

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF STUDENT MOTHERS OF UCC
COLLEGE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE CAPE COAST
CENTRE

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2017

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OF UCC COLLEGE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE
CAPE COAST CENTRE

BY

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Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
of the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in
Administration in Higher Education

JULY 2016

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date:.....

Name:

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: Date.....

Name:

Co-Supervisor's Signature: Date.....

Name:

ABSTRACT

Distance Education has been institutionalised in the public universities in Ghana and women who enrol in the programmes have to combine their family roles with work and their academic pursuits. This study sought to find out the challenges and coping strategies of student mothers of the College of Distance Education of the University of Cape Coast (CoDE, UCC). The study employed the descriptive survey. A questionnaire in the Likert-type scale was used to collect data from 175 student mothers of CoDE, UCC at the Cape Coast study centre. The data collected was analysed and discussed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. It was found that the student mothers (a minimum of 71%) performed a lot of laborious non-academic activities daily in their homes and the combination of these roles with their academics pose negative high effect on their family lives and academics. Unfortunately, the coping strategies they employed were, to a large extent, ineffective and wished for better ones. Among the conclusions was the supposition that student mothers have inevitable academic impediments that emanate from the non-academic activities that they perform, and therefore, the success of their academic pursuit is at the expense of the time they have for their families. It is recommended that CoDE, in collaboration with the Counselling Unit of the University of Cape Coast should, as part of their orientation programme, provide intensive counselling services to all the female students to be aware of the academic challenges that awaits them when they conceive or deliver in the course of reading their programmes.

KEY WORDS

Student mothers

Challenges

Coping strategies

Distance Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No man is a repository of all knowledge; so says a famous Chinese adage. In the same vein, this work could not have been completed without the assistance and contributions of others in diverse ways. Although it is impossible to mention all of them, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my Principal Supervisor, Prof. Yaw Afari Ankomah, and the Co-Supervisor, Dr. Edward Akomaning for their ideas, patience, constructive criticisms and precious time to read through my work at the various stages. I cannot but register my thanks to them and request for long life from the Almighty God for them and their respective families.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to Mr. Joseph C. Sefenu and Mr. Isaac Adom-Konadu all of the School of Graduate Studies for their immense support and encouragement. I am so much grateful to both present and past members of staff of the School of Graduate Studies, University of Cape Coast for their support during my programme. To Mrs. Eunice Naana Johnston, who helped in formatting this work. Special mention should be made of my uncle, Mr. Kwame Boadi Acheampong, Dr. Alfred Ampah-Mensah, Dr. Bro. Michael Amakyi and Mr. Emmanuel Tetteh Kwei whose guidance, dedication and enthusiasm for hard work provided the podium for this work. Thumps up for Dr. Joseph Tuffuor Kwarteng, Mr. Edward Wilson Ansah and Mr. Eugene K. Hesse for their encouragement, support and prayers. I am especially indebted to Mr. Alex Tetteh, Mr. Andrew Acquah and Mrs. Beatrice Asante Somuah for their unflinching support. God will surely bless you. Finally, to my parents and siblings whose prayers, sacrifice and encouragement spurred me on to the successful completion of this work.

DEDICATION

To my Dad, Mr. Richard Boadi Osafo, who sees education as a great investment.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Some decades ago, women were seen to be for the home. They were to marry and raise a home or a family. Women were not working or going to school since much of the responsibility of money or other resources needed for the upkeep of the home or family rested on the man. However, the pressures of life in this modern era has necessitated that women go through the educational system and work to support their husbands in taking care of the home financially. This means that women have to combine their family roles, work and academic pursuit. The combination of these roles poses some challenges to both their academic and family lives. Thus, the pursuance of higher education becomes a platform for women to achieve their potentials.

Education can generally be perceived as a very important tool for development. Thus, the importance of education in enhancing social, economic and human development has a general intrinsic value. While education of both genders has a substantial impact on economic growth, the education of girls was a stronger predictor of growth than that of boys in poorer countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (Sutton, 1998; World Bank, 2011). Female education makes it possible to tap the potentials of women to support nation building, which seems to be low in Sub-Saharan Africa. Education provides women with greater earning capacity,

and promotes healthier and better families who can deal effectively with the challenges of the 21st century (Ityavyar, 2005). The empowerment of women has implications for demographical development.

Education is a key to transforming women's attitudes and values from traditional to more modern and from constrained to emancipation (Jejeebhoy, 1995). Female education affects the way household decisions are made and have effects on issues like fertility, children's health, and children's (especially girls) school attendance. Bartels (1999) has stated that women who began childbearing early had more children and there was an inverse relationship between the number of children and the level of education of women. There is also a direct relationship between a mother's education and family health (Sutton, 1998). The education of a mother is consistently one of the most powerful determinants of child health. Educated mothers are far more likely to make use of preventive health-care services and to demand timely treatment. An enhanced nutritional standard also reduces child mortality by five to ten percent for each additional year of schooling (Sutton, 1998). The multiple benefits of female education are cumulative, in that they become mutually reinforcing over time, with the advantages transmitted across generations.

By the middle of the 1990s, most education development projects focused on primary and secondary education claiming to have better rate of return (World Bank, 1980) and playing a key role in poverty reduction (World Bank, 2004). Most development partners regarded universities as white elephants (institutional enclaves) without direct participation in the development process of the African

communities. Unfortunately, this view was nurtured by the World Bank for many years. It is therefore worth noting, the shift in paradigm of the World Bank as evidenced by its collaboration with the “Joint Japan - World Bank Graduate Scholarship Programme (JJ/WBGSP)” and its report in constructing knowledge societies entitled “New Challenges for Tertiary Education.” The programme acknowledges the role of higher education as the engine of development in the new knowledge economy whereby the new modes of economic growth are dependent on knowledge and information technology (Msolla n. d.).

University education has been found to prepare high calibre professionals to take charge of policies and administrative management of a nation and to facilitate national development. It has been observed that though all the universities in Ghana have adopted affirmative action to increase the enrolment of female students and have gender desks to ensure their welfare, conditions of operation in the universities conflict with cultural expectations of a woman’s role in the family, which appears to be static and do not always favour the intellectual development of females (Kwapong, 2007).

It is perceived that students who are mothers generally have to overcome particular barriers to successfully pursue and reach their educational goals. In 2003, as part of a survey on the needs of students who care for children, New Zealand University Students’ Association, and Lidgard reported that students who were parents were finding the time to juggle the two roles of parent and student successfully, balancing the workload of their studies with family life and responsibilities (Lidgard, 2004). Student mothers’ time is delimited by family,

work and social activities that are in competition. Considering these potential time allocation conflicts, the student mothers' aim is to find the balance between work, leisure and family activities (Bratton & Gold, 2003).

The current need for permanent knowledge update as well as taking care of the home has promoted distance learning among mothers (Bratton & Gold, 2003). Therefore, the learning activity is a new temporal pattern to integrate in the lives of females. Time spent in academic processes could be a source of conflict for mother learners because they have to balance their lives with academic or learning time in addition to their professional and social or family patterns. For this reason, work-life of a mother has to do with the balancing or blending of the professional, family and academic activities (Bratton & Gold, 2003).

Studies on mature students found balancing work, study and family life particularly problematic (Arskey, Marchant, & Simmill, 1994). One group that can be considered in this regard is mothers with dependent children. The responsibilities typically associated with the role of mothers tend to change at home when these women become students (Callister, Newell, Perry & Scott, 2006). Neale (2001) also identified dealing with family issues and problems at home as one of the main barriers preventing or limiting mothers' ability to achieve their higher education aims. There is the issue of emotional costs (Merrill, 1999; Whisker, 1996), for student mothers whose partners are not so supportive and feel threatened by their (wife) participation in higher education. Dewart (1996) provides a more specific insight. Common issues and anxieties for the mothers in their study included lack of time, difficulty meeting family demands,

fear of failure, stress and anxiety, the need to set priorities, and integrating family issues with study issues. Heenan (2002) identifies that the three main obstacles for women progressing further with higher education are their caring responsibilities, financial constraints, and lack of career advice.

Walkup (2006) also confirms the particular problems for such students to be time constrain, as a result of managing academic, childcare and domestic tasks, feelings of exclusion because the tertiary education provider fails or has a limited approach to meeting specific needs, emotional stress about childcare provision, and guilt in relation to the conflicting roles of “mother” and “student”. Funding childcare is perhaps the most consistent problem faced by mothers who are students (Griffiths, 2002; Lidgard, 2004). Students who are also mothers often feel they are adversely affected by increased financial pressures and become very reliant on positive support from their partners and/or families (Kantanis, 2002). This is particularly problematic for student mothers because of the practical component of their university degree. This means additional costs for travelling to schools and resources for studies. Taking time out from their traditional roles at home to prepare for and complete their professional job practices can cause these student mothers particular anxiety. Finding the time to manage their education and the needs of their families can be very stressful. Merrill (1999) notes that a lack of integration between home and university life often requires students to engage in complex coping strategies and the pressures of work and family life often force students to assign lower priority to their study.

Having people who positively support them in this respect, including extended family members, friends and partners, seems vital in determining how well mothers cope with these experiences (Bay, 1999; Duncan, 2000; Griffiths, 2002; Kantanis, 2002). Edwards (1993) found that students who are also mothers had various ways of both separating and connecting these dual roles. In most cases, these women simply added studying to their traditional domestic roles. This stance requires them to find new or additional ways of managing their domestic responsibilities and childcare arrangements. Due to these issues, childbearing mothers who wish to pursue further studies have resorted to distance education opportunities provided by some tertiary institutions.

Distance learning in developing countries thus, emerged as a way of widening access to education for tertiary applicants who qualify but could not otherwise gain admission due to the limited space in the existing tertiary institutions (Kwapong, 2007). The delivery of the programme in Ghana, a developing country in Africa, is predominantly print-based and is supported with regular (every fortnight) face-to-face tutorials. Currently, four of the public universities, University of Ghana (UG), University of Cape Coast (UCC), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and University of Education, Winneba (UEW), are offering academic programmes in a dual mode thus regular and distance. In most distance learning institutions, the percentage of female enrolment is rather higher than that of on-campus programmes (Kwapong, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Women who are mothers (student mothers) and tend to seek academic excellence do not only play the role of being a mother but also play the role of being a worker and a student. The above background gives a clear picture of some of the challenges posed to student mothers as they pursue higher education in the regular stream of schooling. The challenges include stress and anxiety, failure in courses being studied, inability to meet family needs, inadequate funding and lack of support from partners. As a result of the challenges, they are sometimes unable to achieve their educational aims. There has therefore been a continuous search for an alternative for mothers who want to pursue further study. The current need for knowledge update as well as taking care of the home has promoted distance learning among mothers (Bratton & Gold, 2003).

Distance education gives opportunity to the mother to combine her professional role with being student, a wife, and a mother. However, unlike the main stream where the mother leaves home and resides on campus to undertake her studies, women in distance education reside at home and combine their traditional roles with academic pursuit. These situations are likely to present a number of challenges to these student mothers. It is therefore pertinent to investigate what these challenges are and how these student mothers are coping with them as they try to climb the academic ladder.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges and coping strategies of student mothers, focusing on the Cape Coast centre of the College of

Distance Education in the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study looked at the non-academic roles undertaken by student mothers and how these roles influence their academic lives. The influence of academic pursuits on the family lives of the student mothers was also investigated.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What non-academic roles do student mothers of CoDE, UCC undertake in their lives?
2. What are the views of student mothers of CoDE, UCC on how their non-academic roles influence their academic lives?
3. What are the views of student mothers of CoDE, UCC on how their academic pursuits influence their family lives?
4. What coping strategies do student mothers of CoDE, UCC suggest can be employed to overcome the challenges that their non-academic roles and academic pursuits pose to them?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its capacity to contribute to knowledge on the plight of student mothers pursuing higher education. It is hoped that the results of the study, which I hope to disseminate through publication and seminar presentations, would inform student mothers pursuing higher education in other tertiary institutions about the effective coping strategies that could be employed to make their studies less burdensome.

It is hoped that the results and the findings of this study would enable the administration of CoDE, UCC and other analogous institutions to understand better the challenges and coping strategies of female students who are mothers. By this, the University authorities may provide more appropriate measures that would assist the educational and domestic lives of the students. In addition, the findings may help family members including husbands and in-laws to appreciate the challenges of the student mother. The appreciation of these members is likely to influence them to provide the necessary assistance to these students.

Mother friendly educational policies could be formulated and implemented from the Ministry of Education through the Universities as a result of these findings. The results and findings of this study may also serve as an additional source of reference for other researchers and students whose studies relate to the issues of challenges and coping strategies of female University students.

Delimitation

This study focused on the challenges and coping strategies adopted by student mothers on the distance education programme at the College of Distance Education of University of Cape Coast study centre. Only mothers with one or more biological children who fall within age five or below were included in the study. The study in other words, excluded mothers with adopted or co-habiting children. Again, the study was delimited to the type of distance education where students meet their facilitators on face-to-face basis from time-to-time and taken through their instructional modules. This implies that other distance education

models like the online, which is not run by UCC was exempted. Also, the findings and conclusions made were based on the views of the student mothers in terms of their responds to the items on the questionnaire.

Limitations

The research was not without limitations, notably among them was with regard to the description or definition of student mothers to be only females with biological children. This was a shortcoming because the mothers without biological children could not have different roles from those with biological children.

Moreover, it may be possible that the descriptive research design employed allowed my personal feelings and subjectivity to influence (without my notice) the reporting of the issues, as they existed. But, I am confident that these limitations did not affect (to a large extent) the validity and reliability of the results obtained because the results were discussed with people familiar with the challenges and coping strategies of student mothers.

Finally, the study could have some limitations if used as a basis for generalization beyond the confines of UCC CoDE since its focus was on a specific group of University of Cape Coast CoDE students.

Definition of Terms

Student Mother: A female student with one or more biological children who fall within age five or less.

UCC: University of Cape Coast

CoDE: College of Distance Education

Organisation of the Study

The study is composed of five main chapters. Chapter one deals with the introduction of the study that centred on the background to the study, problem statement, purpose, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitations, definition of terms and organisation of the study. Chapter two presents review of related literature. This concentrates on conceptual frameworks, theoretical and empirical studies.

The research method is presented in Chapter three. This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling procedures, instrument for data collection, data collection and data analysis procedures that were employed in the study. Chapter four presents the results, findings and discusses the findings. Finally, Chapter five provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges and coping strategies of student mothers, focusing on the Cape Coast centre of the College of Distance Education in the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study looked at the non-academic roles undertaken by student mothers and how these roles influence their academic lives. The influence of academic pursuits on the family lives of the student mothers was also investigated. This chapter focused on the literature review. The review is divided into two sections. The first section forms the theoretical review. Theories reviewed include the transactional coping theory, avoidant versus attentive coping, and the compass of shame coping theory. The concepts of distance education, childcare and gender differences are also reviewed. The second section presents empirical literature related to the study. These have been thematically presented as follows:

- i. Non-academic roles undertaken by student mothers in their lives
- ii. Influence of the non-academic roles of student mothers on their academic lives
- iii. Influence of the academic pursuit of student mothers on their family lives
- iv. Coping strategies of student mothers

Theoretical Review

There are many different coping theories important in explaining why and how people cope with different circumstances. Some of these theories are

discussed in order to understand how the participants in this study cope with the challenges they face.

Transactional coping theory

Transactional Coping Theory provides useful frame for an analysis of coping. The theory postulated that individual's cognitive appraisals and coping processes are influenced interactively by a combination of personality based situational factors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman identified two broad categories of antecedents that directly influence how people appraise and cope with situations, those linked to the characteristics of the individual and those linked to the characteristics of the situation. Those linked to the characteristics of the individual include commitments, beliefs, and personal traits. Situational factors include the novelty or the predictability of the situation, the uncertainty of the event, temporal factors or the ambiguity of the situation.

Within the Transactional Coping Theory, coping is defined as constantly changing cognitive and behavioural effort to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus (1993) investigated the distinction between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. According to this perspective, problem-focused coping strategies involve defining and solving the relevant problem. Although this type of strategy is usually thought to involve problems external to the individual, it can also involve problem-oriented strategies aimed at the self. Emotion-focused coping strategies in contrast, include

a variety of strategies aimed at lessening the emotional stress that results from the problem.

Although both forms of coping strategies are used in most stressful encounters, they are nevertheless dependent on the way one appraises the situation. For example, Folkman and Lazarus analysed 1300 stressful episodes reported by people and found that both forms of coping strategies were used in most encounters. People however, tended to use more problem-focused coping strategies when the situation was appraised as changeable and more emotion-focused coping strategies when the situation was appraised as not or less changeable (Folkman & Lazarus, (1984). Lazarus and Folkman postulated that a person's internalised cultural values, beliefs, and norms affect the appraisal process of stressors and the perceived appropriateness of coping responses. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that coping is a dynamic process, specific to not only the present situation but also the stage of the encounter.

Avoidant versus attentive coping theory

Krohne (2002) studied stress and coping theories. He proposed that a distinction can be made when discussing stress coping strategies as between avoidant and attentive coping. Avoidant stress coping strategies are ways of thinking about stressful situations such as denial, distraction, repression, and suppression that act to shift an individual's attention away from the stressor and their immediate emotional reaction to the stressor. On the other hand, attentive coping focuses attention on the stressor and one's response to it (Brewer, 1987).

Krohne further classified coping strategies into two dimensions; the traits oriented and the state oriented strategies. These two have different objectives: the trait oriented aims at identifying individuals with inadequate coping resources and tendencies for the demand of a specific stress encounter while the state oriented strategy centres around the actual coping which seeks to investigate the relationship between the coping strategies used by individuals, the outcome variables and emotional reactions (Krohne, 2002).

The compass of shame coping theory

The compass of shame is another theoretical perspective grounded in coping theory. The compass of shame comprises four poles of maladaptive shame coping that constitute stable individual tendencies for coping with the self-conscious emotion of shame (Nathanson, 1992). The first two poles are attack-self and withdrawal. These are conceptualised as internalising coping strategies that focus the unpleasant experience of shame upon the self. The second two poles are attack-other and avoidance. These are conceptualised as externalising coping because both responses cognitively distance the self from the source of shame. Initial studies investigating the relationship between coping styles and general trait dispositions suggest that internalising coping styles are related to personality styles that are susceptible to anxiety and depressive disorders (Elison, Lennon, & Pulos, 2006).

Another theory on coping is present, past, and future coping theory. This theory explains two approaches to coping which are coping style and coping process. Coping style treats coping as a personality characteristic while the coping

process treats coping as managing stress that changes over time (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). The type of coping process that would be adapted by an individual depends on the individual himself/herself, the time period of encounter, and the outcome of the modality being studied (Lazarus, 1993).

The Concept of Distance Education

According to Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998), adults start to learn again when circumstances in life require additional learning. Learning, is defined as the bringing about of change in the thinking process, resulting in the acquiring of knowledge or skills, is typically based on the teacher and student interaction and instructional process. In the field of non-traditional learning, open learning and distance learning are terms often used interchangeably, and literature abounds with overlapping terminology and conflicting viewpoints (Knowles et al, (1998). Some propose that there is no distinction between the two (Rumble, 1989). By that "distance learning is a sub-category of open learning" (Lewis & Spencer, 1986, p. 17); others opine that "open learning is not synonymous with distance education" (Foks, 1987, p. 74), a view echoed by Garrison (1990, p. 119) who states that, "open learning systems are not equivalent to distance education". There are significant differences between the two terms, although much modern usage blurs the distinction.

Distance learning refers mainly to a mode of delivery; independent learning at a distance through the means of self-study texts and non-contiguous communication, while open learning includes the notions of both openness and flexibility; whereby students have personal autonomy over their studies and where

access restrictions and privileges have been removed and distance as in independence from the teacher. Thus, it originally involved the traditional, paper-based correspondence course where students worked independently, submitted assignments via mail and then waited for written feedback from a teacher. Over time, as new technologies emerged, distance educators developed new educational models. Early use of educational television included broadcasts of class lectures. Students could watch the lectures and then complete assignments for submission. (Garrison, 1990).

Keegan (1990, p. 44) identifies five main elements of distance education:

1. the separation of teacher and learner,
2. the influence of an educational organization,
3. the use of technical media (usually print) to unite the teacher and learner and to carry educational content,
4. the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue and
5. the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes.

Keegan's formulation is a useful one (and one which appears to have been generally accepted by researchers, although one criticised by Garrison (1990), as being too narrow) and is considered to be suitable since the distance learning programme included these five elements. Distance education, in which the teacher is removed by time and place from the student (McIsaac, 1993), started out as an alternative to the classic educational process. It has been defined in the past and

currently in the literature; the term can be used to describe any of a number of instructional situations. Although it is thought of as a new term, distance learning has been around for well over 100 years. One of the earlier forms of distance learning which was done through correspondence courses started in Europe. This remained the primary form of distance learning, until in the middle of the 20th century when instructional radio and television became more popular (Imel, 1996).

The mandates and shortages of teachers in rural schools produced a climate in the late 1980s conducive to the rapid development of distance learning (McIsaac, 1993). The term distance education or learning had been in wide use for several decades, but was coined at a time when the technological possibilities for distance instruction were more limited. Today, distance education has expanded to include a variety of educational models and media. As technology has changed, so has the definition of distance learning. Videotaped lectures have been a standard in university and professional courses for the last two decades (Moore & Lockee, 1998). Audiotapes and lessons sent through the mail have been used in correspondence courses to teach subjects such as foreign language for quite some time (Teaster & Blieszner, 1999). Today, the Internet and compressed videos have taken distance learning in new directions, allowing distance learning to occur in real time. Live video instruction is the most popular and fastest growing delivery mode in the United States (Ostendorf, 1997).

According to Morabito (1999), the growth of distance education is categorised into four generations: printed instruction, early technology, online

instruction, and web-based teleconferencing. There are however, three different types of schools in higher education describing distance education. They are correspondence schools, open universities, and virtual universities (Klesius, Homan & Tompson, 1997). In all these, the ultimate role (preparing undergraduate students for a career (Lee, 2003) has never changed. The benchmark of distance education was in the late 1980s when computers became mass media as the Internet spread. According to Webster (2002), computer technology started between 1945 and 1970 and it was mostly used in the field of big science and in national scale projects such as national defense and space exploration. It was gradually used in government, organisations, and schools, and most distance learning institutions added the Internet capabilities by the 1990s. In addition, new instructional methods based on computer technology (i.e. computer-based education, computer assisted education) were developed to improve students' learning environments for both conventional and distance education.

What is currently known as distance education or distance learning dates back to the early eighteenth (18th) Century. With the development of the postal service in the nineteenth (19th) Century, distance education took the form of correspondence studies. This brought in its wake the establishment of Commercial Correspondence Colleges in Great Britain. The University of London, University of South Africa and Massey University are some of the pioneering institutions of modern distance education (Morabito, 1999). In 1997, the University of South Africa which started distance learning programmes in 1946 started offering programmes from certificate to doctoral level degrees using

instructional materials such as study guides, tutorial letters, audiocassettes, books, and the Internet services to help students with their learning (Morabito, 1999).

In a report by the United States (US) Department of Commerce on Computer and Internet use (2001), individuals continuously expand their uses of computers and the Internet. According to Dunn (2001), hundreds of university degrees and about 90,000 university-level courses are available online, and about two-thirds of higher education institutions offer at least some courses online. The development of online education improves instructional environments tremendously, not just for education systems but also for business organisations, providing courses, resources, and performance support systems. However, in many cases, interactivity of instructional materials and interactions between learners and instructors and among learners has been the biggest concern in online learning environments.

Currently, online information technology plays a major role in operating distance classes, reaching people worldwide. Online education changes the concept of time and space by allowing global access to education and more advanced tools to provide optimal learning environments for students. People form learning communities with shared interests such as computer groups and discussion groups have fruitful social interactions. In addition, virtual learning environments in which students act as if they are in a real classroom are introduced and tested by many universities. Moreover, traditional programmes tend to overwhelm its distance education components, and thus the pedagogies more relevant to face-to-face instruction and negate the power and effectiveness

of its distance education components. Distance education should ideally, be premised on pedagogical models that best underpin delivery and learning method. (Litto, 2001).

Litto (2001) determined that hybridisation, that is the combination of face-to-face and distance delivery modalities, is nonetheless currently the best method to tap into distance education's potentialities. Indeed, experts in charge of distance education in Brazil tend to be "academics with only a theoretical knowledge of distance education." with "their practical experience firmly rooted in the conventional face-to-face practices of the existing higher education institutions" (Romiszowski, 2005, p. 6).

According to Savery and Duffy (1995), there are two factors that affect learners' attitudes toward learning: the familiarity with the instructional medium and their ability to make something meaningful out of the material presented. Savery and Duffy's (1995) research found that television proved to be mentally less demanding than printed text when comparable content was employed. When students do not make meaningful connection between instruction and their needs, it is hard for them to be motivated to learn. In recent years, there have been significant changes in the field of instructional technology. Instructional activities have been upgraded with the integration of various technologies. Online network systems, multimedia and artificial intelligence are integrated into online instructional modules. They empower instructional presentation, interactions among individuals, students' engagement with a class and flexibility in time and space.

In 1996, the Instructional Telecommunications Council defined distance education as the process of extending learning or delivering instructional resource-sharing opportunities, to locations away from a classroom, building or site to another classroom, building or site by using video, audio, computer, multimedia communications or some combination of these with other traditional delivery methods (Gross & Pirkl 1994). Today's distance education encourages students to become active learners. The scope and target audience of distance education have been broadened as online technology became available. Information online helps people with their everyday lives. Online instruction makes the purpose and functions of education to be expanded from academic levels of learning to managing our general problems. Online-based performance technology proposes effective and efficient solutions for solving problems in workplaces, replacing traditional training. Therefore, current trends suggest that distance education is replaced by online education.

Features of Distance Education

Distance education is beset with a remarkable paradox. It has asserted its existence but cannot define itself (Shale, 1990). How distance education is best defined or differentiated from other educational approaches has been the subject of much debate (Perraton, 2000). The United Kingdom's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (1999) defines distance education as a way of providing higher education that involves the transfer to the students' location the materials that form the main basis of study, rather than the student moving to the location of the resource provider. Also the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) (2004) explains

distance education as the delivery of learning or training for those who are separated mostly by time and space from those who are teaching or training them. Thus, distance education has its fundamental concept, the separation of students and teachers by distance and sometimes by time which necessitates the introduction of an artificial communication medium that will deliver information and also provide a channel for interaction between the teacher and the students (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Hall (1996) also maintains that a key feature of distance education is that distance and time separate the teacher from the student. UNESCO (2002) looks at the phenomenon as an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and or time from the learners. With distance education, students are usually not in direct physical contact with their tutors. Students are sent packages of programme, occasional tutorial sessions are arranged in which the tutors and learners take part (IEDE, 2007). Holmberg (1993) describes distance education as:

The various forms of teaching and learning at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or in the same premises but which nevertheless benefit from planning, guidance and tuition (i.e. tutoring, teaching of staff of the tutorial organisation. Its main characteristic is that it relies on non-contiguous, i.e. mediated communication (p.1).

From the perspective of many educational technologists, distance education is inexorably linked to technology. According to Garrison and Shale (1996) distance education involves non-contiguous communication between students and teachers mediated by print or some form of technology. Recent developments in technology are believed to removing some of the disadvantages associated with distance education. Bates (1995) suggests that new technologies promise a wider range of teaching functions and a higher quality of learning, lower costs, greater student control, more interaction and feedback for students.

It is important to clarify what distance education is not. This becomes necessary as the term is used interchangeably with what it is not. For instance, Holmberg (1993) explains that there has existed for a long time opposing views of interchanging the word distance education with that of Open University. Even though Holmberg and others try to explain these concepts, the confusion still persists. For Holmberg (2001), distance education is not open learning because the latter implies forms of study which refrain from all avoidable restrictions as to access, study time and methods. Supporting this view, Rowntree (1992) explains that even though all open learning (even on site) involves some degree of distance learning, not all distance learning involves much openness.

Also, UNESCO (2001) in an attempt to differentiate between the two, states that distance education is an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and time from the learner while open learning is an organised educational activity, based on the use of teaching materials, in which constraints on study are minimised in

terms either of access, or of time and place, method of study or any combination of these. In addition to this, the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL) (2004) explains that open learning policies should not be part of distance education programmes but are complementary to it. It is of interest to note that scholars in this particular field use various terms for the concept distance education. According to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (1999), there is considerable debate globally about the appropriate terminology and a number of different terms are commonly used which refer to the same or similar sort of activity.

Rowntree (1992) uses the term distance learning because he believes that it covers all distance learning, as such learning extends to both industrial and professional training. On the other hand, Keegan (1990) prefers using the term distance education because it includes both distance teaching and distance learning. Holmberg (1993), shedding further light suggests that the term distance study should be limited to denoting the activity of the students while distance teaching denotes that of the supporting organisation, particularly its writers, editors and tutors.

In the midst of this confusion, however, Keegan (1990) provides a comprehensive description of distance education. He perceives distance education to have the following characteristics:

1. Quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process. This distinguishes it from conventional face-to-face education.

2. Influence of an educational organisation in both planning and preparation on learning materials and in the provision of student support services. This distinguishes it from private and “teach yourself programmes”.
3. Use of technical media-print, audio, video and computer as means of content delivery.
4. Provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate a dialogue. This distinguishes it from other uses of technology in education.
5. Quasi-permanent absence of learning group throughout the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals and not in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings for teaching and socialisation purposes.

Another distinctive feature of distance education is the profile of students involved. According to Peters (1998), students differ primarily in the following ways: Students will usually have a greater experience of life; most of them bring considerable experience of working to academic courses and this also has an effect on the ways in which they study in particular when the studies and the professional experience cover the same field; there are distance education students who want to reach a higher socio-economic status as a result of their experience at work; studying at a relatively large age has in general a completely different function than with 19-25 year old students because it fits into plans for life-cycles in a different way.

From the above, distance education in this study is defined as the mode of delivery in which the teacher is separated from the learners, thereby necessitating the use of artificial communication that encourages interaction among teacher/learners and learners/learners. Distance education enables individuals yearning for education to stay in the comfort of their homes, work place and almost everywhere to take part in tertiary education to obtain diplomas and degrees.

A Brief History of Distance Education in Ghana

In Ghana correspondence education was introduced more than three decades ago. This was an avenue through which workers upgraded themselves. In 1982, for example, the Modular Teacher Training Programme (MTTP) was introduced to address the training needs of untrained teachers. Through the MTTP, 7,537 untrained teachers received professional training and obtained Teachers' Certificate 'A' qualification. Nonetheless, the programme was saddled with some difficulties and was abandoned. In spite of the initial challenges, the Government of Ghana still believed that distance education was a viable complement to conventional education especially, at the tertiary level. As a result, between 1991 and 1994, the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education (MOE) with the assistance of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), sponsored a number of survey to ascertain the distance education in Ghana. Based on the visions of the government of Ghana to make education accessible to all Ghanaians irrespective of where they reside, distance education

programme was introduced as a viable complement to the usual face-to-face education. Ghana's distance education programme is aimed at providing quality education to meet learning needs, enhancing organisational performances, and improving quality of life of Ghanaians. Four public universities, namely: University of Cape Coast (UCC), University of Ghana (UG), University of Education, Winneba (UEW) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) offer distance education (UCC, CCE, 2010).

Distance Education in the University of Cape Coast

The idea of distance education in University of Cape Coast was conceived in 1992 with the setting up of a Distance Education Unit under the coordinatorship of Professor Nathaniel Pecku. In 1997, the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) was established to administer Distance Education programmes with Professor Dominic Agyeman becoming the first Director. It had, among other goals, to raise the market value of serving personnel to improve their living standards and provide opportunities for applicants who qualify for admission to universities in the country but are not offered due to constrictions in physical facilities. From the 1st of August 2014, it was upgraded as College of Distance Education with a Provost as the lead officer.

The college had a very modest start in 2001 when it admitted 750 students to its Diploma in Basic Education programme. The centre had nine study centres in all the ten regions, except the Volta Region which was added in 2002. Having graduated 573 students three years later, the college has consistently graduated students. By 2007 the college's students population had increased tremendously

to 16,189 students with twenty-two (22) study centres in all regions of the country (Asiedu-Addo, Monday October 13, 2014). The college runs undergraduate and postgraduate face-to-face programmes where students meet their tutors every two weeks on weekend basis and are taken through their modules. The undergraduate programmes include: Diploma in Basic Education, Diploma in Psychology and Foundations of Education, Diploma in Management Studies, Bachelor of Basic Education, Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Management Studies.

The postgraduate programmes are Master of Education in Information Technology, Master of Education in Administration in Higher Education, Master of Education in Educational Psychology, Master of Education in Guidance and Counselling, Master of Education in Measurement and Evaluation, Master of Education in Special Education, Master of Business Administration in Accounting, Master of Business Administration in Finance, Master of Business Administration in Human Resource Management and Master of Business Administration in Marketing (UCC, CCE, 2010).

Importance of Distance Education

Distance education breaks the association of learning with classroom; thus, preparing students with skills for the self-directed continuing and recurrent education which will be essential for their continuing professional development in a world of rapidly changing information and ideas (Jones, 1997). Distance education provides opportunity for the large number of people to acquire formal education which otherwise would have been difficult (Bishop cited in Adentwi, 2002). Hellman (2003) identifies the following as some of the potential

importance of distance education: increase of access, flexibility, financial economy (great savings in the construction of universities and teachers' salaries). For instance, on access, a great number of potential students are refused admission into tertiary education. About 20% of qualified students are denied access to university education in Swaziland for lack of space on the conventional campus.

However, with the advent of distance education, Magagula and Ngwenya (2004) explain that distance education has enabled the anomaly in Swaziland to be corrected greatly. Tait (1995) mentions that perhaps the most obvious role of distance education is access to tertiary education to the majority of potential students who otherwise would have been neglected. Paul (1990) believes that distance education can be, and is often a form of mass communication and opens up conventional education which has various barriers such as entry requirements, time constraints, financial demands and geographical problems. In discussing the benefits of distance education, Bishop (1986) refers to Coomb's assertion that life-long education is essential in a rapidly progressing and changing society. He cites three reasons:

1. To keep the already well trained abreast of time.
2. To improve the quality of satisfaction of individuals.
3. To enrich the leisure time of individuals.

Distance education offers opportunity to a large audience, meeting the needs of students who are unable to attend on campus classes and involving speakers who would otherwise be unavailable (Moore & Thompson, 1999). Dodd

(1991) asserts that distance education is a great educational opportunity and provides large numbers with the chance to continue their education.

Rose (1995) has also observed that, in various forms, distance education has proven that it has the capability of educating groups of people who would not probably attain higher education otherwise. Some cases in Mongolia showed that distance education was able to reach more teachers more quickly than traditional alternatives. It reached over half of the country's primary school teachers and impacted well on the beliefs and practices of teachers and headteachers (Moore & Thompson, 1999). Oliveria (1998) observes that distance education has gained much popularity over the last decade. Distance education is used in places such as Beijing, Jarkata, Brazi, Argentina and America as technique to reach those that would by other means, are unreachable (Bollag & Overland, 2001).

Distance education has the potential to attract many applicants to enrol due to factors such as cost, flexibility of programme and easy access to university education (Keegan, 1995). According to the American Council on Education, the number of students in distance education doubled from 1995 to 1998 totaling 1.6 million (Dervarics, 2001). Another market forecast says that by the year 2002, there would be 2.2 million students on distance education programmes in American colleges and universities (Dibiase, 2001).

Distance education is cost effective. Bishop (1986) indicates that distance education is the economic method of teacher education in modern times. He explains that since the learner is at a distant, certain infrastructural cost such as the provision of lecture rooms are avoided. Also the few available tutors and

administrators can take charge of many more students than those who could possibly be housed in a school. In support of this, Bollag and Overland (2001) maintain that many of the promises of distance education are financial in nature. Universities hope to save money by delivering education to students that are unable to attend classes because of time and distance.

Distance education brings about efficiency of work in the sense that it makes it possible for these students most of whom are workers to apply whatever theories, techniques and skills they will acquire from their work thereby making them improve upon their job performance. To this end, most African countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa use distance education programmes to develop more professional teachers (Chivore, 1993). For instance, the Tanzania government in its quest to achieve Universal Primary Education relied on distance education as a strategy to achieve this objective. Consequently, distance teacher development programme was launched and within five years a total number of 37,998 primary school teachers were trained. This made a great impact in Tanzania primary education (Oduro, 2008). Also, a survey by Musa (2002) revealed that professional teachers in the Wa district show greater interest in distance education because they see it as a means by which they can upgrade themselves and to be competent.

Distance education also enhances promotion. A study by Owusu-Boateng, Essel and Mensah (2001) revealed that distance education enhances prospects for promotion. Majority of teachers (88%) agreed that distance education would increase their chances of being promoted. A similar study by Owusu-Boateng and

Essel (2001) on the same issue revealed that majority of the students (81.1%) hold the view that distance education enhances prospects for promotion. In the Ghana Education Service (GES), without a qualification in first degree, one cannot be promoted above the rank of Assistant Director of Education. Majority of teachers enrolled on distance programmes are motivated by the desire for professional development and the enhancement of their career opportunity.

Wood (1996) also outlines some of the potential benefits of distance education in both developed and developing countries as greater access to education, flexibility of scheduling, the possibility of proceeding at one's pace and the opportunity to study without having to travel. Generally, most distance learners have positive perception towards distance education because of its prospects (Oduro, 2008). A study of students of Pennsylvania by Ferguson and Wijekuman (2000) on whether they were satisfied with the distance education programme revealed that (75%) of the students were satisfied with the programme. Also a study conducted by Mireku-Gyimah (1998) on students' interest in distance education points out that most students (88%) saw the need for distance education at the tertiary level. They cited reasons such as accessibility, flexibility and an opportunity for career development as the key motivating factors that influenced them to opt for distance learning.

The convenience of time and space is a big guarantee made by distance learning. According to Ravhudzuho (2000), distance education enables one to study at one's pace, as there is no time limit for one to study. Thus, in distance learning, students do not have to physically be with the instructor in space and

depending on the method used, they do not have to be together in time as well. This is a great advantage for non-traditional students who cannot attend regular classes. Satellite campuses such as Arkansas State University are drawing out a lot of adult learners in and from small towns and cities (Savoye, 2002).

Distance education also promotes higher education for women. Writing from the Canadian perspective, Prymus (2004) remarks that women are enjoying distance education programmes amid their hectic life style. The programme allows them to learn at any time or any place. In a study by Reuss cited by Kwapong (2007) indicates an overwhelming response of women in Athabasca University (AU) to distance education. The study revealed that approximately 67% of the AU's students are women, majority of whom may have had some post-secondary education but may not have had the opportunity to complete their university studies. In a related development, Kyei-Baffour as cited in Adentwi (2002) argues that distance education may be the answer to the problem of gender imbalance at the tertiary education level. Using statistics from the second batch of students enrolled on the University of Education Winnaba distance education programme, Kyei-Baffour points out that for the first time ever in the university's history, female students out-numbered male students. He indicated that out of the 86 students inducted into the programme, 46 were women while only 40 were male. Distance education thus, provides a convenient way by which many women can combine their desire for higher education with their matrimonial responsibilities.

Distance education has made significant impact in teacher education in Africa. Adekanmbi (2004) observes a wide application of distance education in teacher education in Africa. Echoing this, UNESCO (2001) notes that distance education is being used by many countries in Africa for the training of both new entrants and those who are already on the job. The programme helps to raise the skills, deepen the understanding and extend the knowledge of teachers. For instance, in Nigeria, a UNESCO report (2002) talks about an acute shortage of qualified primary teachers. That led to the establishment in 1976 of the National Teachers Institute (NTI), a distance education college for teachers with the aim of training more teachers. It had made significant impact to teacher supply in Nigeria, producing 48,204 graduates from 1990 to 1999.

Distance education in Ghana is used as a strategy for training basic school teachers because of the benefits associated with it (Adentwi, 2002). The following are worth considering: Distance education allows Ghanaian basic school teachers to have access to university education. This saves them from the stress they go through in their quest for tertiary education (Adentwi, 2002). Distance education is offered by most Ghanaian teachers because of its flexibility. The programme allows teachers to learn in their homes at their own time while they continue to work. Most teachers get attracted to the programme as a result of how flexible the programme is. A study by Adukpo (2007) on the reasons why Ghanaian teachers show interest in distance learning revealed that majority of the teachers (87%) have interest in distance education because it is flexible.

Distance education allows professional teachers to upgrade themselves to enhance their career advancement (Musa, 2002). Most teachers are motivated by the fact that distance learning will grant them the opportunity to acquire higher education and to enrich their knowledge. In a study carried out by Owusu-Boateng, Essel and Mensah (2001) on whether distance learners believe that the programme can help them upgrade themselves, almost all the respondents (95%) accepted the fact that distance education gives the opportunity for an upgrade. In a similar study, Sam-Tagoe (2000) reports that most teachers (96.6%) believe that distance learning will help them to achieve their ambition for higher academic laurels.

The quality of distance education programme is another factor that has lured many teachers to enrol on such programmes. Koomson (1998) indicates that there is no significant difference in professional competence between teachers trained by distance and those trained by conventional system. This means that if training teachers by distance is managed well, the prospects that could be derived from the programme would outweigh the problems. Most Ghanaian teachers perceive distance education to be a good programme due to the quality of course structure and the effective organisation of tutorial sessions (Bampo, 2008). Again a survey by Sam-Tagoe (2000) to find out whether distance education is a good programme or not revealed that majority of the respondents (97.5%) held the view that distance education is a good programme. These factors go to support the fact that distance education has the potential to attract more teachers to enrol in future.

In a survey by Mireku-Gyimah (1998) the researcher gave certain conditions under which students would accept a distance education system. These are:

1. If the programme would be recognised and respected as the conventional one both locally and internationally.
2. If the same entry requirements, lecturers, syllabus, course content, examinations, grading, certification used in the conventional system would also be used in distance education.
3. If there would be regular opportunities for distance learners to meet and interact with their tutors and colleagues.
4. If distance education students would have access to support services.
5. If distance education would be affordable.

Distance education institutions in Ghana have certain ambitions for mounting such programmes. Study conducted by Mensah and Owusu-Mensah (2002) about interest in distance education in four public universities: the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, the researchers noted the following as the reasons why these institutions favour distance education programme:

1. Distance education will help them to expand access to many applicants who are refused admission every year.
2. Distance education will make education available to the large number of the working population who are unable to study full- time.

3. Distance education programme will be useful to workers in the private sector and other organisations which, by their collective agreement policy, do not grant study leave with pay to their workers.
4. The introduction of distance education programme is a way of generating income to supplement the inadequate funding they receive from the government.

Many people use education to enhance their prospects for promotion and self-actualization. Teachers are a group of people who always seek to upgrade themselves through education. However, access to university education is a barrier. Since access to conventional education is becoming increasingly competitive and expensive, distance education presents the best option to conventional education. Distance education should therefore be managed well by distance learning institutions to enhance the prospects it holds for students.

Challenges of Distance Education

Distance education changes the learning relationship from the common centralised school model to a more decentralized, flexible model. It also reverses social dynamics by bringing school to students rather than students to school. However, the programme is plagued with many drawbacks. The major challenges to distance education according to Galusha (1997) are student-related challenges, faculty-related challenges, organisational-related challenges and course-related challenges.

Challenges encountered by the students fall into several distinct categories such as costs and motivators, feedback and teacher contact, student support

services, alienation and isolation, lack of experience and training (Keegan, 1990). Most distance education students are faced with the problem of meeting the financial obligation of the programme (Koomson, 1998). Teachers in developing countries are among the least-paid workers (Galusha, 1997). Since the cost of distance education in most developing countries is borne by students themselves most of whom have huge financial commitment towards their families, it brings stress on students and subsequently the lack of interest in the programme. Distance education will be patronised by students when the cost is low; in fact, when the cost is far lower than the conventional system (Koomson, 1998).

Another area of concern for the distance students is the perceived lack of feedback or contact with the facilitator. Because there are no regular face-to-face contacts with facilitators, students may have trouble in self-evaluation. Keegan (1990) believes that the separation of student and facilitator imposed by distance removes a “vital link” of communication between these two parties. The link must be restored through overt instructional efforts so that the teaching-learning transaction may be reintegrated (Keegan, 1990). Keegan in a study in Mongolia indicated that students do not receive adequate reintegration measures such as electronic or telephone communication and feedback from instructors. Such students are unlikely to experience complete academic and social integration into institutional life. Consequently, such students would be more likely to drop out (Keegan, 1990). In a study on the value of interaction in distance education, Burge and Howard cited in Bampo (2008) reveals that the utilisation of on-site facilities tend to increase students-rapport with lecturers/tutors. This may lead to

greater satisfaction of students. In a similar research conducted at Athabasca University (AU) by Coldeway, MacRury and Spencer (2003) indicate that distance learners were found to be motivated when they had frequent contacts with their instructors.

One critical area of concern for distance students is the lack of support services such as providing tutors, academic planners, schedulers and technical assistance. The isolation that results from the distance learning process can complicate the learning process for adult students (Saint, 1999). According to Wood (1996), support for distance learners should not be overlooked when planning distance programmes. Students need tutors and academic planners to help them to complete courses on time and to act as a support system when stress becomes a problem. Planners from Washington State University (WSU) note that student services are a significant part of the budgeted cost of the programme. They also hold the view that success in attracting and retaining students will depend on excellent student support services than on any technology issues (Oaks, 1996).

Feeling of alienation and isolation is another challenge facing distance students. Students of all kinds want to be part of a larger community. For many traditional students, this is an important part of their social lives. The distance education programme takes away such social interactions that would be present in traditional learning environments. This challenge must be mitigated by institutions providing a sense of personal involvement between the student and

the institution. One way of addressing this challenge is through the use of tutors that communicate with students electronically on phone (Tait, 1995).

Geographical isolation has been identified as one of the major problems for distance students (Oaks, 1996). In addition to the practical challenges of contacting academic and administrative staff, obtaining study materials and borrowing library books, distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with other students and are often denied the perception that they belong to a scholarly community. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity and lack of confidence in their own. Most distance learners have little skills in technical issues. Many adult students are not well versed in the use of technology such as computers and the internet. Using electronic medium in distance learning can exclude students who lack computer or writing skills. These skills are needed if computer technology is used. Students will typically be offered volumes of electronic-based information. Using information will be a problem for some non-technical students (Rowntree, 1992). According to Rowntree, adult learners must be taught how to manage not only their study time but also the materials presented as well. Wood (1996) suggests that if students are undertaking distance learning courses that require knowledge of computers, then the students must be taught at a minimum, the fundamentals of operating the system of choice of the distance-taught courses. If distance education is to be successful, technology based barriers must be made a non-issue.

Faculty experience challenges such as: lack of staff training in course development and technology, lack of support for distance learning in general, and

inadequate faculty selection for distance learning courses. Sometimes, the coursework for traditional and distance students is the same. Often it is not. There can be a lot of up front effort in designing distance learning material. This can impose a burden on facilitators who already have material for traditional classrooms. Computers, video equipment, communications software, and the like present challenges and frustrations. Faculty must know how to use these technologies if they are to teach distance courses. Training students and staff, particularly in troubleshooting problems is imperative to success in distance learning (Chou, 1994).

Perhaps the biggest challenge for distance programmes is the lack of support by the faculty (Oaks, 1996). The endorsement by department faculty is viewed as a critical instructional element in any distance education programme (Holmberg, 2002). More than any other participant, faculty roles must change the most in administering distance learning programmes. This can be a difficult adjustment for some facilitators. They must change teaching styles to that of a mentor, tutor, and facilitator (Rumble, 1989). They must meet the needs of distance students without face-to-face contact. Since the majority of distance learners are adults, facilitators may need to change their teaching style. This may be challenging for some of them who are used to teaching with 18-22-year-olds. Faculty is responsible for change in their course content to accommodate diverse student needs and expectations. So long as college faculty feels there is a burden associated with the distance education programmes currently in place, there will be little support for expanding distance education opportunities (Galusha, 1997).

Another challenge perceived by faculty is the threat to tenure and human resource staffing. Depending on the school and the academic department, courses taught as part of a distance programme may not always count toward tenure considerations, thus causing a disincentive for participation by some non-tenured faculty (Oaks, 1996). Additionally, if one professor can serve thousands of students there will obviously be fewer professors and fewer departments and faculties. Schools must not underestimate this resistance and should be very aware of the possibility of overburdening faculty and staff. Facilitators also have problems respecting the academics of distance courses. One way of enhancing commitment is by forcing distance courses through the same approval process as on-campus courses. In 1994, Chou wrote, "By going through the same stringent approval process as on-campus courses, the acceptance among college faculty is enhanced." (p. 25).

Another challenge is the teacher's acceptance of distance learning programmes. Teachers with enthusiasm for this non-traditional coursework are best suited to teach them. One way to mitigate these potentially serious challenges is by selecting teachers who are relatively senior people, effective teachers who like the idea of distance learning and want to participate in it. Interest and motivation are not success factors reserved only for the student. Faculties who want to teach distance courses are certainly more likely to be successful than faculty that are forced to teach these courses (Chou, 1994).

Student and teacher concerns represent the human aspects of distance programmes. Organisational problem, especially infrastructure and technology

problems, also present challenges. Faculties who teach distance education courses need organisational and administrative unit that is to be responsible for managing the programmes. Institutional leaders must be committed to distance programmes. Marrs (1995) admits that without this support, distance education is at risk of becoming a peripheral activity, without commitment from the institution. Technology considerations are self-evident but are the most easily solved. Technology challenges include; facing new technology, telecommunications, hardware issues, course production and technology and internet (Perraton, 1991).

A primary concern for both learning institutions and students is availability of funds. When technology is used, the costs increase substantially for both the student and the institution. Universities must consider the initial costs as well as the continuing costs of installing, maintaining, using and upgrading technology to support distance services. Telecommunications and connectivity costs such as those needed to use the Internet, are ongoing costs. Washington State University (WSU) did not anticipate connectivity costs and subsequent problems in planning their distance programmes. This led to additional investments in toll-free lines and computers (Oaks, 1996). Institutions must also plan to have competent computer staff to support Internet use. These staff must then be kept up-to-date on the newest, fastest, cheapest technology available; therefore, ongoing staff training costs must be considered.

The student must also incur technology costs. If the Internet is used, then the student must have access to a computer and a modem. However, for many institutions technology pays for itself in terms of allowing more students to

participate, thus increasing tuition funding. This sounds good on paper but technology must not be abused to save money. Regardless of cost issues, distance education should be instituted to advance the course of education for the institution, not as a sole effort to save money (Kinnaman, 1995).

In addition to cost considerations, there is the challenge of inadequate telecommunications facilities. Harry (1992), observes that existing telecommunications systems are inefficient and/or expensive to use, so that educational institutions are unlikely to place too much reliance on them for teaching, support, or information searching. That perhaps is the reason why some developing countries still use print, cassettes, and radio delivery methods. Such circumstances prevent some instructors from producing or using advanced media and providing higher quality material for students.

Distance education through simultaneous two-way audio-visual interaction systems such as video conferencing, brings an additional set of issues to be considered by the instructor, and effective models for this delivery system need to be identified (Sweet, 1996). Wood (1996) argues that some students, particularly those without home computers with modems could have difficulty communicating with the university or teacher. Lack of adequate hardware and the subsequent cost problems of obtaining equipment could place undue hardship on some remote students. However, implementing other communications systems (phone, mail, etc.) could help overcome this problem.

Learning institutions must develop distance learning course material or pay a hefty price to order materials from distributors. Most distance learning

institutions in Africa struggle with adequate provision of learning materials. A UNESCO (2002) report indicates that not only do distance learners in Africa receive distance materials late but also there are concerns about inadequate distance materials. In a survey on support services in Tanzania, Joshi (1999) revealed that majority of the students (87%) were of the view that distance education materials were inadequate. This affects their learning. However, Owusu-Mensah (1998) reports that the University of Namibia is able to provide adequate learning materials for its distance learners.

Delay in the supply of distance materials is another challenge facing distance students. The delay in the supply of course materials appears to stem from difficulties in printing and supplying distance module on schedule (Bampo, 2008). Bampo attributed the delay to the dual roles played by distance lecturers who teach both regular and distance students. Adentwi (2002) however, traced the delay to the fact that most distance institutions sublet the production of distance materials to private companies most of whom do not have the capacity to produce materials on a large scale. According to Moore and Thompson such delays are likely to affect students' success and completion rates. Though distance education is at the infant stage in Ghana, print materials that have been produced so far have been acclaimed to be of high quality. At UEW, two evaluation studies have been conducted to find the quality of the distance materials. The results show that the study materials were highly commended by distance learners most of whom described the materials as simple and very interactive (Adentwi, 2002).

The Internet is proving to be an effective delivery medium that enables communication of knowledge at the student's convenience. It has the potential, in fact, to change the nature of distance teaching (Wright, 1991). But it is not without problems. Some fear the existing worldwide telecommunications network is ill-equipped to handle the rapid expansion of the Internet. Carter (2001) says relying solely on the Internet for courseware and communications transmission is risky. Carter further explained that using the internet can degrade the quality of interactions between and among staff and students. Due to the perceived anonymity provided by the Internet, abusive behaviour could become a problem. However, these problems can be mediated with proper care and regulation (Oaks, 1996).

The newest of the technological challenges lies in complying with government regulations. Course content may need to be limited based on the requirements in the decency section of the 1996 Telecommunications Act (Oaks, 1996). This section describes materials deemed suitable for the Internet. Some courses, such as Anthropology or Human Sexuality, may not be appropriate for the Internet. Distance learning institutions must be aware of, and plan for, regulatory issues if the Internet is used for conveying course content.

The area of concern lies in the distance courses themselves. Institutions must consider course standards, curriculum development and support, course content, and course pacing in developing distance learning programmes (Rowntree, 1992). Many believe distance courses are inferior to traditional courses (Perraton, 1991). Perraton advises distance learning institutions to pay

attention to the quality of the material presented in distance courses. He suggests further that curriculum and assessment materials must be developed to equal that of the traditional classroom if distance courses are to receive the respect they deserve. Distance learning institutions must maintain the same course content, learning objectives, standards, and credits for all sections, regardless of method of delivery (Galusha, 1997). An evaluation of study material at UEW indicates that study materials were highly commended by distance learners (Adentwi, 2002).

Assessing of student performance is another challenge in distance learning. It is a commonly held belief that distance students perform more poorly in assessment than do regular students because of the additional pressures and burdens of distance study (Keegan, 1991). However, a study of the result of 67 Science subjects at California State University (CSU) over a six-year period showed conclusively that there was no difference between distance and internal students in the proportions of students in each grade category (Harden, 1994). However, objective testing does not reward soon enough for adequate reinforcement. Since one key to a successful learning campaign is positive reinforcement, testing methods must be developed to interactively test distance students.

More research into instructional methods and models is needed to identify those that work well in distance learning (Jackman and Swan, 1994). Participatory and active learning models are preferred by distance learning students. In a study of 93 Interactive Video Network (IVN) graduate students at North Dakota State University 1993 and 1994 found that IVN students placed high importance on

active learning models (Jackman and Swan, 1994). However, IVN teachers need to know the variety of teaching models available for use in the classroom so they can make educated choices in designing their coursework. The course consideration is the use of pacing techniques.

Pacing material presented to students appears to have a positive effect on course completion rates. Completion rate study in 1992 found that universities which used pacing techniques had completion rates that were more than double those institutions in which the courses were open-ended (Jackman and Swan, 1994). Although the coursework and delivery methods were the same, those institutions that paced student work were more successful at retaining distance learning students.

Distance learning has not received much admiration in the academic community even though it is not new. This is because of the challenges that come with it. The intense growth of the adult learner population is making distance learning an increasingly popular choice of learning techniques. Close scrutiny of the intrinsic challenges in distance education will help overcome the challenges encountered by students and faculty (Garrison, 1994).

Still on the challenges, Pallof and Pratt (2000) indicate quality of instruction, hidden cost, misuse of technology, attitudes of instructors, students and administrators. Each of these has an effect on the quality of distance learning as a product. Much of the quality of instruction depends on the attitudes of the administration and the instructor. Data collected from Elliot and Kervin (1999) show that instructors had conflicting attitudes about teaching distance education.

They report that after teaching one course, the majority of the instructors were willing to teach another; by that they rated the quality of the course as only equal or lower quality than other classes taught on campus. Many times, it seems that the administration believes that technology will improve the quality of the class.

However, Pallof and Pratt (2000) remind us that technology does not teach students, rather effective teachers do. The effectiveness of distance education is based on teacher preparation and understanding of the needs of students (Omoregie, 1997). Greenberg (1998) in a survey of higher administrators reports revealed that many of the decision-makers including lecturers view distance education as second rate, a necessary but a deficient form of education. There are also cost issues associated with distance education. Are they actually cost-effective? A study by Phelps (1999) found that the potential cost-effectiveness of using on-line technologies in distance education is still uncertain.

Besides the cost of technology, there is still the possibility of not utilising all its potential. Some of the challenges arise from lack of training, instructor's attitudes about using the technology and hardware problems. It is evident that instructors need to be trained to use distance learning technology but often they are not. Once again, it appears administrators think that technology itself will improve the course. This is certainly not the case. The best distance education practices depend on creative and well-informed instructors (Greenberg, 1998).

Another common challenge is attitudes of instructors towards distance education. As in any instructional situation, the instructor can set the tone for learning in the educational environment. The instructor must be trained and

motivated to be effective (Carter, 2001). Weber (1996) suggests that an instructor must have technological skills and confidence to use the various electronic devices in order to be effective in an electronic classroom. Instructors must also change the manner in which information is delivered. While this does not work well, multimedia presentations are successful. Carter (2001) found in a study of adult distance learning that to bridge the gaps between classroom and distance teaching, faculty need to look at distance teaching from the students' point of view. Faculty must be aware of getting instructional materials to study centres.

There are students concerns with distance learning classes. Not all students are suited to this type of learning and not all are taught via this medium. More mature students are the most likely to find success with distance learning. The successful student needs to have a number of characteristics such as tolerance, a need for autonomy and ability to be flexible (Threkald & Brezoska, 1994). Bates (1995) found that compared to face-to-face learning environments, distance learning requires students to be more focused, better time managers and to be able to work independently and with group members. Many distance learners are different from traditional undergraduates in that they are already in professions. They have well defined goals and are more motivated to learn (Dibiase, 2001).

Distance education has been used extensively and continues to be used for teacher preparation in most African countries like Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana. Though this mode of delivering formal education is suitable educational training, its applicability to the training of teachers is faced with a

number of problems. Koomson (1998) presents the following problems of distance education in teacher education:

Organising teacher training programme on distance in a dual institution creates additional responsibilities on academic staff. Though the practice is cost-effective, it creates serious burden on the existing staff who are expected to teach the regular students as well. There is therefore, the tendency for one programme to suffer at the expense at of the other.

Another challenge of distance education in teacher preparation according to Koomson is the huge financial commitment in order to get the needed technology devices to run the programme. Most distance institutions in Africa struggle with securing the needed technology devices such as audio, visual and audio-visual equipment due to insufficient funds (Phelps, 1999).

Supervision is important in distance education. Both tutors and students need to be monitored to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place always. Unfortunately, most distance institutions are not doing well in this area. Where there is no supervision productivity is likely to be affected (Sheets, 1992). However, the centre co-ordinator is engaged in some kind of supervision. There is also the problem of support services. Distance learners need regular services such as library, counselling and student-tutor interaction to be able to cope with their studies. In most cases these services are not adequately provided. Lack of support services account for high attrition in distance learning programmes (Bates, 1995).

Low income of pre-tertiary teachers is another challenge. Teachers in developing countries are low income earners. They find it difficult to pay their

fees and also meet family responsibilities (Adentwi, 2002). Facilitators need support from the government to enable them pursue the programme. Fortunately, the Government of Ghana acknowledges the importance of education and as such is committed to offer assistance to distance learners (Government of Ghana, 2004).

Childcare

The public sphere of gainful employment was predominantly considered in the realm of the husband, while the wife was seen to be responsible for the private household and the tasks of caring for children and the elderly, which was financially secured through the income earned by her husband (Jacobs & Schain, 2000). This was underpinned by the idea that care by the mother in the private household was the form of care work that ensured the best quality of care, as it was practised on the basis of love and moral duty and not in the interest of generating financial income (Pfau-Effinger, 2007).

Today, women also play important roles as generators of family income, whether in household farms or businesses or as wage employees (Katepa-Kalala, 1999). In developing countries especially, such work is likely to be essential to family survival. Because of the time constraints of women, however, their roles as care-givers and as providers of family income may conflict with one another, with potentially important implications for the welfare of children (Jokes, 2000).

According to relevant theoretical concepts and empirical knowledge that have been developed in the context of comparative social policy research, the ways in which family, schooling and employment are connected from the

perspective of mothers are strongly connected to the ways in which care work in relation to childcare is organised (Kessler & McRae, 2001). Pfau-Effinger (2007) argued that arrangements of family and work can be comparatively analysed and classified on the basis of the given cultural model of the family. Pfau-Effinger developed two traditional 20th Century models and three more modern family models of contemporary post-industrial societies in Western Europe.

The family economy model, which was based on the participation of all family members in agriculture and on family farms, care was not well developed as a specific task, allocated to specific persons and needing specific skills (Pfau-Effinger, 2007). The housewife model of the male breadwinner family in which care was seen as the specific task of the housewife which did not need specific skills but was seen as being based on quasi natural skills and did not participate in paid work.

The male breadwinner/female part-time career model which is based on the idea that the family and, particularly, women inside the family, should reduce their studying hours in school and working hours in paid work during the period of 'active motherhood' and share the task of caring with other institutions outside of the family such as the market or the non-profit sector (Pfau-Effinger, 2007). The dual breadwinner/external care model is based on the assumption that care should mainly be provided by institutions outside of the family, such as day-care nurseries and schools. The dual breadwinner/dual career model is also based on the assumption that women and men equally share the tasks of caring inside the

family and should share this with other institutions outside of the family such as day-care nurseries and schools.

When mothers choose care for their children, they often take into consideration factors such as affordability, quality and convenience. Some mothers have the opportunity to take their children to work or school with them or share child care responsibilities with their spouses or partners. However, when women are leaving for work or school and do not have the opportunity to take their child to their work place or school or share child care responsibilities with their spouses or partners, they are often faced with an almost bewildering array of choices which include “kith and kin” care, friends, neighbours, relatives, family home, schools and early education programmes (Lopoo, 2007).

According to Lopoo (2007), these types of care are grouped as formal and informal. Informal childcare is the care that is provided by relatives-grandmothers and aunts-, nannies, or home care providers and this typically takes place in a home setting, while formal care is the care that is provided by trained and untrained caregivers and normally takes place in schools or care centre settings. Childcare is now an ordinary part of life for children in most western countries (McLanahan & Adams, 2011).

More than half of infants are placed in some form of formal care for at least ten hours during their first year of life, and more than three-quarters of families with young children depend on formal care as a support for maternal employment because these forms of care are often indistinguishable in their activities (Magsood, Qamar & Cheema, 2005). Significantly, research shows that

children who were cared for by friends and relatives in unregulated homes were far more likely to belong to low-income families than children who were enrolled in centre-based programmes or cared for in regulated family child care homes (Pfau-Effinger, 2007).

However, due to limited income, low-income parents often had to opt for the cheapest type of care that they could find on the informal childcare market (McLanahan & Adams, 2011). Moreover, since the availability of subsidised centre-based care was extremely scarce in poor neighbourhoods, low-income parents often had no choice but to leave their children in the care of a friend or relatives.

Rogier and Padget (2004) were of the view that the environment in which the families find themselves affects their choice of childcare. They further explained that, in the rural areas where family life is centred on extended family system, working mother may rely on other members of the household to provide childcare, but the quality of care provided by these substitutes, especially if they are older children, may be poor.

However, the use of hired domestic help or institutional childcare is higher in the urban areas throughout the developing world. Since these families may not have their extended family members around, they seek assistance from outside (Pfau-Effinger, 2007). Since domestic help is unaffordable for most households, and publicly provided childcare remains scarce, the numbers using these alternatives even in urban areas remain low. Generally, however, the childcare problem is more pressing in urban settings, raising concerns about the quality of

care for young children of student mothers who cannot secure adequate care (Sadaquat & Sheikh, 2010).

Childcare effects are complex and vary primarily as a function of the quality of care provided (Xiaohui, 2011). In other words, whether childcare poses a risk to children, protects them from disadvantaged homes, or promotes good developmental outcomes depends on the quality of care. Quality childcare may buffer the negative influence of maternal depression with respect to children's social and emotional development. Families making decisions about child care arrangements should be heartened by the knowledge that, when all is said and done, it is the care they provide to their children that matters most (Presser, 2011).

Gender differences

Biklen and Pollard as cited in Adusah-Karikari (2008) assert that "being male or female carries few meanings in and of itself; its most potent meanings come from social and cultural meanings attributed to it. The 2001 World Bank report explains that all cultures interpret and elaborates the biological differences between men and women into a set of social expectations about what behaviours and activities are appropriate and what rights, resources and power women and men possess. For example, nearly all societies give the primary responsibility for the care of infants and young children to women and girls; and assign military service and national defense to men (World Bank, 2001). Biklen and Pollard (1999) indicated that what we have come to identify as belonging to men's or women's behaviours, attitudes, presentation, of self and so on, is produced by social relationships and continually negotiated and maintained within cultures.

Maccobby and Jackling as cited in Acheampong (2000) pointed out that women learn what it means to belong to any society through a socialising process which begins in their infancy. Through verbal and non-verbal interaction with family members and other caretakers, they learn behaviour patterns appropriate to their cultural norms. Maccobby and Jackling as cited in Unal (2004) view the socialising process of gender in terms of sex role differences. Lee and Cropper (1974) reported that males and females are socialised through different life styles through child rearing practices which entail differential expectations. The Association of American University Women (AAUW, 1992) agrees on the socialisation process by saying that despite learning a common language, they differ in their verbal and non-verbal expressions. They are socialised to belong to sex-segregated social groups, wear gender appropriate clothing, and prefer activities and toys associated with one's sex. This kind of traditional socialisation contributes to women's development levels as competencies based on those activities.

Morley (2005) contends furthermore that gender has a significant impact on academic and professional identity formation. Gendered power relations symbolically and materially construct and regulate women's everyday experiences of higher education (Adusah-Karikari, 2008). Adu (1999) observes that African society's concept of women is negative. This is shown in customs, traditions and beliefs, which have over the years contributed in keeping women under subjection and making them feel generally inferior to men, he continued to say that women are not viewed as human resources vital for development but as

amorphous labour reserve to use when there is a shortage. Niles (2000) asserts that some countries and parents hold negative views about the education of girls. In Chad, for example, he said some parents believe that schools push girls to prostitution, make them unfaithful to their husbands and difficult to control by parents.

Some parents are also of the view that literate girls are more liberal with the use of their sex organs than the illiterate ones and this discouraged most parents from supporting the education of their daughters. Dolphyne (1991) also observes that women's education has always lagged behind that of men in all African societies. She explains that the major role for a woman in a traditional society was to ensure the lineage, and she was expected to marry soon after puberty. The woman she said did not need formal education to perform this function. This effectively minimised the role of education in the African women's lives. In traditional societies, the traditional woman is expected to be provided for by her husband; and since education becomes a means for entering highly paid jobs in the formal sector, it was considered more important for boys to have formal education because they are seen as future breadwinners in the family. She observes that it is fairly easy for a girl with no formal education to make a living out of retail trade or the sale of snacks to workers. Dolphyne said on account of this, most girls who started school did not continue beyond the primary school level. She also observed that parents took their female children as their insurance against poverty in their old age. It did not seem profitable therefore to invest money in the education of the girl child.

Stromquist as cited in Adusah-Karikari (2008) found that various studies about girl's education are affected by the gender division of labour, which made them needed at home for domestic duties. Stromquist stated that in Botswana girls attended significantly fewer hours of class per day than boys. This was because girls, particularly those from low income families, were often needed at home for home-keeping, child minding and even income earning activities. According to Stromquist, parents rely on girls for domestic help and that this resulted in poor attendance and in turn led to low academic performance, which often resulted in grade repetition which either keeps girls in school for a longer period or makes them drop out. Mumuni (2000) cited a research conducted on female education in Ghana which identified certain socio-cultural factors that impede female participation and retention in the educational system. Factors enumerated included early marriage, religion and the ambivalent parental attitude towards education. According to Mumuni (2000), procreation is implanted in the minds of the females, which cause them to fulfil the expectations of society by aspiring towards what society expects of them. They treasure and prefer early marriages and childbearing to higher education. He added that other cultural practices like betrothal, 'dipo' and the 'trokosi' systems, which promote promiscuity among young girls was highly encouraged. Society sees women as neither needing education nor, if need be at all, not much since the woman will finally end up in the kitchen. This is because girls and thus women have often been relegated to the background and assigned roles as good cooks, baby sitters and probably taking care of their husbands.

According to a report of the Federation of African Women Educationist (FAWE, 1998), economic pressures affected the provision of education and the ability of parents to pay fees for their children. According to FAWE, under severe economic circumstances, parents choose to withdraw girls from school. Poverty stricken households, especially those headed by women in the rural areas, cannot afford exorbitant requirements for school attendance such as books and uniforms, just to mention a few. Ninyangi (1999) and Stromquist (2000) reported that in Kenya, when parents could not pay the school fees, they kept the female children at home. Stromquist (2000) said women's responsibilities at home were seen as more important than those outside the home. Parents were therefore willing to invest in the education of their sons rather than the education of their daughters regardless of their intellectual abilities. Omololu (1973) observed that in the past, due to ignorance and low education, some parents sometimes objected to the education of the girl child for fear that if the girls were educated, they will be less inclined to obey their men and they would become crudely aggressive, ambitious and competitive with men.

Stromquist (2000) further pointed out that practices such as bridewealth and dowry in several African and Asian countries prompted low income parents to push their children into early marriages to collect money as dowry. He asserted that economic conditions, cultural norms and religious beliefs affected the participation of females in education. Campbell (1978) was also of the opinion that parents were more interested in giving their female children to marriages in order to receive dowry from would-be sons-in-law. He further noted that parents'

attitude towards their children's marriage was logically determined by the child's resorting to prostitution or becoming pregnant unceremoniously. Education in view of this was looked upon as 'something' which is good for only males because to them the longer a female stays in school, the longer she delays the payment of dowry. In Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, there exists a definite preference for sons. It is believed that sons can carry the family name and provide future economic support for the family. Hatem (1986) said a daughter does not contribute economically to her nuclear family. Above all, females required supervision to guard against any type of moral indiscretion, and since they could not jeopardise the entire family, they were often seen as a source of anxiety.

Snyder and Tedesse (as cited in Adusah-Karikari 2008) also points out that colonial officials tended to visualise women in terms of a Victorian image of what a woman should be, instead of observing women's actual functions. From this perspective they envisioned women's responsibilities are largely limited to nurturing and conserving society, while men engaged in political and economic activities. Colonials equated 'male' with "breadwinner" and as a result, introduced technologies to men and recruited men for paying jobs. Tamale and Olako-Onyango (1997) stated that women in Africa under colonial rule generally entered academia later than their male counterparts. Adusah-Karikari (2008) indicates that not only did missionary education disproportionately extend educational opportunities to males, but men's education was also accorded higher priority than that of women.

Today's inequality in education is a direct effect of our colonial heritage. It has been argued by Dolphyne (1991) that if women should excel in any profession, then it should be teaching and nursing, as these two professions are supposedly women's forte. This corroborates the findings of the Statistics Division of the United Nations (2010) that women dominate the teaching profession at the primary level. In periods of rapid economic development, while men are pushed away from teaching to better-paid jobs elsewhere (OECD 1998), women tend to be comfortable with the teaching profession as taking care of younger children in nursery and primary school is traditionally seen as an "extension of motherhood" and therefore a "natural" job for women.

Government of Ghana (GOG) (2004) recorded that a survey conducted on women's education in 1984 revealed that the proportion of women of the total population aged 6 years and above constituted 56.5% of the total population as compared to 43.5% of men. Literacy rates are generally high for both sexes between ages 15 and 34 years but fall rapidly for women in succeeding age groups. Adoo-Adeku (1992) confirmed the above statement by saying that while the percentage of girls in school decreased as they moved up the educational ladder, that of boys increased. It was a norm that children, particularly girls, took care of their parents during their old age, so they had to get married, stay at home and take care of the family. The United Nations Organisation (1997) observed that even though the labour force in all parts of the world is being provided by women it is greater in the less developed countries.

However, there is still a gap and that is due to the fact that the type of manpower they provide is of poor quality. This observation implies that there is something women lack that has contributed to the quality of labour they provide and which does not attract better income. The principal institution that can best address this problem is education as women are generally those on whom the responsibility of education falls, whether in the home or in the school. Dr. Aggrey's statement, "to educate a boy, is to educate an individual but to educate a girl, is to educate a family" (Wesley Girls' High School, 2015, p. 6). Though widely used in Ghana since independence, does not reflect women's actual involvement in higher education. The status of the Ghanaian woman in formal education is shaped by socio-cultural beliefs deepened by colonial legacies. The colonial system of education was sharply skewed toward boys. Bartels (1999) reveals that when the first school for girls was opened in Ghana, the aim of the missionaries who ran the school was to groom young women to become wives fit for the men they were training. There are many instances of gender stereotyping which widens as education progresses. Teachers' negative opinions and attitudes towards a girl's potential in the educational system has enhanced gender inequality in schools. Sadker and Sadker (2009) found that boys were more likely to get teacher attention than girls. Boys were praised more and were likely to have extended conversations with teachers. They cited studies which show that teachers were more likely to give male students detailed instructions on how to do things for them. They concluded that the outcome of such biased attention for girls include reduced commitment to career.

The reason for gender stereotyping in Africa, according to Lumumba (as cited in Adusah-Karikari, 2008), is that gender was an important bias for education and although many positions existed which could be filled by men as well as women, from top to bottom of the social structure there are certain duties that were considered purely as female duties and vice versa

Women's level of literacy in Ghana on the whole is low, so the few educated women tend to be concentrated in certain areas, namely teaching and nursing. Dirassa (1991) argued that schools tend to channel girls into traditional female fields. This seems to legitimise stereotype roles for women. The impression created is that women are fit for certain occupations and not for others. A survey of parents of dropouts in India indicated that they withdrew the daughters from school when they saw education as conflicting with marriage (Nayana, 1985). Also in some rural and urban areas parents place a lower value on the education of their daughters than on that of their sons. Their attitude is partly due to the fact that their daughters will become pregnant before completing school and certification. This kind of parental attitude towards the education of their daughters may also be influenced by finance which often impede the efforts of schoolgirls and apparently result in girls seeking support through promiscuity.

The bottom line is, women in contemporary Ghanaian society were seen primarily as home-makers; a broad term which comprises child-bearing, nurturing and home-keeping. All these and many more have contributed in the low number of women in education which we are experiencing in Ghana today. The United Nations Human Development report (1996) has stated that fairer opportunities for

women and better access to education, childcare, credit and employment contribute to their development that of family members and to economic growth.

The task of adult education is to address the limitations and contradictions of formal education and to foster a critical examination of the social, political and economic system, as it affects the situation of women. This is being done through an array of innovative strategies in adult learning, which go beyond the conventional definitions of empowerment.

Empirical Review

The empirical review section looks at the non-academic roles undertaken by student mothers in their lives, views of student mothers on the influence of their non-academic roles on their academic lives and the views of student mothers on the influence of their academic life on their family lives.

Non-academic roles undertaken by student mothers

Conventional roles of women

The duties on women are numerous and vary from society to society. Nevertheless, there are certain domestic activities which stand out in all societies, as female role starts from dawn and end at dusk. The daily routine work begins from house cleaning, fetching water, dish washing, laundry, preparing food for family, and care of children. Brydon and Chant (1993) were of the view that what women do and are expected to do vary with economy, climate, political or religious, ideology and culture. But the core of common tasks which women everywhere are required to perform include: cooking on daily basis, housework (sweeping, cleaning and washing) and very often fetching water and fire wood.

Pierson and Cohen (1995) stated that the daily activities of women include waking up, washing dishes, heating of leftover food, hoeing, weeding, planting, collecting firewood, pounding and grinding, fetching water and lighting fire. Pierson and Cohen were also of the view that a woman's place is the home, where she is supposed to fulfil her principal responsibility to society: taking care of children and supervising their emotional and mental development until they can be independent and taking care of her husband and his needs for his ultimate headship of the nuclear family. In the United States of America, the National Survey of Families and Households (Noonan, 2001) found that time spent in female housework chores has a negative effect on their wages and that the negative relationship between housework and wages is stronger for women than for men. Also, the Bureau of Labour Statistics (2015) discovered that on an average day, women spend more than twice as much time preparing food and drink and doing interior cleaning, and four times as much time doing laundry as men did.

In many societies in the world, women have been ascribed traditional roles. These roles are dictated by the societies in which they find themselves. Greenstreet (1997) made an inquiry into the Ghanaian traditional society and stated that it was based on a subsistence economy in which division of labour exists between men and women. The main functions of women were to look after the home, raise children and to give regular assistance with farm works such as the planting and harvesting of crops.

Rogers (1998) carried out investigations into the domestication of women in developing countries and stated that the striking feature of the Western ideology is the enormous emphasis on the exclusive role of the biological mother in nurturing infants and children, particularly in the first few years. This is linked with the identification of women's place in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers; the home is presented to them as their primary occupation. Women fulfil the basic needs of the household such as food purchasing and preparation, fuel and water collection, childcare, health and daily maintenance (Noponen, 1991).

Luxton (as cited in Pierson & Cohen, 1995) broke the domestic work of women into four sub-categories. The first was the housework itself, by which she meant cooking, cleaning and maintaining the house and the objects with it, followed by child caring and rearing. The third sub-category was household management orchestrating all household activities and co-ordinating the schedules of household members and tension managing—caring for the psycho-emotional needs of all the household members and the sexual needs of the husband. Opong and Abu (1997) also broke the role of Ghanaian women into seven. The first was parental role, followed by occupational role, conjugal role and domestic role. They further made mention of kin roles, community roles and individual role.

Discussing the triple role of women in rural communities, Assimeng (1999) divided the role of women as reproductive, productive and community management politics. He explained that women reproductive role entails child bearing and child rearing responsibilities and relative domestic tasks undertaken by women. These include childcare, maintenance of husband and the infirm

members of the household: fetching of water and fuel, food storage, food processing and preparation, washing, ironing clothes, assisting in building, maintaining and cleaning the house. These reproductive functions often result in their shouldering a disproportionately large share of the responsibility of child upbringing.

According to Assimeng (1999), despite the differences in family forms, kinship structures, marital arrangements, political and economic structures, women everywhere are charged with the responsibility of raising children up to the socially designated end of childhood. Women are also charged with the daily upkeep of the household. He further explained that the productive role of women refers to the work done by women for payment in cash or kind. It includes both market production with an exchange value, and subsistence and home production with an exchange value. These types of work generally generate income. Some of the productive works women engage themselves in include backyard gardening and rearing of household livestock, so that money that would be accrued would be used in purchasing items or saved for something else, thereby increasing the economic level of the family.

Assimeng (1999) explained the community management role as activities undertaken wholly by females at the community level as an extension of their reproductive role. This is to ensure the provision and maintenance of their scarce resources of collective consumption such as water, healthcare and education. It is voluntary and unpaid work undertaken in “free time.”

In African societies, women are expected to go through child bearing and child upbringing. In the view of Adu (1999), the respect and status conferred on motherhood was so great as compared to marriage, to such an extent that even professional women would rather have children out of wedlock than remain childless. In most African societies, it does not matter even if the man responsible for the pregnancy is already married to someone else (Ardayfio-Schandorf & Kwafo-Akoto, 1995).

The value that the society attaches to childbearing in most African societies is based on the premises that the society should grow by ensuring that women produce to ensure the continuity of her lineage (matrilineal societies) or her husband's lineage (patrilineal societies). Belsky and Eggebeen (2004) indicate that apart from housekeeping and childcare, which are assigned by social norms to the woman, she is also expected to play a sexual role.

Voydanoff (2004) also agrees with Belsky and Eggebeen (2004) that marriage and motherhood will be dominant in the lives of most women. Housework and childcare will continue to be predominantly the sphere of the woman. The reality of married life therefore is for the woman to perform the unpaid provider of sexual and domestic services to her husband. Marriage imposes some roles for women. These include cooking meals, cleaning and general maintenance of the house, having children and, looking after them and on a subtler level, giving the husband sexual satisfaction, obeying him with love and companionship.

Married women can therefore be referred to as the homemakers in every family (Apter, 2005). The position of a woman in a family is valued because of her reproductive abilities such as the guarantor of the family line and her role as in providing food, cooking, fetching water and fuel wood, washing, taking care of children, the sick and the aged and promoting the health and well-being of other family members (Peavy & Smith, 2006).

Peavy and Smith (2006) supported Apter's (2005) view on the role of women by stating that women do the entire cooking, cleaning and childcare essential to household survival and often engaged in the manufacture of soap, candles and clothes. They were of the view that the work of the woman included not only the work she had traditionally done but also whatever additional work was required in order to ensure the success of her home such as ploughing field, digging cellars and erecting fences.

Women's normal sphere is the home, which they leave freely, but only on unusual occasions. They are solicitous of their children as well as their husbands and perform such domestic services as cleaning of windows, putting up curtains, sweeping, taking out "slop" in the chamber pots, cleaning up messy beds, seeing that a hot bath is drawn when the man of the house comes home from work and being submissive to men are the role that women have to play (Pandey, 2006).

The review so far indicates that childbearing and mothering is an integral part of women's gender role in the family life. It has also emphasised the submissive and sacrificial role of women to their household. However, the authors considered the work these women did as sacrificial without monetary contribution

to the household. If these services mentioned by the authors as the role of women were not done, someone would have to be employed to do them. This may take money away from the family and might affect the well-being of the family.

In addition, traditional women were seen as inferior to men. Women were not made to participate in decisions that affected the family. They accepted and kowtowed to the decisions of their husbands. Today, women are now taking part in decision making and contributing financially to the well-being of the household. Their contribution to family welfare has changed.

Contemporary roles of women

Not so many decades ago, it was pretty much expected that women, once married, would dedicate their lives to raising children and managing the home. The role of women in society has changed. The home-based mother has been left behind in the nest. Urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, liberation of women's right, awareness of rights, influence of media, westernisation, expanding access to education have to some extent, provided new opportunities for women (Lokshin, Glinskaya & Garcia, 2000).

In the 21st century society, women have been doing the same work which was once considered exclusively for men (Smith & Apicelli, 1982). For instance, women have gone to space, joined modern guerrilla groups and armies, headed the countries administration, participated in sport and games and fought at the battlefield (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1991). Women have taken over the reins of politics and war when men had failed. For example, in Vietnam, legend has it that hundred years ago, two princesses overthrew Chinese oppression for the first time

in that country's history (World Bank, 1995). Again, in the seventeenth century, Jamaica Nanny of the Maroons is reputed to have outwitted the British for three decades. In the Gold Coast, now Ghana, Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the queen mother of Ejisu in the Ashanti region, led the Ashantis into war (Adu, 1999).

The family is not a static institution. In recent decades, divorce rates have risen, leaving a lot of females to be separated and living as heads of families (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). This has forced them to specialise in the market spheres to wield a great impact on the quality of the women as well as their families. In Britain, a study by Muszyriska (2008) revealed that the proportion of women in paid employment reached its highest peak during the Second World War. Out of the total of 17.25 million women between the ages of fourteen and sixty-four years about 7.3 million worked in either paid employment or were drafted into the auxiliary military service.

According to Muszyriska (2008), the most important social changes in the past twenty-five years involve the status of women, particularly of women at work. She stated that nearly half of the entire workforce in the United State of America is female and nearly half of women with children return to work within a year of childbirth. Muszyriska further postulated that, in the last decade of the 19th century, 19 % of all women were in the labour force and in 1977, 32 % of all mothers were in the labour force. The figure rose to 52 % in 1988 and in 1990, the percentage exceeded 60.

Easton and Padgett (2004) were of the view that, increasing women participation in the world of work has increased women's power in the home.

Improving women's decision making power within the household leads not only to improving the well-being of children as a group, but also serves as a force to reduce long standing discrimination that undermines female capabilities in many important areas of life, as well as human and economic development in general (Xiaohui, 2011). Xiaohui further stressed the importance of women assuming positions of power and influence and making decisions, not only because their points of view and talents are needed, but also as a matter of their human right. They are considered strong and intelligent and can do all a man can do. According to Sultana and Zanariah (2011), almost every class in every culture around the globe has projected ideal women who endure and sacrifice for their children, family and people. They are now heading most households.

In the past, most societies in Sub-Saharan Africa assumed males to be heads of households irrespective of the status of their spouses, and female-headed households were not recognised (Baden, Green, Otoo-Oyortey, & Peasgood, 1994). However, in recent times, compositions of households have undergone profound changes, and female-headed households have emerged. According to the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2000), female headship of households has been estimated to be 13% in Middle East and North Africa, 22% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 16% in Asia, 35% in the Caribbean and 24% in Latin America. This phenomenon is as a result of migration of males to seek greener pastures in urban as well as other rural mining and cash crop growing areas, thus relinquishing the responsibilities of managing households to women (Cudjoe, 2009).

Many women the world over have assumed the breadwinner role in addition to the domestic roles (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1999). Everywhere in the world, women now have two jobs; one in the home and one outside it. They are now at the heart of development because they control most of the non-money economy through subsistence cash rewards of market work. Women are important economic actors providing for themselves, husbands, children and other members of the extended family. They are assuming a central role within the family. This position has arisen largely because women have had to share much, even all the responsibility for supporting themselves and their children, in return for considerable independence (Brown, 1994).

Friedman (1999) posited that education serves as the main factor of change for women. Friedman further explained that, as a result of some parents encouraging their female children to go to school, the result has been a lot of women breaking through the social barriers to occupy prominent places in the socio-economic and political life of the nation. Women are now occupying positions in the public service and undertaking careers which were previously regarded as the preserve of men. Friedman concluded that women have gradually participated more in employed work as they make advances in education and that the decrease in fertility and the greater ability to predict and plan pregnancies have also made a difference in the lives of women.

These changes have come about as what was once produced in the home has been dramatically altered both by the emergence of labour-saving technology in the home and by the development of service industries that allow much of what

was once provided by specialised home makers to be purchased at the market (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). Stevenson and Wolfers further mentioned changes in wage structure and the technology of birth control as some of the changes in the functional form of family life over the past half century.

Family planning is a factor in the emancipation of women. With it, women can decide if and when she will have children and having it will not incapacitate her as it had in the past (Easton & Padgett, 2004). This makes the woman become healthy and strong to participate in the management of the home, societal activities and also become an active participant in national development (Cudjoe, 2009). Furthermore, day-care centres mean that women no longer have to rear their children full time, if they prefer not to do so. Access to reliable day-care enables mothers to participate in types of work that are not compatible with simultaneously caring for their children, such jobs in manufacturing and industrial settings that are often higher-paying than traditional forms of employment (Prasad, 2012).

The activities of NGOs have also helped in the emancipation of women. These NGOs support women with special measures such as provision of low-cost innovative technology and in developing practical support systems for females. They also provide loans and know-how assistance to support the move of women into work. Both government and NGOs have programmes that enable the women to get access to credit facilities, training and skill development programmes (ILO, 2012).

All the authors on this theme touched on women's work outside the home as the major changing role of women which has given them power in decision making within the household. This power gained by women is mainly due to financial contribution they make because of the work they do. The financial contribution of women to family income is highly varied. However, these women are better able to work or further their studies when they have someone to provide quality childcare for their children when their mothers are at work or school.

Influence of the Non-Academic Roles of Student Mothers on Their Academic Lives

When mothers leave home to further their education, they do not neglect their family roles all together. In an attempt to continue performing her role as a mother and a student she encounters numerous challenges. The task of combining motherhood with the demands of an academic life is difficult for most women. Even though these women are still in school, they still have primary responsibilities for homework, childcare and for instilling cultural values in their children. In the absence of the mother, as it can be in a situation of a student mother, the child may feel lonely and neglected in terms of maternal control, supervision and training. This may affect the emotions of the mother while at school. Jarvis (1995) found out that adults who were over-stimulated or anxious do not learn well as those who are stimulated to respond to their learning situation in a normal way. Anxiety could impede even the mastery of new motor skills and it also tended to interfere with and inhibit original thought.

One major challenge that affects student mothers is the timetable for lectures, tutorials and other academic programmes on campus. According to Dallas (1998) undergraduate studies, especially, are time structured and inflexible, such that a woman would have to attend classes when they are offered but not when they fit into her day. She has to study before exams, read and prepare for her assignments, and shift her focus to these tasks she does. University studies, unlike a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job, do not allow one to punch out at a certain hour and leave work behind, but often occupy one's thought and emotions throughout the day. Caplan (1993) notes that the academic tenure clock and women's biological clocks coincide.

Williams (2007) states that graduate school is a space and place where real changes can begin to enact different policies, build a different community, draw on functioning and effective support systems, and make inclusiveness and diversity a reality. These changes can happen only if support comes from all fronts, only if graduate students who are mothers are not the only ones making all the sacrifices, and only if children and family life are coded in the academy as symbols of encouragement rather than challenges to be managed by individual women. Hensel (1990) too argues that the verdict is clear having children is detrimental to a woman's career success. Hensel points out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and family life. Academic life assumes that people have "uninterrupted" time (Hensel, 1990). Therefore, choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less

interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder (Williams, 2007).

Egenti and Omoruyi (2011) state that the stress or trauma which student mothers have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards the programme. This has led some of their colleagues to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their babies. In addition, some have to contend with pregnancy while others nurse their newborn babies alongside their studies. Some have had to put to bed in the course of their studies or even during examinations. This further increases their burden and has made some to fail their exams while some have had to even abandon their examinations. Some come late for lectures because of their marital demands or even stay away from lectures for a reasonable period as a result of home pressure or demand. All these affect their learning and levels of achievement (Egenti & Omoruyi, 2011).

A research conducted by Andres and Finlay (2004) revealed that in an effort to reduce the cost of babysitting, some mothers traded babysitting time with friends. Although they saved money they compensated with less study time by studying all night prior to an examination. Lack of sleep interfered with their performances. Sleep deficits were common with the resultant blunting of decision-making processes. Most of the entering women received less than five hours sleep per night as they struggle to maintain academic and family responsibilities known to impair mental processes such as concentration, memory, reasoning ability, and decisiveness (Coreen, as cited in Andres & Finlay, 2004). Contrasting her previous experience in her workforce with her current life as a

student, Helene, a respondent who was a student-nursing mother stated:

When you are working you can just come from work right, when you are a student, you never can tell until the semester's done. There's this assignment and you look at the calendar and oh, there's this exams, and when you go home in the evenings, you're not 100 percent there (Andres & Finlay, 2004, p.56). In addition, student mothers who bring babies to school reported that they do not have thorough preparations for examinations. They lack concentration on their studies or actual writing of examination papers. Sometimes it happens that one is sitting for an examination, and hears a cry of her baby just outside the examination hall. Such a person loses concentration.

Banda's (2000) research further found that other challenges associated with student mothers who bring babies to college face the problem of inadequate space in the hostels and inappropriate food for the babies. The college hostel rooms were designed to accommodate two students. Although distance education learners are allowed to bring babies, they use the same rooms that were meant for residential students. Therefore, they are forced to squeeze into the same rooms. Thus, a room, which was meant for two people, takes in six: two teacher-learners, two babies and two nannies. Such an environment is not good for the babies who have their own demands. The problems found by Banda (2000) is not peculiar to student nursing mothers offering distance education programmes alone but could also happen to residential students of other tertiary education institutions. It is

clear therefore that there is the need for some policy framework by the tertiary institutions that could help address the predicaments of this category of students who also have the right to education.

The challenges faced by student mothers cannot be overestimated. For distance education programme, according to Hordzi (2008), the main problem of some of the women during examination is how to get peace of mind from their babies to concentrate and write the examination. This is because those who are nursing mothers find it difficult to concentrate during examination as a result of disturbances from their babies. He goes on to state that the situation at times becomes so desperate for the mothers such that it is common to see a mother carrying her baby on the shoulders of one hand while using the other hand in answering the examination questions. In such a situation one wonders how effectively the student-nursing mother will be able to write the exam.

Hensel (1990) explains that being a mother means being constantly interruptible and continually responsive to needs of someone else, which makes it difficult to develop the concentration necessary to write and study. Psychological strain of new experiences and new challenges according to (Meindl, 2009), include; feelings of inferiority in relation to skills of younger classmates in uneasy mixture with feelings of superiority around own life accomplishments, strain in group projects and social isolation from student peers.

The economic situation of the student mother could also be a determining factor in her ability to complete the course successfully. A study conducted by Mamhute (2011) found that both pregnant and student mothers had their studies

negatively affected by financial problems. When financial resources were not sufficient to sustain them, students temporarily absconded from some educational activities such as lectures to source for funds and/or other essential materials. Even when the student mothers did not abscond from studies and continued as if all was well, worry eroded academic benefits.

In addition, the drudgery of combining numerous activities could cause most student mothers to absent themselves from lectures and tutorials. A research conducted by Harrison (2008) on tutorial attendance and student performance showed that students who attended all or most tutorials received a mean final mark in the course just over a full letter grade higher than students who attended none or very few tutorials.

Influence of the Academic Pursuits of Student Mothers on their Family Lives

Another area of importance is the effect of women's education on their relationships with husband and family. Several problems are created in family management when mothers combine schooling with their responsibilities in the home. These student mothers are often tired because of the double workload and this may affect their relationship with their husbands and children. They may not be able to give them enough attention and motherly love. Apart from not being able to meet their family need adequately, their studies outside the home too may suffer. They may not be able to put up their best and mostly unable to keep up with colleagues who had either no children or husband. Motherhood and academia do not blend well for most student mothers.

Many mothers say that juggling the stresses of schooling with the responsibilities of home leave them overworked, overstrained and always wake up from bed already tired (Dallas, 1998). When women spend long hours away from their babies, the babies do not get what they need most; the time and attention of their mother. No one can fulfil a mother's role well as a mother can. A substitute figure can alleviate a child's need for its mother but cannot take her place. Student nursing mothers therefore face the challenge of combining their roles as mothers and/or wives with their academic work effectively if the above problems persist (Dallas, 1998).

However, what is obvious is that even though student mothers find it challenging to continue studying, they are doing so in greater numbers (Najjuma & Kyarugah, 2006). According to (Meindl, 2009), returning to study as an adult, be it after a hiatus of a few years or several decades, is a wonderful opportunity for personal growth and development. Sometimes, however, it poses particular personal and interpersonal challenges which lead to stress and may interfere with the achievement of academic or skill acquisition goals. This is corroborated by Milner-Home, Power and Dennis (1996) who state that the traditional image of a mother is that of a self-sacrificing being. If taken as such, the student mother is likely to exhaust herself as she attends to both her studies and the parenting role.

Besides, the demands of parenthood and studentship are not only conflicting but also stressful thereby posing great challenges to the student mother (Mamhute, 2011). Returning to study is exciting and also emotionally and psychologically arousing. Inward turmoil and self-examination may be marked by

external manifestations such as increased physical and mental fatigue which sometimes manifests as mild depression and social withdrawal, but it is worth noting that research assures us that, even while it feels “destabilising,” returning to study and career changes are rational responses to dissatisfaction and unmet needs by well-adjusted people (Meindl, 2009).

Breastfeeding of babies is also one of the challenges that are encountered by most students who are nursing mothers especially those with newly born babies. There are a lot of benefits of breastfeeding to mothers as well as the baby involved. Breastfeeding, like birth, empowers women not only in accomplishment in themselves and their abilities. Breastfeeding protects infants against numerous infectious diseases including otitis media, respiratory infections and diarrhoea (Chen & Kaplan, 2003). Breastfeeding also lowers children’s risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and cardiovascular risk factors (Chen & Kaplan, 2003). The production of milk in the mother burns down calories, helping with weight loss after pregnancy. A by-product of breastfeeding has a relaxing effect on the mother and stimulates maternal instincts. Also, Chen and Kaplan suggest that women who breastfeed have reduced risks of pre-menopausal breast cancer, cervical cancer and osteoporosis.

Breastfeeding according to Robotti (1998) is the most natural and nutritious way to encourage a baby’s development, it has also been found that breastfed babies have fewer ears, respiratory and intestinal infection, they are less likely to have childhood diabetes and amputations as well as learning disabilities. Babies who do not have the chance of being breastfed by their mothers, as it is in

the case of some student mothers, are likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or “crib death”. They are also likely to become obese, lack emotional security as well as suffer poor mouth and tooth development of oral muscles and facial bones. There is extensive evidence on the short-term and long-term health benefits of breastfeeding for infants and mothers. In 2003, the World Health Organization recommended that, wherever possible, infants should be fed exclusively on breast milk until six months of age. A study in helping women to breastfeed concluded that most educated mothers do not breastfeed for long and cannot practice exclusive breastfeeding (King, 2007) as it can be seen in the case of student nursing mothers even though breastfeeding is known to develop healthier children, thus reducing health care in the society.

Aside the fact that it is not easy to go to school after a long break in education which may be due to marriage or bearing children and caring for the family, Baun and Tomari (1979) point out the fact that adult learners also have poor memory and as a result find it difficult to memorise. These authors continue to say that the adult goes through physiological changes, which may affect in his/her sight and learning becoming less acute and in some, loss of physical dexterity. Banda (2000) researched on Challenges in Distance Education: Experiences of Female Teacher-Learners at Domasi College of Education in Malawi and found that Teacher-learners with babies bring baby sitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. Consequently, some teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. Some babies get sick and thus, put

pressure on the mothers, as they have to take them to hospitals. One teacher-learner lost a child in 2002 during the residential session and her spouse blamed her participation in the programme as the cause of the child's death.

Furthering education by women could also have profound effect on their relationships and marriage. According to Suiter (2008) the decline in marital happiness among full-time students and their husbands appear to have been related to changes in the women's performance of family roles over the years, and to husbands' responses to those changes. In a study conducted by Suiter (2008), 44 married mothers and 33 of their husbands were interviewed in-depth at the beginning and the end of the women's first year of enrolment in a university to study, the study showed that there were changes in marital happiness when women return to school. Marital happiness declined over the year among couples in which wives were enrolled as full-time students, and changed little among couples in which wives were enrolled as part-time students. Marital happiness changed substantially more among husbands than wives.

Kwagala (as cited in Najjuma & Kyarugah, 2006) found out that some women either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers, leave children with neighbours, relatives, older siblings, paid child minders or take them to day care centres. This state of affairs may not let those mothers concentrate on their books and at the same time children are at a risk of uncertainties. Perkins (1985) observed that of course few mothers are immune from guilt feelings about what might happen when they leave very young children in the care of others. So they get worried about whether and when they can go out to work or become a

student Najjuma & Kyarugah, 2006). Some mothers are forced to change their programmes/courses in order to cater for their babies. Thus there are significant challenges that mothers encounter in trying to attain University education, most of which are largely unknown, some of which are likely to contribute to their poor performance and sometimes failure to complete their studies.

Coping Strategies of Student Mothers

Student mothers' roles and academic pursuits pose the above challenges to them. Therefore, there is the need to find ways of surmounting these challenges. Writing on the coping strategies for student mothers, Fricke (2010) mentioned that women and men should be treated equally. However, when treating men and women equally results in inequity, they should be treated differently. A prime example is pregnancy; women get pregnant and men do not. In order for women to have equal opportunities, their reproductive capacities need to be taken into consideration. If the law and society as a whole do not take these issues into consideration, the circumstances will force women to be relegated to the private sphere if they choose to exercise their reproductive right to have children. Many women give birth and then return to the public sphere, whether it is work or school. Women may desire to continue to breastfeed due to the great benefits; breastfeeding provides health benefits for both mother and baby, as well as reduces costs, and promotes an emotional bond between mother and baby. If the public sphere does not accommodate a woman's decision to breastfeed, by allowing her to express her milk throughout her work/school day, she will be forced to either leave the workforce or school, or more likely stop breastfeeding,

depriving her infant of its many benefits.

Writing on Educational opportunities and academic performance: A case study of university student mothers in Venezuela, Pinnilla and Munoz (2005) posited that evidence shows that the academic performance of student mothers is lower than that of other groups of university students. In practice, student mothers participate as part-time students, although this category is not officially recognised by most Venezuelan public universities. Almost all the life circumstances of student mothers negatively affect their academic performance. The only circumstance that contributes positively to the performance of a student mother is the help provided by her extended family in taking care of her children. The fact that student mothers are able to participate in higher education is mainly due to the help they receive from their extended family (Pinilla & Muñoz, 2005).

In Banda's (2000) study on the experiences of female teacher-learners' distance education at Domasi College of Education in Malawi, some participants had the following suggestions when they were asked the question as to how they could be assisted when they bring their babies to the college: provide us with spacious accommodation, we need regular transport to hospital whenever our babies or nannies are ill. Others also suggested a reduced fee for nannies, accommodating sick student mothers in a separate room, that is, a sick bay. The provision of breast feeding rooms in the various universities to ease the challenges faced by student mothers as provided by some universities in the United States was also proposed. For example, Columbia University provides lactation rooms to support student mothers returning to work, school, or campus. Each room offers a

clean, secure, and private space for women who need to express breast milk during their time on campus. All of the rooms are equipped with a table, chair, and lock from the inside; some contain refrigerators and sinks. Where rooms do not have a refrigerator, student mothers are recommended to bring a cooler to store their breast milk (<http://www.worklife.columbia.edu/breastfeeding-support>). Though the usage of such facilities is for a fee, the benefits derived by the users cannot be over emphasised. Such breast feeding rooms are usually used under strict guidelines. For instance, the use of the breastfeeding room by staff and students of Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick reads as follows:

The Mother and Baby Room is locked at all times and may be accessed by requesting the key and swipe card which will be issued by the Main Reception staff. The Mother and Baby Logbook at reception will have to be signed to log use of the room. The facility is provided as a private and sanitary room for breastfeeding staff and students to express their milk during work hours. Persons using the Mother and Baby Room are required to respect the privacy and security of the room and to agree to schedule their use with other mothers using the room. It is important that all staff and students using the room ensure that it is clean and locked as they leave (Fricke, 2010, p. 2).

Equally important is the realisation that guidance and counseling is as crucial as extra tuition for the female learners (Oppong-Mensah, Ahiatrogah, & Deku, 2008). Hodgson, (1993) underscored the importance of counseling. To him, counseling may be helpful for the students to develop their skills and be able to cope with the combination of part time study, work and family life. The research

by Najjuma and Kyarugah, (2006) established that student mothers are challenged by the triple role which include productive, reproductive and community service, which is likely to bring stress, anxiety, and sometimes, may lead to disease. It is therefore recommended that efforts should be made by university administrators to provide counseling services specifically to student mothers in order to manage better the hassles brought about by the challenges they face. Availing of space by the Universities, for mothers to share their experiences can also be helpful in helping them to identify steps that can improve their learning.

The problem of lack of facilities featured as another issue that prevent mothers from concentrating on their studies as they have to think about their babies that they have left somewhere. The university authorities should consider accommodation of student nursing mothers at the university or by introducing daycare centres at the university premises so as to cater for those with young babies (Najjuma & Kyarugah, 2006). The most significant way to combat these inherent disadvantages for student mothers is the provision of on-campus childcare. Research has shown that graduation rates are significantly higher for student mothers when campus child care is provided, and further, students are more likely to remain in school, graduate in fewer years, and earn higher grades (Kappner, as cited in Gasser & Gasser, 2010). On top of these relatively simple gestures of support for student parents, another important initiative is to simply help student mothers develop a campus support system or network among student mothers on campus. This can take the form of a student organisation, a support group, or even a playgroup (Gasser & Gasser, 2010). Schools and other care

centres have recently emerged to address partially problems confronted by student mothers. Some of these crèches accept infants as young as six months and have vehicles, which convey them to and from homes to the school every day. Kwagala as cited in Najjuma and Kyarugah (2006) on the other hand found out that some women either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers, leave children with neighbours, relatives, older siblings, paid child minders or take them to day care centres.

Another suggestion worth considering was the provision of hostel facilities that could accommodate nursing mothers so that those who are capable and willing to stay on campus could do so. This result confirms the findings of Onsongo's (2004) research on Promoting Gender Equity in Selected Public Universities of Kenya. In that study, when students were asked what can be done to improve the situation of student mothers on campus, they proposed that the university should provide accommodation for student mothers on campus (this they said will ensure access to clean water and electricity). The participants also suggested that a day care centre for student mothers be set up on the campus for student mothers to access at a cost and lower the fees for student mothers especially, health fees charged for the healthcare of children.

One coping strategy is the support from the family, especially, husbands, grandparents and other relatives in Africa. Writing on coping strategies used by student mothers to succeed in Occupational Therapy School revealed that physical support from husbands was used by all the participants (Grohman & Lamm, 2009). Emotional support from husband and peers and time management

strategies was used by 93.3% of the participants. Findings concluded that 100% of the participants who had their first child in school reported that they used emotional and physical support from their husbands and parents and time management strategies.

Chapter Summary

The related literature reviewed was categorised into two sections. The theoretical review section delved into three theories that have direct and indirect relation and implication on the issues looked at in this study. These comprised the Transactional Coping Theory, the Avoidant versus Attentive Coping, and The Compass of Shame Coping Theory. The Transactional Coping Theory postulates that individual's cognitive appraisals and coping processes are influenced interactively by a combination of personality based situational factors. The theory has two broad categories of antecedents which directly influence how people appraise and cope with situations which depends on the characteristics of the individual (the person's commitments, beliefs, and personal traits) and the characteristics of the situation (in terms of the novelty or the predictability of the situation, the uncertainty of the event, temporal factors, or the ambiguity of the situation). There is also a component of this theory (emotion-focused coping strategy), which rather takes into consideration a variety of strategies aimed at lessening the emotional stress that results from the problem.

With the Avoidant versus Attentive Coping Theory, while the avoidant aspect looks at ways of thinking about stressful situations such as denial, distraction, repression, and suppression that act to shift an individual's attention

away from the stressor and their immediate emotional reaction to the stressor, the attentive coping theory rather focuses attention on the stressor and one's response to it.

The compass of shame comprises four poles of maladaptive shame coping that constitute stable individual tendencies for coping with the self-conscious emotion of shame. The first two poles are attack-self and withdrawal and the second two poles are attack-other and avoidance. The theory indicates that the initial studies investigating the relationship between coping styles and general trait dispositions suggested that internalising coping styles are related to personality styles that are susceptible to anxiety and depressive disorders. A portion of this theory explains two approaches to coping which are coping style and coping process. The coping style treats coping as a personality characteristic while the coping process treats coping as managing stress that changes over time. The type of coping process that would be adapted by an individual depends on the individual himself/herself, the time period of encounter, and the outcome of the modality being studied. Distance education, as may be viewed worldwide and practised in Ghana, is basically meant to ensure that higher education is made equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

The literature suggests that current need for knowledge-update as well as taking care of the home has promoted distance learning among mothers across the world (Bratton & Gold, 2003). In Ghana, distance education is an opportunity for women to combine household chores, family issues, childbearing with academics. This according to Jejeebhoy (1995), is the sure way of transforming women's

attitudes and values from traditional to more modern and from constrained to emancipation. However, this is not an easy task for most women who qualify for higher education but could not gain admission due to limited space in some tertiary education institutions or their inability to stay on campus as mothers and pursue regular or full-time study.

When it comes to literature on women's involvement in distance education in Ghana, there is some literature gap. For instance, not much information is available through research on the influence of the academic pursuit and non-academic roles of student mothers on their lives. Thus, little is known about the coping strategies that those who went through employed. These gaps are meant to be filled with the findings of this study. The literature also suggests what the university can do to assist student mothers of distance education to address their challenges as they combine their activities as mothers and academic work. The next chapter explains the research methods used.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter described the method used to undertake the research. Thus, the research design used, the population studied and the sample and sampling procedures employed in the study. The research instrument, data collection and data analysis procedures are also described in the chapter.

Research Design

The design used for the study is a descriptive survey. The descriptive survey design is a type of design that can be explained as the process of gathering data in order to answer research questions or test hypothesis which concerns the existing status of a phenomenon. This type of survey attempts to provide an accurate and objective description of a picture of an on-going situation or real life situation (Quartey & Awoyemi, 2002). Koul (1997) indicated that survey studies are conducted to collect detailed description on existing phenomenon with the intent of employing data to justify current conditions, practices or make more intelligent plans for improving them. He further explained that, in addition to analysing, interpreting and reporting on the status of an organisation for future guidance, descriptive surveys can be used to determine the adequacy of an activity by comparing results to established standards. It also has another advantage of producing a good amount of responses from a wide range of people.

The descriptive survey design is ideal because this study was poised to examine the non-academic roles student mothers of the College of Distance

Education of the University of Cape Coast undertake in their lives. It also reports on the views of student mothers of CoDE, UCC on how the non-academic roles they undertake influence their academic lives as well as how their academic pursuits influence their family lives. This is also a real life and an on-going situation in the College of Distance Education of University of Cape Coast.

Despite the above advantages, the descriptive survey design is not without weakness. Marczyk, DeMatteon and Festinger (2005) observe that survey designs, like all non-experimental designs, no matter how convincing the data may be, cannot rule out the influence of extraneous variables on the study. This is because descriptive survey designs do not have control over the variables and the environment that they study. This means that findings from surveys are most often influenced by factors other than those attributed by the researcher. Seifert and Hoffgung (1991) also identify problems of survey designs to include the possibility of producing untrustworthy result because they may delve into people's private matters.

Again, since descriptive survey designs most often make use of questionnaires, it becomes limited to respondents who are literate. However, attempts have been made to minimise the limitation(s) of survey design in this study. These include avoiding issues which respondents considered sensitive and personal. Also, all members of the target group were literates and the researcher used very simple language to make the items easy to understand and answer.

Only the quantitative approach was used because of the nature of the research questions set for this study, the kind of data required and the instrument employed.

Population

According to Fink (1995), the criteria for the inclusion of a unit in a survey are based on characteristics of respondents who are eligible for the participation in the survey. For this reason, the target population for the study consists of all student mothers of the College of Distance Education of the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast study centre. I chose the Cape Coast study centre for this research because of its relatively high population. It attracts a lot of students from Cape Coast and even as far as Accra, Mankessim and Takoradi thereby making the centre having a very high population as compared to the other centres.

CoDE, UCC has campuses in every region in Ghana. In other words, female students of the college are from diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic and political backgrounds. Most of these female students are of age 18 to 35. As females, some of them are married with children. In addition, they study different programmes ranging between diploma and first degree. They also travel from nearby towns to their study centres.

The accessible population is the 175 student mothers whom I met in class while administering the population form (see appendix A). Since CoDE did not have a data on the population of female students within my definition of student mothers, I had to prepare a population form to get the population of all the student

mothers. The data in Table 1 shows the distribution of student mothers by programme in 2014.

Table 1

Population of student mothers at the College of Distance Education of the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast Study Centre

Programmes	Year	Year	Year	Total
	1	2	3	
<i>Education:</i>				
Diploma in Basic Education (DBE)	35	30	11	76
Diploma in Psychology and Foundations of Education (DPF)	3	20	*	23
Bachelor Degree in Basic Education (PDE)	7	4	**	11
Diploma in Science and Maths Education (DSME)	1	2	**	3
Bachelor Degree in Psychology and Foundations in Educ. (BPF)	2	1	**	3
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Business:</i>				
Diploma in Management Studies (DMS)	6	7	11	24
Diploma in Commerce (DCO)	1	1	*	2
Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS)	17	7	**	24
Bachelor of Commerce (BCOM)	*	8	**	8
Bachelor of Science Marketing (BMK)	1	*	**	1
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>59</i>
Grand Total	74	80	22	175

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2014).

*There are no student mothers

** There are no 3rd year students

Sampling Procedure

The choice of student mothers is based on the reason that according to a research by Erickson (2004), children under the age of five need more attention from their mothers especially to grow and develop well psychosocially. Thus, all the 175 student mothers were involved in the study (census). The census procedure was used because, per my definition of “student mothers”, only the 175 women in Table 1 qualified to be involved in the study. It was found to be inappropriate to still select a sample from this figure (175).

Data Collection Instruments

The participants, as already noted, were people who could read and write. Thus, both closed- and open-ended questionnaires were used for this study. The closed-ended items were quite more than the open-ended types. The questionnaire has five sections. Sections ‘A’ to ‘E’. The section A which had seven items, solicited some information on the bio-data and few preliminary issues of the respondents. Each of the rest of the sections tackled a specific research question as posed in Chapter One. The items were based on the relevant literature about the phenomenon under study. Section B which had twelve items, looked at the non-academic roles undertaken by the respondents. Section C which had twelve items, looked at the influence of the non-academic roles on the academic lives of the respondents. Also, Section D which had nine items, was based on the influence of the students mothers academic pursuits on their family lives. Finally, Section E which had thirteen items measured the coping strategies of the student mothers.

Validity and reliability tests were conducted on the instrument. A sample of the instrument was given to my supervisors to check its validity by the face. The items were critiqued and ascertained to be valid by face and content. The suggestions as given by the supervisors were used to effect the necessary changes to improve upon the instrument.

A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted using five student mothers drawn from the College of Distance Education of the University of Cape Coast, Agona Swedru study centre. Choosing students from this Centre was basically due to the homogeneity in their characteristics. It was discovered that some of the student mothers did not respond to a few statements, perhaps, they did not understand them because they felt they were slightly ambiguous and some sentences being quite long for them. Such statements were noted and later restructured.

The data gathered from the pilot study were coded into the Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS). The Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the four sections that were in Likert-type scale and were all above .70 (Section B=.798; Section C=.756; Section D=.788 and Section E=.933). These values show that the instrument was reliable and of good quality for collecting useful data for the study as maintained by Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) that if the co-efficient alpha value is .70 and above then it is of good quality.

Data Collection Procedures

A letter of introduction (Appendix B) from the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, University of Cape Coast enabled me to seek

permission from the University of Cape Coast, College of Distance Education to first collect information from all their undergraduate female students in order to get total population of student mothers for the study. Secondly, the letter also assisted to introduce myself and sought permission from all the respondents before the due date. I introduced myself to the respondents and asked for their permission to administer the questionnaire to them.

I addressed all requests for clarification on the questionnaire. The respondents were comfortable in responding to the questionnaire because I assured them of strict confidentiality. I had a 100% return rate of the questionnaire administered.

Data Processing and Analysis

The matrix labelled Table 3 indicates the research questions and the analytical methods/tools used to analyse the data collected.

Table 2

Data Analysis Matrix

Research Question	Type of Data	Analytical Method or Tool
1 What non-academic roles do student mothers of the College of Distance Education of University of Cape Coast undertake in their lives?	Quantitative	Frequencies and percentages.
2 What are the views of student mothers of the College of Distance Education of University of Cape Coast on how their current roles influence their academic lives?	Quantitative	Mean of means and Mean of standard deviations
3 What are the views of student mothers of the College of Distance Education of University of Cape Coast on how their academic pursuits influence their family lives?	Quantitative	Mean and standard deviation distributions
4 What coping strategies do student mothers of the College of Distance Education of University of Cape Coast suggest can be employed to overcome the challenges their non-academic roles and academic pursuits pose to them?	Quantitative	Frequencies and percentages

Ethical Considerations

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), research ethics relates to questions about how to formulate and clarify a research topic, design a research and gain access, collect data, process and store data, analyse data and write up research findings in a moral and responsible way. Ethical angst in the field is inevitable when the work involves others, whether they are colleagues, respondents, assistants, or people in positions of authority (Perecman & Curran, 2006). Ethical issues are highly relevant and require due considerations. According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), ethical standards require that researchers do not put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation. The trustworthiness of a quantitative study is judged by whether the researcher conforms to standards for acceptable and competent practices and whether they meet standards for ethical conduct (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). It is as a result of this, that I needed to prepare myself and consider ethical concerns as I designed the study so that a sound ethical practice was built into the study (Neuman, 2006).

Saunders et al. (2009) emphasise that it is important to ensure that the way in which the research is designed is methodologically sound and morally defensible to all those who are involved in it. To ensure this I obtained consent from respondents and permission to administer the questionnaire, ensured confidentiality of their responses, and informed them about the character of the research and their right to withdraw at any time to avoid harmful consequences. I

further requested of them to decide on their convenient venues for the completion of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges and coping strategies of student mothers, focusing on the Cape Coast centre of the College of Distance Education in the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study looked at the non-academic roles undertaken by student mothers, how these roles influence their academic lives. The influence of academic pursuits on the family lives of the student mothers was also investigated. The study further examined the coping strategies student mothers of College of Distance Education of the University of Cape Coast (CoDE, UCC). This chapter focused on the results and the discussion from the analysis.

One thing that has come to stay in Ghana is the widening of access to education through distance learning for tertiary applicants who qualify but could not otherwise gain admission due to limited space in some tertiary institutions or student's inability to stay on campus and pursue regular or full-time study. This opportunity has made most childbearing women in both rural and urban areas overcome the constraints of access to further education, thereby making education which is a key to transforming women's attitudes and values from traditional to more modern and from constrained to emancipated (Jejeebhoy, 1995), a complete reality among Ghanaian women. However, economic factors have made student mothers who tend to seek academic excellence not only play the role of being a

student but also play the role of being a worker and a mother —a situation which presents many challenges to student mothers.

The results have been presented in the tables according to the four research questions posed. Moreover, Tables 4-8 carry some essential introductory information about the respondents' academic undertaking, but first, the age distribution of the respondents has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range(years)	No.	%
21-25	15	9
26-30	84	48
31-35	25	14
36-40	51	29
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

A larger proportion of the respondents (62%) were within the ages of 26 and 35. This shows that most of the student mothers were young ladies who might have been married for not more than a decade; and are still in their childbearing age and by extension, the possible pressure from their husbands to have additional child(ren) as the need arose.

These ambitious ladies desiring to achieve higher academic laurels were into different programmes including Diploma in Basic Education (DBE), Diploma in Psychology and Foundations of Education (DPF), Bachelor Degree in Basic

Education (PDE), Diploma in Science and Mathematics Education (DSME), Bachelor Degree in Psychology and Foundations of Education (BPF), Diploma in Management Studies (DMS), Diploma in Commerce (DCO), Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS), Bachelor of Commerce (BCOM) and Bachelor of Science in Marketing (BMK).

Table 4 gives the clue that relatively few of them enrolled in the BMK programme while DBE was the favourite of the majority. The inference is that most of the respondents were being trained to become basic school teachers.

Table 4

Programme of Study

Programme	No.	% of Total
Diploma in Basic Education (DBE)	76	43
Diploma in Psychology and Foundations of Educ. (DPF)	23	13
Diploma in Science and Maths Education (DSME)	3	2
Bachelor Degree in Basic Education (PDE)	11	6
Bachelor Degree in Psychology and Foundations in Educ. (BPF)	3	2
Diploma in Management Studies (DMS)	24	14
Diploma in Commerce (DCO)	2	1
Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS)	24	14
Bachelor of Commerce (B.COM)	8	4
Bachelor of Science in Marketing (BMK)	1	1
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

Most of these student mothers could already be in the field of teaching but lacked the required qualification and so needed to upgrade themselves to meet the standard or are now pursuing the programme in order to have the qualification to teach in the basic school. This, deductively, confirms the findings of the Statistics Division of the United Nations (2010) that women dominate the teaching profession at the primary level. One reason for this phenomenon is that taking care of younger children in nursery and primary school is traditionally seen as an “extension of motherhood” and therefore a “natural” job for women. In periods of rapid economic development, men have been attracted away from teaching into better paid jobs elsewhere (OECD 1998). The information in Table 4 is also a confirmation of the fact that the “natural” disposition of women to look after younger children occurs rather as a strategy to fit economic needs.

Table 5 hints that a relatively large proportion of the student mothers were those in their first year (Level 100) (39%) and final year (Level 400) (30%). Level 500 students were post diploma students. Those in level 100 might have gotten pregnant and delivered on or after admission into the university to study. However, it appears the reason why there were relatively few student mothers in levels 200 and 300 is that they might have partly either experienced or observed the challenges or difficulties of being a student mother and have decided to guard themselves against pregnancy while studying.

Table 5

Respondents' Level in the Programme of Study

Level	No.	% of Total
100	68	39
200	11	6
300	14	8
400	52	30
500	30	17
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

A reason that could be associated with having 52 (30%) student mothers in the final year (Level 400) is that, perhaps, as they were about to complete their programme of study, they could get pregnant and manage (manoeuvre) their ways through the last year. Similar motive could be assigned to those in the post diploma level (Level 500).

In view of the foregoing issues, it is important to investigate the people who advised the respondents to enrol in the CoDE, UCC programmes. From Table 6, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents (65%) by themselves decided to enrol on the programme.

Table 6

Student Mothers' Source of Academic Inspiration

Who made you enrol in the UCC CoDE programme?	No.	% of Total
Myself	115	65
Husband/Partner	30	17
Father	15	9
Mother	0	0
Friends	0	0
Others	15	9
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

Their partners (husbands or partners) were also very influential in their decision to further their education. One surprising thing from the responses is that none of the respondents had their friends or mothers inspire them to enrol in the academic programme they read. Having most of them take the decision by themselves to enrol raises the question of why they enrolled. Table 7 presents the responses of the student mothers on reasons for pursuing further studies from UCC, CoDE.

Table 7

Reasons for Enrolling in UCC, CoDE

Reason	No.	% of Total
To upgrade and earn higher income	90	51
To get promotion	15	9
To become responsible	10	6
To get a job and earn income	11	6
To be retained at my work place	5	3
To gain higher knowledge	32	18
With no reason	12	7
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

A little more than half (51%) of the 175 student mothers took the decision to further their education just to upgrade themselves to earn higher income. Those who took the decision for the purpose of gaining higher knowledge were 32 (18%) out of the 175 (100%) participants. Others who took the decision to get a job to earn income and become responsible as well as those who enrolled to dodge retrenchment (to be retained at their work places), among other reasons were all less than 10% (in each case). Intriguingly, 12 student mothers representing 7% of the respondents enrolled with no reason. This appears unrealistic: possibly, they had reason(s) they were not willing to share in this study; otherwise, it would be a possible area for future study.

Whichever reason(s) the student mothers ascribed to their pursuit of higher education, one thing is clear: to ensure their personal benefits. The personal benefits of higher education are so important that they are reflected in the operations of most educational institutions and it is a fact that the top-ranked role for a college to perform is preparing undergraduate students for a career (Lee, 2003). The reasons for which the student mothers pursued further studies as shown in Table 7 confirm Lee's finding that increased education is associated with higher income, prestige, better working conditions and potential for promotion which most students and their parents look out for.

In the following discussions, the four research questions have been addressed under four major themes namely, non-academic roles that student mothers undertake in their lives; influence of non-academic roles on student mothers' academic lives; influence of student mothers' academic pursuits on their family lives, and finally, the coping strategies of student mothers.

The responses are graduated on a 4 Likert-type scale. The scales are labelled as follows: Strongly Disagree (SD) =1; Disagree (D) =2; Agree (A) =3; Strongly Agree (SA) =4. Given this, in tables where the statistical analyses are in means and standard deviations, when the mean response falls on a particular scale or close to the scale (i.e. +.5 or -.5 range), that becomes the overriding response. For example, a mean of 2.5 is taken as falling on the 3rd scale, thereby implying *Agree*.

Research Question One

What non-academic roles do student mothers of the college of distance education of university of cape coast undertake in their lives?

For the purpose of fully appreciating the challenges faced by student mothers in their quest to pursue further study, the non-academic roles they played as student mothers was investigated. The nature of work or duties student mothers undertake would determine the sort of challenges they face amidst their academic responsibilities. Table 8 presents the non-academic roles student mothers of CoDE, UCC, undertake in their lives.

Table 8

Non-academic Roles Student Mothers of CoDE, UCC, undertake in their Life.

Role	SD No.(%)	D No.(%)	A No.(%)	SA No.(%)	Total
Cook for my family everyday.	-	5(3)	56(32)	114(65)	175(100)
Have to care for my child/children everyday.	-	5(3)	37(21)	133(76)	175(100)
Have to fetch water for my family everyday.	30(17)	56(32)	53(30)	36(21)	175(100)
Have to wash for my family everyday.	21(12)	10(6)	96(55)	48(27)	175(100)
Assist in farm work everyday.	113(64)	52(30)	10(6)	-	175(100)
Must take my child/children to school and bring him or					

her/their home every day.	15(9)	36(20)	65(37)	59(34)	175(100)
Must assist my child/children in his or her/their home work everyday.	-	20(11)	52(30)	103(59)	175(100)
Must report to my work place every weekday.	-	-	16(9)	159(91)	175(100)
Must take my child/children to the hospital when they are sick.	-	5(3)	29(16)	141(81)	175(100)
My responsibility to tidy up my house /home everyday.	-	5(3)	35(20)	135(77)	175(100)
My responsibility to satisfy the sexual pleasures of my husband anytime.	15(9)	15(9)	39(20)	106(62)	175(100)

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015). SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

A closer look at the responses in Table 8 generally shows that student mothers have a lot to grapple with in terms of daily responsibilities in their homes. Most of them in this study had a number of laborious duties to perform everyday—over 71% of them either strongly agreed or simply agreed to all the items in Table 8 except doing farm work and fetching of water. They had to cook, wash, tidy up their homes and care for little children everyday. Those at school-going age are taken to and from school everyday. Study time automatically

becomes the period for assisting wards to do their home works. As workers, they also report to their work places throughout the working days. When the child(ren) get sick, they put aside all activities including academics and attend to the child(ren) either at home or in the infirmary.

The foregoing findings exemplify few but hectic non-academic activities that student mothers go through daily. The results support the longitudinal data from the National Survey of Families and Households (Noonan, 2001), that time spent in female housework chores has a negative effect on their wages and that the negative relationship between housework and wages is stronger for women than for men. Similar to the results in Table 8 is the findings by the Bureau of Labour Statistics (2015) that on an average day, women spend more than twice as much time preparing food and drink and doing interior cleaning, and four times as much time doing laundry as men did. Definitely, these chores would affect the performance of other activities either in the house or the workplace or at school. The discussion below delves into the influence of non-academic roles on student mothers' academic lives.

Research Question Two

What are the views of student mothers of code, UCC on how their non-academic roles influence their academic lives?

The roles (non-academic) performed by student mothers as reflected in the forgoing discussions are enormous. There is no doubt that such problems could severely interrupt the academic works of the student mothers. Table 9 throws

more light on the impact of non-academic activities on the academic lives of the student mothers.

A mean of means (MM) of 3.04 with a mean of standard deviation (MSTD) of .91 is an indication (agreement) from the responses in Table 9 that the non-academic activities they engaged in affected their academic pursuits. For example, they agreed that they were not able to attend lectures regularly because of many other activities that they performed (M=3.47; STD=.79) and always late whenever they attended lectures (M= 3.00; STD= .94). They were unable to get enough time to learn (M= 3.23; STD= .88) and even not able to attend group discussions regularly (M= 3.50; STD= .85). They further agreed that pressures of the non-academic roles have made it difficult for them to complete and submit assignments on time (M= 2.68; STD= .94).

Table 9

Influence of Non-Academic Roles on Academic Lives

Statement	M	ST D
I am not able to attend lectures regularly because of the many non-academic activities I perform.	3.47	.79
As a student mother I am not able to get enough time to learn.	3.23	.88
As a student mother I am not able to prepare well for and concentrate on examinations.	3.20	.93
My activities as a student mother always make me attend lectures late.	3.00	.94
Plenty house chores make me sleep in class.	2.24	.91

As a result of non-academic activities as a student mother I sometimes forget the time for lectures and tutorials and absent myself.	2.01	1.09
As a result of activities as a student mother I sometimes report late at examination centres.	2.98	1.07
As a result of non-academic activities as a student mother I am not able to complete and submit assignments on time.	2.68	.94
As a result of non-academic activities as a student mother I am not able to attend group discussions regularly.	3.50	.85
The non-academic activities I perform are responsible for my bad grades.	3.10	.63

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015); N= 175; Strongly Disagree (SD)=1;

Disagree (D)=2; Agree (A)=3; Strongly Agree (SA)=4; MM= 3.041; MSTD= .91;

Standard Deviation (STD); Mean (M)

The foregoing problems result in student mothers not being able to prepare well for and concentrate on semester examinations (M= 3.20; STD= .93). The problems are also evident in their late arrival at examination centres (M= 2.98; STD= 1.07). Ultimately, this has made them believe that the non-academic activities they perform are responsible for the bad grades that they usually get (M= 3.10; STD= .63). Bobbie (2008) admits that poor academic performance among women is as a result of the overburdening household chores women engage in. The student mothers, however, did not ascribe forgetting times for lectures and tutorials (M= 2.01; STD= 1.09) and sleeping in class (M= 2.24; STD= .91) to the plenty of house chores that they engaged in. This implies that

there were other factors that made them forget lecture and tutorials times or made them sleep in class.

The findings emanating from the responses of the respondents are in consonance with the findings of scholars who have undertaken comprehensive researches on the subject under discussion. Notable among them is Dallas (1998) who found out that undergraduate studies, especially, are time structured and inflexible, such that a woman would have to attend classes when they are offered and not when they fit into her day. She has to study before exams, read and prepare for her assignments, and shift her focus to these tasks she does. Hensel (1990) also pointed out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and family life. In this regard it was proposed that academic life assumes that people have “uninterrupted” time. In the same vein Williams (2007) added that choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder. Egenti and Omoruyi (2011) stated that the stress or trauma which student mothers have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards the programme. This has led some of their colleagues to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their babies.

Additionally, Andres and Finlay (2004) found out that student mothers who bring babies reported that they do not have thorough preparations for examinations. They lack concentration on their studies or actual writing of examination papers. Sometimes it happens that one is sitting for an examination, and hears a cry of her baby just outside the examination hall and loses

concentration. Harrison (2008) maintained that the drudgery of combining numerous activities could cause most student mothers to absent themselves from lectures and tutorials. In order to appreciate the influence of non-academic activities on academic lives of the student mothers, the respondents were asked to give an overall rating of the influence on a scale of 1—100%. Table 10 presents the results.

Table 10

Overall Rating of the Influence of Non-Academic Roles on Academic Life

Rating on a scale of 1—100%	No.	% of Total
Greater than 50% [Positive high effect]	5	3
Less than 50% [Positive low effect]	15	9
-50% and above [Negative high effect]	145	83
Below -50% [Negative low effect]	10	6
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

Most of the student mothers (83%) have indicated that the non-academic activities they perform have a negative effect that is high on their academic lives. Only a handful (3%) claim that their non-academic duties have a positive high effect on their academic lives. It is possible that the academic pursuits of the student mothers also, have some effects on their family lives. Research question three addresses this contemplation.

Research Question Three

What are the views of student mothers of code, ucc on how their academic pursuits influences their family lives?

The academic responsibilities that the student mothers perform have the capacity to limit the time and energy left for family. In order to ascertain this conjecture, the 175 student mothers were made to respond to items on the issue.

Table 11 presents the results.

Table 11

Influence of Academic Pursuits on Family Lives

Statement	M	STD
I often have less time for my husband because of my studies.	3.57	.98
My academic activities create confusion between me and my husband/partner.	3.15	.90
I often have less time for my child/children.	3.74	.86
I am not able to attend family meetings or gatherings regularly when scheduled on weekends.	3.56	.72
As a result of my studies in distance education, I am not able to breastfeed my newly born baby very well.	3.63	1.04
I am not able to have good sleep during the night due to my studies.	3.69	.62
I sometimes skip my breakfast due to my studies as a student mother.	1.81	.81

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015) N= 175; Strongly Disagree (SD)=1; Disagree (D)=2; Agree (A)=3; Strongly Agree (SA)=4; (MM)= 3.31; (MSTD)= .85 Standard Deviation (STD); Mean (M)

From Table 11, a mean of means (MM) of 3.31 implies that the respondents generally agreed (with varying degrees) to the items. This is true in the sense that apart from disagreeing that they sometimes skip breakfast due to their studies as student mothers, they strongly agreed to the rest of the items in the table. It is now clear from the student mothers' responses that because of their academic pursuits, they tend to have less time for their partners/husbands (M= 3.57; STD= .98) and child/children (M=3.74; STD= .86), to the extent of not being able to breastfeed their newly born babies very well (M= 3.63; STD= 1.04). For family meetings or gatherings, they strongly agreed that they were not able to attend regularly when scheduled on weekends (M= 3.56; STD= .72).

In view of the foregoing concerns, it is not surprising that the student mothers agreed that their academic activities create confusion between them and their husbands/partners (M= 3.15; STD= .90). Thus, again, on a scale of 1—100%, the respondents were made to rate the overall influence of (this time) their academic pursuits on their family lives. Table 12 has the results.

Table 12

Overall Rating of the Influence of Academic Pursuit on Family Life

Rating on a scale of 1—100%	No.	% of Total
Greater than 50% [Positive high effect]	3	2
Less than 50% [Positive low effect]	12	7
-50% and above [Negative high effect]	150	85
Below -50% [Negative low effect]	10	6
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

Most of the respondents believed that, as student mothers, the academic activities they engage in have highly affected their family lives negatively. About 150 respondents representing 85% of the 175 student mothers held this notion. The responses are in confirmation with researches carried out by scholars who have researched extensively on the topic under discussion. For example, Dallas (1998) found out that several problems are created in family management when mothers combine schooling with their responsibilities in the home. Such student mothers often get tired because of the double workload and this may affect their relationship with their husbands and children. They may not be able to give them enough attention and motherly love.

Apart from not being able to meet their family needs adequately, their studies outside the home too may suffer. They may not be able to put up their best and mostly unable to keep up with colleagues who had either no children or husband. Motherhood and academia do not blend well for most student mothers.

Many mothers say that juggling the stresses of schooling with the responsibilities of home leave them overworked, overstrained and always wake up from bed already tired. When women spend long hours away from their babies, the babies do not get what they need most; the time and attention of their mother. No one can fulfil a mother's role efficiently as a mother can. A substitute figure can alleviate a child's need for its mother but cannot take her place. Student mothers therefore face the challenge of combining their roles as mothers and/or wives with their academic work effectively if the problems persist. This is corroborated by Milner-Home, Power and Dennis (1996) who state that the traditional image of a mother is that of a self-sacrificing being. If taken as such, the student mother is likely to exhaust herself as she attends to both her studies and the parenting role.

Chen and Kaplan (2003) added that breastfeeding of babies is also one of the challenges that are encountered by most students. Banda (2000) researched on Challenges in Distance Education: Experiences of Female Teacher-Learners at Domasi College of Education in Malawi and found that Teacher-learners with babies bring baby sitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies.

Consequently, some teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. Some babies get sick and thus, put pressure on the mothers, as they have to take them to hospitals. One teacher-learner lost a child in 2002 during the residential session and her spouse blamed her participation in the programme as the cause of the child's death.

In a study conducted by Suiter (2008), 44 married mothers and 33 of their husbands were interviewed in depth at the beginning and the end of the women's first year of enrolment in a university to study, the study showed that there were changes in marital happiness when women return to school. Marital happiness declined over the year among couples in which wives were enrolled as full-time students, and changed little among couples in which wives were enrolled as part-time students. Marital happiness changed substantially more among husbands than wives. This implies that the marital happiness of the student mothers of CoDE, UCC is relatively lower than when they had not enrolled onto their programme of study. That of their partners may be substantially lower as maintained by Suiter.

Research Question Four

What coping strategies do student mothers of code, ucc suggest can be employed to overcome the challenges that non-academic roles and academic pursuits pose to them?

From the discussion so far, it is well-understood that for student mothers, finding time to manage their education and the needs of their families has been found to be very stressful. Taking time from their traditional roles at home to prepare for and complete their professional job practices can cause them a lot of anxiety. Yet, it is said that a lack of integration between home and university life often requires students to engage in complex coping strategies and the pressures of work and family life which often force students to assign lower priority to their

studies (Merrill, 1999). Student mothers in CoDE, UCC also have some coping strategies some of which have been presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Coping Strategies of Students Mothers

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	Total		
	No(%)	No(%)	No(%)	No(%)	No(%)	M	STD
Constantly seeking for support from my husband.	64(36)	26(15)	38(22)	47(27)	175(100)	2.32	1.22
Employing the services of a paid domestic worker.	35(20)	34(19)	63(36)	43(25)	175(100)	2.65	1.06
Skipping lectures sometimes to breastfeed my child.	33(19)	27(15)	40(23)	75(43)	175(100)	3.35	.96
Employing the services of a family member when attending lectures.	10(6)	15(8)	79(45)	71(41)	175(100)	3.79	.83
Pleading for lecturers' help.	16(9)	13(7)	33(19)	113(65)	175(100)	3.39	.97

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015) N= 175; Strongly Disagree (SD)=1; Disagree (D)=2; Agree (A)=3; Strongly Agree (SA)=4; MM= 3.10; MSTD= 1.01; Standard Deviation (STD); Mean (M)

Responses from Table 13 point out that the student mothers generally agreed (in varying degrees) that they employed the coping strategies itemised. This is evident in the value of the mean of means of their responses (i.e. MM= 3.10) which falls on the third scale (A=Agree) with a mean of standard deviation of 1.01. A larger proportion of the respondents either agreed (36%) or strongly agreed (25%) that they employed the services of a paid domestic worker (M= 2.65; STD= 1.06) or a family member (M= 3.79; STD= .83) when attending lectures and whether the student mothers employ the services of a paid domestic worker or a family member when attending lectures, those who still breastfeed their new-borns had to skip lectures sometimes to breastfeed (M= 3.35; STD= .96).

When it comes to accessing support from their partners/husbands, the student mothers appeared divided in their responses: 51% of them disagreed (merely or strongly) while 49% agreed (merely or strongly) to the strategy of constantly seeking support from their partners/husbands (M= 2.32; STD= 1.22). A strategy that is quite dicey is pleading for lecturers' help. About 146 (84%) respondents merely or strongly agreed that they do plead for lecturers' help.

The responses provided are in concordance to that of researchers who have made comprehensive researches on the coping strategies employed by student mothers of distance education in overcoming the various challenges faced

by them. Grohman and Lamm (2009) found out that one coping strategy that cannot be ignored is the support from the family, especially, husbands, parents, grandparents and other relatives in Africa. Their research on coping strategies used by student mothers to succeed in Occupational Therapy School revealed that physical support from husbands was used by all the participants. They added that emotional support from husband and peers and time management strategies was used by 93.3% of the participants. Findings concluded that 100% of the participants who had their first child in school reported that they used emotional and physical support from their husband and parents and time management strategies. Kwagala (as cited in Najjuma & Kyarugah, 2006) found out that some women either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers, leave children with neighbours, relatives, older siblings, paid child minders or take them to day care centres.

But the question that must be contended with is whether the coping strategies employed were effective; and even if so, whether they would be willing to change those coping strategies. The results of their responses to these two important questions have been cross-tabulated as shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Cross Tabulation of Effectiveness of Coping Strategies and Willingness to Change the Strategy

		<i>Are your coping strategies effective?</i>			Total
		Yes	Uncertain	No	
<i>Do you wish to change your strategies?</i>	<u>Yes</u>	12	13	62	87
	<u>No</u>	78	10	0	88
Total		90	23	62	175

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

Sixty-two respondents out of the 87 wished to change their coping strategies because they believed such strategies were not effective. On the other hand, 78 respondents out of the 88 who did not wish to change their coping strategies because such strategies were effective (i.e. out of the 90 respondents who said their coping strategies were effective for them). Obviously, all the respondents (62) whose coping strategies were ineffective wished to change such strategies which were ineffective. Also, 12 respondents who claimed their strategies were effective still wished to change those coping strategies. It means a lot of student mothers keep searching for better strategies that could let them cope with the situations they face.

Given all the multiplicity of domestic roles, economic duties and academic pursuits of student mothers and the effects they tend to have on their family lives amidst their academics, a question worth-answering is “whether they would wish

to stop or continue reading their programmes?" Whatever their answer(s) may be, the Transactional Coping Theory can be used to explain it, especially, by the two broad categories of antecedents identified by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) which directly influence how people appraise and cope with situations. By this theory, per the characteristics of the individual student mothers and the characteristics of the situation at hand, they may either choose to stop or continue till they finish the programme. If they are committed and believe in overcoming the uncertainties associated with the turnout of events, then they would generally say, "Yes". Table 15 presents the results on the respondents' decision to continue or abandon the programme of study.

Table 15

Decision to Continue or Abandon the Programme of Study

Do you wish you had stopped the programme?	No.	%
Yes	5	3
No	160	91
Uncertain	10	6
Total	175	100

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015)

Most of the respondents (160 representing 91% of the 175 student mothers) opted not to abandon the programme they were studying. This shows how dedicated they were to finishing the programme they deliberately enrolled in despite the challenges they faced. Thus, their commitments, beliefs and personal traits contributed to their resilience towards completing the programme.

This action of student mothers could also be explained by Krohne's (2002) avoidant stress coping theory which postulates that people rather think about the stressful situations such as denial, distraction, repression and suppression that they may suffer if they fail to act appropriately and thus, tend to shift the individual's attention away from the factor causing the stress and how they were to react emotionally to the situation. Probably, the student mothers preferred to face the challenges they faced squarely rather than quitting the programme and receiving mockery comments from their detractors, friends and relatives.

As already noted in Table 14, all the respondents whose coping strategies were ineffective wished to change such strategies. In addition to this, 12 respondents claimed their strategies were effective yet they still wanted to change them. This shows how important the student mothers wished they had better coping strategies at their disposal. Consequently, a list of some few suggestions on the coping strategies were made for the student mothers to select from. Interestingly, the respondents agreed strongly to all the four suggestions tabled.

Table 16

Suggestions to Help Student Mothers Cope with their Academics

Statement	SD No(%)	D No(%)	A No(%)	SA No(%)	Total No(%)	STD M
There should be a breastfeeding room at the centre where student mothers can store breast milk and give to their children.	12(7)	10(6)	28(16)	125(71)	175(100)	3.68 .78
Student mothers should be provided with guidance and counselling.	8(4)	7(4)	59(34)	101(58)	175(100)	3.55 .81
There should be a day care centre at the study centre for the babies of CoDE student mothers.	13(7)	11(6)	35(20)	116(66)	175(100)	3.56 .82
There should be the provision of hostel facilities on campus for CoDE student mothers.	-	27(15)	39(22)	109(62)	175(100)	3.60 .80

Source: Field survey, Osafo (2015); N= 175; Strongly Disagree (SD)=1; Disagree (D)=2; Agree (A)=3; Strongly Agree (SA)=4; Standard Deviation (STD); Mean (M); MM= 3.6; MSTD= .80

From Table 16, a mean of means of 3.6 with a mean of standard deviation of .80 implies that most of the respondents expressed strong agreement with less variation in their responses to the suggested coping strategies. For example, on the issue of whether there should be a breastfeeding room at the centre where student mothers can store breast milk to give to their children, 71% of them strongly agreed. Again, as to whether there should be a day-care centre at the study centre for the babies of CoDE student mothers, 68% strongly agreed. They (62%) also agreed strongly that there should be the provision of hostel facilities on campus for CoDE student mothers. Apart from all these strategies, more than half (58%) of the student mothers expressed interest in the provision of guidance and counselling on how to manage the situation.

The findings are in line with the findings of Banda (2000) who conducted a study on the experiences of female teacher-learners' distance education at Domasi College of Education in Malawi where some participants had the following suggestions when they were asked the question as to how they could be assisted when they bring their babies to the college. The responses were: provide us with spacious accommodation, we need regular transport to hospital whenever our babies or nannies are ill. Others also suggested a reduced fee for nannies, accommodating sick student mothers in a separate room, that is, a sick bay. The provision of breastfeeding rooms in the various universities to ease the challenges faced by student mothers as provided by some universities in the United States was also proposed. Equally important is the realisation that guidance and counselling is as crucial as extra tuition for the female learners as proposed by

Oppong-Mensah, Ahiatrogah and Deku (2008). Hodgson (1993) underscored the importance of counselling. To him, counselling may be helpful for the students to develop their skills and be able to cope with the combination of part time study, work and family life. Additionally, Najjuma and Kyarugah (2006) opined that the university authorities should consider accommodation of student nursing mothers at the university or by introducing day-care centres at the university premises so as to cater for those with young babies. In the same angle, these findings confirm the findings of Onsongo (2004) on Promoting Gender Equity in Selected Public Universities of Kenya. In that study, when students were asked what can be done to improve the situation of student mothers on campus, they proposed that the university should provide accommodation for student mothers on campus (this they said will ensure access to clean water and electricity).

The participants also suggested that a day care centre for student mothers be set up on the campus for student mothers to access at a cost and lower the fees for student mothers especially, health fees charged for the healthcare of their children.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges and coping strategies of student mothers, focusing on the Cape Coast centre of the College of Distance Education in the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study looked at the non-academic roles undertaken by student mothers, how these roles influence their academic lives. The influence of academic pursuits on the family lives of the student mothers was also investigated. The study further examined the coping strategies of student mothers of College of Distance Education of the University of Cape Coast (CoDE, UCC). This chapter provides a summary of the study, key findings, conclusions and recommendations for policy making and professional practice. A suggestion for further research has also been provided in this chapter.

Summary

Formal education is a necessity for every good life, and in Africa, it was initially a special package or prerogative for men only (Raftery & Valiulis, 2011). However, over the years, the pressures of life and the complex dynamics of society have made it a must for women to also go through formal educational system and work to support their men or husbands in taking care of the home financially, among other things. Despite the important roles that higher formal education plays in the lives of women, their gender roles and modern life styles have made it extremely challenging for women to have access to higher formal

education or even if they have access, successful completion becomes very difficult. Women who force their way out have to combine their family roles with work and the academic pursuit. The combination of these roles poses some difficulties to both their academic and family lives. This study, thus, sought to find out the challenges and coping strategies of student mothers of the College of Distance Education of the University of Cape Coast (CoDE, UCC). The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What non-academic roles do student mothers of CoDE, UCC undertake in their lives?
2. What are the views of student mothers of CoDE, UCC on how their non-academic roles influence their academic lives?
3. What are the views of student mothers of CoDE, UCC on how their academic pursuits influence their family lives?
4. What coping strategies do student mothers of CoDE, UCC suggest can be employed to overcome the challenges that their non-academic roles and academic pursuits pose to them?

Relevant literature related to the study was reviewed. These comprised theories and empirical studies as well as concepts related to the issue under consideration which have been documented by some authorities, educationists, and researchers. The study employed descriptive survey and collected data through the use of questionnaire. Per my operational definition of “student mothers”, only 175 women (see Table 1) out of all females who attended lectures at the University of Cape Coast CoDE Study Centre qualified to be involved in

the study, thus, all of them (175) were used (census). The data collected were analysed, discussed and presented using frequency counts, percentage tables, mean and standard deviation distributions.

Key Findings

1. On research question one, it was found that the student mothers (a minimum of 71%) had a lot of laborious non-academic activities to perform daily in their homes. With the exception of doing farm work and fetching of water, student mothers had to cook, wash, tidy up their homes and care for their little child(ren) everyday. Child(ren) at school-going age were taken to and from school everyday. Student mothers' study-time automatically became the period for assisting wards to do their home works. As workers, they also reported to their work places throughout the working days. When the child(ren) got sick, they put aside all activities including academics and attended to them either at home or in the infirmary.
2. Most of the student mothers (83%) have indicated that the non-academic activities they performed had a negative effect that is high on their academic life (MM= 3.04; MSTD=.91). Only a handful (3%) claimed that their non-academic duties have a positive high effect on their academic life. For example, they agreed that they were not able to attend lectures regularly because of many other activities that they performed (M=3.47; STD=.79) and always late whenever they attended lectures (M= 3.00; STD= .94). They were unable to get enough time to learn (M= 3.23; STD=

.88) and even not able to attend group discussions regularly (M= 3.5; STD= .85). They further agreed that pressures of the non-academic roles had made it difficult for them to complete and submit assignments on time (M= 2.68; STD= .94). They also contended that the foregoing problems have resulted in their inability to prepare well for and concentrate on their semester examinations (M= 3.20; STD= .93). The non-academic activities they performed, to them, also accounted for their late arrival at examination centres (M= 2.98; STD= 1.07). All these foregoing challenges have made the student mothers believe that the non-academic activities they performed were responsible for the bad grades that they usually got in semester examinations (M= 3.10; STD= .63).

3. On the influence of student mothers' academic pursuits on their family lives, about 150 (85%) of the 175 respondents held the notion that the academic activities they were engaged in had negative high effect on their family lives. Specifically, it was found that due to the mothers' academic pursuance, they tended to have less time for their partners/husbands (M= 3.57; STD= .98) and child(ren) (M=3.74; STD= .86), to the extent of not being able to breastfeed their newly born babies very well (M= 3.63; STD= 1.04). Attendance to family meetings scheduled on weekends was found to be a problem for the student mothers (M= 3.56; STD= .72). In view of the foregoing concerns, it was discovered that student mothers' academic activities created confusion between them and their husbands/partners (M= 3.15; STD= .90).

4. With respect to the coping strategies adopted by the student mothers, majority of the respondents (61%) agreed (either strongly or merely) that they employed the services of a paid domestic worker (M= 2.65; STD= 1.06) or a family member (M= 3.79; STD= .83) when attending lectures. Nevertheless, those who still breastfed their new-borns had to skip lectures sometimes to breastfeed (M= 3.35; STD= .96). It was also discovered that about 146 (84%) of the respondents agreed variously that they engaged in strategy of pleading for lecturers' help. They mostly received unreliable support from their partners/husbands. Despite the challenges the student mothers faced, 160 (91%) out of the 175 student mothers were still committed to the finishing of their programmes of study that they deliberately enrolled. However, the student mothers wished they had better coping strategies at their disposal, especially, all those whose coping strategies were ineffective.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made:

On research question one, it was found that the student mothers had a lot of laborious non-academic activities that they performed daily in their homes. It is therefore concluded that CoDE student mothers have very limited time for their personal study.

On research question two, the student mothers indicated that the non-academic activities they performed had a negative high-effect on their academic

life. The conclusion is that student mothers have inevitable academic impediments that emanate from the non-academic activities that they perform.

With respect to research question three, it was found that the academic activities that the student mothers engaged in had negative high effect on their family lives. From this, it can be inferred that the success of the student mothers' academic pursuits is at the expense of the time they have for their families.

On the coping strategies, it was found that the student mothers had various coping strategies most of which were ineffective. The inference therefore is, student mothers would continue to experience the challenges they face, unless they receive the suggested coping strategies they intend to obtain from CoDE, UCC.

Recommendations

On the bases of the findings of this study and the conclusions made, the following recommendations are made:

1. Student mothers should delegate or sharing their responsibilities with their partner/husband and any other person they deem fit. Their husband(s)/partner(s) or the persons they deem fit, should in turn give their full support to the student mothers so as to reduce their daily schedules and chores to get time for their studies.
2. Counselling Unit at CoDE with the assistance of the Counselling Centre of the University of Cape Coast should, as part of their orientation programme, provide intensive counselling services to all the female students to be aware

of the academic challenges that awaits them when they conceive/deliver in the course of reading their programmes.

3. Student mothers should endeavour to explain the consequences of enrolling in the CoDE programme to their families, especially, partner/husband for them to fully understand their actions so as to offer the necessary assistance when the need arises.
4. In order to save the student-mothers from the overwhelming challenges they face, the strategies they proposed in this study should be adhered to by CoDE, UCC. These include the establishment of a breastfeeding room at the centre where student mothers can store milk and feed their children; a day-care centre at the study centre for the babies of CoDE student mothers; the provision of hostel facilities on campus for CoDE student mothers; guidance and counselling on how to manage academics with family responsibilities.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study focused on undergraduate students studying by the distance mode at University of Cape of Coast. Further studies will be required from other universities running programmes on the distance mode to corroborate the findings of the present study and to ensure their generalisability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Mothers' Population Register Form

Dear Respondent,

This form is meant to collect information about Student Mothers of College of Distance Education in the Cape Coast centre of the University of Cape Coast. It will be appreciated if you complete this form accurately and truthfully. The information provided is for an academic research only. You are thereby assured of complete confidentiality of information you provide. Thank you.

1.

Name

2. Marital status: Married Single Divorced

3. Programme of Study (e.g. BMS):

4. Level of Programme (e.g. Level 100, Level 200, Level 500 etc)

5. Residence

6. Phone number

7. E-Mail Address:

8. How many biological children do you have?

9. How many of the biological children are five years and below?

Appendix B
Letter of Introduction

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Student Mothers in CoDE UCC

SECTION A

Bio Data

1. Age:

16-20 years 31-35 years

21-25 years 36-40years

26-30 years

2. Level:

100 300

200 400

3. Programme of Study:_____

Preliminary Questions

1. Who made you enrol on the UCCCoDEprogramme?

Myself Mother

Husband/Partner Friends

Father

Other [Specify]_____

2. State why you enrolled_____

3. Do you wish you had stopped the programme?

Yes Uncertain

No

4. Give reason(s) for your answer to question 3 above _____

SECTION B

Using a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), Please select by ticking (✓) the appropriate number to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements about the non-academic roles you perform as a student mother.

No.	Statement	SA	A	SD	D
5.	I cook for my family everyday.				
6.	I have to care for my child/children everyday.				
7.	I have to fetch water for my family everyday.				
8.	I have to wash for my family everyday.				
9.	I assist in farm work everyday.				
10.	I must take my child/children to school and bring him or her/them home everyday.				
11.	I must assist my child/children in his or her/their home work everyday.				
12.	I must report to my work place everyday.				
13.	I must take my child/children to the hospital when they are sick.				

14.	It is my responsibility to tidy up my house/home everyday.				
15.	It is my responsibility to satisfy the sexual pleasures of my husband anytime.				

16. State any other activities that you perform as a student

mother _____

SECTION C

Using a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), please select by ticking (√) the appropriate number to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements about the influence of non-academic roles on your academic life as a student mother.

No.	Statement	SA	A	SD	D
16.	I am not able to attend face-to-face regularly because of the many non-academic activities I perform.				
17.	As a student mother I am not able to get enough time to learn.				
18.	As a student mother I am not able to prepare well for and concentrate on examinations.				
19.	My activities as a student mother always make me attend face-to-face late.				
20.	Plenty house chores make me sleep in class.				

21.	As a result of activities carried out at home, as a student mother I sometimes forget the time for face-to-face and tutorials and absent myself.				
22.	As a result of activities as a student mother I sometimes report late at examination centres.				
23.	As a result of activities as a student mother I am not able to complete and submit assignments on time.				
24.	As a result of activities as a student mother I am not able to attend group discussions regularly.				
25.	The non-academic activities I perform are responsible for my bad grades.				

26. State any other effects of your non-academic activities as a student mother on your academic life

27. Over all, rate the influence of your non-academic activities on your academic life on a scale of 1%—100% [*use (-) for negative influence and (+) for positive influence*]

*Rate []

SECTION D

Using a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), please select by ticking (✓) the appropriate number to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements about the influence of your academic pursuit on your family life as a student mothers.

No.	Statement	SA	A	SD	D
28.	I often have less time for my husband because of my studies.				
29.	My academic activities create confusion between me and my husband/partner.				
30.	I often have less time for my child/children.				
31.	I am not able to attend family meetings or gatherings regularly when scheduled on weekends.				
32.	As a result of my studies in distance education, I am not able to breastfeed my newly born baby very well.				
33.	I am not able to have good sleep during the night due to my studies.				
34.	I sometimes skip my breakfast due to my studies as a student mother.				

35. State any other influence of your academic pursuance as a student mother on your family life _____

36. Over all, rate the influence of your academic pursuance on your family life on a scale of 1%—100% [*use (-) for negative influence and (+) for positive influence*]

*Rate []

SECTION E

Using a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), please select by ticking (✓) the appropriate number to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements about your coping strategies as a student mother.

No.	Statement	SA	A	SD	D
37.	Constantly seeking for support from my husband (e.g. He helps me in my assignments and gives me a lift to campus and back home).				
38.	Employing the services of a paid domestic worker				
39.	Skipping face-to-face sometimes to breastfeed my child.				
40.	Employing the services of a family member when attending face-to-face.				
41.	Pleading for course tutors' help. E.g. Asking course tutors to just give me a pass mark.				

42. Suggest other coping strategies that you employ.

43. Are your coping strategies effective?

Yes

Uncertain

No

44. Do you wish to change your strategies?

Yes

No

45. Give reason(s)

Using a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), please select by ticking (✓) the appropriate number to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following suggestions. CoDE, UCC should undertake to reduce the challenges of student mothers.

No.	Suggestions	SA	A	SD	D
46	There should be a breastfeeding room at the centre where student mothers can store breast milk and give to their children.				
47	Student mothers should be provided with guidance and counselling.				

48	There should be a day care centre for the study of the babies of CoDE student mothers.				
49	There should be the provision of hostel facilities on campus for CoDE student mothers.				