

**MOTIVATORS, CONTRIBUTORS AND INHIBITORS IN  
ADULT HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF  
THE WESTERN CAPE**

by

**KARIN VILJOEN**

Student number: 5998670

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### DECLARATION

I declare that MOTIVATORS, CONTRIBUTORS AND INHIBITORS IN ADULT HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Signature

.....*H. Viljoen*.....

Date

.....*6/01/13*.....

## DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to*

*All the wonderful and courageous women in my family who will always be my  
inspiration. They triumphed over many challenges.*

*And in loving memory of*

*Pieter-Jan Viljoen (21.12.12) who kept a watchful eye over each page I  
wrote to his very end. I shall for ever treasure his loyal companionship.*

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# **MOTIVATORS, CONTRIBUTORS AND INHIBITORS IN ADULT HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

STUDENT: K. Viljoen

DEGREE: MASTER OF EDUCATION – WITH SPECIALIZATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

SUPERVISOR: Dr G. Van den Berg

## **ABSTRACT**

Lifelong learning for adults has almost become compulsory for the maintenance of employability. In the South African context, The National Plan for Higher Education advocated an increase of adult learners entering higher education to facilitate lifelong learning.

This study will focus on adult learners returning to institutions of higher education on a full-time basis. The study will determine factors that motivate adults to enter the learning environment, and it will identify inhibitors and contributors during their studies. A qualitative research design has been employed. Analysis of data collected by open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews indicated that the motivation to return to higher education was mainly personal and career driven. Students reported on situational, dispositional, and institutional inhibitors they experienced and had to overcome. Contributors identified included various support systems. Recommendations are made in view of the results of the empirical study to assist institutions of higher education in South Africa to meet the unique needs of the adult learner.

## **Key terms**

Motivators; inhibitors; contributors; adults; adult learners; traditional learners; non-traditional learners; institutions of higher education; full-time students; oral hygiene students.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Internationally, lifelong education has almost become compulsory for an adult to survive in the working environment. Initial or basic education is not enough to produce an employee who is constantly in demand and highly marketable. The world of work has changed owing to political and global economic restructuring and thus, the return to higher education could be considered to be a “survival mechanism” for an employee in the 21st century (Ahl, 2006:386; O’Donnel & Tobell, 2007:312; Bye, Pushkar & Conway, 2007:141). Owing to this demand for a more marketable employee, there is an increase in the number of adults wanting to return to higher education with the purpose of improving their skills and knowledge (Giancola, Grawitch & Borchert, 2009:261; Kasworm, 2003:3).

For the past decade, 30%-73% of undergraduate students in Northern America are students with an interrupted linear path in their education; they are also known as non-traditional students (Hardin, 2008:50). Non-traditional students are students who did not enter higher educational institutions directly after the completion of compulsory schooling. According to Canadian studies, fewer than half of undergraduate students in their third year of bachelor studies were following a linear educational process (Bye et al., 2007:142; De Vito, 2009:3). Although there has been an increase in adult learners entering universities and colleges, these institutions continue to focus on the traditional student, who, typically, arrives at a university directly after completing high school (De Vito, 2009:3).

Motivators, mentioned in research studies, of why adults return to higher education were the following: preparing adults to gain or improve their current employment position; personal advancement; improving of skills; complying with working and company expectations; expected promotions or promotions already granted; improved ability to serve mankind; and the improvement of skills in order to participate in community work (Ibrahim & Silong, 2000:1; Scanlon, 2009:29). Many adults returning to formal higher education are pursuing their first post-secondary qualification, while others may already



have a degree and are returning for postgraduate studies in order to strengthen their career paths or change careers. Retired “Baby Boomers” turn to higher education to fulfil their dreams of acquiring a formal higher education qualification or to obtain a postgraduate degree (Hardin, 2008:49).

In the South African context, institutions of higher education, after 1994, expected a dramatic rise in adult learners flocking to universities, but a different and unexpected scenario emerged. Institutions of higher education in South Africa prepared themselves for a huge influx of previously disadvantaged adult students to register for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The need profile of the students, universities envisaged, appeared drastically different from those who eventually flocked to the institutions (MacGregor, 2008:1). Huge numbers of adult students who came to the institutions of higher education were in need of basic education and not of higher education as the universities had expected. Universities realized that if they turned these adults in need of basic education away, they might forfeit much needed potential growth in the number of undergraduate students in the future. Universities in need of growing student numbers trusted that these adults might find their way back to the institution that had assisted them to achieve basic education and might, therefore, in future enrol for undergraduate qualifications (MacGregor, 2008:1).

In light of the universities relying on these adults to return to enrol for undergraduate programmes, universities needed to prepare for the specific needs of the adult learner. Questions institutions of higher education should ask of themselves include: Are adults returning to the universities as full-time students after completing their basic education? What motivates the adult learner to enter or re-enter institutions of higher education? What are the barriers the adult learner experience and what are the factors that contribute to their academic success as adult learners?

Castle (2003:32) noted that only a limited amount of research investigating the prior educational paths or the inhibitors adults experience when participating in higher education has been done within the South African context. Castle (2003:32) argues that the practice of adults entering institutions of higher education as students may be a new concept in the South African educational context, and suggests that researchers have yet to investigate this uncharted field.

A literature search, pertaining to this study and referring to the motivators, inhibitors, and contributors adults experience returning full-time to institutions of higher education in the South African context, did not yield many results. Considering the impact this information may have on both the institutions of higher education in South Africa and adult students wanting to return, it is necessary to investigate these factors.

Within the South African context, one of the major barriers for students registered at South African universities is the financial challenge that students face (MacGregor, 2007:1). According to MacGregor (2007:1), research indicated that about 70% of the students who dropped out from the institution of higher learning programme for which they had registered came from families with a low income. Loans and bursaries do not always cover the full cost of studies, leaving the economically poor student struggling to meet living and other expenses. This bleak financial situation may also be a consideration for the adult person in South Africa leaving their current work position in order to enter, or to re-enter, as a full-time student at an institution of higher education. Although financial problems are mentioned by both MacGregor (2007) and Castle (2003) as one of the major barriers experienced by South African students, Castle (2003), in addition to this, mentions that one other major barrier to participation in higher education is the lack of information provided by universities. Castle (2003:33) indicates that information on university programmes and course information is not always written in a clear, accessible way for their target markets, resulting in a potential barrier.

Considering that lifelong education has almost become compulsory to maintain employability, and that, in the South African context, The National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001:29) advocates an increase in the number of adult learners in higher education to facilitate lifelong learning and the development of skills, it is worthwhile to identify and to investigate the factors that motivate adults in South Africa to return as full-time students to institutions of higher education. Investigations should include the identification of the factors that these adult students experience as inhibitors and contributors in their efforts to pursue a higher education qualification. The research conducted for the purpose of this thesis will focus on a group of students registered for the qualification Baccalaureus of Oral Health (BOH) at the University of the Western Cape.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND

The programme for the Baccalaureus of Oral Health (BOH) is currently presented at selected universities in South Africa. The BOH programme presented at these universities is a full-time university programme with no option of distance or part-time studies. Students enrolling for this degree programme, therefore, do not have any option other than to enrol as full-time students. A further complicating factor is that the BOH programme is a programme that applies selection criteria, allowing only a selected quota of students to enter the programme. The BOH programme often attracts adults who want to improve their current qualifications, skills, and knowledge in the field of oral health and dentistry. These adults have no option but to resign from their current careers and job opportunities in order to pursue a career in oral health. The motivation for these adults to resign from their current occupations, sacrifice a reliable income, and adapt to a change in lifestyle is one of the focus points of this research project.

According to the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001) in Section 2: “Producing the Graduates Needed for Social and Economic Development in South Africa” states that the participation rate of adults in higher education should be addressed. Goal one of the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001) states that educational opportunities should include a growing student population irrespective of race, gender, age, creed or class. The Ministry is of opinion that an important avenue for increasing student numbers is to recruit from the non-traditional student pool. This non-traditional student pool includes workers, mature learners with specific focus on the female student. In order to respond to the National Plan for Higher Education, universities will have to accommodate the needs of these adult learners. It is of national importance, therefore, to determine what the perceptions of adult learners are with regard to what they encounter as inhibitors and contributors during their studies in order for institutions of higher education to adapt accordingly.

The *Education White Paper 3*, of 1997 which defines the principles, goals, and structures for the transformation of the education system, states that an educational policy must be adopted that will increase access for all previously-disadvantaged groups from the erstwhile apartheid system. Previously-disadvantaged groups included are all ethnical groups previously disadvantaged by apartheid, women, the disabled, and the adult student (Department of Education.1997, p.1.13 and p.2.2). The *Education White Paper 3*, of 1997 further states that

new curricula and accommodating models of teaching and learning should be generated and developed in order to be able to accommodate a larger and more diverse student population. This study, investigating the motivators, inhibitors, and contributors of a group of adult learners entering a formal higher education institution in the South African context, addresses the request of the *Education White Paper 3*, of 1997 that delivery modes and models of teaching and learning should become flexible enough to accommodate the needs of the adult learner.

### **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Against the background described in section 1.1 of this study, international research studies in adult education clearly indicate that there has been an increase in the number of adult learners returning to institutions of formal higher education (Giancola, Grawitch & Borchert, 2009:261; Kasworm, 2003:3; Hardin, 2008:49).

Factors acting as motivators for adults to return to higher education, as well as the inhibitors and contributors they experience, are internationally well researched, however as confirmed by Castle (2003:32), there is not much literature to be found relating to the South African context.

This research project will focus on a group of adult students registered for the BOH degree programme at the University of the Western Cape, and the factors that motivated these students to resign from their full-time occupations, sacrifice their monthly income, as well as their current lifestyle, in order to pursue a career in oral health. The Degree in Oral Health programme is presented exclusively on a full-time basis, with no option for part-time or distance learning. For the purpose of this study, full-time studies can be defined as the attending of formal lectures, practical demonstrations and clinical treatment of patients from 8:00 to 16:30 each day from Monday to Friday. The contact hours prescribed for the BOH programme is stipulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). The HPCSA determines the notional lecture and clinical training hours of each student registered for this course. Taking into account the structure of the BOH course and the prescriptions of training stipulated by the HPCSA, it is impossible for the adult student to maintain a full-time job.

A second complicating factor relates to the geographical location of the training centres. The BOH degree is not presented at all universities in South Africa. The qualification in oral health is presented at the following universities, the University of Durban-Westville, the University of Pretoria, the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of the Western Cape and the Medical University of Southern Africa. The University of the Western Cape is the only training institution in the Western Cape presenting the BOH qualification. South Africa's neighbouring countries do not present the BOH programme at their universities and students originating from as far as Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe find their way to South Africa to obtain this qualification. Students living far from the University of the Western Cape, for example in other provinces or in neighbouring countries, have to relocate. The implication of this is that these adult students have no choice but to leave their family and relocate on their own to the Western Cape if they are unable to relocate the entire family for the duration of their studies. Students deciding to relocate on their own will have to support their families financially in one province and themselves at university. This contributes to a complex situation where adult students often have the burden of no secure income and the loss of benefits, for example medical aid, which they enjoyed when they were permanently employed. These adult learners are often burdened with the maintenance of two households, high expenditure of travelling costs to keep in contact with spouses and children, university fees, as well as the cost of travelling to lectures on a daily basis between the three different training platforms.

A logistical fact relating to the geographical location of the institution is that all students are scheduled for lectures, pre-clinical, and practical sessions across three training platforms. A map of various training sites can be viewed in Annexure H. Students are, at times, scheduled at the Main Campus in Bellville South, the Oral Health Training Centre situated at Tygerberg, and the Oral Health Centre in Mitchells Plain. The practical implication of this logistical arrangement is that students have to travel often and far to the various training platforms.

A further important aspect to consider regarding this course is that the Baccalaureus Degree in Oral Health is a selection course, allowing a maximum of only 30 candidates to enter into the first year programme at the mentioned institution. Securing a position in this course could be difficult and sometimes delayed owing to selection procedures that are governed by the administration of the university. Applicants are often informed as late as mid-January of an

academic year that they have been selected for the BOH programme. Potential adult learners to this programme have to resign with short notice from secure jobs and forfeit their income. In some cases these adults resign before their position is confirmed by the university, only to learn that they have not been successful in their application for selection. Employers may not always be willing to accept resignations from such employees on short notice or to re-employ them if they did not secure a place on the programme.

Adult learners deciding to return to higher education and qualify themselves in the field of oral health may be challenged by the unique inhibitors mentioned above. Should the university comply with the stipulations of the *Education White Paper 3*, of 1997 and the National Plan for Higher Education, (DoE, 2001) it is of utmost importance that it addresses these inhibitors and caters for the specific needs of the adult learner.

The findings of this research will provide dental faculties with the opportunity of addressing and limiting the inhibiting factors that may be encountered by their adult learners. By identifying, addressing and minimizing the barriers, identifying contributors, and expanding on the positive or contributing factors, the Dental Faculty of the University of the Western Cape may in future be able to offer support systems so unique that the faculty will attract the adult learner who wants to return to this specific institution of higher education.

This study undertaken within the South African context, even though on a limited scale, will provide a challenge for the Dental Faculty to develop programmes, policies, and initiatives that will best accommodate the adult learner. As mentioned by the Scottish Educational report of 2006 “there should be no barriers in the adult learning environment that could not be overcome” (St Claire, 2006:34-35). According to both Kasworm (2003:9) and Hardin (2008:54), contemporary leaders will open the doors of the institutions to adult learners and provide a helpful, supportive environment for their future success (Kasworm, 2003:9).

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION**

Considering the research problem as discussed in section 1.3 it becomes clear that the adult learner entering the higher educational learning environment may be confronted by unique challenges, different from those that confront the young student who enters university directly after completing grade twelve at school.

This leads us to the research question:

*What are the factors that motivate the working adult to register as a full-time student for the Bachelor degree in Oral Health and what are the inhibitors and contributors they experience during their studies?*

Following on the main question, the following sub-questions will be addressed in order to provide a better understanding of the unique situation of the adult learner entering or re-entering an institution of higher education:

- Sub-question one: What are the factors that motivate adults to resign from full-time occupations to enter a higher education institution as full-time students?
- Sub-question two: Which specific inhibitors do these adult learners encounter during their full-time studies?
- Sub-question three: What are the specific coping strategies that these adult learners employ to overcome the inhibitors they experience during their full-time studies?
- Sub-question four: Who or what are the contributors that enable the adult learner to continue and succeed with their studies?
- Sub-question five: How could the university administration and lecturers assist the adult learner in the future?

## **1.5 AIM OF RESEARCH**

Relating to the research question and sub-questions mentioned, the research aims are as follows:

- To identify the factors that motivate adults to resign from full-time occupations to enter a higher education institution as full-time students;
- To determine the specific inhibitors that adult learners experience;
- To identify the coping strategies that adult learners employ to overcome the inhibitors they experience during their full-time studies;

- To identify the contributors that enable adult learners to continue with and succeed in their studies; and
- To determine how the university could assist adult learners in the future.

## **1.6 LITERATURE STUDY**

The literature study will include a review of international and national research material to determine factors that are identified as motivators for adult learners to enter or re-enter higher education as well as the perceived inhibitors and contributors during their studies.

The literature study will include a number of theoretical frameworks in order to provide this study with a sound, evidence-based structure. The theoretical framework of adult learning, also known as andragogy, will be applied to investigate the nature of the adult learner. The Typology of Houle will be employed to assist the researcher to identify the motives which adults have for choosing to return to formal higher learning institutions. Thirdly, the classification of Cross will be applied in order to investigate the inhibitors identified in adult education. The fourth theory will be Herzberg's theory of Hygienes that refer to the contributors and hygienes that need to be situated in the adult learning environment.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Research design of the empirical research**

The qualitative research design will be the method of choice for this study. Qualitative research is a situated activity that places the observer in the world of the observant (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008:3). Qualitative researchers study phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008:3). Qualitative research studies mostly employ samples that are small in scale, and the participants are purposively selected by criteria. Data collection methods involve close contact between the participants and the researcher (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008:3). Data collected is very detailed, information rich, and extensive (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:315; Ritchie & Lewis, 2008:3). The analysis of data is not statistical by nature but by detailed descriptions and classifications, identifying patterns of association and explanations



(Ritchie & Lewis, 2008:3). Qualitative studies provide more in-depth insight into the subjective rationale of a person. The rationale to apply the qualitative research method for this study is to collect data from the participants exploring their own personal motivation for returning to the formal learning environment and to collect data determining their subjective perceptions of the inhibitors and contributors they experience during their studies.

### **1.7.2 Sample**

The researcher will employ the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is a sampling method where the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest being researched (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:126).

Participants selected for the purpose of this study will include students registered for the Baccalaureus Degree in Oral Health in the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of the Western Cape. Participants will include students who are currently registered for their first, second, or third year of study and who meet the criteria as mentioned below.

Participants will be selected to take part in this study on the basis of one of the following criteria:

- Students with prior working experience related to dentistry;
- Students with prior working experience not related to dentistry;
- Students with other qualifications (higher education)

### **1.7.3 DATA COLLECTION**

There will be two different methods of data collection for the purpose of this study. The motivation for the two different data collection methods are for the purpose of triangulation. Triangulation will provide the researcher with a systematic comparison of findings on the same research topics generated by the different research methods (Bloor & Wood, 2006:170).

### **1.7.3.1 Questionnaires**

The first two sets of data will be collected by means of questionnaires. The questionnaires will consist of open-ended questions. The questionnaires will be divided into different sections. The first section will focus on demographic information followed by a second section on the educational background of the participant and their families. This section is included to determine how, and if, the educational background of significant others, for example parents and spouses, had an influence on the decision of these adults to return to higher education. The third section will focus on factors that acted as motivators for these adults to return to higher education as well as the inhibitors and contributors they could identify during their studies. A second questionnaire will be handed to each participant six months after the completion of the first questionnaire. The reason for re-issuing the questionnaire is, firstly, to ensure triangulation and, secondly, to determine the students' experiences in a more senior year of study. Findings from the data derived from Questionnaire A (Annexure B) and Questionnaire B (Annexure C) will be compared and combined in the presentation and discussion of data in chapter 4.

### **1.7.3.2 In-depth interviews**

The third set of data will be collected by the method of in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews contain open-response questions in order to obtain data from participants on how they, as individuals, perceive their world and how they explain, experience, or make sense of the important events in their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:350). Selection of the participants for the in-depth interviews will be determined by convenient sampling. The availability of each participant will be pre-determined when signing the first consent letter. Before the in-depth interviews commence, the participants will receive a second consent letter (Annexure D) to sign, providing their permission to be interviewed. Motivation for employing the in-depth interview as a second research methodology is that these interviews provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of each person's personal perspective and experience of the phenomena being researched (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:350). During the in-depth interview, the focus is on each participant's personal and subjective experiences on returning to higher education as well as the inhibiting and contributing factors that have influenced their studies. The in-depth interviews will provide data that are detailed, personal, and subjective. Each in-depth interview, with the permission of the student, will be audio-

taped. In addition to audio-tape recordings, handwritten notes will be taken during the interview to record non-verbal communication.

On the point of trustworthiness of the study, the researcher may recall interviewees in order to clarify information and request a second interview from the participant. The researcher will make use of participant review, where the participant is asked to check the transcribed data deriving from the interview data for accuracy. Once these procedures are completed, the data from each interviewee will be analysed for a comprehensive integration of findings.

## **1.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

Analysis of the data deriving from the questionnaire will be employed to identify the main motivators, contributors, and inhibitors adult students may experience when registered for the Baccalaureus Degree in Oral Health at UWC.

The open-ended questionnaires will have themes that will identify the factors that motivated adults to return to or enter higher education, as well the inhibitors and the contributors during their studies. The questions will be structured according to the pre-determined categories according to the theoretical frameworks applied in this research. Once the data is collected an analysis will be conducted by coding information to the pre-determined categories and seeking for patterns in the information obtained.

Data analysis will be managed electronically and manually (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2006:377). Manual and electronic data analysis will be employed for this study and will be discussed in detail in chapter three.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than quantitative research as the researcher is usually in direct contact with the research participants, and this raises particular ethical concerns (Babbie, 2004:306). Ethical guidelines for the purpose of this study will include ethical considerations regarding informed consent which is a norm in which participants indicate their voluntary participation in research projects on a full understanding of the possible risks involved in a study (Babbie, 2004:64). Ethical considerations of

confidentiality of the participant apply to a researcher who must guarantee that the identity of the participant will be protected and not made public (Babbie, 2004:65). Anonymity can be guaranteed to participants of this study when answering the questionnaires; however the interview survey participant cannot be guaranteed anonymity since the interviewer collects data from an identifiable participant (Babbie, 2000:472). All participants have the choice to decide to participate or withdraw from the research project at any stage.

In order to gain informed consent for the purpose of data collection by the questionnaire method, the researcher will assure the participants of anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. All information recorded will be kept in a lockable cabinet off-site.

In order to gain informed consent for interviewing purposes, the researcher will assure the participants of both confidentiality and privacy. Participants will be informed that the interview will be recorded using the method of voice recording and note taking (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334). The researcher will inform each participant that the voice recording will be transcribed by the researcher. There will be no third party involved at any stage for the purpose of interpretation and data analysis. The location of the interviews will not be disclosed, nor will the time or date, to any other person, but to the participant alone (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334). Participants will be coded in such a way that only the researcher will be able to identify the interviewee should the researcher find it necessary to contact the participant for a second interview. All written records will be kept safe in an undisclosed area in a lock-up cabinet. The final research report will be open for all the participants to view before being sent for final assessment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334). The researcher will destroy all voice recordings, transcriptions, and any other written documents after the results of the final assessment of the dissertation have been officially announced and the researcher has graduated.

The researcher acknowledges restrictions within her field of study and practice and the fact that, during interviews, participants may share information that indicates the need for referral for professional help or support. The researcher will, however, follow up on such participants only if the participant should verbally express the need for referral and ask for such referral. This could be interpreted as an act of reciprocity towards the participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334).

The above mentioned will be discussed with each participant and presented in written format. Each participant willing to participate in the study will sign a letter of informed consent.

The researcher has obtained ethical clearance from the higher education institution (Annexure G) where the study will be conducted.

## **1.10 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

In this study the researcher will continue to refer throughout the study to key concepts as they are listed below. In order to clarify the meaning of these concepts the following definitions will enhance effective communication between the reader and the printed word.

### **1.10.1 Adult learners**

Defining the adult learner, Kenner and Weinerman (2011:88) and Kasworm (2003:3) state that the adult learner could be classified, according to age, as those students between the ages of 25 and 50, who have a high school diploma or certificate, are financially independent, have reached the status of maturity and complex cognitive development acquired through life experience, are responsible, and often have competing sets of responsibilities, for example, work, family, and student commitments (Kasworm, 2003:3; Hardin, 2008:49).

According to Knowles, adult learners distinguish themselves from child learners as follows: The adult learner is self-directed, has the motivation to learn, has a reservoir of accumulated experience, is ready to learn, apply problem-based orientation to learning, want to apply what he/she learns from real-life situations, learns by comparing past experience with new experiences, needs immediate feedback on his/her progress, tries to avoid failure and has personalized learning styles (Knowles, 1990:194-195; Ibrahim & Silong, 2000:1).

The needs and goals of adult learners differ from younger students owing to the fact that adult learners are in a different place in life and view the world and their future differently from younger students (Kasworm, 2003:9).

Adult learners represent a variety of different groups. Adult learners could include those who have obtained a degree and who are coming back to obtain a postgraduate qualification. Students returning to postgraduate studies need to upgrade their qualifications and to broaden their knowledge base. A second group could be adult learners who would be qualified to enter formal higher education after completing secondary school, but were not offered a place in the course they wished to follow. They started working instead and, later, decided to enrol for their original programme of choice. A third group is the “second chance group”, namely those who did not qualify for university or formal higher education after completing secondary school. These adults went to work, improved themselves, and later desired a degree (Ibrahim & Silong, 2000:4).

### **1.10.2 Traditional students**

Traditional students are defined as students, 21 years of age or younger, who have followed an uninterrupted linear path through the educational system, who attend college or university full-time and are supported by parents and may work only part-time, if at all (Bye, et al., 2007:141).

### **1.10.3 Non-traditional students/adult learners**

According to Hardin (2008) adult students are often referred to as non-traditional students, yet not all non-traditional students are adult students, but they share common characteristics. Non-traditional students are those who delay enrolment to institutions of higher education until adulthood and consider part-time studies as the preferred method of learning, work part-time, are responsible for other people, have family responsibilities, and may have academic deficiencies (Hardin, 2008:50).

### **1.10.4 Contributors**

Contributors could be defined as the forces that support students to persist in their studies as adult learners (Comings, 2007:33). Positive forces include relationships, goals, lecturers, fellow students, friends, colleagues, family, support groups, religion (Comings, 2007:34). Positive supporters or contributors are considered more critical to motivate adult learners to

persist to reach their goal and successfully completing their studies than removing barriers (Comings, 2007:34).

According to Kasworm (2003) adult students in graduate programmes consider the following factors as contributors to their studies: institutions of higher education that are readily accessible, provide programmes that are relevant to their current life needs, are financially affordable, have flexible course scheduling and supportive programmes for adult lifestyle commitments (Kasworm, 2003:7). Some adult learners pursue formal education institutions that are prestigious or programme specific. The level of expertise of the adult learner and his/her work-related responsibility may influence the adult student's participation in formal higher education (Kasworm, 2003:8).

One other institutional contributor is that the adult student should be encouraged to be more integrated into the social life of the institution (Hardin, 2008:53). According to Hardin (2008), Research by National On-Campus Reports, 2002 indicates that adult students that are involved in campus activities are more likely not to drop out of a programme than those adult students who do not participate in campus activities. Adults reported that on-campus activities would be encouraged and better attended by them as adults if they could include activities in which their children could participate (Hardin, 2008:53).

### **1.10.5 Inhibitors**

Inhibitors in this study refer to the barriers and challenges that adult learners encounter when entering the formal learning environment as well as during their years of study. Inhibitors or barriers could include institutional, situational, dispositional, or psychological barriers (Comings, 2007:34; Hardin, 2008:51). Institutional barriers include all procedures, policies, and "Red Tape" that delay the progress of the adult student (Hardin, 2008:51).

Situational barriers include role conflict, time management, family and work problems, economic, financial and logistics, transportation difficulties, health, and fatigue (Comings, 2007:34; Hardin, 2008:52). Dispositional or psychological barriers include inadequate coping skills, lack of self-confidence, poor self-image, poor self-determination, prior school-anxiety based experience, negative beliefs about expected outcomes, negative thoughts (Hardin, 2008:51; Comings, 2007:34). Situational barriers include financial barriers. Adult students,

similar to younger undergraduates, find that they have financial constraints (Kasworm, 2003:8). This could be owing to the fact that they have to support households and other members in the household, e.g. children, spouses, and parents (Kasworm, 2003:8). Adult learners are often at a disadvantage by not being able to ask their parents to assist them financially, as the younger undergraduate would (Kasworm, 2003:8).

Family commitments could be considered to be both a major inspiration and also a major inhibitor for the adult learner to participate in formal education. Being a single parent, mostly women, could be considered as a major inhibitor for an adult learner (Kasworm, 2003:9).

### **1.10.6 Motivators**

Motivators can be described as the factors that will positively encourage the participation of adults in learning activities, for example when there are clear benefits for the individual and their family, a real interest in learning, a positive experience of learning, and the maintenance of a learning identity. According to the literature, sources of motivators in adult learning factors include personal advancement, improving skills, complying with company expectations, expected promotions or promotions already given, improved ability to serve mankind, and participation in community work. These may all contribute to the motivating factors for adults to return to higher education (Scanlon, 2009:29; Hardin, 2000:49). According to Kasworm, studies indicating the most popular motivation (85%) for adults to participate in formal learning activities are career orientated reasons. Fewer than 5% indicated that entering the learning environment was motivated by family transitions, leisure needs, and artistic interests (Kasworm, 2003:5). Research by Kasworm and Blowers (1994) found that the key motives for adults entering formal education related to personal transitions and changes, proactive life planning, and increased social status and power (Kasworm, 2003:7).

## **1.11 DEMARCATION OF THE CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and overview**

Chapter one has provided an overview of the study. The background to this study, as well as the problem statement and the aims of the research, has been addressed. The research design



and methods to be applied in this study have been described, as have the ethical considerations. Definitions of terminology and concepts in terms of the context of this research project have been provided to orientate the reader.

## **Chapter 2: Literature study**

Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the relevant literature and the theoretical frameworks employed. The theoretical frameworks for this study will include various literature reviews that focus on the concept of the adult learner. The study will discuss when an individual is considered to be an adult, what the characteristics of the adult learner are and how the adult learner differs from the child in the learning environment. The study will then focus on the factors that motivate the adult to return to the learning environment. The Typology of Houle will be employed to provide a theoretical framework for a discussion relating to the motivating agents. The focus of the study will progress to the identification of inhibitors adult learners encounter during their studies. The theoretical framework of choice is that of Cross's Chain of Response Model. Inhibitors will be discussed under the headings of situational, dispositional, and institutional inhibitors. The latter part of the discussion will focus on factors and agents that contribute to the success of the adult learner. The discussion will focus on the theoretical framework of Hertzberg and his concept of Hygienes.

## **Chapter 3: Research design and methodology**

Chapter 3 will focus on the research methodology to be conducted and the ethical considerations applicable for this study. The research design employed for this research project is the qualitative research design. Data collection methods are open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The ethical considerations, such as anonymity, privacy, and informed consent are discussed in detail in chapter three.

## **Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussion**

Data presentation, analysis, and discussion derived from the data collected will be structured in chapter 4 according to the main research questions and sub-questions. The researcher collected data on demographics and the reason for that is explained under each section. The educational background of family members and spouses to determine the role of motivation

of these significant others to enter the learning environment are examined. Data analysis regarding the motivators to resign and enrol for the full-time course in Oral Health is discussed according to the Typology of Houle. Inhibitors students experience during their time of study is discussed according to the Chain Response Model of Cross. This is followed by a discussion on how these adult learners developed coping strategies to deal with the inhibitors they experienced during their studies. The final focus is on the contributors that assisted the learners in succeeding in their studies and the support systems provided by the university as well as the value thereof according to the participants.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions, limitations and recommendations**

Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the literature review and the empirical study. This will be followed by the synthesis of the research findings. The researcher will follow this discussion with conclusions derived from the literature and the empirical study. Similarities and differences relating to the study will be highlighted. The limitations the researcher encountered during the various phases of the project will be noted, followed by recommendations as indicated by data analysis and interpretations.

### **1.12 SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 has introduced the reader to the problem identified in the adult's world of learning when returning to institutions of higher education. The orientation to the problem was followed by a brief discussion of the background to the problem, a literature overview of international and national research as well as the theoretical frameworks employed in this research project. The research problem was described to the reader and followed by the main research question and sub-questions. The reader was introduced to the aims the researcher has identified for this research project. A discussion relating to the research methodology informed the reader about the choice the researcher has made to collect and analyse data. This analysis and interpretation of the data provided the reader with an answer to the research question and aims. Data will be collected by the method of open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Data analysis methods will be those of coding and pattern seeking in order to interpret the information provided by the participants. Chapter 2 will have two areas of focus. The first focus will be on the content of the literature studies of international and national relevance to the research question. The second focal point will be to provide the

reader with a theoretical framework applicable to each of the concepts of the research question that need to be researched. The theoretical framework will provide the researcher with the necessary scientific approach in order to conduct an empirical study by the collection of data, its analysis and interpretation.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE STUDY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

During the 1970s to the mid 1980s a considerable amount of research was done internationally relating to adult participation in education and the barriers adult learners experienced in the learning situation. Rubenson and Desjardins (2009:189) mention that for the past two decades there has been very little interest from the research community in engaging with these two classical issues in adult education. According to Rubenson and Desjardins (2009:189), taking a renewed interest in reflecting on how participation in adult education and barriers in relation to such participation can be understood is justified.

A literature search pertaining to the South African context in adult education provides very scant information on research conducted regarding these two classical learning issues involving adults as according to Rubenson and Desjardin (2009:189).

The National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001:28) advocates an increase in the number of adult learners entering South African institutions of higher education. It is therefore, valuable to investigate and identify the factors that motivate adults in the South African context to return as full-time students to institutions of higher education. The National Plan for Higher Education advocates that institutions of higher education strive for an increased number of adult learners at their institutions in order to facilitate life-long learning and skills development. The *Education White Paper 3* (1997:27), paragraph 2.59, states that distance education and resource-based learning is specifically appropriate for learners who are already employed full-time and need to earn an income to sustain themselves, their families, and their studies. The researcher, however, cannot resist investigating the dilemma of salary-earning adults who, for various reasons, enter or re-enter institutions of higher education as full-time students, requiring them to resign from their positions of employment.

Learning commitments of adults are normally part-time, combining studying or attending a course alongside family responsibilities, a full-time occupation, as well as work in and

around the house. Adult learners may, therefore, not be able to devote as much of their time to studying as they would want or need to (Daines, Daines & Graham, 1993:4). This situation of the adult learner is confirmed by the study conducted by Castle, Munro, and Osman (2006:364) on part-time students in the *Wits Plus* programme initiated within the South African context. The *Wits Plus* programme was an effort by the University of the Witwatersrand to answer to the appeal of the National Plan for Higher Education to open their doors to mature adults, through the Centre for Part-Time Studies (Castle et al., 2006:364). The Centre for Part-Time Studies, known as *Wits Plus*, was established in 1999 by four faculties at the University of the Witwatersrand in order to provide adult learners with the opportunity of entering undergraduate degree programmes through a part-time, after-hours facility (Castle et al., 2006:368). Barriers reported by these part-time students included lack of bursaries for part-time students, not being eligible for financial aid packages, the length of time needed to complete a degree on a part-time basis, and the intrusion of real life into studies (Castle et al., 2006:369).

The focus of this study, however, will be on the adult learner in the South African context entering into a full-time university programme. The study will attempt to identify factors that motivate adults to leave their full-time occupation and re-enter the world of formal higher education studies as well as identifying the inhibitors and contributors adult learners experience during their full-time studies.

The literature review will have two main focus points, namely the theoretical frameworks employed in this study, and the relevant international and national research conducted on the research question.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research project will be conducted against the backdrop of various applicable theoretical frameworks in order for the researcher to find an answer to the research question. The theoretical framework most applicable in an attempt to answer the main aspects of the research question will be applied to provide the researcher with the necessary scientific framework to conduct an empirical study. These theoretical frameworks will assist in providing scientifically-based answers. The theoretical frameworks applied in this study will focus on the adult learner, motivators, inhibitors, and contributors in adult education.

Theories addressing the unique characteristics of the adult learner, factors and agents acting as motivators according to the Typology of Houle, inhibitors as identified by the classification of Cross and Hertzberg's hygienes as contributing to the success of the adult learner will be discussed in the literature review.

### **2.2.1 The Adult learner**

One needs to address the question of what characterises an adult learner. From where and how did the concept originate and how does an adult differ from a child when it comes to learning? The concept of adult learning should be clarified by starting with a definition of the concept "adult". Gravett (2008:6) states that it is no easy task to define the concept "adult", as it could refer to a specific life stage, the status of the individual, social status, or values and ideas. The exact moment at which one becomes an adult is debatable. According to Tight (1996:14), the definition of an adult is not merely age related, and claims that adulthood is what happens when we grow older, when an individual is able to support himself/herself, to have increased independence, is involved in the creation of the next generation and, independently, take decisions. Gravett (2008:7) concludes that the concept "adulthood" is socially constructed and understood differently by different societies. According to Kasworm (2003:3) and Hardin (2008:49), the adult student could be defined, according to the criterion of age, as typically 25 years or older, or by using the criterion of maturity and developmental complexity acquired through life responsibilities, financial independence, or even the criterion of responsibility shown by dealing with the often competing sets of adult roles, for example work, family, and student commitments. Almost five decades ago, Johnstone and Rivera (as cited by Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007:59) described the typical characteristics of the adult learner as follows:

*The adult education participant is just as often a woman as a man, is typically under forty, has completed high school or more, enjoys an above average income, works full-time and is most often in a white-collar occupation, married and has children.*

Daines, Daines and Graham (1993:4) describe the adult learner as someone who enters the learning situation with experience and knowledge gained over years, someone who may transfer this knowledge to what he/she currently has to learn, has established attitudes, patterns of thinking and definite ways of doing things, takes responsibility for himself/herself,

is goal-orientated and may have increased comprehension. The literature reveals, however, that all characteristics of the adult learner are not only positive ones. Some negative characteristics of the adult learner may include those of a failing memory, finding it difficult to perform academically under pressure, displaying a lack of self-confidence, being over-anxious, being afraid of making mistakes, dreading the possibility of failing and not appreciating a lengthy process to attain their goal (Daines et al., 1993:4).

The literature reviews in the above mentioned discussion (Chapter 2 section 2.2.1) provide evidence that the concept *adult learner* is more complex than simply providing a definition based on age. The concept *adult learner* refers to an individual who has financial independence, acts responsibly, has specific social status and power, established values and beliefs, and is involved in creating and the development of the next generation. The following section (Chapter 2 section 2.2.2) will focus on the concept of adult learning.

### **2.2.2 Adult learning**

The concept of adult learning was basically non-existent at the start of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Schools were established and focused mainly on children and young boys, preparing them for the priesthood. Assumptions regarding teaching were developed with the child learner in mind. Teaching, with the child as main focus, was labelled pedagogy. Pedagogy became the framework and basis for the entire educational system of that time, including that of adult learning in later years (Knowles, 1990:28). Teachers, however, came to realize that adults learn differently from children. Adults learn by a process of active inquiry and not merely by being passive receivers of new information, as children often are. Teachers, therefore, invented teaching methods that would actively engage the adult learner (Knowles, 1990:27). According to Knowles (1990:28), the development of a comprehensive adult learning theory was initiated only as recently as two decades ago. Knowles could be considered as the “father of modern adult learning”, and he coined the term *Andragogy*. *Andragogy* refers to adult learning. According to Knowles (1990), adult learners have the following distinctive characteristics: adults need to know why they have to learn new information or skills; they are self-directed; they are willing to take responsibility; they have individualized experiences which they bring to the learning environment; and they have specific learning expectations. A brief discussion will follow on each of these unique characteristics of the adult learner.

Adults need to know why they have to learn a new skill or acquire new knowledge before undertaking any learning process. Tough (1979), cited in Knowles (1990:57), found that, when adults undertake to learn “something” on their own, they will invest considerable energy in probing into the benefits they will ultimately gain from the learning experience and the negative consequences of not learning. According to Knowles (1990:57), it is one of the prime tasks of the adult learning facilitator to assist adult learners to become aware of their “need to know” and to explain the relevance of the contents of the curriculum to their needs. The facilitator must link the content of the curriculum and the needs of the adult learner to apply this newly-acquired knowledge and skills information in the future. Only when the relationship between the content of the curriculum and the adult’s specific need to acquire new skills and knowledge have been clarified will the adult learner take on the responsibility of engaging in a meaningful manner with the learning material.

The adult learner has a personal concept of being responsible for the decisions he/she makes regarding his/her own life (Knowles, 1990:58). Knowles (1990:58) is of the opinion that, once an adult has reached the stage where he/she realizes that he/she is responsible for his/her own life, he/she develops an intense psychological need to be recognized by others as being self-directive. The adult will consider the learning or any other situation as negative if the learning facilitator’s will is imposed on him/her.

The adult learner enters the learning environment with a wider range of individual experiences, diverse backgrounds, different learning styles, motivations, interests, and goals they want and need to achieve differently than the child learner. Taking this diversity into account, it is important that the adult learner and the facilitator in the adult learning situation focus on the individualization of teaching and learning strategies. Knowles, however, recognises the potentially negative influence of this “greater experience factor” in the adult-learning situation and is of the opinion that adults may develop mental habits, biases, and pre-suppositions ‘that may “close” the mind of the adult learner to new ideas, perceptions and alternative ways of thinking’ (Knowles, 1990:59).

Adults are willing to learn those things they need to know and be able to do to cope with their real-life situations (Knowles, 1990:60). According to Knowles (1990:61), readiness to learn could be created by exposing the adult learner to models of superior performance, career counselling, and simulation exercises.



An adult's orientation to learning differs from that of a child. Adults are life-centred, task orientated, or problem-centred in their orientation to learning (Knowles, 1990:61). Adults will be motivated to learn new practical and knowledge skills if they are convinced that the newly-acquired information or skills will assist them to cope with their real life situations (Knowles, 1990:61). According to Knowles (1990:61), adults learn most effectively when information is presented in the context of their real-life situations.

In the above mentioned section (Chapter 2 section 2.2.2), the literature clearly indicates that the adult learner has characteristics that differ from those of the child learner. The child learner is often merely a passive recipient obligated by legislation to enter the learning process, whereas the adult enters the learning situation from free choice, actively participates in the learning process, and is purpose driven. The adult learner, differently from the child learner, arrives in the learning environment with specific expectations. If these expectations are not met, the learning experience of the adult learner could be jeopardised and result in a negative outcome. The following section (Chapter 2 section 2.2.3) will focus on the expectations of the adult learner when entering the formal learning environment.

### **2.2.3 Expectations of the adult learner**

When adults enter the learning environment they have certain distinctive expectations. According to Daines et al. (1993:5), adult learners expect of their tutors to be enthusiastic, knowledgeable, experts in their field of practice and study, have well-designed lecture plans, arrive prepared for every lecture or demonstration, and apply various different teaching methods. Adult learners expect value for their money, desire regular feedback on their progress, want to enjoy the learning experience, and they need acknowledgement of previous experience, skills acquired, and their status as adults (Daines et al., 1993:5). The needs and goals of adult learners differ from those of younger students owing to the fact that the adult learner is in a different place in life and views the world and his/her future differently from the way a child does (Kasworm, 2003:9).

The above-mentioned discussion has focused on international literature relating to the adult learner, the characteristics of adult learning, and the expectations of the adult learner. As this study is conducted in the South African context, it is important to refer to relevant South African literature in defining and describing the nature of the adult learner.

#### **2.2.4 Who is the adult learner in the South African context?**

In an attempt to define and compile a profile of the adult learner in the South African context, the researcher studied the relevant literature, and it revealed that in the current South African context, the legislative definition of the adult student of “mature age” is a student who is 23 years or older. The current policy regulates that, from the age of 23, people in South Africa are able to obtain mature age exemption, which means access to higher formal education without a Matriculation Endorsement (Walters & Koetsier, 2006:99).

According to Walters and Koetsier (2006:98-99), adult learners have increased responsibilities owing to their economic, family, or community commitments. Adults bring complex life experiences to their learning environments, and their time is restricted owing to their multiple roles and responsibilities.

Similarly to the international situation, South Africa has experienced major economic changes, currently experiences a shortage of highly-qualified professional people, has a shortage of people with managerial skills, as well as having to deal with the negative impact of HIV on the labour force. The before-mentioned factors have contributed to the acceptance of the need for on-going education and training (Castle, Munro & Osman, 2006:365). We need to ask what the factors are that motivate adults who are established in careers, earning salaries, and have multiple responsibilities, to resign from their occupations and become full-time students. The following section (Chapter 2 section 2.3) will focus on the factors that motivate adults to enter or re-enter institutions for formal higher education.

### **2.3 MOTIVATORS**

According to Ryan and Deci (2000:54), to be motivated implies that an individual is moved to do something or take action. The authors state that people do not just have different amounts and different types of motivation but also differ as regards the level and orientation of motivation. The orientation of motivation relates to “why” the action is taken, for example, why a learner wants to acquire a new set of skills (Ryan & Deci, 2000:55). To relate to this study the question of why adults take action to enter formal higher education can be asked.

The following section will focus on relevant literature reviews in order to provide the researcher with a scientifically sound answer and a theoretical framework to employ in this study.

As mentioned above, one of the aims of this study is to determine the orientation of motivation explaining why adults return to formal higher education. Motivators are the factors that will positively encourage adults to enter the learning experience and participate in learning activities. Adults participate when there are clear benefits to them as individuals and to their families, as well as when they have interest in learning, positive experiences of learning, and the maintenance of a learning identity.

According to the literature, sources of motivators in adult learning include personal advancement, the improving of skills, complying with company expectations, expected promotions or promotions already given, an improved ability to serve mankind, and participation in community work (Lieb, 1991:2; Bye et al., 2007:143; Scanlon, 2009:29). According to Bye et al. (2007:143), self-improvement and personal growth for some adult learners are equal to, or even more important than, reaching extrinsic goals such as job, career, or financial gain.

### **2.3.1 Motives to return**

The question is what motivates busy adults and why do they choose to enter to learning opportunities. In an attempt to answer the above question, Ibrahim and Silong (2000:3) state that there are differing groups of adults wishing to return to institutions of learning, namely graduates who have already obtained their first degree and want to upgrade their qualification, or, a second group, those adult learners who qualified to enter institutions of higher education after completing their secondary education, but could not secure a place in the programme of study they had selected as their first choice. These are typically the adults who have been working for a period of time, have decided that they want to improve their qualifications, but will also need to continue working full-time. A third group are called “the second chance” group. “The second chance” group are adults who did not initially qualify for university entrance after leaving school, had no choice but to find a job and work to earn a living, and now, a few years later, desire a degree in order to improve themselves and secure a better future (Ibrahim & Silong, 2000:3). In providing a reason for the fact that growing

numbers of adults are entering the world of learning, Scanlon (2008:17) argues that the adults' world of work has changed considerably owing to the restructuring of economics and politics, and the rapid speed of technological development. The traditional roles of the worker or artisan with specific or specialised labour skills have become redundant or almost irrelevant owing to the above mentioned factors in the world of work. Adults may, furthermore, be motivated to seek new learning experiences in order to cope with specific life-changing events, for example job-related problems, or personal problems such as divorce, losing a loved one, and illness. The primary motivation cited by adults for entering or re-entering a learning experience is the need for new and improved knowledge and skills (Hardin, 2008:54-55).

As mentioned in the literature review, motives for participation in adult education are unarguably many, complex, and subjected to change. Educators and student affairs professionals should identify these factors as well as the complexity of the orientation of motivation of the adult learner (Merriam et al., 2007:65; Kasworm, 2003:5).

If student affairs professionals had the answer to the complex question of what the orientation of the motivators are that urge adults to enter institutions of formal higher learning, it could provide universities with the key solution to recruiting and retaining the vast number of adult learners entering the learning environment (Kasworm, 2003:5). Although the motivators for adults to return to institutions of higher education may be varied in nature, it is important to consider the fact that each adult returns to the learning situation with a complex and different set of beliefs, demands or needs, external pressures, expectations, and values (Kasworm, 2003:5).

### **2.3.2 Motivators according to Houle**

Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 have addressed concepts relating to the adult and the adult learner. In a quest to answer the research question it is of importance to determine the agents or factors that motivate the adult to enter or re-enter to institutions of higher education.

The Typology of Houle will be employed as the theoretical framework for this study to investigate factors that motivated the adult learners participating in this study to enter or re-enter institutions of higher education. The reason for selecting this typology is that Houle

(1961) developed a classification that specifically focused on motivating factors or agents for adults returning to the learning environment.

### **2.3.2.1 The Typology of Houle**

The study of the motivating factors for adults to return to the learning environment was initiated by the publication of Houle's – *The Inquiring Mind* in 1961 (cited by Merriam et al., 2007:63; Boshier, 1985:114-115).

Houle's Typology was created by conducting in-depth interviews with twenty two adult learners to determine the orientation of their motivation to entering the learning environment. After an analysis of these in-depth interviews, Houle came to the conclusion that three separate learning orientations could be identified that acted as motives for adults to return to or enter the learning environment. This classification is today well known as Houle's Typology and the categories of learners are:

- Goal-orientated learners;
- Activity-orientated learners; and
- Learning-orientated learners (Cross, 1981:82; Boshier & Collins, 1985:115).

Goal-orientated learners can be described as learners who use education as a means of achieving some or other goal or to gain specific objectives (Cross, 1981:82; Boshier & Collins, 1985:115; Gordon, 1993:5). The goal-orientated learner considers learning as a series of episodes, each starting with the identification of a specific individualized need (Cross, 1981:82; Gordon, 1993:6). According to Houle, goal-orientated learners do not restrict their learning activities to any one institution or method, but select the institution or method that will help them to achieve their goal (Cross, 1981:82). The second group is the activity-orientated learner. The activity-orientated learner finds in the learning environment a specific meaning which is not necessary related to the content that is presented (Boshier & Collins, 1985:115). The activity-orientated learners participate for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction thereof rather than to develop or learn a new skill (Gordon, 1993:6; Merriam et al., 2007:64). Activity-orientated learners often join in a learning activity to escape from loneliness, unhappy circumstances, boredom, or to maintain a family (Cross,

1981:82; Boshier & Collins, 1985:115). Learning-orientated participants seek knowledge for their own personal benefit (Cross, 1981:83; Boshier & Collins, 1985:115). The learning-orientated person has a deep-seated desire to know more and also has the need to develop lifelong by means of gaining further knowledge for the duration of his/her life; they are keen readers and join groups and classes for educational reasons (Cross, 1981:83; Gordon, 1993:7). Houle stated that there are no pure types of motivational orientation, indicating that individuals are hardly ever purely goal-, purely activity- or purely learning-orientated.

Boshier and Collins (1985:118), tested Houle's Typology twenty years later and came to the conclusion that, although Houle had failed to anticipate the growing complexity of the motives of why adults may participate in learning activities, the typology has the most popular framework purporting to describe participant orientations and that it can easily be employed in the current modern society and context. Although Houle's classification was questioned by Boshier and Collins in the 1980s and again by Gordon in the 1990's these authors requested that reconsideration should be given to Houle's classification in modern times. The conclusion of the investigation by Boshier and Collins is that this classification can be seen as the steppingstone for motivational orientation research for adults entering formal education. The Typology of Houle, however contested, was never abandoned, by either Boshier and Collins (1985) or Gordon (1993). Boshier and Collins concluded in their study of Houle's Typology as following:

In future, practitioners and professors who speak of goal, activity and learning orientation must realize that this reality is more complicated than Houle envisaged more than twenty years ago

The Typology of Houle will, therefore, be considered for this study as the basic theoretical framework of choice for the identification of the motivators of why adults return as full-time students to formal higher education in the South African context.

### **2.3.3 Motivators in the South African context**

Literature reviews focusing on international research relating to the motivators for adults entering or re-entering were discussed in the previous section (Chapter 2 section 2.3.1). Research relating to the South African context refers to the studies of February and Koetsier (2007) and Castle et al. (2006). In the study of Castle et al. (2006), adults reported that they wished to return to study in response to issues raised by “globalization”. These adults believed that their jobs were vulnerable, that the demands to become formally qualified and more versatile were growing, that they wanted to improve their current work status, take on more responsibility at work, and become more skilled and knowledgeable, so ensuring a better future as well as financial empowerment (February & Koetsier, 2007:6; Castle et al., 2006:369).

The discussion above has focused on the concept of motivators (Chapter 2 section 2.3), the motives for adults to return to the formal learning environment (Chapter 2 section 2.3.1) and the theoretical framework employed for this study to determine why adults return to full-time studies at institutions of formal higher education in the South African context (Chapter 2 section 2.3.2). Although there are multiple factors that may act as motivators for adults to return to formal higher education, there are also an abundance of factors that may act as inhibitors during their studies. The section to follow will focus on literature reviews and the theoretical framework pertaining to the inhibitors adult learners may experience when entering the formal learning environment at an institution of higher learning.

## **2.4 INHIBITORS IN ADULT EDUCATION**

### **2.4.1 Chain of Response Model**

In the above section 2.3.1 the factors or agents acting as motivators for adults to enter or re-enter the learning environment was discussed against the theoretical framework of Houle’s Typology. In this section, the inhibitors adults may be confronted with when entering the learning situation as well as during their studies will be addressed. Cross (1981:97) declares that although it is difficult to explain the motivators that convince adults to return to the learning environment, it is even more difficult to determine the inhibitors that prevent them from entering learning situations. Taking into consideration the before-mentioned statement

of Cross, this research project will include the inhibitors that challenge adult learners. According to Cross (1981:97), several different research techniques could be applied to determine the inhibitors adults experience with respect to entering the learning situation, for example conducting interviews and the completing of questionnaires. Cross developed the Chain of Response Model that identifies three types of barriers adults experience when returning to the world of learning. In the following discussion the definition of each type of inhibitor will be given, followed by specific reference to the inhibitors adults experience during their learning experience. It is important to mention at this stage that, for the purpose of this study, barriers and challenges adult learners encounter when entering the formal learning environment, as well as during their years of study, will be referred to as *inhibitors* as from section 2.4.2.

The Chain of Response Model reveals the following barriers:

#### **2.4.1.1 Situational barriers**

Situational barriers are those barriers arising from one's situation in life at a given time, for example, role conflict, lack of time, work-related challenges, finances, childcare, transport, and geographical isolation, logistical problems, health, and fatigue (Cross, 1981:98; Comings, 2007:34; Hardin, 2008:52).

#### **2.4.1.2 Institutional barriers**

Institutional barriers are all the practices and procedures that could exclude or discourage adults from participating in learning activities, for example inconvenient scheduling of learning activities, locations of learning activities or institutions, full-time fees for part-time-studies, and the types of courses or programmes that are available at a learning institution.

#### **2.4.1.3 Dispositional barriers**

Dispositional barriers are those barriers that are related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner (Cross, 1981:98). Dispositional barriers may include inadequate coping skills, lack of self-confidence, poor self-image, poor self-determination, school-based anxiety stemming from prior negative learning experiences, negative beliefs about expected



outcomes, and negative thoughts (Hardin, 2008:51; Comings, 2007:34; Ibrahim & Silong, 2000:2). According to Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), cited by Ibrahim and Silong (2000), dispositional barriers could be divided into psychological barriers that would include beliefs, values, and perceptions about education or the learner himself or herself, and informational barriers which reflect the lack of awareness as to what educational opportunities are available (Ibrahim & Silong, 2000:2). The Chain of Response Model will be employed as the theoretical framework in this study to identify the inhibitors adult learners experience before, and during, the process of enrolment, as well as the inhibitors they experience as adult students attending university on a full-time basis at a university in the Western Cape.

## **2.4.2 Inhibitors experienced returning to formal higher education**

The following section will provide a detailed literature review and discussion on the inhibitors adult learners experience when entering the educational environment. This research study will focus on the inhibitors adult learners experience from the time they start the enrolment process at the institution of higher education to the conclusion of their studies. The literature review discussion will be conducted according to the Chain Response Model.

### **2.4.2.1 Situational inhibitors**

Adult learners are more vulnerable to the difficulties they have to manage in the transition from being actively involved in the working and family environment and returning to the formal learning environment, than traditional students. This vulnerability could be caused by their minority status of being an adult student on campus, a lack of recent experience studying at a formal educational institution, and/or the added responsibilities outside the university (O'Donnell & Tobell, 2007:313). The additional responsibilities unique to the adult learner include the realities that they find themselves overwhelmed by work, family, financial, and other demands. The demands of fulfilling these multiple roles are usually not experienced by the teenage or child learner. Fulfilling these multiple roles may act as inhibitors in the learning environment of the adult learner (Lieb, 1991:2; Bye et al., 2007:143; Rubenson & Desjardin, 2009:191; Giancola et al., 2009:246; Kasworm, 2003:7-8).

Gender plays an important role in the world of the adult learner. According to Rubenson et al. (2009:191), the situational barrier most frequently mentioned by adult female learners

returning to formal learning institutions is multiple family responsibilities. Women with family responsibilities are the fastest-growing group of adult learners returning to the learning environment, but they are also the most vulnerable to role strain. Role strain, according to Home (1998:85) and Merriam et al. (2007:57), is due to conflicting demands and the multiple roles they have to take on, resulting in their constantly experiencing work overload.

Financial strain entering a study programme or course could be of major concern to the adult learner. The adult learner may be a breadwinner or contribute financially on a large scale to the economy of the household. Once enrolled as a student, he/she is responsible for the payment of study-fees and also continues to be responsible for the family's financial needs (Castle, 2003:43; Ibrahim & Silong, 2000:16).

Considering the numerous situational challenges adult learners are confronted with, it is important that efficient learner support is available. The assistance and support with which adult learners are provided could make the difference between adults persisting and being successful in their studies or dropping out (Home, 1998:86).

#### **2.4.2.2 Dispositional inhibitors**

The adult learner is faced with several dispositional inhibitors also referred to as psychological inhibitors. These inhibitors, to only mention a few, include uncertainty of the decision they have made to enter the learning environment; fear of the academic environment due to previous academic experiences, and fear of the unknown. Literature confirm these dispositional inhibitors adults experience by comparing adult learner participants with non-participants, indicating that negative attitudes and dispositions toward learning are by far the most negative deterrents to entering or re-entering formal education (O'Donnell et al., 2007:313; Rubenson & Desjardin, 2009:192). According to O'Donnell and Tobell (2007:313), this is most likely in the category of the non-traditional learner, where the rejection of further exposure to the learning environment by adults is often the result of previous negative learning experiences. Baker (2006:175) mentions that adult students returning to the learning environment may in addition find themselves revisiting adolescent-type experiences, in which they feel uncertain and incapacitated, being uprooted from their comfort zone. Another problem is the adult learner may experience exclusion from the rest of the younger students and campus activities. The interpretation of their situation could be

experienced by adult learners as being that they are not included in the wider aspects of university life as they are considered as “day” students (O'Donnell & Tobell, 2007:313; Hardin, 2008:53). Hardin (2008:53) reports that it is of importance for the adult learner to be included in campus activities and have interaction with other students on campus as this may contribute to their success in their studies. Hardin is in agreement with Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) that, included in the category of dispositional inhibitors, are also educational factors of the past that should be acknowledged. Adult learners may feel inferior owing to educational inhibitors experienced in the past (Hardin, 2008:54). Kenner and Weinerman (2011:87) state that the adult learners bring to the learning environment their own individual life experiences and learning styles that may be considered as dispositional inhibitors or sometimes as a contributor. The life experiences and entrenched learning styles of the adult learner may be considered by some lecturers as challenging but could contribute and provide learning opportunities should the lecturer make an effort to rather embrace these differences (Kenner & Weinerman, 2001:87).

#### **2.4.2.3 Institutional inhibitors**

Institutional inhibitors, according to Harding (2008:51), are created by the institution itself, sometimes even without the institutions recognising it. These barriers become inhibitors for the adult learner in their endeavours to learn and in the achievement of their goals. Institutional barriers that may inhibit the progress of the adult learner include institutional policies, administrative procedures and “red tape”, as well as the type of learning technology employed by the learning institution. These barriers may be experienced by the adult learners at any time, from the moment the student decides to attend an institution of higher education up to the completion of the intended qualification (Hardin, 2008:51). Research conducted by Madfes (1989), as quoted in Hardin (2008:51), found that adult learners are not tolerant towards barriers imposed by the institutions and would more often decide to discontinue their studies than to try to overcome them. Institutions of higher education should, therefore, limit or remove the barriers adult learners encounter should they wish to attract and retain the adult student.

Student support services on offer by the learning institution must be able to provide accurate information and proper guidance from the pre-enrolment phase throughout the entire duration of the adult student's registration for study in such an institution (Ibrahim & Silong,

2000:13). De Vito, (2009:5) claims that accessibility, geographical location, time of presentation, course flexibility, and instructional methods used in presenting the course are recognized institutional inhibitors.

Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.2 sub-sections 2.4.2.1-2.4.2.3) focused on international literature relating to inhibitors the adult learner has to face when entering the formal learning environment. The following section 2.4.2.4 will focus on literature relating to inhibitors adult learners in the South African context are confronted with while studying at formal institutions of higher education.

#### **2.4.2.4 Inhibitors in the South African context**

Relating to the South African context and inhibitors adult learners have to face; statistics available from the University of the Western Cape in 2003, as mentioned in the study by Watters, Koetsier and Walters (2003:5), indicate that 19% of adult learners were registered as full-time students, and 95% of part-time adult learners were employed. Forty two per cent of the full-time students indicated that they spend on average 10-19 hours per week working to support their finances, and 23% of the full-time registered students were employed at least 20-35 hours per week (Watters et al., 2003:6). The conclusion from this study by Watters et al. (2003) is that adult students spent substantial amounts of time working, whether they are part-time or full-time students. This reality highlights the importance for higher education institutions to understand the working world of the adult learner (Walters & Koetsier, 2006:104). Hours spend working in order to meet financial demands have a negative impact on the studies of students as the time spent at work could, otherwise, have been spent on their studies.

Research conducted on the successes of the *Wits Plus* initiative indicated that one of the inhibitors most frequently mentioned was the financial implication of studying and the shortage of bursaries for part-time students. One other inhibitor adult learners mentioned in the same study was time allowed to complete a qualification (Castle et al., 2006:369). Life situations or situational barriers as, for example, personal affairs, family, illness, separation, divorce, financial- or work-related factors were noted by adult learners as significant inhibitors to their academic progress (Walters & Koetsier, 2006:104; Castle et al., 2006:369-370). Life situations or situational inhibitors cause adult learners to “stop-out” on their

studies with the intention of continuing their studies at a later stage. Unfortunately, institutions of higher education do not make provision for such “stop-out” periods adult learners are forced to take, owing to life responsibilities that become a priority.

In the study conducted by February and Koetsier (2007:5) on the topic “What Support and Success means to a Group of Working Adults within one Faculty at a South African Higher Education Institution”, students commented that poor response and co-operation regarding the administration of the institution contributed to endless frustration and a waste of their precious time. Suggestions of how the university and its employees could support part-time students more efficiently included comments on being more sensitive when scheduling tests and assignments, adjusting the pace of presentation for adult learners, extension of after-hours availability to computer laboratories, administrative staff, and lecturers. Students further mentioned that employers could be more accommodating regarding financial support, time off to prepare for tests and assessments, more time to study and more understanding and leniency with regard to the shifts they have to work.

Similar feedback was reported from adult learners registered at the Centre for Part-Time Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, known as *Wits Plus*. Although the intention of the *Wits Plus* programme was to attract adult learners and to broaden their access to a formal qualification, students requested more co-operation from administration officers (Castle et al., 2006:368-369).

Whatever the motivating agents that convince adults to return to formal education situations, it is clear from the literature that such a decision causes major changes and often disruptions in the current life style of the adult learners. In their strive to ensure a better education and future for them as well as for their families, they often feel disorientated, confused, and stressed when stepping into their new role as students. Institutions of higher education, therefore, should not be the agent that contributes to the stress, uncertainty, and confusion of adult learners but rather assist them by breaking down barriers that may inhibit them from reaching their goals. Institutions of higher education should act as contributing agents in the adult learners’ world of learning, opening the doors of opportunity. The discussion to follow (Chapter 2 section 2.5) will focus on contributing factors in adult learning, enabling and assisting adult learners to reach their goals by successfully completing their studies.

## 2.5 CONTRIBUTORS

Contributing factors or agents, according to Comings (2007:33-34), are the forces that support students in persisting in their studies as adult learners. According to Comings (2007:34), supporters include sound relationships with lecturers, fellow students, friends, colleagues, family, definite personal goals, support groups, and religion. These positive supporters or contributors are considered most critical to motivate adult learners to persist in reaching their goal and successfully completing their studies.

International literature studies indicate that adult learners in graduate programmes consider the following institutional contributors to be of assistance in the achievement of success in their studies, such as institutions of higher education that are readily accessible, the provision of programmes that are relevant to their current life needs, programmes and courses that are financially affordable, have flexible course scheduling, and supportive programmes for adult lifestyle commitments.

Adult learners are goal-orientated and motivated to enter or re-enter institutions of learning, they expect and appreciate an educational programme that is well structured, organized, and has clearly defined learning outcomes (Lieb, 1991:1; Comings, 2007:34; Hardin, 2008:55). These adult learners come to the learning situation with a wide range of previous experience and knowledge; they are self-directed and have their own interests. The newly-acquired knowledge has to be successfully integrated with previous knowledge in order for it to be applied to their working environment (Lieb, 1991:1; Hardin, 2008:54; Knowles, 1990:59; Daines et al., 1993:5). Comings (2007:34); Daines et al. (1993:5) and Gravett (2008:11) agree that adults will commit themselves to the new learning experience when the goals and objectives of the programme they are going to follow are considered to be realistic and important to them and if their specific learning needs are addressed. Adult learners further need to understand why they need to learn certain curriculum content. Learning material must be career focused, and new skills and knowledge must be applied immediately (Gravett, 2008:11; Hardin, 2008:55; Knowles, 1990:61). According to the adult learner, the characteristics required of lecturers who contribute to a positive learning experience will ideally be that they treat the adult learner with respect, have knowledge of the curriculum, and demonstrate effective communication with their students (Scanlon, 2009:41; Daines et al., 1993:5). According to St Clair (2006:36), as reported in the Scottish Report, factors that

will enhance the learning experience of adult learners are the availability of efficient social networks, interest in the learning field, personal development, and ambition. Adult learners are goal-orientated and want to earn their qualification in the minimum amount of time.

Institutions of higher learning are in need of adult learners and are, therefore, obliged to assist them to complete their studies and reach their goals (Hardin, 2008:56). Considering this statement by Hardin (2008:56), it is worthwhile mentioning the concept of hygienes and the role it plays in the policies of learning institutions.

According to the industrial psychologist, Herzberg (as cited by St Clair, 2006:16), hygienes are those factors that have to be present in order to allow an individual to perform certain behaviours. Secondly, there are motivators that make behaviour more likely to occur when hygienes are present. Hygienes are the factors that need to be taken care of before an adult learner can take the decision to enrol for an educational programme or course. The policy of the learning institution should ensure that potential learners have access to the support they need in order to be successful in their learning experiences. According to St Clair (2006:33), the following hygienes are initiatives which learning institutions may include in their policies to enable adult learners to participate in learning activities. These hygienes include time allocation of the programme of choice, geographical location of the educational institution, financial assistance, support mechanisms, childcare, clarity of course information and support systems provided by employees. Each of these hygienes will be discussed in detail in section 2.5.1.

## **2.5.1 Hygienes**

### **2.5.1.1 Time allocation**

Institutions of learning must be able to provide the potential learner with a clear plan for time allocation. Ideally an institution should be able to offer a variety of options in programmes or in a programme not only regarding different times, but also different incentives (St Clair, 2006:33).

### **2.5.1.2 Location**

The learning institution must be geographically nearby for the learner, but also suitable for the purpose of the specific learning activity in which the learner wishes to take part. (St Clair, 2006: 34).

### **2.5.1.3 Financial packages**

Necessary funding has to be in place for the adult learner to participate in learning. This, however, does not imply that the programme to be followed has to be totally cost free. The ideal situation would be that the cost of the participation in learning will not exceed the income, life expenses and family commitments of the student (St Clair, 2006:34).

### **2.5.1.4 Support mechanisms**

The learning institution must provide support for the adult learner, for example learner support groups and staff mentors (St Clair, 2006:34).

### **2.5.1.5 Childcare**

Appropriate, convenient, and affordable childcare should be available for the adult learner who has children (St Clair, 2006:35).

### **2.5.1.6 Information**

The learning institution should provide the potential adult learner with enough information regarding courses and programmes for the adult to make informed decisions (St Clair, 2006:35).

### **2.5.1.7 Employer support**

Should the potential learner be employed, the support of the employer could be of importance in the decision to participate in further studies. The employer might work together with the training institution to provide the learner with work-related study materials and advanced skills that could be applied once the employee returns to the working environment (St Clair, 2006:35).

Chapter 2 (section 2.5) focused on international literature of contributors that assist adult learners to enter or re-enter the formal learning environment. Contributors included external agents such as family, friends and colleagues, positive attitude of lecturers and the internal



motivation of the adult learners to reach their goals. The following section (2.5.2) will discuss literature referring to contributors in adult learning in the South African context.

### **2.5.2 Contributors in the South African context**

Although it is limited, the literature relating to the South African context regarding contributors in adult higher education can be summed up in a study conducted by February and Koetsier (2007:6-7) where adult learners indicated that the factors that influenced their academic success were the effort they as adult students invested in their studies, the support and encouragement of family and friends, their own personality characteristics such as determination and confidence, as well as lecturer and tutor support.

To conclude this discussion on contributors, formal higher education institutions could assist adult learners in experiencing the transition to and from the learning environment as being positive by reducing the inhibitors or barriers that may have a negative impact on their learning environment and by ensuring that hygienes are in place. Hygienes include, for example, institutional activities to expand course delivery, creating student affairs offices that could attend to the needs of adult learners, a redesign of web-sites to include information for adult learners, adult learner orientation sessions, student-mentor programmes, financial assistance and the introduction of adult learner committees.

### **2.5.3 Both ends of the scale: Contributors and Inhibitors**

In this literature review inhibitors that are considered to be barriers in the learning environment and contributors that are considered as positive in the learning environment have been discussed. These are the factors that could influence the endeavours of an adult to enter or re-enter the learning environment as well as his/her learning experience while studying. In search of the relevant literature for this study, it was discovered that some inhibitors could be contributors and *vice versa*. The following literature reviews will confirm that there are factors in the life of the adult learner that could be considered to be either a contributor or an inhibitor depending on the specific situation of the adult learner. These factors that could act as either an inhibitor or a contributor will be referred to as both-ends-of-the-scale factors. These both-ends-of-the-scale factors, which will be discussed in sub-sections 2.5.3.1-2.5.3.4

below, include relationships with family members, the current status of the adult learner, the lecturer-adult learner relationship, and relationships with other students.

### **2.5.3.1 Family**

There is strong evidence that the educational background of the family contributes to the decision of the adult learner to enter or re-enter the educational situation. This may range from the positive end of the scale as a contributor when having a well-educated family that may support the family member entering adult learning situations, or as an inhibitor where there is general unease regarding a family member entering a learning situation. The adult coming from an unsupportive family structure as mentioned by Castle (2003:49) may enter into the learning environment experiencing the negative circumstances of a lack of support or enduring violent abuse due to studying. In many situations the adult learner is the first in the family to attend an institution of higher education, and family support for such a student is critical for him/her to succeed (Hardin, 2008:53). Sometimes family members do not understand the value of the necessary commitment to further education, but, in other situations as mentioned by Castle (2003:44-47), parents would encourage their adult children to return to or further their studies in order to please them as parents and to set an example for their siblings. These very siblings for whom adult learners need to, or want to, set an example could, according to Kasworm (2003:8), become both a major inspiration and/or a major deterrent to participating in learning.

### **2.5.3.2 Status**

Whether a person is unemployed or employed, as well as the type of work the employed person is performing, could significantly influence his/her participation in learning activities. Kasworm (2003:8) mentions that, although limited research has been reported, it is suggested that the level of responsibility and expertise required to perform a specific job may influence the adult learners' decision to enter the learning environment. Most adult learners find it traumatic to move from being successful in their careers to becoming a novice student (Hardin, 2008:53). Owing to the status some adults have achieved in their careers, they could experience feelings of shame to admit that they are enrolled for undergraduate programmes and would inform friends and family members that they are attending seminars. According to the study by O'Donnell et al. (2007:323), some adults indicated that they were too proud to

admit that they were students, but other students indicated the opposite, namely that it was a more socially acceptable label to be a student than having to say that they were unemployed, a single parent, or too ill to work.

### **2.5.3.3 The lecturer-adult learner relationship**

The relationship between the lecturer and the learner is an important factor that could be considered as being either a contributor or an inhibitor (Bye et al., 2007:154-155). The teacher-learner relationship is both an equal and unequal relationship, whether teaching children or adults. Learners should be viewed as being equal as human beings but unequal in the sense that the lecturer is the expert of the specific subject matter. The adult learner is seeking to acquire this specific expertise, consisting of skills and knowledge, from the lecturer (Neuda, 2010:1). The lecturer could, however, become an inhibitor in the learning process when the lecturer “parades knowledge”, and does not encourage the active participation of the adult learner in the learning environment. According to Neuda (2010:3-4) the lecturer who becomes impatient, causes confusion, discourages risk-taking, treats adult learners as children, scolds, and makes use of praise sparingly could be considered as an inhibitor in the world of the adult learner.

According to the study done by O’Donnell and Tobell (2007:321), students indicated that lecturers and other academics who communicated with them as if they were on the same level enhanced their learning experience. Bye et al. (2007:155); Scanlon (2009:33), and Ibrahim and Silong (2000), agree with O’Donnell and Tobell (2007:321) that the lecturer has to demonstrate effective communication and listening skills, encourage the adult to learn, acknowledge the learning endeavours of the adult learner, demonstrate sound knowledge of the curriculum, promote student autonomy, and value the student as an active partner in the shared learning experience.

Lecturers who are underprepared for lecture sessions, those who “spoon-feed” their students, and lecturers, who are unfamiliar with the curriculum, making them guilty of curriculum misinterpretations, are considered as distracters or inhibitors in the world of learning of the adult learner (Scanlon, 2009:34). Adult learners want to have control over their learning experience; they want to have self-direction and, therefore, do not appreciate the overprotective lecturer (Scanlon, 2009:33).

#### **2.5.3.4 Relationships with other students**

Research by Scanlon (2009:36) identified the fact that the relationship with other students was almost as important for the adult learner as the relationship with their lecturer. Students who supported them with their studies were considered as “mentors”, and those who did not support them were considered to be “intimidators”.

### **2.6 SUMMARY**

Chapter 2 focused on the various theoretical frameworks employed for this study. The various frameworks have provided this study with a scientific approach in the search for answers to the research problem. The following theoretical frameworks will be employed: Knowles theory of adult learning to investigate the characteristics of the adult learner and conditions for adult learning; the Typology of Houle to determine the motivating factors for adults to enter or re-enter formal higher education; Cross’s Chain of Response theory will be employed to determine the inhibitors that adult learners may experience before and during enrolment as well as during their study years; the theory of Herzberg to determine the hygienes, namely the factors that need to be taken care of before an adult learner can take the decision to enrol for an educational programme or course, which could act as contributors. The international literature search regarding the main theoretical framework and the concepts of adult learning, motivators, inhibitors, and contributors proved to be insightful and sufficient. In contrast to the international results, the literature search relating to the adult returning to formal higher education as full-time students in the South African context seems to be limited. Studies in the South African context focus mostly on the adult learner participating in part-time studies. The researcher, therefore, concludes that this study relating to adults studying as full-time students in the South African context will be of importance and value for institutions of higher education in their effort to attract and retain adult learners.

Chapter 3 will focus on research methodology. The study method of choice for the empirical research study is that of qualitative data collection and analysis according to the literature study and theoretical frameworks as discussed in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 focused on the literature study relating to the research problem to identify the factors that motivate adults to return to institutions of higher education as well as the inhibitors and contributors they experience during their studies. Both international and national research relating to this study was consulted for a clearer understanding of the research problem. The results of the literature review indicated that, although international research addresses the research problem, very little attention has been given to the adult learner in the South African context returning full-time to higher education. In order to determine the factors that motivated a group of adult learners in the South African context to attend a full-time course, as well as identifying the inhibitors and contributors they experience during their studies, an empirical study will be conducted. The empirical study will assist the researcher to collect reliable data for analysis and interpretation in order to provide an answer to the research problem.

In this chapter the study design, participant selection, ethical considerations, data collection and analysis will be discussed.

#### **3.2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL STUDY**

An empirical study, according to McMillan & Schumacher (2006:10), is a study in which the researcher is guided by evidence obtained by employing systematic research techniques instead of acting on opinions and authorities. Empirical studies require data collection followed by the logic interpretation thereof by the researcher.

In Chapter 2 a detailed discussion was provided regarding the literature review relevant to this study. The motivation for a thorough and detailed literature review was to provide this study with a solid scientifically-based theoretical framework. Literature from previous international and national research studies was included in this literature review in order to

inform the reader regarding the research problem. The second section of this study focuses on the empirical research conducted.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The qualitative research methodology will be the method of choice for this research project. The motivation for employing the qualitative research approach for this study is that the researcher will have the opportunity of becoming part of the world the adult learner experiences in the BOH course. The researcher will, in addition to the data collected from the questionnaires, be able to interact face-to-face with each participant during the in-depth interviewer data collection phase. During these in-depth interviews the researcher will record the adult student's motivation to enter higher education and provide detailed documentation of the adult student's perceptions of the inhibitors and contributors they experience during their studies. The analysis of the in-depth interview combined with the data derived from the open-ended questionnaires will assist the researcher in providing answers to the research problem relating to a specific group of students in the South African context. Data analysis will be done by organising data into pre-determined categories according to the theoretical framework as discussed in chapter 2 sections 2.3 to 2.5.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative research approach**

Johnson and Christensen (2011:376) describe qualitative research approach as the collection of non-numerical data where researchers tend to rely on the inductive mode of the scientific method. Qualitative researchers study phenomena in an open-ended way, have no prior expectations, and no manipulation of the study field is allowed. The main objective of qualitative research is, therefore, to explore, discover, and generate theory. According to Johnson and Christensen (2011:376), qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the researcher in the world of the participants who are observed within their natural setting in an attempt to make sense of it. The observer, however, will not draw any attention to him/herself during the period of observation (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:377; Ritchie & Lewis, 2008:3).

### 3.3.2 Case study

A case study examines a bounded system, or a case, over time in detail and may according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:26-27) be a program, an event, an activity, or a set of individuals bounded in time and place.

A case study approach will be employed to investigate the factors that motivated these participants to resign from their full-time occupations and return to higher education to follow the degree program in Oral Health. Included in the investigation are the inhibitors and the contributors experienced during their years of study.

The motivation for selecting the case study approach was that the participants were bounded to a specific time, place and program for the full duration of the BOH program. During the time of the case study all participants were registered for the BOH program at the Dental Faculty of the University of the Western Cape. The BOH program is a structured, full-time program with compulsory modules spread over three years. All participants to this study attend lectures and clinical sessions at the following campuses namely, the Oral Health Centre at Tygerberg, the Oral Health Centre at Mitchells Plain and the UWC main campus.

Taking the criteria of McMillan and Schumacher (2006:26-27) into consideration this study answered to the criteria of a case study.

The researcher will employ the same lens to explore patterns and themes which occur across all the data collected. According to Mason (2012:165) this case study will be an example of a cross-sectional data indexing method as the researcher will employ the same set of indexing categories for use across all sets of data collected. Motivation and advantages for applying the cross-sectional data indexing method include: the data sets are predominantly text based therefore indexing and retrieval procedures are most readily applied to text-based data; provides a systematic overview of the collected data allowing the researcher to have an indication of how well they have covered the research field; distance the researcher from impressive incidents and assists the researcher to determine if the data collected addresses the research questions (Mason, 2012:152-153).

## **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

### **3.4.1 Selection of participants**

In qualitative research, sampling is purposive, and, according to Johnson and Christensen (2011:239), researchers employing the qualitative research methodology have to decide who or what they want to study. After that the researcher defines a set of criteria or characteristics the participants must hold (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:235). In qualitative research the researcher will purposively search for information-rich participants, groups of people, sites, or events that will be able to supply knowledgeable and experienced information regarding certain phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:318).

### **3.4.2 Sampling of participants**

Qualitative research typically employs samples that are small in scale. The participants are purposively selected by inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the data collection methods involve close contact between the participant/s and the researcher (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008:3). The sample for this study includes all the students currently registered for the BOH programme in their first, second, or third year of study who meet one of the inclusion criteria as mentioned in this discussion under the heading 3.4.3 “Participant criteria”.

### **3.4.3 Participant criteria**

The inclusion criteria for participants to this study are students registered for the Bachelor’s Degree in Oral Health who meet one of the following criteria:

- Students with prior working experience related to dentistry;
- Students with prior working experience not related to dentistry;
- Students with other qualifications (higher education)



### **3.4.4 Data collection**

The term “method of data collection” refers to how the researcher obtains empirical data in order to answer the research question (Christensen & Johnson, 2011:55).

The data collection methodology employed for this study is a combination of standardized open-ended questionnaires and the in-depth interview guide where questions are directed by the theoretical framework as discussed in Chapter 2 sections 2.2-2.5. There will be three opportunities for data collection by the use of two different data collection methods. The motivation for the three different sets of data collection is for the purpose of triangulation. Triangulation will provide the researcher with a systematic comparison of findings on the same research topics, generated by different research methods (Bloor & Wood, 2006:170).

The first method of data collection was that of questionnaires (Annexures B & C). The questionnaires consisted of open-end type questions divided into different sections. According to Babbie (2004:245) open-ended questions indicate the type of questioning where the participant provides his or her own answers.

The second type of data collection was the method of in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews contain open-response questions in order to obtain data from participants about how they perceive their world and how they explain, experience, or make sense of the important events in their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:350).

A detailed discussion of the methods of data collection pertaining to this study will follow hereunder.

#### **3.4.4.1 Questionnaires**

According to Christensen and Johnson (2011:56), a questionnaire is a self-report, data-collection instrument. The questionnaire may include the collection of data measuring demographics, opinions, and perceptions of the participants. These questionnaires are completed by the research participants. Questionnaires may include closed-ended items where respondents have to select from a range of responses supplied by the researcher and open-ended items where the participant may provide answers in their own words.

Questionnaires were issued to participants who fulfilled to meet one of the participant selection criteria and who gave consent to participate in the study. The first questionnaires were issued to the participants in a lecture venue at the Tygerberg Oral Health Centre.

The first section of the questionnaire for this research study included collecting data relating to the demographic profile of the students. Questions posed in this section included age, gender, and language. A second section included questions relating to the financial position of the student. These questions were included to determine the effect on the students of having to resign from a stable monthly income. Questions included an enquiry of whether the students enjoyed financial independence, and were currently financially responsible for their studies, as well as any other financial responsibilities. A third question relating to their financial situation sought to discover whether they had to work part-time to provide for their financial needs. The third section included questions relating to the educational background of the parents of the student, the student himself or herself, his/her spouse and/or life partner. The reason for including questions regarding the educational background of family members and spouses was motivated by literature reviews as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.5.3.1, claiming that the educational background of family could have a considerable impact on the success and failure of the adult learner as well as his/her motivation to re-enter higher education. The fourth section focused on the factors that motivated these adult learners to enter or re-enter higher education. Questions related to why the students had decided to resign from their secure income jobs in order to enter or re-enter an institution of higher education to study and why they specifically choose oral hygiene as a study field. The researcher considered it important to include a question relating to whether oral hygiene was actually their first choice of study as she has sensed that quite a few adult students were eager to pursue a career as dentists and not that of oral hygienists. The fifth section focused on the perception and experiences of the adult learners regarding the inhibitors encountered before and during enrolment to the oral hygiene programme, as well as during their current studies. The sixth section included questions regarding the contributors these adults had experienced during their studies and the value of these contributors. The questionnaire concluded with a question asking learners whether they were familiar with the support systems on offer at the institution, whether they were utilizing these support systems, and their opinions about and experience of the value of the support systems of the institution.

The open-ended questionnaires were issued at the beginning of the empirical data collection phase and repeated six months later to determine whether the information collected from the first set of data compared with that from the second set of data. The second reason for issuing a follow-up questionnaire (Annexure C) was to determine whether the students had different experiences with regard to inhibitors and contributors as they progressed in their studies. The results of the questionnaires will be compared with the pre-determined categories for motivators, inhibitors, and contributors as outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2 sections 2.3 to 2.5.

#### **3.4.4.2 Interviews**

An interview is a situation where the interviewer asks the interviewee a series of questions; interviews can be face-to-face or telephonic (Christensen & Johnson, 2011: 56). Qualitative interviews may take several forms, for example, the informal conversational interview, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:350). The informal conversational interview and the interview guide are conversational and situational, whereas in the standardized open-ended interview, participants are asked the same questions in the same order (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:350).

The in-depth interviews (Annexure E) for the purpose of this study are guided by the pre-determined categories as discussed in Chapter 2 sections 2.3 to 2.5. The in-depth interviews, with the permission of the participants, were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher. All the interviews were conducted on an individual basis in the office of the researcher at the Oral Health Centre of the Tygerberg Campus. The interviewees could, however, determine the time and date for the interview, suitable to their schedule. Interviews were conducted ensuring privacy and confidentiality. Although interviews were voice recorded, the researcher did the transcribing of the data. All data collected were exclusively handled by the researcher, never allowing a second person, for example a scribe or administrator, to view any of the contents.

### 3.4.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an on-going, cyclical process that is integrated into all the different phases of the research, and there is an on-going interplay between data collection and theory. The researcher is continuously coding data, categorizing, and seeking for emerging patterns in order to interpret the data and make logical conclusions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:364; Babbie, 2004:370). Although qualitative data analysis could be assisted by computer programmes, it is usually the researcher's cognitive ability to analyse and interpret the qualitative data. This cognitive ability of the researcher could never fully be replaced by technology of computer programmes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:364). According to Babbie (2004:376), once the process of data collection is completed the researcher will be in the possession of a massive amount of written information. Patterns emerging from the data may provide important information explaining human behaviour and the perceptions they have of the world in which they live.

In this study, the researcher employed predetermined categories as discussed in Chapter 2 sections 2.3 to 2.5, to code, categorise and seek patterns in the data derived from both the open-ended questionnaires and the in-depth interviews.

The data collected from the questionnaires were studied by the researcher. Information relating to the motivators, inhibitors and contributors mentioned by the participants corresponding with information derived from the literature research were highlighted. Once this manual activity was completed the researcher transferred all the information from the paper copies of the questionnaires onto a combined electronic copy for the specific set of data collected. Employing the review function on MS Word, the researcher coded, categorised and searched for patterning.

Relating to the data collected from the in-depth interviews the researcher captured the data on a voice recorder. Memos of non-verbal communication were made during the in-depth interviews. After conclusion of the in-depth interview the researcher replayed the voice recording and listened to the interview several times. The researcher transcribed the interview verbatim with a pencil onto paper while listening to the voice recording by play-stop, write-replay method. The researcher ensured that each voice recording was accurately transcribed by replaying sections of the voice recording repeatedly to aid the transcription throughout the

complete interview. Only once the researcher was satisfied that the transcribed interview was a true reflection of the voice recording, the researcher considered analysis of the interview. The researcher thereafter typed out the transcribed in-depth interview onto the computer on a MS Word document. Information deriving from the interviews that corresponded with the literature reviews was highlighted. Each participant's comments were coded and placed under the specific pre-determined categories as discussed in chapter 2 sections 2.3 to 2.5 by employing the review function of MS word.

The researcher, for the purpose of this study, decided not to make use of the ATLAS.ti system for qualitative analysis. The motivation for taking such a decision was a multi-factor decision, one owing to a lack of time to master a new computer programme, and secondly, owing to financial constraints. The researcher, however, had discussions with experienced qualitative researchers who advised and guided her on how to make use of the "review" task in MS Word to assist with the coding, categorizing, and pattern seeking of the different sets of data.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **3.5.1 Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers use the term *validity* or *trustworthiness* when referring to qualitative research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and, therefore, defensible (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:264). Strategies that have been developed to maximize validity include extended fieldwork, triangulation by cross checking information by employing the use of multiple procedures or sources to ensure corroboration, making use of multiple research methods to study a phenomenon, participant feedback of the researcher's interpretations and conclusions with the actual participants, and peer review of the researcher's interpretations. On the point of trustworthiness, the researcher employed three opportunities for data collection by the use of two different data collection methods. The motivation for the three different sets of data collection as mentioned in 3.4.4 is for the purpose of triangulation. Triangulation will provide the researcher with a systematic comparison of findings on the same research topics, generated by different research methods (Bloor & Wood, 2006:170).

Where information is unclear or lacking in detail the researcher may recall an interviewee for a second interview with the purpose of clarifying information contributing to the trustworthiness of the study. The researcher will make use of participant review for validity and the reliability of the data. The participant will be requested to confirm the accuracy of the interpretation of transcribed data and or to modify information from the interview data according to the information they have supplied.

Qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than quantitative research, and for that reason ethical policies regarding informed consent, deception, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality are important (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:333).

### **3.5.2 Informed consent**

All participants participating in a research study must provide informed consent before the study may commence. Informed consent is the agreement of the participant to take part in the specific research study after the researcher has informed the participant of the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, alternative procedures, and limits of confidentiality relative to the research project (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:107; Babbie, 2004:64).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants firstly by informing them verbally about the motivation, purpose, and procedures of the research project. The researcher, thereafter, handed each participant a letter of informed consent to be signed signifying agreement to participate in the first method of data collection, namely that of open-ended questionnaires. This letter of informed consent included the required purpose, methods, guarantee of privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participation autonomy was included, indicating the freedom of the participants to withdraw from the study at any time, without jeopardizing themselves academically or personally. Participants agreeing to participate in the study signed the consent letter (Annexure A).

Educational research is often conducted within formal educational institutions, for example schools or universities (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:113). Legally, the researcher may not conduct a research project without the approval of a particular office or administrator in the institution's system (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:107). The researcher, for the purpose of this study, had to employ the sample selection criteria to select participants for this study

from students registered in the Dental Faculty at the University of the Western Cape. The researcher, therefore, had to apply for ethical clearance and registration of this project at the University of the Western Cape. The researcher applied for a position to do a protocol presentation on 6 May 2011. This protocol presentation was attended by the Dean responsible for research at the University of the Western Cape Dental Faculty and staff members of the Dental Faculty. The Dean responsible for research as well as the staff members could make suggestions regarding the research proposal and question the researcher on aspects of the proposed research project. The conclusion of this protocol presentation was that the Dean responsible for research would take the protocol to the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape on 10 June 2011. The protocol was accepted, ethically approved, and registered on 20 July 2011.

The University of the Western Cape has granted the candidate ethical clearance to conduct the above research project. Project Registration Number: 11/5/21 (Annexure G).

### **3.5.3 Anonymity**

Anonymity indicates that the identity of the participant will be unknown to all people reading the research, as well as for the researcher where possible (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:116; Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2011:124; Babbie, 2004:65).

For the purpose of data collection by questionnaire the researcher discussed anonymity and privacy with the participants. No indication of identity would be necessary when answering the questionnaires. The researcher would be the only person involved with the data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and report writing. Each participant was requested to sign a letter of consent, declaring that he/she would participate voluntarily. The consent letter was issued separately from the questionnaire in order to protect the anonymity of the participant and was placed in a closed container. The intended use of the collected data was discussed with the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334). Participants had the authority to decide to participate or withdraw from the research project at any stage. Regarding information security, the researcher assured participants that all information recorded would be kept in a lockable cabinet off-site.

### 3.5.4 Confidentiality and privacy

Confidentiality indicates that the participant will come to an agreement about what the researcher may or may not do with the information obtained during data collection (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:116; Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2011:124). Privacy refers to controlling the access of other people to information collected from participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2011:116).

For the purpose of data collection by questionnaire the researcher discussed anonymity and privacy with the participants. No indication of identity would be necessary when answering the questionnaires. The researcher would be the only person involved with the data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and report writing. Each participant was requested to sign a letter of consent, declaring that he/she would participate voluntarily. The intended use of the data was discussed with the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334). Participants had the authority to decide to participate or withdraw from the research project at any stage. Regarding information security, the researcher assured participants that all information recorded would be kept in a lockable cabinet off-site.

In order to gain informed consent for interviewing purposes, the researcher assured the participants of privacy and confidentiality. Participants were informed that the interview would be recorded by both voice recording and note taking (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334). Voice recordings would be transcribed and analysed by the researcher. Participants are coded in such a way that only the researcher would be able to identify the interviewee should the researcher find it necessary to repeat an interview with a specific participant. The researcher would make use of “participant review” in order to enhance the validity of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:326). The researcher would ask each participant to review his or her own transcriptions and notes of the interview in order to check for correctness of information and interpretation.

Participants were under no obligation to take part in the study, and they could, at any time, withdraw from the study without any personal or academic penalty. Students could indicate whether they did not wish to answer a specific question. Participants could indicate when they wished to provide information for the purpose of the study, but also choose not to have certain sections of the interview voice recorded. The researcher acknowledged restrictions



within her field of study and practice and the fact that, during interviews, participants may share information that indicated referral for professional help or support. The researcher would, however, follow up on such participants only if the participant should verbally express the need and ask for a referral. This could be interpreted as an act of reciprocity towards the participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:334).

The above-mentioned was discussed with each participant and presented in written format. A letter of consent was issued to each student participating in the interview section of the data collection (Annexure D). The student, once he/she agreed to participate, signed the letter of informed consent. The signed consent letter will be kept on record by the researcher. Letters of consent will be kept off-site in a locked cabinet. Each student received a copy of the letter of consent he/she has signed for their own record keeping.

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

Chapter 3 has focused on the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis as well as the ethical considerations employed for this study. The researcher considered the qualitative research design to be best suited for this study to determine the factors motivating adults to return to higher education as well as the inhibitors and contributors they experience. The data collection methods selected were that of open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The interviews, as well as the questionnaires, were considered to be able to provide data reflecting each participant's own experiences and perceptions regarding the research problem under investigation. To ensure that information is trustworthy, triangulation was employed by issuing a second questionnaire six months after the initial questionnaire. In-depth interviews were voice recorded and transcribed. The researcher made use of member checking to further enhance trustworthiness.

Ethical considerations included aspects of informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, institutional consent, and no harm to participants. Data analysis for both questionnaires and in-depth interviews were done separately. Each set of data was coded manually and electronically on MS Word. The researcher typed out all the data derived from each of the questionnaires into an MS Word document form into the pre-determined categories. Once all the data had been captured onto the Word document the researcher made use of the "Review" function to identify codes and the patterning of the data. The data derived from the

questionnaires were transcribed from the voice recordings by handwriting each interview and, thereafter, typing each transcribed interview onto MS word documents. Once again the researcher made use of the “Review” function of the MS Word to code, categorise, and seek patterns in the information.

Chapter 4 will focus in detail on the analysis and discussion of the three sets of data collected.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 focuses on the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the data collected for this study. Data collection methods, as discussed in chapter 3, included both open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The researcher collected data by employing open-ended questionnaires on two separate occasions for the sake of trustworthiness and to determine the impact of a more senior study year on the adult learners (Annexures B and C). The first set of data collected from the participants was that gleaned from the open-ended questionnaire (Annexure B). The questionnaire was issued to learners who met the participant criteria and agreed to participate in the study. The second open-ended questionnaire (Annexure C) was distributed to the same learners, six months after issuing the first questionnaire. Not all participants returned the second open-ended questionnaire.

The first and second questionnaire included items that would elicit information regarding demographics, the educational background of parents, spouses, life-partners, and the participants themselves. The reason for the inclusion of questions relating to the educational background of parents, as well as that of spouses, was to determine whether the academic background of these family members acted as a significant motivator, inhibitor, or contributor with regard to the decision of these participants to return to higher education.

The questionnaires, furthermore, included questions structured around pre-determined categories regarding factors that could have acted as agents motivating these adults to return as full-time students to university, as well as the categories relating to the inhibitors and contributors affecting them during their studies. These pre-determined categories were discussed in detail in chapter 2, with section 2.3 referring to motivators according to the Typology of Houle, section 2.4 referring to inhibitors according to Cross's Chain Response Model, section 2.5 referring to Contributors, and section 2.5.1 to Hygienes according to Hertzberg, that should be in place and that could enable an adult learner to return to the educational environment.

The second method of data collection, that of in-depth interviews, was used to obtain answers from the participants regarding factors that had motivated them to resign from their secure income occupation and become full-time students, the inhibitors or barriers they had experienced as adults during their application to enrol to the course, the inhibitors they experience currently as adults learners, how they overcome these barriers, and what enable them to continue with their studies.

Questions regarding the support systems on offer by the university and the value thereof were included in both the questionnaires as well as during the in-depth interviews.

Students participating in the research project were reminded of their agreement to make themselves available for in-depth interviews after both the first and the second questionnaire data collection activities. The researcher followed-up on this invitation by making appointments with the participants for the in-depth interviews. Ten of the fourteen participants made themselves available for the in-depth interview. The in-depth interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and transcribed by the researcher.

The in-depth interviews (Annexure E) were conducted in the office of the researcher. Interviews were conducted for at least 45 minutes to one hour per interviewee. The voice recordings of the in-depth interviews were recorded on a Phillips<sup>®</sup> digital voice recorder and thereafter downloaded onto a personal laptop computer. Thereafter the digital voice recordings were transcribed verbatim by recording the conversation onto paper. The researcher typed out the in-depth interviews. The analysis was done by reading the in-depth interviews several times and sorting the information under the pre-determined categories. Once sorting under the pre-determined categories had been completed, the researcher identified patterns in the information provided. The key words that were constantly repeated by the participants in the interviews indicated that there was a pattern of similar experiences. These keywords were highlighted. Once that process had been completed, the researcher typed in the command to the programme to filter and group the keywords. The same process was followed in analysing the data of the open-ended questionnaires.

## 4.2 Demographic information

In the following section the demographic information collected from the open-ended questionnaire will be presented and discussed. The demographics will assist in contextualising the data and will, furthermore, provide the researcher with information regarding the age, gender, race, home language, and educational background of the participants most likely to resign from their full-time occupation and apply for the BOH programme.

### 4.2.1 Age

The distribution of the students' ages varied between 20 and 50 years. According to the data collected, it is in the age category of 20-27 years that adults are most likely to make a career shift and enter higher education, followed by the category of students between the ages 36-43 years.

**Table1. Age of adult student participants registered in the BOH programme**

Age	Participants
20-27	8/14=57.14%
28-35	1/14=7.14%
36-43	2/14=14.29%
44-51	1/14=7.14%
Unknown	2/14=14.29

### 4.2.2 Gender

The oral hygiene occupation is historically a female-dominated occupation, and, therefore, males are still the minority in this course and occupation. One male (7.14%) and thirteen (92.86%) female students participated in the study. This is clearly reflected by the data presented in table 2.

**Table 2. Gender of adult student participants registered in the BOH programme**

Gender	Participants
Female	13/14=92.86%
Male	1/14=7.14%

#### 4.2.3 Home language

The distribution of language indicated that three participants were Xhosa speaking, two were Afrikaans speaking, and the majority, 6 (42.86%), were English speaking. There are one student each who spoke one of the following languages, Shona/Ndebele, Portuguese, and German.

**Table 3. Home language of the adult students registered in the BOH programme**

Home language	Participants
English	6/14=42.86%
Xhosa	3/14=21.43%
Afrikaans	2/14=14.29%
Shona/Ndebele	1/14=7.14%
Portuguese	1/14=7.14%
German	1/14=7.14%

#### 4.2.4 Race

The majority of the adults, 9 (64.28%), who enter the BOH programme are from previously disadvantaged groups, and 92.86% are female. The profile is in accordance with stipulations of *The Education White Paper 3*, of 1997.

**Table 4. Race classification of adult students registered in the BOH programme**

Race	Participants
Black	5/14=35.71%
Coloured	2/14=14.29%
Indian	2/14=14.29%
White(all female adults)	5/14=35.71%

### 4.2.5 Financial dependence

Thirteen (92.86%) of the students indicated that they were either totally financially dependent or mostly financially dependent on other people. Only one (7.14%) participant indicated having their own small business and being financially independent.

**Table 5. Financial in/dependence of adult students registered in the BOH programme**

Financial in/dependence	Participants
Dependent	13/14=92.86%
Independent	1/14=7.14%

### 4.2.6 Educational background of family

#### 4.2.6.1 The father

Unfortunately five (35.71%) of the participants did not respond to this question. Four (28.58%) students responding to this question indicated that their fathers had no qualifications, one (7.14%) student indicated that the father had some kind of informal “in service” training, and four (28.58%) students indicated that their fathers had formal higher educational qualifications.

The occupations of the fathers varied from those with no formal training, for example a municipal worker and a construction worker, to semi-formal training, for example a business man, the owner of an estate agency, an employee at an embassy, and those with a tertiary qualification, for example an accountant and a pastor.

**Table 6. Educational background of fathers**

Educational background: Father	Participants
Did not answer question	5/14=35.71%
No qualifications	4/14=28.58%
Informal training / in service training	1/14=7.14%
Diploma	1/14=7.14%
Degree	2/14=14.29%
Diploma and degree	1/14=7.14%

**4.2.6.2 The mother**

Unfortunately four (28.57%) participants did not respond to this question. Students responding to this question indicated that three (21.43%) of the mothers had no qualifications, four (28.57%) had some kind of informal “in service” training, and three (21.43%) students reported that their mothers had formal higher education qualifications.

Occupations included being housewives, pensioners, a physiotherapist, a pastor, a counsellor, a nurse, and an art teacher.

**Table 7. Educational background of mothers**

Educational background: Mother	Participants
Did not answer question	4/14=28.57%
No qualifications	3/14=21.43%
Informal training / in service training	4/14=28.57%
Degree	3/14=21.43%

**4.2.6.3 The participants**

Six (42.86%) of the participants had no post-school qualifications, and six (42.86%) participants had completed post-school qualifications. Post-school qualifications included three with completed degrees, two with diplomas, and one with a certificate. Two (14.29%) participants had not completed their previous post-school studies.



The second questionnaire (Annexure C) required that the participants provide more detailed information regarding their educational background. Post-school qualifications ranged from obtaining degrees in Psychology, Information Technology, and B.Sc. in Zoology, a Diploma in Basic Ambulance Attendance, and Certificates in dental assisting. Incomplete post-school qualifications included the field of Nursing and a B.Sc. degree.

Qualifications were obtained from the following higher educational institutions: Universities; University of Technology; Poli-Technicon (Namibia); Institute of Christian Psychology; Oxbridge Academy, and the Medical Rescue Institute.

**Table 8. Educational background of the participant pre-registration for the BOH programme**

Educational background: Participants	Participants
No post-school training	6/14=42.86%
Post-school qualification not completed	2/14=14.29
Certificate	1/14=7.14%
Diploma	2/14=14.29%
Degree	3/14=21.42%

#### 4.2.6.4 The spouse/life partner

Seven (50%) of the participants indicated that they did not have a spouse. Three (21.43%) indicated that their spouse did not have any post-school qualification, and four (28.57%) indicated that their spouse/life partner had post-school qualifications. The following employment by spouses/life partners were recorded; a radiographer, a school principal, and two chartered accountants.

**Table 9. Educational background of spouse**

Educational background: Spouse	Participants
No spouse/life partner	7/14=50%
No post-school qualification	3/14=21.43%
Degree qualification	4/14=28.57%

#### **4.2.6.5 The family**

The question relating to the educational background of the parents as well as the participants and the influence thereof on their decision to study further could broadly be divided into four categories. The first category included participants who came from an educational background where the parents had no post-school qualifications. Data analysis from the open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews indicated that parents who did not have post-school qualifications acted as agents of external motivation. These parents motivated their adult children to resign from their current jobs to take the opportunity to study further in order to have a brighter future. These parents without qualifications encouraged the participants to be the first in the family to obtain a university qualification. The second category consisted of participants with parents and other family members, for example older or younger siblings, with post-school qualifications. These families were more academically orientated and they motivated the participants to obtain a higher education qualification equal to what they as parents had and/or to compete with siblings. The third category consisted of the participants who worked, earned a salary, and had no previous university qualifications. These participants were motivated to study further to have a better future. A qualification from a higher educational institution would improve their academic (and personal) status and power. The fourth category was composed of those participants who had previously obtained a post-school qualification(s) and were internally motivated to achieve more, desiring an occupation with more status, power, independence, and often competing with siblings in the family for yet another qualification.

#### **4.2.7 Oral hygiene as first choice**

Six (42.86%) of the participants indicated that their main intention was to enrol for the Bachelors in Oral Health as it was their first choice and the only career they wanted to follow. Eight (57.14%) participants indicated that although they are registered for the Bachelors in Oral Health it was not their first choice.

**Table 10. Oral hygiene as first, second or third choice of study**

Ranking of choice to study oral hygiene	Participants
First choice	6/14=42.86%
Second choice	6/14=42.86%
Third choice	1/14=7.14%
Did not have a choice	1/14=7.14%

In the following section the researcher will continue to present and discuss the data analysis deriving from the various data collection methods. The discussion will be conducted according to the various theoretical frameworks as discussed in chapter 2 sections 2.2. to 2.5.

The different sets of data will be presented in combination under each of the pre-determined categories of motivators, inhibitors, and contributors. Data collected from the open-ended questionnaires (Annexures B & C) will be reported on as “Participant Q” while data collected from the interviews (Annexure E) will be reported on as “Participant I”.

#### **4.3. Motivation to resign and enrol for the full-time course in B. Oral Health**

To determine the factors that motivated the adults to resign from secure income occupations and enrol for a full-time course in order to pursue the BOH qualification, the participants were asked to note or report their main motivation for entering or re-entering higher education.

The answers obtained from the participants relating to this question could be grouped according to the Typology of Houle as discussed in chapter 2, (section 2.3.2). According to Houle, adult learners could be goal-orientated, activity-orientated or learning-orientated.

Goal-orientated learners included those who indicated that they are in personal transition, students who realized they had to do serious pro-active life planning, those who wanted personal advancement, as well as students who were motivated to prove themselves to a spouse or a family member. The learning-orientated students were learners who wanted to improve or learn new skills in the dental occupation, and, by doing so, secure improved employability, job security, and advance their status and power. The activity-orientated

learner finds in the learning environment a specific meaning which is not necessarily related to the content that is presented (Boshier & Collins, 1985:115). The activity-orientated learners participate for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction thereof rather than to develop or learn a new skill (Gordon, 193:6; Merriam et al., 2007:64). Activity-orientated learners often join in a learning activity to escape from loneliness, unhappy circumstances, boredom, or to maintain a family (Cross, 1981:82; Boshier & Collins, 1985:115).

#### **4.3.1 Goal-orientated learners**

Learners belonging to this category indicated that they had returned to higher education in order to provide for a better future for themselves and their families. These students were motivated to resign from their full-time occupations, which they sometimes enjoyed or sometimes dreaded, in order to prepare for a better quality of life. As indicated by participant I1 “... I have been a dental assistant for more than five years and came to realize that oral hygiene would be a good career path to follow and that the salaries are much better in comparison to that of a chair side assistant in dentistry...”. Participant Q2 said, “... I want to improve the quality of my life...” While participant Q5 noted, “... I want to better myself and be educated... I have been taught by my parents that education is the only way out of poverty...”. This better quality of life that students envisaged would be to the benefit of themselves as well as to the benefit of their families. The benefit of an improved qualification includes providing a better future for their children, spouses, parents, and other siblings as stated by participant I3 “... first of all was for having a better life for me and my child, my daughter”. The same interviewee, furthermore, indicated that she could not keep on working at her previous job as a cleaner, hardly being able to afford the taxi fare and finding it impossible to maintain a child.

In addition to this, the majority of the participants mentioned that they wanted to prove themselves to family members, including parents, siblings, and spouses. Three participants mentioned that they wanted to obtain the Degree in Oral Health to prove to family members that they could obtain a degree. Some of the participants wanted to demonstrate that they have equally excellent academic abilities compared to a specific family member, as participant I4 stated “... my brother does well in everything, he is a genius ... my brother encourages me, my brother could be considered as my enabler... he is very supportive and I want to be just as good as he... I want to show my family I can do just as well...”. Participant

I6 indicated that she wanted to prove to her parents that she could perform academically just as well as her brother, "... my parents always say you have to work ... take your brother as an example! ... I want to prove them wrong... my brother works hard and yah... I want to follow his example...".

The interviewees who were dental assistants before applying for the BOH degree indicated that this degree qualification is considered by them as an occupation that will provide them with more power and status. Obtaining a degree in oral health would be considered a move upward on the status scale and they would be appreciated more by their patients. Participant I4 explained, "... Some patient once said to the dentist "what do you need her for...", and that "her" is sitting there... you know they are all 'la de da' people and I had more degrees than that patient and she did not know that... she just made an assumption... dental assistants are not stupid... that made me so angry...". The participant really became enraged by the patient's comment and decided to enrol for yet another degree. Participant I4 stated that, in general, patients visiting the dentist for treatment do not regard the dental assistant as being of any importance.

Relating to the question of the educational background of parents, the majority of the participants indicated that they were the first in their family to attend an institution of higher education. Participant I5 indicated that she was the first in her family to start, and most probably persevere with, a degree qualification. She said, "... I am the only one of her [referring to her mother] children that has gone to university, and I am trying to complete my course successfully ... the other ... my brother and sister... had gone to college but had dropped out... I am the only one that has achieved high marks from high school up to now..." The same student indicated that her mother had acted as an encouraging force for her to study. She mentioned that her mother's expectation of her to overachieve academically had placed her under enormous pressure. The same comment was noted by participant I10 who indicated that her father, who had no education owing to the former apartheid government, urged her to obtain a university degree. Participant I10 reported "... my sister is a medical doctor... my father wanted me to be one as well ... I do not like blood... I ended up doing oral hygiene... I thought it would have no blood ... but it has a lot...". Participant I10 however indicated that she wanted to follow a career in banking, but to fulfil her father's wish; she had decided to register for the BCh D course in order to become a dentist. According to this

interviewee, she ended up in the BOH course by default. She indicated that it had never been her intention to study to become an oral hygienist.

#### **4.3.2 Activity-orientated learners**

The activity-orientated learners participate for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction thereof rather than to develop or learn a new skill. There were only two participants that may fit into the activity-orientated section. Both these participants did not resign from their full-time occupations out of their own choice to follow a career in oral hygiene but were convinced by their families. Participant Q6 wanted to become a dentist and was not interested in oral hygiene. The participant indicated that she basically just attended the course to keep her family pacified and considered the oral hygiene course as an activity she needed to complete. Participant I8 indicated that she wanted to work in a bank and is attending the course to pacify her sister and her father. Participant I8 disclosed in the interview that the only aspect she enjoys of being in Cape Town and being enrolled for the course in oral hygiene is that she and her sister-in-law can go out on shopping excursions, beauty treatments and dressing-up.

Participant Q6 indicated that she is studying for this qualification as an oral hygienist because her parents wanted her to study oral hygiene. "... I did not want to study oral hygiene... my parents made me register for this course... it was then a two year diploma, now that I am studying this BOH course it has become a three year degree...". Participant I8 replied that she is registered for the BOH course just to satisfy the wishes of her father and sister "... My sister is a medical doctor and my father wanted me to become one as well, I do not want to study to become an oral hygienist, I am in this course to keep my father and sister happy... I want to work in a bank... now I am in Cape Town away from my child and my family... my sister-in-law lives in Cape Town, she and I go shopping and dressing up... that I enjoy...".

The section on the "Activity-orientated" learner is unsurprisingly scanty as the majority of students resigned from their full-time occupation to reach a specific goal as previously discussed in section 4.3.1 and are therefore goal-orientated. Should the focus of this study have been on the motivation why adults enter programs of leisure, the comment resorting under the heading "Activity-orientated learners" would most possibly be rich and impressive.

### 4.3.3 Learning-orientated learners

Learning-orientated learners want to improve their skills or learn new skills in the dental occupation and, by doing so, secure improved employability, job security, and advance their status and power. Participant Q2 indicated that she was motivated to resign from her job as a dental assistant and further her studies as an oral hygienist "... because it is a step up from where I was...". For participant Q4 it was "... Also in a way an ego thing... fed up of people assuming I am not so intelligent... I used to be embarrassed to even mention to others what I did as people often hold the assumption that dental assistants are not bright...". Participant Q5 was seeking self-worth, "... I believe that I have a lot to offer the world... I can actually be someone if I'm educated". In this category, participant I4 answered that she was blessed with so many talents and, therefore, wanted to further her studies. This student had previously obtained two other degrees as well as numerous diploma and certificate qualifications. She stated, "... how fortunate I am in comparison to others... I want to do also in the field of dentistry a Master's Degree research project... I will always study...". Participant Q5 indicated her intention to study further once she had obtained her qualification as an oral hygienist and indicated that, "... While I am working as an oral hygienist, I will register for my Master's Degree in Public Health. I will not stop studying...". Participant Q14 indicated that she needed more of an academic challenge and decided to continue studies; "... my previous studies were all so easy so I wanted something that is a bit more challenging and also something I would enjoy and would support me in the future, ... I wanted an extra qualification because my first qualification as gym instructor is not sufficient to support myself with ... especially in Namibia".

### 4.4 Inhibitors

Relating to the question of whether the participants had encountered any inhibitors when they applied to enrol for the BOH course as well as during their years of studies, the participants responded as follows. Seven of the participants indicated that they had experienced inhibitors during the time they were in the process of making application and during enrolment. Comments included those which follow, and these are grouped according to pre-determined categories of inhibitors students may encounter according to the classification of Cross. Cross's classification identified institutional, dispositional, and situational barriers.

#### 4.4.1 Institutional inhibitors

The institutional inhibitors participants encountered and most often reported on was their perception regarding the way they were treated at the university's main campus by administrative staff. Participant I3 explained what she encountered as institutional inhibitors, "... It was the people at the UWC campus, the admin, they do not ask questions, nobody helps you, and I think it is the attitude of the admin people, on a scale of one to five... I would rate them as poor". This was confirmed by participant Q5 who reported on her experience with the university administration. "... People at main campus are not helpful at all... a person has to find their own way...". Some of the participants were under the impression that the university administration is quota driven and drenched with discrimination as explained by participant Q5 "...yes, there are certain quotas the university tries to fill in terms of numbers and statistics... you maybe have the marks but the university is trying to balance statistics, you could actually lose a place in a programme due to this...".

The majority of foreign students reported inhibitors during the actual process of enrolment. These problems were mainly administrative of nature, as participant Q5 once again shared her experience with student administration, "... Student administration told me firstly they only take in five foreign students in the course and secondly in addition to that they had a problem with me having studied before and almost wanted to say that I should give others a chance too..." Some administrative problems experienced by the participants were owing to a lack of effective communication from student administration at main campus and the Dental Faculty administration. Participant Q1 indicated, "... I did not receive any mail from the department only to be called and told that I was supposed to be in class...". Participant Q1 was the only male participant in the study; he reported, "... I am the bread winner of the family ... this late and poor communication caused serious problems. I was confronted to resign immediately from my job, find accommodation and leave my family in the Eastern Cape... on arrival at campus I was informed that there was no more accommodation available on campus and I had nowhere to live... this created a lot of problems in my first year". Students furthermore indicated that they experienced problems with official documentation. The problems relating to documentation were that some students indicated that they either had to wait excessively long periods to receive replies to requests or to receive documentation. Participant Q3 explained her encounter with administration as follows, "... because I am Namibian and our school marks are different I had to get an exemption



certificate which was difficult because it's done telephonically... although I started the process the year prior to my studies I had to wait a week after campus had already started before I got my answer from student administration...". Communication with faculty officers was noted as difficult, and they never replied to e-mails. "... Calling from a different country is very costly and to be ignored... all this is unacceptable...".

Participants indicated that a further institutional barrier was the geographical location of the university and that only selected institutions made provision for the BOH programme. A complicating factor that was mentioned by the participants was that BOH is a selection course that limits the number of successful applicants. When the researcher asked the participants to supply reasons why they had selected this specific institution to study at, they had various reasons. Participant I1 was persuaded to enrol at the institution owing to the fact that she was selected and her place was confirmed by the institution to the programme. She stated, "... I did try at the University of Pretoria and could not get accepted and then got accepted here ...". Participants Q2 and Q6 indicated that they had no choice but to enrol at the specific institution, and reported, "... because it is the only dental faculty in the Western Cape... I had no choice...". Participant Q3 opted to apply to the institution with high status value, "... I was told it had the best dental school in South Africa and that it merged with Stellenbosch University". Participant Q4 was convinced by the geographical location of the institution, "... I wanted to be in Cape Town... it was the only dentistry faculty I knew about". Participant Q5 indicated that finances were the deciding factor to enrol at this specific institution and stated, "... I applied here because it is not very expensive and has a dental faculty..."

#### **4.4.2 Dispositional inhibitors**

Dispositional inhibitors include personal and psychological fears as indicated by participant Q2, "... The barriers were more psychological...", and this was echoed by participant Q6, "... Yes, my own personal fears... fear of the unknown and fear of lack of self-efficacy...". Relocating to a new environment was often mentioned by participants coming from other provinces and foreign countries. Participant I1 mentioned, "... At first I was excited, but fearing the unknown... not coming from Cape Town I did not know where to find anything... all was unknown and I had to find my way around... no familiar faces... all so new...". Participant I3 indicated during the interview that she had to rely on her faith to overcome her

fear of the new learning environment, "... the first time I applied, someone told me to come here and I prayed I would find someone who would direct me here and I sat outside and prayed...". Participant I6 reported on her fear of the unknown by stating, "... I was scared because it was a complete new environment and everything was completely changed... making new friends and people, fear of the unknown...". Participant I9 agreed and stated, "... coming from the Eastern Cape... not knowing where I am going... the taxi driver said he knew where UWC main campus is and he dropped me off... O ... I was scared... but now I am ok...".

Participants with spouses indicated that they now had to depend on their husbands for financial support. Participant Q2, "... leaving my job, my comfort zone.... what relationship strain with my husband would that cause?"

Resignation from full-time occupations was also noted as being a dispositional barrier as participant Q6 noted, "... leaving a secure job where I was comfortable, happy and earning a predictable income to having to depend on my husband...", and participant I4, "... I was out of my comfort zone and to lose your income is frightening, my employer kept my job open for six months for me to return...".

Some participants who lived in private residences verbalized their fear of driving long distances to the various campuses for training. Participant I2 reported, "... I had a fear of driving which was a big barrier.... I know that it was going to be hard driving the 91 km everyday... when I started the course I did not have any transport of my own but when I got my car to drive the 91 km in peak traffic... I had thoughts... I felt the pressure so much that I wanted to run away...". One of the candidates coming from a neighbouring country confirmed that she found it most challenging "... to find a place for me to stay and to drive here... in Cape Town...".

#### **4.4.3 Situational inhibitors**

Situational barriers mentioned included the loss of income, financial constraints, the thought of being dependent as an adult on other people, for example their parents and family members, having no transport, and being far away from their family and friends all owing to the geographical location of the institution.

Financial problems created the situational inhibitor most frequently mentioned by the participants. The participants reported that they did not appreciate becoming dependant on family members or other people for the three years of their studies. Most of the participants indicated that they were financially dependent on a specific family member or members, parents, or spouses. The lack of finances had a negative impact on their previous lifestyle that they had enjoyed. According to participant I1, she and her husband had planned for her to study, but soon found their money was depleted, "... I thought the money we saved over the few years would be enough to carry us through... but my... our money ran out soon with the move, deposit on housing... my father is now paying 100% of my study fees... my in-laws pay our DSTV for entertainment... as we cannot afford to go out...". Participant I2 who was supported by her parents for all her living requirements stated, "... my stressor ... definitely financially... I feel like... guilty when my parents give me money when they do not really have and it actually stresses me a lot, so I try and work part-time as much as possible... I know my parents are making sacrifices and that really hurts me... having no income and being reliant on my parents and not having transport... those were difficult, but when I got past the mental block... I did it..." Participant I3, who has a daughter to support, has taken up a demanding part-time occupation as a career at a facility for Alzheimer patients and the aged. She often leaves directly from campus to go to the home for the aged to work night shifts and weekends. "... Yah... I have a financial difficulty that is why I got a part-time job... even if I do not have food on my table I shall still come to university..."

These participants, furthermore, indicated that a lack of finances did not only place a burden on their family, but indicated that a lack of financial freedom also had negative social implications. Students reported that they did not have enough money to socialize with friends and had to stay at home over weekends and university vacations. Participant I1 indicated the loss of close friends owing to her relocation to Cape Town, and said that limited finances was difficult, stating that "... socially I do not have much friends as we moved from Gauteng and my lifetime friends and family are there, due to the studies I do not have time to invest in building new friendships... so ... I am looking forward to see my friends again and maybe go out with them and my husband once I am qualified...". Participant I2 sounded depressed during the interview and stated, "... I think one of the biggest changes is the deterioration of my social life, it has deteriorated a lot... I know at varsity social life is supposed to improve ... I am friends with the very young students in my class although they are very mature for their age; age is not a problem, physically... distance to travel to friends is a problem after

university hours and money... I am invited to go out... but I do not have any money, so suddenly I have no income and that limits my social life... I often sit alone at home at night...” Prolonged social isolation and the deprivation of social interaction caused depression with some of the participants, especially those who were not in stable relationships with partners or not married. Married students living with their spouses reported that, although they did not always have the finances to go out for entertainment, they would at least watch a movie on television. Spouses, partners, and best friends living together were considered as encouragement, advising the students to take breaks for a few minutes before returning to their studies and assisting them with house chores.

When asked about the inhibitors they currently experience as adult learners, the participants mentioned, in both the questionnaires and the in-depth interviews that they find the workload of the course heavy when taking into account that they have multiple roles to fulfil. Adult learners specifically referred to the enormous workload during their second year of study. Participant Q1 complained that an interrupted learning path, combined with heavy course workload, was a challenge, “... firstly it was difficult for me to cope with the workload of the studies as I took 16 years before I could enter tertiary level...”. Participant Q6 was challenged by the multiple roles she had to fulfil, “... balancing workload and family life... and the guilt that arises from all the compromising...”. Participant I1 reported that she struggled to cope with the heavy work load and reported that age was a factor with a failing memory and poor retention of information, “... one of the difficulties I experience is... continuous hard work and very hard work to say the least... I personally think that the younger students have the advantage that they can study faster than me who’s older...”. Heavy workload as an inhibitor was confirmed by participant I2 who indicated that she suffered an undue amount of stress owing to the workload. This undue amount of stress reacted negatively on her physical and psychological health, as well as her social and family relations. She quoted, “... what I find as a barrier... is the exceptional amount of stress due to workload... at times I have been driven to the brink of insanity... I cry a lot and I lose weight, I get difficult with my family, I then give them a hard time and I get aggressive... the very long hours because of the traffic... leaving at 6:45 in the morning and then getting home after 17:45... Lecturers’ negative attitude...”. The result of this excessive amount of stress created by her studies resulted in serious physical problems causing surgical procedures and the use of prescription anti-depressants. Participant I6 confirmed that the workload was a huge inhibitor, “... Yes there is so much to do... it is hard, the volume of work, knowledge base, practical sessions, short time

and so many students that need to do practical or observe ... so you have to stay longer at the training facilities to get a chance...”.

Other inhibitors from the dispositional category mentioned were age related. There were both physical problems and social implications related to being an older student. Participants mentioned that being older it is difficult to keep up physically with the demands of the course. The participants indicated that it could be owing to their age that they struggle to cope with the workload. Participant Q3, who was the oldest member participating in the study, mentioned that “... after more than 25 years, critical reading and writing were my greatest challenge, remembering the new information...”, and this was confirmed by participant I1 “... I personally think that the younger students have the advantage that they can study faster than me who’s older...”. Another comment referring to the fact that their age was an inhibitor regarding their campus life included that of participant Q8 who said “... Classmates always think you know everything just because you older than them... some call you ’auntie; just to assume or remind you that you old... which I don’t like...”. Participant Q12 was annoyed in general with the younger students and their irresponsible attitude; she stated, “... just being around younger students... that is difficult...”.

The participants who had been working as dental assistants for a few years thought that their experience in a dental-related occupation would be to their benefit, but they soon discovered that lecturers would actually act as inhibitors reacting negatively to their past experiences when they referred to knowledge or experience gained previously. Participants in general commented on lecturers being rude towards them either with regards to previous knowledge gained or because they had an opinion based on experience, as stated by participant I6, “... Some of the lecturers are very rude and this makes it difficult to learn for me as an adult... I personally learn when people are more kind... some of the lecturers are quite intimidating ...”. Some of the participants were of the opinion that sometimes their time was wasted by lecturers as stated by Participant I6, “... some lecturers come to lectures ill prepared... I feel there is so much to do and then you have to sit here in class to listen to repetitions of lectures and there are a lot of other things you have to do...”.

Three of the participants who came from other provinces or neighbouring countries had to relocate to the Western Cape Province and made use of the hostel accommodation facilities. All three of these participants had poor perceptions of the living conditions for adult students

at the residences made available at the two different campus sites. Participants reported that hostel life was not ideal for the more mature student. Participant I7 mentioned that younger students always find ways and time to socialize more, resulting in the creation of high noise levels and disturbing of the older students who need a quieter learning environment. The lack of privacy was further mentioned by one student. Two of the adult learners indicated that the younger students' way of relaxation and socializing differed from that of the older students, as stated by participant I7, "... the younger students will always find time to socialize, noise levels in the hostels could become distracting... also lack of adult supervision... no bathroom privacy as male and female share... and the hygiene in the hostel is questionable...". Adult students would prefer socializing in relaxed, quiet, and sophisticated surroundings. One of the adult students indicated that, when selecting candidates, a higher selection proportion should be allocated to adult learners as it could assist them to have more social interaction in the class with peers of their own age. This will assist these adults at least to have common ground with more students in their class groups.

#### **4.4.4 Coping strategies for inhibitors**

Chapter 4, section 4.4 sub-sections 4.4.1-4.4.3, focused on the various inhibitors the participants were challenged with during their studies. Analysis of the various sets of data collected indicated that these participants were determined to cope and overcome challenges they encountered in order to achieve success. The following section will focus on the various coping strategies the participants employed.

##### **4.4.4.1 Situational inhibitor: Finances**

As thirteen of the fourteen participants indicated that inhibitors originated mostly from financial constraints, the researcher decided to investigate this inhibitor in more detail. The researcher wanted to determine who was financially responsible for each of these participants, and how they and their dependants, should they have any, survive financially once they have resigned from their secure jobs that had provided a stable income. From the analysis of the three sets of data, it could be concluded that the financial constraint was the major inhibitor and most likely the factor that caused the most stress and the greatest change of lifestyle.

Some participants indicated that they were currently dependent on their parents for financial support. Participant I1 confirmed that financial support was provided by her parents "... My parents help where they can as well as my in-laws... my father pays all my study fees and my text books...". Participant I2 had a similar response and indicated that she experienced depression and feelings of guilt owing to her dependence on her parents, "... My parents supply pretty much everything... they help where they can... I provide most of my pocket money working part-time...weekends and vacations ... I paid my first year from my money saved while I was working, for this year I took a loan from my parents, I will pay them back when I am done...". Participant I5 informed the researcher that the entire household took on the responsibility of sustaining her financially, "... My family has the type of relationship where we discuss everything with each other ... I told them, my mother, father, sister and brother about the cost of the course and how long it will take, they said it is fine with them and that they will assist me financially ... they said although it will be difficult they will help me..., but I am not a big spender...". Participant I9 had a professionally qualified sibling, "... my sister is a medical doctor and she pays my study fees ...".

Three participants reported that, although they had financial concerns when they started the BOH qualification, they later qualified for financial assistance from The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Participant I5 is an example of such a candidate, "... I have a bursary from NSFAS, I was very fortunate... I applied last year, after my studies were paid in full in 2012 by my family... NSFAS paid my full fees back for 2010, 2011 and 2012. now I have no financial problems regarding my studies". Participant I6 has an internationally-funded bursary with no obligations once she has completed her studies. This bursary was earned by academic merit "... I have a bursary from Switzerland... they cover all my study fees and there is enough for residence and text books... the funder is also willing to fund me should I want to study to become a dentist". Participant I6 indicated that she was, furthermore, financially assisted by her previous employer as well as by her parents. Her previous employer guaranteed her part-time work during university vacations to supplement her pocket money as well as a secure job once she has qualified.

One participant was funded by her husband regarding some aspects of her studies and all of her everyday expenses. This participant, however, indicated that, although her husband was funding her, he was not in the least interested in her studies, what the course entailed, or her excellent academic performance. The husband's financial support to her studies was not

accompanied by his physical or emotional support. This situation left the participant over-worked and highly stressed. Participant I3, who had a daughter as a dependant, indicated that, "...I am supported by my husband, he provides the food...we help each other... he works full-time ... and I work part-time... I work part-time in the week... after university in the evening and Saturdays and Sundays... 48 hours over the weekend... I work night shifts then 12 hours or more...". Participant I5 found it difficult to balance part-time work and the heavy study load, and mentioned, "...Financially to cope... I work part-time but I struggle between work, studying and my family...".

There were those participants who restricted their budget in order to survive financially. Participant I5 indicated that she saved money by restricting social activities, "... I spend time with people at varsity, but not after hours.... I don't have a solution to the lack of social life it causes...". Participant I6 echoed participant I5 "... due to a restricted budget... I restrict social time to save money... specially fuel... I do not just drive... I can only afford to go to Stellenbosch to visit my friends every second week... maybe".

Participant Q7, who had extreme financial difficulty during the first year of study, was advised by the clinical advisor to find out detail regarding financial assistance at the institution and to establish what they require from the student to obtain a loan. The participant indicated, "... I have written letters to the loan officer and some change has come about... I know what is expected of me now in terms of documentation that I need to make available before the money is paid, so it is becoming easier...".

#### **4.4.4.2 Dispositional inhibitors: Stress**

The in-depth interviews identified that the majority of the participants mentioned that they suffered from high stress levels. The stress, if not managed, could, and most probably has, acted as an inhibitor to their studies. The researcher, therefore, investigated how the participants cope with the stress caused by the inhibitors that they had previously mentioned.

Participants indicated in the interviews that they would work according to a specific study programme they have developed to suit their academic demand. These participants, who were serious about their studies, applied strict time management to cope with the inhibitors, for example, participant Q4 and Q9 indicated that they make use of every spare minute available



to cope with the high volume of work. Participant Q4 reported, "... I work absolutely every free second I have available, I am a great "multi-tasker"... thank goodness I am a female... I have many sleepless nights...". This was confirmed by participant Q9, "... I study as much as possible in class and during lunch, even on my way to school and back on the train so when I am at home I have to attend to my child until she sleeps then I study if it is not too late...". Participant I6 indicated, "... Having a year planner to organise and work weekends to get ahead with work is a great help...".

Stress relief in various forms of relaxation was mentioned, while over-the-counter medications to cope with stress were often reported. Participant I1 who indicated that her husband assists her by doing most of the household tasks to relieve her from an undue amount of stress further indicated, "... If I do become too much stressed my husband would make the suggestion that I first leave the studying for a while, maybe I will just read something ... or watch a short programme on DSTV... I have to take Bioplus<sup>®</sup>, to keep me going ... the long hours at varsity, studying in the evening, all the assignments and some household chores... yah that forces me to take something to keep me going...". Participant I2 "... Lately I have been taking long walks on the beach. I like watching DVDs and reading magazines, another stress reliever is sugar, I know it is not good for me but it makes me feel physiologically good...". Participant I3 said "... I relieve my stress by going to the old aged home just to laugh; I even go there when I am not on duty just to enjoy the people...". Participant I4 stated, "... some days I can cope better than other days. I am a very verbal person... I will always talk about what I am worried about. I have resorted to "Calmettes"<sup>®</sup> for this exam... they are in the cupboard just in case, also Bioplus<sup>®</sup> to keep me going... I also go to the gym". Participant Q8 experienced health problems owing to the stress and reported, "... the stress made me very sick in my second year so I try keeping the stress lower now in the third year... I try to get more sleep in favour of very high marks... I talk to my family; I try to exercise more and take anti-stress herbal supplements". This student reported later that she, however, had to make use of prescription medication to control stress and anxiety owing to the workload in her final year.

#### **4.4.4.3 Institutional inhibitors**

Participants who made use of campus residences stated that they, as adult students, at times encounter problems. They reported that the noise factor at campus accommodation, as well as

the social activities at the hostels, is questionable and does not create an environment that is conducive to learning. Participant I7 indicated that hostel life does not always provide desirable living conditions, and stated, "... I am trying to be a 'change agent' by living as an example... I clean... I do not make excessive noise...". Discipline in general is a great problem according to the perception of the participants at the one specific campus hostel.

Regarding the high volume work load associated with the course and having multiple roles to fulfil, the participants replied that they tried to cope by taking the situation in their own hands and personally request extensions on assignment dates or just to ignore the demands and continue at the pace they could manage. Participant Q3 reported, "... I sometimes don't overcome problems with workload... I just accept and move on...". Participant Q4 reported as follows, "... by complaining to lecturers or the year coordinator if workload is excessive, hoping that I might just manage to get an extension on that assignment or test date, I just get on with it as best as I can... with the heavy workload and multiple roles I usually neglect my son and husband...". Participant Q5 turned to her faith to cope with her multiple roles to fulfil, "... I pray a lot for strength from God and he is faithful to give me that strength and encouragement...".

#### **4.5 Contributors**

The question relating to the factors or agents that contribute to and enable these participants to continue and succeed in their studies ranged from having support systems, to taking up responsibility as an adult, and understanding the impact of their studies on the people that are supporting them. Participant Q2 reported that she had taken up the responsibility of being a student, "... I am being much more responsible ... also understanding the financial impact it has on the people supporting me ... I do not want to disappoint them". Some students indicated that they had to become much more goal-orientated and focused. Personal motivation was necessary to achieve success, as indicated in the open-ended questionnaire by participant Q3, "... my personal drive to succeed enables me...", and participant Q4 reinforced this comment by stating, "... being goal-directed, focussed in my work and life in general make me succeed...".

Data collected from the second questionnaire relating to enablers confirmed the value of family and friends being supportive of the students and their studies. Support provided was

described by the participants as physical support by family members and friends, for example, taking over household chores to assist them, emotional support provided by family and friends who would encourage them to succeed, as well as spiritual support asking God to help them through challenging times. Participant Q4 noted in the open-ended questionnaire that it is "... stable family life and their support as well as other people's expectations of me that keep me motivated...". Participant Q6 agreed and responded that it is "... parents and supportive friends providing me with financial and social support...". Participant Q7 indicated that "... knowing that there are people that believe in me... believing in myself, and it's good when you know exactly why you are here... I have a great support system at home... support from my previous employer and being fortunate to have a bursary... these factors motivate me to do well...". Participant I4 declared that, although her husband did not support her emotionally, her mother and brother are her pillars of strength and that they are just a phone-call away... My mom supports me emotionally, if I am upset or worried I will phone my mom". Participant I5 reported that "... my family motivates me regarding different sectors of my life... my father and I are very close and he is very supportive...". Sibling support and motivation provided to the students were often mentioned as contributing factors, as stated and confirmed by participant I4, "... Yah my brother could be considered as my enabler, he is very supportive ...". Participant I5 confirmed the importance of sibling support by stating "... Yes, my brother encourages me, he understands me...". Participant I9 who has a sister who has qualified from university says, "... my sister will always encourage me to go on... she would say... I was there as well, I know how difficult it is, but keep going... do not give up...". Participant I9 indicated that she has a small child of almost four living with her in-laws in another province and states that "... I have never looked after my child, they [her in-laws] look after her so that I can study... my husband works in another province to provide financially...".

Data collected from the in-depth interviews and the questionnaires indicated that some of the adult participants who were not in a stable relationship with a significant other person were of the opinion that it could have been to their benefit. These students considered that being married or in a stable and happy relationship could act as an enabler. A partner could encourage them to keep going and to share their burden during difficult times. Examples from the open-ended questionnaire that made reference to the positive and valuable contribution of spouses or life partners to their success studying included praise from participant Q8, "... My partner always encourages me that I am still young ... I can do it... I

can have a degree and have a proper job and also my child keeps me going because I know I have to do it for her...”. Participant I1 was proud and grateful to report, “... My husband helps with everything... also when he knows that I am studying for a 'big' test or exam he will try to be as quiet as possible or even clean the flat, prepare some food for me and go somewhere for the day so that I can concentrate on my studies... that helps a lot ... my husband is very supportive...”. Participant I2 “... A boyfriend could be an asset, bringing balance, making me happier and easier to cope with stress... I do not have a boyfriend at the moment but, when I did, he was very supportive and encouraging...”. Participant I3 declared that “... although my husband is very supportive, my in-laws do not support my studies... they do not understand, they live from the land... they are very traditional, they ask why are you studying?” Participant I5 reported that her special friend contributes significantly to supporting her emotionally and motivates her to continue with her studies, as she reported, “... ‘Mr Man’ my boyfriend of eight years... is very supportive to my studies...”

#### **4.6 Support systems provided by the university**

Chapter 4 section 4.5, focused on the enablers the participants reported on assisting them to succeed in their studies. The enablers mentioned in the discussion consisted mostly of support provided by spouses, family members, and friends as well as the participants’ internal drive to succeed. The following section will investigate whether the university has support systems available to enable the adult learner.

When the participants were asked about the support systems available at the university, the majority indicated that they were aware of the support systems on offer at the university. Support systems the participants were aware of included clinical advisors at the dental faculty, counsellors, a psychologist, as well as medical doctors at the main campus. According to the participants, certain modules in the BOH curriculum, for example “Living and Learning”, assisted them to orientate, adapt, and cope with the demand of becoming a university student. When the participants were asked to evaluate the value of these support systems available at the institution, comments ranged from students who found the support systems helpful, supportive, user friendly, and affordable, for example the on-campus medical doctor, down to those participants who claimed that they did not know about the support systems provided, and those who did not want to make use of the support systems.

Although there were participants who reported that the support systems were of no significant assistance to them personally, they were in the minority.

Data collected from questionnaire B (Annexure C) indicated that the majority of the participants were of the opinion that clinical advisors were of great assistance. Participants Q1 and Q6 indicated, "... yes the clinical advisors are very helpful...". Participant Q2 reported that "... yes, very helpful... especially the clinical advisors... my clinical advisor is like a mother to me...". Participant Q3 confirmed the value of the clinical advisors, "... the clinical advisors give you advice on how to cope with daily tasks, to manage time and set out goals to achieve and to use those tools as a target to get there...". Participant Q5 stated that..."If clinical advisors are a support system, then mine has been a life saver on numerous occasions, much appreciated...".

Participants also referred to modules that assisted them to cope with the heavy study load as well as the availability of an "in house" academic advisor. Participant Q3 confirmed that certain modules assisted and strengthened her coping abilities, "... Yes, for example the "Living and Learning" module, it really helped me academically and socially...". Participant Q4 found that most of the support systems the university have in place have real benefits, and she uses most of them, "... the support systems that I am aware of are consultations with lecturers and tutorials... they are supportive, I have seen a counsellor and the UWC medical doctor is affordable so it helps me when I am sick...".

#### **4.7 The role of the university in supporting the adult learner**

Questionnaire B (Annexure C) included a question to the participants about how the university may assist future adult learners in reducing perceived inhibitors. Comments ranged from students indicating that they had no problems with which the university could assist them with or those who were prepared to sacrifice their previous lifestyle in order to reach their goal, as stated by participant Q1, "... I am quite happy and do not have any problems... I was prepared for studies and I knew that it wasn't going to be easy and I feel free to approach lecturers if I need help...". Participant Q8 was pleased with the support systems on offer at the university, and reported "... I think the university is doing everything it can to support us...".

Some of the responses and comments of the participants included that the university should not discriminate against the older student, as stated by Participant Q2, "... I hope that when applications are looked at there is no discrimination or bias against adult students, adult students have to be treated more equally like the young students... and that credit should be given regarding modules for which they already have obtained tertiary qualifications. Participants who did not succeed in obtaining financial assistance indicated that they were discriminated against owing to their age and also the fact that they had previously obtained other qualifications.

Further suggestions included the opinion that the Department of Oral Hygiene should tailor the course to the needs of their adult learners and suggested that some modules could be credited considering previous experience and qualifications obtained. Participant Q7 complained, "... the university should have better understanding of the adult individual's specific needs...". The participants, furthermore, had the perception that the administration of the university should become more adult learner orientated and a user-friendly environment. As stated by participant Q4, "... I don't know about the university, but if they could have more people with personalities like the lecturers in the Oral Hygiene department then I think it would be a better supportive and helpful place...". This opinion was supported by Participant I3, "... main campus, I do not know where to start, simple communication will be a starting point... I still dread going to the campus... I think you guys at the dental faculty do a lot and go out of their way to assist the students...". Participant I2 and participant I4: "... Workload!! I do not know how we can get around it...". Participants staying at campus residence had a perception that the hostels are for the younger students and do not cater to accommodate the adult student as explained by participant I7, "... All I can think of is the hostels, to make the rooms bigger. I have to live there for a few years and there is no space and the communal kitchen I do not want to use due to the problem with neatness... then there is the noise factor and the fact that we as adults socialize in a more behaved manner...".

#### **4.8 Summary**

In chapter 4 the researcher has identified and discussed the factors that motivated adults to resign from secure jobs with the intention of entering or re-entering institutions of higher education. Family members, internal motivation, and the search for greater status and appreciation were some of the motivating agents that were mentioned most often. The

chapter, furthermore, focused on the inhibitors that these adult learners encountered during the phase of enrolment as well as during their studies. Inhibitors were discussed, according to Cross's classification, namely institutional, situational, and dispositional inhibitors. Institutional inhibitors mentioned included administrative problems, institutional "red tape" and poor communication. Situational inhibitors included the lack of finances, high workload owing to the multiple roles the students had to fulfil as adults, stress and age. Dispositional inhibitors mentioned included fear of the unknown as some had to relocate to the Western Cape Province, the fear of the university buildings and staff, and uncertainty regarding their academic abilities. Although these participants did encounter numerous inhibitors, they managed successfully to develop coping strategies. These coping strategies, along with the enablers provided in and by their immediate environment, assisted these participants to continue with their studies to reach their ultimate goal, namely to graduate with a BOH degree. Although the participants did mention that they had encountered several institutional inhibitors, the majority of the participants did agree that the university does have some support systems in place.

Chapter 5 will focus on the synthesis of the literature review and the data collected for this research project. The researcher will discuss the limitations of this study and conclude with recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 4 focused on the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the qualitative data collected in this study in attempt to provide a solution to the research problem. The research problem focused on three main aspects. The first focus area was on the factors that motivated the adult participants in the research to resign from their occupations and enrol as full-time students at an institution of higher education. The second focus area of this research was to determine factors adult learners perceive as inhibitors, from the time of application to graduation. Thirdly, the research focused on the enablers who contributed to the success of the adult learner and their perseverance in completing their studies.

In chapter 5 the researcher will provide a conclusion and make recommendations relating to the research problem. The recommendations will be derived from the information gathered from both the literature review and data derived from the empirical study. In order to summarize, compare and make recommendations, it is necessary to re-visit the aim of the research as well as its objectives.

This study aimed to identify factors that motivate adults to resign from their full-time occupation and re-enter the world of formal higher education and to identify the inhibitors and contributors the students experience during their full-time studies. The researcher will make recommendations about how these adult learners could be accommodated and assisted in order to ensure that the University of the Western Cape becomes an institution of choice for adults considering entering or re-entering an institution of higher education as full-time students.



The aims of this study were:

- To identify the factors that motivate adults to resign from full-time occupations to enter a higher education institution as full-time students;
- To determine the specific inhibitors that adult learners experience;
- To identify the coping strategies that adult learners employ to overcome the inhibitors they experience during their full-time studies;
- To identify the contributors that enable adult learners to continue with and succeed in their studies; and
- To determine how the university could assist adult learners in the future.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW**

In chapter 2 the researcher discussed the relevant literature relating to the research problem.

The results from the literature review will be discussed according to the theoretical frameworks under each of the following headings:

- The adult learner;
- Motivators to enter adult education;
- Inhibitors in adult education; and
- Contributors in adult education.

### **5.2.1 The adult learner**

Adults learn differently from and for different reasons than children (Chapter 2 section 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). Adults have unique learning characteristics and do not passively absorb new information just for the sake of learning, as the school going child often does. Adults want to know exactly why they need to learn a new skill or acquire new knowledge. They learn on the basis of “need to know” or “want to know”, and they need to apply this knowledge or skill to their field of practice almost immediately. The adult learner takes responsibility for the decision to enter a learning situation out of free choice, while the child is bound by legislation to enter the learning environment (Chapter 2 section 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). Adults enter the

learning environment with a broad spectrum of gained experience and knowledge, and they need to be acknowledged and respected by learning facilitators (Chapter 2 section 2.2.3). The learning orientation of the adult learner is task-orientated and problem-solving in nature. Although adults could be motivated by external factors, they are highly motivated by their personal internal drive to succeed, as for example job satisfaction, self-esteem, and the search for an improved quality of life. The educational backgrounds of adult learners are varied in the sense that adult learners may be entering an institution of higher education for the first time or re-entering it after several years of work (Chapter 2 section 2.2.2).

Characteristics of adult learners indicate that they are typically busy people with multiple roles to fulfil (Chapter 2 section 2.2.1). Adults spend most of their day working, caring for their families, sustaining households, and attending to community commitments. Negative traits of the adult learner include failing memory, fear of an inability to retain information, finding it difficult to achieve high academic performance, low self-esteem and the underestimating of their own abilities.

The expectations of the adult learner are demanding as they expect their learning facilitators or lecturers to be experts in their field of practice, arrive well prepared for lectures, and provide regular assessment and feedback on their progress, as the adult learner needs to be updated and assured of individual performance on a regular basis (Chapter 2 section 2.2.3).

### **5.2.2 Motivators to enter adult education**

The question of why adults wish to return to the learning environment has been well researched and reported on in international research, and the theoretical frameworks for this study were derived from these literature reviews (Chapter 2 section 2.3). The theoretical framework applied to determine why adults wish to enter or re-enter the formal learning environment was conducted to the Typology of Houle. According to Houle, there are three different categories of adults entering or re-entering the learning environment, namely the goal-orientated, activity-orientated and learning-orientated adult learner (Chapter 2 section 2.3.2.1).

Goal-orientated learners can be described as learners who use education as a means of achieving some or other goal or to obtain specific objectives. Activity-orientated learners

participate for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction associated with it. Sometimes they need to escape from loneliness, unhappy circumstances and boredom, and do not necessarily desire to develop or learn a new skill. Learning-orientated learners seek knowledge for their own benefit. The learning-orientated person has a deep seated desire to know more and has the need to be involved in lifelong development by means of expanding their knowledge and skills.

According to the results of the literature review, adults will enter the learning environment only if there are clear cut benefits for them, their families, or their significant others (Chapter 2 section 2.3). The adult would consider personal advancement, improvement of skills, complying with company expectations, career promotions, improved ability to serve mankind, and the participation in community work as motivation to return to the learning environment. The majority of adults return to the learning environment to improve their employability, and this can, therefore, be considered to be career-driven motivation. In addition, adults are motivated to return to the learning environment in order to respect the wishes of a spouse or sibling, provide a role model for their children, or fulfil their own dreams obtaining a degree (Chapter 2 section 2.3.1). Adults may, in addition, to these factors be motivated to return to the learning environment by dramatic, life-changing events, for example divorce, the death of a loved one, or illness. As mentioned above, motivators for adults to return to the learning environment are varied and returning to the learning environment is truly an individual decision.

### **5.2.3 Inhibitors in adult education**

Equally important is the identification of factors or agents that could be considered as inhibitors (Chapter 2 section 2.4). Adults could experience inhibitors on different levels and at different stages when they consider entering or returning to higher education. Inhibitors could prevent or exclude adults from entering the learning environment, have a negative impact on the enrolment process, and determine the success of their studies. Investigating these inhibitors, Cross developed the “Chain of Response Model” identifying three types of inhibitors adults experience when returning to the learning environment, namely situational barriers, institutional barriers and dispositional barriers (Chapter 2 section 2.4.1 sub-sections 2.4.1.1-2.4.1.3).

The literature reveals that the situational barrier most frequently reported on by students related to financial challenges and constraints. Regarding situational barriers, adult female students reported that in addition to all the other inhibitors they experience, they, as women, have added responsibilities owing to the multiple roles they are expected to fulfil. These multiple roles are the reason they suffer from role strain (Chapter 2 section 2.4.2.1). Literature reviews relating to institutional barriers include all the practices and procedures that could exclude or discourage adults from participating in learning activities owing to the policies, structure, or attitudes of the learning facility. Results from the literature review include inconvenient scheduling of learning activities, geographical location of learning activities, exceedingly high study fees, the availability of programmes at a specific learning institution, and poor or unclear information regarding programmes on offer by the learning institution and unclear or incomplete administrative information (Chapter 2 section 2.4.2.3).

Dispositional barriers (Chapter 2 section 2.4.2.2) are those barriers that are related to the attitudes and personal perceptions the learner has about him/herself. Dispositional barriers may include inadequate coping skills, lack of self-confidence, poor self-image, negativity towards learning owing to prior learning experiences, negative thoughts about the learning environment, and expecting poor academic results. The literature reveals that the negative attitudes and dispositions of adults towards learning are by far the most serious deterrents influencing their decision to enter or re- enter the realm of formal education (Chapter 2 section 2.4.2.2).

#### **5.2.4 Contributors in adult education**

Contributors could be defined as the forces that support a student in persisting in their studies as adult learners. Contributors revealed in the literature reviews include relationships, goals, lecturers, fellow students, friends, colleagues, family, support groups, and religion (Chapter 2 section 2.5). These contributors are considered most critical in motivating adult learners to persist in attempting to reach their goal and the successful completion of their studies. According to Hertzberg, the concept of “Hygienes” should be taken into account when an adult is considering entering the learning environment (Chapter 2 section 2.5.1). The learning institution should ensure that potential adult learners have access to the supporters or support systems they need to be successful in their learning experience. These supporters include the allocation of time regarding the programme on offer, financial assistance to the adult learner,

availability of mentors, reliable childcare, and a favourable location of the institution, clear information regarding the course or programme being followed, as well as employer support (Chapter 2 sections 2.5.1.1-2.5.1.7).

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

This section will focus on the summary of the results from the data gathered for the empirical study. The main themes derived from the data analysis will be discussed in the following section.

#### **5.3.1 Motivation to resign and enrol for a full-time course**

Motivations stated by the goal-orientated participants to resign from their full-time occupations included their desire to provide a better future for themselves, their children, and their families, to please parents who had dreams for them to further their education, and to prove themselves to siblings, parents, and spouses (Chapter 4 section 4.3.1). Participants who indicated that their previous occupation was that of a dental assistant reported that improving their qualifications by obtaining a BOH degree would provide them with a higher status occupation, power, and prestige. Participants were of the opinion that a degree in Oral Health would assist them in contributing to the health of the general public and the communities in which they function. The majority of the participants, regardless of gender or race, were part of the first generation within their families to enter university and obtain a degree. Participants were motivated by parents, siblings, and spouses to pursue a better qualification and career. Those participants coming from previously disadvantaged groups, originating from the apartheid era, were motivated by parents and family members to seize the educational opportunities they had previously been denied. These parents and family members were willing to assist their adult children and siblings financially to return to institutions of higher education.

The activity-orientated participants (Chapter 4 section 4.3.2) indicated that they entered the learning environment for other reasons than to develop skills or broaden their information basis and knowledge. Two of the participants indicated that they entered the learning environment merely to pacify family members by going to university. These participants indicated during the interviews that they did not consider studying BOH as important and it is

only an activity they have to complete and move on with what they actually intended doing in the first place.

The learning-orientated participants indicated that they wanted to improve or learn new occupational skills in order to secure improved employability, but also indicated that they will continue to study after obtaining the BOH degree (Chapter 4 section 4.3.3). The motivation for a selected few from this group was to obtain a degree, pursue postgraduate qualifications and be appointed as academics at the university at which they are currently enrolled. These participants have an attitude of “never to stop studying”, being excellent examples of the life-long learner, internally motivated, and striving to become the best self they can be (Chapter 4 section 4.3.3).

### **5.3.2 Inhibitors before, during and after enrolment**

The institutional inhibitors participants most frequently experienced before and during the enrolment phase related to administration and administrative procedures. The participants were of the perception that they experienced a lack of sufficient communication between administration and themselves. Participants experienced delayed, slow or no feedback to requests related to administrative procedures. These participants had the perception that there is a dire need for administrative development. The current situation results in unnecessary delays that adult students can ill afford. The foreign student participants had additional administrative obligations to attend to before they could register, for example, legalizing documents to study in South Africa such as study permits and arranging for finances, foreign students also have to pay their study fees in full at the beginning of the academic year upon registration. The majority of these participants indicated that they experienced the administration as being non-accommodating, loaded with negativity and discrimination. Participants further indicated that they found the information regarding the course for which they were applying to register for as limited, confusing, and unclear. Participants thought they were applying to register for the degree in dentistry (BCh D) and not oral hygiene (BOH). This is reported as a problem as 57.14% of the participants resigned from their full-time occupations to further their studies as dentists, but ended up in the BOH programme (Chapter 4. section 4.2.7).

The geographical location of the institution was also mentioned as an inhibitor as some participants indicated that they were deprived from a choice where to study. Some of the participants claimed that they had no choice but to register at the institution as it is the only university in the Western Cape that has a dental faculty where they could pursue a career in the field of dentistry.

Regarding dispositional inhibitors students mentioned that they experienced personal as well as psychological fears (Chapter 4 section 4.4.2). These fears included becoming financially dependent, the decision to resign, doubting their own abilities to study, concerns about academic performance, and a fear of academic failure.

Participants originating from other provinces as well as from neighbouring countries had a fear of relocating to the unknown, dreaded being removed from their comfort zone, and were concerned about the strain in relationships when leaving their spouse, family and friends. Participants reported that the mere thought of travelling far distances to reach the various training sites on a daily basis was emotionally challenging and a frightening experience.

Situational inhibitors (Chapter 4 section 4.4.3) most often reported by the participants included the realities of financial constraints bringing about the need to adapt to a new lifestyle with fewer amenities and often resulting in a lack of social interaction. These factors resulted in participants becoming isolated, lonely and depressed. Participants living in private residences mentioned that their budget was further drained by the fact that training took place in at least three different training sites, and the cost of fuel became a challenge. Participants reported that their initial concerns regarding financial dependence did materialize and created physically and psychologically stressful situations.

The extreme workload and the multiple roles they as adults had to fulfil were mentioned as major inhibitors. Participants with multiple roles reported that, at times, they would experience frustration if, according to their perception, they had to attend lectures that did not contribute to their learning experience or the goal they needed or wanted to achieve. Participants in addition reported that certain lecturers would relate with them in an abrasive manner and deny the fact that they as adult learners had work-related skills, experience and knowledge.

Age was considered by the more mature learners as being both a psychological and physiological inhibitor. As a physiological inhibitor the students reported that the long hours attending lectures, working in clinics rendering service to patients, combined with the long distances they had to travel, left them exhausted at the end of each day. This resulted in the fact that they had little energy to study in the evening for formal assessments, the completing of assignments, and preparing for the following day.

The negative psychological impact of being an adult learner was indicated as two fold, namely younger students had expectations of older learners to have instant knowledge, and at the same time were not aware of the adult learners' actual need to acquire new skills and knowledge similar to that of the younger students. Participants reported that the younger students at times referred to them as being old in a disrespectful and discriminatory fashion.

Participants residing in university accommodation indicated that inhibitors experienced in the hostel environment could be related to the fact that younger students engaged in different social activities from those that they as adults would. Considering that the adult learners reported that they needed more time to study, they ideally would have preferred to be situated in a residence on campus where they would have had the benefit of being in reach of campus facilities, for example the library, computer laboratories, and bus services. Participants also wished for an on-campus residence that would provide more privacy and a quieter learning environment.

### **5.3.3 Strategies adult learner apply to cope with inhibitors**

Analysis of the three sets of data resulted in the conclusion that the major inhibitor participants experienced was that of financial constraints. These financial constraints were the most likely factor contributing to the stress levels of the participants and change in lifestyle it brought about. Regarding situational inhibitors and how the participants tried to cope (Chapter 4 section 4.4.4 sub-section 4.4.4.1), the participants indicated that it would have been impossible to cope financially without the aid of family members, parents, siblings, and employers who believed in their goal and dream to achieve a university qualification. Only a minority of the participants could manage to hold part-time employment during weekends and university vacations in order to contribute to their own finances, partially alleviating their



financial burden. The reason for the majority not being able to work part-time was the heavy workload and combined multiple roles they had to fulfil.

The participants reported that, owing to their age, they found it difficult to obtain study loans or bursaries for full-time studies. Some of these participants, however, did manage to obtain financial assistance in their more senior years of study on the basis of their consistent above-average academic performance. Participants achieving “A” symbol average aggregates benefitted from the university’s rebate system.

Relating to the question of how the participants coped with dispositional inhibitors, participants indicated that stress caused by the heavy workload and the demands of the programme was a major inhibiting factor (Chapter 4 section 4.4.4.2). The majority indicated that they had to apply time management strategies. Efficient time management was achieved by making use of year planners and schedules.

Stress relief ranged from those participants who believed that they benefited from physical activities to their buying over-the-counter energy boosters and anti-stress medication. Some participants denied the reality of their stressful situations, ignored trivialities, and focused on their end goal, to achieve a university qualification. The participants who identified campus residence as an inhibiting factor decided that they would endeavour to improve the situation by setting an example for the younger students (Chapter 4 section 4.4.4.3).

### **5.3.4 Contributors identified by adult learners**

The majority of the participants indicated that they had to act as their own enablers (Chapter 4 section 4.5). Deciding and taking action to become their own enablers contributed to the positive outcome of the studies of these participants. The participants indicated that they had to take deliberate action to become goal-orientated, more focused, and internally motivated in order to succeed. The participants indicated further that they had had to take responsibility for their own decision to enter to the higher educational environment. They seriously had to consider the impact their studies had on the people sustaining them financially, physically, and emotionally, and did not want to disappoint them. Participants indicated that enjoying family and relationship stability contributed to their success. Familial and spouse or partner stability provided these participants with a safe and loving environment in which they could develop to their full potential and flourish academically. Participants not being in secure

relationships or married considered it to be a challenge to be on their own as their perception was that a partner could have provided physical and emotional support. Previous employers were considered to be contributors to their studies. Participants previously working in dental practices reported that they were encouraged by their employers to take the opportunity to study and make their dreams of obtaining a degree become a reality. Participants who had previously been employed in dental practices indicated that the continuous positive encouragement of colleagues, allowing continuing networking with the staff, and the financial support given by these practices by providing part-time jobs or monthly contributions to their studies enabled them to achieve success. Most of the participants originating from dental practices had certainty that once they had qualified they could be re-employed as oral hygienists or have the option of obtaining excellent references to take up employment elsewhere.

### **5.3.5 Support systems provided by the university**

Participants to this study were informed about and were aware of the various support systems on offer by the university and, specifically, the dental faculty. The participants reported that they had found the support systems useful and were utilizing them to their benefit (Chapter 4 section 4.6). Dental faculty support systems included clinical advisors, an in-house academic advisor, modules housed in the BOH I curriculum that provided assistance and advice to students entering university. Students reported that the greater university provided valuable support systems, for example consultations with psychologists and medical doctors. Students mentioned that consultations with the medical doctor were more affordable than private practice, and the limited number of free consultations with the psychologist was to their benefit. Although there are many more support systems on offer at the university, those mentioned above are the support systems that were mentioned and utilized predominantly by the participants. From the analysis of the various sets of data, it was clear that the participants highly regarded the availability of clinical advisors, a unique initiative of the dental faculty in which they are registered (Chapter 4 section 4.6).

### **5.3.6 The role of the university supporting the adult learner**

Comment deriving from the different sets of data identified two groups of participants, namely those who wanted support and indicated that assistance provided by the university

and the faculty was efficient, to those students who did not desire support from the institution (Chapter 4 section 4.7). Participants from the group who indicated that they did not desire support from the university reported that they were acutely aware of the demands they as adult learners would have to answer to, and had to face the situation on their own.

Some of the participants were of the opinion that the university's structure discriminated against them as adults in certain ways, for example when applying for loans and bursaries the younger students were given prime consideration.

Regarding the structure of the BOH programme, the participants commented that previous qualifications, similar modules passed in other degree programmes, and work-related experience should be acknowledged and credited.

Asked if the course should be available as a part-time option, the majority of the participants indicated from the empirical data collected, that the BOH programme, owing to its unique nature, could not be presented as a part-time course. The full-time programme was considered by most as the only option. The participants further indicated that the administration could become more user friendly for, and understanding towards the needs of the adult learner.

## **5.4 SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The synthesis of the research findings will focus on the similarities and differences between the literature review and the findings of the empirical data collected for this study. In this study more similarities than dissimilarities relating to the literature were identified. The discussion will be structured according to the research problem.

### **5.4.1 Motivation to resign and enrol for the full-time course**

Analysis from the data collected for the empirical study conducted for this research project indicated that there were similarities between the data collected and the literature studies with the regard to the factors that motivated the adult learners to enter or re-enter an institution of higher education. On the question of why the participants decided to resign from a full-time occupation and enter an institution of higher education, the participants indicated that they desired a degree qualification in order to gain improved employability, provide a better future for themselves and their families, enhance themselves as persons, apply for higher status job

opportunities, improve the health of their communities, be of service to mankind, and prove to family members their ability to obtain a degree. The agents of motivation, according to the data collected for the purpose of this study within the South African context, are in agreement with the international literature reviews discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3 and 2.3.1 by reference to Bye et al. (2007:144), Merriam et al. (2007:62) and Scanlon (2009:29) with regard to returning to formal higher education. The results of this study furthermore compare suitably with the South-African context studies of February and Koetsier (2007:6) and Castle et al. (2006:369) (Chapter 2 section 2.3.3). Although literature reviews focus on students who enter higher education in a part-time capacity, motivators identified in this limited study are predominantly similar for entering institutions for full-time study.

#### **5.4.2 Inhibitors before, during, and after enrolment**

Participants reporting on institutional inhibitors indicated that, during the period of application and enrolment, they had experienced a lack of cooperation from institutional administrative staff (Chapter 4 section 4.4 sub-section 4.4.1). An analysis of the data pertaining to this study clearly indicated a pattern of dissatisfaction among the students relating to administrative procedures. A further major concern raised by the participants related to information provided by the institution regarding the choice of the two dental programmes on offer. According to the participants, information was unclear as to what programme should be selected as the first choice of study on the university's application form. The majority of the participants who had resigned from full-time occupations had applied to the university to pursue careers in dentistry and not in oral hygiene (Chapter 4 section 4.2.7 Table 10). These participants were under the impression that they had applied for the BCh D degree and discovered, only on the first academic day, that they had been registered for the BOH degree programme. The devastating news was either that they could not convert to the BCh D programme as the selection for both courses had been completed and the maximum number of students for each programme finalized or that they had not met the selection criteria to enter the BCh D programme.

When participants were asked why they had chosen to apply to this specific institution of higher learning they reported that they had no choice as this was the only university in the Western-Cape with a Dental Faculty. It was also the most affordable institution or the only institution from which they could receive selection. Students who had to relocate from

outside the South African borders or from other provinces were confronted by geographical displacement leading to expensive relocations and being up-rooted from their familiar environments.

The institutional inhibitors mentioned in this study compare well with those mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 2 section 2.4.2 sub-section 2.4.2.3). De Vito (2009:5) claims that the geographical location of an institution could be considered as an inhibitor for students to enrol to a program on offer. According to Ibrahim and Silong (2000:13) in their conference paper presented at 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities, student support services on campus should be able to assist students with the correct and proper information relating to their studies from the pre-enrolment phase throughout the student's time of registration at a learning institution. Literature reviews indicated that the adult student is often less tolerant of mediocre administrative abilities and poor information clarity found at learning institutions and will easily decide to move to an alternative learning institution. In the limited relevant literature available within the South African context (Chapter 2 section 2.4.2 sub-section 2.4.2.4), similar dissatisfaction with administration was reported in the studies conducted by February and Koetsier (2007:5) and Castle et al. (2006:368-369).

Reporting on dispositional inhibitors participants indicated that they had experienced both personal and psychological fears (Chapter 4 section 4.4 sub-section 4.4.2). Some of these fears included concerns regarding loss of financial independence, the possibility of relationship strain that may be created amongst those who were supporting them financially, a fear of the unknown, a fear of the new learning environment, doubting their ability to cope with academic challenges, and the age difference between them and the traditional student. The results of the empirical study compare well with the literature as discussed (Chapter 2 section 2.4 sub-section 2.4.2.2). Baker (2006:175) refers to the dispositional inhibitors of the adult learners experiencing uncertainty in their new environment, uncertain about who they are, being up rooted from the familiar, removed from their comfort zone, and incapacitated by entering the formal learning institution. The adult learner has to deal with being separated from family members, spouses, and friends owing to the geographical location of a learning institution. Baker (2006:175), furthermore, refers to the re-configuration of the psyche of the adult learner as rapid changes and adjustments to their prior existence need to be considered. The adult learner is once again confronted by the need to reconsider who they are and how

they are to “re-identify” themselves. Loneliness and isolation from social interaction were reported as being inhibitors ultimately negatively affecting the adult student’s psychological state. This experience is confirmed in the literature review (Chapter 2 section 2.4 sub-section 2.4.2.2) in a study conducted by O’Donnell and Tobell (2007:313) in which they stated that adult students are often excluded from the non-academic activities on campus resulting in a lack of interactivity. This compares well with the empirical data collected for this study where participants mentioned that they were excluded from campus social activities, especially after hours (Chapter 4 section 4.4.4 sub-section 4.4.4.1). The reasons stated for this non-inclusion was that the younger students socialize in a manner different from that of adults. One participant indicated that the younger students socialized irresponsibly. Other reasons stated for being excluded in campus activities after hours, were the distance involved in living away from the campus, not having the finances to participate in social activities, as well as the heavy workload owing to having to fulfil multiple roles (Chapter 4 section 4.4 sub-section 4.4.3).

Reporting on the situational inhibitors, all the participants in this study indicated that finances could be considered as their major constraint (Chapter 4 section 4.4 sub-section 4.4.3). Resigning from full-time occupations left these participants with a loss of reliable income, forcing them to become dependent on family members and spouses. Some participants who had originally been breadwinners indicated that the lack of finances to support their families had resulted in huge negative impact on the lifestyle of both themselves and their dependants. The participants who experienced dire financial shortfalls had to resort to part-time jobs to sustain themselves and their families. A second important situational inhibitor deriving from the lack of finances, as well as the geographical location of the students residing off campus, was a lack of social interaction. Participants indicated that they did not have the finances to socialize, resulting in loneliness and depression. Also mentioned was that the programme they were registered for generated an undue amount of work. Female students having to fulfil multiple roles found it challenging to cope with all the demands they had to face. Age was mentioned as a situational inhibitor as younger students would either discriminate against the older students or expect them to display superior knowledge not realizing that the adult learner attended university to acquire new skills and knowledge. Some of the participants with work-related experience in the field of dentistry noted that lecturers did not acknowledge the fact that they as students could actually contribute to the learning environment. These statements made by the participants are in agreement with the literature review (Chapter 2

section 2.2.3) and the study of Daines et al. (1993:5). In this study the importance of the adult student's need to have previous experience, skills, and status as adults acknowledged are highlighted. The study of Kenner and Weinerman (2011:87) (Chapter 2 section 2.2 sub-section 2.2.3) addresses the challenges lecturers experience when coping with the qualities adults bring to the learning environment. The afore-mentioned study of Kenner and Weinerman (2011:87) could explain why lecturers react towards the adult learner the way they do, viz. by disregarding the adult learners' experience and skills.

### **5.4.3 Contributors identified**

Analysis from the data collected from the empirical study indicated that there were similarities between the empirical data collected and the literature studies with regard to the factors students identified as contributors to their studies.

Participants reported on the importance of internal motivation to succeed in their studies (Chapter 4 section 4.5). The participants agreed that it was beneficial to become more focused and goal-orientated regarding their own studies. This is confirmed by the literature review referring to the factors relating to internal motivation of adult learner, for example job satisfaction, improved self-esteem, and a better quality of life for themselves and their families (Chapter 2 section 2.3 sub-section 2.3.1).

In the analysis of the empirical data it was clear that, in addition to internal motivation, external agents play a significant role as contributors to the success of adult learners. Contributors (Chapter 4 section 4.5) included family members, friends, husbands or partners, religion; their importance is confirmed in the literature review (Chapter 2 section 2.5). Comings (2007:34) states that positive supporters or contributors are considered most critical in motivating adult learners to persist in reaching their goals and successfully complete their studies. Continued encouragement and support by previous employers were further mentioned as a contributing agent by the participants who had previously been employed in dental practices. The literature reviews confirm the presence and importance of employer support being beneficial to the success of the adult learners (Chapter 2 section 2.5 sub-section 2.5.1.7). Employer support could include financial assistance, encouragement, and, as in the case of the participants in this study, re-employment after graduation.

The literature review refers to Herzberg's theory of Hygienes which are the factors that need to be taken care of before an individual takes the decision to enrol in an educational programme or course (Chapter 2 section 2.5.1 sub-sections 2.5.1.1-2.5.1.7). An analysis of the empirical data showed that participants were of the opinion that the institution fell short on the basic Hygienes as stipulated in Chapter 2 section 2.5.1 sub-sections 2.5.1.1-2.5.1.7. These shortcomings relate more specifically to the institution not providing alternative options to the time allocation of the course, the geographical location of the programme, the difficulty for adult learners to find financial assistance, a lack of clarity with regard to pre-enrolment information relevant to the programme (as previously discussed) and a lack of administrative assistance.

The empirical data analysis did, however, indicate that the university provided sufficient and valuable support systems to the adult learners during the course of their studies. The majority of the students reported that clinical advisor support was of immense value (Chapter 4 section 4.6).

## **5.5 Conclusions**

The literature review for this study indicated that there are several significant motivating factors and agents encouraging adults to enter or re-enter the formal learning situation. Most of the literature reviews available on adults entering formal educational studies focus on students entering on a part-time basis. The focus of this study, however, has been exclusively on adults who resign from full-time occupations and enter or re-enter an institution of higher education. The motivating factors identified in both the literature review and empirical study pointed to typical internal motivators and external agents encouraging the adult to pursue further qualifications. The main research question furthermore attempts to identify the factors that may act as inhibitors and contributors in the endeavours of the adult learner to obtain a qualification at a higher educational institution.

Data gathering tools for the empirical study were structured in such a manner that they could provide answers to the following sub-questions.



- Sub-question one: What are the factors that motivate adults to resign from full-time occupations to enter a higher education institution as full-time students?
- Sub-question two: Which specific inhibitors do these adult learners encounter during their full-time studies?
- Sub-question three: What are the specific coping strategies that these adult learners employ to overcome the inhibitors they experience during their full-time studies?
- Sub-question four: Who or what are the contributors that enable the adult learner to continue with and succeed in their studies?
- Sub-question five: How could the university, administration and lecturers assist the adult learner in the future?

### **5.5.1 What are the factors that motivate adults to resign from full-time occupations to enter a higher education institution as full-time students?**

Research studies relating to adults entering or re-entering institutions of higher education focus mostly on adults entering part-time studies. This study is different as the focus is exclusively on adults that are obliged to resign from their occupations in order to enrol as full-time students for the BOH degree. The researcher wished to determine why adults who were financially independent, earning a reasonable or steady income, and, in some cases, well established in their occupation decided to take the giant leap of resigning and entering the BOH degree programme.

Information derived from both the open-ended questionnaires and the interviews was grouped according to the three categories of Houle's Typology.

The goal-orientated participants indicated that their main motivations to resign and enter the BOH degree programme, which is a full-time programme, were as described below.

The majority of the participants reported that they were seeking an improved quality of life for themselves and their families. The participants were of the opinion that, once they had improved their qualifications, they would be able to be employed as oral hygienists enjoying a higher income than they had had before. The oral hygiene occupation was considered by most of the participants to be of higher status and importance than the career or occupation

they had been following prior to their resignation. Participants in this study reported that they had a desire to improve themselves, adding to their sense of self-worth, and seeing it as a venture in self-actualization. Some of the participants, however, indicated that their initial motivation to resign from their occupation was to enrol for the degree in dentistry (BCh D). Unfortunately due to unclear information on the application forms the participants upon registration selected the incorrect course and were enrolled for the degree in oral hygiene (BOH) instead. These participants were, however, not de-motivated, and they reported that the BOH course has created a new career path for them in dentistry. A minority indicated that they considered enrolling for the BCh D degree once they had qualified as oral hygienists.

Goal-orientated participants further reported that they had been motivated to enter formal higher education to prove themselves to family members and siblings. Some of the participants had an intense desire to prove to their families that they also had intellectual abilities equal to or better than, siblings or other members in their family. The majority of the participants reported that they were the first generation of the family to enter university, and they wanted to prove to their families that they could be successful. Parents were reported to be major motivating agents with regard to these participants entering university and urging them to take up opportunities to study which they as parents had been denied owing to apartheid. Where parents were the motivating agents for these adult participants with regard to their entering university, the parents or the entire family would contribute financially to the studies of the students.

The learning-orientated participants indicated their insatiable desire to study. These participants indicated that they had been motivated to resign by the mere thought of obtaining yet another qualification. Obtaining qualifications added to their sense of self-worth, but, in addition, they reported that they could contribute more to the society in which they functioned. Typical of the learning-orientated students is the fact that they will never cease their learning activities. Participants indicated that resigning from their full-time occupations to obtain a degree in BOH was a small sacrifice and was worthwhile as this degree would enable them in the future to sustain their occupation and venture into lifelong learning by entering various postgraduate qualifications and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) activities.

The majority of the participants reported on multiple motivating agents that resulted in their resignation from their occupation. These motivating agents included internal motivation, for example the desire for self-improvement, self-actualization, and the desire to excel academically. External motivators mentioned by the participants were such as improved earning ability, higher status and power, academic expectations of parents and siblings, investing in a better future for themselves and their families. In the context of this study, the majority of the participants wanted to enter formal higher education to improve themselves, provide their family with a better quality of life and utilize learning opportunities the generations preceding them had never had.

### **5.5.2 Which specific inhibitors do these adult learners encounter during their full-time studies?**

Inhibitors reported by the participants to this study will be presented according to Cross's Chain Response Model. The inhibitors adult learners may encounter are, according to the classification by Cross, namely: institutional, dispositional, and situational inhibitors.

Participants were questioned with regards to the institutional inhibitors they had experienced throughout the duration of the course, including the period of application and enrolment.

Participants responded in both the open-ended questionnaires and the interviews that they were faced with administrative inhibitors during the time preceding application when they were in the phase of gathering information relating to the university and the course, as well as during the phase of application and enrolment. Participants clearly voiced the opinion that they had experienced a generally lax attitude from administration with regard to assisting them with general enquiries. Administration was accused of presenting less than desirable communication interaction. According to the participants, communication and feedback on administrative enquiries were delayed, unanswered, or unresolved for long periods on end. The participants furthermore indicated that course information, in general, was unclear to the point where on-line applications resulted in incorrect course selection and registration.

Participants originating from neighbouring countries, in particular, experienced administrative inhibitors during the time of application resulting in various delays in

obtaining study permits, visas and arrangements relating to accommodation and financial assistance.

Poor communication from administration resulted in logistical problems for the participants in this study. To mention only a few of these problems, participants reported that they had been informed at a very late stage that they had been selected for the BOH course and had to resign from their jobs on short notice. Problems with relocation and accommodation were reported if the participant had to relocate to the Western Cape on short notice.

The geographical location of the university was also mentioned as an inhibitor as not all universities have the BOH course on offer resulting in the fact that participants had to relocate. Participants originating from other provinces and neighbouring countries who had family responsibilities, such as spouses and children to care for, had to consider relocating on their own and leaving their family in the province or country of origin or relocating the entire family.

Regarding dispositional inhibitors, which include personal and psychological inhibitors experienced, the participants reported that they experienced a fear of the unknown, a fear of the learning environment and the lecturers, and becoming financially dependent on others, resignation, driving long distances between the various campuses, and uncertainty about whether they would be able to study and successfully complete their studies.

Relating to situational inhibitors, the majority of the participants lost their financial security and became dependent on family members and spouses for financial assistance. The loss of financial independence generated multiple inhibitors for these participants. Lack of finances had a negative impact on their financial freedom and social interaction. Participants reported that they had no time or money to invest in socializing with their friends, resulting in the fact that they had to stay at home during weekends and holidays. This prolonged social deprivation was partly the cause of some of the participants suffering from depression.

The participants unanimously indicated that the workload of the BOH programme was overwhelming. The combination of prolonged exposure to being overburdened by coursework, the participants multiple responsibilities as adults, and social deprivation could be the cause of adult learners suffering undue amounts of stress and resulting in depression,

anxiety, compulsive behaviour, and physical ailments. The participants further indicated that their status as adults was ignored by some of the lecturers, treating them as if they were children, denigrating the work and life experience they brought to the learning environment.

Participants who indicated that they had had to make use of campus residence indicated that the accommodation was less suitable for them as adult learners than for young students. According to the participants, campus residence was not an environment that was greatly conducive to learning, privacy was not respected, poor supervision and the living standards of the younger students did not meet those of the adult learner.

Considering the above discussion, it is clear that these participants had to face a multitude of inhibitors. The question remains as to how they coped and how they overcame the inhibitors they experienced during their full-time studies.

### **5.5.3 What are the specific coping strategies that these adult learners employ to overcome the inhibitors they experience during their full-time studies?**

An analysis of the empirical data identified the various strategies the participants in this study applied to cope with the inhibitors they experienced. Financial constraints were mentioned as the major inhibitor by the students (Chapter 4 section 4.4.4 sub-section 4.4.4.1). Participants to this study reported that they survived financially with the assistance of becoming partially or fully dependent on family members and spouses. Some of the participants were fortunate to apply for and benefit from the NSFAS. There were participants who indicated that they tried to excel in their academic performance in order to qualify for a rebate from the university. Applications for international bursaries and financial assistance by previous employers were mentioned as a great assistance in overcoming the financial inhibitors they had experienced.

Engaging in part-time jobs was a temporary solution for some of these participants owing to the heavy coursework load. Students considering part-time work resorted selectively to part-time jobs, working only over weekends or during the longer vacation periods.

Relating to the response that the participants indicated that they suffered from stress, it can be concluded that stress originated from the financial constraints as well as the enormous workload of the course, combined with the multiple roles the learners had to fulfil. The participants tried to cope with their stress by resorting to physical exercise or buying over the counter medication in attempt to reduce their stress levels, but also by using stimulants to keep them mentally alert. Relating to the high volume workload and the multiple roles they had to fulfil, the participants employed strict time management. Participants made use of year planners to plot out all activities and started working ahead of the schedule during university vacations and weekends. Those adults with multiple roles to fulfil indicated that they had to multi-task at home and sacrifice free time. The majority of the participants indicated that they had had to dedicate every free minute to their studies even while in transit from one facility to another. Relating to accommodation that was considered as an inhibitor by participants living in residence on campus, these adults decided to live by example, with the hope that they could act as agents of change.

#### **5.5.4 Who or what are the contributors that enable the adult learner to continue and succeed in their studies?**

As adult learners face numerous inhibitors during the years of study it is important to determine who and what the contributors are who assist these learners to continue and succeed with their studies.

The majority of the participants reported that it is their internal motivation; goal-orientation, focused nature, and their intense desire to succeed that enable them to continue with their studies. Participants reported that they had to believe in themselves that they would succeed. The participants indicated that they did not want to disappoint their families who were investing financially in their studies, and, therefore, they had to persevere with their studies. The value of family members, especially siblings, spouses, friends, and previous employers were highly regarded as contributors to their success and perseverance in their studies. Family members, friends, and spouses provided much needed physical, psychological, and financial support contributing to their studies and success. Some of the participants indicated that it is only with the power of their faith and religion that they could have survived the years of studying.

Although not all of the participants were married, the majority were in stable relationships with significant others. These significant others included life partners and special friends from the opposite gender. All participants reported, without deliberately being asked in either the questionnaires or interviews, that a stable relationship with a spouse or significant other is an important contributor to the success of their studies.

Although the participants did report on institutional inhibitors, they also mentioned that the university was doing its best to contribute to their success and enable students to succeed in their studies. Institutional contributors mentioned by the participants firstly included enablers unique to the dental faculty environment, for example, the clinical advisory system and the availability of a full-time academic advisor. The clinical advisory system was highly praised and appreciated. Regarding main campus support systems, the participants reported their appreciation of the availability of counsellors, limited free consultations with psychologists, and affordable consultations with a medical doctor on campus.

In this discussion, it is evident that these participants could succeed only with the necessary contributors assisting them to persevere. Internal motivation, the desire to succeed, support from family members and partners, previous employers as well as institutional support enabled the participants to continue with and succeed in their endeavours to reach their dream.

#### **5.5.5 How could the university, administration and lecturers assist the adult learner in the future?**

Relating to the question of how the university, administration, and lecturers could assist the adult students enrolling in the university in the future, two broad categories could be identified. The first category indicated that as adults they take full responsibility for their decision to enter the learning environment and, therefore, take ownership with regard to resolving the inhibitors they may experience. These participants did not expect, or want, the university or faculty to be of assistance. The second category of students indicated that they had some advice for faculty and the university. The advice relative to the broader university included the issue that student administration should become more user-friendly and sensitive towards the specific, and sometimes unique, circumstances of adult learners. The remarks regarding administration referred specifically to the period during application and enrolment

to the university. It appeared that adult students from foreign countries encountered major frustration regarding administrative procedures to register.

The participants indicated that the information on the application forms relating to the course for which they are applying to register for is unclear and misleading. This lack of clear information is the major cause of their enrolling for a course they did not intend to pursue.

Participants further perceived that, although there are various financial assistance platforms available for students, an element of discrimination against their age and previous qualifications was reported.

Participants making use of campus accommodation reported that the living requirements of adults are different from those of the younger students. Participants reported that lack of managerial supervision at one specific hostel where they had to reside was perceived as alarming and a reason for concern. The participants reported that they did not want, or need, to deal with problematic situations resulting from poor student behaviour owing to a lack of supervision.

Regarding the dental faculty itself and their administration, the participants were more complimentary and they indicated that they had not experienced major problems.

Relating to academic staff, the participants mentioned that lecturers could be more considerate and respectful towards their status as adults, as well as recognising the experience they bring to the learning situation. Participants with tertiary qualifications mentioned that, although they had obtained degrees or diplomas in a specific field, for example a degree in Information Technology, they had to live through the frustration of registering for a module that focused on basic computer skills. Participants considered it a waste of their precious time and additional cost to register for a module they had previously passed. Participants mentioned that they want to acquire new skills and knowledge in order to qualify, and not be taught what they already know.

To create an environment that is inviting for the adult learner to enter and in which to succeed in their studies, it is important that institutions take note of the comments and the suggestions made by these participants.



## 5.6 Limitations

The study was confined to one department of a faculty at an institution of higher learning and reflects the perceptions of a selected group of participants in a selected course and should not be taken as a generalisation relative to other courses or other institutions.

Further limitations include:

- International and national literature reviews available on the research problem investigated for the purpose of this study on adults entering as full-time learners at an institution of higher education is limited. The researcher had mostly to draw on information from literature relating to adult learners in part-time studies.
- Participant selection criteria restricted some learners from participating in this investigation.
- Some learners indicated and declared their willingness to participate in the questionnaire data collection phase, but were tardy to being interviewed.

## 5.7 Recommendations

The *Education White Paper 3*, which defines the principles, goals, and structures for the transformation of the education system, states that an educational policy must be adopted that would increase access for all previously-disadvantaged groups from the prior apartheid system to tertiary education. The adult learner is included in this group of disadvantaged. Institutions of higher education should, therefore adapt to, accommodate and meet the needs and expectations of the adult learner.

Regarding administration processing and staff attending to student affairs, it is recommended that the administration could be assisted by development programmes to understand the unique needs, circumstances and qualities of the adult learner and adapt accordingly.

Universities and faculties should ensure that information pertaining to courses or programmes on offer at the institution are written and explained in a clear and comprehensible manner in brochures and on application forms in order to avoid confusion.

Owing to the fact that these working adults planning to enter as full-time students have to resign from their full-time jobs it would be recommended that student administration inform these applicants timeously that their application to the programme has been successful. This will assist the applicants to resign in a respectable timeframe, discuss potential arrangements with their employers, and finalize financial and other administrative responsibilities.

Financial constraints were identified as the major inhibitor in this study. The participant's perception was that owing to their age, they were discriminated against by financial assistance programmes, bursaries, and student loans. Financial support structures should align their policy according to the stipulations of The *Education White Paper 3*, of 1997.

University accommodation should address the specific requirements of the adult learner. The adult students indicated that the typical lifestyle of young students could be considered as an inhibitor to the adults and their studies. The university should consider the development of accommodation exclusively designed for the adult learner on campus, creating an environment conducive to learning, and enabling the adult learner to make use of the campus facilities.

University and faculty lecturers are experts in their field of practice and study; however regrettably, they are not always trained teachers. Teaching and learning initiatives attempt to bridge the discrepancies between the lecturer's expertise and their teaching abilities. Teaching and learning initiatives should in future include introducing learning facilitators to the unique characteristics, needs, and expectations of the adult learner. This could equip the lecturer to cope with the challenges brought to them when teaching adults in a programme dominated by traditional students.

### **5.8 Recommendations for further research**

While conducting this research project, it became evident that the following aspects could be considered as areas of importance for further research and investigation:

- Instead of limiting the study to adult learners entering a specific under-graduate programme on a full-time basis in a specific program, research could include all adult

learners registered on a full-time basis for undergraduate programmes to this specific faculty or the institution;

- Research could be extended to adult learners entering postgraduate programmes on a full-time basis at the dental faculty of this institution;
- Perceived living conditions on campus, as experienced by all adult learners entering or re-entering the learning environment and utilizing hostel accommodation, could be investigated;
- Research could be conducted as to how the BOH course could be tailored to the needs and expectations of the adult learner;
- Research could be extended to the lecturers of the specific faculty and their perception of the adult learner; and
- Research could be conducted on the preparedness of lecturers to accommodate and adapt to the unique learning needs and expectations of the adult learner.

## **5.9 SUMMARY**

The literature reviews conducted for this study confirmed that lifelong learning has become almost compulsory for an employee. The motivation for this lifelong learning is to produce a marketable employee who can survive the competitive and ever-evolving world of the modern working environment. National literature reviews refer to the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001), which advocates an increase in the number of adult learners in higher education in order to facilitate lifelong learning and the development of skills in the South African context.

Considering that the adult is the potential student of the future it is of national importance and relevance that this study was conducted. This study focused on the agents or factors of motivation for adults entering or re-entering the learning environment, the inhibitors they were confronted with throughout their learning experience, as well as the factors that contributed to their perseverance and success to the completion of their qualifications.

Adult students, owing to their unique circumstances, encountered challenges that are different from those faced by traditional students who complete their secondary school education and directly enter a higher educational institution.

Similarities relating to the motivating agents, the various categories of inhibitors and contributors as discussed in the literature review as well as in the empirical study, should be taken into account by institutions of higher education in South Africa to direct them towards the explicit instructions of The National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001). Institutions should focus on the specific needs, expectations and qualities of the adult learner, as well as the challenges with which the full-time adult student is faced. Institutions of higher education should adapt and hone their administrative skills and sensitize specialists in their field of expertise who are acting as lecturers with regard to the unique characteristics and experiences of the adult learner. Institutions that adapt to the unique characteristics of the full-time adult learner could reap the benefits of much needed escalating adult student numbers and become institutions of status and choice. Of more or “equal” importance is the fact that these institutions would be adhering to the explicit recommendations and stipulations of *The Education White Paper 3* (1997) and The National Plan for Higher Education (2001). The stipulations include that institutions of higher education should identify skills gaps and shortages and develop programmes accordingly, provide bursaries to non-traditional learners, thereby increasing the access of mature or adult learner to higher education. Increasing the amount of adult students in higher education should not be viewed by these institutions of higher education as merely exercise to boost student numbers but acting responsibly, taking ownership and answering to the policy goal number 1 section 2 sub-section 2.4 outcome 3 of the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001).

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**ANNEXURE A****CONSENT FORM: QUESTIONNAIRES**

I .....hereby agree to take part in the study “Motivators, contributors and inhibitors in Higher Education in the University of the Western Cape.

The motive of the study is to assist Mrs Viljoen to complete her Master’s Degree in Adult Education.

I confirm hereby that Mrs Viljoen has explained the following before issuing the questionnaire.

Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy will be guaranteed. All records will be kept safe in a lock up cabinet off -site. No names will be written on the questionnaires,

I have been informed that all questionnaires will be analyzed and according to the data forthcoming will give lead to an optional personal in-depth interview with the researcher.

As participant I have the authority to decide to withdraw from the research project at any time without any personal or academic penalty. As participant I have the authority to ask that sections of the interview may not be audio taped or noted.

I understand that Mrs Viljoen will act within her scope of practice and will not extend or assist in any personal matters unless I specifically ask her for a referral to a professional, qualified person in the related field.

Mrs Viljoen has explained to me that the completed findings of her research will be open for reading and comment to each participant in the study before sending the final, bounded copies to UNISA.

I understand that the written dissertation will remain the property of UNISA after final assessment.

Mrs Viljoen will destroy all records once her final mark is made public by UNISA in order to obtain her degree.

Please indicate if you are willing to participate in the personal interview that is part of this study. Yes

/ No

Name and surname.....

Date.....

Signature.....

**ANNEXURE B**

**QUESTIONNAIRE A**

**Kindly complete the following questionnaire**

**1 Age**.....

**2 Gender** ..... Male  Female

**3 Year of study** BOH I  BOH II  BOH III

**4 Home language**.....

**5.1 Are you financially independent?**.....

**5.2 Who pays for your studies?**.....

**5.3 Are you working part-time?**.....

**6.1 Educational back ground: Your family**

Qualification of father.....

Occupation of father.....

Qualification of mother.....

Occupation of mother.....

**6.2 Educational background: Yourself**

Do you have any post-school qualifications?.....

If yes, provide details of qualifications.....

Where did you obtain the qualifications?.....

**6.3 Educational background: Spouse/life partner**

Does your spouse/ partner have a post-school qualification?.....

Occupation of spouse/partner?.....

**7 Why did you decide to enter or re-enter higher education (University)?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**8 Why did you choose oral hygiene as a field of study?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**8.1 Was oral hygiene your first choice of study or your second/third choice?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**8.2 If you answered “No” in 8.1 please indicate why you entered oral hygiene as a field of study.**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**9.1 Did you encounter any barriers/problems when you wanted to enter the study field of oral hygiene?**

.....

**9.2 If yes, indicate what type of difficulties/barriers you encountered.**

.....  
.....  
.....

**10.1 What are the barriers that you encounter currently as an adult learner?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**10.2 How do you overcome these barriers?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**11 What are the factors that are contributing/helping/enabling you to succeed as an adult learner?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**12 What are your expectations once you are qualified as an oral hygienist?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**13.1 Are you aware of the support systems available from the learning institution/university you are registered at the moment?**

.....

.....

.....

**13.2 Are you making use of any of the support systems you are aware of at the university? And if so are these support systems successful?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**14 Any suggestions how the University may be of further assistance to contribute to your success?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you so much for participating in this research project.**

## ANNEXURE C

## QUESTIONNAIRE B (for triangulation)

**Demographic information:**

**In this section I would appreciate it if I could learn more about you as a participant.**

**Kindly indicate your**

**1 Age** Years  Months

**2 Gender** (Indicate your gender with an X) Male  Female

**3 Please indicate marital status with an X in the appropriate tick box.**

Single  Married  Divorced  Life partner

**4 Dependants**

**Do you have any dependants?**

**Please indicate with an X in the appropriate tick box.**

4.1 Yes  No

**If you do have dependants, please elaborate on how many and relationship of dependants.**

4.2 How many dependants? .....

4.3 Relationship of dependants?.....

**5 Year of study**

**Please indicate if you are currently in your first, second or third year of studies by making an X in the appropriate tick box.**

BOH I  BOH II  BOH III

**6 Language**

6.1 What is your home language? .....

6.2 What other language do you often speak at home?.....

**7 Financial status**

7.1 Are you financially independent?.....

7.2 Who pays for your studies? .....

7.3 Are you working part-time?.....

7.4 If you answered “Yes” in 5.3 what type of work do you do part-time?.....

7.5 If you answered “Yes” to 5.3 motivate why you are working part-time.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**8 In the next section of the questionnaire I would appreciate to have some information regarding the educational background of your family and yourself.**

**Please tell me more about the school or academic qualification of your**

8.1 Father.....

8.2 Mother.....

8.3 Your spouse/ life partner.....

**Please tell me more about your own educational background.**

8.4 Please indicate with an X if you have any post-school qualifications.

Yes  No

8.4.1 If yes, provide details of your post-school qualifications.

.....  
 .....

8.4.2 Where did you obtain these post-school qualifications?

.....  
 .....

**Please tell me more about the occupation of your**

8.5.1 Father .....

8.5.2 Mother.....

8.5.3 Spouse or life partner.....



**9 Please tell me in detail**

9.1 Why did you decide to come to the University?

.....  
.....  
.....

9.2 What do you consider as the main event that made you decide to leave your occupation and secure income and come back to study further at university?

.....  
.....  
.....

**10 Please tell me more about your choice to study oral hygiene.**

10.1 Why did you specifically choose to become a qualified oral hygienist and not select another occupation?

.....  
.....  
.....

10.2 Was oral hygiene your first choice of study or your second/third choice?

.....  
.....  
.....

10.3 If oral hygiene was not your first choice please indicate why you entered oral hygiene as a field of study.

.....  
.....  
.....

10.4 Why did you choose the University of the Western Cape to register and study at?

.....  
.....  
.....

**11 Please tell me more about the barriers you encountered when you applied for this course and also problems you encounter as a student currently.**

Please indicate with an X in the appropriate tick box.

11.1 Did you encounter any barriers or problems when you wanted to enter the study field of Oral Hygiene?      Yes            No     

11.2 If yes, indicate what type of difficulties/barriers you encountered.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

11.3 Describe what are the barriers you encounter currently as an adult learner.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

11.4 Explain how do you overcome these barriers?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

12.1 What are the factors that are contributing/helping/enabling you to succeed as an adult learner?

.....  
 .....

12.2 What are your expectations once you are qualified as an oral hygienist?

.....

**13 Support systems**

13.1 Indicate with an X in the appropriate tick box if you are aware of any support systems available from the learning institution/university you are registered at the moment?

Yes       No     

13.2 Please indicate with an X in the appropriate tick box if you are making use of any of the support systems you are aware of at the university?

Yes       No

13.3 If you answered “yes” in question 13.2 please tell me if these support systems are helpful for your specific needs as an adult learner.

.....  
.....

14 Please write down any suggestions how this University may be of further assistance to contribute to your success as an adult learner.

.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you so much for participating in this research project. Wishing you the very best with your studies and success for your future career.**

**ANNEXURE D****CONSENT FORM FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

I .....hereby agree to take part in the study Motivators, contributors and inhibitors in Higher Education in the University of the Western Cape. The motive of the study is to assist Mrs Viljoen to complete her Master's Degree in Adult Education.

I confirm hereby that Mrs Viljoen has explained the following before the start of the first interview:

Confidentiality and privacy will be guaranteed. All records will be kept safe in a lock up cabinet off site. No names will be written on interview sheets or mentioned in the interview or during transcribing of the interview. I have been informed that all interviews will be audio-taped and notes will be taken during the interview. I have been informed that all conversations will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher, Mrs Viljoen. I understand that no third party will be involved at any stage of data collection and transcribing of the data. The first interview will be 45-60 minutes and Mrs Viljoen may ask for a second and third interview.

As participant I have the authority to decide to withdraw from the research project at any time without any personal or academic penalty.

As participant, I have the authority to ask that sections of the interview may not be audio taped or noted.

I understand that Mrs Viljoen will act within her scope of practice and will not extend or assist in any matter unless I specifically ask her for a referral to a professional, qualified person related to the field.

I understand that the transcribed interviews will be sent to Mrs Viljoen's supervisor at UNISA for comment.

Mrs Viljoen has explained to me that the completed findings of her research will be open for reading and comment to each participant in the study before sending the final, bounded copies to UNISA.

I understand that the documents remain the property of UNISA after final assessment.

Mrs Viljoen will destroy all records after her final mark is made public by UNISA in order to obtain her degree.

Name and surname:.....

Date:.....

Signature:.....

## ANNEXURE E

## INTERVIEW-GUIDE

**Interview site : Tygerberg Oral Health Centre**

**Date of interview:.....**

**Interviewee code .....**

**Gender: M F**

How did you come to know about the course in Oral hygiene?

Did UWC provide help or encourage you to enrol?

Did you have any problems to enrol for this course?

What made it difficult to enrol?

What would make it easier to enrol?

Are you interested in the course you have enrolled for?

What do you like about the oral hygiene course?

What are your long term goals/ why study?

Do you want to further your studies once completing this course in oral hygiene?

What is/was your motive for enrolling for this course in oral hygiene?

What was the deciding factor for you to enrol?

This is a full-time course; would you have preferred a different mode of studying?

What type of study mode would you have preferred?

Do you think that your preferred choice of study mode could be applied for the oral hygiene course?

Do you work part-time?

How many hours do you work part-time? Per day.....Per week .....

What type of work do you do part-time?

Do you support yourself 100% financially at this stage? If “No”- Who helps to support you financially?

Who pays your study fees?

Do you have dependants?

Do you have family members that live with you?

Spouse

Children

Elderly parents

Who supports you physically and emotionally with all the other responsibilities e.g. childcare, housework etc.?

How many hours per week do you study?

Do you study at home?

If no motivate your answer:

Do you study at university?

Do you have any previous post-school training?

Did you complete the qualification?

How supportive is your spouse, family, extended family or life partner?

Do you need to be encouraged?

Who encourages you the most?

How far do you have to travel on a daily basis to attend university?

Where do you stay?

Do you have electricity at the place of study?

What type of accommodation do you have?

Do you experience any disruptions or disturbances when you have to study?

Name the type of disturbance

How do you cope with stressors?

How do you or what do you do to relax?

Do you participate in any sport activities?

How has your life changed since being a student?

What did you not like about your routine day at your previous work?

What do you not like about your day being here at university?

Did you have any fears coming to university in the beginning?

What were those fears?

Did they materialize did the fears become real?

Should you have a chance to change course would you?

What would you choose to study?

Why did you not enrol sooner to this course/program?

What are the difficulties you experience now that you have enrolled? What are the barriers?

What makes it easier to be here at university?

Any suggestions how the university can make it easier for you as an adult learner?

## ANNEXURE F

## Example: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

## ANNEXURE F

## Example: Interview Transcription

Attached is an example of one of the ten interview transcriptions. This transcription was selected due to the information provided. This participant had at least ten years of work related experience in the field of dentistry; had several tertiary education qualifications; a child with inclusive educational needs to take care of and did not enjoy emotional or physical support from her immediate home environment. This student is an example of a combination of a goal- and learning-orientated learner.

**I= Interviewer**

**PI= Participant interviewee**

**I:** How did you come to know about the course in Oral Hygiene?

**PI:** I started as a dental assistant and I know a lot of oral hygienists

**Comment [u1]:** Contributor:  
 •Prior knowledge of the occupation oral hygiene  
 •Familiar with scope of practice of the oral hygienist

**I:** Did UWC provide help or encourage you to enrol?

**PI:** No- I had to enrol here – there are no other universities in Cape Town offering the OH course.

**Comment [KV2]:** Institutional inhibitor:  
 •Geographical location  
 •No option to register elsewhere in this province- restricted choice

**I:** Did you have any problems to enrol for this course?

**PI:** No problems. Nice little on-line application, payment and got reply immediately.

**Comment [u3]:** Institutional:  
 •No admin problems due to on-line application,  
 •SA resident

**I:** What made it difficult to enrol?

**PI:** You mean for me or in general, for me? No, I do not think so.

**I:** Are you interested in the course you have enrolled for?

**PI:** Yes, I worked in a dental environment for 10-11 years and I developed an interest in dentistry and everything so I wanted to further my interest in the occupation. What happened at first was I knew a dentist, who was a lady dentist and her receptionist left; she was receptionist, accountant, assistant and she asked “please come and help us, I went to help and never left.

**Comment [u4]:** Motivation  
 •Employer encouraged

**I:** What are your long term goals/ why study?

**PI:** Preferably I would like to work as oral hygienist at a private practice/specialist practice and I want to be in an academic environment- I will like the combination research, lecture and private practice.

**Comment [u5]:** Motivation:  
 •Goal orientated

**I:** Do you want to further your studies once completing this course in oral hygiene?

**PI:** Yes. I want to do also in the field of dentistry a Masters Degree research project; I have already discussed this with one of the lecturers.

**Comment [KV6]:** Motivation:  
 •Goal orientated and  
 •Learning orientated

**I:** What is / was your motive for enrolling for this course in oral hygiene?

**PI:** I was working as a dental assistant and I did not feel that I was using my full potential and I did not feel that is right, I have been given so many gifts and I did not want to waste mine. How fortunate I am in comparison to others then I should do more to help others – that was my main motivation. Yes, hopefully it will improve my success in life and I am sure it will – either way I rate myself as a successful person when I can help others and have a good career.

**Comment [u7]:** Motivation :  
 •Self improvement  
 •Acquiring new skills  
 •Self empowerment

**Comment [u8]:** Motivation:  
 •Contribute to the community  
 •Helping other people

**Comment [KV9]:** Motivation:  
 •Self improvement  
 •Higher status, success  
 •Goal orientated

**Comment [u10]:** Motivation:  
 •Improved /better career opportunity

**I:** How long did you ponder before you decided to enrol – it seems you took ten years to do so?

**PI:** No I would say it was about a year I waited to enrol.



**I:** What was the deciding factor to enrol?

**PI:** Somebody told me, something told me I should go and do this. I know it sounds crazy and, maybe I am crazy but it was like an apparition, an enlightenment – it happened while I was driving from work. So I know with certainty I had to enrol.

**Comment [u11]:** Motivation to enrol  
•Religious experience

**I:** This is a full-time course; would you have preferred a different mode of studying?

**PI:** No it needs to be a full-time course. If you have to include everything you have to do and learn it definitely has to be a full-time course. There is no way you could do this part-time. maybe we could do more practical work, but I hope that will come next year...Yes, a few things I thought of being unnecessary - but yes, I can understand why it needs to be full-time.

**I:** What type of work do you do part-time?

**PI:** Dental assisting

**I:** How many hours per week?

**PI:** I just get phoned and asked, I am quite independent. My husband pays everything; he pays for my petrol as well... Husband pays 100% I paid my own study fees, I started saving a soon as I knew.

**Comment [KV12]:** Situational inhibitor:  
•Dependent on husband/  
•Work part-time

**Comment [u13]:** Financial  
•Dependant on husband for financial assistance

**I:** Do you have dependants?

**PI:** Yes, one child a son

**Comment [KV14]:** Situational inhibitor:  
•Multiple roles  
•Child to take care of  
•Household  
•Study

**I:** Do you have family members that live with you?

**PI:** Yes a spouse and one child aged 11 years

**I:** Who supports you physically and emotionally with all the other responsibilities e.g. childcare, housework etc.?

**PI:** O no, myself, husband might help with something, like putting the washing in the machine, that is basically all.

**Comment [KV15]:** Situational inhibitor:  
•Multiple roles  
•No assistance physically or emotionally

**I:** How many hours per week do you study?

**PI:** All the time, every single waiting moment due to workload

**Comment [KV16]:** Situational barrier:  
•Course workload-heavy

**I:** Do you study at home?

**PI:** I study at home I study at varsity; I study everywhere- in the car while I am driving

**I:** Do you have any previous post-school training?

**PI:** Yes I have degrees, diplomas and certificates

**Comment [u17]:** Motivator:  
•Previous academic success

**I:** How supportive is your spouse, family, extended family or life partner?

**PI:** The spouse-non supportive: Except for paying, spouse does not want to know anything about my course, stress or marks I am getting. Look he wishes me well for the exam and stuff but he gets to hear about my marks even if he doesn't want to. I just follow him and tell him, but he has his own things and is always out, so I have a supportive mom, if I am upset or worried I will phone my mom.

**Comment [KV18]:** Contributors:  
•Mother  
•Brother

**I:** Do you need encouragement at times to go on with your studies?

**PI:** I suppose so..... I encourage myself, I have to do well

**Comment [u19]:** Motivation:  
•Strong internal motivation to succeed

**I:** Do you experience any disruptions or disturbances when you have to study?

**PI:** Yes,....yes all the time, it is my child that needs a lot of special attention, all the house work, then the TV is on, then the dogs are there, it goes on and on, but I can study through it all. I can focus there and there (students point with finger); No I had to learn to do that even as a child I could study in the shop.

**Comment [u20]:** Situational inhibitor  
•Noise  
•Child with need for special attention  
•Multiple role of student, housekeeper, wife

**I:** How do you cope with stressors?

**PI:** I, some days I can cope better than other days, I suppose but yah.....

**Comment [u21]:** Situational inhibitor:  
•Stress:  
○ Coping mechanisms  
○ Talking  
○ Over the counter medication to calm  
○Physical exercise

I just cope, I just have to. I am a very verbal person; I will always talk about what I am worried about. I have resorted to “Calmettes” (medication) this exam they are in the cupboard just in case

**I:** How do you or what do you do to relax?

**PI:** I go to the gym , I love to gym...I do not go in the week, I can't go while I am studying, I do not allow myself to go. Normally I go on Saturdays and Sundays, and holidays every day.

**I:** How has your life changed being a student?

**PI:** A lot of work after hours, At least the work (assisting in the practice) was left at work, now I have to study all the time.

**I:** What did you not like about your routine day at your previous work?

**PI:** I liked the job, yes; we used to work from 7:30 am to 20:00. Standing with the suction in your hand – he (the dentist) did a lot of surgical procedures. I did not just do assisting, I did all the post-operative instructions, the accounts, had no lunch breaks, no tea time, for me it was very stressful.

Whoever I was working with, would take tea breaks and I would set up for the next patient. The other thing is that people just assumed that I am stupid

because I am a dental assistant... Yah, definitely ...some of those people....

Some patient once said to the dentist “what do you need her for” and that “her” is sitting there you know they are all “la de da” people and I had more degrees than that lady (the patient) and she did not know that she just made an assumption. Dental assistants are not stupid. That made me so angry and then my brother does well in everything, my brother encourages me. My brother could be considered as my enabler he is very supportive.

**Comment [u22]:** Motivation:  
•Higher status job

**Comment [u23]:** Goal orientated:

- Motivation to pursue further higher education
- Personal enhancement
- Higher status job
- Empowered

**Comment [u24]:** Enabler and motivator:

- Brother encourages
- Wants to be like brother (genius)

**Comment [u25]:** Motivator external

- Approval of family
- Brother supporter
- Brother also a motivator

**I:** What do you not like about your day being here at university?

**PI:** O',well at the end of the day I will have a degree (another degree as this student has a degree)

**I:** Did you have any fears coming to university in the beginning?

What were those fears?

**PI:** I was full of fear, I did not know if I could still study. It was something new, I was out of my comfort zone, and to lose your income is frightening. Dr (employer) kept my job open for 6 months for me to return.

**Comment [u26]:** Dispositional inhibitor.

- Psychological fears
- Fearing inability to study and remember
- Being out of the comfort zone
- Fear of losing income and independence
- Dependent on husband

**I:** Did these fears materialize, did it become real?

**PI:** No the fears did not become real.....

**Comment [u27]:** Contributor.

Employer:

- Reserved position at work for 6 months
- Assisting with employment part-time
- Encourages her throughout the course
- Considers her "still" part of the practice
- Job security once qualified

**I:** Should you have a chance to change course would you?

**PI:** No not any more I wanted to.....

**I:** What would you choose to study?

**PI:** There were so many lecturers telling me to change course to do dentistry

**Comment [u28]:**

Both end of the scale:

- Lecturers motivating to change course
- Lecturers praising excellent academic performance

**I:** Why did you not enrol sooner to this course/program?

**PI:** Only the past year previously wanted to, the dentist told not to do that due to that you only do scaling.

**I:** What are the difficulties you experience now that you have enrolled? What are the barriers?

**PI:** My own fears. Right on the day I started... I was very sad to leave my job, I was very happy there.

**Comment [u29]:** Current inhibitors:

- Dispositional psychological fears
- Own fears
- Unsure about resigning from job

**I:** What makes it easier to be here; what are the enablers?

**PI:** My own internal motivation

**Comment [u30]:** Enabler:  
 •Internal motivation  
 •Family member – brother

**I:** Any suggestions how we or the university can make it easier for you?

**PI:** Work load. I do not know how we can get around it, unnecessary things e.g. women's health, why not men's health...? In my thinking each patient is a special patient and counselling? If a patient really needs counselling they need to see a specialized person. Also lecturers become abrasive when you mention things like this. They do not acknowledge our experience.

**Comment [u31]:** Institutional and situational inhibitor  
 •Course work load  
 •Questioning curriculum content

**Comment [u32]:** Institutional inhibitor:  
 •Work related experience brought to course not acknowledged

**I:** Are there any support systems in place at the university that you value as important?


**PI:** Yes, the clinical advisors as a support system has been a life saver on numerous occasions. I do not however make use of any of the other support systems available.

**Comment [u33]:** Contributors:  
 •Clinical advisors


## ANNEXURE G

## INSTITUTIONAL CONSENT

STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE FOR RESEARCHERS



**Office of the Deputy Dean  
Postgraduate Studies and Research**  
Faculty of Dentistry & WHO Collaborating Centre for Oral Health



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**  
Private Bag X1, Tygerberg 7505  
Cape Town  
SOUTH AFRICA

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2011

**For Attention: Mrs K Viljoen**  
Department of Oral Hygiene

Dear Mrs Viljoen

**STUDY PROJECT: Motivators, contributors and inhibitors in Higher Education**

**PROJECT REGISTRATION NUMBER: 11/5/21**


**ETHICS:      Approved**

At a meeting of the Senate Research Committee held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2011 the above project was approved. This project is therefore now registered and you can proceed with the work. Please quote the above-mentioned project title and registration number in all further correspondence. Please carefully read the Standards and Guidance for Researchers below before carrying out your study.

Patients participating in a research project at the Tygerberg and Mitchells Plain Oral Health Centres will not be treated free of charge as the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape does not support research financially.

Due to the heavy workload auxiliary staff of the Oral Health Centres cannot offer assistance with research projects.

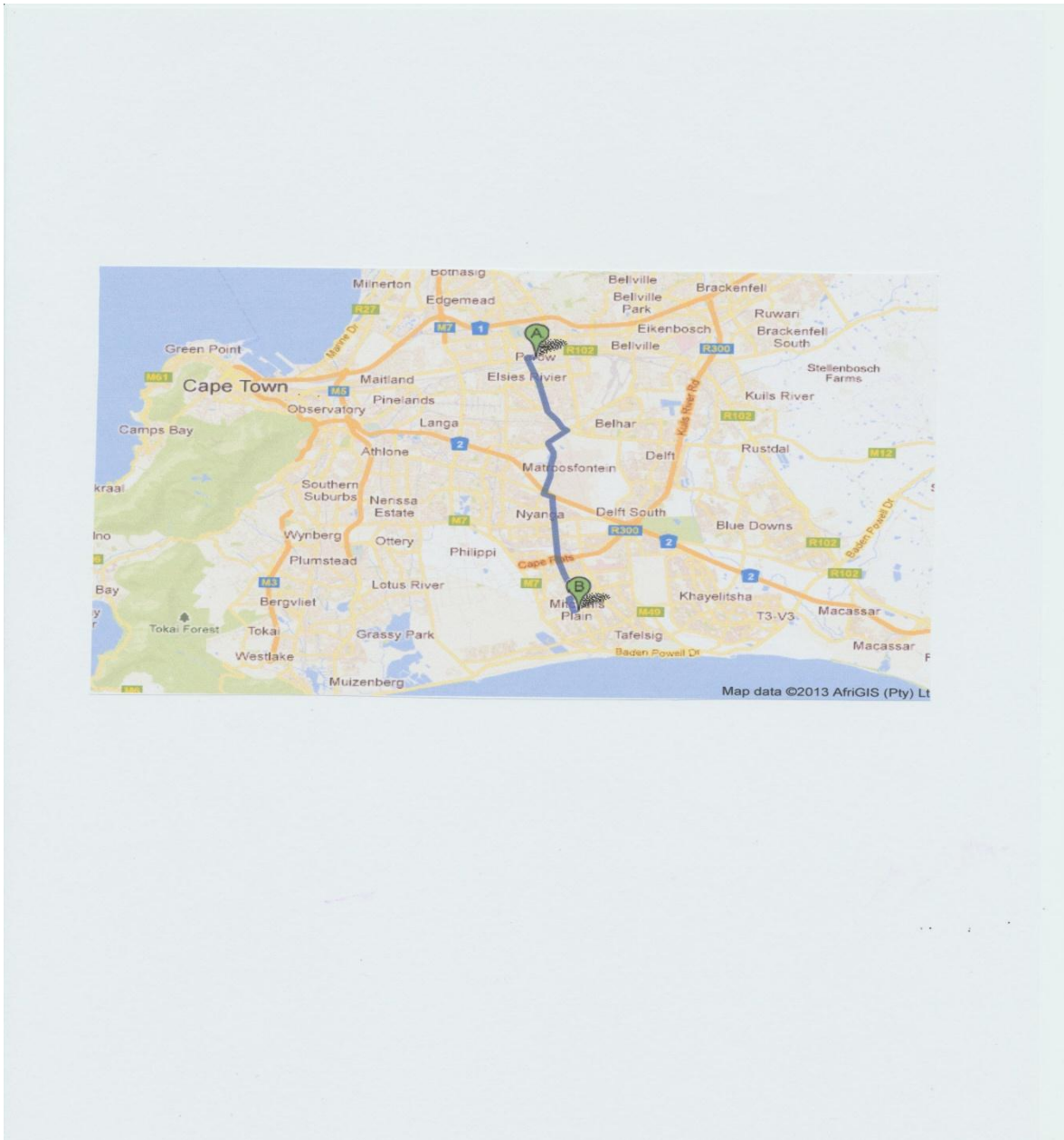
Yours sincerely



Professor Sudeshni Naidoo

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Tel -27-21-937 3148 (w); Fax -27-21-931 2287 e-mail: suenaidoo@uwc.ac.za

**ANNEXURE H****Map of geographical location – UWC Dental faculty training sites**

Sourced from: [www:MapsGalaxy.com](http://www:MapsGalaxy.com)

Available from: <http://www.distance-calculator.co.uk/map-print.php?town1=Parow&town2=Mitchells...> [accessed on 10 November 2012]