the teen mothers, given the discursive practices meant to punish the sexuality of the girls in society.

This chapter draws conclusions on what the study has established as barriers to the education process of the teen mothers. From the conclusions the chapter will present recommendations on how challenges experienced by schooling teen mothers could be addressed.

9.1 Conclusions

9.1.1 The MLPP

This study has found that the lack of the policy's precision on how schools can assist teen mothers, and the institutions' lack of understanding of the policy, has resulted in adopting and using it ambivalently. The public schools in the study allow the teen mothers to continue their education, but do not make any special provisions to address learning barriers hindering the education process of the girls. Inclusion of the teen mothers in schools has not always been a

straightforward issue because of the moral stigma often associated with teenage pregnancy. Some principals are not sympathetic enough to make any special provisions to accommodate the needs of the girls. This is also confirmed by Datnow and Castellano (2000) when they noted that educators respond to school reforms in varied ways such as pushing or sustaining reform efforts, or resisting and subverting them in active or passive ways.

Though the MLPP is meant for teen mothers, it fails to solicit the views of the girls, their parents and teachers in its formulation. Consequently, there is little information of exactly how the process would unfold and what specific educational arrangements would flow from a negotiated settlement (Jansen, 2003). The approach, which did not solicit the views of the stakeholder, was therefore wrong. hooks (1990:125) asserts that often debates for policy-making "highlight notions of difference, marginality and otherness in such a way that it further marginalises actual people of difference and otherness". This can be avoided if the marginalised are included in the debates.

Teen mothers, therefore, should not be passive agents. Listening to the girls' voices may have quite a powerful effect in alerting educators to both the problems that the girls recognise and to the solutions they prefer (Kenway et al, 1993). In the light of the discourses and given their relative lack of power, teen mothers cannot succeed in disputing the prejudices and unnecessary controls on them. However, if the teen mothers are given a chance to be heard, dominant discourses affecting them as scholars could be subdued (Kelly, 2000) because their voices may give insights on how the ideologies are unfairly pulling them [the girls] down.

Teachers should have been included in the MLPP formulation process because they are critical stakeholders and implementers of the policy. Teachers are implementers who are close to the learners and know them better, who work at the critical interface of teaching, learning and assessment. This view is supported

by Fullan (1993:77) when he contends that "the actions of the teachers, the frontline agents of change are critical to successful implementation".

Another problem is that the policy was not buttressed by informed research–based knowledge. As Jansen (2003) notes, it is important that decision–making in South African educational policy be informed and guided by research. The rationale here is that research would provide critical, systematic and decision orientation to policymakers.

Due to lack of informed research–based knowledge, the policy formulation may not have paid attention to the resources required to influence implementation of the policy. Resources such as a program to empower teachers with skills relevant to handling learners with special needs vis-à-vis teen mothers should be included. Another example of the resources needed in schools for the implementation of the policy is amenities required by the teen mothers to reduce their schooling disruptions. As Jansen (2001:287) posits, for change in practice to occur, deliberate attention should be focused on implementation that is "concerned with the sobering realities of making change happen in practical terms in sites where it is most manifest and effective, such as schools". That is, by paying deliberate attention to understanding accurately and deeply the dynamics and complexity of implementing the policy, its objectives can be easily achieved.

9.1.2 Schools and Communities

In some cases the way the schools and communities respond to the needs of the teen mothers create stumbling blocks for the girls. Within the school environment such blocks include:

- lack of opportunities to make–up missed classes;
- prejudice by teachers and fellow learners;
- compulsion not to sit for matric examinations;
- lack of provisions and accommodation to meet the teen mothers' special needs;

- inflexibility of the schools in responding to the needs of the teen mothers; and

- conservative attitudes among some educators and communities.

The needs of the girls are not considered by the schools to ensure that they have access to effective and quality participation in education. That is, there are institutional and pedagogical barriers to the effective education process of the girls. At the school, level barriers could include dysfunctional professional knowledge and a lack of an inclusive ethos.

In this study, the teachers take insufficient or no account of the special needs of the teen mothers in their learning processes. Instead, the teachers are biased against the girls and view them as failures and irredeemable learners. Such responses usually result from lack of human and professional sensitivity in teachers as well as unavailability of training on how to respond to the needs of teen mothers at school. As a result the girls are marginalised by not being viewed as learners with special needs.

According to Vayrynen (2000), inclusion is to be seen as part of the wider struggle to overcome exclusive discourse and practices. Inclusion is about improving schooling. That is, inclusive education addresses the full gamut of barriers to effective and quality participation in education, with a special emphasis on those who have a human right to such participation.

The stumbling blocks to the education processes of the teen mothers could grow from dysfunctional professional knowledge of the educators and discourses which vie against inclusion of the girls in school. Such obstacles are manifested when principals construct deliberate or inadvertent intellectual barriers, which disempower and disable teen mothers from achieving in their scholastic endeavours. An example is when the teen mothers are forced not to sit for matric examinations in their schools because the principals believe the girls will fail the examinations; and this would mean a high failure rate for the school.

Another example of a deliberate construct and/or lack of professional knowledge barrier, which disempowers and disables the teen mothers, is the unwillingness or inability of the principals to coordinate professional counselling which is important for the girls to combat the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy. This research has found that though this is spelled out by the MLPP, schools are not complying with it.

In most cases principals choose not to act according to the policy because the process is time-consuming and this may require them to put their usual tasks of serving hundreds of learners at a halt in order to serve one learner. It is clear that principals have many duties to fulfil. Giving urgency to coordination of teen pregnancies would mean that a lot of administrative work would be postponed or never done, considering that a number of pregnancies occur every year at schools and that their occurrences are at different times. Again as Deschenes et al (2001:542) posit, not many educators today would willingly recreate a system of control that produced red tape and distractions from the real work of teaching. In addition, Theron and Dunn (2006) argue that some educators simply have low morale and commitment to help learners with their social life.

Schools have complex and conflicting responsibilities, being both products of their cultures and sites to change that culture. That is why involving the local community, local knowledge, and local informal communication channels are essential in any movement towards inclusive interventions (Vayrynen, 2000), in this case, on the part of the schooling teen mothers. Learning takes place through interaction between an individual and his/her surroundings. Deschenes et al (2001:537) argue that "children often fail academically because the culture of the school is so different from the cultural backgrounds of the communities they serve". In some instances, a lack of flexibility of educational provision and management in accommodating teen mothers in the mainstream on the part of the school put the girls in conflict with their culture. For instance, schools do not allow pregnant learners to put on maternity clothes. As a result, in keeping with

social values, ideologies from communities force the girls to stop attending school due to their improper dressing.

The responses of the community towards the teenage mothers serve to both facilitate and hinder the schooling of the girls. The facilitation can be observed when NGOs render assistance and shelter to the pregnant girls who have been left destitute. The organisations assist the girls if they wish to terminate their pregnancies or to place their babies up for adoption. Adoption and pregnancy termination among schooling girls provide solutions to the realities of motherhood and pregnancy (Theron and Dunn, 2006; Taylor, 1997). This allows the girls to attend school without disruptions due to pregnancy or childcaring.

In some cases, communities, through discourse and/or prejudice, construct barriers to the inclusion of teen mothers in schools. For instance, parents of other learners usually force schools to bar pregnant girls from attending classes for fear of contamination. The barriers restrict the fair and equal participation of teen mothers in regular schools.

9.1.3 Teen mothers as learners

While the flexibility of schools is necessary to minimise the challenges schooling teen mothers face, the girls themselves need to show a high sense of responsibility towards their predicament. They require a sense of maturity to accommodate their new role of motherhood into their role as learners. They need to be dedicated to their schooling and take initiatives to deal with some of the barriers they face. It is unfortunate to note that some teen mothers are immature and just wait for society to sort out issues for them. If a service is not available, they give up without using their initiative.

In order to reduce disruption of schooling due to parental responsibilities, girls can identify a member of their extended family to take on primary caretaking of the babies (Johnson-Hanks, 2002). For those who do not have this service within the family, they can place their babies in a foster home, or they can place

their babies up for adoption. Unfortunately, the teen mothers I interviewed were adamant that they could not place their babies up for adoption because they did not want to part with them. Most of them would not opt for abortion, because they believed that would be killing, which is against their religious beliefs.

If all the contributors from policy, school and home environments including the teen mothers themselves combine their efforts to ensure minimal disruption to schooling of the girls, it is possible that the girls could achieve their ambitions of getting an academic qualification which would enable them to become self-supporting and responsible citizens.

9.2   Recommendations

The challenges which the girls face need to be managed in order to enable them to complete their schooling successfully so that they can contribute to the development of the country, since it is believed that education of women is vital to the development of a nation. This section outlines suggestions which could be used to overcome the barriers which schooling teen mothers face in the Western Cape. I have made eleven recommendations, as follows:

9.2.1   Concerning the MLPP

- The MLPP should be revisited to ensure its clarity on steps to be followed by schools to support the schooling of the teen mothers.

- There is a need for an enforcement agency to ensure that schools are complying with the policy.

- There is a need to include the voices of teen mothers, teachers and parents in the decision–making of the policy.

9.2.2   Concerning the school and the community

- There is a need for in–service training of teachers, revisiting and redesigning teacher training to enhance inclusive education for learners such as teen mothers.

- The Department of Education should equip Life Orientation teachers with professional counselling skills.

- Schools should create policies that allow flexible education participation of teen mothers.

- The EMDC should ensure that girls and their parents in the public schools are aware of, and can access, professional counselling when the need arises.

- There is a need to ensure that communities are well informed about inclusion of teen mothers and their rights to education in public schools.

9.2.3 Concerning teen mothers

- The teen mothers can form self-help groups within their schools.

- The girls need to take responsibility of their predicament.

- The girls could identify family members or foster homes to assume parental responsibility for their babies.

9.2.1 Concerning the MLPP

Theories on compliance posit that non–compliance is usually due to two reasons. Firstly, it is the lack of capacity (knowledge of the rule and technological ability to comply), and secondly, it is the commitment (determined by norms, perceptions and incentives for compliance) of entities (Grossman and Zaelke, 2005). This study has established that schools are not complying with the MLPP, therefore, based on the theory of capacity and compliance, there is a need for a more refined approach in the policy to ensure compliance. This approach should provide maximum assistance strategies, such as procedures with definite steps to be followed, technological assistance and policing designed to enable the monitoring agents to provide compliance advice.

One of the reasons why schools are not implementing the MLPP is lack of capacity. In some cases the schools do not know what to do to implement the policy effectively, because the policy does not present implementation procedures. Jansen (2001) observed that policy documents are not accompanied by implementation plans; as a result most policies are not implemented as intended by the policy. Therefore, in order to address the lack of capacity, there is a need to revisit the policy and ensure that there are no omissions and its

interpretation is defined and made precise. This would aid the schools in understanding and putting into action what the policy requires them to do.

Lack of commitment by educators in schools is another reason for not complying with the MLPP. Commitment should be enhanced by clearly articulating the consequences to the public schools whenever they fail to comply with the policy. There should also be an enforcement agency within the EMDCs whose task it is to issue penalties and make the probability of detection high enough so that it becomes difficult for the public schools to violate the policy.

All stakeholders (teen mothers, their teachers, the community, NGOs, state, and parents) must be included in the formulation of the policy. Grossman and Zaelke (2005) believe that policies need to be informed by analyses of what works and what does not, so that the approaches can be modified. In the case of the MLPP, what could work or not for teen mothers could be best analysed by the girls themselves, their educators, and their parents. The teen mothers need to be actively involved because the girls know best what they need to remain in school and be able to succeed. Since they are the ones experiencing the phenomenon, they can analyse the situation better. Kenway et al (1993) postulate that it would be prudent for educators, researchers and policy makers to take into consideration the voice of the girls rather than imposing definitions of problems and solutions on the girls. That is, the policy makers should attend to what teen mothers themselves see as the challenging issues. This echoes Ulrich's (2002) 'boundary critique' which aims at disclosing inevitable partiality. He argues that a systematic process of boundary critique needs to:

a. identify the sources of selectivity, by surfacing the underpinning boundary judgments;

b. to question these boundary judgments with respect to their practical and ethical implications and to surface options, through discussions with all concerned *stakeholders* (note that their selection in turn represents a boundary judgment in need of critique); and

c. based on these two critical efforts it may then be necessary to challenge unqualified claims to knowledge or rationality by compelling argumentation, through the emancipatory use of boundary critique (Ulrich, 2002:41).

The educators should also be included in policy making because they are the ones to use it to ensure that teen mothers' special needs are accordingly met at school. Parents need to be included because there are issues which need collaborative work by educators and parents in order to ensure success of the learners. This idea is echoed by Christenson and Sheridan (2001) who conclude that parents are essential to the educational success of their children.

9.2.2 Concerning the school and community

While it may be assumed that teachers would support and encourage teen mothers to deal with their situation as 'learners with special needs', the teachers themselves might be in need of guidance or sensitisation on how they can encourage and support teen mothers academically. It may be necessary to provide the teachers with in–service training on how inclusion of the pregnant girls in the system could be effectively achieved.

The learning barriers which the teen mothers face in school could be perceived as an example of what many other marginalised learners face. Effective inclusion of these learners in schools may be addressed by modifying the teacher training curriculum. Just as inclusive education systems require new skills and knowledge from the educators (Vayrynen, 2000), incorporating special needs of teen mothers within the mainstream requires the same. Therefore, teacher training in South Africa should be revisited and designed to support special consideration of learners such as teen mothers. This might involve improving teaching practices, developing collaborative working and teaching methods, and redefining special teachers' roles, for example, embracing the girls' fundamental human needs. According to Luttrell (2003), this is a restorative vision of educational practice that

enhances relationships, and helps learners to recuperate their losses and recognise personal conflicts.

The schools need to create an environment which encourages the girls to continue their education with minimal disruption. That is, the schools should take into consideration the needs of teen mothers, and devise motivating solutions to · help the girls successfully complete their schooling. Such solutions should not be influenced by negative discourses about teen motherhood/pregnancy.

In order to make the support work, educators should be in the forefront in helping the teen mothers recognise their difficulties in reconciling school, pregnancy and motherhood; and identifying the actions to take in order for the girls to succeed with schooling. Educators could formulate a school policy to allow pregnant girls to use maternity clothing when attending classes. While the use of this clothing would ensure that the pregnant learners are not in conflict with the social values, dressing like this may make the girls stand out, hence creating a negative feeling within them. To circumvent the feeling, educators could phrase the policy in such a way that the use of the maternity clothing is optional so that those who can tolerate the situation can still attend school without contravening the social norms. Deschenes et al (2001) contend that adapting the schools to some values of the communities it serves, requires a high degree of self–determination and flexibility on the part of the educators. Therefore, educators need to be flexible and be able to render the assistance the teen mothers require to stay in school.

There is also a need to ensure that all teen mothers are aware of, and receive, professional counselling at an appropriate time. This study has established that many teen mothers have not received counselling by professionals of the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES), a component within the EMDC. The lack of awareness and inaccessibility of the therapy could be addressed by making counselling readily available in the schools. The Department of Education could assign professional counsellors who could be based in the schools to manage cases requiring their services. The ideal would

be to have one counsellor per school to deal with the teen pregnancy issue and all other problems requiring counselling. However, this may not be cost effective for the department. To reduce the costs, one counsellor could manage a small number (say two or three) of schools. In this manner it would not be an insurmountable task for principals of the schools coordinating the process. Accessibility to professional counselling for the teen mother would then improve.

Alternatively, in order to make the counselling readily available to the teen mothers in schools, the Department of Education could equip the Life Orientation (LO) teachers with professional counselling skills to deal with the schooling teen mothers issues. With these skills, the LO teachers could meet counselling needs of the teen mothers and their parents. The rationale for choosing the LO teachers is that they already have the responsibility of equipping learners with skills such as problem-solving. Equipping the teachers with the skills could also relieve the schools from the burden of coordinating the process with an outsider, the process perceived as time-consuming by the school principals.

This research has found that parents have myriad reactions when they first learn that their daughter is pregnant. This finding is in line with what Luttrell (2003:131) notes – that the reactions vary considerably from 'disbelief', to 'denial', to 'blame', to 'disappointment', to 'rejection', to 'violence'. The reaction can disrupt the bond between the parent and the child. Such parents need counselling to help restore and repair the bond (Naseef, 2001). There is consequently a need to provide counselling for the parents of the teen mothers to help them to come to terms with the daughters and their situation. This would help to ensure that teen mothers are not left destitute and without support from their parents. The counselling could be organised and made available by the school in collaboration with professional counsellors assigned to schools to provide counselling to teen mothers. Alternatively, as indicated earlier, Life Skills teachers equipped with counselling skills can provide the therapy to the parents.

Most of the negative impacts the community has on the schooling teen mothers arise from the discourses surrounding teen pregnancy which aim at punishing the girls. Whilst some people are keen to allow teen mothers to continue their education in the mainstream, others see it as a threat – because they are ill-informed about it and still perceive it as mainstreaming of unfit learners. It is, therefore, essential that the parent body of the school and the community should be well-informed about what inclusion of teen mothers into the institutions means, what it implies and how it should be implemented.

Just as a community may be a source of justification of exclusion of teen mother from schooling, it [the community] can, with appropriate sensitisation, resources, procedures and professional involvement, become a powerful resource to address the challenges the girls face and to foster inclusive education systems in the schools. That is, teachers, parents, NGOs and well–wishers can create community buy–in, building political support within schools and communities, and advocating support for the teen mothers. They can lobby schools to be flexible and adequately accommodate extra life demands of the girls. Civic education should be given to the groups of people opposing the inclusion of the girls to emphasise that forcing the teen mothers out of school does not only punish the girls, but their children and the generations to follow. This message could be disseminated by the use of arts such as music and drama, and media through posters, bill boards and/or jingles on television and radio.

9.2.3 Concerning the teen mothers

Pregnant and mothering school girls can come together and form self-help groups within their schools. Within the group the girls can learn from each other on how to deal with their situation. To enhance their initiatives, the girls can invite women who were teen mothers, but have managed to succeed with schooling, to come to talk to the girls. Such women can give insights to the girls on how to handle their predicament and at the same time know what to do to succeed at school.

The girls need to realise that what they have done is unfortunate and therefore take responsibility for their mistakes. The girls need to be dedicated to their schooling and realise that they have a responsibility to be educated for themselves and for their babies. The girls need to develop a sense of maturity and to make informed decisions. Teen mothers can ask for advice about what to do from responsible grown-ups within their societies, or from their teachers.

Primary caregiving to babies is one of the major disruptions to education of the teen mothers. To take away this disruption, the girls can identify family members or foster homes to assume parental responsibility of their babies. If these services are not available, the girls could seriously consider giving their babies up for adoption. Information about foster homes and giving babies up for adoption can be obtained from the Department of Social Services through social workers available in local areas.

9.3 Future research

I introduced the idea of separate schools for teen mothers in my discussion in Chapter 6. The schools could address:

- the situation of the girls, especially those who find it hard to cope in normal schools because of pressure in that environment; and
- the fear that teen mothers would set a bad example for the other learners, or even tarnish the public school's image.

I have suggested some ways the issues could be addressed. I strongly believe that separate schools would solve many of the schooling challenges that the girls face. This idea concurs with Kenway et al (1993:72) who note that separate classes for girls are common as an attempt to reconstruct the learning environment and curriculum, in order to remove any impediments to girls' access to and success in any aspect of schooling in which they become involved.

Separate schools for teen mothers as noted by McDade (1992) are most often physically and administratively isolated from regular schools; as such not every public school could have such a campus close by due to resource logistics, practices and effectiveness. Based on McDade's point, while the idea about

separate schools for teen mothers is appealing, it raises questions which need thorough investigation before its adoption in the province. For instance,

I. How and where could such schools be set up?

II. How would the problem of transport be dealt with so that all teen mothers wishing to enrol in the school do not have problems with distance from home and are not too far away from their babies?

III. If given the option to register in separate schools at any time during the year, how would each teen mother adjust her school timetable to the progress of her pregnancy and/or motherhood? How would the teaching progress, since such learners would not be capable of studying the same subjects at the same pace and rate of progress? How would the curriculum be handled while ensuring that it is equal and comparable to that of the normal school?

IV. If separate schools could be designed to protect teen mothers from undue harassment in the public school and ensure that they continue with their education with minimum disruption, would such separate programs serve to stigmatise those who enrol at those institutions? Therefore, before adopting the idea, there is need for research to ensure that such stigmatisation be avoided.

I think, if such questions are addressed, separate schools for teen mothers could make a good environment to enable the girls to complete their education successfully.

Other areas for research to improve the schooling of teen mothers are:

- how poverty and socio-economic factors contribute to teen pregnancies;
- the training of teachers to include management of social problems;
- making schools more caring, and the pastoral role of the educator; and
- public debates on abortion as an option for the pregnant girls.

9.4   Chapter summary

The chapter has drawn conclusions about the challenges schooling teen mothers face, based on the results of this research. The chapter has shown that the challenges experienced by the teen mothers are not addressed due to a number of reasons. One of the reasons is the flaws of the MLPP which guarantees the girls a right to education in the public schools in the province. The flaws have contributed to the public schools' partial compliance of the policy. Therefore, it is recommendable that the policy be revisited to mend the flaws and introduce monitoring mechanisms to ensure that individual schools are complying.

The impact of discourse surrounding teen pregnancy/motherhood and lack of capacity and commitment on the educators' side, has resulted in teen mothers not being treated as learners with special needs in their schools. For instance, professional counselling and other necessary accommodations are not made available to the girls. Sensitising educators on the needs of the teen mothers can help in addressing this situation.

The research has shown that some attitudes of parents and communities have negatively affected the schooling process of the teen mothers. Many parents give up when their daughters fall pregnant. In some cases parents disown the teen mothers, leaving them with no support. This makes it impossible for the girls to perform well in school, or at worst, to attend school. Counselling could help parents come to terms with their daughters' position and the challenges they are experiencing. This would ensure that the parents at least do not give up on their daughters and continue their involvement in the schooling of the girls. In some cases the community has forced teen mothers to stop attending school based on the 'contamination' discourse and the perception that the girls' dress code violates the cultural norms. This obstacle can be addressed by sensitising the community to the rights to education of the teen mothers.

Finally, well formulated policies plus efforts of the school and home environments can combine to provide adequate support to schooling teen mothers. Without

support from the environments, the girls cannot achieve their ambitions of getting an academic qualification which would help them access good jobs on the labour market.

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Appendix I: - Questionnaire to learners

Dear learner,

I am a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and I am conducting research for my D.Ed Thesis which is about Promoting Girls' Education in South Africa: With reference to teen mothers as learners.

Please fill in this questionnaire to the best of your knowledge. Do not write your name on this questionnaire. If you feel you cannot respond to this questionnaire you are free not to. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Yours truly,

Agnes (Researcher)

1. Gender:☐ Male ☐ Female

2. I am in Grade ....at ....

3. How many teen mothers are there in your class? ......

4. Do you have a relation who is a teen mother ☐ Yes ☐ No

In the following questions you may tick in as many boxes as the information is applicable to your answer

5. If your answer above is 'yes', how closely related are you?

☐ Sister

☐ Cousin

☐ Aunt

☐ Other. Specify ....

☐ None

6. If your answer in question 5 is 'none' go to question 6. How do you feel about her situation?

☐ Embarrassed

☐ Sorry for her

☐ She needs your emotional and physical support

☐ She needs extra academic support

☐ Other. Specify ....

7. How do you feel about the teen mother(s) situation in your class?

☐ Embarrassed

☐ Sorry for her/them

☐ She/they need your emotional and moral support

☐ She/they need extra academic support

☐ Other. Specify ....

8. How do other girls relate with teen mother learner(s) in your class?

☐ They reject her/them

☐ They feel embarrassed to be associated with her/them

☐ They enjoy teasing and bullying her/them

☐ They accept her/them just like anybody else in the class

☐ Other. Specify ....

9. How do boys relate with teen mother learner(s) in your class?

☐ They reject her/them

☐ They feel embarrassed to be associated with her/them

☐ They enjoy teasing and bullying her/them

☐ They accept her/them just like anybody else in the class

☐ Other. Specify ....

In the following questions (10 to 12) you are given a scale of 1 to 4: where

1= Often; 2= sometimes; 3= rarely; 4= never.

You are required to fill in the boxes the number that is suitable according to your knowledge.

10. Do you think the teen mothers are more challenged academically than other learners because they feel

☐ They feel rejected by fellow learners

☐ They feel embarrassed for themselves

☐ They feel rejected by the teachers

☐ They feel rejected by their own families

☐ They just do not have enough time to do their academic work and take care of
their babies

☐ Other. Specify ....

11. According to your own observation, how do you think teachers relate to teen
mothers?

(fill in the boxes the number that is suitable according to your knowledge.

1= Often; 2= sometimes; 3= rarely; 4= never).

☐ Teachers accept them just like any other learner

☐ Teachers reject them because they are teen mothers

☐ Teachers reduce their academic support to them

☐ Teachers are not sure how to handle them

☐ Teachers give more support to the teen mothers than to the other learners

☐ Other. Specify ....

12. Teen mothers may fail to perform well in class because of:

(fill in the boxes the number that is suitable according to your knowledge.

1= Often; 2= sometimes; 3= rarely; 4= never.)

☐ Loneliness

☐ Prejudice

☐ Rejection by fellow learners

☐ Rejection by the teachers

☐ Other. Specify ....

13. Have you ever witnessed a fellow learner attacking another learner because she is
a teen mother (answer Yes or No)

☐ Verbally

☐ Physically

☐ Both verbally and physically

☐ Other. Specify ....

14. Have you ever witnessed a fellow learner showing kindness to another learner because she is a teen mother (answer Yes or No)

  ☐ Verbally

  ☐ Physically

  ☐ Both verbally and physically

  ☐ Other. Specify ....

15. Do you think teen mothers have fears of participating in class discussion (tick in the appropriate box)

  ☐ Always

  ☐ Most of the times

  ☐ Sometimes

  ☐ Never

16. If your answer above is 'yes' what things or actions would they be afraid of?

....

....

....

17. If the school had a provision of day care service for the children of the teen mother learners, what would be your reaction?

....

....

....

18. Do you think teen mother learners' integration capabilities with their classmates and teachers improve with time?

  ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please explain..

....

19. How do you feel associating with teen mother classmate(s)? (tick in the appropriate

box)

☐ ease

☐ unease

☐ I do not even want to associate with her/them

20 If the school had a childcare service, do you think the academic life of the teen

mothers would improve?

☐Yes ☐No

Please explain..

....

Appendix II: - Questionnaire to teachers

Dear teacher,

     I am a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and I am conducting research for my D.Ed Thesis which is about Promoting Girls' Education in South Africa: With reference to teen mothers as learners.

     Please fill in this questionnaire to the best of your knowledge. Do not write your name on this questionnaire. If you feel you cannot respond to this questionnaire you are free not to. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks in advance for your contribution.
Yours truly,
     Agnes (Researcher)

Name of the school ....

Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

I have been teaching since ....

I have .... teen mothers in my class

How many teen mothers have you taught since you started teaching? ....

In the following questions you may tick in as many boxes as the alternative fit in your responses.

1. How do you feel about the teen mother(s) situation in your class?

    ☐ Embarrassed

    ☐ Sorry for her/them

    ☐ She/they need your emotion and moral support

    ☐ She/they need extra academic support

    ☐ Other. Specify ....

2. How do other girls relate with teen mother learner(s) in your class?

    ☐ They reject her/them

    ☐ They feel embarrassed to be associated with her/them

    ☐ They enjoy teasing and bullying them

    ☐ They accept her/them just like anybody else in the class

    ☐ Other. Specify ....

3. How do boys relate with teen mother learner(s) in your class?

☐ They reject her/them

☐ They feel embarrassed to be associated with her/them

☐ They enjoy teasing and bullying them

☐ They accept her/them just like anybody else in the class

☐ Other. Specify ....

In the following questions (4 to 6) you are given a scale of 1 to 4: where

1= Often; 2= sometimes; 3= rarely; 4= never. You are required to fill in the boxes the number that is suitable according to your knowledge.

4. Do you think the teen mothers are more challenged academically than other

learners because they feel:

☐ rejected by fellow learners

☐ embarrassed for themselves

☐ rejected by the teachers

☐ rejected by their own families

☐ they just do not have enough time to do their academic work and take care of

their babies

☐ Other. Specify ....

5. According to your own observation, how do you think teachers relate to teen

Mothers?

(fill in the boxes the number that is suitable according to your knowledge.

1= Often; 2= sometimes; 3= rarely; 4= never.)

☐ Teachers accept them just like any other learner

☐ Teachers reject them because they are teen mothers

☐ Teachers reduce their academic support to them

☐ Teachers are not sure how to handle them

☐ Other. Specify ....

6. Teen mothers may fail to perform well in class because of:

(fill in the boxes the number that is suitable according to your knowledge.

1= Often; 2= sometimes; 3= rarely; 4= never.)

☐ Loneliness

☐ Prejudice

☐ Lack of acceptance by fellow learners

☐ Lack of acceptance by the teachers

☐ Other. Specify ....

7a. Have you ever witnessed a learner attacking another learner because the other is a

teen mother? (answer Yes or No)

☐ Verbally

☐ Physically

☐ Both verbally and physically

☐ Other. Specify ....

b. If your answer above is 'yes' what did you do?

....

....

8. Have you ever witnessed a fellow learner showing kindness to another learner

because she is a teen mother? (answer Yes or No)

☐ Verbally

☐ Physically

☐ Both verbally and physically

☐ Other. Specify ....

9. Do you think teen mothers have fears participating in class discussion? (tick in the

appropriate box)

☐ Always

☐ Most of the times

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

10 If your answer above is 'yes' what things or actions would they be afraid of?

....

....

....

11 If the school proposed provision of day care service for the children of the teen

mother learners, what would be your reaction?

....

....

....

12. Do you think teen mother learners' integration capabilities with their classmates

and teachers improve with time?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please explain...

....

13. how do you feel as a teacher of teen mother(s) about associating with

her/them academically? (tick in the appropriate box)

☐ ease

☐ unease

☐ I do not even want to associate with them

☐ I am not sure about how to handle them

14 If the school had a childcare service, do you think the academic life of the teen

mothers would improve?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please explain...

....

12. Do the teen mothers experience any difficulty getting re-admission to school

after

giving birth?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please explain...

13. When teen mother(s) experience hardship coping with their academic work because they don't have enough time for their academic work and due to mothering, how do you help them?

....

....

14. Basing on teaching experience, how is the academic performance of the teen mothers in general? (tick in the appropriate box)

☐ Above average

☐ Average

☐ Below average

17. How do you feel when you are teaching classes with teen mother(s)?

☐ Embarrassed

☐ Angry

☐ Not affected

☐ Other (specify)...

Appendix III: - Semi-structured interview questionnaire to teen mother learners

1. When you come to school, who takes care of your child? Who does the same when it is time to do homework?

2. When you first came back to school did you experience any shock? What do you think was the cause? How did you respond to that?

3. Who made the decision for you to come back to school, you or your parents? How willing were you to come back to school?

4. Did you experience any problems getting re-admission to school?

5. As a teen mother learner, do you experience any stress? How do you respond to that?

6. When you are discussing things in class do you feel free to speak your mind always? Why?

7. When you were coming back to school did you seek any counselling? If yes, who offered you the counselling? How helpful was it to you?

8. How is your academic performance at school?

9. How are you accepted by your teachers and fellow learners at school? Please explain.

10. What challenges do you face in balancing the demands of parenthood and schooling? How do you deal with the challenges?

11. Do you know of any organisation which helps young teen mothers to finish their education? If yes, are you making use of the organisation and how?

12. How has having a baby changed your academic life?

13. Are you getting enough support both from home and school in order to cope with the school work? What other help would you need in order to improve your schooling life as a young mother?

14. Do you mind when other learners do not want to associate with you because you have a baby? Why or why not?

15. If there was a separate school for teen mothers, would you prefer to enroll at that school or not? Why?

16. When you have a nasty experience at school, do you feel free to talk about this with your parents?

Appendix IV: - Semi-structured interview questionnaire to the heads of the schools

1. Do you have teen mothers at this school? How many?

2. Do the school regulations allow teen mothers to come back to school? If yes, how does the school welcome them? If not, why?

3. What is the procedure required for a teen mother to be readmitted to this school? How long does it take to process their applications?

4. Does your office sometimes hesitate to take the teen mothers back into the school system? Why or why not?

5. Do you have girls enrolled who have transferred from other schools because they do not want to be at their old school because they are now young mothers?

6. When the teen mothers are allowed to come back to school, does the school offer them any assistance e.g. counselling and childcare facilities? Why or why not?

7. Has your office got the WCED policy on learner pregnancy in public schools? How does the school implement the policy?

8. As the head of this school do you think this policy is important? Why or why not?

9. From your own observation, how challenging is it for the teen mothers to complete their secondary education? Do most of these girls succeed in their matric exams?

10. Does your office receive any complaints from the teen mothers about bullying and mockery by their teachers and fellow students at school? If yes, how do you deal with such type of situations?

11. Teen mothers and other girls may have problems with the normal school timetable due to child caring and domestic work. What help is put in place to make sure that these girls are not left behind?

12. How many teen mothers have sat for their Matric Exams within the past three years? What percentage of them succeeded?

13. How many teen mothers registered for classes at the beginning of this school year and how many are still attending classes regularly?

14. If there any who are not able to attend classes regularly, how does the school help them?

15. If there were a separate school for teen mothers, do you think the teen mothers' challenges would be reduced? Why or why not?

Appendix V: — Semi-structured interview questionnaire to teen mothers' parents

1. How much support do you give to your daughter in order for her to complete her secondary education?

2. Who made the decision that your daughter should go back to school? How ready was she to return to school?

3. As a parent when you discovered that your daughter was pregnant, did you expect her to get married or continue with her education? Why?

4. When your daughter was returning to school, did you seek any counseling for her? If yes, who offered the counselling? If not why?

5. Did your daughter experience any difficulty getting readmission? If yes, how was this resolved?

6. Do you think it is important for your daughter to complete secondary school? Why or why not?

7. When your daughter goes to school who takes care of her baby?

8. Does your daughter complain about mocking and bullying by fellow learners and teachers? If yes, how do you help her?

9. Does you daughter have enough time to do her homework and study at home?

10. Do you think the school or education department should do something to help the teen mothers with their schooling? What would you suggest be done?

11. If there were separate schools for teen mothers would you prefer your daughter to enroll at that school? Why or why not?

Appendix VI: – Letter requesting consent from parents

Agnes Chigona
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
P.O. Box 652
Cape Town 800

Through: The Principal
                ....High School

Dear Parents/guardian

Request for consent to interview your daughter: .

I write to request your consent to interview your daughter about teen mothers' schooling challenges.

I am a Doctor of Education student at Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the research is in fulfillment of the Doctoral Studies. The research is about **Promoting girls' education in South Africa with reference to teenage mothers as learners.** Girls, especially those who become mothers before they finish their high school education will benefit a lot from this study, as it tries to promote the girls' education by suggesting measures of decreasing the challenges these girls face while mothering and schooling simultaneously.

Participation will be entirely voluntary. Randomly selected participants will be free to choose not to participate. Should they choose to participate, they are free not to respond to any question they do not wish to respond to, or can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Thank you so much in advance for your understanding.
Sincerely,

Agnes Chigona (D.Ed. student)

CC: Prof. Rajendra Chetty (D.Ed. Supervisor)
           Cape Peninsula University of Technology

....
Reply slip

I .... the parent of .... give consent to the researcher to interview my daughter about teen mothers' schooling challenges.

Signature

Appendix VII: - Consent form

Agnes Chigona
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
P.O. Box 652
Cape Town 800

Through: The Principal
..............High School

Dear participant,

I write to request your consent to audio-record the interview with you about teen mothers' schooling challenges.

I am a Doctor of Education student at Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the research is in fulfillment of the Doctoral Studies. The research is about **Promoting girls' education in South Africa with special reference to teenage mothers as learners.** Girls, especially those who become mothers before they finish their high school, will benefit a lot from this study as it tries to promote the girls' education by suggesting measures of decreasing the challenges these girls face while mothering and schooling simultaneously.

Participation is entirely voluntary. As a randomly selected participant you are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you are free not to respond to any question you do not wish to respond to, or can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Thank you so much in advance for your understanding.
Sincerely,

Agnes Chigona (D.Ed. student)

CC: *Prof. Rajendra Chetty (D.Ed. Supervisor)*
        Cape Peninsula University of Technology

....

Reply slip

I .... give consent to the researcher to interview me
and audio tape record the interview about teen mothers' schooling challenges.

Signature

Appendix VIII: - Application for permission to conduct research

To: The Western Cape Education Department

From: Agnes Chigona
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
P.O. Box 652
Cape Town 800

Dear Sir/Madam,

Request for a permission to conduct research in High schools

I write to request your permission to conduct research in high schools in the Western Cape. The schools are: XXXXXXX.

I am a Doctor of Education student at Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the research is in fulfillment of the D.Ed. The research is about **Promoting girls' education in South Africa: with reference to teen mothers as learners.** The research will involve interviewing the girls (teen mothers), teachers, and the parents or guardians of the teen mothers. Another group of boys, girls and teachers will be asked to respond to a questionnaire. Girls, especially those who become mothers before they finish their high school, will benefit a lot from this study as it tries to promote the girls' education by suggesting measures of lessening the challenges these girls face while mothering and schooling simultaneously.

As a researcher, I do not perceive any risks from the participants' involvement in this study. However, the participants will be asked to sign a consent form once all their questions (if they have any concerning this research) have been answered to their satisfaction.

While I will keep individual's responses in confidence, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalisations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location only accessible to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches individual respondents to their answers will be destroyed. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation will be entirely voluntary. Randomly selected participants will be free to choose not to participate. Should they choose to participate, they can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Thank you so much in advance for your understanding.
Sincerely,

Agnes Chigona (D.Ed. student)

CC: Prof. Rajendra Chetty (D.Ed. Supervisor)
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Appendix IX: Managing Learner Pregnancy Policy (MLPP)

WCED POLICY ON MANAGING LEARNER PREGNANCY IN GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

1. BACKGROUND

The Bill of Rights, as contained in the Constitution of the RSA, Act 108/1996, affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom, including the rights of children (Section 28) and the right to education (Section 29).

It is therefore imperative that school managers and governing bodies ensure that the rights and development of female learners are not curtailed and that special measures are taken in respect of pregnant schoolgirls.

Regulation history

This policy replaces the section on Teenage Pregnancy contained in Circular 0077/98: *General Manual for the Suspension and Expulsion of Learners from Public Schools (excluding Public Schools for Learners sent or transferred thereto in terms of The Child Care Act, 1983 (Act 74/1983) and/or the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 (Act 51/1977)).*

2. LEARNER PREGNANCY

It is recommended that the school policy and the code of conduct for learners make provision for managing learner pregnancy within the framework of this policy document.

2.1 When it is evident that a learner is pregnant, the matter must be treated with **great sensitivity and confidentiality**.

2.1.1 *The learner must be considered to be a Learner with Special Needs with access to counselling by professionals of the* Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES) component within the EMDC. The principal must manage and co-ordinate this process.

2.1.2 In order to maintain confidentiality, the principal must report to the school governing body that a learner is pregnant, without necessarily divulging the learner's name.

2.1.3 Should the learner have become pregnant as a result of sexual abuse, incest or rape, the principal must follow the procedures in the *Abuse no More* protocol document.

2.1.4 The principal must convene a meeting with the learner and her parent(s) or guardian(s) to

(a) gain an understanding of how she and her parent(s) or guardian(s) intend dealing with the matter.

(b) supply them with comprehensive information concerning all the appropriate health and guidance services available in the community; the services available in the school system and at the EMDCs; and the options available to her to continue her education during her pregnancy.

- These alternatives may include the following:
  - Remaining at school as long as it is medically advisable and then obtaining learning material and support from the school
  - Withdrawing from the school for the duration of the pregnancy and taking own responsibility for continued education
- A Grade 12 candidate must be fully informed about examination options and procedures, although she herself is responsible for registering as a private candidate for subsequent examinations.

(c) request the parent(s) or guardian(s) to obtain a medical certificate

giving a possible date of confinement, the date from which it would be medically advisable for the learner to be absent from school before the confinement, and the date from which it would be medically advisable for her to return to school.

(d) discuss with the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the learner, the period during which she must be absent from school, based on the above information.

(e) enter into a written agreement with the parent(s) or guardian(s) and the learner in which it is stated clearly that

- during the time she attends school it is at her own risk
- the school is indemnified from accountability for any pregnancy- related injuries or incidents
- no alternative or additional logistical arrangements can be demanded from the school
- no exceptions can be made regarding adherence to the school's code of conduct.

(f) make it clear that when the learner returns to school after the birth, she will not be allowed to bring the baby with her.

(g) take any further decisions, for example about

- whether the matter must be handled confidentially or not
- appropriate behaviour and actions on the part of the learner
- participation in the school's extra-curricular activities.

2.2 Should it be known or established that a male learner at the school is co-responsible for a pregnancy, it is essential that confidentiality be maintained.

2.2.1 The principal must inform the school governing body.

2.2.2 The principal and SLES professionals within the EMDC must ensure that

(a) attention is given to the male learner's co-responsibility.
(b) the male learner is counselled and provided with information on matters of sexuality, responsibility for actions and the legal implications of obligations and rights.

2.2.3 A written agreement must be entered into with the parent(s) or guardian(s), the male learner and the governing body about appropriate behaviour, which conforms, to the school's code of conduct.

2.3 Should it be known or established that a learner at another educational institution is co-responsible for the pregnancy, the principal concerned must be notified and he or she must manage the situation in accordance with paragraphs 2.2.1 to 2.2.3.

2.4 The educational consequences of learner pregnancy and parenting are twofold: young mothers and fathers run a risk that they will not obtain the educational skills needed to become self-supporting, economically productive citizens, something which often results in their children entering the educational system with economic and developmental disadvantages.

2.4.1 A school is expected to act appropriately in cases of learner pregnancy. However, it is also important that the school should approach the situation from an educational and values-driven perspective, with as ultimate goal to enable the learners *whose futures could otherwise be jeopardised by unfortunate circumstances, to achieve success in the classroom and in* their personal lives.

2.4.2 It is essential for the learner concerned that her education should continue with as little disruption as possible. Alternative suitable arrangements must be made to cover the curriculum. This means that lesson notes and assignments must be made available to her and that she must take responsibility for completing and returning the assignments to the school for continuous assessment (CASS).

2.4.3 The process of gathering valid information about the learner's performance and the formal recording of her progress throughout the year (CASS) must be continued as far as practically possible whether she is at school or at home. The evidence of assessment and recording contained in her profile and portfolio will help the EMDC multifunctional team to decide about her progression at the end of the year.

2.5 The importance of providing children with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values regarding their sexuality and the accompanying social

responsibilities in especially the learning area: Life Orientation, cannot be over-emphasised.

2.6 Schools can also enable parents and guardians to play a more active role in the sexuality education of their children by presenting parent involvement and educational support programmes.

3. PREGNANCY DURING SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

When a full-time Grade 12 candidate becomes pregnant, the principal must deal with the case as follows:

3.1 In cases where special arrangements are required, the principal must report the pregnancy to the Director: Examinations at the Department immediately and submit a medical certificate as proof.

3.2 The learner has the right and choice to attend school up to as close to the confinement date as is considered medically advisable.

3.2.1 If a learner will be 32 weeks (or more) pregnant on 1 October of the Grade 12 year, as indicated in a medical certificate, she will have the following options:

(a) To write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations in a separate examination room at the school or in a separate venue in the vicinity
(b) To write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations at another centre as a private candidate, should she decide to terminate full-time school attendance. In this case the conditions pertaining to special centres contained in paragraphs 3.3.1 to 3.3.5 will be applicable.
(c) To enter for the supplementary examinations in the following March.

- The reason for these options is that candidates have the right to write their Senior Certificate Examinations in the best possible examination environment, and they could become upset if a candidate in an advanced stage of pregnancy goes into labour during an examination session.
- If the learner chooses to write and is allowed to enter for the supplementary examinations of the following March, she must submit a medical certificate confirming that the term of her pregnancy was so advanced that it was impossible for her to write the October/November Senior Certificate Examination.

• A candidate who is unable to write the examinations either in November or in March, may register as a private candidate for subsequent examinations on her own responsibility.

3.2.2 If the pregnant learner in Grade 12 is less than 32 weeks pregnant on

1 October and chooses to sit for the examinations, the following options will be available:

(a) To write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations at her own school
(b) To write at another school in the vicinity or at a special examination centre
(c) To write at a special examination centre as a private candidate should she decide to terminate full-time school attendance

3.3 Should the candidate choose to write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations at a special examination centre, the *following will apply:*

3.3.1 The principal must assist the candidate and arrange with the Director: Examinations at the Department for her to write at a special examination centre.

3.3.2 If the learner is the only candidate at a special examination centre, she (or her parent(s) or guardian(s)) will be responsible for remunerating the invigilator. The candidate must pay the required invigilation fee to the Western Cape Education Department, which will then pay the invigilator.

3.3.3 The circuit manager must approve the invigilator and the special examination centre, which must be situated as near as possible to the school.

3.3.4 The special invigilator must receive a question paper for the specific examination session from the chief invigilator when the question papers are opened in the school's official examination venue, and take it to the special examination centre.

3.3.5 After every examination session the special invigilator must hand the answer script(s) to the chief invigilator who will send it/them to the Department with the rest of the school's scripts.

4. GENERAL

In terms of the Constitution principals, school governing bodies and EMDCs are accountable for all learners' right to quality *education, and this includes enrolled expectant learners or learners who are parents. In order to balance the parent*

responsibilities and educational needs of learners who are parents, partnerships with Education Support Services, Social Services and Health should be forged within the EMDCs.