

**AN EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S  
TRANSFORMATION THROUGH DISTANCE  
LEARNING IN KENYA**

**LUCY KASYOKA KITHOME**

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**DURBAN**

## DECLARATION

I LUCY KASYOKA KITHOME declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research, except the otherwise acknowledged assistance and referenced citations. It has not been previously submitted for any degree and is not being concurrently presented for examination in any other University

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2004

Signature: LKithome.....

## **DEDICATION**

### **I dedicate this thesis to:**

My husband, Mussolini Kithome, for giving unwavering support throughout the project period and by accepting to take care of the children during my absence.

My children Catherine Malinda, Eunice Lula, David Mumo and Caroline Malinda, for your love and patience during the time I was away from you.

My mother, Tabitha Lula Kitema, for your love and the struggles you went through in order to see me through my schooling.

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## ABSTRACT

This research, *An Exploration of Women's Transformation through Distance Learning in Kenya*, applied Mezirow's theory of transformative learning to investigate how distance learning impacted on women's views about themselves and their position in society. This was done by examining whether distance learning enables women to acquire new self-perceptions about themselves and leads them to challenge the status quo and take action in order to improve their status in society. Three distance learning programmes were studied: the B. Ed. programme at the Faculty of External Studies at the University of Nairobi, Theological Education by Extension, and the Co-operative College of Kenya.

This research was motivated through my own biography, with the purpose of identifying and encouraging distance learning practices that promote women's transformation. The research also hoped to draw attention to the study of women's issues in distance learning, as an area that has not attracted much attention in Kenya and to generate information which can be used to inform the use of distance learning methods in a way that favours women.

Biographical methods of research were used. This involved listening to women's learning stories, noting their reasons for coming back to study, the barriers that they encountered as they studied and the coping strategies that they used to overcome the barriers. In addition, other methods were used to supplement the biographical data collected from the women. These included focus group discussions, observation and documentary evidence. The approach to data analysis was based on the use of hermeneutics methods of data interpretation. The themes and concepts that emerged from this process were compared with themes and concepts generated through other methods of data collection.

The main findings were that distance learning, though based on alternative forms of provision, does lead to transformation, however, women from the three programmes experienced diverse levels of transformation. The B. Ed. programme with its face-to-face component and women with higher education had greater impact on women's transformation than other programmes. Although the TEE programme had face-to-

face interaction, their curriculum, which reinforced the negative gender stereotypes in society and does not lead to recognised certificates, could not allow them to achieve this experience. The Coop programme, without the face-to-face arrangement had the lowest transformative effects on women. On the basis of these findings, it was recommended that more distance learning programmes be designed, with increased use of face-to-face components in order to help women achieve transformation.

The findings and the discussions thereof also show that prior level of education had far reaching effects on the levels of transformation that women achieved. This led to the recommendation that women's education should be encouraged and the society should be sensitised about the value of educating women.

Distance learning also enabled women to achieve economic empowerment, in terms of promotions, new jobs and increased salaries; however this was only noted in the B. Ed. and Coop programmes. The TEE programme, being a church programme had no economic benefits for its women learners. The women in the TEE programme were not happy with the present arrangement and were, therefore, calling for a review of the programme.

The findings also showed that women's transformation is not being fully achieved because of non-supportive facilities and the use of learning materials, which reinforce the negative gender stereotypes in society. Therefore, to make distance learning more accessible to women learners and more transformational, the research recommended changes geared towards the creation of women-friendly facilities and learning materials.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AMREF	African Medical Research Foundation
AVU	African Virtue University
B. Ed.	Bachelor of Education
CATs	Continuous Assessment Tests
CBA	Certificate in Business Administration
CEES	College of Education and External Studies
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
Coop	Cooperative College of Kenya
DCO	District Cooperative Officer
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationists
FES	Faculty of External Studies
FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency (or Immune Deficiency) Syndrome.
ICTs	Information and Communications Technologies
INADES	African Institute for Economic and Social Development Formation
KSTC	Kenya Science Teachers' College
OAIC	Organization of African Instituted Churches
OISE	Ontario Institute for the Study of Education
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Society
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation investigates the ability of distance learning to transform women who go back to study through distance learning methods in Kenya. Although there has always been debate about the definition of this term, scholars are in agreement on the fact that the term refers to the mode of teaching and learning, characterized by separation between the teacher and the learner most of the time, with this separation being mitigated by some form of technology; either simple printed texts, or the telephone, teleconferencing, computer conferencing and the Internet (Holmberg 1995, Leiper 1993, Spodick 1995, Taylor 2001). These technologies are used to bridge the gap that exists between the teacher and the learner most of the time.

Through the use of biographical approaches, I traced the lived experiences of women students and established the routes through which they joined distance learning and the possible transformation which may have occurred in their lives after participating in distance learning. The research studied women from three different distance learning programmes, namely: the University of Nairobi B. Ed.; the Church based Theological Education by Extension; and the Cooperative College of Kenya programmes; identifying their motivation, learning experiences, barriers to their study and transforming experiences in their lives related to their study.

In this chapter I give the introduction to the whole thesis. I begin by giving the background information on the geographical area of the field research. This is followed by the statement of the problem, the research questions that were answered, the rationale for the study, the theoretical frameworks that were used and a preview of the methods that were utilized, in both the data collection and processing. I then discuss the limitations, the organizational structure of the thesis and present a concluding summary of the chapter.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

This research was done in Kenya. Kenya is situated in the East African region, where she is bordered by the Indian Ocean to the east, Somalia to the northeast, Ethiopia to the north, Sudan to the northwest, Uganda to the west and Tanzania to the south. Kenya and the last two countries share the waters of Lake Victoria, the greatest fresh water lake in Africa, with the lake serving as the famous source of the River Nile.

Kenya gained independence from the British in 1963 and she remained a single party state until 1992 when she became a multi-party democracy. Kenya is a multilingual nation, with English and Swahili as the official languages. There are 42 indigenous languages.

Kenya's population is about 30 million people with women forming 58 per cent of the total population (Forum for African Women Educationists 2001). Although women are the majority in the population, they occupy a lower social status in the family and society. They are considered second-class citizens by their dominant male counterparts (Odaga & Heneveld 1995, Davidson 1993, Forum for African Women Educationists 2001). This view of women as second class citizens has led to their exclusion from various levels of education as well as socio-economic and political spheres of life, both in the private (domestic) and the public spheres. The majority of them do not participate in decision-making forums on economic as well as political destinies of their families and society. They also lack control over economic resources. For example, the recently published report by Human Rights Watch summarizes the economic situation of Kenyan women by stating that,

Women's rights to property are unequal to those of men in Kenya. Their rights to own, inherit, manage, and dispose of property are under constant attack from customs, laws, and individuals including government officials who believe that women cannot be trusted with or do not deserve property (Human Rights Watch 2003:1).

The impact of this violation of women's property rights extends not only through their lives, but also through the lives of their children, resulting in poverty, inhuman living conditions, vulnerability to violence and nonparticipation in education for their

children. Therefore, without economic power, Kenyan women have to rely on their male relatives for economic survival, making them vulnerable to further subjugation, sexual abuse and poverty.

Politically, Kenya is still a male dominated society. For instance, the recently constructed parliament is said to have the largest number of women parliamentarians. However, it only has 18 women out of the total of 221 parliamentarians. Among the cabinet ministers, out of 30 positions, women have only three full cabinet positions. It is intriguing that the present government has been applauded for improving the state of women in high positions. Yet the disparities are still very wide (Ng'ang'a 2003).

The bulk of Kenyan women have been relegated to the home, where responsibilities of taking care of the men and the future posterity weigh them down (Karani 1998, FAWE, 1995). For instance, women produce half the food in Kenya and carry most of the responsibilities in the household (Kenya Data Research Centre 2000). However, they have no control over their labour, inputs, marketing of cash crops and the use of income from agricultural produce (Kenya Data Research Centre 2000). Although their role in society is crucial, their work is undervalued and not rewarded. Socio-cultural norms and traditional values have enhanced this subservient status of women (Gachuhi & Matiru 1988). This state of affairs has had far reaching impact on women's education.

In spite of the government's commitment, as reflected in both the Kenyan Constitution and legislative enactment on education, to gender balance at all levels of education, there are still big disparities between men and women's participation in education (Davidson 1993, Kigotho 2001). The majority of the women are still excluded from the different levels of education, either having never enrolled or having dropped out of school before the completion of a specified cycle. This drop out rate leads to very few women reaching tertiary level education. In 1994/95 the female student population in universities was only 26.4 per cent. This figure increased by 2.4% in 1997/98 (Forum for African Women Educationists 1999). By 2001, it was estimated that for every 100,000 Kenyan women, there were only 125 enrolled at tertiary level, whereas for the same number of men, there were 350 (Kigotho 2001). Of the few women who make it to universities, the majority register for Arts courses,

such as nursing, law, education, anthropology and agriculture, with a much smaller enrolment in science subjects such as architecture, engineering, veterinary and human medicine, physical sciences and mathematics.

There are a number of factors that act as barriers to women's education. These include widespread poverty; socio-cultural beliefs, such as negative attitude to women's education, sexual division of labour; and practices, such as initiation rites, bride price and early marriages; distance from educational institutions and the effects of HIV/AIDS. All these have combined to act as roadblocks to women's education.

Poverty, coupled with negative attitude to the education of girls, has played a great role in causing dropout of girls, in that the allocation of the available resources to boys' education keeps the majority girls from schooling, 'either by not allowing them to enroll in the first place or by forcing them to abandon school before they have completed the education cycle' (Forum for African Women Educationists 2001:1). Traditional beliefs about girls and women discourage investment in their education. Parents consider girls' education as less important, whereas that of boys is considered as investment. Girls are seen in terms of consumption since they would get married and go to live elsewhere (UNESCO 1988).

The sexual division of labour, where women are assigned most of the social reproductive tasks, constrains girls' education (Kigotho 2001). Girls have heavy workload and this leads them to drop out of school. Wamahihu echoes this fact by stating that:

Girls throughout the continent face competing demands on their time; first, the traditional division of labour stipulates that girls and boys perform certain tasks within the domestic economy as unpaid family labour. Research indicates that girls are generally expected to continue performing their traditionally designated roles even as they attend school (Wamahihu 1994:13).

The effects of HIV/AIDS have also made the situation worse in that girls are turning out to be caregivers for their dying parents (Forum for African Women Educationists 2001). About 1.4 million children have been rendered orphans by the disease in

Kenya (Aduda 2001). Once the parents die, then the girls drop out from school to take care of their siblings and also due to lack of fees.

Social customs such as initiation rites, female circumcision, bride price and early marriage have had negative consequences for the schooling of girls. Research shows that girls who 'undergo circumcision, or for whom bride price has been paid, experience attitudinal changes and tend to reject formal education, perceiving themselves to be adults, and schools as institutions meant for children' (Wamahihu 1994:14).

Early marriage among the Maasai and Somali, Turkana, Samburu and Pokot, is prevalent and has been a major impediment to improving the status of women as girls are married off early to old men so that parents can earn some cattle in bride wealth (Muita 1999). Among the Giriama, too, early marriages and pregnancy continue to block many girls from successful completion of their education cycle (Mwewa 2002). Indeed early marriage is estimated to affect 27 per cent of under 19 year old girls in the East African region. This results in girls dropping out of school and as a result leading a life of domestic and sexual subservience.

The distance to learning institutions and insecurity, the inhospitable teaching and learning environment, in which girls are ridiculed, the perceived low status of women in society and lack of role models, have had their share in blocking girls and women from participation in education (Wamahihu 1994, Forum for African Women Educationists 2001).

All the above factors have conspired to exclude Kenyan women from full participation in education. Their exclusion from education has led to their further isolation from the mainstream economy. This scenario calls for a different approach to the education of women.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

For Kenyan women to come out of this debilitating state that they find themselves in, they have to participate in a subversive form of education, which not only enables them to get qualifications leading to employment opportunities, but also instills critical thinking which leads them to challenge patriarchy (Thompson 1997). Through it, women would be able to have a better understanding of their social world and thus be better equipped to challenge the status quo. Such a kind of education should help women change their lives, acquire more independence, have more control over their lives and more self-worth (Thompson 1997, Barr 1999). It should raise awareness about their conditions, by giving them chance to reinterpret themselves critically (Mezirow 1991).

Some Kenyan women have tried to re-enter mainstream education by joining flexible education programmes for mature adult returnees. One of these modes of study is distance learning. Although distance learning was introduced in Kenya in the sixties, there are still no dedicated distance teaching institutions, whose sole aim is to deliver courses via the distance mode of delivery. Examples of these dedicated institutions in other parts of the world are the world's mega-Universities such as United Kingdom's Open University, University of South Africa (UNISA), Indira Gandhi National Open University and the Tanzanian Open University (Commonwealth of Learning 2001, Dodds 1991, Mugridge 1994). Most of the distance learning programmes in Kenya would fall under the dual-mode type of institutions whereby the institutions handle both residential and distance learning students, each of them being exposed to a different curriculum, without even any possibility of students crossing over from one mode to the other (Gatimu 2000, Perraton 1991, 1995). This is unlike other dual-mode institutions in the world that offer the same course in both modes and give the same examinations, and give students leeway to combine modes as they wish and as it is convenient to their needs.

However, some institutions in Kenya have integrated distance learning programmes within their residential systems. These include the University of Nairobi's B. Ed. programme, Theological Education by Extension (TEE) certificate and diploma programmes, which are offered on a non-formal basis, and the Co-operative College

of Kenya certificate course in the management of co-operatives. It is these first three that are the subject of this research. Other programmes include the African Medical Research and Education Foundation (AMREF) programme whose objective is to retrain nurses on communicable diseases. It uses print, audiocassettes and weekly broadcast through radio. Student support is given through tutoring and counselling in periodic group sessions (UNESCO 1995, Jenkins, 1990, Perraton 2000). Since the majority nurses in Kenya are women, the programme reaches more women than any other distance learning programme in Kenya. The African Institute for Economic and Social Development Formation (INADES), which is a rural based adult education programme, aims at reaching non-literate and neo-literates with knowledge on management, entrepreneurship, forestry, fishing and modern methods of farming (UNESCO 1995, Perraton 2000). It does this by the use of print lessons, assignments and magazines, combined with seminars and radio series. This programme does not attract many women because of lack of publicity. Although it targets rural people, many do not know that it exists. Normally the recruitment to the programme is done through the radio and this acts as a barrier for many women since not many rural women own radios.

The African Virtual University, which is a satellite information technology based distance learning programme sponsored by the World Bank, focuses on science, engineering, business and medical fields. Its objective was to bring quality education to a large number of students in Kenya, using modern information technology (Amutabi & Oketch 2003, World Bank 2001). Its learning package comprises 'live pre-recorded lectures transmitted by satellite and viewed on a television screen plus handouts, textbooks, lecture guidelines and programmes/schedules on transmission, and other materials, that are transmitted electronically' (Amutabi & Oketch 2003:8). Programmes are broadcast to partner institutions in Africa via satellite from the United States of America and Europe. Although the programme was started with a lot of enthusiasm, its accessibility to the majority of Kenyan women is questionable because it is based in Nairobi while the majority of women stay in the rural areas, where telephone, computers and Internet are non-existent. Furthermore, the fees charged (about US\$ 11,000) for the full course makes the programme non accessible for the majority of women, who lack money. Thus, although there are many distance learning programmes in Kenya, their accessibility to women remains questionable.

Therefore, in this research, I:

- Explored, through the use of biographical approaches, the lived experiences of women students involved in distance learning in Kenya to establish whether distance learning helps women to take positive action on their worlds. By understanding the individual women students within a biographical context, I identified significant moments and experiences, which have shaped their present lives as distance learners;
- Established the relevance and responsiveness of distance learning to the needs and aspirations of women students;
- Established how distance learning helps women to rediscover themselves, their capabilities and talents and enables them to engage socially;
- Investigated how distance learning is enabling and empowering women to rethink and re-evaluate their position and condition in society and to participate fully in the social, economic and political spheres of life.

#### **1.4 Research Questions Asked**

To explore the issues of women's transformation through distance learning, four research questions were asked:

1. How does distance learning change women's views about themselves and their position in society?  
My concern was to establish the kind of impact distance learning has had on the kind of persons they have become today. Included here are issues related to their self-esteem/self-worth, critical self-reflection, courage to question the subordinate position they occupy, ability to reflect on social conditions of existence and their approach to life and thought-forms.
2. What kind of obstacles/ difficulties/challenges do women learners encounter in their study and how do they deal with them? I wanted to identify the problems that women encounter as they pursue distance learning courses. I also investigated how these women managed to surmount these barriers in order to succeed, as evidence of the transforming process of distance learning.

3. What are the socio-economic implications of their education for themselves and their families? I was concerned with the socio-economic benefits that women have gained after doing distance learning courses: their ability to have control over resources, the kind of lifestyles they live after completion of the courses, their home environment, socio-economic status, job placement, and their ability to play a greater role in decision-making forums.
4. What practical suggestions/strategies would they recommend be put in place so as to enhance women learners' transformation? My interest was to get recommendations /suggestions from the women learners on what policy changes needed to be made, and policies that need to be put in place so that studying for women becomes more transformational.

Answers to these questions would provide a full description of Kenyan women distance learners' transformation through distance learning. They would also enable educators to identify good distance learning practices that would benefit women and meet their study needs.

### **1.5 Rationale for the study**

My goal in this research was to understand, through biographical methods, the experiences of women students taking distance learning courses and to explore the possible transformation that may have taken place in their lives as a result of participating in distance learning. One of the reasons for choosing this topic can be located in my own biography.

I was born and brought up by a widowed mother who lived in a patriarchal society with clear-cut divisions between men and women. These traditional gendered divisions influenced the whole of my early life and contributed to what I was to become in my adult life. My mother had been married as a fifth wife to a rich and polygamous old man. However, when he passed away, our status changed drastically in that we lost all the property that he had left behind to my stepbrothers. The source of my mother's problems was based on the fact that she had only daughters and no sons. My half-brothers wanted to marry off my elder sisters at an early age to old

men. However, my mother rejected this practice and due to this, she was stigmatized and chased away from her matrimonial home. She went to her brother's home and so I grew up in my maternal uncle's home. Even here, we were not accepted as such, because women did not inherit land from their fathers or brothers. So my maternal uncle acted in a revolutionary way, by giving my mother a piece of land, though on a temporary basis. My mother struggled to feed us, by doing manual work in rich neighbours' homes. My two elder sisters and I would join her in the farms to work, either for food or for money to buy other supplies.

My elder sisters were never sent to school because there was just too much poverty around for my mother to think of taking them to school. At the same time, there were gendered attitudes towards education. Girls' education was considered non profitable, with the society arguing that once they got married the benefits of their education would be enjoyed by other (husband's) people. This explains why my mother was not eager to struggle for my sisters' education and it also points to the general non-participation of women in education.

I actually went to school by chance. It was through the efforts of one of the nursery school teachers that I was finally enrolled in school. She visited my mother several times and sensitized her to the importance of taking girls to school. Initially, my mother was reluctant to follow her advice, but through the persistence of this teacher, I was sent to school. Once in school I turned out to be a bright child and the teachers liked me. Although coming from abject poverty, I managed to perform well in both secondary and high school and was finally admitted to do a Bachelor of Education degree, specializing in History and Religious studies. Teaching in my community then was considered the right career for women and so every opinion leader advised me that as a woman I had to be a teacher. Immediately after graduation in 1984 I registered for an M.A. in Religious Studies. When I completed this programme, I was able to get a job as a tutorial fellow and was later promoted to a lecturer at the University of Nairobi.

Although I had been hired to teach in the residential programme, I performed duties on a part time basis at the Faculty of External Studies, by writing distance learning materials and tutoring the students. I even coordinated the writing of materials in

Philosophy and Religious Studies. This experience laid a foundation for my interest and later involvement in distance learning. In 1994 I was able to register for the University of London M.A. programme in Distance education, which is normally taught through the distance learning mode of delivery. By this time I was already married and had three children.

Student life as a distance learner was harsh for me because I had to combine domestic chores, as a wife and mother, a job at the university and study. So study came in as an added load to my already overburdened life. All the same, I knew that I did not have much choice. I could not go to London to do the course full time. This would have meant abandoning my family at a time when my husband was away in Canada and at a time when my children were still very small. At the same time, it would have meant that I would lose my much-needed job at the university.

My study routine or format as a distance learner was dictated to by the other duties that I had to do. I would perform all the other duties during the day, and at night I would settle down to study. Other times, when I did not have many commitments, I would do my studies during the day. I used to carry my learning materials to work, so that I could study in my office during the hours I did not have lectures. I had to discipline myself so as to meet the deadlines for the assignments; and due to this I was able to hand in my assignments on time. I had to learn to balance between my studies on one side, and my duties as a mother, wife, and an employee. This was not easy as there were tensions in the process of trying to integrate the three aspects of my life. These tensions that arise as woman combine daily chores and studying have been summarized by Jane Ribbens, commenting on Rosalind Edwards' research experience by stating that:

Her determination to be a successful student whilst also being a 'good' wife and mother became channeled into attempts to integrate the two aspects of her life, in the face of their increasing disjuncture. In particular what was valued familiarly was not academically, and vice versa. (Edwards & Ribbens 1998:6)

As a distance learner I also found myself in this dilemma; I wanted to complete my studies on time, but at the same time, I wanted to run my family smoothly (Stalker 2001). These are the same dilemmas that women academics faces as they struggle to

stay afloat in academics and at the same time maintain a healthy family. Getting the right mix was a big problem and a struggle.

Through hard work and self-discipline, I was able to obtain my M.A. in distance education in 1998. This experience transformed my thinking about myself and my capabilities. I came to realize that I could change my career line from Religious Studies to distance learning. This discovery motivated me to register for this Ph.D. programme.

Therefore, due to my experience as a distance learner and the transformation that has occurred in my life after the study experience, I was motivated to investigate other women's experiences too. I felt there was need to establish what happens to other women who take up distance learning courses in Kenya. I did not have any hypothesis to test; I wanted to hear the experiences of these women students, how they balanced studying with all other women's chores, the problems that they encountered as they studied and the possible transformation that had taken place in their lives as a result.

Secondly, most of the educational institutions in Kenya are in the process of integrating distance learning programmes into their residential systems (Gatimu et al 1997, Kithome & Gatimu 2001). Therefore, with many educational institutions moving towards integration of distance education into their residential programmes, there is need to investigate the ability of these mushrooming distance learning programmes to meet the needs of women, improve access to their participation in education and be able to change their approach to life as well as enable them to challenge their low status in society.

Thirdly, since education is seen by feminist educators as an important tool in the struggle to end women's subordination (Barr 1999, Thompson 1997), it is, therefore, vital to establish how strategic distance learning is in this struggle. Thus, there is need to investigate whether distance learning is able to equip women to live better lives, socially, economically and politically.

Fourthly, although there is a lot of literature on distance learning in Kenya, far less attention has been given to the impact of distance learning on women's lives. I had

already realized that the previous researchers in the area of distance learning tended to ignore the unique experiences of women students taking distance learning courses. Most of these researchers tended to concentrate on administration of distance learning programmes (Dodds 1992). Others aimed at evaluating the material development process (Kamau 1988) and student support subsystems of the programmes (Kamau 1992, 1993). Even those studies that paid attention to the distance learners, investigated learner's response to the different subsystems of distance learning. For instance, Kamau (1995) studied learners' perspectives on the learning materials, with the aim to establish whether the University of Nairobi distance learning programme used high quality materials and support services. Odumbe's 1995 conference paper paid attention to the application of technology to distance education in Kenya. Mwangi's study (2000) looked at the AMREF's distance programme as an example of non-formal distance learning. These and other researchers on distance education in Kenya never paid attention to the unique distance learning clientele called women. They tended to treat women students as part of the mass of students. Yet, from my own experience, having done an MA in distance education through the distance learning mode, I knew that women students have completely different experiences from those of men and that distance learning was bound to have a unique impact on their lives. I, therefore, noticed that there was a gap in the existing distance learning literature. The voices of women distance learners were lacking and I, therefore, embarked on bringing out these voices so as to let the world know what women go through as they study and how distance learning transforms their spiritual, social, political and economic lives.

Fifthly, the study is expected to create awareness of the needs, experiences and aspirations of women students. Its recommendations will give guidance to distance educators to create more and better studying opportunities for women; and initiate educational policies that would enable women to participate successfully and to experience transformation in their lives through distance study. This research project will contribute to the field of adult and distance learning by highlighting the lives of women students involved in distance learning.

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical framework guiding this study is Mezirow's perspective of transformative learning theory. This theory, which is a critical theory of adult education, and based on an emancipatory paradigm, is influencing the trends of adult education greatly. Transformative learning theory posits that an ideal learning process enables the learner to examine, question, validate and revise their perspectives (Mezirow 1996, Cranton 1994). According to Mezirow, transformative theory, '...seeks to establish a general, abstract, and idealized model which explains the generic structure, dimensions, and dynamics of the learning process' (Mezirow 1996:166). Under Mezirow's model of learning, the best conditions for learning are those which allow the learner to fully participate in a critical perspective reflection (Mezirow 1991, 1995, Cranton 1994).

Once an adult learner has undergone an education programme that is transformational, she emancipates herself from forces that exert control over her life and which she may have taken for granted or seen as beyond her control (Imel 1995). This theory was used to inform this research about the role of distance learning in enabling women learners to achieve transformation in their 'meaning perspectives' and be able to think critically about their position and condition in society and to develop new assumptions and beliefs about themselves and the world they live in (Mezirow 1990). By so doing, the research will establish whether distance learning enables women to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and challenge their low status in Kenyan society. More discussions of the transformative theory will be made in chapter three.

My research has utilized the definition of transformative learning that is provided by the Transformation Learning Centre at Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, (OISE), which states that transformative learning is:

A deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions... as shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of

class, race, and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities of social justice and peace and personal joy (Morrel & O'Connor 2002: xvii).

Hence, in this research I will be examining if distance learning leads women distance learners to experience deep shifts in their frames of reference, their attitudes to themselves and to the world they live in, to power relations in the home and public spheres of live. I will be examining whether this shift came gradually, if it came at all, or came in an 'epiphanic' sudden trigger (Kovan & Dirkx 2003: 118), and how it affects their relationships in a patriarchal society.

### **1.7 Preview of the Methods Used**

In this research, biographical methods of data collection were mainly used. This is a recent method of data collection in qualitative research, which involves the collection and study of people's life stories as narrated to the researcher (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995:117). It enquires about turning points and the best and worst times of peoples' lives (Hoerning & Alheit 1995). The biographical method is a popular tool used by feminist researchers to investigate the lived experiences of women, and how different factors have shaped their perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviours (Middleton 1996, Thompson 1997, Barr 1999, Edwards & Ribbens 1998, Clover 1997). Unlike other qualitative research methods, the biographical method gives emphasis to what the interviewee says, how it is said and the meaning made by the speaker of what she has said (Stephens 1998).

In order to determine the ability of distance learning to transform women, using biographical methods, I explored the lived experiences of women students taking distance learning courses in Kenya. I listened to and heard what the women learners had to say about their lives before and after participating in distance learning. I was interested in taking great recognition of the voices of women students who participate in these programmes. By listening to women's learning stories, I was seeking to give voice to the voiceless and in this way, enlighten the society on the conditions and needs of women distance learners. By use of open-ended questions, I was able to establish the biographical routes through which the women joined distance learning

courses. I also identified significant moments and experiences, which in the eyes of the students had shaped their present lives.

In addition to biographical methods, focus groups were used to elicit more information from the women students. The method involves the placing of interviewees into groups for the purposes of discussing the research topics that are presented by the researcher, in the form of a set of open-ended questions (Morgan 1998), Krueger 1988). Through focus group discussions individual opinions, attitudes and ideas were discussed; issues and ideas were clarified (Cohen and Manion 1994). I organized three focus groups, each of them comprising six to ten students from each of the three programmes studied.

To supplement the data gained by biographical and focus group methods, I used observation methods and the study of documentary evidence. Observation methods involved 'gathering impressions of the surrounding world through all relevant human faculties' (Denzin & Lincoln 1998:80). I was able to 'follow the events as they took their natural courses' (p.81). I attended tutorial meetings so as to establish the presence and participation of women, to study the tutors' language and timing of the meetings to see whether they were women friendly and took recognition of women's busy schedules. I was also able to visit these women at their homes and establish the kind of chores that they have to combine with their studies and to see the kind of environment that they studied in.

Documentary evidence was collected by the gathering and studying of official data from the institutions, such as enrolment and graduation lists. I was able to visit libraries and resource centres in Kenya to collect materials that could illuminate the research. I also studied the learning materials themselves in order to establish whether they were written in a gender sensitive manner.

The data collected from the biographical interviews and focus group were processed through hermeneutical methods of data analysis. These are methods of interpreting data by exegetical examination; looking for patterns of meaning and experience from the data (Denzin 1989). In this research the process involved the reading and rereading, line by line, of the transcriptions in order to identify themes, concepts,

issues and features of significance that were common to most of the interviews and to identify those items that came up as isolated cases (Love 1994, World Bank 2002). The data obtained from observation and documentary evidence were compared with the themes, concepts and trends that were obtained from biographical and focus group data. From then on, I was able to expand on and theorize about the different segments of the stories (Fitzpatrick 2001). More detailed descriptions of the whole research process are covered in chapter three of this dissertation.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

The findings of this research are restricted to the geographical area of the study, that is, Kenya. Not all distance learning programmes in Kenya were studied because of constraints of time and funds. Even among the three institutions, only a sample of 33 women students was interviewed.

There was also the limitation of language. Some of the informants spoke in Swahili while others used their vernacular. This meant that the data had to be translated from these languages into English, a process that raised fears of losing the original meaning. All the same, I translated the data as carefully as possible so as to maintain the interviewees' intended meaning.

Another limitation was related to the fact that, due to constraints resulting from time restrictions on this Ph.D. research, I was not able to undertake a longitudinal research which involves interviewing the same students before they took on the distance learning programme, during the study period and then after completing the study programme, in order to trace the different developmental phases of transformation process and establish whether the transformation was maintained over time (Courtenay et al 2000). Instead I did a cross-sectional study, in which I interviewed students from different levels of the programmes, ranging from some who had just joined the programme and others who had already completed their programmes.

## **1.9 Organization of the thesis**

Chapter one introduces the reader to the thesis by giving background information on the condition and position of women in Kenya. The statement of the problem being investigated is stated. The research questions being addressed in the research are outlined as well as the rationale for the study. The theoretical frameworks that were applied are also discussed. This is followed by the preview of the methods used in data collection and analysis. Finally, the limitations of the research are discussed. The chapter is concluded with a summary of the key issues discussed.

Chapter two comprises the literature review. The body of literature that was reviewed included literature on distance education, women in distance education, women in Kenya, and finally, literature on learning and transformation theories. Chapter three gives a description of the methods that were used in this research. Biographical methods, focus group methods, observation and document evidence as qualitative methods of data collection are discussed, pointing out their strengths, weaknesses and explaining how each of them was applied in the research. Hermeneutical methods of data analysis are discussed. There is also a discussion on how the data from different methods was compared in order to integrate the research findings. Chapters 4A, 4B, 4C and five present the findings of the research. Chapter six is the analysis and discussions of the findings. Chapter seven is the conclusion, while chapter eight gives the emerging recommendations.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter presented an overview of the whole thesis. The background locates this study in Kenya and raises issues of women's subordination and exclusion from education in the Kenyan society. From this background, the statement of the problem was provided, as an investigation of the transformative effect of distance learning on women learners. The rationale for this investigation was based on my personal biography and the proliferation of distance programmes in Kenya. Therefore, a need to investigate distance learning's ability to transform women was justified. Mezirow's transformative theory of learning was highlighted as the working theory for the research and the biographical method of research is discussed as most useful for this investigation. The limitations and the structure of the whole thesis were also

presented. Most of these issues are discussed in the subsequent chapters. The next chapter will examine the literature on distance learning, women's subordination and exclusion from education in Kenya and theories of transformation through education.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

After stating the research problem and asking the key questions in this research, it is now necessary to review the related literature. The review will be done starting with an examination of the Freirean philosophy of liberatory education as a basis for understanding Mezirow's transformative theory of learning, which is the working theoretical framework for this research on women's transformation through distance learning. The review will cover the background and definitions of distance learning, and women in distance learning in order to illustrate how the question of women's transformation is not reflected upon in the literature. In addition, the review will show women's exclusion from most important spheres of life and education in Kenya, to help in identifying the changes that women experience as a result of their participation in distance learning.

#### **2.2 Mezirow's theory of transformative learning**

As already stated above, my research used Mezirow's transformative theory of learning to investigate the lived experiences of women distance learners in Kenya. In this section I discuss this theory, starting with Freirean philosophy, from which Mezirow's theory draws its influence. Both Freire and Mezirow see learning as a 'liberating force' although from different perspectives (Jarvis 1983:85). Therefore, the starting point for understanding Mezirow would be Freire.

##### **2.2.1 Freire's approach to Adult Learning**

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator (1927-1997), wrote extensively on adult education. Freire's central thesis is that education is a double-edged sword, which can be used to reinforce or to question prevailing social forces that make learners passive and dependent (Freire 1972, Wallerstein 1989, 1996, Hendriks 2002). To illustrate his view of education he contrasted the traditional authoritarian type of learning with his new alternative model of liberatory learning. To Freire the traditional type of education, which he called, 'banking education', was basically meant to reinforce and

maintain existing socio-economic power structures (Freire 1985, Freire & Faundez 1989, Jarvis 1983, Xavier 2002). He argued that this was done through the assumptions that the teacher knows everything, while the learner knows nothing, that the teacher narrates, prescribes and deposits knowledge, and the learner receives mechanically, memorizes, and finally reproduces it back to the teacher in the form of examination. He saw this as an instrument of oppression 'that inhibits inquiry, creativity and dialogue' (Hendriks 2002:2). He said that this type of education does not encourage critical thinking and questioning of existing oppressive social and political conditions (1972, 1989).

To move away from this system of education, Freire suggested an alternative model of education that is dialogic, transformative, liberatory, and allows the learners to take control of their lives (Freire 1972, 1985, Jarvis 1983, Xavier 2002). To him the liberatory type of education, which he called 'dialogic' and 'problem-posing', was the best for the learners because it sought to change structures of domination by enabling learners to '... develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves' (Freire 1972: 64). To him 'the democratization of the content and method of teaching incites inquiry, creativity and critical thinking which impels the emergence of consciousness and the unveiling of reality' (p.62). Therefore, dialogic education promotes critical thinking in the learners, leading them to question and reflect on their past, present and to take collective action about their future (Freire 1972, 1985, Xavier 2002, McLafferty 2002, Leeman 2002). In this kind of learning, the role of the teacher changes from that of banker of knowledge to that of a guide, as well as a fellow learner. The students and teacher explore issues as problems for their investigation (Freire 1972, Jarvis 1983, Xavier 2002). This form of learning leads to 'conscientization' and once the learners reach this level they are able to act upon their realities.

Barr (1999: 14) summarizes Freire's point of view by stating that:

according to Freire, people are ignorant of their needs and the true nature of their social relationships under capitalism and patriarchy and this ignorance helps oppressive social conditions to persist. This 'false consciousness' is to be removed by the intervention of the critical educator and through such

increased self-consciousness, achieved through reflection on their social conditions of existence, participants will change the conditions.

Heaney (2001:2) also points out that education for liberation, according to Freire:

would challenge the “givenness” of the world and enable learners to reflect on their experience historically, giving their immediate reality a beginning, a present, and, most importantly a future. It would awaken in adult learners the expectation of change—a power, which once awakened, seeks expression in collective, transforming social action.

One of the challenges to the educational proposal of Freire is the allegation that his language was sexist, discriminatory and that it brought contradiction to his message of liberation (Hendriks 2002). Barr (1999: 15) further points out that ‘...it fails to address the different forms of oppression experienced by different groups- the man who is oppressed by his boss oppressing his wife...’

Freire’s philosophy, therefore, tended to address only the oppression that was based on class but omitted oppression based on gender, race, ethnicity, and language (McClafferty 2002, Hendriks 2002). However, Freire’s ideas have been used widely by feminists to confront exclusion and oppression of women in society.

### **2.2.2 Mezirow’s Transformative Theory of Learning**

From this background of Freire's philosophy of reflection and critical thinking, Mezirow developed his new transformative theory of learning. This acknowledgement does not negate the fact that Mezirow draws his influence from the works of many other scholars such as Thomas Kuhn, Jurgen Habermas, Roger Gould, and Frankfurt Schools of German Philosopher (Mezirow 2000, 1991; Cranton, 1994).

Mezirow's theory posits that the learning process is about meaning making, what he calls the 'construct of meaning' (Mezirow 1989:170). He explains that people's habit of expectation serves as meaning structures determining our perceptions and cognition leading to distortions of how we interpret experiences. This, he argues, can only be changed through 'critical reflection of the presuppositions of these uncritically assimilated meaning schemes and perspectives' (p.170). This would then lead to what

he calls transformative learning. According to Mezirow (1994: 222), the learner's interpretation and reinterpretation of 'their sense experiences are central to meaning making, hence learning.'

The process of meaning making according to Mezirow (1994) is influenced by our meaning structures, which are two dimensional, i.e. meaning perspectives and schemes. Meaning perspectives are culturally sanctioned codes and norms that influence expectations. Meaning schemes are 'constellation of concept, beliefs, judgement and feelings which shape a particular interpretation. The meaning schemes are specific manifestations of our meaning perspectives' (p.223). It is these meaning structures which, according to Mezirow (1991, 1996, 2000), are transformed through critical reflection, in which old assumptions and beliefs are re-evaluated against new experiences. This is a process which follows specific phases or steps outlined by him (Mezirow 1991).

Transformative adult learning is, therefore, the 'process of freeing ourselves from forces that limit our options and our control over our lives, forces that have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control' (Cranton 1994:17). Mezirow (1989: 171) uses the term 'transformative learning' to refer to the concepts of emancipation through learning. Mezirow's thinking on transformative learning started with his research on women students returning to study at a mature age (Newman 1994, Cranton 1994). In this study Mezirow paid attention to the reasons why the women went back to college, how and why they revised their views about themselves and their lower status in society (Mezirow 1981, Newman 1993, 1994). From this study, Mezirow discovered that these women no longer accepted the lower status they had accepted before joining the course. They had undergone a transformation process, through which they had come to view themselves and the structures that had made them who they were, differently (Mezirow 1981, 1991, 1996, Newman 1994). From this initial research Mezirow came to construct and reflect on transformative learning as the ideal form of adult learning. An ideal learning process enables the learners to examine, question, validate and revise their perspectives (Mezirow 1996, Cranton 1994). Mezirow focuses on the 'central role of the construct of meaning in the learning process' (Mezirow 1989: 170).

Transformational learning involves a 'fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world we live in' (Courtenay, 2001: 102) Transformational learning theory views learning as 'the process of using prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meanings of one's experience to guide action' (Mezirow 2000: 4). This theory emphasizes the individual learner's development. Hence, it is concerned with intrapersonal psychology (Hart 1990, McDonald 1999), whereby 'it is the learner, not the society, being transformed' (Tennant 1999:34). According to Mezirow (1996, 2000), it is through critical self-reflection that learners reach the point where they question their 'taken-for-granted worldview'. The learners reach a point where they question and challenge distortions about their reality. Through critical reflection, learners come to realize that what they had accepted as given, or 'real or normal is a distortion of their reality and the world they live in' (Newman 1993: 171). Newman further stated that learners come to realize that a 'particular view of themselves and the world was based on a set of values and assumptions that could be challenged.' This becomes the starting point for the construction of a 'new set of values and assumptions upon which to build new and different lives.'

Mezirow points out that transformative learning is, therefore, 'the process of taking on a superior meaning perspective through critical reflection and free dialogue' (Mezirow 2000: 2). Transformation can occur gradually or from a 'sudden, powerful experience' and leads to a shift in the way people see themselves and the world they live in. Hence, the transformation learning process involves 'thoughts and feelings' (Baumgartner 2001: 18).

Mezirow argues that transformative learning is that knowledge 'gained through critical self-reflection, as distinct from the knowledge gained from our 'technical' interest in the objective world or our 'practical' interest in social relationships' (Mezirow 1991: 87). He says that critical reflection occurs in the environment of problem-solving, which includes the content and process. He posits that:

The goal of adult education is to help adult learners become more critically reflective, participate more fully and freely in rational discourse and action, and advance developmentally by moving toward meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative of experience' (p. 224-5)

As a constructivist model, transformative learning theory posits that ‘knowledge is not “out there” to be discovered but is created from interpretations and reinterpretations in light of new experience’ (Baumgartner 2001:16). It is these revised meanings that Mezirow calls ‘perspective transformation’ (Mezirow 1996). They provide a ‘more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective’ (Mezirow 1990:14). Although transformative learning theory is based on Freirean philosophy, it differs from it in that the latter focuses on social justice whereas Mezirow focuses on rational thought and reflection (Baumgartner 2001).

Mezirow (1993:170) summarizes his arguments by stating that,

I have tried to show how our habits of expectation, which come to serve as meaning structures determining the nature of perception and cognition, often, distort our interpretation of experience. Critical reflection on the presuppositions of these uncritically assimilated meaning schemes and perspectives can lead to individual and social transformation. This process of perspective transformation can be individual (as in psychotherapy), group (as in Freire or popular education in Latin America), or collective (as in the civil rights or other social movements).

Mezirow draws on Jurgen Habermas’s (1971) analysis of three domains of learning; namely: the technical, the practical, and the emancipatory (Cranton 1994). The technical domain deals with empirical knowledge and is governed by technical rules. This can be seen as the knowledge that individuals create to assist them to control and manipulate their environment (Newman 1993). Newman notes that, ‘in this domain of learning we are concerned with understanding relationships between cause and effect, with developing knowledge by testing hypotheses, with the gathering of observable evidence’ (Newman 1993:176). This refers to the positivist paradigm. It is the kind of learning that relates to task-oriented competencies and is learned in order to perform a role (Newman 1993). Practical knowledge deals with grasping people’s social norms, values and political concepts. This is the kind of knowledge that is found in ‘historical-interpretive sciences such as history, theology and the descriptive social sciences like anthropology and sociology’ (Newman 1993: 176). It is learning for ‘interpersonal understanding’. Mezirow says that ‘in this kind of learning we arrive at generalizations and solve problems, not through objectively testing a hypothesis, but

by reaching a consensus through rational discourse' (Mezirow 1991:76). Newman (1993:177) goes on to state that:

All the adult learning and education to do with communication skills, assertion and empathy training, conflict resolution, listening, group work, self-expression, confidence building and the like would fall into this domain of learning as would most adult education in the liberal tradition.

Finally, the emancipatory domain of knowledge, or what Mezirow calls 'learning for perspective transformation', is concerned with enabling the learners to know who they are, how they came to be who they are and the factors that continue to hinder and shape the way they see themselves (Mezirow 1981, 1991, 1994, 1996, Newman 1993). In this kind of learning, learners come to think critically about their beliefs and perceptions about themselves and re-examine values and assumptions through continuous critical appraisal.

Mezirow uses the phrase 'meaning perspective' to refer to the kind of 'frame of reference which comes from the way we grew up, the culture in which we live, and what we have previously learned' (Cranton 1994: 26). Cranton continues:

'Our experiences are filtered through our meaning perspectives, which for most of us are uncritically assimilated ways of knowing, believing, feeling. They include distortions, prejudices, stereotypes, social context, and lack of knowledge. Learning occurs when an individual enters a process of reconciling newly communicated ideas with the presuppositions of prior learning (p.27).

Perspective transformation, therefore, refers to the 'process of getting to grips with our meaning perspectives and changing them so that we can see the world and ourselves a little more realistically' (Newman 1993; 171). Mezirow sees it as the

Emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings (Mezirow 1981, cited in Newman 1993: 171).

To Mezirow, this is the 'process by which adults come to recognize their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them' (Mezirow 1981, cited in Newman 1993:1171). However, for transformation to occur, certain ideal conditions must prevail.

### ***2.2.2.1 Process of transformation***

Mezirow (1994, 2000) states that learning occurs in one of the following four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference or our meaning schemes; by learning new frames of reference or new meaning schemes; by transforming meaning schemes; and finally, by transforming meaning perspectives. He explains that, by the time adults reach adulthood, they have acquired a way of seeing the world and a set of values, which they use to interpret their experiences (Mezirow 1996, Cranton 1994). Once they enter a learning environment they have to integrate their new knowledge with prior experiences. However, when this does not happen, then there is a dilemma or personal crisis (what Mezirow calls 'disorienting dilemma'), which in turn leads to re-examination and adjustment of one's premise (Cranton 1994, Newman 1993). At this stage people 'engage in critical reflection and re-evaluate the assumptions they have made about themselves and their world' (Baumgartner, 2001:17). According to Cranton (1994:4) transformative learning occurs when 'through critical self-reflection, an individual revises old or develops new assumptions, beliefs, or ways of seeing the world.' Mezirow further states that:

reflection on their meaning perspectives or their overarching structures of assumptions or their meaning schemes, which include their beliefs and values or habitual, implicit rules for interpreting experience leads to perspective transformation or change in world view (Mezirow 2000: 2, cited in Baumgartner 2001: 17).

The third phase in the transformation process is when learners engage in 'reflective discourse', whereby they talk with others about their new perspective in order to obtain consensual validation for their newly acquired world view (Mezirow 2000, Baumgartner 2001). Mezirow (1996:171) further states that:

A superior perspective is more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of experiences, is based on further information, is freer from coercion or

distorting self-deception, more open to other perspectives and points of view, more accepting of other ideas as equal participants in discourse, more rational in assessing contending arguments and evidence, more critically reflective.

The final phase in this process involves learners taking action on the new perspectives. This implies that they not only see, but also live the new perspective (Baumgartner 2001). Once adults have gone through this process they no longer wish to continue holding onto their youthful attitudes, behaviours, assumptions and values. In other words they change (transform) 'their old patterns into new ones' (Geerling 2001:2). The central part of transformative learning is critical reflection (Mezirow 1996, 2000).

#### ***2.2.2.2 Ideal conditions for transformative learning***

Under Mezirow's model of learning, the best conditions for learning are those which allow the learner to fully participate in a critical 'perspective reflection' (Mezirow 1991, 1995, Cranton 1994). Mezirow lists these conditions as, (a) accurate and complete information about the topic discussed, (b) freedom from coercion, (c) ability to reason argumentatively about competing validity claims and to argue logically from the evidence, (d) ability to be critically reflective about assumptions and premises, (e) openness to consideration of the validity or other meaning perspectives and paradigms (f) self-knowledge sufficient to assure participation free from distortion, inhibition, compensatory mechanisms or other forms of self-deception, (g) role reciprocity-equal opportunity to interpret, explain, challenge, refute and take other roles in dialogue, (h) a mutual goal of arriving at a consensus based upon evidence and the cogency of argument alone (Mezirow 1989: 171).

Once a learner has undergone an education process with the above conditions, she attempts to free herself from forces that exert control over her life and which previously she may have taken for granted or seen as beyond her control (Imel 1995). Mezirow (1996) posits that 'these conditions for an ideal discourse provide the criteria for judging the superiority of a meaning perspective' (p. 171).

Mezirow (1996) argues that there are a number of limitations to the existence of the ideal conditions for transformative learning to occur. These are often 'institutionalized

political and economic ideologies, arrangements, practices and systems, which result in oppression, coercion, alienation, abrogation of human and civil rights, injustice and unequal opportunity for security, health, education and employment' (p. 171).

He argues that:

educational experiences which fail in some measure to recognize and foster these conditions are inadequate educational experiences. When social institutions and practices impede the full participation of every adult learner in construing the meaning of his or her experience through critical discourse, they are thwarting the most basic human need and should be modified to make them more responsive to this need (p.171).

### ***2.2.2.3 Critiques of Mezirow's transformative theory***

Mezirow's perspective of transformative theory of learning has met with many criticisms. One of these came from Collard and Law, (1989), who argued that the theory played down the importance of collective social action and that it never went beyond the individual learner. They further accused him of failing to concede that structural inequalities in society hinder realisation of the circumstances for ideal learning. In response to them, Mezirow (1989, 1993) states that: 'social action is crucial, but it is not the only goal of adult education. In my view it is a contingent and instrumental goal' (Mezirow 1989: 171). He further posits that 'when learners come to identify with others who have been similarly oppressed, collective social action may develop...but this is the learner's decision, not the educator's (p. 172). He further points out:

that there are social practices and institutions, which also oppress others as well by legitimising and applying sanctions to support distorted belief systems (ideologies which may be social, political, economic, occupational, educational, religious or technological) (Mezirow 1993:172).

Mezirow (1989:171) further states that 'taking action indicated by critical reflection may be impeded by lack of information, situational constraints, psychological hang-ups or absence of required skills'. He further clarifies that, 'it is not the educator's role to set out to effect a specific political action; this is indoctrination' (1993: 172).

However, the educator can 'encourage the learner to critically reflect on specific taken-for-granted relationships which appear dependency-producing or oppressive, but the learner makes his or her own decisions about specific actions to be taken, if any' (1993:172).

Newman (1994) challenged the transformative learning theory by pointing out that its focus is on the individual learners rather than 'on the other people/partner, the employer, and others within the structure of the patriarchal society that may have oppressed her' (Newman 1994:45). He goes on to point out that since one of the outcomes of perspective transformation is reintegration 'the worry is if we accept reintegration as a satisfactory outcome then, although the individual may be transformed, the oppressors may go unchallenged and the society these oppressors continue to act in, may go unchanged.' He points out that, Mezirow did not attempt to look for ways of changing the society that the transformed individuals were expected to live in, unlike Freire, whose philosophy had a dimension of the 'oppressed' rescuing the 'oppressor' from the oppressive scenario.

Newman (1993) was also concerned that Mezirow's research focused on those women who had gone back to college; what happened to those who experienced the disorienting dilemmas but did not seek re-entry to college? He argued that if they experienced disorientation, then some may have 'experienced breakdown, or developed an almost pathological blindness to allow them to continue functioning in their culturally induced dependency roles without breaking down' (p.174).

#### ***2.2.2.4 Clarifications of Mezirow's theory by other scholars***

Other critiques argue that the theory is flawed because it does not show explicitly the role of power in the transformation process (Hart 1985, 1990, Newman 1994, Baumgartner 2001, Inglis 1997). Newman, for instance has posited that transformative learning theory could be better placed if it put more emphasis, not on learners' assumptions, but on 'assumptions and actions of their opponents' (P.241). Further, Cunningham (1992) argues that, the theory does not pay attention to 'social transformations and the equalising of power relations in society' (p. 185). Hart (1990) too, found the theory wanting because it does not challenge the prevailing economic and political arrangements which feeds the distortions.

Hart (1990) further posited that, through emancipatory education, learners should be able to question the existing normative ideologies that maintain the status quo and its relations of power. These ideologies include systematic values, beliefs, and concepts that are culturally sanctioned. She argues that truth could be distorted by social, cultural, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors. Socio-cultural distortions are composed of the normative ideologies, beliefs and values of culture. It was Gramsci who initially, arguing from a Marxist tradition, pointed to how culture and ideology are implicated in power and domination in society (Burawoy 2003). Habermas (1987) has also analysed the different types of power and how it works in blocking individuals from exploiting their full potential

To Hart (1990), the second level of distortion was based at the interpersonal communicative level. It is through human interactions and relationships that unequal relations are perpetuated. Hart (1990) described a third level of distortion, that is, the unconscious psychological structures that constitute a person's self-identity, what she called 'pathology.' She argues that, these communicative distortions have the 'power to immunise norms against critique (Hart 1990: 130). These distortions make injustice and inequality legitimate and prevent critical 'thematization of normative ideologies, and promote the status quo.' To her, pathology 'harms the truth and perpetuates interpersonal communicative distortions' (p. 132). According to her, these three levels are so much intertwined such that it is not possible to critique one without the other two.

Inglis (1997) agrees with Hart (1990) that in order to have a clear understanding of the concepts of empowerment and emancipation, the beginning point is an analysis of the concept of power. According to Inglis, 'empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, while emancipation is concerned with critically analysing, resisting and challenging structures of power' (p. 4). Hence, empowerment brings the concept of 'working within the system', whereas emancipation implies 'trying to change the system.'

Inglis (1997:3) further posits that:

Transformative learning focuses on the individual and the reconstruction of the notion of self. This is the locus for social as well as personal change. Power becomes reduced to blockages preventing a true realisation of the self, with adult learning becoming the process of revealing and dissolving these blockages.

Emancipatory learning has to do with 'learning to challenge and change existing systems' that tend to oppress the individual (Inglis 1997:3). Although he acknowledges social action as a component of transformation, Mezirow's theory seems to over-rely on the 'individual rather than social movements as the agency of social change and, consequently, to an inadequate and false sense of emancipation' (Inglis 1997:3).

Inglis suggests that by laying bare its features and by announcing the various strategies and tactics through which it is exercised, adult educators can help people, particularly the less powerful, to know and understand power and to see how it operates in their lives.' Showing people how to read their lives and the family, groups, organisations and society in which they are involved in terms of a struggle for power can be emancipating' (p.7). He states that in its every day meaning:

power is best understood in terms of an acquisition which either an individual or organisation possesses... individuals are powerful when they have sufficient resources to get their own way and do what they want despite... resistance by others...it goes beyond specific actions to being able to limit what others do, say, think, and perceive (p. 8).

Using Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Inglis (1997) differentiates three ways by which people get power. Economic capital provides wealth, income, property and resources. Political capital permits one to rule instead of being ruled. Social capital is sourced from 'social networks or being well connected' (p.8). Then there is cultural capital, which 'derives from people having greater prestige, honour, and respect due to knowledge, education, manners, and morals'. Hence power is seen as a 'resource which some have in abundance and others do not, but which we are all in a struggle to attain and maintain' (p.9). He defines empowerment as the 'process by which

individuals or groups seek, by working within the existing system, to obtain greater economic, political and social power’.

Hence Inglis (1997: 10-11)) distinguishes ‘empowerment’ from ‘emancipation’ in adult education by stating that empowerment helps people to ‘attain greater economic, political, and social power...what Freire called “banking education”, people making greater commitments and investments as a means towards obtaining greater rewards’. According to this school of thought, empowerment through adult education assists people to get on in the world but not to change the world. To Inglis empowerment is about enabling learners to gain self-confidence, self-expression and an interest in learning. It also involves ‘expressing oneself and saying what one feels, like, thinks, and wants’. He further argues that empowerment has become ‘synonymous with concepts as varied as coping skills, personal efficacy, self-sufficiency, self-esteem, mutual support, natural support systems...’ Hence in order to transform social life one has to understand the different types of power and ways through which they operate in society as a whole and in the lives of individuals. Thus to overcome ‘oppressing power, it is necessary to be able to identify, describe, and analyze it’ (p. 5).

By contrast, ‘education for liberation and emancipation is a collective educational activity which has its goal social and political transformation’ (Inglis 1997: 11). He further states that: ‘Adult educators can help in emancipation when they become part of the power struggle of an oppressed people. He sees a tension between individual transformative learning and emancipatory education. Although the former is necessary, it is not a sufficient base for the latter. He posits that the educator’s role is that of facilitating a ‘progression from individual transformative learning to emancipatory education’ by assisting the oppressed to ‘be able to see and understand how power operates in their lives.’ Hence, adult educators have to be able to ‘read and interpret social life in terms of a struggle for power’ (p. 12).

### ***2.1.2.5 Operational definition of transformation***

Courtenay et al (2000) have clarified that Mezirow's transformative theory of learning can be used in 'its entirety or with respect to a particular component of the process' of transformation (p.103). Therefore, the operational definition derived from the above review of Mezirow's theory and its criticism restricts the understanding of transformation of meaning perspectives at the personal level, and how the individual reintegrates into society as a new and empowered individual, conscious of its oppressive structures and able to manoeuvre or negotiate for her interests. This definition includes empowerment in the sense suggested by Inglis (1997) when he argues that power can also be 'understood in terms of an acquisition, which either the individual or organisation possesses... individuals are powerful when they have sufficient resources to get their own way and do what they want despite ...resistance ...it goes beyond specific actions to being able to limit what others do, say, think and perceive' (p.8). So if a woman is cured of Hart's (1990) and Newman's (1994) pathological blindness, such a woman will be seen as a transformed individual.

My research does not go all the way into finding out whether women distance learners have come together to change oppressive systems and achieve social transformation. This definition limits the scope of transformation in this research to personal transformation and not a broader, political and social transformation. This does not negate the fact that the individual will reintegrate into this unchanged society as a transformed and empowered individual, potentially capable of negotiating and defending her interests in it.

## **2.3 Definition of distance learning**

It is difficult to give a single definition of distance learning because there has always been a debate about its definitions. What we have are just approaches towards defining the phrase (Peters 1988, Holmberg 1988, 1995, Taylor 2001). In this section I examine approaches such as distance learning as an industrialized form of study, guided didactic conversation, independent study and Information and Communication Technologies, and new definitions.

### **2.3.1 Distance learning as industrialized form of study**

Peters (1988) has been credited with formulating the theory that sees distance learning as an industrial form of production. He sees distance learning as a form of education completely different from the conventional system in that it has industrial characteristics. He sees it as the most industrialized form of education, in that it is controlled by rules of technology; unlike those of social order, which control conventional teaching and that it is carried out through emotionless language, unlike the interactional speech found in classroom instruction. He states that:

Distance study is a rationalized method involving the division of labour- of providing knowledge which, as a result of applying the principles of industrial organization as well as the extensive use of technology, thus facilitating the reproduction of objective teaching activity in any numbers, allows a large number of students to participate in University study simultaneously, regardless of their place of residence and occupation (p.111).

He uses concepts found in an industrial set up, such as ‘rationalization’, ‘division of labour’, ‘mechanization’, ‘assembly line’, ‘mass production’, etc. (pp. 96-102), to describe what goes on in distance learning. He compares these concepts with distance learning processes, such as materials development, production and distribution. To him the relationship between teacher and taught is ‘controlled by rules of technology as opposed to those of social order, which regulates face-to-face teaching’ (Mugridge 1994:82). To him distance learning could solve the problem of providing education to large masses of people.

The validity of Peters’ theory is shown by the fact that distance learning employs industrial methods in the process of material development and production. In the process of course development, for instance, there is an elaborate division of labour, where there are course writers, editors, media producers, graphic artists, designers and printers, all playing specific roles but working towards the production of a teaching-learning package (Peters 1988, Mugridge 1994). Distance learning institutions are also ‘concerned with planning, lead times, deadlines, production schedules, and mass production of the product’ (Mugridge 1994:84). These are all concepts found in an industrial set up. The concept of mass production in distance learning is clearly shown by the fact that today distance learning has led to the emergence of mass higher

education in both developing and developed countries (Taylor 2001). Of course, the difference is only that in developed countries this is happening through the online courses that are offered over the Internet; whereas developing countries which are still struggling to access Internet facilities, continue to use print, audiocassettes and short sessions of face-to-face. Taylor (2001) supports this theory by arguing that for a long time tertiary education was very 'selective with access and somewhat restricted' (p.5). However, with distance learning, the scenario has changed drastically, in that those who were initially barred from participating in education are able to access it through distance learning methods. Taylor (2001) points out that 'as higher education becomes increasingly market driven, institutional success will increasingly depend on students' perceptions of flexibility of access, quality of service and value for money' (p. 5). These are concerns that are found in the world of industry and give strength to the comparison of distance learning with industrial processes.

However, Peter's theory does not adequately cover other aspects of distance learning such as provision of support services to learners. In particular, it does not give room for distance educators to recognize and attend to the needs of learners, the majority of whom combine their study with a multitude of other responsibilities and for that reason need to be supported in order to succeed as learners. The theory is concerned with the system's ability to deliver the product, but not the transformation of the learners.

### **2.3.2 Guided didactic conversation**

Unlike Peters (1988) who defined distance learning in relation to industrial set up, Holmberg (1988) describes it as a 'guided didactic conversation' (1988: 114). He argues that in distance learning, although student and teacher are separated from each other most of the time, there is still a possibility of a conversation-like interaction between the two (Holmberg 1988, 1995). This conversation-like interaction is mainly simulated through students' interaction with the pre-prepared learning materials. It can also be done in reality through written letters from tutors and counselors and through the telephone (Holmberg 1988, Mugridge 1994). Holmberg (1988:114) further states that:

My theory implies that the character of good distance education resembles that of guided conversation aiming at learning and that the presence of the typical

traits of such a conversation facilitates learning. The distance study course and the non-contiguous communication typical of distance education are seen as the instruments of a conversation-like interaction between the student on the one hand and the tutor counselor of the supporting organization administering the study on the other. There is constant interaction ('conversation') between the supporting organization (authors, tutors, counselors), simulated through the students' interaction with the pre-produced courses and real through the written and/or telephone interaction with their tutors and counselors.

He argues that, although distance learning is self-study, it is a unique form of self-study in that students have materials developed specifically for them and while working on them they interact with tutors, authors, and counselors from the teaching institution. This is what he calls 'guided didactic conversation,' what Mugridge refers to as 'a voyage of discovery in which students benefit from the help of experienced pilots' (Mugridge 1994: 84).

Holmberg's theory pays attention to the human dimension of distance study. He emphasizes the fact that study materials should be written in a simulated dialogue form so that as the student studies, she may feel the 'presence of the teacher' within the text (Holmberg 1988, Mugridge 1994). He is advocating for distance learning that gives maximum help to the learners, most of which could be found in the materials that are designed well. Such materials have to be written in a conversational style of writing. He later emphasizes the fact that, with new forms of media (teleconferencing, computer conferencing and Internet), there are presently new possibilities for 'non-contiguous group interaction', something that did not exist during distance learning's formative period (Holmberg 1995:6). To him the establishment of this personal contact between the teacher and learner is needed so as to promote motivation and pleasure for the learner. To him such feelings could be promoted through well-developed materials that have two-way communication.

### **2.3.3 Independent study**

Wedemeyer (1988) is credited with the formulation of the theory of distance learning as independent study. Later Michael Moore echoed Wedemeyer's writing and postulated the same theme. Wedemeyer describes distance learning as an independent

study where learners take responsibility for their own learning process (Wedemeyer 1988, Mugridge 1994). Wedemeyer brings into distance learning democratization ideals by insisting that distance learning should open doors to education to anyone interested, regardless of their poverty, disability, geographical or social isolation and inability to enter a conventional system of education. He further stresses that, as an independent study, distance learning should be 'self-pacing, individualized and goal-free: the student should be free to pace his learning according to his own circumstances and not be bound by any mechanisms of the institution' (Wedemeyer 1988: 64). To him distance education should, therefore, be able to operate anywhere where there are students who need to study. It should also be able to give freedom to the learners to be responsible for their own learning.

Moore (1988) further emphasizes the need for student autonomy in distance learning by stating that:

the role of the teacher in the new learner centred educational universe, at its simplest, is not so much to 'instruct' as to provide an environment in which each individual learner is able to identify what he is ready to learn, and in which he has access to a large variety of resources for learning (p. 69).

His definition highlights the three main issues in distance learning, namely: the separation of teaching behaviours and learning behaviours, the use of technical media and the possibility of two-way communication (Keegan 1988). This definition isolates the learner from the interactive process which can encourage transformation (Thompson 1997).

#### **2.3.4 ICTs and new definitions of distance learning**

More recent definitions of the term distance learning have continued to emphasize the separation of learner and teacher as a major characteristic of distance learning, regardless of the recent application of information technology. According to Perraton (2000: 13) distance learning can be defined as the 'form of learning where most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner.' The Commonwealth of Learning (Commonwealth of Learning, 2001), stresses the fact that since distance learning delivers education to the learner at a time and place of her choice, it remains a promising alternative route for meeting peoples' educational needs. The publication notes that the introduction of Information and Communication

Technologies (ICTs) into distance learning has led to greater opportunities for 'increasing access and improving quality' (p.1). Indeed they argue that ICTs have changed the face of distance learning in that today there is 'much use of digital video, tele-learning, audio conferencing and other electronic devices for learning' (p. 1).

A definition of distance learning in terms of ICTs tends to exclude African countries which continue to utilize basic distance learning methods, such as print, audiocassettes and short sessions of face-to-face. For instance, in Kenya, these modern forms of communication technologies are still beyond the reach of most educational institutions, and yet these institutions have continued to use the traditional methods of distance learning (mainly print, audio cassettes combined with short sessions of face-to-face) to reach members of the population who cannot be reached by the conventional methods of learning.

### **2.3.5 The historical development of distance learning**

The term distance learning can be understood best in the context of its evolution. Distance learning has developed through different phases, each distinguished from the other by the forms of media used to deliver lessons to learners. The first phase was characterized by the use of post as a means of sending out printed lessons to learners scattered in remote regions. Hence, the term 'correspondence education' was used to refer to the method. According to Inquai (1994), the pioneers of correspondence education were moved by the desire to help people, both school children and adults who could not benefit from the established conventional system of education. Some of these groups were disadvantaged because they stayed far from educational institutions, while others had family commitments to attend to or were disabled. In some countries pioneers were individuals, whereas in others, departments of education wanted to complement formal schools and by so doing, reach those who lived far from established institutions (Inquai 1994). Among the pioneers in the new method were women like Eliot Ticknor in North America who, from 1873, promoted the education of women by sending them lessons to their homes. Ticknor 'opened new sources of progress and pleasure to mothers and their children within their own homes, and without hindering in any way domestic duties and claims' (Mackenzie & Christensen 1970:29). Ticknor founded and ran the Boston based Society to Encourage Study at Home from 1873 until her death in 1897. Holmberg states that

‘the idea of exchanging letters between teacher and student originated with her and monthly correspondence with guided readings and frequent tests formed a vital part of the organization’s personalized instruction’ (Holmberg 1995:2).

Other pioneers of distance learning were people like Isaac Pitman of Britain who taught shorthand and scripture by post, and Thomas Foster, a North American, who was moved by a mining disaster and started sending lessons to miners by post. These pioneer distance educators sent posters, newspapers, books, engravings, photographs and maps as learning materials (Henry 1995, Inquai 1994, Dodds 1991). These early learning materials lacked guidance and counselling for the students and as a result, it is only learners who had a personal orientation to self directed learning and who were exceptionally highly motivated who managed to complete their programme. (Dodds 1991, Gatimu 2000). In a bid to reduce the learners’ drop out rates, promoters of distance learning began to pay special attention to the content presentation by introducing in-built conversations, what Holmberg (1988) calls ‘guided didactic conversation’ within the study texts.

The term correspondence education was used to refer to the use of post to reach students with printed lessons. It was based on stand-alone, self-study materials, whereby learners did not have to leave their homes at all to study (The Commonwealth of Learning 2001, Gachuhi & Matiru 1989, Dodds 1991). The teaching institution posted printed learning materials to students scattered in different parts by post; and then the students did the learning on their own; then reposted the assignments back to the institution. The tutors in turn, marked and returned the work by post.

In addition to the post, other forms of media were introduced to support print and vary stimuli. These included radio, audiocassettes, television broadcast and videocassettes combined with short sessions of face-to-face tuition in both formal and non-formal education (Inquai 1994, Bradley 1994, Gachui & Matiru 1989, Gatimu 2000). This marked a unique phase in the development of distance learning, in which the term ‘three-way teaching’ was used to refer to the combination of different forms of media. Once distance educators incorporated other forms of media, the term correspondence became redundant and in its place came the term distance education.

The next phase in the development of distance learning was the introduction of advanced forms of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), to deliver lessons to learners (Holmberg 1995). We see new methods of presenting learning materials to learners in a more sophisticated manner, such as teleconferencing, videoconferencing and the Internet (Moore 1996). This has led to the incorporation of new terms to describe the same form of learning, such as 'Internet education', 'virtual studies', 'cyber cafe-based learning', 'e-learning', 'online instruction', 'computer-mediated learning' and 'web-based learning' (Holmberg 1995, Perraton 2000, Harasim et al. 1995, Kowalski 1998, Uhl 1997). Indeed there is now a tendency in the west to use the term distance learning to refer specifically to electronic based learning. For instance, the Higher Education Program and Policy Council of the American Federation of Teachers (2000:1) defines distance learning as 'courses in which nearly all the interaction between the teacher and student takes place electronically. Electronic communication may take the form of audio, video, e-mail, chat, teleconferencing, and, increasingly, the Internet.'

These new technologies have led to great improvements in the delivery of distance learning lessons, in that students, not only able to search information in the data bases just by a touch of a mouse, but also to communicate with the tutor in a faster manner, either through satellites or communication networks and in some cases the 'instructor can see the students, and the students can see and respond to the instructor' (Spodick 1995:2). Hence, these new technologies have improved the interaction between students and instructors, and among the students themselves. Tilson (2000) comments that:

Communication between instructors and students, which may have taken weeks in the past, can now be almost instantaneous with the advent of email. In addition email enables learners to communicate with each other, opening up opportunities for joint learning activities. Emails can also be used by learners to communicate with other resource people, or even to download relevant text materials (p.8).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of distance learning throughout all the phases is the steady expansion and the gradual use of more and more sophisticated methods

and media (Holmberg 1995). Distance learning started humbly but within a short time educators came to notice that the method could assist them in overcoming barriers that blocked many students from benefiting from existing educational programmes. It is intriguing to note that during much of its development distance learning was taken as a 'stepchild of the academy' (Feenberg 1999:1). However, presently there is great enthusiasm in adopting distance learning programmes. Many stakeholders in education have noticed that distance learning has great advantage over the conventional methods in:

first its economy: school buildings are not required and teachers and administrations can be responsible for many times more students than they can accommodate in a school; flexibility: people who have got jobs can study in their own time, at their own homes without being removed from their work for long periods; its seven league boots: it can operate over long distances and cater for widely scattered student bodies (Perraton 2000:7).

Faced with the problems of limited resources and huge demand for education, educators, both in the government and non-governmental organizations have turned to the use of distance learning in order to provide education to the masses. This has led to a great expansion in the use of the method, further leading to a new legitimacy for distance learning, unlike in the past when it lacked self-esteem, government support and regulation. Feenberg (1999:2) notes that, it is not the faculty who are in the forefront of the renewed interest, but 'politicians, university administration and computer and telecommunications companies' who have noticed that there is 'money in it.' This 'money-driven' interest for distance learning may have a negative impact on the quality of the courses presented to learners.

Currently, electronic based distance learning is increasingly dominant in the developed countries; the scenario is quite different in the developing countries, where Information and Communications Technologies are still scarce and expensive. Internet based learning is dependent on access by both students and institution to online environments, that is computers and connectivity. In developing countries there is still widespread lack of access to electronic communication technologies and even when the technology is accessible, it still remains quite expensive and beyond the reach of the majority (Klemm & Utsumi 1997). In Africa the Internet is still a

preserve of the elite in the major cities and for this reason, Internet based learning has not managed to reach as big a population as the traditional three-way distance learning (Perraton 2000). In Kenya for instance, Internet facilities are still rare and even though there are servers, the charges are prohibitive for learning purposes. A definition of distance learning in terms of ICTs leads to further isolation of women from education and subsequent transformation because not many of them can afford the hardware and software that is used in Internet based distance learning. Since Web based learning is normally done around the Personal Computer, this would further lock women in the home, denying them the transformative opportunities that distance learning programmes with face-to-face interaction provide.

## **2.4 Women in distance learning**

Much of the literature on women in distance learning is concerned about women's earlier exclusion from the distance learning discourse, in spite of their enormous contribution to its development. Later works looked at a number of issues like access and equity, women's achievements, representation in the learning materials and pedagogy.

### **2.4.1 First Feminist distance learning publication**

It is extremely intriguing to note that although women participated actively in the pioneering of the use of distance learning as a method, for a long period of time, there was no literature about women, either as students or educators (Faith 1988, Burge & Lenksyj 1990). There was plenty of literature on all areas of distance learning with the exception of women's concerns. It was not until 1988 that feminist distance educators had the first publication on women's participation in distance learning. This was the famous feminist book entitled, *Towards New Horizons for Women in Distance Education: International Perspectives*, edited by Karlene Faith. In her forward to this publication, Burge (1988:vii) points out that from its inception 'distance learning existed for over one hundred years with no written documents on the experiences of women as learners and educators.' This fact was also acknowledged by Carl (1988: 316) when she stated that 'Women are noticeably absent from the literature, and little documentation exists to examine their impact on the development of distance education.' This exclusion of women from distance learning literature was in spite of

the fact that women played and have continued to play a significant role in distance education. During its pioneer period, women were involved in the direct provision as educators, while others played the role of guides, supervisors and monitors to their children who had joined government sponsored distance learning programmes, since they lived far from conventional schools. During this pioneer period 'there was pressure on girls to be highly literate so that they could one day, in turn, educate their own children' (Faith 1988: 3). Distance learning has continued to attract large number of women as students, due to its flexibility which allows women to combine study with other family chores. However, this high level of women's involvement in distance learning world wide 'in part, reflects the still-prevalent assumption that woman's place is in the home'. It also shows that women 'are insisting as never before that their exclusion from educational domains is unacceptable' (Faith 1988: 6).

Faith's collection of case studies of women in distance education documents 'selected examples of women's contributions to and female participation within distance education' (Faith 1988: 7). These case studies raises a number of issues such as the gender factor in distance education, issues of equity, challenges in bringing equity into distance learning and a celebration of women's achievements as students and providers of distance learning courses (Faith 1988). Howarth (2001: 2), while reviewing Faith's collection, points out that distance learning needs to be 'a subversive force, promoting women's studies and such initiatives as the British Open University's pioneering 'Women in Technology' programme, playing down courses on child-care and nutrition which are not enabling for women.' The authors in Faith's collections argue that, although distance learning helps in women's individual self-development, it combines with traditional gender roles and expectations by assisting in the confinement of women to the home. For example, Carl (1988: 110) states that:

One of the main concerns of those who provide distance education in a broadcast form is that it should not reinforce the ghettoization of women confined to the home. In the design of educational curriculum via Distance Education via Television (DUET), an important consideration is to ensure that students accomplish some of the course work outside of the home, preferably in the company of others who are either taking the same course or who are interested in the content. Women are encouraged to learn in groups, either in

homes or in workplaces, access and resources within the community. The community is, then, viewed as a resource for continuing education.

This publication was a watershed because it encouraged many women scholars to take on the task of researching on, and writing about women issues in distance education. For example, Spronk (1990) notes that from their writings 'gender issues are being raised and discussed in professional and scholarly meetings of distance educators and increasingly in their writings' (p.1). Dighe (1998) also comments on this publication by stating that:

In general the publication alerted distance education practitioners to the need to develop more gender-sensitive approaches to distance education. Attention was drawn to giving women more visibility, for an accurate representation of their concerns in course materials, for the need to use gender-sensitive inclusive language (p.3).

#### **2.4.2 Feminist pedagogy in distance learning**

As said earlier, one of the distinguishing factors for distance learning is the separation between the learner and the teacher most of the time, with learning processes being aided by different forms of media. In this section I look at some of these forms of media and show how relevant they are to the learning needs of women learners.

According to Burge and Lenksyj (1990: 3), women's access to and successful involvement in distance learning mode is affected by two factors, namely, 'the traditionally male construction and ownership of knowledge, and the invisibility of women in course materials'. The two point out that:

feminist pedagogy takes the specificity of women's experience into account. Female learners come to class with specific personal histories, learning styles, and expectations that are shaped to varying degrees, by their experiences as girls and women in a society characterized by male power and privilege.

They go further to state that:

when these women, each with her personal history of struggle, enter higher education, a learner-centred approach that is gender-neutral, does not generate the woman-centred, transformative learning experiences envisioned by feminists. (p.30).

To them, the ideal feminist teaching environment is one in which:

Feminist teachers and learners are by definition engaged in a political project; by virtue of both content and process, the feminist classroom is one of the sites of women's conscientization, resistance, and struggle (Burge and Lenksyj (1990: 30).

They state the fact that 'female distance students have specific learning needs that are most effectively met by woman-centred as well as learner-centred approaches' (p.10).

They suggest that:

To achieve the goals of woman-centred teaching in the face of various forms of institutional and societal hostility to feminism, teachers need to use, and to strengthen, feminist networks both inside and outside the academy (p.10).

The point that is coming out clearly in Burge and Lenksyj (1990) is the fact that feminist distance educators need to put in place forms of distance learning programmes where women play more significant roles in the construction of knowledge and provision of support services. In addition, distance educators are called upon to ensure positive visibility of women in the study materials, so that women 'are in the text as well as in the armchair studying it' (p.3).

Kirkup & Prummer (1990) have further shown that the needs of women distance learners tend to be different from those of male learners in relation to the local support provided for face-to-face sessions during their distance study. Their study focused on 'access to local student support services and the value students place on them' (p. 1). According to the two authors, 'women are more regular attendees at face-to-face tutorials, and value local provision, especially the chance to interact with other students, more than men.' This made them 'more inclined to use study centres facilities which provided them with opportunity to share their study with others: fellow students at study centres and residential schools, friends and family' (p.13). The research shows that women's preferred method of learning was the one with 'connection with others during their studies' (p.13). Dighe (1998) also supported this view when she stated that women learn best in 'learning environments where affective forms of knowledge that comes from life experience are valued (p.4).'

However, 'women students have to overcome a lot of barriers in order to manage to spend time with other students and engage in shared learning' (p.14). Dighe (1998), points to some of the barriers such as family and personal responsibilities that make it difficult to attend the study centres. Kirkup and Prummer (1990:15) stress that 'in designing any distance education system that effort is put into creating networks of support amongst students and the opportunity to meet.' These networks could be created through different forms of support such as face-to-face, teleconferencing, written comments or electronic means. She states that 'through such an interaction women, some for probably the first time, realize that there are others like them who have the same doubts and difficulties and who are grappling with the same issues' (Dighe 1998:p.4).

### **2.4.3 Access and equity in distance learning**

From its inception distance learning has been concerned with the expansion and improvement of access to education for marginalized groups of people who could not participate before. One of the achievements of distance learning globally has been the ability to 'help overcome educational inequality between men and women' (Dodds 1994: 65). It enables women to overcome the cultural and social barriers that bar them from benefiting from conventional forms of education. Hence, Sturrock (1988) points out that women benefit from the flexibility and ease of access that distance learning programmes provide, in that they are able to carry on with their family and job responsibilities as they study.

However, the inequality is still persistent in that socio-cultural factors continue to block many women from successfully completing distance learning programmes. Research has shown that women students continue to choose the so-called 'female subjects'. For instance, Christine von Prummer and Ute Rossie, (1988), have identified that, at the Fernuniversitat in Germany, women were still concentrated in the art based courses, with very few venturing into mathematics and science fields. This was echoed by Enoch (1988) who pointed out that at the Everyman's University in Israel, women distance learners continued to choose humanities and social sciences. She attributes this practice to women's socialization process.

#### **2.4.4 Women's concerns lacking in course materials**

Feminist distance educators have established the fact that women's concerns are lacking in distance course materials. After doing a critical examination of distance education course content and structure of materials, to determine the extent to which both male and female interests are represented, Matiru and Gachuhi (1988) exposed the fact that there are gender stereotypes in the distance learning materials used in Kenya (Matiru & Gachuhi 1988). In this evaluation, they discovered that 'sex stereotyping pervades all subject areas and that females are significantly underrepresented even in those courses, such as Home science, which have been designed primarily or exclusively for females' (p.145). Their study revealed that throughout the texts males were depicted as having more social prominence and as being engaged in more significant activities than women. They concluded that the education received through the study of such materials was bound to reinforce traditional assumptions of male superiority and women's inferior position in society (Faith 1988, Matiru and Gachuhi 1988).

Faith argues that by studying these biased materials, women learners end up accepting their lower status in society and for this reason these materials are meant for domestication of women and do not enable them to question the prevalent discrimination against women found in Kenyan society.

Another study by Sturrock (1988) examined the kind of courses offered mainly at university level and how relevant they were to women's needs. She gave a critical examination of each course to see whether they were women inclusive. For instance, she looked at the kind of literature that was offered and wondered whether, when students study literature, they study literature books written by women (Sturrock, 1988). She noted that there were omissions on women poets for example. Students were given a curriculum that emphasized male poets only. She argued that such omissions were a product of traditional male-dominated cultural norms and needed to be challenged. She argued that 'educators, women and men alike, academic staff and instructional designers alike must remain aware of this exclusion so that they do not inadvertently foster its persistence' (p. 187).

#### **2.4.5 Barriers to women's participation in distance learning**

Various barriers block women from participating in distance learning. These are cultural attitudes, family commitments and the structure of the programmes (Sturrock 1988, Evans 1995, Dighe 1998, Kanwar & Taplin 2001). According to Sturrock (1988) women distance learners have 'to balance studies with the family commitments' (p.32), which involves multiple responsibilities. She points out that women students experience conflict 'between family commitments and their studies.'

Evans (1995) too, notes that cultural factors have continued to block women from participating in education because it is through cultural social norms and traditions that the subservient status of women in society is maintained. Kanwar and Taplin (2001) corroborated this fact by noting that education of males is more valued than that of women since, after marriage, 'women leave to husbands' families, and hence, are not regarded as being useful to their own families in the long term' (p.6). Due to this perception, large families opt to take boys to school while the girls remain at home.

The other cultural barrier is attitudinal in that there are perceived differences between male and female roles and capabilities which are:

inculcated through socialization in the home and family, reinforced through schooling, through vocational/career guidance services, through experiences in the workplace, peer pressure and through absence of female roles modes (Evans 1995: 3).

Kanwar & Taplin (2001:7) have further noted the 'stereotyping attitudes that still prevail among themselves as well as among their husbands, children and other family members.'

Lack of confidence and self esteem act as a barrier in that women come to college with a low self esteem and due to this they avoid subjects that they think are tough (Evans 1995). Thompson (1983a: 57) had also raised this fact when she noted that:

For many women the feeling of having little confidence is widespread...The feelings are almost always attributed to some sense of personal inadequacy and are strongest when women, used to being homemakers and child-rearers,

venture 'out' into the world beyond the home. Many of us underrate our own strength and achievements, and after a number of years in which our lives have revolved around the needs of our husbands and children, we lose track of our own identity and sense of significance... Women who claim to be unconfident are in most respects internalizing and taking responsibility for a process of exclusion and marginalization, which is a consequence of patriarchal relationships.

Other barriers include lack of support from spouses and other relatives, financial difficulties and the fact of living in rural/isolated areas (Evans 1995, Kanwar & Taplin 2001). Evans (1995) points out that 'fees requirements are major barriers where women do not have independent control of resources, where they are dependent on male partners who are unsupportive' (Evans (1995:4). She further points out poverty as a major 'situational fact in many regions' (p.4). Hence, lack of economic power for the majority of women acts as a barrier.

The structure of the programmes also act as roadblocks for women (institutional barriers), whereby students are required to attend at fixed hours and the fact that students are not able to make up for the missed sessions. This is made worse by the fact that most of these institutions do not provide childcare facilities for women learners (Evans 1995).

#### **2.4.6 Impact of distance learning on women's lives**

Studies done by Willen (1988) showed that participation in a distance learning programme resulted in increased self esteem in women. Her study showed that distance study not only increased their self esteem but also social status' in relation to work, family and friends' (p.100).

Kanwar and Taplin (2001) also discussed the impact of distance learning on women's lives in India. Their study, which was based on 23 case studies of successful women students, shows that in spite of the many problems that women have to cope with in order to participate in distance learning, women have gained great benefits, 'not only their own quality of life but also that of their families and even communities' (p.74).

It gives women a 'second chance' at education. Its advantage is the ability to 'enable the mother to spend more of her time at home with her children and study at the same time.'

After participation in higher education through distance study women's performance and economic wellbeing are improved. They also receive promotion to more senior positions (Kanwar & Taplin, 2001). It also enables them to be more articulate, more confident, see things more broadly, develop independent thinking and become role models to their children. The findings of my study echo these findings in that women in Kenya have undergone tremendous changes after undertaking distance study. This will be elaborated later in chapter four and five of this dissertation when I examine the transformation process in the lives of these distance learners.

Although Kanwar & Taplin's book elaborated on the changes that occur in women's lives after participation in distance learning, the case studies do not investigate the ability of distance learning to enable women to challenge and question their low status. It does not show how these women were enabled by the distance learning experience to take action against the existing discrimination and exclusion of women from the public arena. It does just accept that distance learning 'may be an ideal way for them to access education, since it potentially enables them to do most of their studying from home if they wish to do so, thus reducing the need to conflict with social or cultural requirements' (Kanwar & Taplin, 2001: 78). Such a statement takes for granted the cultural and social role assignment for women. An ideal distance learning programme should be able to lead women to question and challenge the factors that have relegated them to the home as well as enable them to take action to improve their lives.

The review of literature on women shows that not much has been done on distance learning's ability to transform women and hence, the need for my research to fill this gap.

## **2.5 Women in Kenya**

In this section I pay attention to the position and condition of Kenyan women in society, their participation in education and the barriers that block them from involvement. It will show that women's low position in society impacts negatively on their education, in that throughout their lives there is always somebody who determines whether they study or not, either a father during childhood or a husband in adult life. When women decide to return to education at a mature age, socio-cultural role expectations block them from completing their studies and it is only those who are able to surmount these barriers who manage to complete their studies.

### **2.5.1 Position and condition of women in Kenya**

The subjugation of women in African society is well documented (Ekeya 1994, Muita 1999, Njoroge 2000). Cultural beliefs about women have placed them in an inferior position in society. In Kenya women are still 'considered second-class citizens by the dominant male counterparts amid biased traditional customary laws and society's attitude' (Okoko 2001:1). Through the socialization process a girl child from very early in life is taught to see herself as inferior to a boy and throughout her life she has to occupy a subordinate position to that of men. Girls are taught to be meek, obedient and good at domestic chores. Indeed girls are praised for being obedient and subservient, a fact that makes them feel inferior and shy away from the male dominated roles. Even the roles that are ascribed to women relegate them to the home. Thus Kenya socializes its women to remain in the private sphere of life (kitchen, and home) whereas men are socialized to be in the public sphere (leadership, breadwinner) (Abagi, Olweya & Otieno 2000). Hence, women continue to occupy subordinate position in the Kenyan patriarchal society. Women have been relegated to domestic roles which have little direct economic reward, whereas men occupy roles in the world outside the home, roles that have prestige, power and direct economic gains.

Ekeya (1994) examines African Traditional society and notes that women's influence was limited to the homestead where she lived 'in the shadow of a man and her existence was defined and given legal sanction by men' (p.42). Ekeya further noted that when the husband died, the wife could not inherit his property, and in any case, she formed part of that property and this is why she had to be passed over to a male

relative for inheritance. In some Kenyan communities wife inheritance is still rampant and has contributed to the high infection rate with HIV/AIDS among women (Wango 2001). Hence, there is a glaring exclusion of women from most important areas, both in the domestic and public spheres of life. This attitude to women in the traditional set up has hardly changed today, in that women in Kenya continue to occupy lower status than men. From my experience, when a male comes to a homestead in the rural areas and finds the children and the mother, he would ask, 'is there nobody at home?' Then the woman would reply, 'no, it is only the children and I'. Such statements are loaded with meanings that show that women and children occupy the same inferior position where they do not make or influence decisions made in the family.

There is still rampant violence against women such as battering from husband and his male relatives, rape and female genital mutilation. Njoroge (2000) discusses how Kenyan women have been subjected to various forms of violence whose major result is destruction of their dignity and fullness of life. She notes that while these negative attitudes towards women are 'strongly rooted in the African culture, western education has also reinforced the inferiority of women' (p.83).

Njoroge (2000) notes that there is hope in that Kenyan women scholars have established the existence of sexism as the main factor that relegates women to lower position in society. Kenyan women scholars are, therefore, 'demanding a critical examination of traditional values, beliefs and practices, which for a long time have subjugated women and children' (p.84). According to her, women scholars in Kenya have been exposing the 'cultural beliefs and practices that perpetuate the dehumanization of women and children. More importantly these women scholars are trying their best to involve the rural women (who are largely illiterate or semi-illiterate) by recording their experiences, songs, stories, achievements' (p.87).

Kibiti (2002) notes that culture is the:

ideology which provides justification for the oppression of women, creates justification for their exploitation, and creates adequate space for male domination and control over women. This becomes pronounced especially when culture defines and confines women to the domestic sphere of

reproductive activities. This means that culture as an ideology devalues women and works in favour of the men (p.2).

At the level of the family, which are mostly patrilineal, patrilocal and with strong patriarchal traditions, women experience subordination and domination. This domination extends to the economic, political and social areas. Since women are second-class they do not have access, control and ownership of property such as land, livestock or equipment. At the same time they are not involved in decision-making (Kibiti 2002).

Economically, women fare poorly in the Kenyan context in that they are overburdened by different chores that they perform both at the home and place of work (including the farm). According to the Kenya Gender Data Research Centre (2000), Kenyan women, especially in the rural areas, bear most of the responsibilities for household food security and yet this work is under valued and not rewarded. There is imbalance in the division of farm work, which results in women having no control over their labour inputs, marketing of cash crops and the use of the income from agricultural produce.

At the same time, the majority of Kenyan women are excluded from formal wage employment by virtue of their educational background. For this reason they have tried to enter the market economy through self-employment in informal sector activities, such as horticulture, kiosks, basket making, retail trading, and handcrafts services. The 'lack of access to property/land ownership ensures that they participate in the sector largely from illegal make-shifts stalls, and main street corridors' (Kenya Gender Data Research Centre 2000: 20). This means that their source of income is not steady as they are chased around by the city council police officers every now and then.

The economic powerlessness of Kenyan women has been described in detail by the recently published report by Human Rights Watch (2003). According to this publication, Kenyan women, both illiterate and those with advanced degrees, are denied property rights in Kenya. Human Rights Watch interviewed women from different social groupings and found out that once the husband died the couple's

property was 'looted' by the relatives. The report points out that, 'rich or poor, in monogamous and polygamous unions, women struggled not just with losing their property, but also with being ostracized by their families and communities if they attempted to assert their rights' (p.1).

This problem affects women in both urban and rural areas in the same way. This is because the unequal gender relations in the country are taken as legitimate, natural and inevitable. Human Rights Watch (2003) points out that although women's property rights were limited in the traditional society, 'social structures protected women and men against exclusion from land, Kenya's most important asset' (p.2). Traditionally, inheritance was patrilineal, 'a married woman did not inherit from parents since her husband's family was expected to provide for her'. At the same time, women did not inherit land from their husbands but held it in trust for her sons. Though since independence, Kenyans have been debating about land reforms, 'the emphasis is on ethnic and socioeconomic equality, not gender equality' (Human Rights Watch 2003:3). Although the Kenyan constitution outlaws any discrimination on basis of sex, the Kenyan courts normally refer to customary law when handling cases of property rights for women. It is unfortunate that Kenya's legal system recognizes these customary laws, which are never in favour of women's property rights.

This state of affairs has led to the fact that 'Eighty per cent of female-headed households are either poor or very poor, due to their limited ownership of and access to land' (Human Rights Watch, 2003: 4). Although they do not own the land, they constitute 80 percent of the agricultural labour force; work that is never paid or appreciated. This economic powerlessness for many Kenyan women has led some into commercial sex work, as the only way of earning a living. Other women have joined small-scale businesses as hawkers on the street pavements.

In the political arena, the marginalization of Kenyan women is evident in that even in parliament they are the minority. Traditional gender roles block women from occupying leadership positions. The present practice is that the law and policy makers do not take seriously matters related to women. According to research done by Abagi et al (2000) the majority of Kenyan men still think that politics should remain their

preserve. Abagi and team set out to 'establish people's opinion on the issue of affirmative action in the political field in Kenya' (p.21). They did this by asking the interviewees to state whether they agreed to have one third of seats in parliament reserved for women, since they formed 58 per cent of the total Kenyan population. It was only 40 per cent of those interviewed who supported the proposal, with 48 against and 12 undecided. Their research showed that most men (65 per cent) wanted the status quo of women under representation in parliament to remain. Abagi and team concluded that these findings implied that the majority of men 'still view politics as a male domain that should not be visited by women' (p.22).

The practical test for Abagi et al's (2000) research was demonstrated by the results of the 2002 elections. Out of the 140 women candidates for parliamentary seats, it was only 12 who won with another six nominated into parliament by different parties (Caplan 2003). Thus there are only 18 women out of the 222 positions in parliament, though this is seen as an improvement compared to the past, when there could be either one or no woman in parliament (Ngang'a 2003). The question that begs to be answered is why do women vote in male parliamentarians? The answer to this question lies in the fact that culture and gender role specifications that are passed on through the socialization process have pushed women to the domestic sphere of life (Otieno 2003). Women have got no confidence in women's leadership. Both men and women believe that politics is for men and women's place is in the domestic arena.

### **2.5.3 Kenyan women & Education**

As highlighted in chapter one, although women are the majority in the Kenyan population, they are under represented in education. It is a well-known fact that the majority of girls and women in Africa continue to be excluded from the different levels of education and careers (Abagi 2000, Wamahiu 1994). Since independence the Kenyan government has continued to view education as an investment that empowers its citizens, both men and women to participate in the country's development. The government has been committed to the provision of education opportunities to all its citizens 'regardless of their economic, social or cultural status' (Ministry of Education 2000:7). Its commitment to education can be clearly shown by the many commissions it has established to give advice on the best way of structuring education so that it can benefit every citizen. Immediately after independence the government established the

National Commission on Education (Ominde Commission) in 1964. Then there was the National Commission on Education, Objectives and Policies (Gachathi Report), (The Kenya Government 1976); the Presidential Working Party on the establishment of the Second National University (Mackay Report), (The Kenya Government 1981); the Presidential Commission on the Development of education for the Next Decade and Beyond (Kamunge Report), (The Kenya Government 1988); and the Presidential Commission on the Review of Education (Koech Report), (The Kenya Government 2000).

All these documents emphasize the government's commitment to the provision of education for all. It is, therefore, intriguing to note that although the Kenyan Constitution and education legislative enactment on education give evidence of the government's commitment to gender balance at all levels of education, there are still great disparities between men's and women's participation in education (Davidson 1993). These high sounding policies, laws and enactments have not translated into gender equity in education at all levels. Abagi et al (2000:23) notes that although both Kenyan men and women see 'schooling as a vehicle of social change and development, there is still a deep-rooted gender discrimination and insensitiveness against women in Kenya.'

Gender disparities at all levels of education continue to be the greatest challenge to the government (Ministry of Education 2000). For instance, the 1999 ministry statistics showed that the enrolment of girls in most provinces was lower than that of boys. The statistics from selected provinces indicated that among the illiterates women are the majority. In Homa Bay in Western Province, for instance, the illiterate men in 1999 totaled 9,822, while women were 16,112; in Meru, in Eastern Province, illiterate men were 3,097 while women were 5,456; in Nyeri, illiterate men were 17,914 while women were 32,658 (Ministry of Education 2000). From this data we can see that there is almost twice the number of illiterate women to men in every province in Kenya. This gender gap was greatest at the University level where the percentage of girls in the 2000/2001 academic year was 31.7 per cent.

There are many reasons for these disparities. The socialization process has conditioned girls to feel inferior to boys and due to this they tend to have low

aspirations. Muita (1999) has noted that the 'socialization process also treats the girl child differently from the boy imparting different personal values, skills, expectations and aspirations.' She enumerates the factors that have effected on girls' education and health as 'sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, child marriage and early pregnancy.' (p.3). She points out that, girls from poor backgrounds have to enter the labour market very early. They work very long hours, with poor living conditions, which lead to unhappiness and psychological disorders, with risks of sexual abuse (Muita 1999). She further states that:

In the socio-cultural, religious and traditional context, the female child suffers a much lower status in relation to that of the male child. Disparities start at birth with different values applied to each sex with the girl child always getting the lower deal (p.3).

Due to this socialization, many girls do not aim as high as boys and by the time they finish high school, the majority of them think in terms of getting married and bearing children. Even among those who make it to the tertiary level of education, aspirations are modest and they think in terms of either becoming a teacher, nurse, clerk, cateress, or a secretary. Girls have continued to see the scientific field as the domain of men and they have continued to perform poorly in science subjects.

According to Wango (2001), the high fees and levies that are charged in primary and secondary schools, in addition to the cost of textbooks, also help account for these great disparities. He states that: 'since it was implemented, cost sharing, with the existing poverty, has greatly contributed to the decline in the enrolment and attendance in school. Girls are the first to suffer when parents cannot afford school levies and for fees' (p.7). His research found out that every year about 10,000 to 13,000 girls drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy. Other factors were poverty, school fees and levies, hostile learning environment, child labour, early marriages and insecurity (Wango 2001). Muita (1999) has also noted that the practice of marrying off girls at early age among some communities in Kenya (Maasai, Samburu, Somali, Turkana, and the Pokot) discourages the education of women. Other practices are the infamous female genital mutilation, whose 'immediate effects are debilitating pain, often infection and long term effects on their sexuality' (p.7). She notes that 'some

initiated girls do not return to school nor concentrate on their studies as society considers their next step as marriage' (p.8).

Muita (1999) and Nungu (1999) have both noted the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on the education of the girl child. Girls as young as age 3 are given the mother's responsibility in the home and so with the epidemic the girl child has to carry the burden of care giving to sick parents and her siblings, and indeed sites of child headed homes are common. In other cases girls leave school in order to take up employment, normally as domestic workers, so as to supplement the family income.

The Kenya Gender Data Research Centre (2000) has corroborated these facts by noting that:

prevalent traditional practices bar girls from basic education, hence most women in the formal sector have access to jobs in lower echelons, requiring low skills and low pay and are rarely given consideration for further training, promotion and job security (Kenya Gender Data Research Centre (p.17).

Thus to achieve gender equity in society the government has to strive hard in order to bridge the gender gap in education. Both the government and the NGOs have been involved in the elusive war of bridging the disparities in education by promoting girl-child's access to education. Nungu (1999) draws our attention to the fact that the Kenyan government has already taken affirmative action in order to eradicate the imbalance in women's participation in education. These include:

Allocation of educational resources and secondary school places on a regional basis (quotas), lowering of university entry points for girls from 69 points to 68 in 1992, and from 66 to 65 points in 1994 and the construction of boarding facilities for girls (p.6).

This sounds an excellent step for the government to take. However, there is also need to practically address other factors that bar women from participating in education, such as cultural beliefs and practices. There is also need for the government to address the issues of poverty and economic inequalities that also tend to affect negatively the education of women and girls. The launching of free primary education in 2003 would benefit many girls who could not participate. However, the question still remains:

what happens to them after they complete primary education, bearing in mind that secondary education is still very expensive in Kenya.

#### **2.5.4 Kenyan women and the Church**

Since one of the distance learning programmes under my study is church based, it is necessary for me here to look at the prevailing circumstances of women in the church. Kanyoro (1992a: 16) has noted that the church has continued to participate in the domination and exclusion of women. She asserts that:

The Christian church taught men that they are heads of the home. It told wives to obey their husbands, and children to obey their fathers. But the church failed to emphasize the gospel of husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Some Christian men in the service of the church also inflict violence, physical or otherwise, on their wives and children. The church has not taken a strong stand against this evil behaviour. What are the reasons for the church's silence? Is it because the church is male in structure and some of our leaders are guilty of this sin? Is it because women's issues are not at the forefront of our church's agenda?

Ekeya (1994) has further stated that although Kenyan women fared badly in the traditional society, their conditions have been made worse by the coming of Christianity in that:

Besides the cultural norms and taboos that bound her and held her in subjection, two other oppressive elements have been added to her world: the loaded interpretation of certain biblical passages, and the predominantly male church ministries and institutions (p.139).

She notes that 'certain passages of scripture have been and continue to be interpreted to the detriment of women, and the predominantly male-oriented church ministries and institutions' (p.143). She argues that the interpretation of passages such as, 'wives be subject to your husbands' has put women into a subservient position and that 'by emphasizing woman's subjection to man in marriage, the church has directly given men the excuse for laxity and tyranny in their dealings with their wives' (p.144). This has led men to be unfaithful to their wives and even venting violence on them. She says that 'in a very subtle way the church encourages women to endure the hardships

of marriage even to the point of accepting an impossible marriage relationship as a necessary martyrdom...' (p.144).

Njoroge (2000) has also noted this exclusion and rejection of Kenyan women in the church and the larger society. She notes that the church has failed to pay attention to practices that continue to place women in a subservient position in Kenya. She points out that:

The church in Africa has, generally speaking, excluded women from participation in all the levels of the ministry. The church in Kenya is not only silent but it also imposes teachings that aggravate the injustices done to women and children... Similarly it is this widespread pattern of exclusion and neglect of persons in our society that has provoked Christian women to respond to human needs and to create projects that deal with those who are 'rejected by history... (p. 84-85).

With this kind of social background Kenyan women need to participate in a type of education that gives them stamina and will power to question the prevailing marginalization in society. It is the aim of this study to investigate the ability of distance study to instill in women critical consciousness that leads them to question this hegemonic control.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has laid the foundation for the examination of how distance learning leads women living in a patriarchal society to question and change the social gender inequality that exists in the Kenyan context. Therefore, the literature will form the theoretical basis upon which this thesis examines whether distance learning transforms women's perspectives about themselves and the world around them and whether it enables them to challenge the socio-cultural normative ideologies on which their subjugation is based. The next chapter explores the methodology that was used in the process of carrying out this research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the literature that serves as a theoretical basis for this study. In this chapter, biographical methods of data collection are discussed as the main methods for this research. There is also discussion of other supplementary methods used such as focus group, observation and analysis of documentary evidence. The chapter discusses hermeneutics as the tools for data analysis.

#### **3.2 Research design**

##### **3.2.1 Qualitative methods of data collection**

To be able to study women's transformation through distance learning I chose a qualitative method, which enabled me to examine the experiences of women learners and give preference to their individual voices (Miller 1998). Unlike quantitative methods, which use measurements to compare and analyze different variables, qualitative research 'uses qualifying words or descriptions to record aspects of the world' (Bless & Higson-Smith 1998:1). It uses nonmathematical processes of data collection and interpretation (Straus & Corbin 1996, Denzin & Lincoln 1998).

Qualitative research is best for research questions such as, 'why', 'what', or 'how', (Lacey & Luff 2001); which I used extensively to explore women's experiences. These were questions that 'stress how social experience is created and given meaning' (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 8). I looked for 'explanations and processes rather than numbers' (Parr 1998:89).

Qualitative research can take different formats. In this research I used biographical methods as the main tools of data collection. In addition, I used focus group discussions methods. In the following sections I examine each of these methods, their strengths and weaknesses and show how they were employed in the research.

### ***3.2.1.1 Biographical Methods***

In this research, I have drawn on biographical methods to specifically listen to learning stories of women distance learners. Biographical methods are a unique method of enquiry, which pay attention to narrative expressions of people's life experiences (Hoerning & Alheit 1995). Norman Denzin defines biographical methods as the 'studied use and collection of life documents, or documents of life, which describe turning-point moments in individuals lives' (Denzin 1989:53). Biographical methods use the respondent's experience to elicit data for the research. They focus on the main or significant events that shape people's lives (Hatch & Wisniewski 1975, Hoerning & Alheit 1995). The researcher takes the sampled stories to represent the prevailing circumstances in the larger society (Erben 1999). Personal biography is influenced by the social structures prevailing in the society in which the individual lives. Alheit states that: ...behind a personal, intended action lies a structure also in operation, because we are not at all required to perform ceaselessly intentional actions with far-reaching biographical consequences' (Alheit 1992: 3). Hence, since the respondent lives within a social-cultural context, the information elicited through biographical research can only be understood fully in the context of the wider society (Erben 1998, Kainan 2002).

Biographical methods of data collection involve the collection of life stories of the target group. According to Polkinghorne, a story is a:

special type of discourse production. In it events and actions are drawn together into an organized whole by means of a plot. A plot is a type of conceptual scheme by which a contextual meaning of individual events can be displayed (Polkinghorne 1995: 7).

Sarah FitzPatrick (2001:3) sees biographical research as the 'study of an individual and her or his experiences as told to the researcher or found in documents and archival material.' In biographical research, 'researchers ask open-ended questions to capture how the person understands his or her own past' (Neuman 1997:373). To Neuman the accuracy in the story is 'less critical than the story itself.'

Biographical approaches offer 'exciting alternatives for connecting the lives and stories of individuals to the understanding of large human and social phenomena' (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995:113). In this method, the individual is at the centre of the research. Hence, understanding the individual life is central to the research process (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995). Biographical methods are related to phenomenological methods in that they seek to understand the phenomena through the eyes of the people who have experienced them (Alheit 1995, Kacem 2002).

Although biographical methods were introduced into social science in the 1920s and 1930s, for a long period social scientists ignored them, preferring quantitative methods. It is only from the 1980s that scholars started to show renewed interest in the use of the method as a means of studying social phenomena (Kacem 2002, Denzin, 1989). In particular, feminist researchers have made extensive use of the methods to investigate the lived experience of women, and how different factors have shaped their perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviours (Middleton 1996, Thompson 1997, Barr 1999, Ribbens et al. 1998). They prefer biographical approaches because they give voice to women's point of view. Indeed for a long time the voices of women had been ignored by other social scientists (Parr 1998).

Biographical methods have become a popular tool in the field of adult education, whereby adult educators study the life history of adult learners to understand the reasons behind their participation in adult education and their learning processes (Alheit 1995). Alheit further claims that they are well-established methods in the field of adult education especially in European countries (Alheit 1992). Biographical research methods enable the researcher to locate herself in the research process, and by so doing, she manages to have a dialogue with the researched (Parr 1998). This dialogue becomes a prerequisite for knowledge construction (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995, Parr 1998).

### ***Strengths of Biographical methodology***

Scholars use biographical methods in order 'to learn about the terms on which others make sense of their lives' (Clover 1997:2). It enables the voices of the respondents to be heard (Alheit 2001). By giving voice to the researched, the researcher participates in the process of empowering them (Cohen & Manion 1994). To those who have been

'silenced it offers the platform for them to speak in their own words about their experiences' (Clark 1998:59). Smith also echoes this by pointing out that biography 'gives voice to people long denied access' (Smith 1994:288).

Biographical methods provide 'greater insight into the nature and meaning of individual lives or groups of lives' (Erben 1998: 4). Since biographical methods are person-centred, it is a better method of understating the human condition (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995). Biographical methods can be used as tools for 're-conceptualization, of exploring one's past experiences and how diverse factors have shaped perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviours' (Clover 1997: 2). The method, like other interpretive methods, has the potential to assist the researcher to 'get inside the person and understand from within' (Cohen & Manion 1994, Olesen 1994).

It is more personal than other types of qualitative research (Parr 1998, Hatch & Wisniewski 1995). For the biographical interview to succeed, 'the researcher and informant have to work closely together to come to a shared understanding of the participant's story' (Hatch & Wisniewski 1995:117). Due to their 'central focus on the individual lives as lived, these approaches produce more practical value for wider populations of readers than other forms of qualitative research.'

Biographical research methods can enrich 'people's lives by stimulating imagination, clarifying emotions and analyzing the context and influences of past experiences and how they have shaped values, attitudes and behaviours' (Clover 1997: 2). The process of story telling brings to the teller emotions, feelings and actions, which come as a result of memories of the past. Coffey adds that biographical methods have the 'potential to highlight and illuminate gendered constructions of power' (Coffey et al 2000: 62).

#### ***Weakness of biographical method***

First, as an interview method, it is time consuming (Bell 1993). One needs plenty of time for the interview itself and also for travelling, interruptions that may occur during the interview and time to go through what transpired in the interview.

Secondly, there is the necessity of positive rapport between the researcher and the researched. For the biographical interview to succeed, the researcher has to establish a relationship with the informant. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) point out that 'exposing one's self to another in the research process involves issues of trust, truth telling, fairness, respect, commitment, and justice' (p. 119). The researcher may be seen as an intruder into the informant's life (Denzin 1994). The informant is normally weary when emptying the whole of herself to a stranger. The researcher has to assure her that whatever she gives is held in confidence and her name would remain anonymous. Without this assurance, the informant will tend to sift what she is telling out. This scenario calls for a relationship based on mutual trust and respect throughout the whole research process (Hatch & Winiewski 1995).

Thirdly, there is over direction. Denzin (1989) notes that by guiding the informant into a set of life experiences, through use of interview schedule, the researcher 'shapes the stories that are told' (Denzin1989: 57) and a linear model is implied. Denzin (1989) adds that, 'the preoccupation with theory elevates the researcher's interpretations above the subjects' (p.57). This may lead to the reduction of the subject's understanding of her life. In other words, the whole process of data analysis, starting with transcription, may erode the informant's original understanding of her life.

Fourthly, there is the problem of mishearing in that as a method it can 'serve to romanticize the individual and their stories, or indeed can privilege the narrator (and their analysis) to the detriment of the individual and personal biographies' (Coffey et al 2000:62). It can lead to the elevation or demeaning of the respondent. For instance the researched may decide to present herself in a favourable and meaningful light and by so doing, present a falsely constructed life.

Fifthly, there is also the problem of false presentation of the self and the story told. The researcher may not be sure whether what the respondent is saying is true and may not be able to test the truth of the story (Bar-on 1996). Hence it is based on the assumption that the respondent is telling the truth about her life.

Sixthly, there are also issues of 'authorship, ownership, and voice' (Hatch & Winiewski 1995: 119). The central issue has to do with the rights of the researched and the researcher. The researched tends to be concerned about how she would benefit from the stories she tells the researcher. There is also danger that the researcher will lose the genuine voice of the researched and elevate herself (Barr 1999). This would blur the informant's voice. Unless the researcher makes deliberate decision to include the voices of the researched, the final product may reflect the researcher more than the researched. In this research, I partly overcame this problem by making sure that, while reporting my research findings I quoted directly from what the women students said. By so doing, I was able to guarantee that the spoken words of women interviewees remain part and parcel of the research project.

#### ***Application of biographical methods in the present research***

In this research, I used biographical methods to explore the lived experiences of women students participating in distance learning programmes in Kenya. I was able to listen to and hear what the women students had to say about their lives before and after participating in distance learning. I was mainly interested in taking great recognition of the voices of the women students. By listening to these women's learning stories, I was able to give voice to the voiceless and in this way, enlighten the society on the conditions and needs of women distance learners (Clarke 1998). By understanding the individual women students within a biographical context, I identified significant moments and experiences in the lives of these women students, which had shaped their present lives. I was interested in establishing the biographical routes through which women joined distance learning programmes and the transformation that may have taken place in their lives after participating in these programmes. These stories have not been told before because researchers on distance education in Kenya have ignored the voices of women students.

#### ***The Research Site***

I started this doctoral programme in March 2001. I spent most part of that year preparing the proposal and doing the literature review. Between July and August 2001 I carried out a pilot study. After this I came back to the University of Natal to continue shaping my proposal, literature review and prepare the interview schedules,

for both the individual and the focus group interviews. I started on the fieldwork in December 2001 and completed it in August 2002.

I had the following reasons for doing my research in Kenya.

As stated in chapter one, this research is located in Kenya and examines three distance learning programmes, namely, College of Education and External Studies (CEES) in the University of Nairobi), the Co-operative College of Kenya and the church based programme, namely, Theological Education by Extension (TEE). These three institutions were chosen because they represent different kinds of women and since I wanted to see whether there is a link between who studies what, and the kind of study that creates greater or less transformative impulse, I found these three ideal choices. Since biographies are situated in context, I had to look at women from different contexts and show how distance learning impacts on their lives. At the same time, these institutions were seen as appropriate because they reach the targeted audience; that is women.

The other reason for choosing to study the three institutions is personal. I decided to choose three institutions that I had prior interaction with because I knew that these institutions would assist me with the relevant information to contact the informants and with the documents that would provide more relevant information. I have interacted with each of the institutions at different times and in varied capacities. I considered the issue of gaining access to the three institutions and realized that it would be easier doing research with them than with other institutions, some of which were barely starting their programmes.

Gaining access to the three institutions was, therefore, not a problem for me because I had had a long time interaction with each one of them and so I was not a stranger. In the case of College of Education and External Studies (CEES), University of Nairobi's programme, I had worked in the college for over ten years. Although I was not directly working in the faculty that deals with distance learning programmes, I had been involved in assisting them with material development and tutoring processes. In 1992 I worked as a volunteer at the Faculty of External Studies to coordinate the writing process for learning materials in the fields of Philosophy and Religious

Studies, both in workshops and outside. I combined this work with my normal duties until 1994 when they got a full time person to do the job. However, I continued to tutor their distance learning students. Therefore, it was easy for me to interact with the Dean of the Faculty and other staff members and they did not have problems making available to me important documents necessary for the research project and assisting in locating interviewees.

For the church distance learning programme, I have worked, on a part-time basis, for the churches in East Africa since 1994. During this period, I have trained writers of the TEE materials, tutors, facilitators and managers. Indeed the coordinators of these programmes and myself have attended different conferences and seminars together. Therefore, gaining access to their programmes was not a problem for me.

For the Cooperative College of Kenya distance learning programme, I had also had a long history of association. Since 1999, I have worked, on part time basis, for the College. Initially I was called upon to facilitate workshops for revision of their learning materials. Then, after the workshop, I was contracted to continue supervising the writers as they developed the materials. Therefore, I was not a stranger at the institution. In fact when I introduced my topic of research to the Principal of the College, she was more than willing to give me assistance. She and her staff gave me total support in my research work.

## **Sampling methods**

### **The sample**

Interviews were carried out among women students who, on one hand, had completed the distance learning programmes, and on the other, who were still studying. My goal was to interview ten students from each of the three programmes. I played down the issue of representativeness and chose a convenient number (Bryman 2001). Biographical research is exploratory and intensive; and for this reason, there is little chance of a large statistically representative sample. The sample is strategic rather than random. Informants are chosen for what they can say rather than whom they represent (Reddy 2000). The informants were not initially taken as typical or representative. However, as the information became repetitive and nothing new was

coming up, they ended up being qualitatively representative of typical distance learners in Kenya. At the end I was able to interview 14 from the university of Nairobi programme, nine from the church based programme and nine from the Cooperative College distance learning programme. Thus biographical interviews were conducted with each of the 32 women.

### *Locating interviewees*

Since distance learning students are scattered in different parts of Kenya, I had to devise some method of gathering them together. Incidental and snowballing sampling methods were used.

Incidental or accidental sampling method refers to a situation where the researcher takes the sample at hand (Kerlinger 1970). Snowballing methods refers to situations when the respondents met initially, assist in recruiting members to the group (Morgan 1998). So in this case I used the social and religious networks among the students to gather enough people for the focus group discussions (Morgan 1998).

The first step in locating the interviewees was to visit these three different institutions. At the University of Nairobi I was given a list of those who had graduated and their contact addresses. I was also given a master register of students continuing with the programmes. From these registers, I identified women students, their telephone numbers and their physical addresses. Then I called the first person on my list and made appointments for the interview. For those who did not have telephones, I went directly to their places of work and sought permission and date for the interview. Once I interviewed one student, she would also direct and introduce me to her colleagues, whom she thought would be willing to be interviewed by me. Hence, in some cases, I used a snowballing method, that is, using the contacts that I had already made to get in touch with other respondents (Morgan 1998b).

At the same time, I was able to attend the residential session in December 2001, when all distance learning students at the University come together at a designated place for tuition. The Dean had organized a plenary with the students. It was during the plenary session that he introduced me to the students and explained to them my research area. He even gave me a chance to address the students. I took this

opportunity to explain further the objectives of my research. The students were impressed by my topic of research (they gave me applause). During this meeting, I invited women students to see me immediately after the meeting so that we could arrange for the interviews. Straight after the meeting, several women came forward and I was able to make arrangement for the individual interviews and the focus group. I, therefore had willing respondents who were ready to supply the required information for the research. The administration gave me one of the lecture rooms to use, for the interview process. I must say that without the administration's assistance it would have been very difficult to gather together these women because most of them are scattered in different parts of the country.

For the church based distance learning programme, I visited the central offices where distance learning programmes are administered. I visited the Presbyterian Church of East African offices and the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) TEE headquarters. I explained to the coordinators of these programmes the aims and logistics of my research. From each of these centres, I got the list of women students and their contacts. Then from then on I organized for the individual and focus group interviews. Once I contacted a few of these students, they would introduce me to their colleagues (snowballing) and then I would interview them in turn. By inviting their friends to be interviewed, these volunteers also acted as 'gatekeepers' (Miller 1998:63). These women turned out to be very cooperative. In fact one of the women went for her friend from her business premises and brought her to the church offices, where I had been given a room to conduct the interview. For this particular case, I could not opt to go to her home or business premises because the area is considered unsafe for strangers. Other women invited me to visit their homes and interview them there; something that I did with a lot of pleasure. I would go carrying a few kitchen foodstuffs, as is the custom in most Kenyan societies. In Kenya one does not visit another woman's home with bare hands. On her part, she would also prepare some food for her 'visitor'. At the homestead she would introduce me to her family, show me family photographs and then we would settle down for the interview session.

For the Co-operative College of Kenya students, I visited the college and was given the physical addresses of the students. Once I got the addresses of the students I was able to visit their places of work and organize for interview sessions. For some of the

students, I carried out the interview in their homes, while for others it was in their places of work. For others, I was fortunate to find out that after completing the correspondence programme, they had then joined the College to pursue a residential course. For this latter group of students, the college made arrangements for me to meet them and organize for both the interview and focus group discussion within the college premises. In fact the college gave me one of the lecture rooms to use as the interview venue. This was quite convenient for the students because it meant that they did not need to move to unfamiliar venues for the interview.

As to the choice of time and place of the interview, I always gave the respondents the upper hand. I had to fit in with the interviewee's plans (Bell 1993). I had to be interviewee-sensitive and friendly, by allowing them to choose the place and time of the interview. One of the problems I encountered while sampling was that some of the interviewees kept on postponing the interview date. This consumed a lot of time. For some, the interview was postponed more than four times. However, finally the interview still took place. This experience taught me the importance of being patient and persistent.

### *Interview schedules*

Before going for the fieldwork, I developed an interview schedule composed of open-ended questions. An interview schedule was necessary to ensure that the limited interview time was used mainly to focus on issues related to the research topic (Fitzpatrick 2000). According to Kerlinger, open-ended questions are 'those that supply a frame of reference for respondents' answers but put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression' (Kerlinger 1970: 55). Open-ended questions give the interviewee leeway to give as much information as possible related to the topic of research. They do not restrict the interviewee on either the 'content or the manner of the interviewee's reply' (Cohen and Manion 1994: 277). Open-ended questions are flexible and give the interviewer chance to probe and exhaust the interviewee's knowledge on the topic of study. Their responses are free from the bias that may arise in the case of predetermined answers. They allow the interviewee to be herself and be able to tell her life stories and reveal her values and attitudes (Holloway 1997). At the same time, they enable the interviewer to access the depth of knowledge of the

respondent, by asking follow up questions, and to follow up any unanticipated responses that may illuminate the research problem.

In this research, therefore, the interview schedule served only as a framework since other questions arose as probes during the interviewing process. This was in line with what Truesdell (2001) advises. She points out that the interview schedule plays the role of a flexible framework because 'other points may occur to both of you (interviewer and interviewee) that could be included during the interview' (p.2).

### *Interview session*

At the start of the interview I tried to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere, by welcoming the interviewee and thanking her for making herself available for the interview. I then introduced myself for the second time (the first was done when the appointment was made). I explained to the interviewee the aims of the research project, and how the material would be used (Parr 1998, Bell 1993). I also took this time to assure the interviewee about anonymity; that the information she gave would be treated confidentially. All this was done to act as ice breaker and put the interviewee at ease (Truesdell 2001). At certain times during the course of the interview session, some of the interviewees would still require that I reassure them that the source of what they said, at that particular moment, was to remain anonymous. I clarified to them that while reporting the research findings, I would use pseudonyms so as to protect their real identity. Once I gave this assurance, the interviewee relaxed and continued narrating their stories comfortably.

One of the problems I encountered was that some interviewees were hesitant to be interviewed. Some of them asked me to explain how the study was going to benefit them as individuals. I had to take some time and explain to them that the findings of such research could reshape education policy and this would benefit many women who are languishing out there with no opportunities to advance their education. I specifically pointed out that such research was bound to enlighten the people about the lives of women distance learners.

All the interviews were tape-recorded. I had to ask permission from the interviewees to tape the proceedings of the interview. Tape recording assures the researcher that all

the information given has been preserved. It is the most reliable method of recording data (Lewin 1990, Gillis 2000). Tape recording 'permits for repeated examinations of the interviewees' answers' (Bryman 2001: 321). However, a problem arises in the process of audio taping, in that it tends to be too intrusive and discourages rapport (Vulliamy et al 1990). One of the problems I encountered was that the taping intimidated my interviewees. Whenever I mentioned that I would tape the proceedings, the interviewees would panic. However, to overcome this problem, I made sure that I came with the tape recorder kept in my bag and then after negotiating with the respondent about the need to record the interview session, I would then get the tape recorder and place it on the table.

Immediately after an interview each tape was labeled. Both sides of the tape were labeled with names of the interviewee, interview date, and tape number (Truesdell 2000). This was done so as to avoid confusion and mix up of tapes. I also used paper and pen to jot down any cues demonstrated by the interviewee's body language, since this could not be taped (Parr 1998).

One of the techniques I had to learn while on the field had to do with my appearance before the interviewees. Since my interviewees came from very varied socio-economic backgrounds, I had to learn how to match my appearance to each group. I did this so as to make sure that the interviewee's impression of me did not influence the outcome of the interview negatively (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999). For instance, most of the times I put on casual clothes to portray non-sophistication and also to suggest a more informal atmosphere. This was done in order to avoid intimidating interviewees and setting myself aloof from them and their lives. It was a way of 'putting the interviewees at ease with me and the interview process' (Truesdell 2001: 2).

At the beginning of the interview session, I asked the informants to feel free and use the language that they felt most comfortable with. I did this because I knew that those who had only done formal education up to primary level would have problems expressing themselves clearly in the English language; and for this reason I made sure I gave them leeway to choose the language of their choice so that they express themselves in the best way possible. So the interviews were carried out in both the

English and Swahili languages. Most of the interviewees from the University programme used English. These were mainly teachers in both primary and secondary schools, where English language is the main medium of instruction and so they did not have problems with the language. However, one of them used Swahili, English and Kamba interchangeably. I did not have problems with the three languages and so I encouraged her to feel free and proceed. Informants from the church based programme used Swahili mainly. At times, some would mix Swahili and English. Most of the informants from the Cooperative College of Kenya programme tended to mix English and Swahili. The Swahili and Kamba texts had to be translated into English. During translation I paid particular attention to the speakers' grammar so as to make sure that I did not lose the meaning that the respondent intended.

### ***3.2.1.2 Focus Group Discussions***

This is a qualitative data collection method, whereby the respondents are placed into groups and then, in a permissive environment, they are allowed to interact over the research topics presented by the researcher, responding in form of open-ended questions (Morgan 1988, 1998, Krueger 1988). Krueger defines a focus group as 'a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (Krueger 1988:18). He also points out that focus groups are 'special occasions devoted to gathering data on specific topics' (Morgan 1998:31). The researcher brings a group of individuals (between six and ten) together for the purpose of discussing, as a group, the topic of her research. Hence, focus groups are 'group discussions exploring a specific set of issues' (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999:4). These are group interviews where the researcher guides the group to discuss the topics related to the research questions. They normally provide information on what is being researched (Morgan 1998). Although the group members may be strangers to each other, they have common characteristics related to the topic being investigated (Krueger 1988). In this research, the common characteristic among the groups was the fact that they were studying or had studied through distance learning methods.

### ***Advantages of focus group method***

The method takes 'advantage of group dynamics to produce new and additional data' (Frey & Fontana 1993:33). Lines of communication are created within the group itself

as well as between the group and the moderator. The group discussions can yield a wide range of responses related to the topic of research (Cohen & Manion 1994). Focus group interviews use 'guided group discussions to generate a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs' (Morgan 1998:11).

Focus group interviews yield in-depth information without 'requiring full-scale ethnographic investigations' (Krueger 1988, Morgan 1988, Gillis et al 2000). They also give the researcher an opportunity to observe respondents interact with each other over the research issues in a limited time (Krueger 1988). Ideas are developed as the group discusses the issues presented to them. Group members influence each other by commenting on each other's ideas and responses. Therefore, the data generated in focus groups is actually group data (Gillis 2000). During the discussions the researcher observes whether there is a wide agreement on a particular issue or whether some ideas are limited to few individuals in the group. The method is cost effective in that 'it brings together a number of people at one point in time to provide data on highly focused topics' (Krueger 1988: 7). It gives the group an opportunity to interact and come up with agreed upon opinions.

Focus groups 'offer opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time' (Morgan 1988:15). They are 'inexpensive, (because more people are interviewed at the same time frame) data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative, over and above individual responses' (Fontana & Frey 1994:55).

#### ***Weaknesses of focus group method***

One of the weaknesses of this method is that, it does not allow personal matters to emerge (Cohen & Manion 1994:287). There is no opportunity for the researcher to learn about individuals in the group (Krueger 1998). Group members may not want to expose their personal issues to the whole group.

Another weakness of focus group method is the fact that the researcher 'has less control in the group interview as compared to the individual interview' (Krueger 1988:46). The method allows participants to 'influence and interact with each other, and, as a result, group members are able to influence the course of the discussion'

(Morgan 1988:16). Krueger adds that this 'sharing of group control results in some inefficiencies such as detours in the discussion, and the raising of irrelevant issues, thus requiring the interviewer to keep the discussions focused' (Krueger 1988:46).

Groups tend to be different in outlook. One may be boring, and dull, while another may be exciting and invigorating (Krueger 1988). In the present research, this weakness was overcome by having three different groups so as to create balance and bring varied experiences.

The other weakness has to do with the fact that focus groups are difficult to assemble. This is especially so in a case where the members are scattered in different parts of the country, as is the case with distance learners in Kenya. When the group members are women, the situation becomes worse, because even when not employed in a public office, women have too many errands to run for everybody. They have a lot of chores to perform, such as, taking care of their children, farm, chickens, cattle and other duties in the home. To gather six or ten women in the same place becomes a problem.

Barbour and Kitzinger (1999:17) point out another weakness as the fact that 'group members may voice opinions that are upsetting to other participants'. This problem was experienced during one of the focus group discussions. As the moderator, I had to intervene and cool down the tempers. For the focus group interview to succeed the researcher needs to have skills in group dynamics. She has to pay attention to issues of 'how the opinions of one member can sway others or how relations outside the group influence response patterns within the group or how size effects responses' (Frey & Fontana 1993: 33). This issue was taken care of in the present research, by the moderator making sure that each group had adequate numbers and also by soliciting opinions from each and every member of the groups.

#### ***Application of focus group method in the present research***

I constructed three focus groups in total. This was in line with Morgan's argument that the 'typical number of groups is three to five' (Morgan 1998:76). One group consisted of students from the University of Nairobi's distance learning programme. The other group was made up of students from the Church based TEE programme, while the third consisted of women from the Coop programme. Each focus group was

composed of between six and ten students. This was in line with Morgan's proposal, that a group size of 6 to 10 would be ideal (Morgan 1998). According to Krueger, there are two factors that influence the size of the group; namely; 'it must be small enough for everyone to have opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions' (Krueger 1988:26). For this reason I had to have a balanced focus group size. I made sure that I had enough people to generate varied ideas and 'not having too many people that some feel crowded out' (Morgan 1998: 71). Of course such crowding would have meant that group members would be competing for chances to speak. Such a situation was avoided by limiting the number to between six and ten.

During the recruitment of group members I had promised to provide some form of refreshments to the group members. I kept my promise and gave each group member Ksh. 100 (US \$ 1.3) for refreshments. For the informants it was also democratic to give the cash money so that members could decide independently what kind of refreshment they wanted to take. This acted as a form of incentive and helped create rapport (Morgan 1998). However, I made it clear to them that it was not payment.

The B. Ed. focus group was composed of women of varied ages, ranging from 25 to 43 years. Some were married; others had divorced and a few were single. All of these women were teachers either in primary or in secondary schools. Those teaching in secondary schools had acquired up to a diploma level of professional training. The primary school teachers had acquired the primary teaching certificate. Three of the interviewees in this category worked in the University Library. They were all aiming at getting a university degree for various reasons, which is presented, later in chapter four of this thesis.

For the TEE group I have already spelt out that once I visited the relevant institutions I was able to get contact names and through this, I made arrangements for the meeting. Some of the students in this group had completed TEE programmes up to diploma level, while others were doing their second certificate programme. Others were just beginners. Almost all of them were involved in some form of church activity. Some were senior deacons, Sunday school teachers, women ministry leaders, one was a church pre-primary school teacher and one was a church secretary. Their

marital status varied also. Most of them were married, some were single parents, one was divorced, and one was a single woman. Their age varied from 24 years to 58 years. The issue of age in Kenya is quite sensitive and so I could not ask them directly for their ages. However, during the interviews I was able to estimate their ages from the contributions they gave about their backgrounds. Others did not have a problem giving their age. The focus group meeting was held in the business premises of one of the students.

For the Coop women, I have already stated earlier that I had to seek assistance from the Cooperative College of Kenya to organize this focus group meeting. As stated, earlier, the focus group interview took place within the College premises. This focus group was composed of women of varied age, ranging between 24 to 38 years. Most of them were married. There was a single parent in their midst and an unmarried 24 year-old woman. Many of them worked in different cooperative societies. Two of them worked in the Cooperative College of Kenya, as a secretary and clerk respectively. These last two had just embarked on the distance learning programme. Others had successfully completed the programme earlier on. Two other women had discontinued the programme after three months of involvement.

The choice of time and venue of the group meeting was dictated to by the commitments of the group members. This was in agreement with Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) who advise researchers to choose a venue accessible and familiar to the participants. For the University of Nairobi group, the meeting took place during the day at a time when they did not have classes. The venue was at the campus, so that, immediately after the discussions, they would go back to their tuition classes. For the Cooperative College group, I had to travel to the College after office hours because this was the time the members were free. We used one of the classrooms as the venue of the meeting. For the church based group, I had also to adhere to the timings of the group. They agreed to meet in the afternoon at one of their colleague's business premises. The room was quiet and comfortable and free from observation by outsiders (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999).

### *The discussions*

As part of my preparation for the discussions, I arrived at the venue early enough to arrange the room, test the tape recorder, by fast forwarding and rewinding new tapes to make sure that they did not stick or jam (Krueger 1998). I also took this time to prepare myself mentally for the activity. As the members came in one by one, I welcomed them and chatted with them as we waited for the other members. This was meant to make them relax and be comfortable in preparation for the discussions. I made sure that each of them wrote down their name and address.

Once I got about six members we started off with the discussions. The first 6 to 10 minutes were spent on quick introduction. For the churchwomen I started off the meeting with a word of prayer. This was done in order to get acceptance from the group as 'one of us' (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999) and to break the religious barriers that could cause the group members to disown me; and hence influence the outcome of the discussions negatively. I knew that in every meeting they attended, church members started with a word of prayer and to do otherwise would mean that I would be considered as an outsider. I had also to dress according to church norms. This was in accordance with Barbour and Kitzinger, who advise that the researcher should 'consider how her persona influences the data collected' (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999: 14), and that she should take care of how her dress, identity, accent and behaviour influences how the participants see her (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999).

In every focus group meeting, I kicked off the ball by introducing myself, explaining the objectives of my study and the discussions to the group. Then I requested each member to do a short introduction, giving us her name, family status, and occupation. This acted as icebreaker and helped to familiarize the members of the group with each other (Krueger 1998). The interviews focused on women's experiences in distance learning and the transformation that occurs in women's lives upon participation in distance learning.

A moderator guide of open-ended questions, containing the key issues of the research, was used to direct the group discussions. I played the role of a moderator, whereby I regulated and guided the discussions (Morgan 1998, Krueger 1998). I asked questions and probes to encourage in-depth discussions. This was done by asking the speakers

to clarify vague statements, or to give additional information on particular issues (Krueger 1998). I also made sure that no member of the group dominated the discussions. At the same time, I tried to encourage the shy ones to give their opinions freely. This was in line with Denzin's & Lincoln's advice that:

First the interviewer must keep one person or a small coalition of persons from dominating the group; second, he or she must encourage recalcitrant respondents to participate; and that, he or she must obtain responses from the entire group to ensure the fullest possible coverage of the topic (Denzin & Lincoln 1998:550).

The interview ran as a conversation whereby I also gave the women chances to ask me questions about issues of their interest. Although Krueger says that the moderator should not be a participant (Krueger 1998), at the end of the discussions I found some members of the group turning towards me with barrage of questions about myself and general issues. For instance, in one group I was asked to explain how I managed to reach the level of doctoral studies and what that meant. I had to patiently explain all the stages one has to pass so as to become a doctoral candidate. I also had to explain to them such terms as, Ph.D., masters, bachelor's degrees and so on. This happened among the Cooperative College group who were doing their certificate programme in the field of cooperative education. By answering their questions I was able to locate myself in the research process and create a dialogue with them (Parr 1998). One of the tenets of feminist methods is reflexivity, whereby the researcher 'documents the production of knowledge and locates herself in the process' (Mauthner 1998:48). However, I was careful not to shape the outcome of the group interview (Krueger 1998).

The focus groups discussions were audio taped in order to preserve the richness and completeness of the data (Gillis 2000). These tapes were later transcribed and the transcripts were photocopied and analyzed using hermeneutical methods of qualitative data analysis. The tapes were then safely stored so that they could be used for any other further research.

### **3.2.1.3 Observation**

Denzin & Lincoln (1998:80) point out that observation consists of 'gathering impressions of the surrounding world through all relevant human faculties'. One can do observation directly by having contact with the subjects or remotely by use of photographs, audiotapes, and videotape (Denzin & Lincoln 1998). The two authors emphasize the fact that the researcher 'must actively witness the phenomena they are studying in action' (p.80).

The advantage with this method is that the observers 'neither manipulate nor stimulate their subjects' (Denzin & Lincoln 1998:80). The observation method does not need questionnaires and schedules. Instead, the researcher 'follows the flow of events' (p. 81). The presence of the researcher does not interrupt this smooth flow of events. In other words, the researcher observes things as they take their natural course and from this, she is able to gather data relevant to her research topic. Observational methods were used to supplement the data that I had gathered through biographical and focus groups interviews.

I attended tutorial meetings for distance learning students and examined how the discussions were conducted and whether they were conducted in a gender sensitive manner. I was able to establish the number of women present in the tutorials. I also wanted to investigate the number of women who had reached the level of group facilitators or tutors. I actually found out that most TEE facilitators were men. It was only in the Presbyterian Church where two of the five facilitators I met were women. These women had completed their TEE programme and had been promoted to facilitator's role. In the Organization of African Instituted Churches there were no women facilitators. One of my informants hoped that once she completed her course, up to diploma level, she would be appointed a facilitator. The University of Nairobi programme was run differently. The lecturers themselves facilitated tutorials. In most cases these were the same people who had developed the learning materials and majority of them were men. This was explained by the fact that at university level in Kenya, women lecturers are fewer than men. In these tutorial/seminar meetings I just listened, watched and took notes of what was taking place (Scott 1997).

I also wanted to observe the kind of language tutors use in class. Most of them were not gender sensitive. In the church based programme the tutors (facilitators) tended to elevate men above women. They did not seem to be sensitive to women's problems. In one of these tutorials, in the church programme, there was only one-woman student. The facilitator (a man) did not seem to be concerned about the gender imbalance in his class. When I asked him what he was doing to change the scenario, he just hoped for the best. As this was on a Saturday morning, a time when most women perform their weekend chores, such as going to the market, washing clothes and cooking, I concluded that probably women were lacking in his group because of timing problem.

The Cooperative College programme was done purely by the correspondence method. There were no tutorials or residential sessions. However, I was able to observe women students in their homes and notice the kind of duties they had to combine with their studies.

#### ***3.2.1.4 Documents***

The study of documentary evidence can involve the analysis of films, videos, slides, as well as study of printed sources (Bell 1993). Included among these are files, books, newspapers and magazines. Documentary evidence was used to supplement the information that I obtained through the above discussed methods (Bell 1993)

Documentary evidence in this study involved collection of official data from the institutions, such as enrolment lists, and graduation lists. The aim of studying these documents was to investigate, for instance, women representation in the programmes, their dropout and succession rates as compared to men students. Documents also provided information about the college fees charged, in order to establish the effect of such fees on women's successful completion of distance study in Kenya.

I also visited various libraries and resource centres in the country to collect relevant materials. For instance, I visited the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) Resource Centre, which has a large collection of literature on women in education. I also visited The World Bank Library, Kenyatta University libraries, University of Nairobi, African Medical Research and Education Foundation

(AMREF), the Cooperative College, the Presbyterian Church of East African Pastoral Centre Libraries, the Organization of African Instituted Churches' resource centre (OAIC) and the Kenya Bureau of Statistics. In each of these resource centres, I would look for any materials relevant to my research. Then I would organize with the administration to have photocopies of the relevant documents made at my cost. One of the problems I encountered was that some of these libraries did not have photocopiers. I was forced to leave my identity card with the person in charge and then walk a long distance to look for a photocopier. This was the trend with government run institutions, like the Kenya Bureau of Statistics and Kenyatta University. I also studied newspaper articles, magazines and Internet sources. I collected the distance learning materials themselves. This was done so as to study the content and investigate whether they were gender balanced.

Once collected, the documents were 'subjected to rigorous analysis' (Bell 1993:70). The researcher tries to establish what kind of document it is, what it says, who produced it and what its purpose was, the time it was produced, and the circumstances under which it was produced, and whether it is complete. Other questions that were asked dealt with the author's socio-political background and experience. I also tried to establish whether the document presented the real picture. That is, documents were examined carefully to establish their authenticity and genuineness and whether they were biased or not.

### **3.2.2 Data Processing Methods**

In this study, qualitative methods of data analysis were used. Qualitative data analysis methods describe and summarise the mass of words generated by the individual interviews and focus group interviews (World Bank 2002). Qualitative data analysis is aimed at summarizing the interviews in terms of common words, phrases, themes, ideas, concepts and patterns (Polkinghorne 1995). According to Neuman 1997:421):

Qualitative researcher analyzes data by organizing it into categories on the bases of themes, concepts or similar features. He or she develops new concepts, formulates conceptual definitions, and examines the relationships among concepts. Eventually he or she links concepts to each other in terms of a sequence, as oppositional sets (x is the opposite of y) or as sets of similar categories that he or she interweaves into theoretical statements. Qualitative

researchers conceptualize or form concepts as they read through and ask critical questions of data.

Through qualitative data analysis, a researcher interprets data by:

Giving them meaning, translating them, or making them understandable. However, the meaning he or she gives begins with the point of view of the people being studied. He or she interprets data by finding out how the people being studied see the world, how they define the situation, or what it means for them (Neuman 1997: 335).

Therefore, qualitative data analysis involves ‘culling for meaning from the words and actions of the participants in the study, framed by the researcher’s focus of inquiry’ (Neuman 1997:128). In the process of searching for meaning, one has to identify first the ‘smaller units of meaning in the data which later serves as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning’ (p.127). There are different approaches to doing qualitative data analysis. In this particular study, I have used hermeneutical methods as the main method of analyzing the data.

### ***3.2.2.1 Hermeneutical methods of data analysis***

Moules defines hermeneutics as the ‘tradition, philosophy, and practice of interpretation’ (Moules 2002: 2). Hence, its other name is ‘interpretive’ method (Mallery et al 2003). For a long time the word hermeneutics was used mainly to refer to the interpretation or exegesis of biblical scriptures and aesthetics. However, Wilhelm Dilthey is credited with its introduction into the social science in the early twentieth Century (Snyman 1993). He was involved in the development of hermeneutics as a method in social science. To him hermeneutics could be used not only for the interpretation of texts (as it happened in theology), but also oral communication and culture. Hermeneutics is mainly concerned with the meaning that the storyteller had in mind by uttering certain words. In this research the term will be used to refer to the ‘exegetical interpretation of the collected’ women’s learning stories (Erben 1998:8).

Hermeneutical or interpretive methods, involve reading and rereading, line by line, of the transcribed interviews, looking for themes, concepts and ‘features of significance’

(Love 1994: 2, Shin 2002:2). In interpreting biographical data, the researcher subjects the live stories to careful readings and interpretations. By so doing, the researcher manages to isolate segments and categories within the stories (Denzin 1989). Thereafter, the researcher looks for patterns of meaning and experience from the data. By this time, the 'individual's biography is reconstructed and the structural-objective factors that have shaped his or her life are identified' (Denzin 1989: 56).

As a qualitative method of data analysis, it shares with other qualitative methods the weakness of being labour intensive and time consuming (World Bank 2002). Another weakness is the fact that it does not enquire about the truth or falsehood of the stories but only what the storyteller has said (Catholic Encyclopedia, 2004).

It raises the tension between how to 'keep respondents' voices and perspectives alive, while at the same time recognizing the researcher's role in shaping the research process and product (Mauthner & Doucet 1998). As researchers categorize the interviewee's words into themes and categories, 'the discrete, separate and different individuals we interviewed are gradually lost' (p.138). It tends to be disempowering in that respondents have little or no control over what we do with the data. Mauthner and Doucet, further state that:

Far removed from our respondents, we make choices and decisions about their lives: which particular issues to focus on in the analysis, how to interpret their words, and which extracts to select for quotation'... We are in the privileged position of naming and representing other people's realities (p.138).

### ***3.2.2.1 The application of hermeneutical data analysis methods in the present research***

Hermeneutical data analysis was applied so as to transform the women's students' private lives into public texts, theories and categories (Mauthner & Doucet 1998). The process of data analysis started with the verbatim transcription of the taped interviews. This was done to ensure that none of the rich data got lost or contaminated. Contamination can occur when researchers try to summarise the interviews and by so doing, biases the transcription by only 'including those sections that seem relevant or interesting to them' (Lacey & Luff 2001: 16). Hence, I opted for

verbatim transcription. Included in the transcripts were also the non-verbal cues that had been noted down during the interview.

Once the transcription process was complete, I organized the data into easily retrievable units. This was done through the process of coding, whereby every interviewee was given a code (Lacey & Luff 2001, South Alabama University no date). All these were put in a secure file that linked the code numbers to the original informants. I labelled each page of each interview so that I could be able to trace back any unit of text to its original context.

I started by reading and rereading the transcripts, making summaries and notes as a way of familiarizing myself with the data. This was followed by open coding whereby themes and emergent concepts that cropped up during my reading were identified and labeled (Lacey & Luff 2001, Parr 1998). The term 'coding' is used to refer to the marking of the segments of the data with symbols, descriptive words, themes and concepts, patterns, or category names (Boyatzis 1998). I ended up with a long list of themes which I later re-coded so as to get fewer but bigger categories.

As I unitized the data (the identification of chunks or units of meaning in the data (Neuman 1997)) and identified the themes and concepts, I also made sure that I identified where they were located (through labeling) so that I could verify exact quotes or context, when need arose (World Bank 2002, Mouthner & Doucet 1998). I identified sets of experiences in the students' lives (FitzPatrick 2001). This was meant to help me as the researcher, to look for life-course stages or experiences of the students' lives that lead them to study through distance methods and the changes that could be attributed to transformation through distance learning. These were substantiated with data from observation and documentary evidence.

Once each interview transcript was read and themes identified, the same exercise was repeated across interviews to identify themes and concepts, and issues that were common to most of the interviews and also to identify those items that were to be found only within one or two interviews (The World Bank 2002 Mouthner & Doucet 1998). The process involved identifying persistent themes across the interviews and locating differences between different interviews. At the same time, I tried to treat

each woman's biodata as a complete text (Morgan 1998, Barr 1999). From then on I went on to expand on and theorize about different segments of the stories (Fitzpatrick 2001). After themes and concepts were clearly defined, I used them to identify sections of students' life experiences to explain the transformation that seemed to have taken place in their lives.

### **3.2.3 Tools of measuring transformation**

Measuring transformation involved critical examination of the data. Geerling (2001)

has posited that transformation normally takes a linear path:

though not always a step-wise process, beginning with a disorienting dilemma followed by a self-examination of feelings, critical reflection, exploration, and planning of new roles, negotiating relationships, building of confidence, and developing a more inclusive and discriminating perspective (p.20).

I explained the disorienting dilemmas that occurred to women either before or after joining distance learning programmes, setting off the process of transformation, up to taking action; what Mezirow refers to developing new perspectives (Mezirow 1981). All these processes were examined against the distance learning programmes.

I therefore tried to 'follow leads, seeking out clues in order to pinpoint any transformation in women's lives' (Barr 1999: 70). One criterion for measuring transformation was to examine the women's own perceptions of themselves and of some of the culturally accepted attitudes and beliefs about women. I was interested gauging whether they were able to critically reflect on their ideas and beliefs and question their lower status in the domestic and public spheres of their lives (Mezirow 1989). For instance, I looked for responses to the question on their views on the status of women both in the domestic and public spheres. Their views on such issues as violence against women, division of labour in the home, economic powerlessness of women, women and leadership positions were a guide to gauging whether or not any transformation had taken place. I also enquired whether distance study had enabled them to challenge the status quo by taking action on the obstacles that block them as women from living full lives. Those who disapproved of the status quo and wanted to see (or bring) change were grouped as having undergone perspective

transformation. Those who did not mind the status quo and supported patriarchy were categorized among those with least transformation.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has elaborated on the methods used in this research. Data generated through the use of these methods is presented in the subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER 4A

### RESEARCH FINDINGS: THE THREE PROGRAMMES

#### 4A.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the methods that were utilized in carrying out this research. In this section of chapter four, part of the findings are presented. The historical background, the format and content of each programme are given. The chapter further highlights the different forms of provision and the pedagogy used in each programme.

**Table 1: The Three Programmes**

Programme	Format/Content	Forms of Provision
<b>B. Ed.</b>	Government institution, Bachelor of Education degree course, takes 6 years, gives professional courses & two teaching subjects Entrance requirements: high school level of education, plus other tertiary level training, experience	Printed study materials, audiocassettes Face-to-face sessions in form of residential sessions and monthly tutorials
<b>TEE</b>	Church-based course, aimed at church growth, numerically and spiritually, different certificates offered: certificate level, diploma level & advanced diploma level, each taking about 2 years. Meets needs of different categories of people in church	Uses printed materials, weekly seminars & practical work
<b>Coop</b>	Government owned institution, certificate course in Basic Coop Management, takes 18 months  Entrance requirement: secondary level of education	Uses print as a stand-alone medium: printed materials are posted to learners who work on them and later post assignments back to the College

#### 4A.2 The B. Ed. Programme

##### 4A.2.1 Historical background

The establishment of distance education in Kenya can be traced to the post-independence Commission of Education in the 1960s, under the Chairmanship of Professor Simeon Ominde. The commission was set up to 'look into the whole of Kenya's educational system, and has influenced and guided national policy for education since independence' (Kinyanjui 1992: 117). It proposed that the government introduce radio and correspondence based distance learning to be implemented by the Ministry of Education, in order to meet the high demand for trained and qualified teachers. Following the Commission's recommendations, the new Kenyan government established the Correspondence Course Unit at the Institute of Adult Education which was based at the then University College of Nairobi (present day University of Nairobi) in 1967. This project was funded through a loan to the government from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), who also provided technical assistance (Otiende 1998). Immediately after

independence in 1963, the new Kenyan government embarked on a massive expansion of primary education. This expansion triggered a high demand for trained teachers. Hence, the Correspondence Course Unit was established in order to train primary school teachers who had no professional education and had been hired unqualified (Otiende 1998, Bradley 1994, Perraton 1991). According to Bradley (1994), the programme combined short residential courses with radio broadcasts and correspondence instruction. Once teachers completed this programme they were promoted. This programme was phased out in 1974 when the government felt that its needs for training of primary school teachers had already been met (Bradley 1994, Perraton 1991). After the distance learning programme which started in 1967 was phased out, the Institute continued to offer other short courses in adult education until 1987 when it was transformed into the College of Education and External Studies (CEES).

By this time, the government priority in education had shifted from primary teacher training to secondary teacher training. Thus the new College was mandated to offer Bachelor of Education programmes through both residential and distance learning methods. This programme combined and has continued to combine print materials, audiocassettes and short residential sessions (Otiende 1998, Bradley 1994, Perraton 2000). When the distance learning programme was first advertised, there were over 3,000 applicants who competed for the only 600 places available, a sign of the popularity of distance learning programmes in Kenya. Indeed, distance learning programmes, together with other new flexible programmes at Kenya's tertiary institutions, have continued to be extremely popular, especially with mature adults, who find it hard to disrupt their adult life's responsibilities to register for full time programmes. The demand has continued to rise as there are many people who want to advance their careers by getting university education.

Presently, the College, which remains a constituent college of the University of Nairobi, offers, through the Faculty of External Studies, various programmes via distance learning mode, such as the Bachelor of Education (Arts and Science) and Postgraduate Diplomas in Sexually Transmitted Diseases. This is a dual-mode college, in that students are admitted either to the residential programme or the

distance learning programme, without a possibility of switching from one programme to the other.

#### **4A.2.2 Format and Content**

The College of Education and External Studies (CEES) is a dual-mode college in that students are admitted either to the residential programme or the distance learning programme (Perraton 2000). The residential B. Ed. programme is managed by the Faculty of Education, while the distance learning one is administered by the Faculty of External Studies. The distance learning course takes 6 years, whereas the residential takes 4 years. Apart from the B. Ed. programme, which is under this research, the Faculty of External Studies offers other programmes through the distance learning mode, such as the Postgraduate Diplomas in Education, and Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Observation shows that there are advanced plans to introduce more distance learning programmes, such as Bachelors of Law, Commerce, and Agriculture. To be admitted to the Bachelor of Education degree, a student should have passed high school level of education with a minimum C+ and have some years of working experience. Those who have a primary school teacher training certificate, in addition to secondary level education, are also considered.

The curriculum for the Bachelor of Education through distance learning consists of professional courses in education such as History of Education, Philosophy of Education, Curriculum Development, Sociology of Education, Economics of Education, Communication and Technology in Education, Educational Management, Micro-teaching and Teaching Practice, among others. Teaching Practice is done during the third year of study when students are attached to secondary schools of their choice and the academic supervisors visit them, observe them as they teach and examine their schemes of work and lesson plans. Before undertaking this practical work, the students have to have undergone Micro-Teaching, whereby during the residential sessions, they demonstrate their knowledge of teaching methods in front of their tutor and fellow students. Apart from the above courses, students are expected to specialize in two teaching subjects. They, therefore, choose from such subjects as History, Mathematics, Linguistics and Literature, Swahili, Religious Studies, Social Education and Ethics, Business Studies and Economics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics. In total, a student is expected to have done 42 courses by the time she is allowed to graduate. Most women

choose the art-based courses, as evident in this research. Out of the ten women students interviewed, only two chose science-based courses. Most of the others chose subjects such as Swahili, Religious Studies, Literature and Linguistics, but none chose Business Studies and Economics. Matiru & Gachuhi (1988) also noted this trend.

#### **4A.2.3 Forms of Provision**

The main teaching agent for the B. Ed. programme is the study materials which include printed self-study materials and audiocassettes. These are reinforced by face-to-face interaction which is provided through residential sessions and monthly tutorials (Otiende 1998, Kinyanjui 1992, Perraton 2000). In the following section I give a description of each of these forms of provision.

##### ***Study Materials***

The B. Ed. distance learning programme is based on printed study materials as the main means of instruction. These are distributed to the learners during the first residential session in every academic year. The learners are given face-to-face guidance on how to go about studying the materials. They are normally advised to spend at least two hours per day on the materials. Audiocassettes are also distributed to the learners in order to reinforce the print materials. These audiocassettes provide tutorial support to the learners.

My finding was consistent with Matiru & Gachuhi (1988) who discovered that the illustrations and examples that were given in the B. Ed. study materials depicted women as subordinate to men.

However, the study materials carry the proper pedagogical structure of distance learning materials. Each module is divided into lectures and at the beginning of each lecture, there are guidelines on how to go about studying the materials, and the time to be spent on each of them and on the assignments. Then there are well spelt out objectives which make it clear to the learner what they should be able to do at the end of the lesson. Such objectives are written in observable and measurable style, using action verbs that deal with cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning (Rowntree 1986, Gatimu et al). At the same time, these study materials use simple language and tutorial-in-print format, with plenty of activities (International Extension College, 1992). Then there is an

introduction whose function is to attract the attention of the learner and to link what was learned in a previous lecture to what is present. This is followed by the body of the lesson, which consists of sections and subsections which are separated by in-text activities to maintain the interaction between the learner and the teacher (Holmberg 1988).

### ***Residential sessions***

Once admitted to the programme, students are expected to attend the residential sessions that take place during the school holidays. Since the majority of the learners are teachers, it was prudent for the College to place the residential sessions over the holidays so as to ensure that teachers' ambitions to study do not jeopardize the interests of the secondary school students. However, as we shall see later in chapter 4c, teachers involved in the distance learning programme experience difficulties in attending residential sessions due to the fact that many schools arrange holiday tuition classes, which teachers are expected to present.

The residential sessions run for between two weeks and a month in the months of April, August and December. This means that there are three residential sessions per year. Since the whole B. Ed. programme takes a minimum of six years, the students have to attend 18 residential sessions in total. During these meetings, students receive tutoring from the lecturers, sit for tests, hand in continuous assessment tests, and sit for end of semester examinations. One of the benefits of residential sessions is that they provide students with opportunities to interact and share experiences with each other. Due to lack of space at the University campuses, these meetings are held in different institutions, which neighbour the University. For instance, sometimes students are taken to Alliance Boys or Girls High Schools, Thogoto Teachers College, Kenya Science Teacher's College, Main Campus, Parklands Campus and Lower Kabete Campus. Therefore, the distance learning students are normally moved from one institution to another every time they come for residential sessions. This has its own problems, in that students feel disoriented. There is also a feeling of being second-class students of the University. This came out clearly in the present research in that students felt like '*nomads*', moving from one place to the next, as we will see later in chapter 4c of this dissertation.

### ***Monthly tutorials***

Apart from the residential sessions there are also monthly tutorial meetings at the Extra-Mural Centres scattered countrywide. Students are encouraged to visit the centres, at least once a month, in order to get any new information about deadlines for continuous assessment tests and also to seek any general information about the programme. At each centre there is a resident lecturer, whose work is to give support to the students who visit the centre. These visits act as opportunities for students to make enquiries about fees, examination dates and the next residential session dates. Unfortunately, due to lack of transport facilities, family and job commitments, some learners do not manage to attend these monthly meetings regularly and so they miss a lot of information that could facilitate their smooth progression with the programme.

## **4A.3 Theological Education by Extension**

### **4A.3.1 Historical Background**

The modern use of distance learning methods to teach theology was invented in 1960s in Latin American Churches. This was in the form of what has become a household name, namely, Theological Education by Extension (TEE). At that time the church was faced with two interrelated problems. On one hand, the church was growing very rapidly, meaning that there was high demand for trained clergy (Winter 1969, Kinsler 1983). On the other hand, seminaries were all based in urban centres, meaning that trainee pastors had to be uprooted from their culture, home setting, family and job and then remain in the cities for the period of their study. This created the problem of a power vacuum, raising a new problem of looking for someone to take care of the congregation. One other problem arose in that, during the period of training, the trainee pastors would get used to city-life and culture and so at the time of graduation, they were not willing to go back to the village and minister there (Gatimu et al 1997). Instead, they preferred to seek employment in the cities, where life was more comfortable. This meant that the church continued to lose the trained clergy. At the same time, training clergy in the urban centres was quite costly for the churches, as it had to foot the bill for the students' upkeep and that of their families (Snook 1992). Christian Missionaries in Guatemala, therefore, realized that the great demand for theological education in the church could easily be met by the use of programmed instruction. This method had an advantage in that learners need not be uprooted from their culture and environment, but studied as

they continued with their day-to-day commitments, including church work (Snook 1992, Kithome 1998). The missionaries also noticed that large numbers of people could be trained right at their homes efficiently and effectively.

Thus, the original logic of TEE was basically to train already self-supporting people to run churches and through this, reduce the use of paid clergy. Most of its pioneer learners were people already involved in different income generating activities and for this reason, once they qualified as clergy, they did not require any financial support from the church (Kinsler 1983, Snook, 1992). Through distance learning methods, the missionaries were able to decentralize theological education by taking it right to the homes of the students. A course would begin with a short period of residential session at a local seminary, during which tutors would introduce basic subject matter to the students. After this induction, learners went back to their homes to continue studying the specially prepared texts on their own and send assignments back to be tutor marked. There were also local centres where learners could meet weekly for localized seminars which were run by visiting tutors (Kithome 1998, Gatimu et al 1997).

Once the experiment succeeded in Guatemala it was exported to other Latin American countries and later to other continents that also had the challenge of high demand for clergy and lay leaders. The Guatemala pioneer missionaries travelled to Africa and India disseminating information on how the new method worked (Kinsler 1983). Theological Education by Extension (TEE) was, therefore, introduced to Kenya in the 1970's (Gatimu et al 1997, Kithome 1998, Snook, 1992). Since its inception in Kenya, TEE has continued to use printed materials, which are boosted by face-to-face seminar meetings, plus an element of practicum, where learners are posted to perform pastoral duties in their local churches (Gatimu et al 1997, Kithome 1998). Initially, Evangel Publishing House published TEE learning materials ecumenically. However, as time went on, most churches opened their own small printing units, where they produce their own TEE materials. For instance, the Presbyterian Church of East African (PCEA) has a huge pastoral centre, where TEE learning materials are produced and printed. These materials are then distributed to other branches of the church, which are scattered countrywide. The PCEA TEE programme is also managed from this centre, where the director's office is located. Other churches, such as Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), have for a long time operated their own printing units, which basically produce TEE

materials, not only for the member churches in Kenya, but also those in other parts of Africa (Batlle 1989, Mala 1986, Kithome 1998).

The reason for this change was basically the fact that each denomination felt that they needed to put emphasis on their own teachings, including teachings on the history of their denominations (Kithome 1998). For this reason, most of the churches today run their own TEE programmes. Of course, there is still exchange of learning materials especially between mainline churches such as Presbyterian, Anglican and Methodist and there are still many churches which still rely on Evangel Publishing House for the production and printing of their learning materials.

#### **4A.3.2 Format and Content**

Since its inception in Guatemala in 1960s, TEE has tried to overcome the problem of elitism that is found in residential colleges. In these colleges, it is only those who have acquired a certain level of formal education who are eligible for admission. TEE has provided access to theological education to wider groups of people. This has been done by making sure that the curriculum is open enough to meet the needs of people of different levels that are found in the church. In a single TEE programme, there could be as many courses as there are different categories in the church. For instance, there is a basic certificate course for those who are only able to read and write in vernacular languages. Then there is a curriculum for those who read and write in Swahili. For instance, the OAIC certificate course was offered through Swahili language and took one year. Those with secondary school level education and above, start from diploma level after which they proceed to advanced diploma level courses, both of which use English language as the medium of instruction. Both the Presbyterian Church of East Africa ordinary and advanced diplomas used English language as the medium of instruction. The former took two years, whereas the latter took four years. Hence, TEE attempts to meet the theological learning needs of most of the members of the church. My observation shows that there has also been a move towards developing TEE curriculum for non-literate communities in the church. This would use other methods of teaching and learning besides reading and writing, such as song and dance, story telling, group discussions and audiocassettes. However, this has yet to be implemented.

Most of the content of TEE curriculum has basically been based on the study of scriptures, such as the study of Old Testament, New Testament, Prophets, The Psalms, Sin, Salvation, Angels, Death and Resurrection and Eschatology. Other courses are related to church work such as Tithing and Giving, Art of Preaching, Counselling, Marriage and Understanding the youth. Other secular courses have been included in the TEE curriculum, such as, Accounting and Book Keeping, and HIV/AIDS. These latter courses are supposed to assist the TEE learners' involvement in different church ministries. For instance, accounting would enable them to perform better as treasurers of different ministries in the church. The study of HIV/AIDS would equip the learners with knowledge to provide support to the affected and infected in society.

#### **4A.3.3 Forms of Provision**

The TEE curriculum is normally delivered through three methods, namely, study materials, the seminar meetings and the practical work. All these forms of provision are combined in order to vary learners' stimuli and by so doing create great opportunities for the learners to gain maximum benefits from the programme. In the following section I am going to discuss each of these segments of the programme.

##### ***Study Materials***

First, there are the TEE study materials. These are normally printed self-instructional materials. These include study series, study guides and tutors' guides. Most of the basic TEE learning materials are still using the programmed instruction method, whereby students study a short programme and then fill in the blank spaces provided. Through this method, learners are led through carefully planned steps towards the achievement of predetermined and specific objectives (Gatimu 1997, Kithome 1998). The materials are supposed to carry all the activities that the learner is expected to perform in the process of learning. For those with more formal education more condensed self-instructional texts are used, whereby, learners are expected to study essay-type texts with in-text built student activities.

The TEE materials for the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) are developed and produced at the Pastoral Centre, which is located in Kikuyu Division of Kiambu District. Once materials are ready they are distributed to the different TEE programmes that are

located in the local branches. Similarly, the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) materials are centrally produced at the headquarters in Nairobi and then distributed to other centres. My observation, after interacting with the OAIC TEE managers, showed that indeed their learning materials are produced, not only for the elite members of the church, but also for the barely literate communities. For this reason, most of them are either in local Kenyan languages or Swahili. However, once materials leave the Kenyan borders, they are once again translated into languages of other African countries.

The TEE learning materials meet the distance learning materials' criteria in that they carry all the activities that a teacher would usually engage in a normal classroom situation. Thus they fall under 'tutorial-in-print' format (Rowntree 1989). They are a form of 'programmed instruction in that they lead the learner through carefully planned steps toward the achievement of a predetermined and specific objectives' (Kithome 1998: 25). They give information, explanation, challenge to application and homework (Thornton 1990). These materials include study guides, which are companions to the main study series and workbooks, which are combinations of textbooks and notebooks.

### *Seminars*

The second method through which the curriculum is offered has been the seminar group discussions. A seminar involves a regular encounter of students with their tutor at the study centre. These meetings are called seminars to emphasize the fact that they are meant for discussions, sharing of problems, questions and applications (Hogarth, Gatimu & Barret 1983, Kithome 1998). The aim of the seminar meeting is to keep the student motivated and to enable them to seek clarification and confirmation of their studies, and share experiences and hence, foster peer group learning. Indeed the pioneers of TEE saw the seminar meeting as 'the heart of the programme' (Winter 1969:34), in that to them the success of the other two components, that is study materials and practical work, depended on what went on in the seminar. In every church congregation there may be 50 or more TEE students. These are further divided into groups of 15-20. Each group is placed under a group leader whose work is to facilitate the group discussions. Indeed the work of a group leader is to 'initiate discussions, stimulate interest, encourage discussion through questioning and to guide the learners to explore further the lesson they have learned' (Thornton 1990:38). In some cases, the group

leader is just chosen among the learners themselves. In some democratic groups the learners would identify the person that they want to be their group leader. However, in other cases, the TEE coordinator appoints a group leader from among the students. The TEE seminars decentralize the programme into manageable units. Once students have gone through the self-instructional materials, they then converge at a central place on a weekly basis. Sometimes two or more groups may come together and hold one seminar meeting. Some of the main objectives of the seminar are to keep the learners motivated, provide fellowship and inspiration. Once in the seminar meeting, students discuss, with the guidance of a seminar leader, the week's lessons and any problems that they encountered as they studied. The seminar meetings provide opportunities for students to express and exchange ideas and experiences, and through this peer group learning is encouraged. Through this interaction learners build each other spiritually and intellectually. It is also during the seminar meetings that students hand in the assignments and collect the marked ones back. As we shall see later in this dissertation, the women students interviewed showed a preference for seminar group learning. It is stated, in other research, that seminar and tutorial meetings for distance learners reduce the boredom that is likely to arise from the interaction only with print materials (Thomas 1994, Kirkup & Prummer 1990).

The TEE programme is able to hold such seminars because the programmes are localized and decentralized to congregational level. The TEE coordinating office may be in a central place, but then each congregation will have its own TEE administrator, to operate on a local level. The materials may be coming from the central office, but the day-to-day running of the programme is done from the local church level. This is unlike the B. Ed. programme, which is centralized at the university level. Managers of B. Ed. programme are based at the University and so the administrative structure does not allow for small group seminar meetings as we see in the TEE programme. Instead of weekly seminars, the B. Ed. provides the three months residential sessions in a year and the monthly visits to the study centres. The Coop has not incorporated face-to-face learning opportunities, a situation that has led many students dropping out of the programme.

### ***Practical work***

The third component of a TEE curriculum is the Practical Work. Once students have interacted with the study materials and have participated in the weekly seminar meetings, they are then expected to go out on attachments (similar to internship) and apply the newly acquired knowledge in some church ministry such as pastoral, youth leadership, Sunday school and women ministries. This is done every Sunday; then on the following seminar meeting, they would report back the kind of obstacles and challenges that they experienced as they served the church community. However, this study shows that the women have not been given the opportunity to go out and perform pastoral duties in the same way as men. This will be elaborated on later as we look at the barriers that TEE women face as they study.

## **4A.4 The Co-operative College of Kenya Programme**

### **4A.4.1 Historical background**

The Cooperative College of Kenya was established in 1971, with the sole purpose of equipping employees and members of the cooperative movement with basic education on cooperatives (Donge 2000). The Cooperative Movement refers to the organizations that are formed when people come together and form formal nonprofit economic enterprises. These enterprises are called cooperatives. Ochieng & Mburu (2001: 2) state that, 'Co-operation simply means working together for a common purpose. It is a joint effort to help one another so as to accomplish certain tasks that would benefit members of the group.' Cooperatives are business ventures that are member-owned and controlled and all members have equal say in their governance through a one member, one vote policy (Kinyua 2001). The goals of cooperatives are mainly to better living standards of the members. Members contribute to the cooperative at agreed intervals. For instance, most cooperatives require their members to give contributions on a monthly basis. Members of the cooperative borrow money at very low interest rates and through this, they are able to pay school fees for their children, pay hospital bills, buy land and build houses for themselves. They are like self-help ventures, which are regulated by the government through the Ministry of Cooperatives. Since independence, the government has been encouraging Kenyan workers to join cooperative societies. Indeed all sectors of employment have their own form of cooperative societies. For instance, there are

cooperative societies for health workers, teachers, lawyers, engineers, armed forces, agricultural sector, fishing, banking, hawkers and many others. Therefore, it is the staff members of these cooperative societies and Ministry of Cooperatives' officials who are targeted by the courses that are offered at the Cooperative College of Kenya, both through the residential and distance learning modes. In particular, the 'major purpose of the distance learning course is to provide basic knowledge and skills necessary for effective and efficient management of co-operative organizations by their Board of Directors, and staff' (Ochieng 2001: 20).

Consequently, the distance learning programme based at the Co-operative College of Kenya, which is sponsored by the government, cooperatives and the individuals involved in the study, targets employees of the Co-operative movement in Kenya, committee members of co-operative societies, Co-operative department officers and members of general public who may have interest in the course (Donge 2000). The programme is sponsored by the government, co-operatives, and the individual students. Its objectives are to 'equip employees of co-operative movements with basic co-operative knowledge and skills, prepare employees for residential co-operative training course and educate the general public on the role of co-operative movement' (Donge 2000: 6). It normally uses print as the medium of instruction. The college sends printed materials with in-text assignments. Once the learners study the materials and do the assignments, they then post them back to the tutors who are based at the college. These tutors in turn mark the assignments and re-post them back to the learners. Examinations are held at the district co-operative headquarter.

#### **4A.4.2 Format and Content**

The Cooperative College of Kenya distance learning programme is a certificate course called Basic Co-operative Management, which earlier used to be called Certificate in Co-operative Management. To be admitted to this course a student needs to have passed a secondary level of education with minimum grades. It takes a minimum of 18 months, whereas the same course on residential basis takes 9 months. It is interesting to note that the college offers both certificate and diploma level courses to its residential students. These courses are professional courses and rarely enable one to get admission to University education, unless she had performed well in her high school education and had long years of experience. Indeed there are wider

choices of courses for residential students to choose from. However, with the distance learning students, the choice is limited to just one course, namely the certificate course. This fact has created a problem in that once a student does the certificate course through distance learning methods she is forced to join the college on full time bases for other advanced courses. Through my interaction with the college authorities, I came to learn that plans were underway to develop diploma level distance learning courses so as to cater for those who do not have the opportunity to study at the College on a full time basis.

Observation shows that the distance learning programme, a correspondence course, is based in the Department of Research and Consultancy. Initially this was a department on its own, whose work was to develop and produce the learning materials and dispatch the same to the learners. However, it was later dissolved and appended to another department to become a sub-department. It is now headed by a Course Coordinator whose duties include organizing for development and revision of the learning materials, liaising with the Principal's office in the advertisement of the courses, the recruitment of the students, managing the assignments and examinations.

This distance learning programme offers a basic course, which is aimed at introducing the student to the basic knowledge about cooperatives, their history, objectives, legal basis, functions in society and ways of making them more responsive to financial needs of the members. The course covers subjects such as Introduction to Cooperative Movement, Introduction to Cooperative Law, Co-operative Management Information Systems, Entrepreneurship Education for Co-operatives, Cooperative Accounting Systems and taxation, Introduction to Co-operative Banking and Finance, Principles and Practice of Co-operative Management, Fundamentals of Accounting, Preparation of Financial Statements and Budgeting and Budgetary Control.

#### **4A.4.3 Form of provision**

##### ***4A.4.3.1 Print***

This programme is based on print as a stand alone medium. Course materials are developed and reviewed by subject specialists who happen to be teaching the same courses on residential basis. The college owns a small printing unit, which does the

printing of the study materials (Donge 2000). Printed self-instructional learning materials are distributed to the learners through post. There is no further interaction between the College and the students. This means that the college literally abandons the students to learn alone, without checking giving them support. Once the students go through the materials they are expected to do the assignments, which are appended to the back of the course materials. Then they post the assignments back to the college to be distributed to the relevant tutors for marking. When they are marked, these are then re-posted to the learners. At the end of the course, examination papers are sent to District Cooperative Officers (DCO), who administer the examination on behalf of the college. This means that the students are expected to travel to their respective District Headquarters to sit for their examinations. Then the DCO posts the written examination to the college for marking.

Hence, since its inception the distance learning course at the Cooperative College of Kenya has continued to use the traditional correspondence method with no chance for interaction between the institution and the students. One of the well-documented weaknesses of this stand-alone method has been the high dropout rate among the students (Dodds 1991, Gachugi & Matiru 1989, Mugridge 1994, Commonwealth of Learning 2001). According to Thomas (1994: 57), print has a great weakness in that it is a 'one-way medium and can't respond to the individual needs of particular students'. Print tends to be boring and tiring and this tends to lead isolated students to discouragement and dropout. Observation revealed that the college has noticed this weakness and is planning to introduce other forms of student support such as, face-to-face tuition, and letters between tutors and learners.

Pedagogically, the materials use a distance learning format in that they are self instructional, containing well spelt out objectives and presenting the information in small chunks with in-text questions (Thornton 1990). They also use a lot of illustrations, symbols and pictures, which act as stimuli for the learners. Hence, like the B. Ed. and the TEE, the Coop materials are professionally done

#### **4A.5 Conclusion**

This section served as an introduction to the research findings. It has given the historical background of the three programmes under the present research, their format and content, in addition to the description of the different forms of provision that are used in each programme. Common to the three programmes is the use of print as the main teaching tools for the B. Ed. and TEE programme, while for the Coop course, it is the sole means of instruction. The chapter has established that both the B. Ed. and the TEE programmes provide face-to-face opportunities for their distance learners. The TEE has a practical component that takes place on Sundays when learners would be posted to work in different church ministries. The next chapter examines the biographies of the women who study in these programmes and were interviewed in this research.

## CHAPTER 4B

### BIOGRAPHIES OF WOMEN LEARNERS

#### 4B.1 Introduction

The previous section presented the three programmes that were studied, describing the format and content and the different forms of provision that are used. In this section, I present the biographies of the women learners that were interviewed for this research, highlighting the routes that the women used to enter distance learning. Due to lack of time and space I am not able to present all the 32 biographies that were studied. Instead I have selected four women from each programme whose biographies gave the most telling case. These biographies are presented in the order they were narrated to me. After examining these 12 biographies in detail, I gave additional stories from other women so as to give the reader a wider view of the type of women who join distance learning in the three programmes investigated. Where appropriate I quote directly from the interviews so as to provide the reader with an opportunity to benefit from these women's first-hand accounts and at the same time, to correct the invisibility of female voices and experience that is dominant in women-insensitive research (Faith 1988). Where the interview was done in Swahili or any other Kenyan local language, I will quote the original version first, followed by the interpretation in brackets. Where necessary I have tidied the grammar in the quotes in order to make it clearer to the reader. This is important because some of the statements may be clearer to me, since I was present when they were made, but they may not be meaningful to other readers. To ensure confidentiality, I have changed the names of the interviewees. Later in the analysis chapter, I will give a comparative analysis of the biographies of the three categories of women, pointing out the commonalities and differences among them.

## 4B.2 The B. Ed. women distance learners

Table 2: Summaries of the biographies of B. Ed. women learners

Programme	Which women study	Reasons for studying	Barriers	Coping strategies
B. Ed.	<b>Age:</b> mature, 23-43	<b>Social:</b> prestige, motivated by other women, be like others in family. <b>Career/work:</b> avoid discrimination, financial gains, develop/change career <b>Academic:</b> upgrade/improve grade <b>Personal:</b> give tuition to children Escape: loneliness & keep self busy	Role expectation	Ignore, struggle, determination, positive outlook, time management
	<b>Marital status:</b> majority married with children		Opposition from husband & in-laws	Convince husband course is useful, seek admission for him, study secretly
	<b>Prior education:</b> high school leavers, though qualified, missed chances for university in their early lives, attended other tertiary colleges		Community's attitude	Stay in isolation
	<b>Occupation:</b> career women (teachers and librarians)		Financial issues	Get loans, convince spouse to assist
	<b>Location:</b> varied-urban, peri-urban & rural areas		Biological: pregnancy, childbirth & rearing	Postpone study, take children to parents, employ domestic servant
			Issues of access	Apply many times to get a chance
			Work place issues: non understanding bosses & colleagues	Confront bosses
			Logistical issues related to residential sessions: lack of crèche facilities, no permanent venue	Some leave children at home, others bring children but they suffer
			Geographical: lack of electricity	Use kerosene lantern
			What helps	Husband's absence, face-to-face classes, role models, domestic servants

### 4B.2.1 Joyce Mwenge

Joyce is a 48 years old graduate from the B. Ed. programme. She is married with five children, aged between 17 and 27 years. She also has two grandchildren, whom she takes care of. She teaches in one of the tertiary colleges on the outskirts of Nairobi. After completion of her secondary school education, she joined Alliance Girls' High School for high school education (equivalent of Matriculation). However, she did not complete the two years of college there, but opted to join Kenya Science Teacher's College (KSTC) for a Diploma in Teacher Education<sup>1</sup> because she did not want to specialize in Arts subjects, which she had registered for at Alliance. At KSTC, she would be able to pursue science subjects and achieve her dreams. While at KSTC, she had her first-born child and got married to a Veterinary doctor<sup>2</sup>. By the third year of her study, she was already expecting her second child. During the period she was

<sup>1</sup> This is locally called Science 1 teacher (S1), which enabled one to teach in a secondary school though as a non-graduate teacher).

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately towards the end of 2003, long after the interview, Joyce lost her husband due to cardiac arrest. I have been able to contact her and give her my condolences.

studying (1980s), the best twenty students from KSTC would be selected once they completed their three-year course and get government funding to go straight to the University. However, although Joyce was among this number, she was not interested in advancing her education then as she had had small children to take care of. At that time, there were no flexible programmes and joining the University would have meant leaving her young family in order to be a residential student. However, her parents wanted her to continue with studies because they knew that she was bright.

When asked about the events leading to her participation in the distance learning programme, Joyce narrated that after teaching for many years she felt a gap in her life. In the secondary schools where she taught, the young graduate teachers would look down on her simply because she did not have a University degree. This happened despite the fact that KSTC teachers were preferred by students to the University graduate teachers. She explains this preference for diploma teachers as due to the fact that KSTC gave a more thorough professional and practical training to its trainee teachers. Due to this discrimination she started feeling inferior. To overcome this problem and to prove to everyone else that she could also do well, she registered immediately when the B. Ed. distance programme was launched, as one of the pioneer students in 1986, specializing in mathematics. She states that she enrolled not so much for the money, but for prestige and self-esteem. In her family, all her siblings had university degrees, one of them being a professor, and so she was the only odd one without a university degree. She recognized that many women had negative attitudes towards mathematics but she had always liked the subject and did well in it.

During the time she was doing this course, she was teaching in a secondary school in the rural parts of Ukambani in the Eastern Province. She was staying within the school compound, where she had been given a house, something that made her study more bearable than her colleagues who studied while based at the rural husband's home, where the negative attitude of in-laws affected their study adversely. At the same time, she was lucky in that her husband had been posted to a different province and for this reason she had more time for her studies. However, he still gave her a lot of support, both morally and financially. For instance, when she had to re-sit examinations, he encouraged her to do them and proceed with the course. She admits that some of her colleagues did not receive the same kind of support from their

spouses and most of them ended up terminating the study before completion. For some of them, the spouses were against the course because they lacked University education. Others had problems with fees payment and also lacked cooperative relatives to leave the children with over residential sessions.

All the same, studying in isolation most of the time was difficult for her. She would do most of the studies alone and then during the school holidays she would attend the residential session at the University. Studying in the rural areas, where the school was situated, was not easy because she had to use a kerosene lamp for lighting since there was no electricity in the area. She had to forgo her holidays in order to attend residential sessions. During the examination period she had to rely on assistance from domestic servants and relatives. The study took so much of her time that she did not have enough time with her family. The hardest choice that she had to make was to leave her husband and children over the holidays to go for the residential sessions. During that period, her husband would have a rough time taking care of the family. The most encouraging time for her *'was during the group discussions when we would meet and then I find that everyone else is experiencing the same kind of problems'*. She admits that it was through determination, discipline and hard work that she managed to complete the programme.

Joyce was so motivated that she had told herself that she would be among the first group to complete the course. In 1993 she finally completed the programme and got a Bachelor of Education Degree. Although there were 100 students in her class, only 40 managed to graduate that time and among these, there were only two women. The rest had abandoned the programme due to pressure from their spouses.

After completing her studies, Joyce experienced a lot of changes in her life in that her confidence and self-esteem went up and she feels fulfilled in that: *'when others give their credentials, I am proud to give mine too'*. Although she still teaches the same subjects she used to teach before, her social status has advanced. She states that: *'I feel that the way people were taking me is not the same way they do today. The society thinks that women can't do much and do not know anything, but now they have realized that I can do as well as men.'* She is able to participate in decision-making forums both in the home and in the church more than before taking the programme.

She states that: ‘... *the course improved my language, the way I view things and my attitude to issues.*’ Her completion of this programme has enabled her to be a role model to her children and by the time of the interview three of them were studying at the University. It also assists her to help her children make decisions in life.

She has also received quite a number of promotions, including becoming headmistress of a secondary school and a head of department in the tertiary college where she is currently based. These promotions were accompanied by salary increments and for this reason she has been able to have a better lifestyle. She has also done an MA degree in Christian Education at the Nairobi International School of Theology. When she retires from her teaching job, she plans to get involved in serving in the church, and this is why she opted to do the theology programme.

#### **4B.2.2 Apia Okanga**

Another typical distance learner in the B. Ed. Programme is Apia Okanga who was doing her fourth year of study at the time of the interview. Apia works as a librarian at the University of Nairobi. She is 39 years of age, married and with three children. She had wanted to go to University immediately after completing high school, but she did not meet the admission criteria then. Although she has been working for quite some time, she has always had the desire to further her education up to University level. She tried to re-enter formal education by doing some course on library science at the Kenya Polytechnic. However, this did not quench her desire for university education. When she read the advertisement for the distance learning programme, she was excited and decided to try her luck by applying for the course. Determined to study, she applied for both the B. Ed. course and a Diploma Course in Library Science at the Kenya Polytechnic. She first got the admission for the latter and actually joined. However, during the first week of attending class, she received an admission to the External Degree Programme at the University of Nairobi. The excitement she got after receiving this letter can only be best expressed by her own words: ‘*I abandoned the diploma very quickly and said, this is what I have wanted all the time*’. She, therefore, joined the Bachelor of Education distance learning programme. She chose to study through the distance method because it was flexible and could allow her to combine study with full time employment, motherhood and wifely duties. She did not care that this course was not related to library science, her professional line. She only

paid attention to the fact that the course was leading to the acquisition of a degree. She knew that distance learning made one feel isolated and lonely most of the time, however, this scenario changed during residential sessions when she would have an opportunity to feel that there were others struggling with her. At the same time she has a few colleagues in the library who are also registered for the same programme and so they normally organized study groups in order to assist one another and to break the monotony of studying alone.

Since she joined the distance programme, life has been hectic because sometimes she had to leave her twin babies when they were small, in order to attend the residential sessions at the University. If only the University had special facilities for breast feeding mothers, she would not have left them behind. At the same time, she realizes that the residential sessions are very important to her because they provide her with opportunity to interact with other students and lecturers. Studying alone is very challenging for her because it occupies all her time. She admits that *'it is really hard being a mother, a wife, having a full time job and at the same time being a student'*. The course is so demanding that she has no time to socialize with friends and relatives. She used to be very active in the church, but since she joined the programme, she has not been able to participate as much, since these activities take place during the holidays when she is attending residential schools.

At least she has received support from her husband. However, his relatives have been the greatest challenge for her studies because they would come to her house in Nairobi and start complaining that she has abandoned their son and left the house to be managed by a domestic worker. Whenever they come, they complain to the husband and ask him why he allowed her to go back to study, because they see studying as only meant for men. However, she is determined to continue with the study until the end. She admits that when she started the course there were many women in the programme but most of them have now dropped out because the spouses could no longer continue supporting them both financially and morally. For women to succeed with their study they need support from the spouses and other relatives in terms of financial support, sharing in the responsibilities and chores at home, in addition to moral support.

Apia admits that a lot of changes have taken place in her life: *'First of all I have become enlightened and realized that education actually opens one's mind...I have had a positive image about myself.'* She further testified that the study had given her a new motivation in life as she had now something to look forward to, that is, achieving the degree certificate. The fact that she is doing a degree has enabled her to value herself more than before. She testifies that the course had given her a lot of confidence and she was sure that once she completed it, she would be able to play more public roles both in the church and the wider society. In particular, she would like to lead other women and give them encouragement so that they realize that they can also succeed in life. This would assist them to realize their hidden potential. She also hopes that once she completes the course she would be able to work with orphans and widows. She feels that the course has equipped her a lot and now she knows that she can play a great role in the society. For instance, she has been advising women to discuss HIV/AIDS issues with their spouses. Many women believe that it is only the husband who should initiate discussions on matters of sex. However, she now tells women to take charge and talk to their husbands about the disease and to be: *'adamant and insist on the husband using safety measures'*. She plans to continue sensitizing women about their rights and potential. This is unlike before when she used to think that as a woman she could only operate in the private sphere. She admits that her husband has changed a lot since she joined the course in that he tends to respect her more than before. She has also become tough and: *'he has realized that I am no longer the same'*.

Her involvement in the programme has given her high status in society in that people tend to respect her more than before: *'People keep on asking me how I manage to take care of my husband, children and the course. So they tell me I am strong. So it gives you a positive status in society.'* She has now become a role model in her community. Even parents tell their children about her achievements and encourage them to follow her footsteps: *'they keep on saying that if she is making it why can't you?'* The course had also helped her to look at society differently in that: *'I have different attitude about different aspects in society'*. She attributed most of these changes to attending residential sessions where she is able to interact with people from different parts of the country: *'The interaction with other students has also helped me to see things differently. The stories we listen from other women do not leave us the same, we come*

*out as changed and better person.*' She also credited Psychology for enabling her to understand people's behaviour and be more tolerant than before.

The course has also changed her views about women. She has come to realize that women have great potential but they lag behind because they lack support from home: *'The society does not support women but women have the potential and they can do anything that a man can do if only they are given chance'*. She further realizes that the course has *'opened my eyes to realize that I can do anything if I am determined. I used to feel that I am just a woman and can do nothing but after doing this course I have been enlightened to see that I am able to do anything I want to do.'* As far as economic benefits are concerned, Apia hopes that once she completes the course she would be able to get a new job, earn a higher salary than now and be self-sufficient economically.

#### **4B.2.3 Deborah Kivanguli**

Debora is 34 years old, married and a mother. She is a trained primary school teacher and a deputy headmistress. When she got married in 1991, she was working as an untrained teacher, with only an A' Level certificate. She gave her husband the opportunity to go abroad for further studies for five years. All this time he was away, she did not have any children. It was only when he came back that she got her first child. Presently her husband is a secondary school deputy headmaster.

Deborah had wanted to go to the university immediately after high school but she did not pass well enough to meet the admission criteria. However, she still had the desire to go for higher learning and gain knowledge. She had been inspired by the many women who had gone to institutions of higher learning. So in 1996 she applied for the B. Ed. distance learning programme and was accepted. However, she was pregnant that time and so she shelved the ideas until 2001 when she reapplied. She was readmitted and joined the programme. At the time of the interview she was doing her second year of study.

When asked about the motivating factors for joining this particular programme, Deborah observed that the kind of salary she earned as a primary school teacher was

not enough to take her children to good schools and live good lives. So she wanted to study so that she could earn more and support her family.

Life as a student has become very difficult and challenging. She experiences a lot of financial constraints because apart from her nuclear family, she also has the extended family that also needs financial assistance. The other problem she experiences is that her in-laws block her study by influencing her husband negatively, so that he does not support her. She also experiences problems at her place of work in that when the headmaster is away she has to run the school and this interferes with her progress. Therefore, she has to carry all the family, job responsibilities and study at the same time.

The other problem that has hindered her study is biological. When she joined the course she was pregnant with her fourth child, which was delivered through Caesarian secession. However after eight days she got complications and had to be hospitalized after which she was very sick and confined to bed. By this time, the course was already in progress. She actually wanted to abandon the course but her husband encouraged her to continue and gave her all the necessary support, financially and moral, through which she was able to continue. She realizes that not all women receive the same support from their husbands. For instance, one of her friends faces opposition from both the husband and in-laws. When she is preparing for the examinations, he puts off the lights and quarrels with her all the time. He also does not provide any money to her and so she has to borrow from her sisters. When I asked her why she thinks this man does not support his wife's study, Deborah stated that it is because he himself does not have the same qualifications that his wife is studying for.

When asked how she has managed to succeed as a student, Deborah points out that she has to programme herself. She normally studies at night after completing the house work. By 9 pm she is already seated studying. She would continue studying up to midnight. Then she would go to bed till 4 am and wake up to study for two more hours, before she starts preparing the children for school. Her study environment is quite friendly in that she has electricity and a study room.

Deborah realizes that a lot of changes have taken place in her life, one of which is increase in self-esteem: *'I count myself as a lucky woman because very soon I am going to attain the degree'*. She further observes that there is a lot of change in the way she thinks and talks: *'Like now I cannot talk all that loosely because I know the boundaries. I now know how to grade my talk'*. She is also able to interact with different categories of people.

Deborah now plays more public roles than before. For instance, she is a coordinator in the fight against female genital mutilation. She is a peer educator and a pioneer in her area, which is notorious for the practice. She goes deep into the villages and educates the women about the negative effects of circumcising girls. She is also involved with another group which educates the community about HIV/AIDS. She talks to boys and girls about the reality of the disease and ways of protecting themselves from infection.

The study has also enabled her to have a progressive attitude about child rearing practices. Although her community believes that girls should not put on trousers, she allows her children to dress in them: *'I want my children to be different and enlightened. I am free and do not limit my children'*. So she wants her children to *'grow up and be prepared for life.'*

On the economic implications of the study to her life, Deborah admits that the course has widened her mind to other sources of raising money. With the many obligations her family has, she had to sit down with her husband and look for ways of raising more money. They bought photocopying and sewing machines which boost their incomes. They also bought a grade cow, which gives them money, through sale of milk, to run the home. She hopes that once she completes the course, she would get a promotion and a salary increase.

On the status of women, Deborah has come to realize that although women are downtrodden, they can do any job and can also advance in education just like men. Women are overburdened with many chores, but when they rejoin education they still perform well. As far as she is concerned, women need to be encouraged to explore their talents. This encouragement could start from the family level with the husband sharing the family chores with the wife so as to lighten her burden.

#### **4B.2.4 Karen Adhiambo**

Karen is about 42 years old and was doing her fourth year of study at the time of the interview. She teaches in a primary school. Karen studied up to form six level of education but did not qualify to enter the University then. So she got employed as an untrained teacher, but later she was sponsored by her sisters-in-law to attend a teacher training course for primary teachers. She is a mother of one son. She was married, but she separated from her husband, who later passed away. When she tried to go back to his place to bury him, she was thrown out by the parents in law. She then tried to go back to her maternal home but her brothers also threw her out. She was forced to rent some premises to stay in. So she went to live with her son in a rented house in the town. This brought a lot of loneliness to her life.

Asked why she joined the B. Ed. distance programme, she stated that she wanted to advance her education and upgrade herself. She was also lonely and so she wanted something that could occupy her mind. So she was looking for something that could occupy her and give her opportunity to interact with other people. Therefore, the residential sessions proved to be very useful to her. : *'So I thought if I joined this course it could occupy my time and also make me feel a bit comfortable when I come to join other people during the residential meetings.'*

When asked about her study routine, Karen explained out that when she is in school she uses her free time to study. However her colleagues would come and disrupt her, with the senior teacher giving her extra work: *'so they make me not to read at school.'* Her study environment is not encouraging because she stays in a rented house where neighbours disturb her with loud music. Then on weekends she cannot concentrate during the day because children make noise as they play outside. She has now resorted to waking up at night and reading up to six in the morning, a total of two hours in a day. So she has to struggle in order to continue with her studies. At least she has a study table, a good chair and electricity.

When she joined the B. Ed. programme, she experienced a lot of discouragement and jealousies from those around her. Her parents and sisters-in-law were very jealous because when they chased her away they thought she would have no future. Some of

her colleagues, too, were against it, as they saw it as a waste of time. However, she is determined to complete the programme and prove to people that she is able to organize her life. Although she does not have enough money, she is able to organize the little finance she has so as to be able to pay the fees. For instance, she has put up a house for herself so that she could save some money from rents. She also grows her own food and this also helps her to save money for the University fees.

For Karen, the most significant changes that have come as a result of her involvement in the programme are that people:

*Started looking at me differently because when they thought I was drowning, they now see me differently. It is like I have resurfaced again. I have won a lot of respect...They fear me and respect me. It is like I am a god, or somebody with strange powers. They thought I was going to be a rag.*

Her invisibility had been magnified by the separation from her husband. When he died she was further alienated in that she became a widow. Kenyan society does not regard these two descriptions highly. First, a failed marriage is always blamed on the woman even if the husband was in the wrong. Secondly, when the husband dies then she lost her identity. Hence, people thought that she was going to have no influence in society, and a walk-over. Once she joined the programme, this scenario changed, in that she became visible and this time because her own achievements. They fear and respect her now due to the fact that she has got status of her own.

She also admits that the course has changed her attitudes and feelings: *'now I feel that I can achieve like any other person and that my self-esteem and confidence has increased tremendously'*. This has also helped her to change her manners. Initially she used to over drink in order to forget her problems, but she admits that this course has reformed her: *'the moment I started taking this course I realized I was giving myself a bad picture, and also this course is supposed to reform somebody and so I started changing from that time...now when I want to take a drink I do it alone...I just go in, buy myself a beer, drink and then go away.'*

She attributes these changes to the interaction she has with other women during residential sessions. By listening to other women's life stories, Karen came to realize that there are other women who have gone through hardships like herself and this has

helped her to be steady in life. She also credits literature written by African writers which describes different lifestyles and their effects on one's life.

Karen plays more public roles now than before. For instance, since joining this course, she has been asked to use her free time to assist in the upcoming secondary school next to the primary school she teaches: *'to me teaching in a secondary section was a great boost to my ego. To me, it was a promotion on my side...so this to me is a big promotion. It has won me self-esteem and raised my ego.'* However, her headmistress was not happy about this and so she kept on giving her too much work so that she does not have time to teach in the secondary school. Karen has also been invited to attend workshops organized by the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and she had been able to educate the community about women's empowerment.

Asked about her views on the status of women in Kenya, Karen pointed out that women suffered a lot because they do not inherit property. Due to this fact many women live miserable lives while others enter prostitution so as to support themselves. She admits that if she did not have a paid job she would also be suffering since she was thrown out of her matrimonial home and her own home. However, since she joined the distance learning programme, she has decided to challenge the practice of barring women from inheriting their fathers' property. She has taken her own brothers and mother to court demanding to be given a share of her father's wealth: *'I am still fighting ... so that my father's property can be shared among all his children, both boys and girls.'*

#### **4B.2.5 Other B. Ed. distance learners**

The above cases represent the typical woman distance learners in the B. Ed. programme. However, some of the women interviewed had different biographies from the above. For instance, Esther Ochola, aged 35 years, was a primary school teacher in Nyanza Province and was doing her first year of study. She was widowed, with two of her children going to secondary school. This means that she has to struggle all alone to raise fees, not only for her children, but also for herself. The other challenge is the fact that when she goes to the residential sessions she has to look for somebody to stay with her children during her absence. Her late husband's relatives do not care about what happens to her and her children because she refused to be inherited by

relatives of her dead husband, as the Luo custom requires. Although she has a lot of financial problems, she is determined to complete the course.

Esther admits that she is: *'more positive to life than before. The course has given me confidence and self-esteem'*. She attributes these changes to the interaction she has with other women during residential sessions: *'I have opened up to some of my problems and I have realized that I am not the only one with problems'*. On economic empowerment, she hopes that once she completes the course she will get a new job, probably as a lecturer, so that she can advance her education to Ph.D. level.

Another typical B. Ed. distance learner is Sofia Kiveti. She holds a Diploma in education and teaches in a secondary school in the Rift Valley Province. She joined the B. Ed. programme after noticing the kind of discrimination and mistreatment that were vented upon other diploma teachers by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC)<sup>3</sup> recently. Most of these teachers were deployed in the primary section and so she decided to seek ways of furthering her education. However, her biggest obstacle was that her husband did not hold a degree certificate and in their community, a woman is not supposed to be more educated than her husband. She had to struggle to convince him that her education was important for the family. Initially, he was against her going back to study and in fact he used to block her from attending the residential sessions. It took long for her to convince him that it was important for her to study. To overcome this problem, she assisted him to apply for the recently developed parallel degree programmes, for those who are working. Since he joined the course, he now appreciates his wife's study. In fact since he joined the course, he would even escort her all the way to the University to attend the residential sessions.

Studying for her is not easy because she has to combine it with job, home and farming chores. This means that she does not give the study the best of her hours as she has to complete these other chores before she can settle down to study. Since she joined the programme her attitude to herself has changed in that: *'I see myself as somebody who can succeed in life...my confidence has been boosted up. I now esteem myself more*

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<sup>3</sup> This is the government body that is responsible for hiring, firing, promoting and transferring teachers in Kenya

than before.' She has also realized that people hold her in higher esteem than before. She has got more bargaining power at home over the family finances: '... *he consults me about how we should spend the money.*'

### 4B.3 The TEE Women Learners

Table3: Summary of biographies of the TEE women

Programme	Which women study	Reasons for studying	Barriers	Coping strategies
TEE	<b>Age:</b> mature (24-57) <b>Marital status:</b> majority are married with children  <b>Prior education:</b> some have secondary level of education, teacher training, others: only primary level  <b>Occupation:</b> some teachers, other businesswomen & housewives  <b>Location:</b> urban, peri-urban, rural areas	<b>Knowledge:</b> scriptures, theology & denomination, love for learning  <b>Social:</b> be in company of others, motivated by others  <b>Spiritual:</b> growth & inspiration, to do God's work better  <b>Psychological:</b> rediscover academic ability  <b>Escape:</b> loneliness	Role expectations	Struggle, termination & positive outlook, time management
			Community's attitude	Determination & positive outlook
			Financial: lack of economic benefits	Have now demanded paid jobs in the church establishment
			Lack of recognition and transfer of credit	Have now demanded it
			Lack of study facilities: lack of electricity	Use kerosene lantern for studying
			What helps	Weekly seminars, role models

#### 4B.3.1 Anne Njoya

Anne Njoya is a typical woman student enrolled in the TEE course. She is 50 years old and is married with five children aged between 14 and 30 years. Anne lives in her rural home in Kiambu District. Through observation, I noticed that she keeps cows, chicken and pigs and also has a small garden where she grows vegetables and fruits. Although built in a rural environment, her house is ultra modern with electricity and running water. She did her formal education up to form four during the old 7-4-2-3 education system<sup>4</sup>. From there, she joined a primary teacher training college, although initially she did not want to be a teacher but wanted to train as a secretary and work in a company. However, it was her mother who persuaded her to join the college. She completed the course when she was 19 years old, worked for two years and then got married in 1967. She got interested in the TEE course when somebody came to her Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) church and introduced the concept in

<sup>4</sup> Ninety per cent of the women interviewed from the TEE programme went through the old system of education, whereby a student spent 7 years in primary, 4 in secondary, 2 in high school and 3 at the university. The rest studied through the new 8-4-4 system. However, none of the interviewees managed to reach university level.

1996. Together with a few women, she decided to join the programme. She has not found the course hard and in fact she completed her diploma course in 1998 and immediately started on the advanced diploma in Counselling, which she was pursuing at the time of the interview. To her: *'TEE is not complicated and is not a lot of work'*. She does all her studies during her free time at school where she teaches: *'I do all of a week's work in a day.'* Then she attends the weekly seminar which takes place on Tuesdays in the afternoon. On Sundays, as a TEE student, she is posted to serve in the church. This acts as practical work or attachment.

Since she joined the course she has experienced a lot of changes in her life: *'It has made me somebody else. In fact I understand things better than before.'* The counselling course that she is doing has helped her understand her daughters better than before: *'I talk to them on every issue that is related to adolescence and growing up'*. She is now able to understand other people's problems more than before.

Anne has also realized that her family gives her more respect: *'my husband respects me more than before. He actually likes the course very much. He consults me on issues that he never used to consult me on before... He sees that I am able to play more responsible roles.'* She attributes these changes to the seminar meetings: *'the seminar helps because when we meet we come with different opinions and then we discuss.'* The practical experience is also important because it gives her opportunity to apply what she has learned, both from the study materials and group discussions.

Anne notices that the self study has also helped her to be more organized and be able to prioritize issues and her work. She points out that due to the confidence that she has acquired, she is able to play more public roles than before. Her headmaster sends her out to attend HIV/AIDS seminars. She is also called upon to talk to the school children when they are going on holiday.

Anne further testifies that the involvement in the programme has helped her to change her manners and attitudes. For instance she does not carry grudges about anybody and even when other teachers sit down to talk about the headmaster, she does not join in: *'I do not like idle talk ...TEE helps us to know how to live with our family and people.'* Anne would advise other women to join the course because: *'it gives a*

*student organizational skills. Like me I also plan when to read and when to do other housework.'*

On whether she had acquired any economic benefit through TEE, Anne states: *'TEE does not bring economic benefits... We TEE graduates are never appointed pastors.'* She points out that, women in particular are discriminated against, right in the church. Indeed this should not be the case because: *'Really before God there is no man or woman.'* To her this exclusion of women in the church is unfair since in some cases, churches are run by people with less theological education than the TEE graduates in the congregation. Even when TEE students are doing practical work, some pastors refuse to give them an opportunity to preach.

On her views about the status of women in the Kenyan society, Anne points out that, women are overburdened with a lot of responsibilities, with little support from their spouses. This is more so for the rural women who perform all the duties such as fetching water, farming, looking after cattle and cooking. Even some of those who have employment do not control their finances. However, for her case the situation is different because her husband gives her a lot of support.

#### **4B.3.2 Abbey Gathendu**

In Anne Njoya's seminar group, there is also Abbey Gathendu, aged 46 and a mother of four children, who are aged between 20 and 26 years old. She lives in her rural home, which is in Kiambu District, in the outskirts of Nairobi City. She has a farm where she grows maize, beans and vegetables. She also keeps cattle and chickens, all of which are for both home consumption and commercial purposes. Upon completion of her secondary education, Abbey fell in love with a man who assured her that he wanted to marry her straight away, but that he would still take her for training, so that she could have employment in the teaching profession. She believed him and immediately after getting married, she asked him when he was to fulfill his pledge. He retracted and told her that if she wanted to continue with learning she should just go back to her parents place, study and then come back to him. She did not have an alternative since she was already a mother. She now regrets having married so early without a professional training. This regret is mainly due to the fact that she is now a housewife and remains preoccupied with house and farm chores, which make her age

very quickly. She regrets that if only she had gone to college after secondary school, she would be a teacher like the rest of the women in her TEE class.

She joined the TEE programme in 1996 because she wanted to have a better understanding of the Bible. She also wanted to get company from other students, and also to prove to herself whether she was still as bright as she used to be in secondary school. For sure, since she joined the TEE class, she has proved to herself that she is still very bright.

After spending over twenty years as a housewife, Abbey felt unsure of her academic capability and she only came to believe in herself after undergoing the course and finding that she was doing well. Already, she has completed her first diploma and is now doing the Advanced Diploma Course in Counselling. She enjoys the study and especially the seminar group meetings. In fact the majority of the students in her study group are women. Most men in this area think TEE is for women and that men's place is in the residential seminary. This explains why there are few men in her seminar group. These seminar meetings enable her to interact in the public sphere. They also break the monotony of the lonely and busy life that she has as a housewife, running both the home and farm chores.

When she first joined the programme she did not inform her husband about it: *'I just paid my own money for the books.'* Since she has many activities that take her to the church, her husband could not know whether she had registered for any course. However, when she invited him for her graduation he was surprised to learn that she had been studying.

Describing her study routine, Abbey stated that she wakes up at 5 am in the morning and starts her studies. At 6 am she starts her housework which includes milking the cow and taking the milk to the dairy. Sometimes she uses her farm produce to employ farm workers to assist her with the farm work. Then at lunch time she would study for just one hour. This means that she puts two hours per day into study. Abbey does not study at night because she does not want to hurt her husband: *'you know men are very jealous. And if he goes to bed and leave me studying he will start quarrelling and I do not want quarrels.'* Abbey attends the seminars on Wednesdays and Tuesdays in the

afternoon. Study has helped her to manage her activities: *'I have become a better organizer because of the added responsibilities.'* Abbey has received discouragement from her own neighbours who seem not to understand why she is studying and yet she is only a housewife: *'Even there are some who abuse me because of the course... they are very negative about it.'* She raises the course fees from the sale of her farm produce. She knows that if she asked her husband to fund the course he would refuse because TEE does not have economic benefits.

Abbey testified that: *'I have improved a lot. I have confidence in many things, in preaching, in praying, because we have done all these. You know before I could not preach but now I can do it with a lot of confidence because I know what I am doing is perfect.'* She also pointed out that she had learned many things from members of the seminar and the texts: *'I interact better with the members of the group. You know I had been a housewife for many years and so when I started interacting with the seminar group members I came to see things differently.'* One of the things she has learned from group members is time management. Also in her seminar group, most members have children of similar age and so the group spends a bit of time discussing issues related to children and the youth. Studying counselling has also helped her know how to interact with her own children. Indeed the module on counselling has been very beneficial: *'because we are dealing with issues like marital problems, how to communicate in marriage, healing and counselling, stresses, depression and others.'* From her group, she has learned better ways of dressing: *'because I want to be like the members of the group. I have to look like the other women in the group.'*

She has also noticed that the attitude of her husband to her has changed since she joined the TEE programme: *'now he looks at me as though I am somebody else and even respects me more than before. His attitude to me has changed. Maybe he is seeing that I have something else to do.'*

On issues of women in the Kenyan society, Abbey thinks that women are excluded from decision making in the larger society and even in the church: *'because even in our churches there are many more men elders than women.'* Even when women elders are chosen, the men in the church choose those women who are not educated

and this means that they would not understand issues and perform well. Her opinion is that competent women should be chosen for these posts in the church.

#### **4B.3.3 Jennifer Mkama**

Jennifer is married with four children aged between 18 and 3 years. Jennifer belongs to a different TEE class which is organized by the Organization of the African Instituted Churches (OAIC). She studied up to secondary level of education and then joined a secretarial college. When she completed this secretarial course in 1985 she was employed by the OAIC, as a secretary, a position she still occupies. Her work is mainly to type the TEE learning materials.

She joined the TEE class in 2001. It was due to her experience in her work that she joined the TEE programme: *'this work of typing TEE books is the one which pulled me to join TEE.'* At the same time, she wanted to have more knowledge of scriptures. The course is giving her the ideal opportunity to learn theology without going to residential theological college and without disrupting her schedules. It is also not as expensive as residential seminaries: *'TEE unafanya wakati wako hile inafaa...Haikuzubui kufanya kazi zingine za nyumbani. Hakuna haja ya kuresign kazini hili usome.'* (TEE, you do it at your own time, the time that is convenient for you... it does not block you from doing other duties at home. There is no need to resign at your place of work so that you study).

Describing her study routine, Jennifer states that once she comes from the office she goes straight to attend to her husband and children and by this time, she is already tired and ready for bed. However, at 5 am she wakes up and studies until 6 am. This time is best for her because the mind is fresh and there is a lot of silence in the house. Since the books talk about God, studying in the morning gives her inspiration. Then after that, she starts preparing children to go to school. Since she stays in one of the informal settlements in Nairobi, she uses a kerosene lamp for studying. On Saturday she attends the seminar meetings. Study occupies her so much such that she has no time to visit her friends. Jennifer receives a lot of support from her husband and he has also joined the TEE course. This creates an ideal opportunity for both of them because they assist each other with their studies.

A lot of changes have occurred in Jennifer's life. First, when she learns that her friends have got problems she goes to pray for them. She is also able to organize a house fellowship for her family. She has learned a lot from studying the texts, such as counselling, evangelism, how to relate with others and all these themes give her guidance in her Christian life. She has also learned administration and management which is applied to the home and the church. The interaction with others in the seminar meetings has enabled her to be more accommodating than before. The study has changed her approach to problems in the family: '*hapo mwanzoni tulikuwa na matatizo nyingi kwa nyumba lakini tangu niingie TEE sioni hio vita kwa nyumba yangu tena*' (before we had a lot of problems in our home but since I joined the TEE course, I do not see the fights in my house anymore). She attributes this to the changes that have occurred in her life.

She also points out that the study has given her confidence and boldness. The practical experience has built her and enabled her to get public responsibilities within the church as she goes out to preach and evangelize. She hopes that soon she would be made a TEE facilitator, which would give her opportunity to lead the seminar. Jennifer hopes that once she completes the course she would be able to get a job or promotion. In particular, she hopes to get a facilitators job in the OAIC TEE since there are no women facilitators. This could lead to financial gain since facilitators are paid.

On the status of women, Jennifer points out that even in the church women are still excluded. Even those who have gone to residential theological colleges are also experiencing exclusion in that they are blocked from becoming pastors. This is a discouraging factor for other women because they lack role models to emulate. The solution to this problem could be found only if women would rise up and demand their rights: '*inatakikana sisi wamama tuamke tuwaambie, sisi wamama we are here, hata sisi tuanweza kusimamia makanisa*' (it is necessary that us women should wake up and tell them, us women we are here, even us we can lead churches).

#### **4B.3.4 Karen Bulinda**

Karen is about 42 years old and stays in Kibera, which is an informal settlement in the city of Nairobi. Karen studied up to primary level of education and then was

employed as a domestic worker before she got married in 1980. Her first husband who was the father of her three children died in 1991 in a road accident. When he died she went back to her parent's home so that they could take care of her. However, she realized that she could not manage single life. So she remarried in 1995. Her second husband works as a driver. She is a housewife, although she has requested him to open a shop for her so that she could be able to run a small scale business.

Karen decided to join the TEE programme because she realized that in her church it is only men who have studied theology. She joined the programme in 2001. She felt that if she joined the course it would give her spiritual guidance so that she would behave in the right way as a Christian.

When asked about her study milieu, Karen stated that she studies at night when she has made sure that she has completed all the home chores. Asked whether her husband complains when she studies late into the night she explains that he actually supports her and wants to join the programme too: *'Nadhani ni kwa sababu ameona mabadiliko ndani yangu ndio sababu ameonelea hii TEE kuwa mzuri'* (I think it is because he has seen the kind of changes that have occurred in me. This is the reason why he has seen that TEE is good).

Karen has testified that the course has given her boldness to speak before people. It has also built her spiritually. Since she joined the programme she has been sent out to preach in different churches and she did this with a lot of courage.

At the family level, since she joined the course the quarrels that used to take place between the husband and her have come to an end. She attributes this change to the fact that she prays over her family problems as she was advised by the TEE facilitator: *'Tangu nianze kusoma TEE majaribu yanapokuja ...ninaingia ndani ya maombi'* (since I started studying TEE, when temptations come I get into prayer). She believes that many women are beaten by their husbands because they do not recognize him as the head of the home and when he comes home angry they keep on nagging him. Instead, women should spend their time in prayer. Some women even neglect their husbands and join politics and to her this is a sin: *'Mwanamke ni wa kutuliza bwana yake. Na salsa ikiwa mama ameacha bwana yake na kwenda kwa*

*siasa, hii ni mbaya sana.* ' (A woman is supposed to serve her husband. So if a woman has left her husband and joined politics, this is very bad.) The course has also enlightened her on how to bring up her children and how to take care of her husband. She hopes that once she completes the course she would be appointed a TEE seminar facilitator.

Karen wants other women to join the TEE course because it gives women opportunities to preach. She looks forward to when women would make a good number among the pastors: '*Tunaitaji wamama waamuke wawe wanaitwa Pastor Karen, Pastor Jane*' (We need women to wake up so that we have some called Pastor Karen, Pastor Jane). Such women would serve as role models to others and in this way they would guide other women.

#### **4B.3.5 Other TEE women**

The above typical biographies have a lot in common with the majority of women who were interviewed. However, there were women with different biographical characteristics in terms of their formal educational level, age and geographical background. For instance, there was Susan Waudo, aged 40 years old and who attends the TEE programme based at the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC). She had gone up to standard 7 in the old education system. Due to financial constraints, she was not able to proceed to secondary school. After failing to go to secondary school, she stayed for a while and then got married in 1978. She is a mother of four children aged between 7 and 18 years. She decided to join the TEE class in 2002 and by the time of the interview she was doing her second month of study. She lives in Kawangware, one of the informal dwelling places within the city of Nairobi, where she also has a carpentry business together with her husband. When the husband goes out to get orders for furniture, she is left in charge of the workshop. When she has no customers in the workshop she would do her week's TEE lessons. Then on Saturdays, she would go to the seminar meetings. She is registered for a certificate course, which uses Swahili as a medium of instruction.

Rose Ngundo is 25 years old and unmarried. She is a pre-unit teacher (teaches 2 1/2 to 5 year olds) in a school that is run by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa for HIV/AIDS orphaned children. She studied up to secondary school level of education

in the new 8-4-4 system, after which she joined the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) run Pastoral Institute, where she studied Child Psychology and Child Development, plus a bit of counselling. She joined the TEE course in 1996 because she wanted to learn more about the word of God and also to get experience. Studying for her is not easy because she has to combine it with her job commitments and also other chores in her parent's home. She lives in their rural home in Gitaru. Her three brothers went to study in Japan and USA and then her elder sister got married. She is lucky, in that although their home is in a rural set up, they have electricity in their home and so she studies with no problems. In her TEE group, she is the only young person, since all the rest are aged 40 and above. For this reason, she has learned a lot from the wisdom of the elderly people in the group. However, during the group discussions sometimes she forgets that she is in the midst of old people and then she cracks jokes. So she has learned to weigh up her words. Rose is not only a TEE student; she is also the seminar group leader. Her work as a group leader is to lead the discussions and keep records of marks in the performance book. Since she joined the programme she has acquired increased self-esteem and confidence. The experience in the TEE seminar meetings have helped her to know: *'how to talk, how to ask questions, talk well to a grown up.'* She uses her newly acquired knowledge to help her friends who have social problems.

## 4B.4 The Coop Women Learners

Table4: Summary of the biographies of Coop women

Programme	Which women study	Reasons for joining	Barriers	Coping strategies
Coop	<b>Age:</b> mature 24-45  <b>Marital status:</b> majority married with children  <b>Prior education:</b> secondary school level with minimum qualifications  <b>Occupation:</b> work as junior clerks and administrators in the coop societies  <b>Location:</b> urban, peri-urban & rural areas	<b>Knowledge:</b> cooperatives  <b>Work/career:</b> career advancement, salary increment, change career  <b>Social :</b> influenced by colleagues  <b>Escape:</b> keep self busy	Role expectations	Struggle, determination, positive outlook, time management, domestic servant
			Financial	Request employer to sponsor
			Issue of access	Applied many times
			Lack of tuition & feedback	Ask colleagues at work for assistance, have recommended for it
			Geographical	Use kerosene lantern (but it affects eyes) and charcoal for cooking & ironing (but wastes time for study)
			What helps	Husbands absence, role models

### 4B.4.1 Mary Mutwa

In this programme, we have Mary Mutwa, a typical woman student in this Certificate course. Mary is 43 years old. She had been married for only 5 years when her husband died in 1992, leaving her behind with two children to take care of. They live in Nairobi. Mary had studied up to secondary level of education and since her family had financial constraints, she was not able to go to high school (equivalent of matriculation), which would have enabled her to compete for University places in the old education system. She, therefore, decided to take professional courses instead. She started off with accounting. Initially she did not want to make accounting her career, but when she got a job with Elimu Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCO) in 1983, where she still works up to today, she realized that she would be better placed if she specialized in the field. Indeed by the time her husband died, she had already done Certified Public Accountant 1 (CPA1).

One of the problems she experienced when her husband was alive is that he did not want her to go back to study because he thought that he had enough money to support the family. However, once he was dead, she realized that she had to advance her education. At one point she got a good manager who was interested in the training of

staff. He, therefore, identified her as one of those to be trained. She had wanted to go for the Coop residential course but she was not selected. To have a higher chance of qualifying for the residential Certificate Course in Business Administration (CBA), she was expected to take the distance learning certificate course. *'So after missing that opportunity I had to opt for the correspondence course.'* She, therefore, registered for it in 1995 and completed in 1996. After completing the distance learning course she was then offered a place on the residential course.

Asked about her study format, Mary stated that she used to study over the weekend but sometimes when her assignments were lagging behind, she would study at night and even lunch time. Once she reached home from work, she would do housework and once it was completed she would sit down and study for about two hours. She pointed out that the fact that the course was based on print alone disadvantaged her, in that she lacked people to discuss it with: *'I would have wished I had time to discuss the issues with a tutor and be able to ask questions. There was no interaction to allow to me know whether I was doing the right thing'*. To overcome this problem she used to consult her colleagues at work on the areas that she found too challenging. At the same time, studying alone had a positive impact on her life: *'I found out that I got to rely on myself. This prepared me even for the residential course I attended...I can say that I got organizational skills through studying alone.'* She has also been training her children to be self-reliant.

Mary stated that the course enabled her to realize that she had the potential to do many things: *'The correspondence course changed me in a very positive way because I came to know that there is a lot that we can achieve, even when we are not in the classroom.'* The study enabled her to start looking at things differently. For instance, she thought she would not make it in life, but once she undertook this course, she changed her way of thinking. She came to realize that she can still pursue education in spite of the problems and responsibilities that surrounded her. The course enabled her to discover that she had a lot of potential that remained unexploited. She also came to notice that she could still compete with those who had left her behind: *'I came to discover that I do not need to remain behind forever'*.

Study has enabled her to play more public roles. For instance, she joined a self-help group called Christian Widows Association: *'once they came to know that I am enlightened in area of co-operative management, they put me in a very responsible position. They asked me to be their publicity person.'* She goes round advising women to form cooperatives of about five or more people so as to uplift themselves financially.

When asked about the economic benefits of the course, she stated that since she graduated she had received many promotions. She started as a clerk but now she has risen to the position of accounts assistance. She has also attended a lot of workshops and seminars from where she is given awards and certificates.

Asked about her views on the status of women in Kenyan society, Mary points out that women are oppressed and when they want to go back to study they are blocked whereas men are not blocked. Women are also overburdened by the many chores that they perform and this blocks their advancement in academics and also in participating in cooperative societies.

#### **4B.4.2 Lilly Muli**

Another typical distance learner at the Coop programme is Lilly Muli. Lilly is 34 years old and married with two children aged 2 and 5 years. Once Lilly completed her secondary education she went to train as a secretary, after which she got employed in the Cooperative College of Kenya in 1990, which is about 30 kilometers from the city centre. Lilly joined the Coop distance course because she has always wanted to change her career: *'because after school you just get into whatever career that comes your way.'* So she ended up with the wrong career, one that she does not like. Hence, she saw the programme as an opportunity for her to change her career. Since she works at the Coop, she has found herself interested in learning things on the Cooperative Movement in Kenya. Recently, the College decided to give special rates to its staff that want to join the distance learning programme. Instead of paying the Kshillings 8,500 (US \$ 106) that other ordinary students are paying, the staff pays Kshillings 1,500 (US\$ 19). So in January 2002, Lilly decided to join the programme.

Since she joined the programme, life has been very hectic for her, in that with small children to take care of and the job commitments, she finds herself working under pressure and only managing to give the studies very little time. One source of her problems is that, since she lives on the college premises, in Nairobi, whenever she brings a domestic worker from the rural areas, the resident male students and staff take her away as wife or girlfriend and due to this, she has to struggle most of the time to do all the domestic chores on her own, as well as doing her office duties. She has to walk her daughter to school every morning and pick her up later in the evening. All these duties leave her with very little time for the studies. At least she is lucky, in that her husband works far (about 500 km) away and only comes home once in month. This fact reduces some of the wifely duties that she has to perform. Although she has so many obstacles to her study, she is motivated and determined to complete the programme on time.

Therefore, she spends thirty minutes in the office studying and when she reaches the house she spends another hour on her studies. Since she joined the course she no longer has time for her friends and the church fellowships she used to attend. Although the course has added more burdens to her life, she sees it as an ideal alternative for women going back to study because they can study as they continue to take care of their families. At the same time, distance learning is challenging in that she has no teacher around to consult and does all the studies alone: *'when you have come across a difficult area it is a problem because you have no one to consult.'*

When she informed her husband that she had registered for this course, he encouraged her to complete it on time. However, she knows that he would not have allowed her to go for full time study because of the family responsibilities that she carries: *'women want to study but most doors are closed, but with distance learning they can combine with family chores'*. He himself has completed a distance learning course on Sales and Marketing and due to this fact he understands what his wife is going through. He has been persuading her to study up to degree level and above, through the distance method.

Since she joined the programme, she has gained a lot of knowledge in the area of cooperative education and hopes that once she completes the course she would be

able to assist rural women in her village on how to form cooperative groups. She also testified that the course has given her organizational skills and she hopes to use them in organizing cooperative societies in her village: *'in the rural areas many cooperatives have collapsed because they do not have anybody to manage and direct their affairs.'* The course has further changed her attitude towards herself in that: *'when I was joining this course I was feeling that I am just a secretary, now I am encouraged that I can read up to degree level and above... I am discovering that I can go as high as I wish in education.'*

The course has also changed her approach to life in that before she used to think that since she had reached secondary level of education she could only study secretarial and dressmaking courses. She even believed that she could not do any course that involved mathematics but now she has a positive attitude that she can study any subject: *'I am getting encouraged to realize that I can do mathematics and I can study and be somebody.'* Although she used to have a negative attitude to mathematics, women role models have influenced her positively and she is now able to balance the accounts in the course she is taking.

The study has also enabled her to come to the realization that she has a lot of talents to study up to any level: *'so for me ni kama nimeamka (it is like I have just woken up) to realize that I have talents to study up to the highest point.'* She, therefore, realizes that the course is very good and she has even been telling other women that they should also join. She also noted that with distance learning many women were able to register secretly since they did not want their bosses and husbands to know that they were studying.

Lilly hopes that once she completes the course she would be able to get a new job and better pay with which she would be able to buy a piece of land in the city to build a house and also be able to take her children to private schools. A better salary would also enable her to dress differently and buy her own car.

Talking about her attitude to the status of women in Kenya, she states that women live in great hardship because they do not own property in both maternal and marital homes. Even when they are employed, they still do not control their own salaries and

remain dependent on men. However, she had vowed never to allow her husband to control her money. Although women are treated as second class citizen they can do a lot when they get an opportunity: *'so women have to work hard knowing that in this world you are just alone. Women must learn to promote themselves.'* She also realizes that women have a lot of potential: *'I believe women can do anything. I feel that there is nothing that I cannot do.'*

Her advice to other women is: *'Dependence on men is dangerous.'* Lilly believes that women should strive to advance themselves through distance learning: *'If your husband does not want you to read, organize yourself and read when he is not there. You choose a place where you will be studying even without him knowing.'* Involvement in education would enable women to be self-reliant and stop relying on their husband's income. Thus participation in the programme has been an eye opener and has changed her attitude to herself and to other women's ability.

#### **4B.4.3 Magdalene Mweru**

Magdalene is 38 years old, married with one child aged seven years. She completed her secondary education in 1989 and proceeded to an accounts college for two years. She has worked for the Kiambu Dairy Cooperative society since 1996 as a bank clerk. By the time of the interview, she had been sponsored by her employer to take a residential course at the Cooperative College of Kenya.

She joined the distance learning course in 1996, sponsored by the employer, and completed it in about one year. When I asked her about the motivating factors for joining the course she stated that: *'I wanted to know more about cooperative societies.'* Since she was a mother, wife and an employee, she realized that it was only distance learning that would be flexible enough to allow her to combine all these responsibilities. At the same time, since she lives in the rural areas, she could not participate in the evening courses because they are all based in the cities: *'so with correspondence course we do not have to move to towns where colleges are.'* She sees distance learning as the ideal alternative for women, as they can combine studying with all other responsibilities.

About her study experiences, she points out that life was rough because: *'I had to balance housework, the baby, husband and the job. I used to come from work, do my housework, cook, wash the baby and then finally settle down to read for an hour.'* She further states that: *'it was not easy because I would come from work when I am already tired and yet I had to complete the housework.'* Hence, she had to sacrifice her leisure time in order to study. She had also to raise funds for posting the assignments to college as well as hire a domestic worker to assist with the baby and the housework. At least she had a quiet room and electricity for her studies. Distance learning helped her to manage her time better than before: *'I have to set aside time for reading and doing other duties.'*

Magdalene received a lot of moral and financial support from her husband during the study period and when she finally completed the course, he was very happy: *'he saw it as a family achievement.'* Indeed he has also given her the same support to attend the present residential course, although many people did not expect him to support her for a residential course. She also received a lot of support from her colleagues at work and finally she became a role model for them.

The study has had a lot of impact on Magdalene's life: *'I have changed my approach to life. I now see that being married is not the end of things. There are other things you can do including studying.'* At the same time she has noticed that: *'since I have more knowledge I am able to express myself in a better way and relate with my customers in more mature way.'* Since the course did not have inbuilt face-to-face interaction she had to rely on her colleagues at work who were doing the same course and as a result she gained better interaction skills. *'I kept on enquiring from them on difficult issues. This helped me to have better relating skills.'* Her confidence has also increased: *'I can now talk to people with strength. I see that I am higher than most women are.'* The study also helped her to realize that she was still capable of succeeding in life: *'I have come to realize that my mind is active. When you stay for a long time without learning you start doubting yourself.'*

As far as economic benefits are concerned, Magdalene states that although she did not receive promotion after completion of the course, she was given some salary

increment which she used to pay a domestic worker. However, some of her colleagues were lucky in that their employers gave them promotion.

The experience of other women had shown her that not all men want their wives to study. Similarly, Kenyan society discourages women from going back to study. When she was admitted to the residential programme many people expected her husband to bring opposition but they were surprised that he gave her total support: *'some were asking how can a married woman leave her husband and children and go back to college... they think that when you are married that is the end of your education and you concentrate on the home.'* As far as she is concerned, this is the wrong attitude since it keeps women down. She points out that women need to be encouraged to go back to college so that they can improve their earning power and as a result be able to assist their families financially.

#### **4B.4.4 Loise Muthinzi**

Loise is 33 years old. She is married with two children. She did her primary level examination in 1984 and was admitted to a secondary school. However, her parents: *'pleaded with me to give my brother a chance because he was older than I was by far.'* This meant that she could not proceed to secondary school in that year and had to repeat primary level. After she did the examination for the second time she was admitted to the same secondary school. After four years of study she went to high school in Mombasa. However, although she had performed well in her form six examination she could not qualify for university admission because there was a double intake that year and the pass mark had to be raised. In 1991, she got employed by the Mwalimu Cooperative Society<sup>5</sup> as a clerk, but has now been promoted to an administrative officer. Although she had a baby in 1990, it was only 2001 when she got married to a driver with the government. She is now a mother of two children.

Loise had tried to register for a full time course but could not get a scholarship for her studies: *'I decided I had to go on with studies on my own, now that my employer was not in a position to give me a scholarship or study leave.'* So when she heard about the distance learning programme she made up her mind quickly and registered for it in

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<sup>5</sup> This is a cooperative society for teachers in the country.

1994 and completed in 1996. Asked about the motivating factors for joining the programme Loise stated that: *'the freedom of studying at my own time. I also knew that I would get more knowledge.'* Loise wanted to get higher academic qualifications which would help her to develop her career.

In reference to her study format, Loise pointed out that she used to study early in the morning, after dropping her son at school. She would report to her office earlier than everybody else, so that she could study before office hours. At other times, she would study in the evenings after her child went to sleep. On weekends she would do all her domestic chores and then settle down to study. She used to put about one hour into the study in the morning and two hours in the evening. She had to sacrifice visiting friends on weekends in order to put all the time into the programme. The study had taken so much of her time such that she did not spend as much time with her son as before. She received a lot of support from her father: *'even today he motivates me to study up to degree level.'* Apart from this distance learning course, she attended a course on management of co-operatives at the same college, which was a residential programme.

Among the changes that took place in Loise's life after studying was the realization that: *'I can make it even when studying on my own without a teacher being present and without going to lecture halls.'* She also gained a lot of knowledge about cooperatives, plus confidence in herself and today she is no longer narrow minded.

At the same time, the course: *'opened my eyes to the fact that there are few women in the management of cooperative societies, especially top management.'* She notes that at her place of work: *'there have never been women managers. The chairman, vice chairman and other top officers are all men.'* Women are also excluded from the top government positions and when they venture into politics they are branded with negative names such as 'prostitutes'. This state of affairs can only change if women went back to study. However she notices that women have to overcome a lot of roadblocks in order to go back to study, one of which is the fact that they do not own property which they could sell to raise the fees. They also have to seek consent from their husbands before undertaking any course. The course enabled her to realize that: *'not only men who can manage but women, too, can make it in life.'* Her advice to

women is that they should sacrifice and go back to study so that they are able to compete with men.

#### **4B.4.5 Other Coop women learners**

In the Coop programme, there was Faith Nzuki, who worked as a cashier in the banking section of one of the local cooperative societies. Faith joined the Coop programme in 1999, studied for three months and quit the course. At that time, she was expecting her first child and this challenge, coupled with the job responsibilities and housework, worked against her motivation to study. At the same time, she used to send in assignments to the college and fail to get feedback. She states that: *'this made me very discouraged... here I was working under hard conditions and not getting any response from the college.'* This lack of response meant that she was not sure whether she was on the right path or not. So she decided to quit the course.

Jane Mbau, who also works as a cashier in a cooperative society, joined the course also for three months and quit. The reasons for quitting included the fact that she had a child aged three years, two cows and a garden to look after. At that time, the gardener who used to assist her on the farm ran away. She had to struggle all alone to care for the cows. The domestic worker also ran away. Her husband used to go to work very early and come home very late as he had to travel from their rural home to Nairobi City every morning for work and for this reason he could not assist her, even if he wanted to, with the family chores. At the same time, she used to send assignments to the College and never received any feedback. This left her discouraged, not knowing whether she had done the right thing or not; whether the assignments had reached the College or not. Under these circumstances, she struggled for three months and quit the course.

#### **4B.5 Conclusion**

This section has described the biographies of women distance learners who were interviewed. The themes that emerged from these descriptions include women's reasons for studying, barriers that they encounter as they study and the coping strategies that women employ in order to succeed as distance learners. Each of these themes will be explored in detail in the next section.

## CHAPTER 4C

### THEMES ARISING FROM THE BIOGRAPHIES

#### 4C.1 Introduction

Section B of this chapter described the biographies of the women that were interviewed for this research. In this section themes and concepts that emerged from these biographies are examined. The process of extracting these themes and concepts was well discussed in chapter three under application of hermeneutical methods of data analysis. These themes include reasons for starting to study, women's views on distance learning, barriers that they encounter as they study and ways through which they go round them in order to succeed as distance learners. The themes given have been described separately for each programme because they differed significantly by programme.

#### 4C.2 Reasons given by the B. Ed. Women

Table 5: Summary of Reasons (no of respondents is 14)

Broad Reasons	Specific Reasons	Percentage of Responses	Number of Respondents
Social (33 %)	Prestige associated with University education	23	11
	Motivation from other women	8	4
	Be like other family members	2	1
Career/work related (32 %)	Avoid discrimination at work	14	7
	Promotion & financial gain	12	6
	Develop/change career	6	
Academic (23 %)	Upgrade/improve grades	23	11
Escape (6 %)	Escape loneliness & keep self busy	6	3
Personal (2 %)	Be able to give tuition to children	2	1
Knowledge reasons (0)	-	0	0
Spiritual reasons (0)	-	0	0
Psychological reason (0)	-	0	0

Note: Percentages have been rounded so they do not add up to 100

## 4C.2.1 Social Reasons

### *4C.2.1.1 Prestige associated with University education*

University education in Kenya is a status symbol and for this reason, when one fails to attain it, this is seen as a failure and leads to frustrations. Thus for the B. Ed. women learners, getting the opportunity to get University education was a great achievement, which brought with it a new sense of self. For instance, Lydia Mwenge stated that: *'I wanted to prove to every one that I was also capable of doing a University degree.... For me I took the course not so much for money but for prestige and self-esteem.'* Aphia Okanga expressed similar idea when she stated that: *'...I always wanted to do a degree course ... I have always had the desire. I had always been comforting myself that one time I will get a chance and do a degree course'*. When Emily Munywoki got admitted to the distance learning programme, she experienced feelings of joy, happiness and satisfaction: *'I just feel I am doing what I should be doing. It makes me very happy to know that I am doing something for myself.'* Emily stated that: *'I was always looking for what I missed many years ago'* (University education). Joyce Kamba further emphasized that: *'I have always wanted to become someone else, that is, to advance my education to degree level... so all along I have wanted to go to the university.'*

To the B. Ed. women, what mattered was university education, regardless of whether it was in the line of their present careers. This is shown by the fact that those who came from other career lines, like library science, had done other courses relevant to their work. However, when they got admission to the B. Ed. programme they abandoned their career lines and went straight to do the distance learning programme. They explained that there were no degree opportunities in their career lines: *'...I realized that chances of furthering education were not existent at the library. So when I saw an advert in 1994, on this course I applied and I was selected. Immediately I joined'* (Meli Manga).

For these women, distance learning had brought an opportunity to re-enter mainstream education, improve their qualifications and be counted among those who had reached a university level of education. Thus distance learning had opened doors for University education, which had been closed for many years.

#### **4C.2.1.2 Motivation from other women**

Peer influence was also given as one of the motivating factors for joining the B. Ed. programmes. For instance, Florence Mukasa was motivated by her friends who had gone for studies earlier on and completed:

*I would meet my colleagues and they would ask me: what are you still doing Flo? In fact most of them were very disappointed that I also never tried to do the exams...those who went back to school, most of them have completed college and most of them are in universities abroad.*

Deborah Kivanguli stated that: *'I have been inspired by the many women who have gone to institutions of higher learning...'* Mercy Kaime further stated that: *'I have a colleague of mine who was teaching in a neighbouring school and she is the one who advised me to join this programme. She is in her fifth year. She got me the forms. I filled and then last year I joined.'*

For others, just seeing their fellow women graduating from the B. Ed. programme was enough to motivate them to join: *'And now my colleagues who had registered for a distance learning course earlier on actually graduated and so I said to myself, so this is a reality'* (Emily Munywoki). All these examples show that role models played a significant role in encouraging women to participate in distance learning

#### **4C.2.1.3 Be like other family members**

This social reason was mentioned by only one woman. Lydia Mwenge decided to participate in the programme so as to fit in other members of her family: *'I was the only one without a degree where I am born and so I wanted to be like every one else.'* She further stated that:

*I am the second born in our family and as we talk now our first born is a professor. The person who follows me is a veterinary doctor. Then the other sister who follows the doctor has also been to the university. So it was only me who did not have a degree. I realized I was going to be the odd one out. I remembered that when I was in school I used to do well. So this pushed me to... be like my brothers and sisters.*

She went ahead to state that her father was very interested in her performance in the distance learning course because: *'he wants all his four children to have degrees'*.

#### **4C.2.2 Career/Work related**

##### ***4C.2.2.1 Avoid discrimination at work***

The B. Ed. women gave discrimination at their place of work as driving force for joining the distance learning programme. Indeed discrimination, based on their lack of university education, carried 14% of all the responses given by the B. Ed. women. This happened mostly to those women who were teaching in schools that had graduate teachers or those working in an office with university graduates. Even the salary scales were structured in such a way that non-graduate teachers earned very little, as compared to what graduate teachers earned. Joyce Kamba described this scenario by stating that:

*There is a lot of discrimination within our institutions. Like when I was teaching in Karura, which runs from primary to secondary, you could see secondary school teacher's looking down on primary school teachers. They feel that they have accomplished so much and you in primary level you are meant to believe you cannot. Then the salary is also very different...sometimes you may be doing the same kind of job and with the same kind of load but just because you do not have a degree you end up getting low salary. This is very frustrating.*

Lillian Odale's experience shows that:

*There was a lot of discrimination because I did not have a university degree. Some times I could still work better than them but my work could not be recognized. When they employ new people they would ask me to show the new group what to do but when they have learned they turn around and tell me that I cannot do it because I lack a degree. So people without degrees were really discriminated against.*

Lydia Mwenge gave a similar testimony when she stated that:

*From Kenya Science where I trained we had been well trained and we were more preferred than graduates from Kenyatta University were. In the classroom we were competent, but in the staff meeting we felt inferior to the graduate teachers from the University. I felt that I should do something... The young graduates used*

*to make us small. They thought we were deadwoods. I felt challenged to also do a university course. Yet I had all these responsibilities.*

The issue of discrimination was made worse when the government decided to deploy diploma teachers in secondary schools to the primary sector:

*I had a diploma in education. Most diploma teachers are frustrated because recently they were redeployed to primary schools but for me I was lucky I remained in my school... I do not like the idea of being looked down upon just because I have only a diploma. We do the same work as graduate teachers and then all of a sudden diploma holders have to be deployed into the primary section. This made me feel very bad (Sofia Kiveti).*

Therefore, the B. Ed. women joined the distance learning programme so as to get a degree certificate and escape discrimination. Indeed some of them stated that immediately they started on the programme, discrimination ceased and they started being ✓ accorded respect and social status.

#### **4C.2.2.2 Promotion and Financial gain**

Dodds (1994: 45) has shown that distance learners go back to study with the hope that the new qualifications would lead to improved economic status. He states that, 'Students are confident that improving their educational qualifications will improve their chances of promotion.' In the present research, the B. Ed. women wanted to get a degree certificate which would lead to either a new job or promotion and thus add to more financial gains and improved life styles. This accounted for 12% of all the B. Ed. responses given. Deborah Kivanguli expressed this fact by stating that:

*With my family growing the kind of education I have is not enough to enable me support them financially. A P1 salary cannot enable me take my children to good educational institutions and also to buy them good clothes. I have to study so that financially I may have to earn more and support my family.*

A participant in the B. Ed. focus group similarly, pointed out that:

*...I always felt very frustrated by the kind of money that we earned with a P1 certificate.... So actually I felt I was not leading the kind of life I would wish to lead and I would not like my young children to lead that*

*kind of life now ...The salary I was getting was not meeting my basic needs and I was almost living below poverty level...So I attended about five interviews in different private schools here in Nairobi and the response I got was that they do not employ P1 teachers. They have diploma and graduate teachers. So I felt that if I have to meet their qualifications, I have to go for a better grade. (Focus group discussions, Lucy Nguli).*

They further added that: *'I have been teaching in a private school and the idea of qualifications...adds to what you carry home.'* (Beverley Mutindi). Hence financial reasons formed a substantive percentage among the reasons given for participation in distance learning.

#### **4C.2.2.3 Develop/change career**

Six percent of all responses show that some of the women joined the programme so as to develop or change their careers. Some wanted to develop their careers within their present employment, while others wanted to seek employment in the private education sector, which offered better packages than the government. Lydia Mwenge stated that: *'I had been in a very frustrating grade in my job.'* A focus group participant further stated that: *'I had always wanted to leave the government because of the kind of frustrations I was going through.'* (Lucy Nguli).'

Meli Manga pointed that: *'I also wanted to establish a career for myself.'* Emily Munywoki also stated that: *'I wanted to advance myself career wise.'* These examples show that the women in the B. Ed. programme placed a lot of importance on career development. Distance learning, therefore, gave women the opportunity to advance their careers without abandoning their present job positions.

#### **4C.2.3 Academic Reasons**

##### **4C.2.3.1 Upgrade/improve grades**

For the B. Ed. women the need to upgrade ones' education formed 23 % of all responses. Karen Adhiambo explained her case by stating that: *'I was ambitious. I wanted to expand on my education and also to upgrade myself.'* Lydia Mwenge pointed out that: *'I*

wanted to better my grades...All through I have been ambitious and wanted to further my education...I wanted to improve my academic qualification.' Evelyn Mutambu also stated that: 'I wanted to upgrade myself. I was not satisfied with my present position.' Most of them had a high school level of education plus some form of tertiary education, either a diploma or certificate in primary teaching or in library sciences. Hence, they wanted to upgrade their certificate up to degree level.

#### **4C.2.4 Escape Reasons**

##### ***4C.2.4.1 Escape loneliness and keep self busy***

Some women joined the programme so as to get away from personal problems. Karen Adhiambo wanted to escape loneliness that came into her life after her marriage collapsed. She testified that: 'I was lonely and so I wanted something that could occupy my mind because I was married, then I was separated. I had a child. During my separation my husband passed away. He was murdered. My in-laws thought that I am the one who organized the murder...'

Thus the residential sessions played a central role in helping women escape loneliness. The interaction with other students gave the lonely student time to feel part of a group and to realize that she is not alone in the struggle. In any case, she would also be able to listen to other women giving their life experiences and in the end grasp that other women students carried even heavier burdens: 'Most of the women I learn with are married. They tell me about how they are frustrated by their husbands. When I listen to them I reflect on my past experiences...' Mercy Kaime also stated that: 'I decided instead of just staying idling since we were not employed, to join this course.'

#### **4C.2.5 Personal reasons**

##### ***4C.2.5.1 To be able to give tuition to children***

The need for more knowledge, which would enable women to give guidance to their children in high school, was highlighted as one of the reasons for starting to study. This formed only 2 % of the responses. Emily Munywoki for instance, states that:

*And also the challenges I was meeting I could not sort them out with the basic education, which I had.... I was comfortable helping my children with the*

*education, which I had at that level, but as they went up the ladder, I found there were some things, which I could not tackle and I was not comfortable with that situation. So I decided to go back, read and be able to help them out.*

### 4C.3 Reasons given by the TEE Women

Table 6: Summary of reasons (10 respondents)

Broad Reasons	Specific reasons	Percentage of responses	No of respondents
Knowledge reasons (44%)	Gain knowledge of scriptures, theology & denomination	36	10
	Love for learning	4	1
Social reasons (33%)	Be in company of others	18	5
	Motivated by others	14	4
Spiritual reasons (18%)	Spiritual growth & Inspiration	7	2
	To do God's work better	11	3
Psychological reasons (4%)	Rediscover academic ability	4	1
Escape (4%)	Escape loneliness	4	1
Career/work related (0%)	-	0	0
Personal (0%)	-	0	0
Academic (0)	-	0	0

Note: Percentages have been rounded so they do not add up to 100

#### 4C.3.1 Knowledge Reasons

##### 4C.3.1.1 Gain knowledge of scriptures, theology and denomination

Many TEE women gave the need to gain more knowledge of scriptures, theology and denomination as a motivating factor for joining the programme. Indeed 40% of all the responses fall in this category. Jennifer Mkama, for instance, stated that: *'Niliikuwa nikitaka kujua mambo ya mungu.'* (I wanted to know things of God). Jerusha Njagi pointed that: *'I have to get some more knowledge because knowledge is power. I thought I should get the knowledge along theological lines now because many times when I am not in this office I am in the church.'* Susan Waudu also pointed out that: *'Niliingia niposikia mwito...niaze kujifunza mambo ya Biblia...'* (I joined when I heard a call... to start learning things about the Bible).

Rose Ngundo also stated that: *'I love the word of God and so I wanted to get good experience and good foundation through the TEE.'* Abbey Gathendu testified that she

joined the programme because she wanted to gain: *'knowledge about the Bible and also knowing about my church.'* The focus group members further stated that: *'I joined the course because I was a Sunday School teacher and I wanted to know about the Bible and our church. So I wanted to gain knowledge.'* Mary Kavinya stated that: *'I wanted to learn more about our church because before I got married I was a Roman Catholic.'*

Karen Bulinda wanted to study the word of God because she realized that very few women had done theology in her church: *'Nikaonelea wachungaji ndio wanajua neno sana. Wamama san asana hawajui neon la Mungu'* (Then I thought it is only pastors who have studied the word. Women mostly do not know God's word).

#### ***4C.3.1.2 Love for learning***

Only 4 % of the responses give love for learning as one of the motivating factors. However, significantly, this factor was raised in both the individual interview and focus group discussions. Rose Ngundo testified that: *'I like learning a lot. Not only TEE but also most of my time I spent reading books, writing poems and stories. So, due to that, I saw that TEE course could be very helpful to me.'*

#### **4C.3.2 Social Reasons**

##### ***4C.3.2.1 Be in the company of others***

Some of the women in the TEE group mentioned the need to get company as one of the motivating factors for studying. This opportunity was provided by the weekly seminars, when TEE students met for group discussions. Indeed the women students pointed out that they had learned many things from associating with others during the seminar meetings: *'...and I actually dress better now because I want to be like the members of the group. I have to look like the other women in the group.'* Rose Ngundo stated that: *'You know TEE has to do with groups. You have to join a group where you study together. When you join a group discussion you get many ideas. You are advised, you know their social life and how people live and so on.'* While in the focus group discussions she commented that: *'I believe that if you socialize with people you come to be enlightened and learn more.'* Being in the company of others was a crucial reason for joining the TEE programme for 17 % of all the responses.

#### **4C.3.2.2 Motivated by others**

For some of the TEE women, the motivating factor was the fact that they saw other students involved in the course and realized that these students had more opportunities to serve in the church community. Therefore, they decided to join the course so as to get these opportunities also. For instance, Betty Ambandala states that: *'hii TEE nilionelea kitu ya kwanza wale walikuwa wa kwanza kujiunga, walipomaliza kitabu ya kwanza walitumwa nje kuubiri. Sasa walipotumwa nje kuubiri, nikasikia ata mimi nilikuwa miongoni mwao.'* (This TEE, those who were the first to join the course, when they completed the course they were sent out to preach. So when they were sent out, I felt that even I should be among them. So I was pulled very much, I said even I must get involved so that I get confidence for going out to preach and being able to talk in the presence of people).

At the same time, many women in this category testified that they were introduced by their pastor into the programme. Mary Kavinya stated that: *'we were introduced by another pastor who was a student.'* Anne Njoya, too, testified that: *'we had somebody who was working with the TEE in our church. He was trying to introduce the concept in our church. My sister and I and a few other women in the church, we decided to join the programme.'* This was further echoed by Abbey Gathendu who noted that: *'we had gone to visit a pastor who was the TEE clerk...he told me that at Sigona they were starting a TEE course.'*

#### **4C.3.3 Spiritual reasons**

##### **4C.3.3.1 Spiritual growth and inspiration**

Since its inception TEE has been concerned with church growth, both spiritually and numerically. The pioneers of the programme were convinced that TEE would lead to spiritual growth. Once spiritual growth has occurred, then the students would go out to preach to others and in the process bring new converts to church, leading to numerical growth. Women in the present research, too, highlighted the need for spiritual growth as one of their motivating factors. Indeed 7 % of the responses given showed women's concerns with spiritual growth. Karen Bulinda stated that: *'hii masomo niliingia ili nipate mwongozo nikiwa ndani ya kanisa'* (I joined this study so that I get spiritual guidance when I am in the church). Rose Ngundo also stated that: *'TEE helps one to*

*grow spiritually, morally and even physically.* This spiritual growth came from the exposure to the study materials, the discussions during seminar meetings and the practical experience. Thus all the three segments of TEE were seen as agents of spiritual growth and inspiration.

#### **4C.3.3.2 To do God's work better**

About 11% of the responses given showed that some TEE women were concerned about their performance in the different church departments that they are involved in. These women wanted to perform these duties better. One of the functions that women wanted to improve on was preaching. Beatrice Ambandala wanted to study so as to be able to preach without fear. Jerusha Njagi stated that: *'I got a deeper knowledge of theological issues, so that now I can give a better preaching session.'* Thus preaching forms part of the church activities that women are involved in and that they would like to improve through TEE study. Although TEE graduates are not remunerated financially, they seem to gain a lot of satisfaction in performing the different functions in the church. Some of the women stated that even before taking the course they had been involved in church ministry but their performance improved after taking the course. For instance, Jerusha Njagi further stated that she had been a Deacon in the church but her performance was not as good as it became after she took the TEE course. Mary Kavinya, has been operating as a treasurer of the Women's Guild and an elder for a long time but it was only after her involvement in the TEE programme that she started performing these duties perfectly: *'...so I can do it better than before...it is not like before because we did not know how to go about some things but now we feel enlightened. So the course is helping us.'* Grace Monze further emphasised that the course had enabled her to make better decisions as a church leader. Thus the urge to perform church work better played a part in motivating women to join the TEE programme.

#### **4C.3.4 Psychological Reasons**

##### **4C.3.4.1 Rediscover academic ability**

Parr (1998:93) has stated that in a patriarchal society women are considered as *'primary carers of the young, their partners and the elderly'*. Unfortunately, many years of pre-occupation with these duties have negative effects on women's perception of self and their capabilities. Some TEE women want to prove that they are still capable. After

spending most of her life as a housewife, Abbey Gathendu started doubting herself and her capabilities. She, therefore, wanted to do TEE so that she could rediscover her talents that had been obscured by the many years of invisibility in the public sphere. Thus TEE presented an ideal opportunity to prove to herself that she was still clever and capable of performing as well as when she was young and in secondary school:

*'I wanted to know whether I am still the same one (laughter). I wanted to prove to myself that I can still perform well... You know as a house wife I thought I had ceased being the real person, as I was before, because when you are in school you were aiming higher but now the situation changes when I became a housewife. So when I joined the TEE class I realized that there was nothing wrong with me. I was still the same one. I could still perform well'*

### **Escape Reasons**

#### ***Escape loneliness***

Bakker (1998: 57) noted that *'studying also gives access to the outside world in a literal sense. Many women make no secret of the fact that the weekly tutorial is a good excuse to leave the home and meet other women.'* Similarly, in this research Wambui Kavengi had just retired and had been spending all her days in the home and so she felt that she needed to get something outside the home to keep her busy, and so she joined the TEE class: *'I wanted to do something with myself because I am retired and I am home most of the time and I was wondering what to do and so when this programme came up I thought it was the right time for me to do something outside the house.'*

She, therefore, wanted to join the course to get an opportunity to participate in public life. The seminar meetings in the TEE course provided an ideal opportunity to be *'outside the home.'*

## 4C.4 Reasons given by the Coop Women

Table 7: Summary of reasons (9 respondents)

Broad Reasons	Specific Reasons	Percentage of responses	No of respondents
Work/career related (61%)	Career advancement	25	7
	Motivated by colleagues	18	5
	Salary increment	14	4
	Change career	4	1
Knowledge reasons (32%)	About cooperatives	32	9
Escape reasons (4%)	Keep self busy	4	1
Social reason (0%)	-	0	0
Academic (0%)	-	0	0
Personal (0%)	-	0	0
Spiritual (0%)	-	0	0
Psychological (0%)	-	0	0

### 4C.4.1 Work/career related

#### 4C.4.1.1 Career advancement

Many women in the Coop programme took the course as a preparation for admission to the residential course given at the same college. To be admitted to the Certificate in Business Administration Course (CBA), one had to have done the distance learning programme. Thus many took the course as part of long term plans for further education. Wanja Ngui, for example, states that:

*At my place of work they had promised if you do the correspondence course you could go for CBA (Certificate in Business Administration)... the rule was that you have to do the correspondence course before you could go for CBA course. So I tried my level best to go for that course ... I finally did that CBA and I hope to do others.*

Mary Mutwa, too, stated that: *'I was identified to take correspondence course because I could not be admitted to the residential course...so after missing that opportunity, I had to opt for the correspondence course.'* Loise Muthinzi stated that: *'I just realized that it was relevant for my stationing in the work I do in the office.'* Hence the Coop women are concerned about career development.

#### **4C.4.1.2 Salary increment**

Some women in the Coop programme gave financial reasons as one of the motivating factors for joining the course, with 14 % of the responses falling under this category. They pointed out that it was the practice of their employer that once they completed the course they would get a salary increment and so they decided to join the programme. Thus Faith Nzuki stated that she: *'wanted to...get the increment that those who completed the course got.'* Jane Mbau further stated that: *'I also wanted to receive the increments that come when one does the course.'*

Lilly Muli hoped that once she completed the programme and got a new job she would get better pay and be able to improve the living standard of her family: *'If I get a heavy salary I can buy a plot (land for residential development) ... so if I get a better pay, then I would be able to take my children to nice schools and colleges. I would like to dress differently and drive a nice car.'* Hence, financial gains are tied to improved standards of living and higher status.

#### **4C.4.1.3 Motivated by colleagues at work**

The presence of role models has played a big influence on women's participation in distance learning. Throughout the interviews many women stated that they were influenced by their friends and in some cases their bosses. Faith Nzuki stated that:

*I was influenced by another colleague, who advised me the course is very nice and that once you finish it you become more knowledgeable in the area of co-operative education, and that you also get a salary increment from your employer. (Faith Nzuki).*

Similarly, Mary Mutwa had testified that her boss introduced her to the programme and supported her financially to study: *'At some point I got a good manager who was interested in the training of staff. So he knew about the training, which could benefit the staff. He identified me as one who could go for the training.'* Jessica Kianda further pointed out that: *'we got a manager...and he introduced us to the correspondence course.'* Jane Mbau has also stated that her boss influenced her to join the programme. All these examples show an employer who identified them for training and in fact even paid the fees for them. The employers are concerned about improved performance and

productivity. They also show that the opinion of others about distance learning determines whether women join a programme or not.

#### **4C.4.1.4 Change career**

A few joined the programme so as to change their careers. Lilly Muli wanted to get a new job because she does not like the present one: *'I hope to get a new job so that I come out of this career of secretarial. I do not like it... once I finish I would go like a hot cake... so I hope to get a good job, so that I may be able to buy better things for myself.'* Lilly felt that the kind of job she was doing was not her best choice and so she hoped that after completion of the course, she would have a higher chance of getting a new and better paying job and be able to buy herself better things: *'I have always wanted to change my career, because after school you just get into whatever career that comes your way. So you end up in the wrong career, one that you do not like.'* Even her friends have been encouraging her to complete the programme because: *'they saw this programme as an opportunity to be more marketable in the job market, that it could lead to other openings.'*

#### **4C.4.2 Knowledge reasons**

##### **4C.4.2.1 Gain knowledge about cooperatives**

The Coop women were interested in gaining knowledge about cooperatives. This formed 32 % of all their responses that were given for participation. Since many of the Coop women worked in cooperative societies, they wanted to gain more knowledge in the area. Jane Mbau stated that: *'I was new at my place of work and I wanted to know what co-operative movement is concerned about.'* Faith Nzuki testified that she joined the programme because: *'I wanted to gain knowledge.'* Maria Kilomo stated that: *I wanted to expand my learning.* At the same time, Eliza Gichere stated that: *'I wanted to have additional knowledge.'* Jane Mbau testified that: *'I wanted to do the course so as to gain more knowledge.'* Loise Muthinzi stated that: *'I also knew that I would get more knowledge.'* Magdalene Mweru was even more specific when she stated that: *'I wanted to know more about cooperative societies.'* Lilly Muli also testified that: *'After working in this college I have found myself interested in learning things on cooperative.'*

### **4C.4.3 Escape reasons**

#### **4C.4.3.1 Keep self busy**

Although the Coop programme did not have a residential or tutorial component, the students still felt that studying kept them busy. The focus group for example, pointed out that:

*At the same time, I found myself idle and I thought the best way of spending my time was to go back to school. Sometimes we get out of job very early, at around 3 pm and I have house help (domestic worker) in the house and I have minimum duties at home and so I decided, let me start on the course. (Maria Kilomo).*

During the focus group discussions, Eliza Gichere stated that she found out that she had few chores to perform and so she decided to join the programme, in order to use her spare time constructively and keep herself busy: *'I also found out that since I am not married I am able to plan my time. So I had all the time at home. I found myself idle and so when I started the course I felt occupied and that I can do a lot.'*

These comments show that while the married women complained about the many chores they had to combine with studying and, which sometimes overwhelmed them, the unmarried women found themselves with too much time to themselves and due to this fact, they decided to get involved with distance learning.

### **4C.5 Commonalities in the women's views on distance learning**

In this section the findings from the three categories of women are looked at to see the commonalities and an attempt is made to integrate them. All the women from the three programmes have stressed the convenience and flexibility in distance learning, in that it enables them to combine daily chores with studying, without disrupting any of their lives.

#### **4C.5.1 Flexible and Convenient**

The flexibility of distance learning was highlighted in the literature review (Dodds 1994, Howarth 1991, Commonwealth of Learning 2001). Distance learning has been credited for opening opportunities for the majority of women who had been locked out of higher education (Taylor, 2001). As the literature review has shown, for a long time tertiary

education has been 'selective with access and somewhat restricted' (Taylor, 2001:5). However, this state of affairs has been changed with the advent of distance learning methods. Through it, individuals who had been barred from participating in education have had doors open for them. It enables learners to study as they carry on with their day-to-day responsibilities (Perraton 2001, Commonwealth of Learning, 2001, Dodds 1994, Mugridge 1994). Perraton (2001) states that distance learning has a great advantage over the conventional methods in '...its flexibility: people who have got jobs can study in their own time, at their own homes without being removed from their work for long periods...' (p.7). In particular, distance learning has opened doors to women to participate in higher education (Mugridge 1994, Kanwar & Taplin 2002). Faith (1988), too, points out that distance learning attracts a large number of women students because of its flexibility and ability to enable women to combine study with other family chores. Sturrock (1988) gives the advantage of distance learning for women as the ability to enable them to perform family and job commitments as they study. May's research (1994:5) showed that women 'chose distance learning because of their personal circumstances and work commitments.'

Similarly, the women learners from the three programmes found it flexible and convenient since it enabled them to combine their daily chores with career and academic development. Thus Esther Ocholar stated that: '*It is convenient to women because it fits into your schedules.*' Emily Munywoki, who was doing the B. Ed. programme stated that:

*I am able to combine my housework and my studies. I can still be with my children as I study. I do not need to divorce my children to study. If anything I motivate my children very well when we sit together with my children all doing assignments. It is convenient for women because it fits into your schedules. You can programme yourself and say I will be doing these other things during this certain period and this is not a big problem. I find distance learning a better alternative for women because being away from home is not there...it was going to give me an opportunity to learn at my own time and my own pace.*

Similarly, Evelyn Mutambo stated that:

*I opted for distance learning because I did not want to leave my teaching job. In any case I need the salary so as to finance my studies. This course would enable*

*me to work and study at the same time. The other courses, even if they take place in the evening, I would be tired by that time but now I can study at the time when I feel ready to do so. The distance learning course is flexible enough and suits my needs.*

The B. Ed. focus group discussions pointed out the importance of running their families and being close to them as they study. Some of them had got chances to go abroad but felt that this option would lead them to leave their families. Joyce Kamba stated that:

*So I started trying out chances. I got three invitation letters to different universities....Resigning to take up the admission abroad meant that I would have to leave behind my children, my husband and so on, ...so we felt that this course was a better option. Because although it is a bit strenuous we are able to meet so many other needs as we study.*

The women in the Coop programme also applauded distance learning for its flexibility:

*I chose correspondence method because I would work at my own pace and would be able to combine with my other duties as a wife, a mother and a farmer.... In correspondence you have nobody to rush you and you can do your other work comfortably (Focus group discussions, Magdalene Mweru).*

They talked about '*freedom of studying at my own time*' as the driving force for choosing the method (Loise Muthinzi). Those living in the rural areas found distance learning the only method applicable to their situation because most of the other programmes were based in the cities and towns. Magdalene stressed this point by stating that: '*some of us live in the villages... so with correspondence course we do not have to move to towns where colleges are*'.

For those with small children, distance learning would allow them to study as they continued to take care of them. Jessica, from the Coop programme stated that:

*...I would choose to go for correspondence because I would be breastfeeding my baby (one month old) as I turn books, then I would also be checking on the other children who are playing outside. As a mother correspondence helps you to do everything at the same time.*

Another factor that the Coop women brought out clearly was that in a situation where the husband was against the wife's study, distance learning would enable her to study in secret:

*'If your husband does not want you to read, organize yourself and read when he is not there. You choose a place where you will be studying even without him knowing...So women should try their level best and promote themselves through studying.'* (Lilly Muli).

Distance learning was described as a door opener for the many women who have been locked out of education and advancement:

*Correspondence education can open doors to many people who have been locked out. Our first-born reached form two and was taken to college to do nursing. She completed this course. Now she has done so many other courses through correspondence such that she is very senior.* (Lilly Muli).

Similar sentiments came from the TEE women:

*I don't think I would have wanted to be a residential student. I would have liked to be based at home so that I could continue with my other commitments and at the same time study. So I chose to study through TEE.* (Focus group discussions, Wambui Kavengi).

Therefore, TEE was seen as convenient and flexible method of study. Even those women doing farming would still manage to participate in the programme as they continue with their work:

*Hata ikiwa mama anaweka mayae, utafanya hio kazi halafu ukatie ngombe nyanzi, na uingie kwa masomo, baadaye unarudi kutayarisha chakula ya jioni. Juma mosi ikifika unaamka mapema utengesee muzee chai, uchunie ngombe majani, kama unapatie kuku chakula, na ikifika saa tano unatoka unaenda seminar kwa masaa mawawili. Halafu unarudi nyumbani, uanze kazi ya nyumbani, unaangalia kuku yako, na ngombe, halafu unapika chakula ya jioni. Ukimaliza kama saa mbili ama tatu, alafu uingie kwa masomo dakika 30 halafu uende ukalale.* (Susan Waudu).

(Even if you keep chickens you will do that job and then you cut grass for the cows and then you enter into study. Thereafter you come to prepare food for the evening. Then you go to cut grass for the cows or you give food to the chickens and at 11 am on Saturday, you leave for the seminar for two hours only. Then you come back and start on the housework. You check on your chickens and cows. Then you cook evening food. When you finish around 8pm, then you study for 30 minutes and then go to sleep.)

#### **4C.6 Barriers to women’s participation**

In this section, I pay attention to the issues that block women from registering for and successfully completing distance learning programmes. Stalker (2001:289) has noted two categories of situational obstacles that prevent women from involvement in higher education. These are the ‘attitudes of those around women, their moral stances and their emotional support or betrayal’, and the ‘practical, day-to-day demands in private sphere relationships that draw them from participation in the public sphere of education’. The barriers have been presented together because there are more similarities across the groups.

##### **4C.6.1 Barriers common to two or three groups**

Table 8: Common barriers

Role expectations for women	B. Ed., TEE & Coop
Financial	B. Ed. & a few Coop
Issues of access	B. Ed. & a few Coop
Community’s attitude	B. Ed. & one TEE
Lack of study facilities at home	B. Ed., TEE & Coop

##### ***4C.6.1.1 Role Expectations for women***

Women’s daily demands in the private sphere have had negative impact on their ability to complete successfully their education (Stalker 2001). Kanwar & Taplin (2001) have further noted that combining family and job responsibilities acts as a barrier to women’s participation in distance learning. Thompson (1997:64), too, has noted that ‘women still retain the major responsibilities for childcare and domestic work and often feel they have to ‘do it better’ so that their absence while at college doesn’t become a major source of grievance’. Since there are already too many chores

that women have to perform in the home and work place, studying comes as an additional burden that the women have to cope with. In the present research, women in the three programmes admitted that the chores and responsibilities that they shouldered hampered their studying. Deborah Kivanguli from the B. Ed. programme stated that: *'I have to carry all the family responsibilities and at the same time study. I have to take care of my husband, children and all the other responsibilities. We have a lot of challenges.'*

Sofia Kiveti, from the same category, pointed out that life had become very difficult due to the additional responsibility of studying:

*I have to combine studying with raising my four children, a husband and a job and of course other duties at home. Life is very hard for me. I have to wake up very early in the morning and go to sleep very late so as to cope with the work. In the school where I teach, I find myself with just too much work. I rarely have enough time to study.... So you squeeze your self very much. Over the weekends you go to the farm and by the end of the day you are very tired. You go to school (to teach) and by the end of the day you are very tired. So I find that it is very hard to study. I normally squeeze myself and during the exams I abandon the other farm work and pay attention to the studies. Other times I only manage to give about one hour per day to the work.*

It is evident from the above statement that studying is squeezed in between other chores that women have to perform both in the home, including farm work and full time employment. These women want to learn but they find themselves in a dilemma between giving time to their studies and to their families:

*Life of a student who is a mother and a wife is very challenging and sometimes some areas suffer. For instance when I am doing exams I have to commute from campus to my house. That time my children have come home for holidays and so I say that if I do not spend time with the children I will also lose them because they will be too independent and will just be doing their things without supervision. So I find commuting a good option for me. I go in the morning and come home. By the time I reach home it is late and so I do not have quality time for my studies. (Emily Munywoki).*

The B. Ed. focus group summed up these obstacles by stating that:

*So you can imagine the stress in the house... somebody (husband) is already giving you problems; your job is a problem; your children are a problem. It is too much. And when you have to go out to look for a colleague who is ahead of you, then he would ask, 'who is that you are going to see?' There are very few husbands who find it easy when the wife is going to see somebody out there. The situation is worse if she is going to see a colleague who is a man. (Emma Omari).*

The Coop women narrated similar experiences. Lilly, for instance, stated that:

*Surely, the way we are busy in the office, I do not have time to study the materials. I have problems with keeping house girls.... Like the whole of this week I had no house girl...I have to leave the small child in a neighbour's house and take the other one to school. After that I go to the office. All the housework would be waiting for me to perform in the evening once I come from work. I could take the book and then start worrying about what is happening in my house. To read a chapter is a real problem. But this week I am settling down to reading and I do not want to keep the book down again. I want to be among the first group to do the exams....(Lilly Muli).*

With small children, studying becomes extremely difficult and hence, this statement articulates the need for support that women distance learners are asking for. Such support could come from sisters, neighbours and domestic workers.

Similarly, Mary Mutwa, one of the completers of the Coop programme stated that:

*I was doing the course when I was married and as a mother. Life was not smooth. I had to balance housework, the baby, husband and the job. I used to come from work, do my housework: cook, wash the baby and then finally settle down to read for an hour. By this time my husband would be relaxing when I am reading...It was not easy to combine because I would come from work when I am already tired and yet I had to complete the housework. Even reading I had to force myself.*

A few TEE women also experienced similar strains as they combined studying with family chores. They gave examples of some of their colleagues who had withdrawn from the programme after being overwhelmed by the home chores. The focus group discussion stated that:

*Women have a lot of work at home. Even when you are not working (full time employment) you still have to do some more work in the home. But men they just come home from work and relax. Women sacrifice a lot to run the home. They do not even have time to relax like men. (Irene Ndonye).*

My experience as a researcher also showed the kind of hectic lives that distance learners go through. While trying to organize for interview dates with these women, in some cases, we kept on postponing the date of the interview because some emergency had arisen at the home level. For instance, for one respondent, we could not settle down for the interview because she had to go and pick up the child from school. For another respondent, the domestic worker left and so she could not be available for the interview, since she was taking care of the children. Hence, women have to combine lifestyle roles and responsibilities.

When I visited these women's homes, I was also able to make useful observation related to the harsh conditions under which they study. Most of them had many responsibilities to combine with their studies. Take Jessica Kianda, for instance; when I went to her home, I found her with a three weeks' old baby. She had delivered through Caesarian Section. She did not have anyone else to assist her with the house chores. She had two more children, aged three and six, to take care of. She would breast feed the baby, change the napkins, then wash clothes for the other kids, wash the house and then prepare food for the family.

At Lydia Mwenge's home, I also observed the many chores that women do as they study. She had a horticultural farm to look after and so I found her with varieties of fruits that she was selling. As we chatted, she received information that her house guard had not reported for duty. So she had to make arrangements for someone else to take over. Then one of the grandsons came running, saying that he had developed a

headache. Lydia had to get some medicine for him. It was only after she had attended to these issues that we settled down for the interview process.

In their recommendations, women stated that they would perform better as students if they received support from their spouses, in terms of assistance with the chores at the home front. The B. Ed. focus group recommended that: *'Men should be kinder and relieve us of some of the duties that we have to combine with the studies'* (Lucy Nguli). Lillian Odale stated that

*Men should help women with domestic work. Men should cooperate with the wife so that she can complete the work. If he does not want to eat food cooked by the house girl then he should be able to cook for himself. Even he can take the children out and leave the wife to concentrate on her studies.*

The family environment has a lot of influence on whether a woman joins and completes successfully the distance learning programme. The B. Ed. women called for a change of attitude, not only on their husbands, but also on the extended family. Women students needed not only financial support, but also emotional and physical support:

*Things like sharing of duties and responsibilities including daily chores and financial responsibilities. Sometimes a woman may come here for residential and when she goes home after two weeks she finds a heap of work piled for her to do (clothes). The man says this is your duty. At that time she has assignments to do. So sharing of duties and more so understanding and love are important for women to complete. (Esther Ochala).*

Similarly, the Coop women stated that: *'the husbands should also come in, assisting us in day-to-day life so as to cope with the studies'* (Loise Muthinzi). The Coop focus group pointed that: *'Yes, men should share with us the housework so that, women can complete their course. They should also stop being jealous of their wives' education. They should encourage their wives to study.'* (Jane Mbau). They went ahead to point out that: *'Support from the husband both financial and sharing in the responsibilities at the family level. These men should stop sitting down and waiting for the women to carry out all the home chores including working in the garden.'* (Lilly Muli). Jane Mbau stated that:

*In fact our husbands should participate in the housework. If they put themselves into wife's shoes then they would help the women by lessening her burden of family chores and if this were done many women would complete successfully their correspondence studies.*

Another focus group member had the view that: *'when a woman enrolls for a correspondence course the husband should be able to hire a house girl for her to assist with the housework and sometimes farm work so that you concentrate on the studies.'* (Focus group, Magdalene Mweru).

A few of the TEE women echoed the rest when they recommended assistance with family chores: *'Men should support women. Another lady dropped because she did not have a worker to help her with house and farm work. If they could be assisted at home then she would continue.'* (Anne Njoya).

However, this was an isolated case, because the majority of the TEE women talked of how women should organize their chores better, so that they could create time for study. For some, the house chores were God-given and so they did not need to complain about it. The change they asked for most was:

*I think for married women they should talk with their family members so that on the day of the seminar, they do much of her duties for those days she is going for the seminar and also the times she has to do the studies. The family members, both husband and the children need to understand that when the lady learns TEE they would also benefit.* (Rose Ngundo).

Moreover, many TEE women did not come outright with a desire for husbands to share the duties at home. I assumed that they were shy in asking the husbands to assist with house chores. This state of affairs could be explained by the fact that both the church and society have specific gender roles for women. The church teachings, in particular, have continued to uphold the status quo and these women seem to conform to these expectations.

From the government side, it was only the B. Ed. women who recommended study leave so as to lessen their burdens:

*Students should be given study leave so that they do not combine work and study. They can be given leave with full pay because you need to pay fees. The government should consider giving students study-leave with pay if you are paying for yourself. Combining school activities with assignments and exams is just too much, not to mention that we also have families competing for our time.* (Josephine Mbavu).

#### **4C.6.1.2 Financial constrains (B. Ed. and a few Coop)**

Karen Evans (1995) has given fee requirements as one of the barriers to women's education. The financial difficulties that women experience are made worse by the fact that the majority of Kenyan women do not access, control and own property such as land, animals or equipment and have to rely on the good will of their spouses for financial support (Kibiti 2002, Human Rights Watch 2003, Kenya Gender Research Centre 2000). Hence, when the husband is against her going back to study, then she would not be able to continue with the study programme. With the present economic powerlessness, Kenyan women have to struggle very hard to raise the kind of fees that are charged for some of the distance learning programmes. Once they joined the programme, financial constraints continue to remain a key hindrance in their study life. Almost all the women interviewed in the B. Ed. programme made reference to financial constraints as having blocked them from registering earlier on or hampering their smooth progression with the study programme:

*Life for me has become very difficult and this is the area I want to share with you. It is very challenging. Financial constraints are the main problem. Here is a family to cater for; here are extended family members also who need your financial assistance because they know you are employed.* (Deborah Kivanguli).

Florence Mukasa testified that:

*...But I have tried to balance, although this has affected my college payment rate. Because so far I have only managed to pay, Ksh 103,000 (US \$1,400) and we are expected to pay Ksh250, 000 (US \$3,333). I have noticed that I am not doing fine in this area because I have to pay other fees for my children and other relatives.*

Esther Ochola noted that as a widowed woman she had to struggle harder than others to raise not only her own fees but also fees for her children:

*My children do not feed as well as I would wish because I use too much money on the course. And being a widow I manage everything on my own...I used to live a comparatively higher life than now. There are things I have had to cut down so as to pay the fees. But when I complete I hope to have higher life after getting a new job and better salary.*

When I looked at the Coop women, I saw that financial issues are not highlighted as much as in the B. Ed. programme. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of them were sponsored by their employers. Others were subsidized by the Coop College where they worked. In any case, the Coop programme was far cheaper than the B. Ed. one. Whereas a Coop student needed to raise Ksh. 9,760 (US \$122) for the whole programme, a B. Ed. student needed to raise about Ksh. 344,000 (US \$4,300) to complete the course. Of course, the residential B. Ed. programme would be more expensive than the purely correspondence course.

As far as the TEE programme was concerned, fees were also subsidized by the church and the students had to raise little money (about Ksh.160, which is US \$2) to buy the study materials. There were rarely any financial constraints facing their successful completion.

In their recommendations, the B. Ed. women urged the institution to be more flexible with its demands on fees. My observation shows that when students have not cleared the whole tuition fee, they are denied the study units, although they are allowed to attend the residential classes and to do the assignments. Since students who pay fees bit by bit are denied the learning materials, by the time they manage to pay the full fees and are given the materials, there is no time to study them. This practice has been a source of discouragement among the women students. Hence, they felt that there was a need for the university to allow female students to have the study units as early as possible so that they could make use of them:

*They need to be a bit flexible. They insist that we must pay before we get the study materials but this inconveniences us. They should allow us to pay by the time we graduate. But sometimes some women have tried to work things out*

*but due to those pressures at home they are not been able to raise the fees on time. So even the college has to be a bit flexible...We are very much willing to pay these fees but actually we need to be given time.* (Focus group, Lucy Nguli).

Other women suggested that the institution and the government organize for loans for distance learning students: *'They should offer to women students some loans so that if the husband does not support her financially then the college comes in to help through loans and scholarships.'* (Esther Ochala). This state of affairs arose: *'because many women are having problems because they do not control finances in their homes.'* (Joyce Kamba). The institution could also organize with the Teachers Service Commission so that University fees could be paid through a check-off system. Debora Kivanguli further stated that: *'The government should give us loans and bursaries to pay our fees... This would help us a lot and this will lessen our problems.'*

Other suggestions were that the government could liaise with donor organizations, whose area of preference is women's education, so that they could provide scholarships to women distance learners: *'The government should encourage donor bodies to give loans and funds to women who are doing distance learning programmes. This would be a great help.'* (Esther Ochala). Such loans could be repaid once the distance learner completed her studies, in the same way that residential students are given loans and once they complete their programmes, they are expected to repay.

Similarly, the Coop women stated that: *'Maybe promote scholarships for women because there are many women who want to join but do not have the money. If the women are given scholarships the men will not give lame excuse of lack of money to prevent her from going to college.'* (Magdalene Mweru).

At the same time, the government could take measures to ensure that the courses are affordable since women *'have got nothing. They have no cow or land to sell like the men'* and so *'if the fees were too high then most women would be locked out.'* (Jane Mbau).

Another recommendation related to community input to women's education. The women learners argued that if the community changed their attitude towards women education, then they would be able to organize for fund-raising meetings for women: *'the community needs to change attitude to women so that they can organize fund-raising meetings for women in the same way they contribute for the men.'* (Esther Ochala). Observation shows that when a male student is going to the university as a mature student, the whole village, and sometimes locations, come together to assist him raise funds for his fees. However, when it is a mature woman going back to study, the community is reluctant to assist, arguing that she is a wife and a mother. This means that the society does not support women's efforts to further their education. The situation becomes worse if her husband has less education. Hence, the women that were interviewed stressed the need to sensitize the community to accept that women's education was as important as that of men.

Since the TEE programme was highly subsidized, the women in this category had no direct recommendation on fees charged.

#### ***4C.6.1.3 Issues of access: Lack of learning opportunities***

Accessing higher education has always been a problem for Kenyans because there are many more who sit for the qualifying examination than existing university and tertiary places. Even with the established affirmative action in admission, which involves the lowering of admission criteria for women, many more women remain locked out of higher education in Kenya (Nungu 1999). There are few places at the government-sponsored institutions where fees are subsidized. The competition for such places is so stiff that it may take many years before she is admitted to a programme. However, the ability of distance learning to open educational opportunities to those who had been blocked from learning has been well documented (Mugridge 1994, Perraton 2001, Taylor 2001). Indeed the pioneers of distance learning saw it as a method that was able

to provide education to the disadvantaged groups in society, including the women, the disabled, and those who lived far from educational institutions (Inquai 1994).

This research has corroborated these findings by establishing that many B. Ed. women had wanted to participate in university education earlier on after completing high school, but they were not selected at the time. For instance, Evelyn Mutambu stated that: *'when I missed to get a place in the university I felt very frustrated.'* A participant in the focus group that:

*I did my A' level exams in 1978 and I missed the university entrance requirement by one point. I had nine points. By then there were no diploma courses for art students. So it was like we had hit the wall... I decided I would better go for the P1 course, but then still I was not satisfied even after completing the P1 course.* (Emma Omari).

Apia Okanga stated that:

*...I always wanted to do a degree course but I did not make it then, but I knew that one day I would still do it. But I missed university entrance requirements by an inch...I have always had the desire. I had always been comforting myself that one time I will get a chance and do a degree course.*

Mary Mutwa, who had completed the Coop course stated that she had wanted to join the residential programme earlier on, but due to the high competition for the few places, she was not selected. She later joined the distance learning programme so as to be able to compete favourably for the residential certificate course in Business Management at the same college.

At the same time, there are no high level distance programmes at the Cooperative College. Once a student completes the certificate course via distance mode, she has to join full time programmes if she wants to do advanced courses. This limits many women who are not able to circumvent the many barriers blocking full time study for mature women.

For the TEE programme, there were no limitations to the number admitted and so they did not have problems of access. In any case, TEE is organized in such a way that courses are created for people of all levels depending on the applicants' level of education. Indeed the success of a TEE programme is measured in terms of the many people who are involved and so for this category of women a lack of opportunities did not surface as one of the barriers to their learning.

As part of their recommendations, the B. Ed. women urged the learning institutions to create bridging courses so as to encourage women who dropped out of school to register for secondary school examinations as private and mature age candidates so that they '*raise their minimum marks and be able to compete for university opportunities*'. Due to the great value they place on women returning to learning, they also pointed out the need for a '*government policy to encourage women to go back to school regardless of their age because their education would have good impact on family, children and society*' (Lillian Odale). Evans (1995) had earlier on noted the importance of provision of bridging courses and conversion courses so that women could be able to update their knowledge and skills with the view to re-entering the labour market.

#### ***4C.6.1.4 Communities' attitude to women's education (B. Ed. & one TEE)***

Among the 130 million children in the world who do not attend school, girls form the majority (UNESCO Courier, March 2000). This means that girls swell the illiteracy rates and continue to form the majority of adults who drop out from the formal school system. In Kenya the scenario is the same in that women and girls have continued to have low participation rates (Nungu 1999).

Similarly, the stories of B. Ed. women shows that many failed to complete formal education due to the attitudes prevalent in society about girl child education:

*...But I did not finish form six because there were other people behind me who needed school fees. There were two of my brothers.... It was very hard for our father to pay fees for all of us. So I left at form five and joined Iregi Teachers College. That time they were giving us allowances at college and so it was easier, for my parents, for me to join a college instead of high school where I needed to pay fees (Joyce Kamba).*

*I did my form six in 1986. Prior to that I had not attended form five because my parents had problems paying fees. I am the last born out of six. Most of the time my brothers and sisters were in college and school and so it was very hard for my father to pay the fees for me. (Meli Manga).*

The situation became worse when women decided to go back to study at a mature age because Kenyan society is negative towards mature women's education. The women in this research testified that: '*Some think you have too much money to waste...they think we are coming here because we have money to waste.*' (Joyce Kamba).

This negative attitude towards women's education was further extended to their husbands in that they would be mocked and influenced negatively with the sole aim of making life for the woman student impossible:

*Some friends of my husband think that I have sat on my husband and that is why he can take me to school...so they take him as a weak man. Even my immediate neighbour talks about it very badly. He talks about the much money I am spending on the course. They think nimekalia bwana yangu sana. Hata wanaona kama nimeenda Ukambani nikachukua Kamuti (I have sat on my husband. Even they think I have gone to Ukambani<sup>6</sup> to get love portion to make him weak.) (Joyce Kamba).*

Evelyn Mutambo also testified that:

*Some think I have become proud...some feel that I do not fit any more in their company. They see me very high. Sometimes I try to show them I am still with them and that they can also go for further education somewhere but they do not seem to understand.*

Due to this negative attitude to their studying most women learners decided to stay indoors without socializing with friends and neighbours: '*All this has made me stay in my house. I never socialize... they have negative attitude towards me and so they do not accept me well into the community.*'

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<sup>6</sup> Many Kenyans believe that very strong witchcraft, especially love portion, comes from Ukambani region

For the TEE group it was only Abbey Gathendu who experienced negative attitude to her involvement. She stated how she received discouragements from her neighbours when she joined the TEE programme. Since she was a housewife, the community did not understand why she had to waste money and time studying. She testified that: *'there are some who abuse me because of the course'*.

None of the Coop women encountered this negative attitude to their study. This could be explained by the fact that since the Coop course lacked face-to-face meetings; it was possible for one to complete the course without people coming to know that one was involved in it in the first place. Studying for the Coop women was a kind of private affair, which was done either at home or in the office.

As part of their recommendations the B. Ed. women stated that there was need to sensitize communities so that they could change their attitude: *'They should be enlightened. We should be role models so that they can see the value of joining this course'* (Esther Ochala). They further stated that: *'Presently they think that married women should not go back to study. They need to realize that marriage is not the end of the world. Instead, they should encourage the women so that they keep reading.'* (Joyce Kamba).

Although the TEE women did not face this problem they still recommended that there was need for the church to have awareness campaigns to enlighten the whole church, and especially women, about the importance of the TEE programme so that more women could join. This was expressed well in the focus group in the following words:

*There is need to have awareness campaigns in all the churches about TEE. I would like to advise the TEE management to introduce a programme whereby the whole church community can be enlightened or educated on the role of TEE. You see now most church members do not regard the TEE. Most of church members do not recognize the presence of TEE and so they won't even come to seek advice from those who have learned through TEE. Things can actually change in the church if TEE students are recognized. We could even create counselling centres. If people do not know the role of TEE then there would be no effect. So the entire church needs to be educated on importance of TEE.* (Rose Ngundo).

Karen Kanini stated that:

*Mimi kile nataka ni wamama wajiunge, kwa sababu hata boma itabaitika. Wamama wakiingia wa hii masomo watakuwa role model kwa wamama wengine. Hata wakisikia maongeo yako ikiwa tofauti watakuja kukuliza mama hii hulitoa wapi? Na wewe utakuja kuwabia ni TEE.*

(For me what I want is for women to join because even the family will benefit. If women join these studies they would be role models to other women. Even when they hear that your kind of talk is different they would come and ask you, where did you get this? And you will tell them that it is the TEE course).

Jennifer Mkama further stated that:

*ningeonelea wamama waimishwe sana ili waingia kwa TEE. Kwa sababu sasa si wengi, wale wana kuja sana sana kwa kanisa letu. Hii TEE ni masomo imeletwa kwa mlango yako na haitachukua nafasi yako nyingi vile. Wamama wanataka waambiwe kuna opportunity mzuri sana ya kusoma. Hata ikiwa ni kuuza mtumba, unauza mchana na jioni una anza kusoma TEE Na hata hii masomo inakusaidia ufundishe wale wengine. Kwangu nimefikiria TEE ni mzuri sana.*

(I would like women to be encouraged to join TEE courses because now there are not very many who come, especially in my church. This TEE course has been brought right to your door and it would not take much of your time as such. Women should be told that there is a very good opportunity for them to study. Even if it means selling second hand clothes, you can sell during the day and then in the evening you start your TEE lessons).

#### **4C.6.2.5 Lack of study facilities in the home (B. Ed., TEE & Coop)**

For the women who studied at their rural homes, the study environment was not conducive. For instance, Eliza Gichere mentioned that the chairs she used in her mother's house for study did not have a backrest and so she strained her back while studying: '*...But then the room we use for studying is just the simple rural seating room where the chairs are not really good to be used for studying purposes, the seats do not have backrest.*'

The other obstacle was the lack of electricity in some homes, especially in rural areas and non-formal settlements in the towns. Presently, only 0.5 % of rural households have access to electricity (Agunda 2003). At the same time, solar electricity is distributed privately and this makes it too expensive for the majority of rural dwellers. For lighting they had to use a paraffin lamp: '*For lighting I use pressure lamp and it affects my eyes. So it is very strenuous to study at home.*' (Eliza Gichere). The lack of electricity meant that there were no modern cooking facilities in the rural homes and so women had to wake up very early in the morning and put charcoal or firewood in the burner so as to prepare breakfast for the family. It was also tedious for them to iron clothes for the family using the charcoal iron box.

Thus the students operating from rural areas felt that the government should provide electricity to the rural areas so as to lessen the burdens that women carry:

*I think the government should consider giving rural areas electricity. In the morning a woman has to wake up, put charcoal in the burner and that whole process is very tedious and time consuming. With electricity you even iron very fast. So having electricity in the villages would help women very much because they would take shorter time to prepare food, ironing and then go back to their books and you read even better with electricity without eye problems. The kerosene lanterns we use give us eye problem.* (Eliza Gichere).

The government could encourage rural electrification by removing the heavy duty charged on imported solar equipment and also by speeding up its rural electrification programme (Agunda 2003). Provision of electricity to rural areas could make women's lives easier because they would not need to go out to look for firewood. Electricity would make their cooking quicker and by so doing, they could get more time to spare for study.

#### 4C.6.2 Contextual Barriers

Table 9: Summary of contextual barriers

Programee	Barriers
B. Ed.	Opposition from husband
	Pregnancy, childbirth and rearing
	Logistical barriers related to residential schools
	Lack of crèche facilities
	Lack of permanent venue for residential schools
	Work related: Non understanding bosses & colleagues
TEE	Lack of recognition and transfer of credit
Coop	Lack of tuition and feedback

##### 4C.6.2.1 Opposition from husbands (B. Ed.)

The stories of B. Ed. women showed that many women could not go back to study because their husbands did not approve of it. Kenyan society expects that once a woman is married and has children she should just concentrate on her family and that the issue of her going back to school does not arise. Joyce Kamba summed up the situation by stating that: *'My course is not a priority to him.'* For many of the women, the education of other people in the nuclear and extended family was given priority over theirs.

The women's stories also pointed to the fact that their involvement in distance learning had created tensions within their families. Lillian Odale, for instance stated that:

*My husband encouraged me to start the course but sometimes you find that there is tension in the relationship caused by my involvement in the course. So you find that you are doing exams and you are being harassed, left, right and centre, because of what you have not done. Sometimes he does not want you to remain at the table studying while he goes to bed.*

There was opposition to B. Ed. women because of their having to attend the in-built residential sessions. This meant that these women could not perform the responsibilities at home and so when these duties were not done, then problems arose in the marriage. For instance Joyce Kamba states that:

*...At the beginning he looked like he was excited about the whole thing. Actually he brought me the forms from Main Campus. He paid the initial amount for the application forms, but as the days go by and like this holiday I*

*have to board for three weeks, he is not very excited... So his excitement is like, dying. He sees that the course is depriving him of company.... he complains about the meals and everything in the house... So at times when I have to do my term papers and I have to work until wee hours in the morning like 3 o' clock, those things do not excite him.*

Some of the women admitted that although their husbands gave them support other women colleagues lacked this support.

*Some women are not encouraged by their husbands in the same way. Like now, I have a friend in part five and she has a big problem. The in-laws and her husband are against her doing the course. When she is preparing for the exams he tells her to put off all the lights. He quarrels with her all the time. She would go out to read using the security light outside. He does not provide any money. She has to borrow from sisters. He has the money but he is not ready to help her.... (Deborah Kivanguli).*

Those women whose husbands did not have university education experienced this problem more: 'He feels jealous that she is going to have a degree when he does not have one.' Lydia Mwenge elaborated on this situation by stating that:

*In our mathematics class there were only two women students who completed. The men were hundred in total....But when he was told that he had failed the exams and that he was to go home, he came and called the wife and told her, let us go home. She went home crying... some of the husbands threaten the wife that 'if you go back to college I will get married'...it seems that those women married to men who are lower in education have more problems.... One colleague of mine had this particular problem. Her husband was a primary school teacher while she was a secondary school teacher...there is a time when the man wanted to leave her because of going back to study.*

She further added that: 'Sometimes I have seen my own relatives wanting to go to study but their husbands refuse. The husbands have contributed to women's failure. Generally most men do not like educated wives. So they do not encourage their wives. They have to change their attitudes.'

Sofia Kiveti from the B. Ed. programme testified that: *'...and then in our community (Kalenjini), women should not be higher than the men. They should not have better education than the men. So it took me a lot of energy to convince him that I needed to further my education and also that he should also further his.'* The husband did not want either a more educated wife than himself or a wife who is on par with him in education. This problem was only lessened if the husband got an opportunity to study too. Once he joined a study programme he would change his attitude to his wife's studying and would support her instead: *'So these days he has applied and joined the parallel programme... when I saw him joining I was very happy because I knew that he would not now be against my studies.'*

Thomson (1997:65) corroborates these findings when she states that, 'one woman on our programme had to fix up an interview at the polytechnic to which she was applying for her husband to do a course too, so that he could be persuaded to agree to her application'. This led me to conclude that men block their wives from going back to study because of insecurity and fear of challenge to their authority and privileged position, but, once they are assured that they would not be left behind, they become more accommodation of wives' education.

Some of the husbands had the mentality that once wives came to the university they would leave them and get other men: *'And then my husband thinks that women who come back to study are aiming so high so that they leave their men to look for other men in college'* (Florence Makasa). Hence, insecurity on the part of the husbands led them to dislike and to sabotage women's university education. In fact, the women stated that some women studied secretly. Upon realizing that their husbands were against their study such women made their own secret arrangement to register for the course. These latter cases were only reported to me by the informants and I was not able to interview any of them. For instance, Lillian Odale stating that:

*Some students did the course secretly because the husband did not approve of the course. These women never came for residential sessions. When they came for exams they cheated him that they were going to visit relatives in Nairobi. The men felt threatened especially when they do not have that degree.*

Even when the husbands gave support to the wives to study, they seemed not to accept the inconveniences caused by the course and especially the fact that they would be left running the homes when the wives went to the residential sessions. Husbands complained not only about the unperformed duties by their wives, but also about how much money is put into the course: *'So he is not amused by how much he is spending in terms of money, time, and all that and the fact that he is remaining alone with the children.'* (Joyce Kamba).

Lack of support from the spouse was given as the main reason for women's high dropout rate from programme: *'In this course we started with many women but they have had to drop out because their husbands could not support them anymore. It is very sad.'* (Alice Okanga).

Since the Coop and the TEE programmes rarely interrupted the daily chores in the home, these women did not encounter significant opposition from either husbands or in-laws. Indeed many women in the TEE class maintained that their husbands were very happy with their involvement in the TEE course and so for this group there may not have been as much opposition as in the B. Ed. The TEE programme was seen 'as a safe pursuit' which was 'unthreatening to masculine authority in the home and the work place' (Thompson 1997:44).

In their recommendations many B. Ed. women suggested that if only the spouses could be more understanding and supportive, then distance learning would become easier for them as women: *'Women need a lot of encouragement from our families.'* (Mary Mutwa). Sofia Kivete added that: *'They should stop being authoritative heads of the home. They should see that wife's success is for the entire family and so they should not be threatened.'* Another stated that:

*They need also to give women moral support, so that he does not expect me to go to bed at the same time with him since I have to study. Husbands should be more considerate and identify with women's feelings so that women can advance their careers. They also need to assist their wives financially and whichever way that will enable the women to advance academically and in their careers.* (Jane Muthinzi).

Jane Mbau from the Coop programme stated that:

*The husbands especially those who take beer, they come home shouting and this disturbs a wife who is studying. So when the wife is studying these men should limit those quarrels they come with when they are drunk. In fact when you are quarreled you cannot concentrate. They have to give us the right environment for studying.*

#### **4C.6.2.2 Opposition from in-laws (B. Ed.)**

Kanwar & Taplin (2001) noted that opposition from relatives barred women from registering and continuing with distance learning courses. Without support from relatives women ended up getting de-motivated. In the present research this reality came out clearly with the B. Ed. women:

*My mother-in-law was not excited because one of her sons is at the university and there are times he falls back due to fees. So when her son takes his money to educate an old woman and a stranger in the home for that matter, instead of educating her son, it was not good news for her... (Joyce Kamba).*

Deborah Kivanguli gave the same testimony when she stated that:

*For now my in-laws have become the greatest roadblock for me. They are telling my husband that he is foolish to have allowed me to take up this course. That when I complete the course I will leave him.*

The situation was worse for those women operating in the rural homes:

*Like for me, if I was doing the course while stationed at the village home, it might have been difficult, but luckily enough we were staying with only two of the children and us. For a woman coming from the rural home it is very difficult to do this course because of the in-laws and others. They keep on wandering, na neusomethya akwatanite na kisomo kya kyau? (Lydia Mwenge). (She is still teaching, what is this other education she is looking for?).*

This problem was compounded when these women needed the assistance of their in-laws to be left with the children when they were going for residential sessions. In the focus group the situation was described in the following words:

*When we are going to college, we need their assistance. So they tend to ask their brother-in law, you mean you cannot get another woman to take care of your children (group laughs). If she wants to study then she is married to studies. You need another woman who will settle down and take care of your children. You may go back and find that he is already married to another woman. (Focus group discussions, Anne Mukala).*

These cases show that women distance learners are very determined to study; that they study under hard conditions, sometimes without the support of their spouses and their relatives. Earlier research (Bakker 1998) has shown that in some cases women students 'hid their books, because they fear that their relatives or in-laws will tear them up if they find out that they are studying' (p.60). The stories of these women show that the in-laws pressurized the men to block their wives from continuing with the education. They also show that women students do not get support from their fellow women who do not study. Again, this problem seemed to be peculiar only to the B. Ed. women students. The Coop and TEE women did not refer to it as one of the daily obstacles to their study.

In their recommendations women students suggested that there was need for the in-laws to change their attitudes and give women students support:

*The in-laws should understand and be sensitized that the learning we are doing is very important and would even change our understanding and characters. They need to change their attitude. If I finish the course and get a good job I will be able to pay their fees and become their counselor. I will be like a gate way to their bright future. (Deborah Kivanguli).*

A participant in the focus group suggested that: *'Especially the in-laws need to support the wife. The in laws need to know that my family is my husband and children and so in laws should not influence the son negatively against the wife's wish to join correspondence.'* (Lucy Ngu).

#### **4C.6.2.3 Pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing (B. Ed.)**

Many women in the B. Ed. programme highlighted pregnancy as a barrier to their study. Deborah Kivanguli testified that: *'In 1996 I applied for this course. I was taken but*

*unfortunately I was pregnant that time so I just abandoned the whole idea. But in 2001, I re-applied, was taken and now I have joined.'*

After giving birth Deborah got complications which interfered with her smooth progression in the course:

*The year 2001 when I joined this course I was pregnant expecting my fourth child. I got the baby through Caesarian section but after eight days the abdomen burst out and all the intestines were out... I underwent a lot of problems. By this time the course had already started. I never attended any lectures. Then in August I was confined in bed very sick.*

Similarly, Florence Mukasa stated that:

*I did not come in April 2000 because I was pregnant...so by good luck or bad luck, it was bad luck anyway... I lost the baby... Maybe it was a blessing in disguise that the baby was to go, so that I can be set free. I had four children and that was to be the fifth.*

Sofia Kiveti's experiences show that the act of rearing children blocked women from registering for distance learning programmes.

*Life became very difficult because I got children following one another. So it became very hard for me to think of furthering my education. I did not know that at any time I would further my education. I got my fourth born in 1996 and I decided to have a break. When I got the break that is when I realized that life was becoming lighter and lighter every day.*

To these women raising a family is seen as serving others but once they registered for the course they started thinking in terms of doing 'something for myself':

*Before I used to think I am being selfish and nowadays I believe for me to achieve anything I also have to be selfish in a way. If you don't like yourself, nobody will even like you. You have to start with liking yourself, doing what you want and then other people tend to appreciate you (Emily Munywoki).*

#### **4C.6.2.4 Logistical barriers created by attendance to residential schools**

One further unique hurdle to the B. Ed. women was the question of who to leave the children with while going for the residential sessions. Lydia Mwenge, states that: *'The children are in school and you are in school. Sometimes you do not have somebody to leave the children with.'* This problem was made worse by the fact that some of the husbands would not allow their wives to go for residential sessions unless they made arrangement for someone else to take care of the children in their absence. The B. Ed. focus group discussions pointed out that:

*Then there are the children. Sometimes the men say the women are not going to leave unless they make arrangements on who is to remain with the children...some maybe have to differ a bit with the husband and carry their children to their maternal home so as to get a chance to come to this programme. So we find that these are also problems. (Anne Mukala).*

The residential sessions also added more pressure on their time because in order to attend for three months in a year, they had to leave their families: *'The hardest thing was to leave my children and go to board during residential sessions. I find that I am not spending enough time with my children.'* (Emily Munywoki).

The period at the residential centres also brought financial constraints because women had not only to raise the tuition fees, but also bus fare and hostel fees. To make matters worse for the women students, residential sessions took place during the school holidays when children who had been to boarding secondary schools would be at home. This meant that the children would come home and, immediately, the mother would pack and go for the residential sessions. This created a dilemma for the women students: *'I have to sacrifice the time I had with my children. Like now when my daughter comes home from boarding secondary school, that is the time I take off and come to board for residential.'* (Joyce Kamba).

Involvement in the course meant that she had to postpone bearing another son:

*I only have one son and before we used to say that I should get another boy but when I enrolled my husband told me, 'if you get pregnant then you have to quit college'. So I had to forgo that wish for another son (laughter) until I finish the course. These are the conditions I was given because he does not*

*want to be left behind with a small baby when I come for residential sessions. It seems I may not get another baby because I am getting to 40 years. But I do not think about it anymore. I will take care of three children that I have. I have two girls and one boy and so I wanted another boy.*

For some, involvement in the course meant that they could no longer be involved in family projects such as running businesses or farming: *'Before I took up the course I had a lot of time for myself. I used to farm; I have a 12-acre farm in Kitale. After taking up the course I stopped farming.'* (Meli Manga).

What Meli calls *'time for myself'* is actually time spent on economic and livelihood activities. For her, farming was another method of raising money for the family. She stopped farming so as to concentrate on the course. This shows that for Meli and others, involvement in the programme has meant that they are no longer able to engage in the economic activities that they used to run before, a situation that leads to further financial constraints.

#### **4C.6.2.5 Lack of crèche facilities for B. Ed. women**

The residential sessions are organized without consideration of breast feeding mothers' needs. There are no crèche facilities provided for mothers who bring their small children along. Thus the B. Ed. women accused the University of ignoring the special needs of these mothers. Some mothers had to leave their small babies at home in order to come to the residential classes. The women suggested the establishment of a day care centre, within the university where mothers could leave their children as they went for their classes:

*They should provide good facilities for mothers. Last time we had residential I had to leave my twins at home. If they had good facilities I would have even carried my children and a maid (baby sitter) to assist when I am in class... it is very hard when the mother is doing exams and has to leave her children behind. Maybe the university should establish a day care centre where they (mothers) would leave their children while attending class. Then over lunch break they would breast-feed the babies... Mothers do not want to lag behind and so even when the baby is two weeks old, I still see women coming for tuition. (Apia Okanga).*

Some mothers did bring their children along to the residential centres. This meant that they would also bring a baby sitter along to take care of the baby as the mother attended classes. There was, therefore, a suggestion that: *'Those women, who come for residential with babies, should be given rooms with two beds because they come with the house help.'* (Evelyn Mutambo)

Emily Munywoki added that:

*The organization of the residential programme does not care about the breast-feeding mothers. By the time those women finish the session the child is malnourished. There is need to have a baby care centre so that the mothers are settled in class knowing that somebody is taking care of the baby. These women are very determined and so they come with the baby but the baby suffers.*

At the same time, such mothers should be provided with a small kitchenette where they could go in and prepare special meals for their small babies. Hence, the creation of special facilities for breast feeding mothers would go a long way to incorporating a woman-centred approach in the B. Ed. programme.

#### ***4C.6.2.6 Lack of permanent venue for residential (B. Ed. students)***

The present practice by the University is that every time there is a residential session for distance learning students, the University makes arrangements with the neighbouring educational institutions such as secondary schools and colleges to accommodate the students. This situation arises due to the fact that the students come to the University at times when fulltime students are in session and this means that there are no spare accommodation and tuition facilities. For this reason, the students are moved from one place to the next. For the women students, this practice ignores the needs of pregnant mothers and those with children. Some of these places are very cold and this affects the babies who accompany their mothers and the pregnant women. At the same time, some of the places are insecure and, due to this problem, women who are non-resident have to skip the late night classes to avoid being mugged on the road. In addition to this, the women felt that they were never informed in advance as to the exact venue for the residential sessions. This created further uncertainty, anxiety and feelings of being second rate and nomads:

*This idea of moving from one place to another, this is very hectic. We have pregnant women and others who have come with children. They should look for one permanent place to house the residential session. There is need to have a particular place to hold the residential. Those pregnant mothers are also affected by climatic changes. Some times we are in Lenana, Thogoto, Lower Kabete, and so many other places. We are like nomads, moving from one place to another every holiday period. (Apia Okanga).*

Indeed for a long time the University of Nairobi has treated the distance learning programme as a stepchild of the academy (Gatimu et al 1997). This has meant that distance learning students are never given priority in the planning of the University programmes. My own observation shows that distance learning programmes at the University, for a long time, were seen as second rate. In fact some academics argued against distance learning, saying that it could not be as effective as the residential. This explains why the distance students are not given priority in the scheduling of accommodation for programmes of the university, leading to this practice of shifting them from one place to another. The women students that were interviewed felt that being taken to all these different places, including secondary schools and primary teacher training institutions, was demeaning and demoralizing for them, especially since it had never been done to regular residential students.

#### ***4C.6.2.7 Work related: Non-understanding bosses and colleagues (B. Ed.)***

It was evident from both the B. Ed. interviews and the focus group discussions that the women students lacked support and understanding from their bosses and colleagues. This was most crucial when the students needed permission to go for the residential sessions. Although the residential sessions take place during the school holidays, most schools hold tuition classes during that period and some head teachers were not willing to release the students to attend the sessions. The focus group discussions pointed out that:

*When time reaches when we have to go and do Continuous Assessment Test (CATS), when you go to ask permission from the head he/she says, 'you are not going, who will teach your class?' This is very frustrating. Some heads even tell you to go and talk to the District Education Officer (DEO). The DEO must write a letter or apply for a study leave (the group nods in agreement) and sometimes they post the study leave letter to the TSCE (Teachers Service commission, the*

body that employs teachers). *So you find that the teacher's small salary does not come by because of a very malicious head teacher.* (Emma Omari).

Lillian Odale further pointed out that:

*I had such a hard time because I could not read in the office. If my boss saw me reading the materials it would be terrible but if he saw me reading a novel he had no problem. To me this was sheer malice. I had to be transferred from the section I was working at, because there were two of us in the external degree and working in the same section. This was meant to discourage us from sharing between ourselves our progress in the course*

Some women had to use confrontational techniques to get permission to attend residential classes:

*... I went to my headmaster and told him, 'you know I really value my job and it is this job helping me with my studies. But now I am put in a position where I have to resign so as to concentrate. But if I resign I would not make it financially. I am resigning because you people are giving me a lot of stress'. So with time they reduced my load, although other people complained.* (Focus group discussions, Emma Omari).

There was also the issue of jealousy from colleagues:

*There are also a lot of jealousies. Like now where I am working, my headmistress keeps going out of the school and when she is away I have to run the school. This interferes with my studies. Even my fellow teachers are very jealous. The friends that I had have all run away because I am moving somewhere.* (Deborah Kivanguli).

In some cases, colleagues in the school influenced the head teachers' attitudes to women learners:

*Some other times the teacher has problems with the colleagues. When they see you applying for permission to go to sit for CATS or go to the library or go for a meeting they feel very bad and in some cases they influence the head not to give you permission again. So you find that apart from the problems we have*

*in the house we also have problems at our places of work.* (Focus group discussions, Nguli).

Therefore, with a non-cooperative head teacher, women students suffered further because their salaries would be deducted and yet they needed the same salary to pay the university fees. This practice raises built-in conflicts in that the school gets money from students, who attend tuition during holidays, but at the same time, it blocks the teachers who want to develop their careers, yet who do not benefit from this extra money that the school collects.

Due to malice and jealousy the B. Ed. women distance learners studied in discouraging environments in the community, places of work, as well as at the family level. The headmasters, as guardians of culture, did not support women who returned to study in the B. Ed. programme. For the Coop and TEE women this issue was not raised. Their study did not interfere with their job commitments. At the same time, their course was not as empowering and as threatening to those in power as the B. Ed. course.

#### ***4C.6.2.8 Lack of recognition (TEE women)***

There was also the problem associated with lack of recognition for women studying TEE. From its inception in Kenya, TEE was always treated as a step-child of the church and residential theological institutions (Kithome & Gatimu 2001). It is well documented that during much of its development, distance learning was taken as a 'step-child of the academy' (Feenberg 1999:1). Thus, it is not surprising that theologians based at the residential theological seminaries and colleges have had very little regard for a TEE graduate. Hence, though TEE has succeeded in making theological education more available, it has not succeeded in opening opportunities for ordination to its graduates, the majority of whom have been women.

My observation shows that in some cases the TEE graduate may have done more advanced theology courses than the pastor in charge of a parish. However, the TEE graduate will still be looked on as inferior to the residentially trained clergy. The double standards of the church could be explained in terms of the church hierarchy trying to protect its profession from the many graduates of TEE in the pews.

At the same time, for a long time, the church has assumed that theologians are men and so when a woman ventures into it she is not as respected as male theologians. This situation was well expressed in the TEE focus group discussions: *'There is also this problem of lack of support and recognition for you when you are learning TEE. The way people take you they would not value your dignity.'* (Rose Ngundo). Anne Njoya also stated that: *'like now we have done preaching, we can preach but when the timetable comes for preachers you are never given that chance to preach. They do not allocate us preaching duties.'*

According to these women, there is gender discrimination right in the church. Men TEE students are treated better than women. This acts as a discouraging factor for the women students. It came out clearly that the church community did not give women students much support:

*The most discouraging is what people say about you and especially when they keep on asking you why you are doing the course. Finally, you come to ask yourself the same question and this can be very discouraging especially if you are not determined.* (Focus group discussions, Anne Ndotu).

This problem became worse for those women who were housewives and were now involved in the course. These women had recognized that studying leads to power, both in the domestic and public spheres of their lives. However, their neighbours could not understand why they decided to go back to study:

*Everybody seems to think that learning is for employment. Even my neighbours do not understand why I as a housewife, should waste time and money learning. Even at my church, they complain.... Even there are some who abuse me because of the course. They say that I am behind something. They think that I want to be elected as an elder or something else* (Abbey Gathendu).

This negative attitude of the community to women students was aggravated by the fact that TEE courses have no economic benefit. The community wondered why the women had to put so much time and energy into the course. The women's main concern was about the lack of financial benefits upon completion of the programme. They stated that there was need for TEE graduates to be given economic and leadership status. For a long time TEE graduates have not been equated with graduates of residential theological institutions. For this reason, they are not given equal employment opportunities within

the church departments. This kind of discrimination and exclusion by the church hierarchy was seen as unjust and the TEE learners called for change. Once the church starts to accord TEE education the respect that it deserves, many more women would be encouraged to join the programme. They recommended that:

*The TEE graduates should be given opportunity to preach, run churches, counselling HIV/AIDS sufferers within the church. Many more people would be attracted to TEE if the present graduates were given opportunities to work within the different church departments. But presently TEE graduates are not recognized and so some people are discouraged. The others are demoralized. (Rose Ngundo).*

The TEE focus group elaborated on this fact by stating that:

*I would like to add and say that they should consider those who are doing TEE such that they are given some work (paid job) in the church so that this can serve as a good example to the others. This would act as motivation. Most women are discouraged because they do all these courses and they do not have economic benefit. They cannot be appointed as pastors and other paid jobs within the church. Those who have no theological education are the ones running church activities and you who have done TEE you are left there. Even if you have done TEE those who are theologically illiterate are the ones on top and they would definitely block your advancement. (Irene Ndongye).*

As a way of bringing recognition and parity of esteem to TEE education, the women learners recommended that upon completion of their programmes, they should be allowed transfer of credit to residential theological colleges, if they wished to continue with theological education:

*The other problem is if I want to go to a residential college I start from scratch. Even when I have done advanced diploma, but if I go to theological college I am treated the same way as someone who has never studied basic theology course. This is very unfair. I think we need to be recognized as graduates of theology. It can be very demoralizing. The criteria used in theological colleges are wanting. The learning materials have given us a lot of knowledge. The situation is very sad. (Mary Kavinya).*

The way TEE is practiced in Kenya seems to deviate from how it is done in other countries, in that in the latter case, TEE students are easily allowed to transfer credit to residential colleges, where they would be exempted from those courses they had already taken. For instance, in South Africa, the TEE College operates in collaboration with residential theological colleges and due to this, it becomes possible for a TEE graduate to transfer credit (TEE College 2004). In Kenya, TEE programmes run independently from residential colleges even when they belong to the same denomination. This dichotomy had negative impact on the TEE programme, whereby, the certificates obtained have little value when compared to residentially obtained ones.

The women learners also raised issue with the present practice, whereby TEE students never have a chance of meeting with the writers of the learning materials. The authors are never group leaders and in fact the group leader is chosen from among the group itself and in some cases it is the group, which chooses its own leader. The practice in South Africa, for instance is that during regional quarterly workshops the TEE learners are able to interact with a few of the module writers and other senior managers of the programme and through this, are able to create dialogue between the institution and the learners (TEE College 2004). Hence the women in the TEE course expressed the need to meet with the authors of the learning materials and interact:

*We also need to meet the authors of the books so that we can ask him (most of these books are authored by men) the questions related to areas we do not understand. So these lecturers should avail themselves so that they meet with us in the group meetings. In some cases we students and the group leader are of the same level and so we cannot help each other a lot but if the authors could come and join the groups once in a while this would help us to understand the materials more. (Focus group discussions, Grace Monze).*

#### **4C.6.2.9 Lack of tuition and feedback for Coop women**

The need for personal contacts between the teaching institution and distance learners has already been raised in the literature review. The review pointed out that women distance learners in particular, put a lot of value on the provision of face-to-face opportunities where they can interact with their tutors and fellow students (Kirkup & Prummer 1990, Dighe 1999). Thus women learners in this study placed a lot of importance on the

available opportunities for meeting, not only with their peers, but also with the lecturers and tutors. Indeed, one of the challenges to women distance educators has been to try and avoid a situation where distance learning reinforces the 'ghettoization of women confined to the home' (Carl, 1988). This could be achieved through the establishment of face-to-face opportunities. Women distance educators have been calling on distance learning designers to create 'networks of support amongst students and the opportunity to meet' (Kirkup & Prummer 1990:15). Hence, the lack of face-to-face facilities has been detrimental to women's ability to complete the Coop course. Women in this programme experienced loneliness and isolation. For instance, Lilly stated that:

*When I used to go to secretarial college I used to do most of the studying with my lecturers, but with this course you have nowhere to go. You have to study everything on your own with nobody to consult. There is no teacher around; it is only text. When you have come across a difficult area it is a problem because you have no one to consult. (Lilly Muli).*

Mary Mutwa also stated that:

*One of the problems I encountered was to do with reading materials. They used to send us a booklet. You read the booklet and then answer the questions at the back of the booklet and then you post the answers to the college. You see, there is a problem in that you can reproduce the whole book and re-post as assignments done. There was no guidance and no opportunity for discussions.*

The lack of face-to-face interaction led to high drop out rates. Faith Nzuki testified that:

*I would send in my assignments but then I would not get response. This made me feel very discouraged because they could not give me the feedback. If there was communication from the college I am sure I would have pressed on but now here I was working under hard conditions and not getting any response from the college. So the lack of response meant that I did not know whether I was on the right path or not.*

Some learners decided to consult their colleagues for assistance. For instance, Jessica Kianda stated that: ...'so I kept on asking my colleagues. Sometimes they would tell me they do not know. You have to keep contacting other people.... If you are mixed up you cannot make it because there is no teacher. The teacher is the book.'

They recommended that the college should put in place structures for short face-to-face tuition so as to assist the learners. This came up strongly during the focus group discussions:

*The college should organize for times when the correspondence course students can come together to meet the lecturers and seek explanation of what they do not understand. Even that meeting of other students struggling with you would help you to feel that I am not alone.* (Focus group discussions, Magdalene Mweru).

Wanja Ngui also stated that:

*There is need to make all of us know each other and meet at some intervals so that we consult and encourage each other and share problems together. It will also be good to have time to ask the teachers hard questions and then they can direct us to the right solutions.*

In the process of organizing for such tutorial sessions, the College was called upon to involve the managers (bosses) in the whole process so that they could facilitate the students' participation: *'they should also involve the manager so that they can give you time to attend the discussions. There should be somebody who deals with regions, like a zone coordinator, so that he/she could organize the tutorials.'* (Jessica Kianda). During such meetings, students, with the help of a tutor, would be able to revise the major topics covered in the study materials. There was also a suggestion that tuition could be done through writing letters to the students as a way of encouraging them.

Some of the women suggested the establishment of a magazine to update the distance learning students about the progress of other colleagues and major activities at the college: *'a magazine that shows what other students are saying and what they are doing. This will also challenge others and when they see others who have done the course or those who are doing; this would encourage more women to join.'* (Magdalene Mweru).

Others suggested that an academic member of staff be stationed at the correspondence office to receive telephone calls from the students who are stranded with academic problems:

*I would like them to put in place an academic staff member to assist the students academically so that when they call with academic problems then that person would handle their problems. (Focus group discussions, Lilly Muli).*

As a way of creating further interaction between distance learners and the institution, the Coop women recommended that distance learning students attend the graduation ceremony, just like any other students of the College. Observation shows that it is only residential students who are invited to graduation ceremonies, unlike in the University of Nairobi, where both residential and distance learners attend. However, for the Cooperative College, once the distance learning students complete their course, their certificates are sent to them through post. Thus, the women students felt that this amounted to discrimination against the correspondence students and called on the institution to change the practice. The focus group discussions pointed out that inviting distance learning students for the graduation ceremony would also raise the students' self-esteem:

*Correspondence students should be given a chance to attend the graduation ceremony just like anybody else. Some of the students do not even know what the college looks like and so they should be given that chance to attend the graduation like the internal students so that they could also meet some of their lecturers. This would also raise their self-esteem. (Focus group discussions, Lilly Muli).*

#### **4C.7 How do women learners manage in the midst of these obstacles?**

Thus far, this research has shown that women distance learners are faced with different types of obstacles as they study. These barriers affect different groups of women differently. In this section I examine how these women manage to succeed under such difficulties. I will point out that studying for women distance learners is a continued struggle. In order to succeed they have devised different coping strategies such as ignoring role expectations, determination and a positive outlook, time management and employing a domestic servant. Their learning situation is made easier when the husband is away, by the face-to-face residential sessions for B. Ed. women, seminar meetings for TEE women and the presence of role models.

#### 4C.7.1 Continued struggle

Literature shows that women returnees to learning are pulled in very different directions by the demands of the private and public spheres of life. This tension between the public and the private has made women experience a struggle to prove to the world that they can make it in both worlds. This makes their study life extremely difficult. Women returnees to education try as much as possible to 'make their learning invisible' by keeping the home undisturbed by their added burden of studying (Stalker, 2001: 295). This meant that studying was done at times when their families did not require their services, such as very early in the morning or very late at night. However, for the married woman there was still a problem in that studying very late at night conflicted with the husband's expectation for the wife to provide comfort in bed. Hence, the women students are in a dilemma as they study. Thus the B. Ed. focus group described their circumstances as: '*We are on a hill but we are saying we will manage.*' (Focus group discussions, Anne Mukala). Lilly Muli, from the Coop course stated that: '*It is really hectic because it adds responsibilities to my life.*' These statements show the kind of struggles that women have to go through in order to succeed as students. Although the women were happy with the opportunities distance learning had opened for them, they still felt that it added burdens to their already overburdened lives, especially to those who were employed. This meant that women have to struggle to cope with the demands of the different spheres of life:

*It does add more loads to women especially if you are working. You have to go to work to do the job, when you go home you are a wife and you have duties in the home and finally you settle down to study when very tired. Like during the weekdays I could only study after ten at night when everyone has gone to sleep because when children are awake you have to pay attention to them and also the husband...(Lillian Odale).*

All the three groups of women felt that men students had an easier time than women because they did not have as many responsibilities as women:

*Women have got bigger load to carry than the men have. We carry our husbands, the children, and we carry our jobs and other responsibilities. So the woman's life is not as easy as that of the man trying to study. Women have got a hard time. (Focus group discussions, Anne Mukala).*

The Coop focus group added that: *'After work his work is just to sit down and watch the television, read newspapers and order food and water. This man does nothing else in the house. He orders the wife around.'* (Magdalene Mweru).

Many of the women studied very early in the morning or very late in the evenings after making sure that all other duties were properly done:

*I had to wake up very early in the morning, reach the office before anybody else and do my studies before office hours. Then in the evening after my usual duties in the house, when I have made sure my son has eaten, is comfortable and has slept.* (Loise Muthinzi).

When they studied at night, they did so at a time when everyone else had gone to sleep. Lydia Mwenge, for instance, stated that:

*I used to study in the evenings....I would spend two to three hours every day. There are times that I would study throughout the night especially if I have not done assignments, and then I have to read first and then do the assignments and send them on time...*

Abbey Gathendu from the TEE group further stated that:

*I wake up at 5 am, read for an hour, milk the cow, and if I have no one to take the milk to the dairy I do it myself. From there I go to the garden. At 1 pm we come for lunch. I rest for an hour and then start on housework. I am just like a maid in the house. I have so many responsibilities in the house. My husband cannot give me money to pay for a maid, but I make sure from the farm work I employ some women to help me. I pay them with the produce of my farm... Management is the key thing for me.*

Some of the women managed to study while in the office, especially in the morning before office work begins:

*Okay, I come to work very early in the morning. I find my concentration is usually good in the morning. So I have purposed (programmed herself to) I will get here at 7 am in the morning. At this time you will not find many people here...I will sit and spend one intensive hour of study...(Emily Munywoki).*

However, for others, studying in the office was made difficult by the negative reaction of the colleagues and the school administration:

*Most of the time when I am in school I use most of my free time to study. But most of my colleagues would come and surround me when I am reading then the senior teacher would come in and tell me to go and occupy another class.*

(Karen Adhiambo).

For some, studying is only done over the weekend because during the week they have very busy schedules: *'In the evening reading is very hard because I am very tired and I have the family to look after. So I do my readings on Saturday morning, evening and Sunday mornings.* (Joyce Kamba).

*Despite the difficulties I used to read over the weekends but when I realized that my assignments were far behind then I used to work on a crash programme. I would read at night, weekends, ensuring that I have no visitors until I had covered all the assignments and sent them.* (Mary Mutwa).

However, for others the weekend is spared for the children and family responsibilities: *'I haven't been able to do much over the weekends because that is the time everybody is at home. It is also time I am catching up on housework, cleaning here and there and just interactions here and there.* (Emily Munywoki).

#### **4C.7.2 Ignore role expectations**

This research has shown that women have to squeeze studying in between the many chores that they do. Sometimes studying was done at the expense of other responsibilities in the home. Emily explains that:

*...But sometimes I have many pressing assignments and that is the only time I can sit and concentrate since I am alone in the house. So I decide to ignore the housework and do my studies. I look at my windowsills and I can see dust accumulating and I say to myself, 'this has to wait.'* (Emily Munywoki).

This shows women's resistance to home chore roles in order to complete their assignment. Of course this leads to further problems in that the spouses would complain about the uncompleted chores. Even going to the residential sessions meant the B. Ed. women had to ignore the roles assigned to them as wives, mothers and daughters-in law.

In some cases some women stated that when they came back from the residential, they would find all the dirty clothes piled up for them. This meant that performing these roles was only postponed temporarily.

Meli Manga had to suspend farming the family's twelve-acre farm so as to concentrate on her studies. This of course had an impact on the family's income, since the money she earned from the sale of the crops from the farm was no more. The TEE women had to attend the seminar and then come back and find the duties waiting including preparing food for the family. One of the recommendations that they made was that other family members should be able to perform these roles so that the student does not have to start afresh once she comes from the TEE seminar.

#### **4C.7.3 Determination and a positive outlook**

Determination and positive approach to life played a major role in sustaining women's motivation to study under great pressure, obstacles and opposition. The B. Ed. focus group summarized their experiences by stating: '*But we have learned how to endure all the hardships.*' (Lucy Nguli). Determination was further illustrated by Susan Waudo, when she stated that:

*I have no house servant at home and I too work in the office and I do all these duties. I wake up early. I prepare the kid to school. I make the breakfast and then I take the kid to school. I go to work and then while I am there I study. In the evening I come back and find duties waiting for me. Now, I do not see anything hard there.*

Regardless of the many obstacles that they faced, the women students were prepared to continue: '*But I think the will power, that is intrinsic force within us, makes us keep pushing, although it is difficult.*' (Focus group discussions, Anne Mukala).

However, these women testified that other women could not cope with this pressure and ended up abandoning the programme altogether. This points to the fact that it is only the strong willed women who manage to complete the academic race through distance learning.

#### **4C.7.4 Time management**

Stalker (2001: 300) has pointed out that as women re-enter formal education, they 'make sure that the private sphere is unshaken by their absences. Thus, participation in educational activities requires not just motivation but an inordinate amount of preplanning, organization, time and energy.' In this research, all the three groups of women agreed that time management, organizational skills and discipline were the key to success for them as distance learners. This helped them to balance between the different responsibilities and study. The B. Ed. focus group stated that:

*We have to try as much as possible to give each of the responsibilities a chance, ...some times you have to wake up very early even at 4 am so that at least by time you leave your house you have done quite a bit. You also do not want to annoy your boss so you have to work extra, although sometimes some problems still come. (Anne Mukala).*

Many of the women used terms such as '*programming yourself*', '*plan your time well*' and '*being disciplined*', as what had enabled them to succeed as distance learners with family and job commitments: '*So to me discipline and being able to plan my time was very important. In a day I had to go to work, then come home and settle down to read.*' (Lydia Mwenge).

The Coop women expressed similar sentiments when they stated that:

*I used to plan myself so that in the morning and evening I do small bits...It was hard to do it later in the day because in the office I would spend the whole day balancing the accounts such that in the evening I am very tired. I used to do the work in the morning in the house before I go to work. Even lunchtimes sometimes I used to do something. (Jessica Kianda).*

Therefore, time management and the ability to plan assisted women students to be successful in their studies as well as running other family duties.

#### **4C.7.5 Employ a domestic servant**

The learning stories of these women distance learners described in different ways the role played by domestic servants. The B. Ed. women emphasized that they only managed to cope with the course because they got assistance from a servant, either to assist in the

farm or with the house chores, including taking care of the children when she went to the residential study. Mary Mutwa, of the Coop programme, had a house servant and this lessened her burdens and enabled her to study comfortably. It meant that: *'I have minimum duties at home'*. Lilly Muli had a lot of problems because she could not keep domestic servants for a long time and for this reason, she had to leave her baby with neighbours so as to take the other child to school and also go to work. This had affected her studies negatively. Jane Mbau could not continue with the Coop course because her domestic worker left the job. This meant that she had to struggle with all the house and farm chores, plus of course her baby and the job, single handedly. After three months of struggle she abandoned the course.

All these testimonies show that domestic servants played a great role in assisting these women distance learners cope with the domestic chores and study at the same time. In some cases where domestic servants were not available, then the women abandoned the programme.

#### **4C.7.6 What helps the situation?**

##### ***4C.7.6.1 When husband is away***

Thompson (1997: 64) has posited that 'in almost every other respect women who embark on courses without men fare better than those who have to square what they're doing with husbands, partners or lovers'. In the present research, women said that unmarried women and those whose husbands worked far away had an easier time than those who were married and stayed in the same premises with their husbands. Lydia Mwenge stated that: *'In fact during most of my study period my husband was in Kakamega and so I would read a lot even up to late in the night.'* During the focus group discussions, Emma Omari, too, pointed out that: *'My husband is a salesman and most of the time he is not at home....Even when he is in the country he is in Mombasa, Nairobi and other towns within the country.'* Lilly Mulli of the Coop course similarly stated that: *'One advantage I have is that my husband does not stay with me... and only comes once in a while. If he were here, I would be having more duties to perform.'*

The absence of the husband from the home meant that women were their own bosses and were in charge of their lives. The presence of a husband brought with it additional

chores as he exercised power over the wife and identified chores that had not been accomplished. Husbands' absence further meant that women could decide what to do with their salaries and through this they were able to pay their fees easily. Single women were able to control their own finances and in this way they did not need to seek anyone's opinion about payment of fees or permission to attend residential classes. Although they struggled to raise the fees, they tended to appreciate the kind of autonomy that was presented by the absence of a controlling male figure in their lives. Much research has shown that female headed homes are generally poorer than the ones which are headed by male and so it is intriguing that these women appreciate male absence from their lives (Abagi, 2000).

#### ***4C.7.6.2 Face-to-face residential classes for B. Ed. women***

The women who were interviewed placed a lot of importance on attending residential sessions, seminars and the formation of informal study groups. Women students tried their level best to attend the residential sessions and other face-to-face meetings. The interaction at the face-to-face occasions helped women to learn from other women's experiences.

For the women learners, residential sessions provided them with the opportunities to interact with each other. Through this contact, students are able to learn together as a group:

*Interaction, bring your minds together and combined effort and through that you solve some of the problems that if you were left alone you would not have solved. So it is a very good thing. People are like resources and so that interaction makes a lot of difference. You also realize there are many struggling and that you are not weak. You give one another moral support.*  
(Josephine Mbavu).

First, when they meet they form study groups and learn together. Through this way, they are able to solve the academic problems that they face. Secondly, they share the problems they face as they study. Different women emphasized this fact in different ways: *'The interaction with other students has also helped me to see things differently. The stories we listen to from other women do not leave us the same. We come out as changed and better person.'* (Alice Okanga).

Others stated that:

*In fact when residential time comes we appreciate it because to a certain extent we are our own bosses (group laughs) and we can study the way we want. Otherwise when we go back home there are so many limitations. (Focus group discussions, Emma Omari).*

Apart from interaction at residential sessions, B. Ed. women students working in the same area would form study groups to assist one another. For instance, those students who were working in the University Library and its environs had a study group where they would meet once a month to study together and discuss areas that were difficult. They would also help each other in tackling the assignments. This also happened with those students teaching in neighbouring schools. They preferred to meet in groups and learn together. Through this, they would assist each other and move together as a group.

#### **4C.7.6.3 Seminar groups for TEE students**

The TEE students saw the seminar meetings as learning venues in that they would discuss ideas together and come up with agreed solutions to whatever issue they had:

*Hii seminar meeting zinanizaidia sana kwa sababu tunapoingia, tunaaza na maombi, halafu tunaingia ndani ya kupishana juu ya mambo ili imeandikwa kwa lesson ya wiki (discuss). Hizo discussions ndizo zinafanya mtu apate nguvu kwa sababu mwalimu anauliza mtu moja moja mpaka kila mtu maoni yake inasikilizwa. (Susan Waudo).*

(These seminar meetings help me very much because when we meet, we start with prayers, and then we get into discussions on things that are written on the week's lessons. We talk about many things. This builds me very much in my life. Those discussions are the ones that make somebody get confidence because the teacher asks one person at a time to contribute until everyone's ideas are heard).

For the housewife, who spent all her days within the homestead, the seminar meetings provided an opportunity for her to get out and interact with the outside world:

*If you are a housewife you keep on rotating in the house all the time, going round and then you go down in all ways, but now when you get out and you mix*

*with other people who are learning and you become socially updated. It is a way of managing your stress. I do not think you will be stressed if you have chance to share with other ladies. You share your experiences. (Jerusha Njagi).*

Hence, the seminar meetings provided opportunities for women to interact on an equal basis, not only with fellow women, but also with the men in the seminar. Through this interaction learners would sharpen each other and the hard parts of the course would be explained both by the seminar leader and also by other members of the group. Thus such interaction leads to collective learning.

#### **4C.7.6.4 Role models**

The learning stories of women distance learners show that the presence of role models gave them impetus to press on with their study. Indeed some joined distance learning after seeing others participate successfully. Mercy Kaime was wooed into the course by her colleague, who went further and even picked up the application forms for her. Emily Munywoki, too, was motivated to join when she saw her colleagues at her place of work graduate from the programme: *'I said to myself, so this is a reality.'* Faith Nzuki, too, joined the Coop course after she was introduced by her friends who were already involved in the course.

Similarly, some of the TEE women stated that they joined the course after they saw those who had joined earlier perform more prestigious functions in the church, like preaching.

In their recommendations, the B. Ed. women stated that there was need for women University lecturers to hold frequent talks with women students, as a way of giving encouragement:

*In fact we need encouragement especially from ladies like you, who could organize for talks so that women can get encouragement. Women lecturers could be taking sessions just to talk to the women students. (Focus group discussions, Beverley Mutindi).*

This point was stressed both at the focus group discussions and the individual interviews. The women learners felt that they needed a lot of guidance and counselling particularly

from women lecturers who serve as role models: *'Yes, we need a lot of encouragement, especially on guidance and counselling. We need to interact with more role models.'* (Focus group discussions, Lucy Nguli).

Women lecturers could extend such talks to the rural areas where they would hold talks in churches and other community centres so as to encourage more women to go back to study: *'Most women are ignorant and when you try to tell them about this programme they tend to be negative. They lack role models. So the women educators should visit the grassroots so that they sell these courses to those women who are down there.'* (Sofia Kiveti).

Mercy Kaime also expressed the same idea by stating that: *'We need role models especially in the rural areas to talk to the women so that they also get interested in advancing their education. For example, when they see a woman driving they see that as a challenge and this motivates them to work harder.'*

In order to encourage many more women to return to learning, there was a need to put women in positions of power, down at the grassroots level. These would act as role models to other women and would encourage many to join distance learning and other flexible programmes. The women students saw the need to encourage adult education classes so that women could have avenues to uplift their education standards:

*Women need to be put in positions of power like sub-chief, this would encourage so many....So adult education should be given opportunities to enable women to rise. This would encourage other women to join courses for mature adults. Let them be allowed to go to colleges after completion of their courses...Most women, who are being sat on by their husbands out there in the villages, they are not stupid. They are disadvantaged because their parents wanted dowry or somebody raped them and they became pregnant. These are professors rotting down there. There are women there with talents, which have not been discovered because there are no opportunities.* (Anne Mukasa).

In addition, these women wanted to play role models in turn, so that they could sensitize other women in the community about the need to go back to learning. They wanted to

inform their fellow women that, although they have so many chores to perform, they could still be involved in some form of learning, which would lead to their advancement:

*Women students should be given a forum to go and talk to the other women in the community and sensitize them about the need to go back to school. Some of them think they are too old to learn but they need to be shown that they are not too old to learn. Most women just think of work and home, the routine kind of job that they do but if somebody would go to them and show them that they must progress, they would open their eyes. (Josephine Mbavu).*

The TEE students challenged the church to establish counselling centres within the church environs so that TEE graduates could have opportunity to be involved in community activities. Through such an interaction with the community many more would be motivated to join the TEE course:

*The church ministers and elders should start counselling centres so that TEE graduates could have avenues for utilizing the newly acquired knowledge. Even they can help the pastor in counselling people. The TEE graduates should be given opportunity to preach, run churches, counselling HIV/AIDS sufferers within the church. Many more people would be attracted to TEE if the present graduates were given opportunities to work within the different church departments. But presently TEE graduates are not recognized and so some people are discouraged. The others are demoralized. (Rose Ngundo).*

Hence, the presence of role models played an important role in sustaining women's motivation to study in the midst of multiple barriers and challenges. This is why they called upon the institutions to create an enabling environment for them to exercise their newly discovered talents in the form of community service.

#### **4C.8 Conclusion**

In this section of chapter 4 themes and concepts arising from biographies presented in the previous section were discussed. The next chapter describes the transformative journey that women have gone through since registering for distance study.

# CHAPTER 5

## TRANSFORMATION

### **5.1 Introduction**

The present chapter explores the transformational process that occurs in the lives of women through distance learning. The chapter traces transformation in the lives of distance learners starting from the experience of ‘disorienting dilemma’ that Mezirow (1989, 1991, 1996, and 2000) sees as the starting point for transformation. The chapter looks at the specific transformation that occurred in the lives of different categories of women. Common to the three groups of women is the intrapersonal transformation, in terms of increased self-esteem and confidence. Women in the three programmes all testified that the study had changed the way they viewed themselves. They also stated that they discovered that they had rediscovered their talents and capabilities. All the women testified that the study had led to interpersonal transformation in that it enabled them to play more public roles and to occupy positions of power in the public arena. The chapter will further demonstrate that transformed women had changed world view in relation to condition and position of women in Kenyan society. The chapter will also illustrate that some women planned to take action about their powerlessness, while others wanted to enlighten other women about the survival tactics in a society that places women in a second class position. The B. Ed. and the Coop women got economic empowerment from the study, leading to further increased self esteem.

### **5.2 Disorienting dilemma**

The literature review showed that transformation is triggered by contradictions in the learners’ lives (Mezirow 1991, Tennant 1993, Newman 1993, 1994). In this research, the awareness of the existence of a flexible programmes accounted for the disorientation that women experienced in their lives. Women distance learners experienced these dilemmas when they noticed that there was a gap in their lives which could only be filled by going back to study. Karen Adhiambo, from the B. Ed. programme, had gone through these contradictions gradually; when first she separated with her husband, then when he passed on, her in-laws accused her of organizing the

murder. They even chased her away from their premises. Once she reached her maternal home, she realized that she could not receive shares of her late father's property, because traditional norms did not allow women to inherit property from their parents, as the property was passed on to the sons. This was a traumatizing experience for her and as a result, she purposed to challenge this practice by taking her mother and brothers to court. She had, therefore, decided to question the normative distortion that daughters should never inherit property from their parents. Since she joined the distance learning programme she has had the opportunity to listen to other women's experiences of exclusion and marginalization. This has further changed her perception of life as she has discovered that other women experience even worse situations than hers.

For Emily Munywoki, her disorienting dilemma was brought by the fact of seeing her colleagues completing the programme: *'And now my colleagues who had registered for the distance learning course earlier on actually graduated and so I said to myself, so it is a reality.'* The implication of this statement is that before this happened, it had not dawned on her that one can learn as a mature adult and succeed, but once she saw her colleagues graduating, this triggered change in her perception and straight away she went to register. She had come to realize that even she could still succeed as a student, regardless of the many responsibilities that she carried.

Karen Bulinda reached a point where she noticed that other women who had gone for the TEE course were able to play more public roles in the church. This realization created conflicts in her life and it was only when she joined the TEE course that she got equilibrium.

Mezirow (1989) has posited that through critical reflection of assumptions and critical self-reflection on assumptions the learner is freed 'from frames of reference, paradigms, or cultural canon (frames of reference held in common) that limit or distort communication and understanding' (p. 191). This is what is seen in the life of Jane Mbau. For a long time she had believed that once a woman got married, that was the end of her ambitions and academic life. However, this standpoint changed when she joined the Coop distance learning programme:

*In fact before I had not known that there are other things that a wife can do. So I came to realize that even when one is married she can still study and go for higher levels of education. Before I thought that when I am married maneno kwisha (ambitious life is over) that you cannot go further. But during those three months I came to realize that getting married is not the end of the world. You can still go further in education.... In fact that experience made me be interested in study until now I am registered for the full time residential course at Cooperative College where I am a boarder. If God wishes after this course I would like to continue. If it were possible I would like to go to higher levels of education. I do not mind if I do it through correspondence or residential.*

The idea coming out clearly from the above citation is that involvement in distance learning, though for a short time, enabled Jane to see herself and her capabilities as a married woman differently.

Lilly Mulli also stated that:

*... Earlier on I used to think that when you reach form four you can only do secretarial, dressmaking courses and remain there, and you cannot go further to diploma and especially I believed I could not do a course with mathematics. But now I have a positive attitude that I can tackle any subject. I am getting encouraged to realize that I can do mathematics and I can study and be somebody. I have seen that even doing balance sheets is as easy as any other subject is. You see the women's attitude of hating mathematics was deeply in me but now I have changed.*

The assumptions in Kenyan society has been that science subjects, including mathematics, are too hard for women and so many women grow up fearing mathematics and choosing the art based subjects. However, for Lilly Muli the study experience had enabled her to revise her assumptions. She now knows that women can also study mathematics and that through education they can change their social status and become 'somebody.'

## Levels and types of Transformation

Table 10: Levels and Types of Transformation

Level	Transformation	B. Ed.	TEE	Coop
1 Intrapersonal	Self-confidence & self-esteem	√	√	√
	autonomy	√	x	x
	talents & potential	√	√	√
2 Interpersonal	Better interaction skills	√	√	x
	Social status at home	√	√	√
	More public roles	√	√	√
	Economic: promotion, new jobs, changed lifestyle	√	x	√
3 Changed world view	Notices exclusion of women at home	√	√x	√x
	Women own no property	√	√x	√x
	Unfair distribution of labour at home	√	x	√x
	Views on violence on women	√	x	√x
	Excluded from powerful positions in public	√	√x	√x
4 Taking action	Bargain & challenge power at home	√	x	x
	Courage to question & demand rights at home	√	x	x
	At public: educate other women	√	√x	√x

Key: √ = transformation has taken place; x = No transformation noticed; √x = some transformed others not

### 5.3 The B. Ed. Women

#### 5.3.1 Transformation among the B. Ed. women

After participation in distance learning the women in this research acquired new self-perceptions, whereby, they got increased confidence and self-esteem, leading them to appreciate their achievements as women. Some of them came to acquire a new identity in terms of autonomy and independence. They also came to discover that they had talents and potential which had remained obscured for a long time by the demands of their subservient position in society. Others acquired a sense of humility and better interaction skills.

#### 5.3.1.2 Intrapersonal Transformation: New self-perceptions

##### *Growth in Confidence and self-esteem*

The literature has shown that many years of subjugation lead women to lose their self-esteem and confidence. Thompson, (1989a: 15) notes that:

For many women the feeling of having little confidence is widespread.... The feelings are almost always attributed to some sense of personal inadequacy and are strongest when women, used to being homemakers and child-rearers, venture 'out' into the world beyond the home. Many of us underrate our own strength and achievements, and after a number of years in which our lives have revolved around the needs of our husbands and children, we lose track of our own identity and sense of significance.... Women who claim to be

unconfident are in most respect internalizing and taking responsibility for a process of exclusion and marginalization, which is a consequence of patriarchal relationships.

Thompson is saying that women need to come to the realization that they are not to blame for the feelings of inferiority and that it is due to unequal arrangement in society, which are sustained through cultural norms, that leads them to accept the second rate position in society. Once women reach a point of realizing this distortion, then they are able to question the social arrangement and take action to reorganize their position.

Women distance educators have also noted the lack of self-confidence and self-esteem as major characteristics of women returning to tertiary education (Kirkup & Prummer 1990, Kanwar & Taplin 2001, Evans 1995). This scenario cuts 'across class, caste, even national boundaries' (Dighe 1998:3). It originates from 'societal norms and mores, process of acculturation and personal experiences' (p.3). Willen (1988: 1000) stated that 'more women than men emphasized self-esteem as an important result of their distance education'. Thompson (1997: 37) explained this state of affairs by stating that 'feelings of marginality, frustration, lack of confidence, personal anonymity and depression are common among too many women in too many different economic and social circumstances...'. Abagi et al (2000) has further stated that as a patriarchal society, Kenya socializes its women to remain in the private sphere of life (kitchen, and home), whereas men are socialized to be in the public sphere (leadership and bread winner). Njoroge (2000), too, has explained that Kenyan women have been subjected to various forms of violence whose major result is destruction of their dignity and fullness of life. The results of my research show the opportunity provided by distance learning for women to re-enter education enabled them to re-examine critically their self worth and the end result is a great increase in their self-esteem and confidence. Involvement in study had brought changes to their psychological self and this was evident in that: '*but now I can socialize with people very easily*' (Lydia Mwenge). Deborah Kivanguli used to pity herself, but this changed immediately she joined the B. Ed. distance programme:

*...I used to have pity on myself but now I am there and I am very happy.... There is change in the way I think about myself. I have now very high self-esteem. I*

*count myself as a lucky woman because very soon I am going to attain the degree and this would boost me morally and academically and even my way of thinking.*

For Joyce Kamba, increased confidence was evident in that she got courage to speak and address big crowds of people without fear or shyness:

*It has given me courage to speak. I can now put across a point without fear. They called me to go and talk to the university students who belong to my church. I am able to speak to university students with courage. So it has given me confidence. I talk to them in a stadium, something I could not do before. I was feeling I am only a primary school teacher, but now I feel I belong to a different and higher class.*

Meli Manga went further to explain that:

*Traditionally women have been looked down upon. Her job has been to give birth and cook for the family but now I look at myself as somebody who is worthy, who should be valued. I actually value myself because I have come to believe that if I am left on my own I will still feed myself. I have been empowered. In a way I can stand on my own...I look at life positively. I look at women as people who when given chances they can make great people. Presently women have been denied those chances.*

Emily Munywoki, too, had experienced new self consciousness: *'I have come to appreciate myself for who I am and even for my capabilities. I never thought that I could sit down and read for those number of hours, or even decide to forgo this or that. I did not think I had the will power.'* Since these women had joined the programme due to feelings of inadequacy, once they joined the programme, then their confidence and self esteem increased.

### ***They discovered that they were Autonomous Beings***

Mezirow (1991) has pointed out that critical reflection, followed by discourse and action 'can change culturally assimilated assumptions and premises which limit and distort understanding and give learners greater control over their lives' (p.189). He further states that 'communicative competence refers to the ability of the learner to negotiate his or her own purposes, values, and meanings rather than to simply accept

those of others' (Mezirow 1996:164). Thompson (1997) also notes that many years living under male hegemony has led women, regardless of their economic and social circumstances, to lose their identity and become anonymous. Ekeya (1994: 142), too, has pointed out that in the traditional Kenyan society, women 'had to live in the shadow of a man and her existence was defined and given legal sanction by men'. In Kenya a woman is either a daughter or a wife. In both cases, she occupies an inferior position and must rely on the male relatives for direction, guidance and economic support. In this research some B. Ed. women reported having acquired their own identity, which was independent from the male influence. Emily Munywoki stated that: *'Today I feel that I have my live and it is full with or without him and this is what I normally tell him.'*

Initially, Emily used to see her identity in terms of her husband, but after her involvement in study for the last four years, she started to see herself as a distinct individual:

*I am an individual; first and foremost, I have come to realize that my life does not depend on my husband and my children... I have discovered myself as an individual that my life should not be dictated to by anybody... I used to have a lot of insecurity. Nowadays even if he went I would just switch and sleep.*

She came to discover that she is an autonomous being and with that discovery, she is able to challenge power in the home. She further pointed out that: *'But I always say that you do not let men judge who you are or ask them, what do you think about me? You know what you are and what you are capable of doing. Just go ahead and do it.'* Florence Mukasa, too, expressed similar sentiments when she stated that once she finished the course she would buy her own car instead of relying on her husband's one. This, too, was a point to feelings of autonomy.

Newman, (1993:178) has argued that emancipatory learning has to do with 'self-knowledge, knowing who we are, how we came to be who we are, and the factors that continue to constrain and shape the way we see ourselves'. Thus for Emily and others, studying has enabled them to reinterpret their identity, instead of relying on her husband's interpretation. They have realized that the socially constructed picture of women is distorted, because it limits their opportunities. Thus women learners have

also come to realize that such socially determined gender roles have marginalized them. This woman is saying that she does not need to rely on such kind of biased descriptions of herself, but rather, rely on her own critical reflection of herself and her capabilities. Hence, they have come to re-discover a new self, one who is capable of higher status than the previous one. Such identity discovery does not refer to being self-centred, but rather being able to psychologically rely on oneself, rather than the male constructed inferior woman. In a way, it points to the ability of women learners to challenge existing beliefs and norms about the inferiority of women and the resultant dependence on men for their socio-economic and cultural survival.

***They have discovered that they have talents and potential***

Researchers have pointed out the fact that transformation learning stirs at the intrapersonal level as ‘psychological recognition for truth’ (McDonald et al 1999: 16). In the present research, one of the truths women discovered is that they had great talents, which had stayed unexplored for a long time, because they were not aware of them in the first place. Hart points out that intrapersonal communicative distortions violates truthfulness and that when the truth is discovered, then learners become ‘free to examine or acknowledge the psychological distortions that have motivated them in the past’ (Hart, 1990, cited in McDonald et al, 1999: 16). Earlier research (Thompson, 1997) had also shown that once women go back to formal education after many years of raising children and taking care of the family, they came to realize that they have potential, that they have ‘untapped areas of talents that society, or we ourselves, in the condition in which we live, have not been able to fulfill’ (p.38).

In the present research, the ability to combine different chores was seen as a sign of talents and ability: Emily Munywoki stated that:

*I have also discovered that I have a lot of potential in so many areas...Even we have group discussions outside residential and this is when I discovered that I have a lot of potential. You are given a challenge to go and research on some topic and when you present it to the group and they appreciate it you come to love yourself and appreciate yourself and you feel good about yourself.*

Joyce Kamba also stated that:

*I have discovered I have talents I never thought I had... I did not know that I have that kind of strength, that I can be a mother, a wife, a student, a teacher, a headmistress, and a Christian for that matter. I do those roles well. This course has taught me how to distribute my energy and my time to fit within all those roles because all of them require my attention.... This course has taught me that I am stronger than I thought. It has also taught me that I am brighter than I thought.*

This statement points to the fact that women distance learners strive to perform their multiples roles well so as to avoid complaints from those in power in their lives (Sturrock, 1988). The statement also shows that this particular woman does not want to challenge the unfair distribution of roles in the home. This is well illustrated when she says that '*I do those roles well*'. Real emancipatory learning would lead her to challenge and question the heaping of too many chores on women in a patriarchal society (Hart 1990). This is not what is happening.

The stories of B. Ed. women show that women's capabilities, talents and potential are blurred by the inferiority that is instilled in their lives by male control that domesticates them. Once they get opportunity within the public sphere of education, they rediscover their abilities and by so doing, get transformed in their perspectives.

#### ***Acquired New Identity as an African***

Only two women who testified that involvement in the B. Ed. programme had impacted positively on their views on African culture. Joyce Kamba stated that studying literature had changed the way she perceived African culture.

*The course had made me look at African culture in different manner. Where I was brought up at the Coast we talk about 'mshamba' (somebody with rural manners). We have our standards and values based on Western and Arabic culture. So we have forgotten our roots... the literature part has made me change my attitude to African culture. It has taught me to look at people and appreciate them. We have to accept our culture. Before I never knew anything good can come from Africa but now I am different. I appreciate our culture more. I used to despise African ways of life, including music but now I have come to appreciate African ways of life and culture. ...Even I used to despise*

*African foods but now I have to respect peoples' food, way of dress and cultures. The interaction with people from other communities has helped me to appreciate other tribes.*

Similarly, Lillian Odale stated that the study of languages had changed her attitude to those who spoke English language with a local mother-tongue accent. Initially she used to despise such people but the course had enabled her to change her attitudes. She explained that studying linguistics had enabled her to be more accommodative to those who speak English language with their first language ascent:

*I have experienced quite a lot of changes especially when I did linguistics. I had a chance to learn that language is acquired... so what you learn as first language affects your learning a second language. You know when I was young I used to laugh at those who cannot pronounce certain letters, but now I understand them. I cannot look down on anyone anymore. In fact I have come to realize that every Kenyan speaks English with their first language accent. Before I got the degree I used to have a negative attitude towards those who cannot pronounce some words properly. So the course has enabled me to change my attitudes.*

### **5.3.1.3 Interpersonal Transformation**

Critiques of transformational learning theory have argued for the 'recognition and exploration of the relationships of the individual to the larger scale, defined as families, communities or cultures' (McDonald 1999:8). Scholars have pointed out that once learners are emancipated from their own psychological distortions at the intrapersonal level, they moved their attention to interpersonal and social-cultural levels (Hart 1990, Newman, 1994). This means that learners are able to critique norms and cultural values that constrain their lives, both in the private and public spheres. In the present research, such a critique led the women to challenge powerlessness, leading to changed relationships in terms of power dynamics, both in the private and public level. Thus interpersonal transformation was experienced in terms of better interaction skills changed relations at home as well as acquisition of higher social status in the public arena.

### ***Humbled and better interaction skills***

Mezirow (1989:171) notes that once transformation has taken place the learner acquires a superior perspective, which is 'more inclusive... more accepting of others as equal participants in discourse.' Many of the women interviewed for this research spoke candidly about how involvement in the study had humbled them and given them better interaction skills with other people. The study experience had enabled them to acquire a new virtue, namely humility. In the B. Ed. focus group Emma Omari, for example, stated categorically that she had been humbled through the learning experience:

*And you see, it has humbled me to a certain extent. It is no longer that feeling of I am better than other people, other than feeling that you should serve them, so that when somebody makes a mistake somewhere you go to them and tell them, you know you should not do this thing, it is wrong. Otherwise, before I would just say, shauri yako' (Swahili for 'it is up to you', or 'carry your own cross'), ... And then to a certain extent you appreciate all other people around you, whether they are low or higher than you. We now understand people the way they are.'*

Joyce Kamba further stated: '*It has also taught me that I should not look down on people. When you see them down there, it does not mean that they are weak; it is only the opportunity which has not come their way.*' Years before joining the programme, Joyce had been looked down upon as a primary school teacher, whose level of education was lower than that of a graduate secondary school teacher. Now that she was going to be a graduate teacher herself, she had taken upon herself a different attitude, that is, never to despise people on basis of their position in society. Thus she had become more accommodative of other people (Mezirow 1996). She had undergone a psychological process that led to a better perspective on herself and also led her to have a better insight in her social understanding of others. Although she feels she is no longer '*down there*' due to the new opportunities she has acquired, she had developed a social empathy with those considered to be below.

Interaction at the residential sessions was credited for this acquisition of humility and interaction skills:

*Interaction with others had made me see that actually I have not achieved much. When I come here and see lecturers younger than me then I realize that I have not achieved much. I have also seen older people, almost my mother's age, also struggling to study, and this has energized me to realize that the sky is the limit for me in education... some of the lecturers are also very serious and they act as role models... Interaction with them has uplifted us and motivated us very much. (Joyce Kamba).*

### ***Changed relationships at the private sphere of life***

#### ***Spouses***

The testimonies of the B. Ed. women show that participation in distance learning had led to changed relationships in terms of power dynamics in the domestic sphere, with the women becoming more visible in decision-making forums. These women testified that their spouses' attitude to them had changed. Florence Makasa's husband treats her with respect and involves her in decision-making forums in the home: '*... but you know he treats me with brakes (laughing) when he brings up an issue, he sees me really discuss it very wisely and backs me and if he is to do something negative, he changes his mind.*'

There were other testimonies of women whose positional power in the home had already increased. For Lydia Mwenge, since she completed the course she has been '*able to get involved in decision-making forums in my house and even in the church.*' Meli Manga, too, expressed the same opinion when she stated that:

*For my social life I find that my Mzee (husband) is very happy with me. His attitude to me has changed. He used to be rude but after I took the course now he is able to sit we have a dialogue. We respect each other. I am no longer a passive observer. I also make decisions. He gives me that authority to make decisions. Both of us have changed. One, I came to discover some of my rights. Now we can discuss.*

Emily Munywoki, too, stated that:

*To some extent I think he has changed due to the changes in the way I tackle issues out. Previously he used to sleep out even for three days... But*

*surprisingly he does not go out anymore. These days he tells me when he has to be away over night. So I think he has changed a lot.*

Change of attitude for some spouses came only after the wives completed the programme:

*Like one of my friends, who completed in 1994, all the time the husband used to give her problems, quarreling every time she was leaving for the residential sessions, quarreling with her when she is reading and even put off the lights when she is reading. He would even throw the books away... so during her graduation the husband attended and said, 'Oh, you mean you did so well like this! I should have given you more time maybe you could have got first class honours!' (Group bursts into loud laughter). These days my friend says that her husband is very happy with her. Even in the house he is very good now. There is no problem now. (Focus group, Beverley Mutindi).*

This citation shows that once women come out to the public arena they get appreciated and their bargaining power increased, in contrast to being kept in invisibility so as to maintain the status quo of subordination.

In other cases, a spouse would play double standards in that he would show lack of interest in his wife's education when at home but when he went out with friends he would use her participation in the course, and especially that she was studying at the most prestigious University in the country, to get enhanced status from his peers. This shows a contradiction in that a man would block his wife from enrolling and succeeding in distance learning, but yet he would still exploit her achievements to gain credibility in public:

*But somehow they appreciate. You find that when they are talking to friends you hear them saying, 'my wife is now doing this course at the university and I am organizing for fees to take to the University of Nairobi. The fellows want credit even when they are not contributing in any way. He wants his friends to know that he is associated with the big University. (Focus group, Susan King'ola).*

***Changed relations with children: rearing practices and role model to the children***

Mezirow (1991:11) states that through transformational learning, learners come to interpret their experience using 'a new set of expectations,' and that this re-interpretation questions old value systems. This means that learners come to question the assumptions and stereotypes that are prevalent in society about what women ought to do or not. In this research, women distance learners had critically re-examined these stereotypes and acquired new values, which were more accommodating. For instance, Debora Kivanguli comes from a community where girls are not allowed to put on trousers, but since she joined the B. Ed. programme, she has changed her attitudes and has given her daughters freedom to put on the clothes of their choice and also to watch programmes on television that girl-children in other homes are prohibited from watching:

*In Kisii where I come from they are still very traditional. Girls are not supposed to put on trousers but for me I dress mine in trousers. So the people start complaining and saying, 'this woman is bringing up prostitutes'. I want my children to be different and enlightened...we also have television and I allow them to watch the catwalk. I am free and do not limit my children. On AIDS day we opened the television and the visitors in my house started complaining that those programmes should not be seen by the children but I told them no! Let them see so that they grow up prepared for life.*

Meli Manga further stated that:

*I try to tell my children what they ought to do, how they should approach life and how they should work hard because this is the only way they can make it in life. I used to have no patience and I used to be very harsh but these days I have adopted the law of moderation with my children.*

Florence Makasi used to '*hit my son very much, but now the anger has come down*'. The subjects such as child psychology had impacted positively on their way of bringing up their children. Lillian Odale for instance stated that: '*We did a course on child psychology. It helped me to know the kind of stages that children go through. I have also learned to cope with them. I can know now how to motivate them and how to handle their manners.*'

Emily Munywoki not only understands her children better after participating in the B. Ed. programme, and especially after doing the Psychology module, but she has also been educating her husband on how to handle the children and also helping other families in bringing up their children:

*I have a broader perspective of looking at things. You know we are doing things like psychology. When I look at my kids and see them behaving the way they do, I think if I did not have this knowledge, maybe we would have so many problems, but now I can be able to understand them. I can be able to predict how she will behave if I do this. Like if it is disciplining or putting a limit and saying don't do this, I have ground to support it and we can reach somewhere. I have also helped other families and their children. I have also been able to advise my husband on ideas on bringing up children. I normally tell him, 'you know we are doing this and I think you should also read it. It is interesting'. He actually comes to appreciate. So I think it has helped our family grow into whatever we are.*

At the same time, many of the women had become role models to their children. They explained that: *'it makes them very happy and challenged. They tend to ask: Mum you are reading. Then I need to work very hard.'* (Focus group, Susan King'ola). They further stated that: *'Mine says that Mum is going to the university of nursery (group laughs).* (Focus group, Emma Omari, 2002)

When Lydia Mwenge's children saw her working hard to complete her B. Ed. course, they came to perceive education as an important venture and for this reason, they also decided to put effort and work hard in their education. Her successful completion of the distance learning programme had given her moral authority to advise her children on the importance of university education and career choice:

*Keka naekie kuuya na niisaa onesa, monae, vai undu tondu Mami aekie sukulu tene na aisaa onesa.* (If I had stopped education down below there, my children would be saying, education is not important because Mum stopped down there and she still lives comfortably). *But I think my going back to college affected them also. All of them are struggling to study at the university. It is like I became a role model for them. If Mum studied at an old age why can't I do it and I am young. Now there are two at the university and now this*

*one here is hoping to join soon. To them education is the thing. They know I know university life ... Furthermore now I feel I know what I am talking about and I can advise them well about careers since I have been there.*

In all these instances, the women claimed that the perception of their children of their mothers had positively changed. They saw their mothers as very hard working. Due to this fact, the children realized that they had also to work hard. Thus the mothers had become role models to their children.

### ***Social status in the public arena***

#### ***More respect***

Many of the women that were interviewed explained that they had received more respect in the public sphere of their lives. Mercy Kaime, a first year in the B. Ed. programme, had noticed that: '*Now they know that I am at the university and so they respect me more.*' Florence Mukasa, who was doing her third year of study, noted that:

*But of late I see people giving me respect. Recently they elected me as the staff secretary. When I talk I see them really listening, something they could not do before. When we are in women meetings, church meetings and any other meetings, I find people giving me respect. So I have seen myself commanding more respect already.*

For Sofia Kiveti, her headmaster at the school she teaches in, has changed his attitude to her since she joined the course a year ago:

*In school everybody used to look down on me, even the headmaster. If there is a problem he becomes very hard on you because you are not a graduate. Since I joined this course my headmaster treats me differently. He looks at me as if I know what I am doing, I can make it. Before he used to look at me as if I am foolish and I cannot make it in education. When I joined he has been asking me whether I am going to make it. Then he looks at me with fear.*

A participant in the focus group stated that:

*In fact where I teach I happen to be the head of the English Department... So at times when I would tell them what to do, they would question very much, but from the time I started this programme, I just need to say a word and people are doing the right thing. There is no question about it. (Speaks with authority and group laughs), (Susan King'ola).*

*In my school they refer to me as the professor. So when they have a problem you would hear then saying, 'let me go and ask the professor' (group laughs). At first I used to get hurt but with time I have realized that they are wishing me good. (Emma Omari).*

### ***Play more public roles***

Mezirow, (2000: 22) has posited that one of the phases of transformation process is a stage where learners explore 'options for new roles, relationships and actions' (cited in Baumgartner, 2002:45). The learner may have been blocked from performing these roles by the taken-for-granted distortions that had remained unchallenged for a long time. However, once the learner, through critical reflection, revises her world view, she is able to play powerful roles. Her visibility in the public sphere leads to her being assigned more status related roles. In this research, the B. Ed. women distance learners are able to play more public roles in the public sphere of their lives. For some of them, even the study groups that they formed opened opportunities to exercise leadership skills. Emily Munywoki, for example, organized her study group very well:

*...I am able to organize the discussion groups. They say that I am a natural leader. I am able to distribute the roles and assign duties and time manage and also in our church I do not feel intimidated any more to stand and conduct anything... I just stand up and lead in singing and other activities... it is like I have rediscovered some qualities in me, which were dormant for a long time.*

Emily has assumed roles associated with power. She plays these roles in different places and for different functions. In the study group she is an organizer, whereas in the church she assumed leadership roles quite easily. Hence, the study has enabled her to have influence.

Other testimonies showed that women were now able to play such roles as community leaders, counselors and church leaders. Since joining the B. Ed. course four years ago, Evelyn Mutambo has seen many parents developing trust in her and requesting her to coach their children: *'The neighbours call me to talk to their children and coach them. Even now they call me to coach secondary going children. Even in our Merry-go-round, they have made me a treasurer.'*

Deborah Kivanguli, who comes from an area infamous for practicing female genital mutilation (FGM), has gained educational status in her community. They respect her more and listen to her advice. Thus she has been co-opted to work with non-governmental organizations that are involved in the fight against FGM. She also works as a peer educator in HIV/Aids education programme:

*They told me that I have to be a coordinator in the fight against the practice. I am a peer educator. Now I am a pioneer. I go deep into the villages and tell the women about the negative effects of circumcising girls. Even in the HIV/AIDS programme, I am working with the Aids Communication Group. I went for a seminar and now work as a peer educator.... When I tell the community what I am doing at the university they tend to listen to me more.*

For Lydia Mwenge, since graduation, she has occupied various senior positions including deputy headmistress of a school: *'I was able to get other leadership opportunities. For instance, I was made a deputy head of a school. Then later I was made a head of a department in a college. I was also made a leader in the church.'*

Meli Manga also testified that:

*Here in my place of work the boss these days leaves the section for me to man. She sees in me a different person: more responsible person, I do not sneak away. The course has enabled me to know that it is good to be responsible and accountable for each and every thing one does. The whole course makes you responsible.*

Thus involvement in distance learning enables women to acquire power and status which they use to occupy influential positions of leadership in the community. Hence

distance learning helps women to rise higher in modern life and acquire opportunities that were initially beyond their reach.

#### ***5.3.1.4 Changed world view***

Most of the studies that have been informed by the transformative learning theory have tended to examine learners' perspectives in relation to certain aspects of their lives. For instance, McDonald et al (1999) examined the perspective transformation of ethical veganism; Baumgartner et al (1999 2002) studied the lives of HIV positive individuals and how they came to make sense of the disease. In this research, I am gauging women's transformation by looking at their views on women's subjugation in the Kenyan society. Since emancipatory learning enables a learner to stop looking at herself through the eyes of others (Newman 1993), I would be able to identify instances of transformation in the lives of Kenyan distance learners. Their views on the culturally accepted low position of women in society would prove whether transformation has occurred or not. A transformed woman learner would be able to challenge the existing normative distortions about women's position in society. Emancipatory learning enables learners to 'name their world', that is, 'being able to describe themselves and their world without relying on hegemonic relationships to understand themselves' (Freire 1972a: 60). In other words, they have to shed those culturally accepted normative assumptions that relegate women to second class citizenship.

#### ***Views on the condition and position of women***

Clark and Wilson (1991) have suggested that the meaning of experience can only be understood within its context. Kibiti, (2002) has explained culture as the 'ideology, which provides justification for women's oppression' (p.2). She further sees culture as the force that defines and confines women to the domestic sphere of reproductive activities. The results of the present research show that the B. Ed. women distance learners have critically re-examined these dominant cultural ideologies that have led to their subjugation at their private and public spheres of life. These women have re-examined the belief and found out that they were treated unfairly. For instance, they noticed that their husbands treated them like little children and that the husbands had to plan everything for them. They summed up society's treatment of women by stating that: '*Women are treated like they have less brains.*' They went on to state

that: *'when somebody says, 'what can a woman tell you?' It simply means that he does not believe a woman can say anything sensible.* (Focus group discussions, Beverly Mutindi). They also stated that: *'it is like woman's life must be planned for, like we are children.'* (Focus group, Anne Mukala). Furthermore, they had come to realize that the idea that a woman's place is in the kitchen, a fact that they had originally taken-for-granted, was meant to suppress them: *'And this idea of 'a woman's place is in the kitchen', you see this is meant to suppress us or put us down here, so that even the idea of a woman going abroad or for further studies, men do not want to hear of that.* (Focus group, Beverly Mutindi).

The above statement shows that these women are able to analyze afresh the whole concept of *'woman's place is in the kitchen'*. They had come to realize that the phrase was used to exclude them from decision-making forums in the home: *'When they insist that woman's place is in the kitchen, they actually do not want you to take part in decisions on land demarcation, or buying land.'* (Focus group, Hellen Kaluki).

These women have raised awareness and are saying that they no longer accept the term in their lives, as it is used to deny them opportunities of power and influence that is found in the public sphere. The raised awareness has enabled them to see that they have been marginalized. When they are denied participation in land demarcation and buying transactions, it means that they are also excluded from the ownership of the same. Hence, such statements are used to maintain the status quo where men occupy economic and social power over the women. The statement shows that these women are challenging this cultural norm and in the process, they are further enlightening each other on the implications of such distortions for their lives as women.

Mercy Kaime also stated that:

*When women get better responsibilities the men become suspicious. Married women, we have a lot of problems. This suspicion could come because of inferiority complex in the man. They also get scared that you are so senior. They also think women are only promoted if they have a relationship with the boss. Men want women to remain down. When you are promoted he thinks that you will be exposed to better men and you may even start looking down*

*on him. They have so many fears. They also fear that women may rebel if they are in high position.*

Women are able to reinterpret the social relations in the domestic sphere of their lives. The focus group, for instance, stated that:

*Some men do not want you to talk more when there is an argument or some discussions. If you talk more than him it may be an issue. 'Why are you outspoken, I am supposed to be the head. You are talking too loudly and saying everything and you do not respect my position' (group agrees).*

(Beverley Mutindi).

In any case, through studying together with men, the women had come to realize that there was no difference between men and women, implying that what men were capable of doing women could also perform: *'I have found out that there is no difference between a man and a woman. We are just equal. We can participate equally with men. I feel that men and women are the same, apart from the biological differences'* (Lillian Odale).

This statement was a direct challenge to the gendered role allocation where men are allocated more prestigious roles in the public sphere and the woman is pushed to the domestic roles which have no power and prestige. Therefore, although Kenyan society views women as the weaker sex and inferior, the distance learning experience had completely changed women's beliefs about their capability:

*The course has really changed me over that because our society, especially African society, it has been viewing women as the weaker sex. For example when these authors write books (she takes literature) they would put titles on us, such as 'flowers', 'you look like the morning' glory', 'the roses',.... You know they just want to use us but they have never given us that equal opportunity to exploit our talent. Even in this programme we beat them in class. This means that if they had given us this opportunity earlier on, I am sure there will be more changes. ...So I have looked at a woman to be a normal human being like that man, who once given chance to learn like men, they just become engineers, lawyers, and lecturers in the universities like men. They are very competent. (Florence Mukasa).*

The socialization of girls was blamed for perpetuating women's subjugation in Kenyan society. Emily Munywoki, for instance, noted that:

*It is so strange that we are brought up to think that our lives are for making the men happy and sometimes we transfer this into our girls. Like when you make meals in the kitchen and you make different food for the father the girls will grow up knowing that men are supposed to be given special treatment. Even us women we have been brought up to think that we are there for happiness of men. It makes a difference when a woman is working, it gives her some independence. This idea of women accounting and begging from him, he will make sure you dance to his music. He would expect you to tell him all that you have bought. I do not know why they think we are not responsible.*

Having specialized in Literature and languages, Lillian Odale, who graduated from the B. Ed. programme in 1999, looks at language use to describe women and realizes that it shows discrimination:

*Actually the society is not fair to women. Women have been looked down upon. Even in language the words used to describe women are meant to keep her down and despised. Like the word 'prostitute' is only used to describe women and yet there are men doing the same job. (Lillian Odale).'*

The above statements are evidence of the fact that women distance learners are able to see and analyze their situation critically. They have seen that language use was one of the tools of making women believe they are inferior to men and now they are able to see that there is a problem in women's socialization process. The way out of this situation is for women to rebel and refuse to accept a world that is named by others (society) but name it themselves (Freire 1972). This is the central theme in the emancipation paradigm, whereby learners come to 'see the world through our own eyes, not as described by someone else' (Newman, 1993: 223).

Some women had come to believe what the society says about them and acquired inferiority:

*Sometimes women have inferiority complex. They have really come to believe that they cannot make it and it is only men who are able. When they get married they just give up on everything else. To some a husband is like the end*

*of everything. When you tell them about going back to school they think there is something wrong with you. They start wondering how they would leave their husbands and children and join an education programme. (Mercy Kaime).*

*When I told a few women that I was joining this course I got a negative response from them. Some of them said, 'some of us are satisfied in our married life and the little certificate that we have'. It's like they never dream of advancing themselves. Some are actually capable but to them going higher than their husbands is a crime. So they have accepted what the society believes about women. (Sofia Kiveti).*

Further gender discrimination was shown in marriage relationships in which married men tended to treat their relatives better than relatives of the wife:

*There is no fairness...my man would like me to help his side alone. But when my cousins and relatives come he frowns... this is very unfair. You know it makes the society think that when you have a male child you are better than the one with a female child and this is where discrimination starts. (Florence Makasi).*

Similar sentiments came from Meli Manga, who stated that:

*When my relatives visit the first day he is excited but at night he starts asking, 'what has he come to do? When is he going back?' .... They do not accept women's relatives and they do not like helping their wives' relatives even when the man is able. My husband thinks assisting my mother is a burden. But compared to the way he treats his relatives there is too much attention. He gives all the money to her.*

Therefore, the study experience has brought changed views about women's subordinate position. The B. Ed. learners are eager to fight for their rights and to correct the distortions that have been inculcated through the socialization process.

### ***Women are excluded from political & economic power bases***

Earlier research (Kenya Gender Data Centre 2000) shows that although Kenyan women, especially in the rural areas, bore most of the responsibilities for household food security, their work was undervalued; never rewarded and that they had no legal claim to land and other forms of property. The Human Rights Watch research (2003) also corroborated these findings and stated that regardless of the level of education and geographical location, Kenyan women could not inherit any property upon the death of their spouses. Even those who remained unmarried, they could not inherit their parents land. The findings of this research show that women distance learners are questioning this state of affairs. Many of the women had come to realize the inequalities found in property ownership. All the B. Ed. women, for instance, had now come to notice the imbalance in ownership of property. Meli Manga, argued that there was:

*lack of economic empowerment, where women are forced to lag behind. You cannot make an independent decision because you lack money. There are no resources and in our communities women who own property are disowned. You are not supposed to buy anything and when you buy, you only do so for your husband and in his name. Women do not own property of their own and this is very serious problem. They are not to inherit land.*

To these women, lack of economic power for women meant dependence on the husband. The situation was worse in the rural areas where women and children work long hours in the coffee farms, but finally the coffee money is paid to the men, who disappear to enjoy it alone in the towns:

*In coffee and tea zones, the wife and children work in the farm all day, week after week. They harvest the cash crop and take it to the factory. That is the last time they hear about the crop. The man takes over and all the money is paid to him. This is injustice and terrible. The man goes to enjoy himself with the money. (Lillian Odale).*

In some other cases, even when women have paid jobs, their salaries are received and managed by the husbands: 'you may be earning but he still dictates to you what to be done with your money.' (Joyce Kamba).

In the public arena, the B. Ed. women had discovered that men dominated the top leadership positions and that women were the minority in the leadership ladder:

*Generally women in Kenya, we are the majority but when you look at the senior posts, I get shocked when I open the newspaper and see promotions in companies. You see four men against one lady, (Group says in unison) this is very bad. (Focus group member, Lucy Nguli).*

*The most recent case of discrimination is the recent merger between KANU (the then ruling party) with National Development Party. How many women were appointed to the top seats? (Other members in unison): 'Not even one.'* (Focus group, Emma Omari).

Although these women admired women political leaders, they pointed out that '*men have negative attitudes towards these women politicians, even in schools where women are the headmistresses, men tend to look down on them*' (Esther Ochola). Yet it is a fact, according to these women, that women tend to be better managers than men.

*Even the women preachers seem to invest more than the men preachers do. Wanjiru has bought a multimillion building within the city centre, Wairimu is building a big complex in Karen (up market area) but Muiru (male preacher) who has the same crowd has build or bought nothing in form of church property. (Meli Manga).*

In the above statement Meli compares women charismatic church preachers with their fellow male preachers and concludes that women tend to be more transparent in managing church funds than their male counterparts.

When asked about their views on women joining politics, most of the women in the B. Ed. programme were of the opinion that this was a desirable thing, as it would mean that the needs of women were articulated by one of their own. Emily Munywoki stated that:

*I have a lot of respect for these women especially those who have managed to keep their families intact.... Our girls are looking at these women politicians*

*as role models. We have to change because women have been silenced for a long time.*

Joyce Kamba was of the opinion that to have more women in parliament was the right way to fight for the rights of women and in fact she hoped that once she completed her course, she would join politics straight away:

*It is proper for women to get into politics and advocate for women rights from there.... Politics that are good are the ones that liberate women. We need women who can talk for the welfare of fellow women.... I think by the time I finish this course I will go into politics straight, you never know.*

Thus there was need to have more women in leadership as they would act as role models: *'I look at them as role models who are telling other women not to be cowards and that they can still make it in life even among men.... More women should join politics and become our leaders.'* (Meli Manga).

#### ***Views on distribution of labour at the home***

Thompson (1999:37) notes that in a patriarchal relationship the dominant view is that women should 'find fulfillment in their families' and of course the accompanying domestic chores. Mezirow (1989: 174) notes that perspective transformation enables women to change 'their uncritical acceptance of sex stereotypic roles and ... individually insist upon a change in the traditional relationships with their husbands and others in their lives.' In the present research, the B. Ed. women see these domestic chores as unfair treatment of women and oppressive. Joyce Kamba described the situation candidly by stating that: *'He treats me like a machine.'* She further noted that although they would both come home tired, the spouse still expected her to proceed on and perform homely duties:

*We both have tiring jobs. When we come from work, very tired, he relaxes to read a newspaper, but he expects me to go to the kitchen and even if I have a maid, he says that 'that kitchen does not belong to a maid, it is still yours'. So he treats me like a machine that does not get tired. When he is seated he talks about how tired he is, forgetting that I am also tired as he is...women are supposed to work tirelessly for men's comfort... he removes socks and throws them everywhere in the sitting room. My work is to come around collecting*

*them...even when I am studying and writing a term paper, he comes to ask for tea. We are still treated as the African women that our mothers used to be.*

These women tried to explain the origin of this unequal division of labour and noted that it was through socialization that women had been taught to accept being treated as 'burden careers':

*Women are kept doing all types of jobs in the home...the way women have been brought up to think that they are burden careers. Women are trained for all kinds of dirty jobs: digging, slashing, kitchen work, etc., but a boy is trained to bookwork and reading the newspaper. We need to change this situation. (Esther Ochola).*

Some members of the focus group stated that the course had enabled them to see the domestic chores in a different way. Unlike other women who had accepted their lot, these women are challenging this arrangement:

*You know most men think that women are a beast of burden. A few women are lucky. But you see our colleague here said that she is lucky in that her husband sometimes is away. You know other women will feel that it is not right to be happy when the husband is away. Generally the ideal society expects that a woman will rejoice when the husband is always around her but this course has changed our attitude. Sometimes you are happy when he is away, (group agrees with her) because some of these tasks will be reduced. (Lucy Nguli, 2002).*

The above statement shows that already the women learners could see the difference in perception between themselves and other women. Other women would accept the added chores that accompany the presence of the husband, but for them, his absence became a blessing, in that duties would be reduced and she would have power in the home without interference. It also shows that these women had shed their old ways of understanding the patriarchal relationship in the home, and had now acquired 'alternative meaning perspectives' (Mezirow, 1989: 173).

Mezirow (1989:190) has stated that:

when a woman enters the process of discourse to justify what is for her the problematic belief that a woman's place is in the home and with others critically examines the origins of this belief in their historical and biographical contexts, her understanding of the validity of this belief may be transformed.

Similarly, in the present research, the women learners noted that there was need to change the scenario at the home so that the men could take house chores positively and share the duties with their partners:

*There should be changes also. These duties should be shared. For instance, I should fetch water for the cow as he feeds it. As I am mopping he can be preparing food. This does not make him less of a man. There is need to have seminars on the importance of getting involved in the house chores. (Debora Kivanguli).*

#### ***Views on abusive relationships***

Many of the B. Ed. women abhorred abusive relationships. Joyce Kamba, for instance, sees the need for women to 'come out and talk about it openly; otherwise they would die quickly due to psychological torture'. She goes on to state that 'abuse comes in many forms. If he does not talk to you, then this is an abuse. Even when he cannot have sex with you, this is an abuse'. This definition of women abuse included not only physical abuse that is commonly acknowledged by most people, but also psychological torture that is meant to damage women's ego and make them acquire feelings of inferiority. A participant in the focus group stated that:

*My parents can cane me because I am their child but still to a certain age. Sasa huyu mtu! (Now this man!). He has found me when I am mature already; I have maybe three or five children (I do not have one yet but I am imagining). This is a lady who may have big children already with this man. Maybe this man is a drunkard but the woman has persevered a lot, then he comes and beats this woman. Maybe you are under the mercy of this man, you just can't go. You do not know how to leave the children behind, you do not have a salary, and you do not have any money or anything to earn yourself a living. Me, actually, it is actually too difficult for me now (group bursts into laughter). (Beverley Mutindi).*

In the above statement the women learners explained that women remained in abusive relationships due to economic dependence. After participating in the B. Ed. programme, these women realized that, since they were employed and could support themselves financially, they need not remain under these kinds of relationships. Instead, they would rather dissolve the marriage than remain under abusive conditions. They stated categorically that:

*... You do not wait for a second beating; please go away when you are still whole. Because he is going to destroy you, your self-esteem and then you will not be able to talk before people because everybody knows that you are being beaten. (Focus group, Emma Omari).*

They also pointed out that they had become peer advisers to their friends and colleagues who were under abusive relationships:

*...In fact I told her, if this is what you go through just go away and she left...I told her that if he had talked of a machete let her go away fast... Up to today she is still on her own...why do women keep on waiting for that panga (machete) to land on them so that we remain saying that he has butchered his wife? Why? Go away. (Focus group, Beverly Mutindi).*

Other B. Ed. women were of the opinion that female genital mutilation gave women feelings of inferiority and due to this, they continued to persevere under abusive relationships. Florence Mukasi, for instance, stated that:

*Women have been undermined when it comes to rites of passage like circumcision and initiation.... So these women are mistreated and because of the genital mutilation that they experienced, they have no urge to leave this man.... Because look, if I am mistreated by a man even if my parents had eaten the dowry, why can't I leave him and live on my own, not necessarily going to live with another man. And even if I had, so what! So long as I am happy and comfortable.*

It is clear from the above statements that the B. Ed. women's value system has changed. They have acquired an open mind towards divorce and getting into a second relationship. To them what matters is their happiness. Many of them testified that the study experience had opened their eyes:

*The course has enabled me to value the woman as a person in her own right. And so she is not a child and she should not be beaten. People should use their brains to solve their problems instead of resorting to fighting. Dialogue should be the key to marriage. (Alice Okanga).*

For many women, the interaction with other women during residential sessions had impacted positively on their transformation. Listening to each other's stories lead to further learning and self reflection: *'When I listen to them I reflect on my past experiences and I feel I do not want to admire a married woman. This is because what they tell me is happening to them is not something new. I have been there personally.'* (Karen Adhiambo). Hence, the sharing of stories by women is a starting point for their transformation. Dighe (1998:14) has also posited that interaction between women, 'helps them examine critically their lower position in society and leads them to take action against the injustices that they have suffered at home, work as well as in the larger society.'

#### **5.3.1.5 Taking Action**

Mezirow (1996:163) has posited that 'A transformative learning experience requires that the learner makes an informed and reflective decision to act'. He had earlier on emphasized that 'action is an integral and indispensable component of transformative learning' (1989:173). This means that once learners realize that they have been living a lie, that the assumptions they had believed in were distorted, they then engaged in discourse with others about it, and finally act on, their new discoveries (Mezirow 1989, Newman 1993, Baumgartner 2001).

#### ***More bargaining power at family level***

Many women testified to the fact that since they got involved in the programme, they had more bargaining power at the home, in that they could negotiate with the spouses better than before:

*I have friends who have finished this programme and from the look of things they seem to be having better bargaining power (the whole group agrees by nodding their heads and saying, hmmm). They are well placed. You know*

*when you are well placed socially you change. It encouraged us* (Focus group, Lucy Nguli).

Thus being 'well placed' implies that these women have gained more power at the domestic sphere and that they are able to play more significant roles in the home, roles that initially were reserved for their spouses, such as decision making. These women further maintained that one of these new power based roles was budgeting together as a family, unlike before when the spouses would do it independently, without seeking their opinions: *'At this level I want to know what is going on. I am chipping in with my money and for this reason I want to know what are we doing with the money.'* (Focus group, Anne Mukala).

Meli Manga, too, testified that:

*Right now my partner sees me as a contributor in many ways directly or indirectly. I have a say in the family. Because of the education I have acquired he also sees me as a resourceful person. I have a say in the family budget and in the investments we carry on. I believe that it is good to be aggressive and show interest in whatever he is doing. Personally even when I have been paying my fees, I have been able to personally buy a few plots through a cooperative society. I had already informed him about this and he supported me.*

A member of the focus group stated that:

*I believe it is our work to ensure we are treated the way we want. For example if somebody is undermining me because I am a woman, I will tell him to the face. I will tell him that I have no business talking to him. Yea, I will just walk out...So it is our work to really look for a way to seek this independence and be appreciated at the same time.* (Emma Omari).

Lydia Mwenge, too, testified that:

*It also led to more control over family finance. Do you know, if you are contributing money to the family this means that you are able to contribute all way round? If you have put your money somewhere you also have a say on how it will be used in budgeting and investment. If you have no money you*

*cannot have a say. Like whenever teacher's salary goes up, maths teachers get more increment than the arts. I can say that although we are developing as a family my salary contributed towards what we own now.*

One way of women overcoming oppression was making sure that they had economic and financial independence from their spouses:

*'This is a challenge to us as women. We should work very hard, educationally, even financially and economically, to make sure that in your family at least you have something you can give, so that you are not a waiting woman, waiting to be given.'* (Focus group, Consolata Wanjiru).

These statements show the power dynamics at home have changed for many women, in that they are more visible in the decision making forums in the home. They are no longer excluded from important financial activities in the home. It also shows that this change came because they have been assertive in asking for a better bargaining deal at the family front. Thus the ability to be assertive and bargain for better treatment is an indicator to transformation, bearing in mind that Kenyan women are socialized to be submissive and less concerned about important decisions in the home (Muita 1999).

### **Women challenging patriarchy**

It was clear from the stories of the B. Ed. women that involvement in distance learning enabled them to be above other women in terms of their ability to challenge the prevailing distortions about their status. The women compared themselves with their rural counterparts and agreed that they were better placed in that they had come to understand the demands of patriarchal society on women, whereas their rural colleagues suffered under ignorance with very little ability to challenge the set up:

*But sometimes I feel that we women who had a chance to come and study here are a little bit privileged because we know some of these things. But when you go back to the rural village, those women in the rural village go through a lot of problems because they are really subjected to that man and since it is the man who is supposed to provide (or he never brings), the family will just go hungry because the woman has nothing. So at least us we are a bit privileged, we know what our rights are and we know how we can manage them in our own houses and come out of it.* (Focus group, Lucy Nguli).

This statement is evidence of the women's transformation. They are able to see things that other women do not see. They also have the stamina to say no to domination, something that other women lack. Mezirow (1996: 167) posits that 'discourse allows us to test the validity of our beliefs and interpretations. It permits us to examine evidence and judge arguments in order to achieve a consensual best judgment concerning justifications presented in support of a belief'. In this regard, the women attributed their newly acquired insights to the interaction that they normally have with other learners during the residential period:

*This course has really empowered us in many ways. Even the interaction we have when we come for residential helps us to know so many things. Like there is a lady who was telling us that 'if your husband tells you to leave, know that he is part of your luggage. So you go and bring a very big lorry, put everything on it, put him also, (group breaks into prolonged laughter), plus all your children. If the house is the problem then you leave it behind and go to a new house. (Focus group, Beverly Mutindi).*

*When the man of the house believes that he can be harassing you around, tell him, 'you know this time we shall leave together, the two of us; nobody has a right to remain here (group bursts into laughter).... If you cannot put up with me and then we shall both leave'. Nothing belongs to me; nothing belongs to him. They are for both of us. (Focus group, Emma Omari, 2002).*

There was no doubt from these stories that participation in distance learning had lead B. Ed. women to challenge the order of things in the home. Hence, for most of them, the normative ideology of male supremacy was challenged. They demanded greater structural change at the family level. However, powerful forces in the home hindered total transformation. This state of affairs has been explained by McDonald et al (1999: 20) when they stated that that 'transformative learning.... is affected and affects the interpersonal level most profoundly.' Although individuals may transform their meaning perspectives, they do so in the face of enormous interpersonal and social-cultural challenges. They further state that, after undergoing transformational learning process, participants found themselves 'struggling against powerful cultural and interpersonal challenges to their newly discovered ideology' and that 'power emerged

as an integral force that shaped the transformational learning journey beyond the decisions to adopt a new meaning perspective' (p. 8). Hart (1985: 120-121) noted that power,

always has the same purpose: to keep individual autonomy within strict and narrowly defined boundaries. This can occur either through direct, open power in the form of violence... or through the mechanism of a false consciousness in the grips of beliefs and assumptions which reflect and cement power relations.

This shows the kind of resistance that the powerful forces may pose to individuals who want to transform their surroundings and have a share of more power. In this research, those around the learners tried to stand on their way of development. Transformed women encountered opposition from the powerful forces that have put them down for a long time at the home front. Emily Munywoki, who at the time of the interview was doing her fourth year in the programme, had decided to take action and behave contrary to the socio-cultural belief that wives should always come home earlier than their husbands and once she did this, her husband was annoyed and as a result the relationship in the home was tense:

*Last Friday, I decided to have coffee with another friend in the evening and so I arrived home at 6.30....I could see he was not happy...about my coming later than usual time. But somehow in my heart I was not feeling guilty about it...After three days it is when he voiced out the disappointment of my coming late. But I told him that I also had a right to socialize with my friends. I also told him that I was responsible enough to decide what is right for me and what is wrong. I do not like his tendency to want to programme me such that I have to be in the house at a particular time.... Before I would have felt very guilty to come late at 6.30 pm. I would have walked into the house feeling very apologetic and I could not stand up to face him and in fact before I would have been forced to cook a story, like I went to see some friend in hospital and we were delayed. But now I am happy just to tell him my piece of mind.*

In the above example, Emily accepts that if it was before she took on the course she would not have been able to tell her husband about her right to socialize with her friends. The study experience had enabled her to stand up for her rights and tell him,

*'this is the way I also look at the issue and if you do not like it, that is very unfortunate'*. Emily further noted that: *'these men have been brought up to think that a woman is down there and that they are there to think for her and programme her'*. This is now unacceptable and in fact she has been training her son to respect his sisters:

*Right now I have to remove that mentality from my son. I have told him that he must do things for himself and I see he is a responsible man. But when the girls come he sits back and wants to be made tea by the girls. I feel mad about that system. I want to make him know that nobody is there to work for him.*

Another finding of this research is that distance learning had armed the women with the ability to question the inheritance laws in Kenya. For instance, Karen Adhiambo decided to take her mother and brothers to court so as to challenge the exclusion of daughters from inheriting their father's property:

*Women are not supposed to complain about their situation or raise issues. For instance, there is this practice that women are not supposed to inherit anything from their parents. I feel that the law should be changed so that women can inherit property. In my case, I was married and then thrown out.... So I feel that women should be allowed by law to inherit father's wealth also together with the brothers so that if I have problems where I am married I have a place to fall back to. In fact prostitution has increased because women have got no rights to property.... I tried to ask a share of my father's property but my brothers beat me up and my own mother decided to side with them. I took them to the police but my mother was not sorry for what they did but I was only fighting for my rights. I am still fighting through the Public Trustee so that my father's property can be shared among all his children, both boys and girls.*

#### ***Involvement in the service of other women: role models***

Through transformative education, learners come to realize the existence of normative ideologies that distort their realities and that of others and once they reach this level of consciousness, they decide to take action against the system. One way of taking action is when learners individually or as a group decide to enlighten others who may still be living in the unreal world (Newman 1993). Nath (2001: 1), too, has stressed that 'the

one resource that liberates people from poverty and empowers them is knowledge. Possessing knowledge is empowering while the lack of knowledge is debilitating'. Thompson (1997: 90) notes that 'unless the oppressed and exploited have the tools to challenge dominant ideas, they risk being locked into the present and unable to imagine alternatives for the future'. Thus in this research, the B. Ed. women wanted to make other women aware of existing inequalities and also ways of combating marginalization. They wanted to provide fellow women with education as a tool to use in their struggle against women's unfair treatment. These women felt that '*it is up to us who are enlightened who should educate the society out there*' (Focus group, Lucy Nguli).

Some of the knowledge they wanted to disseminate related to family planning:

*What I would advise women is that they should practice family planning so that they do not have too many children who become a problem to them. Some women have to stick to the abusive marriage because they have six children at a tender age that need to be taken care of. So it is good for women to plan so that they do not cling to these men who are beastly because of the children* (Focus group, Lucy Nguli).

In a case where the husband wanted more children than what the wife wanted to have, the B. Ed. focus group stated categorically that the wife should make her own private and secrete family planning arrangements: '*If the man wants a certain number of children, what you do as a woman is to organize your own for family planning*' (group agrees). (Focus group, Susan King'ola). This was necessary because once a woman had too many children she would always stick in an abusive relationship.

They also wanted to advise fellow women on how to manage their own money. This would ensure that women have economic empowerment so that they do not have to rely on their spouses for their financial needs.

*I would advise women to try and join women groups for easier saving of their money. For instance, I am in a group of teachers at home. Every month each member brings Ksh 2,500 (US\$ 31). We put that money together and give it to one individual. My turn will be in July... and this will be enough for me to pay*

*fees for one semester... So we need to plan for our money. (Focus group, Anne Mukala).*

Emily Munywoki, too, wanted to educate women on the need to be independent and not to rely on men for their moral and economic support:

*I will try to educate women on the need to do things for themselves. I will tell them that it is important to stand on their own so that with or without the man things can still move. I intend to educate women on the need for women to exploit their potential and be somebody in life and achieve what they wanted to achieve in life.*

Educating other women to take action on their lives was hence, an important tool to fight the prevailing cultural norms and practices that support patriarchal oppression in Kenyan society. Through such activities, other women could benefit from the newly acquired insights.

The women suggest that the educational institutions should create dialogue with the spouses and the community, so that the two institutions could understand the importance of women's education. For instance, this could be done through open-days when the students and their families could be invited to the University. This would give the University opportunity to sensitize the spouses and the community on the importance of the programme, not only to the woman taking it, but also to the whole family:

*...The university should take a key interest in knowing our spouses and our guardians so that once in a while they are talked to (group agrees). To a certain extent they would give us the time to study if they are sensitized on what we are doing. We need to have an 'open-day' when our spouses are invited to come and hear the university tell them what this course is all about. (Focus group, Emma Omari).*

### **5.3.2 Economic Empowerment**

The economic empowerment for women distance learners is treated, not as part of the transformation that women experience, but as a direct financial benefit of their education. Although not part of perspective transformation process, economic benefits

are relevant in this research as they point to distance learning's impact on women's socio-economic life. My argument is that even if women undergo perspective transformation, so long as they rely on their male relatives for economic survival, then their ability to take action on dominance is curtailed. Hence, economic empowerment through distance learning becomes an important element in this research.

#### ***5.3.2.1 Financial benefits leading to changed lifestyles***

Most of the women doing the B. Ed. course were of the opinion that distance learning enabled them to get financial stability through promotion, new jobs and higher salary. Some of those who had already completed the B. Ed. programme had already received economic benefits, in terms of promotion. For, instance, Joyce Kamba, although doing her 4th year in the B. Ed. programme, had already received promotion into a position of a headmistress and she hoped that once she completed the B. Ed. course, she would get more promotion: *'Already I have received a promotion because of the course. I had missed many chances of being employed in private schools because I did not have a university degree. Now that I am going to get one I am anticipating a better job with higher pay than now.'*

Lydia Mwenge, too, was able to get promotion and new positions as headmistress in a secondary school, and later as head of department in a tertiary college. This promotion went hand in hand with more salary, which in turn contributed to a better lifestyle, not only for herself, but also for the whole family. Florence Makasi stated that: *'I would like to drive my own car.'* Those who were still doing the course stated that once they completed they hoped to get promotion, which would lead to changed lifestyles, including being able to buy their own cars. Emily Munywoki stated that *'if I get money in the form of a new job or promotion, I will be able to drive to work.'* Being able to buy her own car was seen as a sign of independence from the husband. In a society that blocks women from owning property, a desire to own a car is evidence of a changed meaning perspective. For this reason, the B. Ed. women learners saw the distance learning programme as a gateway to social mobility and economic independence.

Others in the B. Ed. programme talked of the *'high hopes of a new job'* either in the NGO world or in the private school sector, which paid better salaries than the

government. Others wanted to complete the B. Ed. programme and embark on masters and Ph.D. degrees so that they could finally end up lecturing at university level. Esther Ochola, for example, stated that: *'I expect when I finish to get a new job. I want to be a lecturer and maybe professor maybe. This would mean that when I complete my first degree I go for masters and then PhD if things go well.'*

A participant in the focus group stated:

*This course is like a transition. You know a P1 salary is like a third of a graduate salary. Even the house allowance, the P1 have only Ksh 3,000 (38 US Dollars), while the graduate has Ksh13, 000 (163 US Dollars)... So the gap is just too wide. And of course the chances of getting a new job are higher after completion of this course (Emma Omari).*

### **5.3.2.3 Changed lifestyles and expectations**

The women learners explained the wide range of changes that had taken place in their lifestyles, including changes in manners. Evelyn Mutambu, for instance, stated that:

*Even my walking style, talking and laughing has changed. I used to move everywhere visiting so many people but now I don't, even my walking style has changed. I used to walk lazily now I walk straight, upright and with confidence. Before I used to talk with any boy in the estate but now I have to keep my class. I feel as a university student and a teacher I should just speak with dignity.*

The interaction between students and lecturers led many B. Ed. women to change their mode of dressing and doing things. Meli Manga, for example, stated that:

*There has been a lot of enlightenment because along the way I have interacted with many people, lecturers and classmates. Since my classmates are also working, you find that you tend to copy a few of the virtues that are good. Like dressing, I realize that teachers are supposed to dress like this and that way. So I find myself being influenced by my classmates. Even in the eating habits have changed. I am able to set up a timetable on what to be eaten every day. The menu has to be a balanced diet.*

Debora Kivanguli, further stated that there was even change in the way she thought and talked:

*There is change in the way I think and talk. Like now I cannot talk all that loosely because I know the boundaries. I know how to grade my talk. There are different categories of people and to each I have a way of talking to them. I can handle people with high or low education.*

For Karen Adhiambo, before taking on the B. Ed. course, she used to live a reckless life of heavy drinking and keeping bad company, but since she joined the course three years ago, she has changed her lifestyle:

*Before I started on the course, when I was stressed I used to go to a pub and drink myself dead so that when I reach home I just drop dead asleep and forget my problems. But the moment I started taking this course I realized I was giving myself a bad picture. And also you see this course is supposed to reform somebody and so I started changing from that. Like even if I want to take a drink I do it alone and do not like those days I used to sit with funny women in the pub. I just go in, buy myself a beer, drink and then go away. These are great changes.*

Likewise, Alice Okanga, noted that:

*Sometimes I do not have a lot to talk with the friends I used to interact with. It is like somehow the equilibrium is disturbed. The issues we used to talk about before are no longer relevant. We meet and I find we have nothing to talk about. I do not have time for loose talk. They talk and I feel that I do not have to indulge in those issues. I feel that what they are saying is not helpful to me and I would rather not indulge in it... Now I find that I look for friends who are doing the same course with me. When we meet we start talking about how far we are with the assignments.*

All these stories suggest that distance learning does lead to economic empowerment, improved lifestyles, changed manners and way of life.

## **5.4 The TEE Women**

### **5.4.1 Transformation among the TEE women**

For the TEE women new self-perceptions are seen in terms of increased self-confidence and self-esteem, which enables them to preach and perform other church functions without fear. Transformation for the TEE women is limited in that they are not able to actively challenge the status quo at home. Although TEE has managed to bring intrapersonal transformation to women, in terms of acquisition of positive perceptions about themselves and also brought changed relations at the family level, it has not succeeded in leading to changed world views about the low position of women in society. Many of the TEE women still uphold the prevalent assumptions about women. Though TEE has enabled women to occupy leadership positions in the church and community, it has failed to lead these women to rebel against male control. TEE women are not interested to see structural changes in their position in the private sphere. Instead, they want changes in the public, so that they can be appointed pastors, bishops and church secretaries; jobs that are allocated a stipend. This section shows examples of women's testimonies which support these observations.

#### ***5.4.1.2 Intrapersonal transformation: New Self-Perceptions***

##### ***Confidence & self esteem***

The TEE women testified to having experienced intrapersonal changes in terms of increased self-esteem and confidence. The women focus group stated that: *'I have become a changed person ... I can say that after taking this course you feel more confident and if you are given an opportunity to do something you do it better.'* (Focus group, Grace Monze).

For women confidence and self-esteem were experienced in terms of the ability to preach without fear:

*Kama uko na woga mwingi utapata nguvu. Kama pasta wetu anatupatia nafasi ya kuubiri. Jusi nilipata nafasi nikaenda kuubiri kule Kibera, kwa kanisa kubwa, na sikusikia woga wote. Na ingekuwa si hii TEE hiyo singeenda. Hata kwa kanisa singeweza kuongea. Lakini siku hizi nimepata*

*courage. Hata kwa wamama nimekwisha ongea. Kwa kweli TEE ina change watu sana. Mimi imenifanya ni change kabisa. Niko na confidence. Hata saa singine nachukua wamama kwa plot na naongea nao. Imenifanya ninaweza hata kupatia wamama wengine mawaidha. (Beatrice Ambandala).*

(When you have a lot of fear, after studying TEE, you get a lot of confidence. Like our pastor gives us chance to preach. Recently I got a chance and I went to preach at Kibera in a very big church and I did not feel any fear at all. If it was not for this TEE course I could not have agreed to go. Even in my church I could not manage to speak. But these days I have a lot of courage. Even in women's meetings I have been invited and I have spoken. For sure TEE changes people very much. TEE has made me to be able to even give other women advice).

Abbey Gathendu, too, testified to the fact that many years of doing house work had given her doubts about herself. However participation in TEE had changed all this:

*But when I started learning I discovered that I am very normal, with my writing, my spelling. Even now when I am a secretary of our project I have no difficulties in writing or reading before people. I know this is because of the TEE course.... And you know as a housewife I thought I had ceased being the real person, as I was before.... So now when I joined the TEE class I realized that there is nothing wrong with me. I was still the same one. I could still perform well... You know before, I could not preach but now I can do it with a lot of confidence because I know what I am doing is perfect. I have learned how to preach*

The focus group added that:

*I can add that this course helps us psychologically because we got esteemed. Your dignity is valued more than before because like now this course we were doing on counselling, it helps you on how to manage your stress and even how to help other ladies manage theirs. Nowadays we have many people who are experiencing stress and if you are learned in TEE you know how to cope with it and maybe you can help others. (Focus group, Rose Ngundo).*

These women used the new confidence to play more roles in the church and through this they felt fulfilled. Service to the church was a big motivating factor for them and, therefore, when they gained confidence to preach, they felt that the course had met their needs. Thus TEE had enabled these women to be visible in the church community and occupy positions of power.

#### **5.4.1.3 Interpersonal Transformation**

##### ***Better interpersonal skills***

For many women, the social benefits of the TEE course have been associated with the ability to interact well with others. One of the benefits of face-to-face opportunities in a distance learning programme is that it provides learners with opportunity to interact and in the process learn group dynamics and interpersonal skills. The TEE women pointed out that the seminar discussions had impacted positively on their lives:

*The seminars do a lot because we interact with different people and whenever we have the groups there will be facilitators to come and assist us. So a lot of interactions will help us even to understand other groups from other churches. So the group discussions help us a lot to know how to interact with others. (Focus group, Anne Njoya).*

At the same time, they were better at listening to other people's viewpoints. Hence, they had acquired 'superior perspectives' which had enabled them to accept 'others as equal partners in discourse' (Mezirow 1996). In this research the focus group pointed out that the course had enabled them to: '*learn how to relate and also to give others chance to say their piece of mind. You cannot continue assuming that you are always right.*' (Grace Monze).

In addition, the TEE module on Counselling had enabled the women learners to be able to understand people's behaviour better than before.

*Like when you are provoked by somebody, you are able to interpret the person's behaviour in a different way. For instance, you start thinking that maybe that person has deeper problems that have made her to treat you that way and so you take it lightly. You are even able to investigate further to find out what kind of problem the person has. (Focus group, Anne Njoya).*

For Mary Kavinya, involvement in the TEE course had led to increased knowledge about the Bible:

*Since I started TEE I have been learning new things. We thought that we knew the Bible but every time we learn a new thing I realize that I did not know many things. Every time we study a new book I get something that educates me and which will be helpful.*

Abbey Gathendu stated that:

*Even when you are being called to say something in a wedding, now you know good communication skills and so you talk to the new couple as a learned person. You cannot be outside the topic. You tell them practical advice: how to be forgiving one another, to be communicating well, relating with in-laws and all these things. I have already learned them in the TEE course. We have done pre-and marital counselling. When you stand you do not shake and you take short time but advise them with good quality advice.*

### ***Changed relations at the private level***

#### **Spouses**

Many women pointed out that the course had enabled them to have better relations with their spouses, their children and the larger society. Many of these changes were attributed to the seminar interactions, plus of course, some of the courses, like counselling. The testimonies of many TEE women show that involvement in the programme had given them status at home and that their spouses respected them more than before. Margaret Kavinya stated that: *'his attitude towards me completely changed, because like now he has left me with responsibilities in the office...if it were earlier he could not trust that I could manage. But now he has seen a lot of changes in me and also talents and spiritual maturity.'*

Abbey Gathendu, too, stated that:

*I have learned a lot on how to interact with my husband. Even the respect that he has towards me is changed, because before he used to look at me as a wife who cannot do anything because she left school many years ago. Now he looks*

*at me as though I am somebody else and even he respects me more than before. His attitude to me has changed. Maybe he is seeing that I have something else to do. He sees that I am a good financial manager because he sees me buy myself TEE books.*

Anne Njoya, too, had the same testimony in that at the family level her husband accorded her more respect than before: *'Even my family gives me more respect. My husband respects me more than before. He actually likes the course very much. He consults me on issues that he never used to consult me on before. Since I started the course he supports me very much and he likes the course very much.'*

It is unlikely that he would show the same enthusiasm if she was doing the B. Ed. course. My experience, as a researcher, shows that many men would encourage their wives to register for TEE courses, but they would not be comfortable with a university based course. This is because the B. Ed. programme involves women leaving home and boarding at the University for quite sometime, whereas the TEE women study without much disturbance to the smooth running of the home responsibilities.

#### ***Changed relations with children: Changed rearing practices***

TEE study has also given women ability to relate with their children better. The courses on counselling have been credited for enabling women to acquire techniques of handling children of all ages. Anne Njoya testified that:

*Like now the counselling course has helped me understand my daughters better.... This counselling course is very good because it has even allowed me to understand other people's problems. If it was before I do not think I could cope as well...when my girls are in adolescent stage I understand them better. I talk to them on every issue that is related to adolescent and growing up. I advise them on issues of life. (Anne Njoya).*

Margaret Kavinya gave the same testimony when she stated that:

*TEE has helped me very greatly because my children are young adults now... so after doing the book on counselling: on peer pressure, adolescence and so I learned and know how to solve it before it got out of control... when I am*

*correcting them I have to use a lot of techniques, something I got from the TEE course.*

Beatrice Ambandala further testified that: *'I see that it teaches you how to interact with your children and friends.'* Similar sentiments were further raised at the focus group discussions: *'Now I am able to identify the problems of my children because some are going through adolescent state.'* (Mary Kavinya).

The seminar discussions, too, were credited with helping the women to improve their relations with their children. Abbey Gathendu stated that: *'I have learned a lot from the company of others... And you know in our group we are all of the same age group. Our children are of the same age. So we discuss very much about children, our youth. We have discussed problems facing our children.'*

### **Social status in the public arena**

#### ***More public roles (Better servants in the church)***

One of the benefits of the TEE course was that it had enabled women learners to improve their performance in the church. Although some of them had occupied leadership positions before, they testified that the study equipped them with ability to improve their performance in church functions. A participant in the focus group stated that:

*May I say that the course has given us that ability to make better decisions because since most of us are leaders in the church we are part of the decision making group in the church and so we give our contributions without fear unlike before when I personally would go into those meetings and keep quiet throughout until somebody pointed at me (Grace Monze).*

Mary Kavinya also stated that:

*I was a deacon before taking this course but I must say that my performance was not as good as now... I did not know what I was supposed to do... my performance has improved. I can also chair lady for the boys and girl guides and I am able to organize the members and the committee members. Now I can lead... I have really improved since I started the TEE course.*

Apart from this, Mary is able to give counsel to other women and to pray in public, things that she could not do before she took this course. Hence, the study had empowered these women to play more active roles in the leadership positions that they occupy in the church.

Preaching for the TEE women was one of the new roles that they had acquired. Although some of them used to preach earlier on, now they have improved abilities in preaching and leadership skills. This was well articulated in the focus group discussion:

*Actually we are all leaders in the church and although we got these opportunities even before we started the course, we were not doing it in the right way but now we can perform any duties well. After doing this course whatever leaderships role I am given I do it with confidence and perfectly.* (Abbey Gathendu).

Abbey Gathendu further stated that: *'the course has helped me to improve my performance.'* Some particular courses were singled out for enabling women to improve their performance:

*Before I joined this course I used to be a treasurer of the women's guild but I did not know how to keep the accounts but now in our TEE class we have done Book Keeping and so I can do it better than before. So through this course we get enlightened and whenever we are given an opportunity to lead in the community or in the church we do it with confidence.* (Focus group, Mary Kavinya).

For Anne Njoya, involvement in the TEE course had enabled her to play more public roles even in the secular world:

*Due to the confidence I have acquired I play more roles. Like I go to attend workshops on HIV/AIDS whereby my headmaster sends me out. My headmaster knows that I have a lot of confidence even when there is a meeting he calls on me and gives me a lot of responsibilities (she calls on her daughter to check on the pot in the fire, as we continue with the interview). In fact he does not give me time to prepare myself. He calls on me to go and talk to the*

*kids when they are going on holiday. In those cases I do not need to prepare myself and I always have something to say. He discovered that I have a lot of talents.*

This involvement in the public arena had enabled Anne to acquire more confidence and responsibilities. To be called to speak to the school children was a recognition of her new status and hence, it aided her credibility. Beatrice Ambandala stated that: *'Imenifanya ninawza hata kupatia wamama wengine mawaidha'* (TEE has made me to be able to even give other women advice). It was, therefore, clear from both the individual interviews and the focus group discussions that the study experience had enabled these women to occupy leadership positions in the community, church and the place of work. At the same time, the study had led to improved performance of the responsibilities they held even before joining the study.

#### **5.4.1.4 Changed world view**

##### ***Views on the condition and position of women***

Many TEE women believed that women were designed to occupy the second position by God and so the best thing was to accept the divinely ordained reality. When asked their opinion about the prevailing practice where married women are expected to have little or no interactions with their own relatives, the TEE women were of the opinion that once a woman gets married she should blend completely with the new family, because this is the normal practice, instead of expecting her relatives to be treated in the same way as those of the man: *'When you get married you have to try and fit within the new home. In Luyialand a wife comes after all other relatives of the man. In Kikuyuland women have accepted that you have moved to a new family and you have to adjust to staying with them.'*

Mary Kavinya accepted that: *'women are oppressed, but things are changing because women are getting educated... the problems our mothers experienced we do not want to experience that.. women are no longer accepting to be mistreated.'* Rose Ngundo further stated that: *'women are not treated well. They do not have a good environment to exercise their rights...'* For others, women must fight for their rights. *'If you sit down and wait to be appreciated and put in the right place, it will never happen. I*

*think ladies have to learn to be aggressive and take what belongs to them by force.'*  
(Jerusha Njagi).

In the public arena TEE women were able to pinpoint discrimination and exclusion. Abbey Gathendu looked at the number of women and men elders in the church and noticed disparities. The few men who come to church are given positions of power immediately, yet the church is dominated by women and only a few of them occupy these positions. : *'so we are not really treated well.'*

#### ***Views on distribution of labour at the home***

It was only a few TEE women who noticed the imbalance in the performance of home chores. Anne Njoya, for instance, stated that:

*Women are overburdened. They do too much in the home. They support the family.... We are overworked. The rural women are overburdened with fetching water, farming, looking after cattle, cooking and other many more responsibilities they have to cope with.*

Mary Kavinya stated that:

*There is no way they can accept to divide the jobs equally. They think you are undermining them. Some times you have come together and before you put down your handbag he is asking for tea... he gives his work priority and believes your priority is in the kitchen.... Women even under these heavy loads of responsibilities you have to survive. They have to struggle and get time (to study) even if he is not supporting.*

The above statement shows compliance and resistance at the same time. On one hand, the TEE women see the unfairness in the division of labour at the home front, but do not see hope for change. At the same time, it shows resistance, in that the women want to study whether they receive support or not.

Many TEE women did not agitate for change at the family front in terms of sharing duties equally. Many of these women learners were of the opinion that these chores were God-designed and that the most women could do was to organize themselves well so as to cope with the demands of the family and the study. Jennifer Mkama, for

instance, stated that: *'if we do not perform our responsibilities at home no one will do it. We thank God because he has given us that ability to do the work'*.

The compliant attitude that many TEE women have exhibited could be traced to social-cultural distortions that 'have the power to immunize norms against critique' (Hart, 1990:130). Hart further argues that these distortions make injustice and inequality legitimate and tend to promote the status quo. McDonald et al (1999:13) also notes that 'cultural institutions may be powerful protectors of status quo.' Hart (1990) argues that it is possible that people are unaware of both the internal source of their distortions and also that such distortions exist. For this reason, they put on a pathological mind such that they do not notice the oppressive power relations. Thus due to the kind of influence these women have received, both from the larger society and the church, they have accepted their position and feel that there is nothing wrong with the heaping of home chores on them.

#### **Women lack Political and economic power**

The TEE women agreed that it was unfortunate that women were lacking in top positions both in the church and public institutions. The TEE focus group, for instance, agreed that:

*Opportunities are limited for women. For example there are positions that women are segregated from. Like Church Chairmanship, I have never seen a woman occupying that office, as much as I know that women are capable of doing it. So for some positions us women are marginalized and we need to be considered now that we are learned through TEE. Even the women Reverends are very few and it was only recently that the church started ordaining women into the priesthood and in any case there are still denominations which do not ordain women at all. (Anne Njoya).*

The TEE women had come to notice that they were marginalized in the church. A participant in the focus group stated that:

*Our church members need to realize that women or men we are all children of God and so we should participate equally in church matters. A woman can perform as well as a man in any church position including chairmanship. (Rachael Katui).*

For Abbey Gathendu, there are very few women who are elders and even those at deacon level, which is lower than that of an elder, are there because there are fewer men who attend church. She pointed out that: *'even when you see one man starting to come to the church he is immediately given a post to participate actively. So we are not really treated well'*. She went further to explain that even for the deacon's positions, the church was fond of choosing those women who are illiterate, leaving behind those who are educated, like those who have done TEE courses:

*You know in our churches they select those illiterate women as elders.... They do not know anything about counselling and leadership. So if they are given these big responsibilities, now they will undermine the people they are leading. If they come to know that you are more intelligent than they are, you will be finished.*

For Jennifer, who belongs to a TEE programme organized by the Organization of African Instituted Churches, there are few women preachers because of discrimination. Even those women who have been to residential theological colleges are not given opportunity to become priests in her church; a position that has financial benefits:

*Sasa unajua vile naona wanapenda preachers za wanaume. Hata unaona kuna wale wamama wemeenda theological colleges ,they are not given chance to be pastors. You know if a few women were given chances ya kutunza kanisa kungekuwa na motivation kwa wamama wale wengine. Na wamama wangukuwa wanasema, 'yule mama anafanya kazi mzuri, hata mimi ningependa kuwa kama yeye'. So far now they are not given that opportunity.... Inatakikana sis wamama tuamke tuwaambie, 'sisi wamama, we are here, hata sisi tunaweza kusimamia makanisa, we are here we can manage.' Wamama lazima waamke waitishe hii rights zao. (Jennifer Mkama)*

(Now you know the way I see it, they like to have preachers who are men. Even you see there are those women who have gone to residential theological colleges. They are not given chance to be pastors. You know if a few women were given chance to serve in the church there would be motivation for women to enter. And then many women would be saying: 'That woman is doing a very good job. Even me I would like to be like her'. So far they are not

given that opportunity.... It is necessary that us women should wake up and tell them (men). Us women we are here, even us we can lead churches, we are here, we can manage'. Women must wake up to ask for their rights).

This citation shows that the women want to play new more prestigious and powerful roles in the church, roles that have for a long time been set aside for men only. These women want their presence to be felt and are no longer willing to remain invisible. They are saying that they are no longer going to tolerate injustice of blocking women from centres of power. It is a call for women to raise their voices and break free from patriarchal exclusion.

Some of them pointed to the economic powerlessness of Kenyan women. Anne Njoya, for example, described the situation by stating that:

*Women are really living in hell in this country. He picks your pay slip and money. In some cases the wife does not know what her husband owns. She only hears from his relatives and close friends. So if he dies first then she cannot trace his property. Then the brothers would kick her out.*

A few TEE women stated that women's involvement in politics would lead to improved lifestyles for most of Kenyan population because they would manage the economy better.

*If we had one third of parliamentarians being women it will make a difference. Actually we would make headway if most of Parastatals heads were women, because women would not go and steal from the Parastatals. They would build them up.... If we have more women in parliament we would find that things are changing and men would respect women more. (Jerusha Njagi).*

However, other women in the TEE programme had negative views about women's involvement in politics. Karen Kanini, who was doing her certificate level course stated categorically that:

*Ninaweza kuwa support ikiwa wanamtumikia Mungu. Lakini hii siasa ya huko na kule siwezi. Mwanamke ni wakutuliza bwana wake. Na sasa ikiwe mama ameacha bwana yake na kwenda kwa siasa, hii ni mbaya sana. Wewe mama*

*ukitaka kuwa president, nyumbani kutakuwa na nani, mzee atakuwa na nani. Boma itaanguka.*

(I can only support them if they are serving God. But these politics of here and there, I cannot support. A woman is supposed to serve her husband. So if a woman has left her husband and entered into politics, this is very bad. You, woman who wants to be a president, who will be in your home? Who will be with your husband? Who will take care of your house?)

Other TEE women, like Margaret Kavinya, had a view that some of the women politicians talked negatively about men:

*Some of them do not portray a very good picture of women. For instance Ngilu abuses men, uses bad language. She even beat a District Officer. I do not like the way she portrays the role of a woman.... Some of them you do not hear them talk about their husbands. So this is a sign she does not care about her marriage.*

#### ***Views on abusive relationships***

Through personal observation, I noted that TEE women were not willing to speak much about husband-wife relationship, especially in the group discussions. This was quite different from the experience I had with women in the other two programmes, who tended to be open and quite expressive about the mistreatments that women encounter at the home front. It was only after I probed further that the TEE women gave their views on abusive marriages. At the same time, the TEE women had different views on wife abuse. Whereas the B. Ed. and Coop women recommended separation and divorce from abusive spouses, the TEE women recommended reconciliation and involvement of the pastors, parents and friends as away of solving the problem. The TEE focus group, for instance, noted that:

*I think I would ask her to discuss the issue with the pastor and if possible the pastor to invite the husband for a discussion. If this is not possible I would recommend that she invite both parents to listen to her story in the presence of the husband and in this way be able to intervene. (Irene Ndonye).*

The TEE focus group also suggested that if the husband is fond of controlling the wife's salary, *'she has to find a way that will not hurt the husband but will help her out. She may need to call the best man and maid to come in and help in the discussions.'* (Focus group, Annette Nduku). I assumed that these women were shy to prescribe separation or divorce. In most of their suggestions, they threw the ball at the woman as the one to initiate good relationships in the home. They would say: *'first the lady has to first of all to love the husband and show him respect and by so doing he may change his behaviour.'* (Focus group, Rose Ngundo).

Some of the TEE women indicated that when a husband beats his wife it is an indication that the wife is in the wrong and that the husband is not pleased with her.

*Mme akikuja kwako na azira, zake usiongee. Hata wengine wanapigwa kwa sababu bwana zao wakikuja wamekasirika na wanaongea, kabla ya hasira zao kumalizika bibi ndio huyo, ananza kumjibu, si atapigwa tu? Hata kuna wanume wengine huki nji wako na rah lakini akiingia kwa nyumba aongei, hiyo ni kumaanisha kuna kitu kimekosekana kwa hiyo nyumba. Labda huyo mama ni wa makelele. Lakini hata kama umekasirika ficha kidogo, usimuonyeshe akiingia kwa nyumba. Yeye ndiye mkubwa kwa hiyo nyumba.* (Karen Kanini).

(When your husband comes to you with his anger do not talk back to him. Some women are beaten because when their husbands come home angry, before the husband's anger is down, she shoots up; she starts to reply (argue with) him. What will prevent her from being beaten? Even there are some men who are very happy when they are outside but once they enter her house they keep quiet. This is to show that there is something missing in that house. Maybe the woman is a nagger. But even when you are annoyed, hide it for some time; do not show him when he enters the house. He is the boss in that house).

Susan Waudo, too, stated that: *'nitamwambia angalie makosa ile mzee anaona ili mzee akute mambo sawa sawa... Nita mwambia mzee akiondoka yeye aingie kwa maombi.'* (I will tell her to check the kind of wrongs that her husband sees, so that the

husband finds everything alright... I will tell her when the husband goes, she should get into prayer).

It is clear from the above examples that these TEE women still uphold the church's position that women should endure hardships in marriage and be submissive to their husbands. Ekeya (1994: 144) earlier noted this scenario and stated that, 'in a very subtle way the church encourages women to endure the hardships of marriage even to the point of accepting an impossible marriage relationship as a necessary martyrdom.' Hence, most of the TEE women tended to follow these church sanctioned views.

This disparity in viewing things shows that transformation for the TEE women learners was not uniform. A few isolated women in this category were highly sensitized about their rights and the need to challenge patriarchy, while others wanted to be good wives, please the husband and wait for happiness to come into their marriages. This was a sign that these women had accepted the lower position they occupy and had not changed the views that women need to 'know their place and to accept it' (Thompson 1997:30).

### ***5.3.1.5 Taking Action***

#### ***Bargaining power at family level***

Some women learners still managed to stand up and challenge the status quo. Anne Njoya, for instance stated that:

*I tell women that the husband should know your stand; if you are a weakling then you will cry forever and become a beggar. If you make yourself weak you will have problems. Communication is very important in the home. Let him know what you want and in fact he will change.*

In the same way, Jerusha Njagi felt that there was need for women to wake up and fight for their rights: '*If you sit down and wait to be appreciated and put in the right place, it will never happen. I think ladies have to learn to be aggressive and take what belongs to them by force (laughter).... If women had equal opportunities, they would do a lot.*'

However, many other women accepted the status quo, basing their argument on the Biblical teachings that the men are the heads of the home (and should not be challenged.) These were women with a primary level of education who attended the Organization of African Instituted TEE programme. Karen Bulinda stated that since she joined the TEE course there are no more arguments with her spouse: *'wakati anasema hii na mimi nilikwa nikisema hii...Tangu ningie kwa hii masomo...maombi inasiadia sana'* (when he says this I would say even me I was saying this... since I joined these studies even when I want to talk to him... prayer helps a lot). Jennifer Mkama also testified that before she joined the course they used to have a lot of quarrels with her spouse but now she has changed: *'TEE imenifunza instead ya kupigana na mzee tuketi tujandiliane.'* (TEE has taught me that instead of fighting each other with my husband we sit down and discuss things out). These stories show that many of the TEE were not able to reach a point of challenging patriarchal power with the same vigour as the B. Ed.

#### ***Involvement in the service of other women: role models***

This research has shown that TEE women wanted to be role models in the society and uplift other women, spiritually, psychologically and socially. They wanted to translate their knowledge into the service of other women. They pointed out that participation in the TEE course had given them opportunity and knowledge to help fellow women handle the many problems that they face:

*So the knowledge we are getting is going to help other women who come to us for assistance when faced with these challenges of life. But this course has helped me to help other women so that they feel more secure and show the women that they have a role to play in society. So because of this course I can help a lady on how to grow spiritually, psychologically and socially (Rose Ngundo).*

Betty Ambandala stated that participation in the TEE course had enabled her to organize meetings with other women in her estate and learn together how to solve their problems: *'Hata saa zingine ninachukua wamama kwa plot na naonea nao. Imenifanya ninaweza hata kupatia wamama wengine mawaidha.'* (Even sometimes I take women from my plot and sit down with them and talk to them about issues affecting us. TEE has made me to be able to even give other women advice).

Some of the TEE women wanted to make sure that there were women role models to whom girls would look upon for inspiration so as to bring this change. They wanted to play a role in re-educating the girl-child on the value of a woman as an individual. Jerusha Njagi, one of the TEE women, explained this fact when she stated that:

*We still have a lot to do for women starting with our own children. At least they will have a better opportunity because they have seen us going to school and achieve and competing favourably with men. I think we have to stand up and be role models for girl-children so that they come up. Some of them may be coming from backgrounds where a woman is not supposed to do this and that. Like another time I went to that side of Kiambu... when you go there driving, the children come out screaming: 'a woman is driving a car, come and see a woman driving a car' .... For such a child she has been brought up to think that a woman is lower and below the men. ... So even if she goes to school and she has already accepted that then she remains dominated.*

The presence of women teachers in schools, who looked dignified, is already a good role model for the girls and this may finally reverse the situation of women feeling inferior to men:

*It is naturally being reversed now, because these girls when they go to school they can see women teachers. You see, when we went to school ourselves, our lady teachers were not looking like teachers, and they used to come to school barefoot. They would carry their ropes to school so that on the way back they would fetch firewood. So there was no role model then. But today things are changing. We have women even in managerial positions. (Jerusha Njagi).*

#### **5.4.2 Economic Empowerment**

When I look at the experiences of TEE learners I see that TEE does not lead to economic benefits. As stated earlier, TEE's logic is not geared to providing financial gains, as it aims at relieving the church of the big burden of paid clergy, by training people who are already involved in other economic activities, and who could perform duties of the clergy. However, the TEE learners in this research were not satisfied with the present arrangement and recommended that they be accorded the same benefits as the residentially trained clergy. They stated candidly that, even though

some of them had gone as high as acquiring the higher diploma in theology, there were no job opportunities for them and that jobs in the church were given to those who had graduated from residential theological seminaries and colleges. To these women learners, this was tantamount to discrimination. The TEE focus group, for instance, stated that:

*Presently TEE courses do not lead to economic gains because there are no jobs given to TEE students. In any case we are never appointed to be pastors although we would be told to preach one or two Sundays. But the pastor is appointed from residential colleges. Some of them have not done theology up to advanced level like us and so we see a lot of unfairness. So something needs to be done so that TEE students can be employed by the church and church institutions. (Anne Njoya).*

While in the individual interview, Anne further clarified that:

*TEE does not bring economic benefits and this is a problem. We TEE graduates are never appointed pastors. Some of the pastors are not as educated in theology like me but they cannot allow us to run churches. I think we are a threat to them. Even sometimes they do not put us to preach because they do not want us to shine anywhere. It all has to do with malice... Also the men do not want women focal in the church. Even the church elders do not know as much as we do and so they want to put us down because we are more educated than they are.*

It is unfortunate that although TEE has opened doors to many women to learn theology, it has not accessed economic opportunities and mobility for the graduates. The only hope for a job for TEE women learners was when they managed to be appointed as TEE facilitators, a position where they would be given a small token of appreciation. However, this could not be called a salary and compared to what the pastors earned, it was peanuts.

With no economic benefits, TEE limits women's upward mobility and change of lifestyle that was common among the B. Ed. and the Coop women. However, Abbey Gathendu was able to change her lifestyle, mainly due to the influence of other women.

*I also buy myself new dresses and I actually dress better now because I want to be like the members of the group. I have now to make myself different. You have to tell yourself, 'you know now you have a diploma and they are looking at you as a changed person'; and now you make yourself changed.*

## **5.5 The Coop Women**

### **5.5.1 Transformation among the Coop women**

Among the three groups of women the coop women emerged with least experiences of transformation. Although the distance learning had enabled them to acquire confidence and self-esteem and gave them economic empowerment, there had are very few experiences of interpersonal transformation. At the same time, many coop women are not sensitized the women's issues in Kenyan society. Some of them openly refused to discuss issues of women, arguing that the course only dealt with issues of cooperative management. The lack of face-to-face opportunities denied them the opportunity to learn from each other and hold dialogue over issues facing them.

#### ***5.5.1.1 Intrapersonal Transformation: New Self Perceptions***

##### ***Confidence and self esteem***

Mezirow (1989:190) has stated that once transformational learning has taken place, the learner acquires 'disposition and emotional stamina to believe that one has both the will and the way to reach his or her reflectively redefined goals.' In this research, all the women in the Coop programme testified to experiencing personal growth in terms of increased self esteem and confidence. Involvement in distance learning had transformed the women's attitudes towards themselves. Jane Muthinzi testified that:

*I have realized that given opportunity I can advance. I got assurance that given an opportunity I can advance myself in studies. I realized that I can perform well in studies and in fact if there was another higher course I could have taken it.*

Mary Mutwa, who graduated from the programme, noted how the course had changed her attitude to herself:

*I thought I was a failure. Even other people thought that I was a failure with marital crisis. I used to fear even my own colleagues. Once we met with them*

*they would talk big about the academic qualifications that they had attained. But for me, I found out that with my correspondence course I have gained self-confidence and self-esteem.*

For Eliza Gichere, who was doing her first year, the study had made her feel that she is 'an important person' and that the course had 'boosted my self-esteem'. Magdalene Mweru stated that: 'You feel nice about yourself.' The same experience was noted by Lilly Muli when she started that:

*You know, when I was joining this course I was feeling that I am just a secretary, now I am encouraged that I can read up to degree level and above, whereas in the secretarial field I have only stage three to aim at. So I have confidence that I can make it like anybody else. I have discovered that I can go as high as I wish in the academic line.*

#### ***Discovered have talents and potential***

The discovery of talents and potential through distance learning was highlighted as one of the achievements. Reading through both the individual and focus group interviews made me establish that distance learning enabled women to discover their capabilities. Lilly Muli expressed this reality by stating that: 'So for me ni kama nimeamka (it is like I have just woken up) to realize that I have talents to study up to the highest point.'

Mary Mutwa stated that:

*I discovered that I have a lot of potentiality that has not been exploited because many are the times we have overlooked things and said that they cannot work. But when I know I am capable of leading, or moving from point A to point B, then you start exploiting that moment, that ability.*

Jessica Kianda, a graduate of the programme, stated that:

*I came to realize that I can do anything so long as I am given materials and support. I came to realize that both men and women are equal; there is no difference. We did the same course and both men and women passed. I did not know that I could make it. I can study anywhere.*

In a society that socializes its girls about the superiority of men and inferiority of women (Abagi et al 2000), it was indeed a great shift in thinking for Jessica and others to reach a point of realizing that there was no intellectual difference between the two sexes. Therefore, the study removed self-doubt in the minds of many women. Most of them pointed out that *'I thought I would not make it, but the course changed my way of thinking, that I can still pursue studies despite all these other problems and responsibilities'* (Mary Mutwa). Others stated that: *'I have come to realize that my mind is active. When you stay for a long time without learning you start doubting yourself'* (Magdalene Mweru). Indeed some of them pointed out that the study experience had enabled them to take on other programmes including residential ones. Jane Mbau, for instance, stated that: *'in fact that experience made me be interested in study until now I am registered for the full time residential course at Cooperative College where I am a boarder.'* In summary, once women reach a point where they discover their hidden capabilities, they try other options and in the process they get other opportunities to study and advance in life. The experience stirred interest for studying further and for operating in public.

#### **5.5.1.3 Interpersonal Transformation**

##### ***Additional knowledge and interpersonal Skills***

Many women in this category had joined the programme so as to gain knowledge about cooperatives. Lilly Muli, for example, noted that:

*Before I joined this course I used to go home and then people questioned me about cooperative issues but I did not have the answer for it. But now I find myself with information and knowledge about the cooperatives. Now I hope that by the time I complete the course I will be very knowledgeable.*

A participant in the focus group stated that: *'but now I find myself with knowledge about cooperatives.'* Once learners have rediscovered themselves and their capabilities, the emerging person is expected to relate differently at the interpersonal level. Jessica Kianda points out that: *'the course helped me even in the area of interacting with people. I had to talk to more people making inquiries about the course materials.'* Magdalene Mweru, too, felt that:

*Since I have wider knowledge I am able to express myself in a better way and to relate with my customers in more mature way.... It helps you to relate better with people. I was able to relate with my colleagues who were also doing the course. I kept on inquiring from them on difficult issues. This helped me to have better relating skills.*

Jessica Kianda stated how the course had enabled her to gain organization skills: *'I must say that I got organizational skills. I could manage my life better. I plan what to do when. If you are mixed up you cannot make it because there is no teacher. The teacher is the book.'*

### **Changed relations at the private sphere**

#### ***Spouse***

Many women in the Coop programme testified that their involvement in education had led to improved relations at the home. For instance, the focus group discussions stated that:

*Even the man of the house will feel that you are not just any other women (group laughs). He will feel that you have achieved yet you have not gone to class as such. You are just studying within his compound. (Magdalene Mweru).*

In this statement the focus group is pointing to the fact that distance learning elevates women in terms of social status and prestige. Magdalene Mweru also stated that: *'I have also seen that my husband and I budget together. It is not fair for a woman to work and for a man to budget and control the finances alone.'* In the above case, Magdalene has come to challenge the practice whereby the man controls the salary of his working wife. The citation also shows that there are changes in terms of power dynamics in the home. Before her study she was invisible, but now she is actively participating in the family budget.

The focus group further stated that once one completes the course and gets promotion and a salary increment: *'the husband starts respecting you more than before. He gives you more responsibilities and starts to consult you when he is making decisions. Some women are able to have more say in their finances.'* (Focus group, Jane Mbau). Lilly

Muli also stated that: *'at least the man tends to respect me more after I joined this course. He even helps in paying fees.'* At the same time, Lilly came to discover that many women opted to register secretly: *('by the way many women have registered secretly). They do not want their bosses to know and in some cases their husbands.'*

### ***Changed relations with children: rearing practices and role model to the children***

There are limited cases where Coop women refer to changed child rearing practices. This could be explained by the fact that the curriculum content only dealt with subjects related to cooperative enterprise. Courses such as Psychology and counselling, which had exposed the B. Ed. and the TEE women to child psychology and development, are lacking. At the same time, the lack of face-to-face interaction meant that peer learning on social issues is ruled out. This means that the Coop women lack opportunity to learn new knowledge on child rearing. It was only Mary Mutwa who testified to having learned new ways of treating her children from the course. To her, the fact that she studied in isolation taught her that she had to do everything for herself. Similarly, she went ahead to train her children to be self-reliant. She, therefore, turned her experiences of studying in isolation into an instrument of training her children:

*Before I used to take my children very tender and expect them to lean on me for everything but after the course I changed my approach. I believe that children should be self-reliant. So I have been very harsh on them. I am teaching them they must be above others so that they have qualities of leadership.*

### ***More public roles***

The Coop course, like the B. Ed. and the TEE programmes, opened opportunities for women to play more public roles than before. It was clear from the focus group discussions that involvement in the study had led to promotion and more responsibilities:

*In our organization (work place) somebody can be promoted and in this way hold key positions in the organization. Even when you tell other women what you have done they almost immediately make you their leader. They start giving you more responsibilities. They see that you are somebody who can do planning. (Magdalene Mweru).*

As a result of involvement in the distance learning programme, the Coop women have acquired responsibilities, in the form of leadership positions at the place of work and in the community. Mary Mutwa for instance, is able to play more public roles in the church:

*That course has really assisted me because I joined another fellowship called Christian Widows Association. This is a self-help group. Once they came to know that I am enlightened in areas of co-operative management, they put me in a very responsible position. They asked me to be their publicity person. I go around and talk to women, telling them that they can make groups of about five people and do something for themselves... The course has taught me to participate in issues that I thought I was not qualified to participate, the idea that I thought I was out of place, that I could not initiate.*

Lilly Muli, who has just joined the course, hopes that once she completes, she will be able to play different tasks in the community such as giving leadership to the many cooperative societies in her village which lack capable leaders: *'I hope to be able to lead cooperative societies in my village. People in the village lack leaders.'*

#### **5.5.1.4 Changed world view**

##### ***Views on condition and position of women***

The Coop course has helped women to review some of the beliefs they had previously held as true. For Loise Muthinzi, the study had enabled her to realize that *'it is not true that women are lower than men in thinking. Given a chance women can perform as well as men.'* Their learning experiences enabled them to realize that women were blocked from furthering their education: *'it is unfair that when a man wants to go for studies nobody blocks them but when women want to go for the same they are baptized many bad names.'* (Mary Mutwa). Jessie Kianda, who had completed the programme, too, stated that *'he treats his parents more special than my parents and this is common thing. They should know that we are all human beings.'* Lilly Muli added that: *'these Kenyan men they spend all their money on their relatives and you are not expected to give even a penny to your own relative.'* She, therefore, advises girls that before they get married they should make sure that: *'these men know before*

*hand that this girl is not willing to have her money controlled. I also tell the girls not to accept joined accounts'. Lilly Muli came to realize that: 'women have to work hard knowing that in this world you are just alone.'*

However, some of the Coop women were categorical that the course did not deal with issues related to women. Wanja Nugi refused to talk about women issues and stated that: *'the course was not based on women issues and so I could not think about their problems... I could not think about these issues.'* Jessica Kianda stated that: *'the course dealt with issues of cooperative society and so there was nothing to do with issues of women. My own experience has made me see that women are in trouble because men see them as inferior.'* These women's testimonies are a revelation to the lack of distance learning courses that incorporate issues that affect women in society. This means that the ability of the Coop programme to lead to full perspective transformation for women is limited.

#### ***Views on distribution of labour at the home sphere***

The Coop women pointed out that the study had enabled them to realize that women carry too many responsibilities which block them from registering for and completing their studies. Many agreed that women in Kenyan society are overburdened in that *'a woman works from morning till evening with no single rest at all. She is the first to wake up and last to go to bed'* (Eliza Gichere). Through the distance learning experience, they had come to realize the imbalance that exists in relation to house chores:

*When you are doing correspondence course you are added more responsibilities to do. So after work you can see that there is just too much work for you as a woman at a time when these men are just idle. So in fact these men should just help. There should be change in the kind of responsibilities that we do at home. Instead of him just sitting and reading a newspaper plus watching the television, when I am dying with so much work, they should just come in and assist. So by the time you finish the housework you are very tired. (Jane Mbau).*

It was clear from their testimonies that home chores had barred them from participation in education. The focus group indicated that:

*Being overloaded, there are so many women who want to join these programmes but they cannot because they have too much work around them. Even when she is housewife she works throughout the day non-stop.... Even their socks, they do not care where they throw them. Even in the city, the woman runs errands for the husband: paying electricity, water, attending school meetings and when the child is sick you have to take to the doctor and anything else.... They are actually like babies in the home. (Jane Mbau).*

These women are saying that the division of labour in the home sphere is unjust. Women carry all the load of work in the home at a time when men are idle. So they are compared to babies, for whom everything must be done.

Furthermore, these chores even hinder them from active enjoyment of sex life:

*So the thing is when you go to that bed that tired there is nothing you can do and so the man gets an excuse to move around with other women.... So if we shared the home responsibilities life would even be better in bed because both of us would go there when we are a bit fresh. But now what is happening is that the wife does so much work such that by the time she goes to the bed she is a cabbage and so she is not able to indulge in sex. (Focus group Jane Mbau).*

For Mary Mutwa, the workload at home blocks her from going out to teach women on how to form co-operative societies:

*At times you want to go and address a group of women who want to know how to form a cooperative, but then the workload at home is too much. If the burdens are shared with a spouse the women's performance will be better. Women carry too heavy burdens.*

### ***Women lack political and economic power***

Exclusion of women in both political and economic spheres of life was highlighted. Loise Muthinzi stated that distance learning had opened her eyes to the fact that: 'there were very few women in the management of cooperative societies especially the top management'. According to her, the remedy for this situation was for the women

to: 'go back to school' so that they can occupy those top positions. It was quite worrying for her to discover that 'every top position is held by men'.

The Coop women held the view that it was a good thing to have women in politics so that they could fight for women's rights.

*It is good when I see women in politics. In fact I wish we can get a woman president. Women are treated as nobody but we can do a lot.... I feel that there is nothing I cannot do. Dependence on men is dangerous. But men try to show women politicians ni maraya, ameacha bwana yake (are prostitutes, she has left her husband) and all other kinds of abuse. Men always see evil when it comes to women issues.*

For Magdalene Mweru, women should join politics but at the same time, they should try to balance it with other duties:

*Women should participate in politics but they should balance politics and family, just in the same way we have been able to balance correspondence study and the family. They should not neglect family for politics. In most cases they do not know how to balance the two and so the family suffers.*

These women also noted the prevalent negative attitude that Kenyan society shows to women politicians. Loise Muthinzi stated: 'Even when women join politics they call them prostitutes. But politics is a career and women should be encouraged to join so that they represent their fellow women.' This statement points to the culturally sanctioned assumption that women's place is in the domestic sphere. Once women venture out into the public sphere of politics they are branded bad elements in society. Such names are meant to stigmatize and isolate them and in this way pull them back.

On the economic status of women, the Coop women also noticed the fact that women have no control over their finances. Loise Muthinzi:

*When tea and coffee bonus comes the men pick the money and go to stay in the towns and carry all the money and bankbook. The children and women are suffering because the money is in the hands of the man.... He does not go to pick the coffee and tea.... The mother and the children are like slaves.*





These women had the opinion that the course could help women to be self-reliant and generate their own money. Lilly Muli, for instance, stated that: *'This course helps you do something in life. merry-go-round is a cooperative and I would advise women even if they do not work in cooperative societies to join this course so that they can manage their financial status better and also manage their merry-go-round.'*

### ***Views on abusive relationships***

Many of the women in this category abhorred wife abuse. For Lilly Muli, women should not remain in abusive relationships for long but should quit and start their own businesses:

*Even those women who are beaten, we are not like women of old age who are stuck in abusive marriages. Things are really changing. If a woman is being beaten let her just quit the marriage and start even a small business for herself, even if it is selling sukuma wiki. (Kale, local vegetable).*

The idea of women getting involved in small scale business points to a desire for economic independence. Many cooperatives are organized by small scale business people and so this is a direct lesson from the practice of cooperatives. At the same time, some women still felt that for the sake of the children and the fact that women earned low salaries, women could persevere in those abusive relationships for some time. Thus a participant in the focus group stated that: *'...I was encouraging her to take heart because of the children and the fact that she earns a small salary, which cannot support her, and the children.'* (Focus group, Lilly Muli).

There was a group that believed that there was no point sticking in such a marriage environment:

*I do not believe that you should remain in an abusive relationship because you have no alternative. I believe that in this world there are different alternatives and different doors that lack somebody to open. I do not believe in harassment and being intimidated. I believe somewhere and some how a door would open and I continue with my sweet life... Despite the vows and everything I do not believe in persevering oppression just because I vowed. Even my parents would not bear it to hear that I am being mistreated. (Focus group, Eliza Gichere).*

Others felt that maybe the *'wife is the problem and so she should change....Another thing is about sex. If you do not satisfy him or if he suspects you are moving with another man then you may get thorough beating.'* (Magdalene Mweru). This response shows a case where the woman is blaming the victim for the abuse. Other women in this group stated that due to the vows that women made in church they needed to remain in abusive marriage: *'But let me ask you, let us say that you did a Christian wedding and vowed that you will never part until death do you part, what can you say?'* (Focus group, Jane Mbau). However, this was an isolated case and majority of the interviewees in this programme felt that wife abuse was wrong and that the law needs to be changed so that *'a husband who beats his wife can be taken to court'* (Loise Muthinzi).

Women tend to stay in abusive relationship because their status in society is described in relation to a male figure. When it is not the father it is the husband. So for this reason women fear the effect on their social status when they divorce. Once they divorce, they lose their visibility.

#### **5.5.1.5 Taking Action**

There is no evidence to show that the Coop women have learned to assert themselves like the B. Ed. women. Although they recommend that men should stop sitting down and waiting for women to carry out all the home chores, including farm work, they do not categorically show what role they would play in order to bring change. This is unlike the B. Ed. women who gave specific examples of how they had decided to take specific action about their low position, with the chief aim of improving their lives. The fact that the course did not provide opportunities for learners to meet and learn as a group meant that there was no cross fertilization of ideas and experiences and this in itself may limit opportunities for higher levels of transformation. Unlike the B. Ed. women, who have plans to challenge patriarchal control at home, the Coop women lack this plan. However, in public, they wanted to be role models and be able to conscientize other women about the need to uplift themselves economically.

### **Involvement in the service of other women: role models**

Many of the Coop women wanted to educate other women to have all the property title deeds registered in both names. Loise Muthinzi, for example, stated that: *'women must be enlightened, from the rural to the most educated, so that all the property title deeds, including coffee and tea bonuses are written in both names, so that both control the money.'* Similarly, Lilly Muli was also educating unmarried girls on how to survive in a patriarchal marriage:

*So me I advise girls that before they get married to share with them who they are and what kind of relationship they expect in marriage. Let these men know beforehand that this girl is not willing to have her money controlled. I also tell the girls not to accept joined accounts.*

The Coop women also wanted to educate other women on the need to have smaller families: *'I also think that this practice of women getting too many children affects their health especially when they combine it with tilling the land. This makes them grow old faster and they die quickly.'* (Eliza Gichere).

They also wanted to enlighten women *'not to rely on the education of their husbands'* and also encourage them to *'try their level best and promote themselves through studying'* so that they do not remain beggars in a marriage relationship. She hoped that once she completed the course she would go to her *'village and start a co-operative group and I can manage it, because in the rural areas many co-operatives have collapsed because they do not have qualified people or anybody to manage and direct their affairs'*. In the same way, Loise Muthinzi would like to enlighten women on the need to: *'go back to books because this is the only way we will be able to compete with men'*. Mary Mutwa, too, has been going around talking to women: *'telling them that they can make groups of about five people and do something to help themselves, in terms of forming a small co-operative societies so as to become self-reliant.'*

## 5.5.2 Economic Empowerment

### 5.5.2.1 Financial benefits leading to changed lifestyles

Like the B. Ed. programme, but unlike the TEE course, the Coop programme gave women economic empowerment. Once women completed the course they received a salary increment or promotion. The economic benefits led to improved lifestyles and way of life. The fact that most of these women were sponsored by their employers shows the possibility of getting promotion and a salary increment was high. Thus the Coop course had the ability to push women higher into modern life. Indeed some of the women stated that the course had enabled them to climb into responsible positions in the Cooperative sector. Magdalene Mweru, for instance, stated that: *'When you complete the course and get more money then you get financial stability. You can do something with that money. When I have that money I can buy myself nice clothes, and also my family will feed better than before.'*

Eliza Gichere noted that: *'So I feel that there is a basis for a better livelihood in distance learning.'* The women also testified that, after getting higher salaries upon completion of the course, their life styles changed greatly. Wanja Ngui, for instance, stated that: *'when I was given the salary increment I was now able to buy myself things that I could not afford before and so I can say that my lifestyle changed for the better.'*

For Mary Mutwa, since she completed the distance learning programme, she has received a number of promotions and this has made her a better person:

*Since I did the course I have received quite a number of promotions. Before I took the course I was just a clerk and after doing the course I have been promoted. I have also attended a lot of workshops and seminars where I am given good awards and certificates. I am now in the position of Accounts Assistant.*

Lilly Muli, too, hoped that once she completed the course she would get a new and a better job:

*I hope to get a good job, so that I am able to buy better things for myself. If I get a heavy pay, I can buy a plot; I would also like my children to have a*

*better life.... So if I get a better job, then I would be able to take my children to nice schools and college. I would also like to dress differently from now and drive a nice car.*

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the changes that take place in women's lives after undertaking distance learning programmes. It has shown that all the three categories of women experience new self-consciousness in terms of increased self-esteem and confidence. However, specific programmes are able to lead women into greater and higher levels of transformation than others.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this research was, first, to examine how distance learning changes women's views about themselves and the world they live in; in terms of its effects on their perceptions about themselves and their subordinate position in society. Secondly, the research wanted to examine the barriers that women encounter as they study and the coping strategies that they have devised in order to succeed as distance learners. Thirdly, the research examined the socio-economic impact of the study on women's lives. Finally the research wanted to establish the kind of recommendations that women distance learners would want to be implemented in order to make distance learning more accessible to them. Through the use of biographical methods which were supplemented by focus group methods, observation and documentary evidence, the lived experiences of women distance learners were explored. The findings of the research have shed light on the above questions. They have established that there was undoubtedly personal transformation in varying degrees in the lives of the women. However, these findings are related to women from the three particular programmes that were the basis for this research. Hence, these findings are not intended to be generalized to other women distance learners. As stated in the definition of the term transformation in chapter two, the findings point to personal transformation and did not look at collective social/political transformation that critiques of Mezirow perceive as part of this theory (Collard & Law 1989, Hart 1990, Inglis 1997, Newman 1993).

#### 6.2 The Three Programmes

It was clear from the research findings that the three programmes are different from each other, in terms of vision and mission, format and content, and forms of provision that are used. Whereas the B. Ed. and coop programme are government supported programmes, the TEE programme is church based and supported. The TEE programme operates as a non-formal education programme, whose aim is to provide

the church with competent unpaid workers. The B. Ed. and Coop programmes are formal courses that supply unpaid volunteer workers to educational institutions and the co-operative societies, respectively.

The B. Ed. programme targets people who want to acquire a university degree in education. Although the ratio of women to men in this programme has not reached fifty to fifty levels, more women are accessing university education than before.

On the other hand, the TEE targets church members who want to serve in different capacities in the church. Hence, its objectives are mainly concerned with church growth, spiritually and numerically. Indeed the aims of the TEE programme are related to spiritual needs of the church and of its members. In a way TEE has indeed liberalised theological education in that those who could not be admitted to residential theological seminaries have got the opportunity to study theology at a place and time of their choice. In particular TEE has attracted a large number of women. This could be explained by the fact that TEE is flexible, in that most of the learning is done by private study and only once a week do learners attend the seminar meetings. However, TEE education is not economically empowering to women as the graduates of the programme rarely get paid job opportunities as a result of their study. It, therefore, scores poorly in terms of economic empowerment though many women find it an ideal method of study.

The Coop course targets lower clerical workers in the co-operative movement: bank clerks, cashiers and secretaries. It is aimed at enabling these workers to acquire more knowledge about the co-operative movement and as a result, improve their performance in the job. This explains why most of the coop students were sponsored by their employers. However, the accessibility of this programme to women is still below average level. Although this programme is based on print alone and does not disturb the women's ability to perform other duties, women still remain marginalized in the programme. This is because the programme is poorly publicised, as the women interviewees stated. The administrators rely on existing co-operative societies to inform their employees about the programme. Women happen to be the minority of employees in these co-operative societies. Thus the truth of the matter is a majority

rural women and those who operate in the informal sector, and who could benefit hugely from this programme, are not aware of the programme's existence.

### **Programme Format and Content**

In the same way, their format and curricula are different from each other. Whereas the B. Ed. programme takes 6 years to complete, the TEE certificate course takes two years, the diploma two years and the advanced diploma two more years, the Coop course takes 18 months. The curriculum for the B. Ed. includes professional courses in education plus the teaching subjects. Although the B. Ed. has both science and art based subjects, the findings have shown that women learners tend to choose art based subjects. For example, out of the 14 B. Ed. women that were interviewed only two had specialized in science subjects. The rest were taking Religious Studies, Swahili, Literature and Linguistics and Geography. This tendency to choose art-based subjects is related to the kind of socialization that women receive. Women are socialized to think that science subjects are hard and only men can manage them. These normative distortions inflict inferiority on women (Muita 1999). Observation shows that women academics at the university level have been holding seminars in secondary schools round the country, trying to re-educate the girls that they can also do well in science subjects at every level of their study.

The TEE curriculum deals with the study of the bible and other related issues such as marriage and counselling. On the other hand, the Coop curriculum deals with issues related to co-operative education. It is aimed at equipping people with basic knowledge about cooperatives.

### **Forms of Provision**

A look at the forms of provision shows that the three programmes all use study materials as the main teaching tool. However, the B. Ed. and the TEE programme have face-to-face opportunities to supplement the materials, but the Coop programme is based on print as a stand-alone medium. This has acted as a discouragement to many students, leading to withdrawals. For example, the findings have already shown that out of the nine women interviewed from this programme, two (Jane Mbau and Faith Nzuki) had withdrawn before completing the course. They cited isolation, loneliness and the lack of communication from the institution as the reason for their

abandoning the programme. The ability to learn in a social environment is lacking and this hinders transformation that arises when learners share experiences and come up with solutions to problems as a group.

It is clear from the findings that the TEE programme is the more flexible than others in two ways. First, it is the only programme that admits people of different educational backgrounds. The academic criteria that bar many people from joining other programmes do not exist in the TEE programme. Most TEE courses have different curricula for people with different educational backgrounds. Some of the courses are offered in Swahili and others in vernacular languages. This is done so as to meet the needs of learners with varied educational backgrounds. Hence, it is the most open of all, in that no one is barred from registering due to their low educational level. Indeed the success of a TEE programme is measured by the number of students registering and completing. For this reason, all church members are encouraged to join the TEE programmes, where possible. This is unlike the other two programmes, where the admission criteria block many from joining. Secondly, in terms of forms of provision, it is also the TEE programme that is responsive to women's multiple responsibilities. Although it provides face-to-face opportunities, these are organized in such a way that learners are not uprooted from their families and duties, in order to attend, unlike the B. Ed. programme, where learners have to leave their homes and board at the residential centres for three months in a year. For the TEE, the seminars take place on weekly basis and only for a few hours. This means that women learners are able to continue performing their daily duties without interference. Indeed TEE has great strengths in that it goes to women's environment without uprooting them from their day to day responsibilities. Because of this it does not create a head-on confrontation over women's roles in a conservative society.

### **6.3 Lived Experiences of Women Learners**

The biographies from the three programmes show that there were varied types of women who register for distance learning programmes in Kenya. Among the common elements was that majority of them were mature learners, who had family and in many cases, job commitments to combine with the studies. Those who were not employed were preoccupied with either small scale business ventures or farm work. This meant that

women had to combine study with multiple chores. For some, these chores became so overwhelming that they had to withdraw from the study. Others had to devise survival tactics so as to succeed as students. The combination of multiple responsibilities means that these women study under stressful circumstances and as such, it is only those who are determined who manage to complete.

The B. Ed. women's ages ranged between 24 and 43 years, whereas the TEE group was between 24 and 57 years. The Coop women's ages ranged between 24 and 45 years. This may indicate that the TEE programme attracts older women than the other two programmes. This could be explained by the fact that TEE is not a career related programme and so even retirees could still join so as to keep themselves busy. However, the B. Ed. and Coop programmes are meant for career development, meaning that relatively younger people would be attracted.

Differences emerge when we look at their previous level of education and job commitments. The women in the B. Ed. programme have gone up to a high school level of formal education and have some tertiary training either as teachers or librarians. All the B. Ed. women are employed either as teachers or library workers and hence, for some, the course is directly related to their profession, while for others it is completely in a new area. This applies to those women working in the library, but who have now taken up a B. Ed. course. This switch of profession was necessitated by the lack of degree level opportunities in the library profession. It seems these women just wanted a degree certificate, regardless of whether it was relevant to their present careers or not. However, some of them wanted to use this knowledge to start their own private schools.

The Coop women had a secondary level of education and many had not gone for any other tertiary level training. One was already a trained secretary. All the Coop women had full time employment in the cooperative sector, either as cashiers in the cooperative banks, clerks, secretaries, or administrative officers. This means that, just like the B. Ed. and TEE women, they combine studying with, not only domestic chores, but also job commitments, factors that act as barriers to their successful participation in distance learning.

On the other hand, the TEE women learners are quite a mixed group, in that while some are teachers, with a professional training, about 30 per cent of them were not in full time

employment, some of whom had only reached primary level of education. Among this group, one was running a self-employment business in the informal settlement on the outskirts of the city of Nairobi. Another woman was involved in farming activities, both for family consumption and commercial purposes. Others were planning to open small scale grocery shops.

### **Reasons for starting to study**

The stories from these women showed that they had varied reasons for joining the particular programme. Social reasons dominated the list of reasons for the B. Ed. women, and especially the prestige that is associated with university education. Overall, the B. Ed. women were interested in being elevated and gaining social status. Other motivating factors were related to career and work, academic, escape and personal reasons.

The TEE women's source of motivation is unique. Most of them wanted to gain knowledge of scriptures, have spiritual growth and be in the company of others. A few of them gave psychological and escape reasons.

The Coop women, like the B. Ed. Ones, were interested in career development. They also mentioned the urge to gain knowledge about cooperatives and escape reasons.

Hence, both TEE and Coop women wanted to gain specific knowledge that they would use in the service of the community. The TEE ones wanted to gain knowledge of scriptures, denomination and theology, which would assist them in the service of the church, practical work being part and parcel of their programme. For instance, Jennifer Mukama uses her knowledge to solve people's spiritual and family problems, both in the church and in her neighborhood.

The Coop women wanted to gain knowledge about cooperatives, which would assist them to be better employees and help them to improve their job performance. Hence, these women were interested in gaining knowledge that they could apply directly to their day to day work. Thus they wanted to know about the nuts and bolts of operating cooperative societies. This was necessitated by the fact that they found themselves working for cooperatives without prior knowledge on what it is and how it is organized.

It is not theoretical knowledge that they are interested in but practical. The coop women were interested in directly applying the knowledge they gained into their work stations and performing better as employees of cooperatives. This was unlike B. Ed. women whose major interest was university education regardless of whether the knowledge acquired improved their performance. Indeed none of the B. Ed. women mentioned that she had become a better teacher after her participation in the programme. Instead they were interested in being elevated and occupying prestigious positions in society. Role models were also singled out as source of motivation for joining and continuing with the distance study. Women from the three programmes pointed to the influence of others who had gone back to study.

By choosing to go back to study these women had freed themselves from forces that controlled them, 'forces that have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control' (Cranton 1994:17). Choosing to go back to study was in itself transformational as the women reached a point where they weighed their life conditions and noticed that distance learning could improve their lives. For Florence Mukasa, the urge to go back to study was so big that even a miscarriage was seen as a relief. It is quite intriguing that to her, losing the baby could be seen as a '*blessing in disguise*'. This can only be explained in terms of the student's great desire to re-enter the education and the fact that pregnancy stood in her way. The urge for studying is so high that once she miscarried she felt '*set free.*'

### **Barriers to women's participation**

When I looked at the barriers that women face as they study, I noticed that the B. Ed. women faced more obstacles than the other two categories of women, due to the forms of provision used in the B. Ed. programme and their conflict with women's multiple responsibilities. First, residential sessions, though useful for effective learning processes, create great problems for women. Women had to leave behind their family and job responsibilities in order to attend the residential sessions, which take a whole three months in a year. The residential sessions took place during school holidays and this meant that women learners would be away when their children were on holiday and thus denying the children their mother's care and love. The women related how some of them had even to ferry their children to their maternal homes in order to succeed in attending the residential. Others had to make sure that they had a domestic worker who would look

after the home duties once the woman was away. Another inconvenience brought by residential sessions was the fact that since most of them had a full time job, they had to make arrangements with their employers to be away, a fact that brought problems for many women and acted as a great barrier for some. The bosses at the work place had to be cooperative and look for someone else to stand in for the teacher as she attended residential sessions. This explains why both the family and job institutions are not supportive of women's return to education and act as great stumbling blocks. There are also added costs in that women have to pay residential and transport fees. Hence, attendance to residential sessions causes a lot of inconveniences and creates a confrontation between the women learners, and the family, community and the boss.

This ability to manoeuvre around the powerful patriarchal structures that barred them from succeeding in their education was a recognizable aspect of transformation. This fact already gives credit to distance learning. It enabled the women to realize the unequal power relations both in the home and place of work, leading them to question the status quo. This led them to have a great urge to take action. One way of taking action was enlightening other women, through informal methods about the subjugation and ways of combating this. One of the suggestions they gave to their fellow women was to go back to study in order to improve on their lot. The ability to go against social norms and expectations, in itself, was a further sign of transformation. Leaving husbands and children behind in order to attend residential schools was in itself a way of saying no to unequal relations at home. Societal norms require a wife to pre-occupy herself with caring for husband, children and the extended family. Here were the B. Ed. women overcoming cultural barriers and opting to be away from the family for about a month, three times a year, and relegating house duties to domestic workers. This action in itself is a sign that transformation has not only occurred in their lives but has also been translated from mental processes to the world of reality. This was subversion of societal expectations for married women. They were able to take action and effect change in their world. That is, to show those around them that they were no longer comfortable with the traditional expectations and that they had reversed the situation. The presence of domestic workers in the scene can be seen in terms of women supporting fellow women to study (even some mothers gave similar support to their daughters to go back to study). It can also be interpreted positively, as creation of job opportunities for

fellow women. However, this can also be seen negatively, as a way of pushing the burden of subjugation lower down the ladder onto even less fortunate women. It shows contradiction in the lives of women learners, in that their success depended on their oppression of other women. Thus it makes their transformation individualistic and selfish.

Where the spouse was not willing to let the women go, some women even organised to study secretly, a further indication of women's ability to manipulate their environment in order to better their lives. Cases were told to me of women who would organise to study secretly without letting husbands and others know about it. These women could not attend the residential sessions except during the examination period. During those times, they would lie to their spouses that they wanted to visit some relatives in the city (where residential sessions are mainly held). Such action shows that these women are no longer accepting their lower position and they are able to manoeuvre around the barriers to study. It also shows counter-hegemonic behaviour, though not through confrontational means. Since Mezirow's theory does not address society, this leaves women incapacitated in relations to the oppressive social structures as pointed out by Hart (1990). But none the less as an outcome of personal transformation, the women were still able to manipulate the oppressive systems in order to achieve their interests. I see this as a subversive act. Hart's (1990) level of distortions was still attended to because the oppressive unconscious psychological structures which define women's identity in society were not influential on these women who chose to beat the system in order to study.

The recommendations that these women gave were a further indication to the fact that mental shifts had occurred through distance learning. The recommendations also show that these women are voicing resistance to the existing scenario (Barr 1999). The B. Ed. women agitated for change in the home, larger society, government and the distance teaching institution itself so that their studying could be improved. At the home front, they called for understanding, financial and emotional support, and equal sharing of family chores to enable them to complete their studies. Such expectations were seen as ways of creating an enabling environment for the women to advance themselves.

The other two groups of women had a somewhat easier time than the B. Ed. The TEE programme, though with a face-to-face component, rarely created tension in the lives of women learners. Whereas B. Ed. receives opposition from spouses and in-laws the TEE women are forthright that their spouses are very happy about the programme. For instance, Anne Njoya stated that *'my husband likes the course very much. He sees that I am able to play more responsible roles.'* Thus those around the TEE women seemed to be happy with the course. However, the TEE women's main barrier was the lack of parity of esteem and transferability of certificates obtained. The fact that the TEE certificates are not equated with the ones from residential colleges, even when they are at the same level, meant that if TEE graduates wanted to go to residential seminaries, they had to start at the same point as someone who had never done any theological studies. The women from the Coop programme were disadvantaged by the fact that the course was offered through a single medium, namely print. This meant that there was lack of opportunity for peer learning, company and solidarity building.

These factors made distance learning difficult for many women. Determination, a positive outlook and time management were singled out as the key to succeed as women students. Other ways of survival included hiring a domestic worker, and for some, ignoring some of the family chores. For the B. Ed. women, residential sessions provided ideal opportunities for them to leave all the chores and problems behind and concentrate on study, even though for a short time. It also provided them with an ideal opportunity to be away from husbandly control. These residential sessions gave women chances to reflect on their world and engage in dialogue between themselves, a process that led to perspective transformation. Karen Adhiambo testified that by listening to other women's stories of exclusion and marginalization, she came to reflect on her own life and as a result she took on new perspectives (Mezirow 1991). In the same way, the weekly seminars proved to be very useful for the TEE women in that they provided opportunities for interaction. For example Abbey Gathendu testified the discussions they held in the seminar meetings influenced the way she looked at life.

## 6.4 Forms of Provision and Prior Education in relation to Levels of Transformation

Table 11: Overview of forms of provision, prior education versus levels of transformation

Programme	Forms of provision	Prior level of education	Transformation
The B. Ed.	Combination of: print, audiocassettes, residential sessions & monthly tutorials	Majority went up to high school but missed opportunity to join university, many are trained primary school teachers, others have diploma in secondary education	Majority of them underwent various stages of transformation: <b>Intrapersonal</b> :acquisition of new self perceptions ( in terms of confidence and self esteem, autonomy, discovered talents and potential) <b>Interpersonal transformation</b> : better interaction skills, social status-at home-spouses attitude changed, changed child rearing practices, public- more public roles <b>Changed world view</b> : see exclusion of women in the home (own no property, unfair distribution of labour, violence ,and public arena-exclusion from powerful positions) <b>Taking action</b> : able to bargain and challenge power at home, educate other women, have courage to question & demand their rights in the home & public. Some want to get into parliament to articulate women's needs <b>Economic empowerment</b> : promotion and higher salaries leading to changed lifestyles, & expectations, prospects for new jobs are very high
TEE	Print, weekly seminars, practical work	Some have high school level of education and teacher training, others only secondary level, while others reached primary level	<b>Intrapersonal :acquisition of new self perceptions</b> : in terms of confidence and self esteem, discovered talents and potential; Child rearing practices due to psychology course <b>Interpersonal transformation</b> : better interaction skills, social status-at home-spouses attitude changed, public- more roles , changed child rearing practices due to psychology course <b>World view</b> : only in the public area but not issues at home <b>Take action</b> : no evidence to take action against being controlled in the home, not courageous to disturb the equilibrium, want to educate other women about keeping happy marriages, avoiding friction in the home so as to keep violence at bay: not able to challenge status quo, very little transformation <b>No economic empowerment</b>

The Coop	Print	Secondary school level with minimum pass, majority had no previous college experience	<p>Went through some stages of transformation: intrapersonal: new self-perceptions, confidence &amp; self esteem, discovered have talents &amp; potential, increased knowledge and skills</p> <p>Interpersonal: home-spouses attitude changes, social status is achieved-more public roles, child rearing practices changed</p> <p><i>Any changed world view?</i> Very minimal</p> <p><i>Take action:</i> educate others about economic empowerment, no evidence to take action against being controlled in the home, not courageous to disturb the equilibrium, minimum transformation</p> <p><b>Economic empowerment:</b> some gained salary increments, promotion, chances for admission to other courses</p>
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This research has established that, although in distance study learning takes place in isolation and far from the teacher for most of the time, transformation still takes place in the lives of women students. In the B. Ed., which had face-to-face facilities, women experienced more opportunities for perspective transformation through, not only the peer interaction, but also through interaction with the lecturers and tutors. For the TEE programme, face-to-face opportunities, through the seminars, enabled the learners to exchange ideas among themselves and through these transformational changes occurred. Indeed both B. Ed. and TEE women alluded to the many changes that had taken place in their lives due to their experiences at the residential meetings for the B. Ed. students and the seminars for the TEE students. Social action in terms of mobilization, agency and advocacy are important components of transformative learning. However, the present distance learning programmes have not been designed purposely for consciousness raising, a fact that explains why the stories of these women do not point to social action.

The use of particular ways to reach the distance learners was highlighted as a significant factor in most transformation. The findings presented in this research show that distance provision with components of face-to-face interaction led to more transformative effects. The findings thus have implications for the way distance learning offerings are planned and administered. The key differences in the three distance programmes were in the forms of delivery and prior level of education of the learners. Both the University of Nairobi and the TEE programmes combined different

forms of provision in their delivery of distance learning. The University of Nairobi used print, audiocassettes, residential and monthly tuition sessions. The TEE, on the other hand, used printed materials, weekly seminars and practical work. It was only the Coop course that relied solely on print, without provision of opportunities for students to meet, interact and learn as a group. This had great impact not only on the student's completion rates, but also on their transformation. This section looks at each of these forms of provision in order to highlight which ones lead to more transformation than the other does. It also looks at the impact of prior education on women's transformation.

### **The study materials**

Internationally over half of distance learners are women (Burge & Lenksyj 1990). However, materials are male constructed and hence the knowledge given to women is male owned. This scenario leads to the current invisibility of women in course materials. The literature review has already shown that women are invisible in the distance learning materials offered in the B. Ed. programme (Matiru & Gachuhi 1988). It also showed that the course materials are full of sex stereotypes in that males are depicted as having more social prominence and higher status than women have. They are the judges, policemen, chiefs, engineers and headmasters, whereas women are nurses, cooks and farmers. Men and boys feature more times than women and are pictured doing more prestigious activities such as fishing, studying, herding and driving, whereas women were involved in domestic chores, such as cooking, carrying water and visiting neighbours, activities that demean women's position. Thus women are assigned roles that 'confine them to the home environment that are not economically rewarding' (Matiru & Gachuhi 1988: 145). Hence, such materials 'relegate women to their traditional roles in society, (being subordinate, housebound, passive and inferior' (p.151). This state of affairs is created by the fact that most of the writers are men and so they approach issues from a male privileged position and uphold the socially constructed view that women perform less significant roles than men, that they have less status and esteem; thus reinforcing traditionally accepted perspective about male superiority and female inferiority (Faith, 1988). Such factors inhibit perspective transformation in the lives of women distance learners.

My general conclusion after interrogating the TEE learning materials is that the content is presented in such a way that it upholds the subordinate position occupied by the women, not only in the Bible but also in the church. Even when the TEE materials deal with issues of marriage, they still uphold the superior position of men. For instance, the module on Christian Marriage, that is used by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa TEE, has on several occasions emphasized that men are the heads of homes and that women should be submissive. The Module on Sin and Salvation stresses that if it was not for women folk then there would be no sin in the world. When it talks about sexual sins in the community, it still blames women for enticing men with their way of dress. The module on the Youth in the Church has put a lot of emphasis on how girls should dress, but very little prescription is given on how boys should dress. This means that these courses are aimed at domesticating women further so as to be better wives, mothers and church followers (Faith 1988). When I attended several workshops of writers of TEE learning materials I discovered that 90 per cent of these writers were all men. This means that the materials that are finally produced present issues from men's point of view. Once women study these materials they end up accepting the present order of things, without questioning their low status in society.

When I looked at the Coop materials the same scenario is present. These materials do not address issues that affect women. The materials are constructed by mostly male lecturers. Out of nine units for the distance learning programme, only two were written by women. Although there were quite a number of women lecturers in the College, only two were selected to write the materials.

The Coop materials use pictures, symbols and examples that depict men as superior to women. For instance, in the unit on *Cooperative Accounting Systems and Taxation*, a farmer who wants to get a loan from a cooperative is called Mr Mwema (Nangabo 2001:163). When they talk about a bank manager, they use the word 'him'. For instance, the unit on *Introduction to Cooperative Banking and Finance*, states that, 'It is the duty of the bank manager to supervise.... For him to be able...' (Mbithi 2001: 21). Mbithi further states that 'the bank manager must always make sure...He does this by.... He should scrutinize and verify...' (p. 23). In all these instances, the assumption here is that the bank manager is a man, a traditionally taken-for-granted

assumption and yet practically we have a few women who have managed through great obstacles, including prejudice, to reach the managerial levels in the cooperative movement. Such emphases on male superiority in the materials block the right atmosphere for transformation and instills inferiority in women learners. It also shows that women learners lack women role models in the texts whom to emulate.

Although these stereotypes are accurate in that they depict the truth on the ground, there is need for distance learning material writers to consciously depict a fifty-fifty scenario, so as to provide women learners with progressive images in the texts. Distance educators have to labour to give a balanced representation, though hypothetical for the time being, of women concerns in the study materials. This would impact positively on their self-esteem and ambitions. There is, therefore a need for the designers of materials to produce women sensitive materials that use inclusive language, a language that gives women the dignity that has been denied them for a long time. By so doing, women would feel represented in this courseware. Writers and editors of these materials need to be sensitized on gender representation if distance learning is going to play a greater role in assisting women to experience full transformation and acquire positive perspectives about themselves and their capabilities.

### **Face-to-face interactions**

The importance of establishing personal contact between the learner and the tutor was given prominence by Holmberg (1988, 1995). He argued for a distance learning that provides guidance to the learners so as to reduce the boredom and loneliness that arises when print is used on its own. Carl (1988) too, had emphasised the need for distance learning providers to incorporate face-to-face interactions, so as to avoid a situation where women as distance learners, are confined to the home. Indeed group study has been highlighted as an important component of any distance learning that is sensitive to women learning needs. Other literature reviewed has shown that the distance learning that is responsive to women's preference for connected learning is the one that provides opportunities for women to meet and learn in a social environment (Kirkup & Prummer 1990, Dighe 1998). The findings of Kirkup & Prummer (1990) contrast the concepts of independence and autonomy that male distance education scholars (such as Wedemeyer 1988 and Moore 1988) have

advocated. Such concepts of independence and autonomy (emphasizing that the student be left alone to do the study independently) are 'modeled on male learning styles' (Kirkup & Prummer 1990:2). To Kirkup and Prummer, the theory of independent study does not consider women's need for shared learning and, therefore, the creation of local support systems within distance learning programmes that would benefit women more than men.

The findings of my study show that women distance learners in the Kenyan context, similarly, sacrifice a lot of time and money in order to attend residential classes for the B. Ed. programme. In the same way, the TEE women students showed great interest and commitment to attendance of the seminar meetings. Where face-to-face opportunities do not exist, like in the Coop distance programme, women students have recommended their inclusion so as to give them chance to interact, not only with their fellow students, but also with the lecturers and tutors.

The results of my research show that the highest levels in transformation occur to women who are exposed to a distance learning programme with provisions of face-to-face interaction. The B. Ed. programme which combines study materials with residential classes, plus monthly tutorials, has come out to be the best practice in relation to women's transformation. Women who participate in this programme get transformed not only in their intrapersonal levels, but also in their ability to question and challenge the existing normative distortions about their inferior position and condition in society. They had the stamina to question why they occupy an inferior position, both in the home and in the larger society. They wanted others to know that they had re-interpreted their life experiences and come up with new and positive perspectives about their capabilities and expectations. They wanted to take action about their low status in the private and public spheres.

The provision of residential sessions that provided opportunities for students to move away from home and to interact with the outside world was in itself an agent of transformation. Although this uprooting of B. Ed. women caused a lot of inconveniences, it had its own benefit to the transformational process, in that the chance for women to run away from patriarchal control, though for a short time, gave them chance to think about their experience, dialogue with other women and through this, help each other in

critiquing social arrangement at home and in the public spheres. The residential sessions thus ensured that learning took place in a social environment and encouraged peer learning and through this there was further learning and self-reflection. Some of the students in this group testified that through listening to other women's stories of exclusion, they had come to understand their experiences differently and to take action aimed at making their lives better. Karen Adhiambo testified how she had learned a lot from other women's stories during the residential sessions and as a result, she launched a case in the court of law to challenge the traditional practice of excluding women from inheriting their parents' property. Thus the sharing of stories is a starting point for women's empowerment. Dighe (1998: 14) had earlier stated that 'it helps them examine critically their lower position in society and leads them to take action against the injustices that they have suffered at home, work as well as in the larger society'. Thus the more experienced women would give guidance and advice on ways of 'maneuvering' so as to cope with the demands of both the private and public space. Hence, these residential sessions provided women with opportunities to listen to each other, and through this, they were able to strategize on how to live in a sexist society. This interaction became a catalyst for transformation.

Thus as much as the uprooting of these women disrupts their daily lives and creates a lot of logistical problems, leading to opposition from spouses and relatives, at the same time the process of overcoming these problems creates great opportunities for women to reflect on their position in society and be able to undergo transformative experiences. At the same time, going away from home enables women to experience independence from dominating powers in the home, even though for a short time. Hence the act of being away from home and the demanding chores was in itself a transforming factor. It also gave them opportunity to study without interruption from family chores.

The TEE programme had inbuilt opportunities for learners to meet on a weekly basis. These meetings also provided opportunities for women to interact with men on an equal basis. The fact that the seminar took place only once a week and in the afternoon was also something favouring women's needs. This meant that women learners were able to carry on with other responsibilities and study at the same time.

This was in contrast to the B. Ed. course where the learners had to be uprooted from their families for about four weeks, three times a year.

The practical component in the TEE course gave women chance to operate in the public and occupy position of status and power. However, women learners still complained about the male control that blocked them from serving as pastors during the practical sessions and also after their completion of the course.

For the TEE programme, some of the seminar facilitators were women and this fact meant that women TEE learners had role models in their midst. It also meant that they had opportunities to reflect on their roles as women. When a seminar composed of men and women is facilitated by a woman, this serves as an encouragement for the women in the group, for it shows that women can succeed in the public arena. This scenario presented role models for women to emulate and thus leading to further transformation. Hence, for distance learning to act as a tool for women's transformation, the creation of opportunities for interaction is vital.

In spite of the flexibility in the TEE course, women in this programme have not achieved as high levels of transformation as the B. Ed. did. They experienced transformation in terms of raised self esteem and confidence, discovery of talents and capabilities but for most, their attitude to key issues related to patriarchal arrangement in society remained unchanged. For instance, Abbey Gathendu, pointed out that: *'but for a man it does not matter his level of education. We will still respect him because he is a man.'* Their views on domestic chores too, remained largely unchanged. Some of them were not supportive of women's involvement in politics. They seemed to have accepted the norm that women are there to please the husband and if a marriage fails, it is always the woman to blame for it. While the B. Ed. women asked for changes both in the private and public spheres, the TEE women were only interested in some changes in the public domain in terms of recognition and more status. They wanted to be accorded economic opportunities after completion of their TEE course. They also wanted to be allowed to transfer credit from TEE to residential institutions. The TEE women, for instance, find it no longer acceptable to remain locked outside top church leadership positions which also have economic power. Thus a participant in the focus group stated that *'we need to be recognized as students of theology.'*

At this point I asked myself, what then blocks TEE women from achieving high levels of transformation, yet their programme provides similar learning modes to the B. Ed. programme? I noticed that the environment under which the curriculum was produced and delivered too impacted on women's transformation. The church based courses, done within a conservative environment, tended to uphold the status quo of women's subordination. The fact that the church tends to uphold biblical and cultural norms, both of which place women in a second position, impacted negatively on women's ability to be transformed. The church environment did not provide an ideal condition for women to 'reason argumentatively about competing validity claims' (Mezirow 1989:171), since the church is based on dogmatic doctrines that are rarely challenged from within. Neither did the TEE course encourage 'critical reflection about assumptions and premises' as was the case with the B. Ed. women. Christian teachings in Kenya are not open to 'considerations of the validity or other meaning perspectives and paradigms' (Mezirow 1989: 171). Hence, these women tended to accept the cultural arrangement where women are subordinate. They continued to uphold the supremacy of men on the home front and the only change they asked for was outside the family set up. At the family level, they just argued that women should know their position and play the expected roles in an organized manner in order to create time for study.

When I looked at the Coop programme I noticed that it used print as a stand-alone medium. The course was, therefore, done invisibly, in that it did not affect the smooth running of responsibilities either at the work place or the home front. This meant that since it did not disturb the equilibrium, the women involved did not face as much opposition to their study as the B. Ed. women. However, the lack of provision of face-to-face component made the Coop course the loneliest of the three. Women lacked opportunity to dialogue with other students and exchange ideas about their lives and how to overcome roadblocks to their study and self-actualization. Isolation, coupled with many chores at home and work place, led Jane Mbau and Faith Nzuki to abandon the course at very early stages. To survive in the Coop course, women had to design informal opportunities for support, whereby they would approach their colleagues at work for assistance on subject areas that tended to be difficult.

Another impact of this lonely study method was that the learners tended to shy away from discussing socio-cultural issues that affected women's daily lives. Wanja Ngui could not discuss issues affecting women, arguing that the course did not handle such issues. Thus the form of provision in the Coop programme created limitations for a conducive atmosphere for full transformation. Creation of face-to-face opportunities for the Coop course would, therefore, provide enormous opportunity for women learners to experience change in their lives.

### **6.5 Prior level of education versus transformation**

The research findings have shown that the women with high school level of education, plus some tertiary level training, experience higher levels of transformation than those without. The B. Ed. women had gone up to high school level, but missed university admission by a small margin. Then they joined other tertiary level courses in either teacher training college or polytechnics. When the opportunity to study came, through distance learning methods, they joined. These are the women who exhibited the highest levels of transformation. They are the women who can really be said to have freed themselves from forces that limit their options which they had taken for granted (Cranton 1994). These are the women who were willing, more than others, to challenge exclusion and take action against those structures that maintained it, both in the home and public. They wanted to educate other women about ways of challenging exclusion. They also held dialogue with their partners about the unequal relationships in marriage and insisted on being included in decision-making and being treated as equal partners in the marriage relationship. They struggled to be included in decision making about land, property and investment. Further evidence of higher levels of transformation for the B. Ed. women was shown by the fact that they could ignore home duties to concentrate on their studies, an action that could only have its origins in mental shifts for these women. In a patriarchal society, it is the woman's responsibility to make sure that all the home duties are performed to perfection and so for a woman to have decided to ignore these duties could only be associated with transformed perspectives. The B. Ed. focus group pointed out that those women whose husbands worked and stayed far away were better in that they had more freedom. At the same time, they compared themselves to other typical women and stated that other women would not value the absence of their husbands. However, due

to the transformational changes that had occurred in the B. Ed. women's lives they saw the husband's absence as a good thing.

The women in the TEE group are a mixed in that some of them are primary school teachers, while others are housewives, with only a primary level of education. Those women with higher levels of education are more transformed than their counterparts with just primary level of education. For instance, the primary school teachers have tended to have a more advanced critical consciousness, although not in the same way as the B. Ed. women, in relation to women's subordination than their counterparts with only a primary level of education. The TEE learners from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) programme also happened to have secondary level of education. A majority of them had trained as primary school teachers and they had a broader, more inclusive and critical world view than their counterparts in the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) programme, who had primary level of education. The PCEA women accepted the fact that women were overburdened by the many chores they perform. They also were able to challenge the church hierarchy by asking for job opportunities for women TEE graduates and the transfer of credit from TEE to residential seminaries. They also agitated for more involvement in curriculum design and more say in the running of TEE programmes. For instance, Jerusha Njagi, a primary school teacher, advocates for women to take charge of their lives and demand better treatment.

The Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) TEE women, who mainly had only a primary level of education, supported the hierarchical arrangement and subordination of women, both in the family and in society. For instance, they were against women's involvement in politics, arguing that by joining politics women ruin their homes, in that they ignore home duties and their family. They argued that women's place is in the home, a normative belief whose legitimacy was disputed by the B. Ed. women. These TEE women also saw nothing wrong with the unequal distribution of chores in the family sphere. To them women should only organize and plan their schedules well so that they could cope with studying. They advised fellow women to plan their time well in order to cope with these chores, and at the same time, be able to study. About marital violence, they blamed the woman (victim) for it,

arguing that if she had behaved well and performed her duties properly there would be no violence in the marriage; an issue that the B. Ed. and Coop women abhorred.

The Coop women, the majority of whom had reached secondary level of formal education and passed with low grades, achieved only minimum levels of transformation. Many of them had not participated in another tertiary level programme before. After completing the distance learning programme, some of them were able to join other training programmes to improve on their professional knowledge.

From these findings I concluded that the forms of provision and the prior level of education had a great impact on women's transformation. The contextual environment under which the curriculum is offered had also far reaching effect on the ability to get transformed. The B. Ed. programme is offered in an environment that tends to be liberal and open, whereas the TEE course was offered in a church environment which tends to be conservative and upholds the status quo. The church teachings have continued to place women in the second position. It was quite contradictory that although Organization of African Instituted Churches have the greatest number of women priests, prophetesses and 'mothers', their TEE students experienced the least mental shifts in terms of coming to recognize the discrimination and exclusion that women suffer in Kenyan society.

## **6.6 Levels of Transformation**

In this research transformation through distance learning is seen as those changes that come about due to shifts in thought forms, which was triggered by 'critical self-reflection' ( Mezirow 1991). These shifts affect the way learners see themselves and the world they live in (Courtenay et al, 2000, Mezirow 1981, 1991). Transformation has to do with the learner becoming aware of 'why we attach the meanings we do to reality especially to our roles and relationships' (Mezirow 1981:11). Such transformation develops after the learner notices how 'our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel our world', after which she then moves to reformulate 'these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective' (Mezirow 1990b: 14). The findings of this

research have shown that distance learning does indeed lead some learners to experience mental shifts that enable them to take action or plan to take action about their condition and position in society. Similar findings were made by Courtenay et al (2000), when examining transformation among HIV/AIDS sufferers. Women in the present research experienced different phases of transformation, such that even within the same programme, some were transformed more than others. As part of transformation, many women were able to critically and rationally analyze their long taken-for-granted assumptions about women's inferior position both in the private and public level. While some B. Ed. women were ready to challenge systems of oppression both in the private and public spheres of live, women from other programmes had no courage to disturb the status quo. The TEE and Coop women in particular, were not as revolutionary as the B. Ed. students. The latter were ready to take action, first on their home front and then in the public. The findings have shown that although many women in this research described ways of taking action in their personal lives, very few reached the level of taking social action. However, the fact that they could plan to take action in their personal lives, was a good thing as it pointed to part of their development. This points to the need for further research investigating the ability of distance learning to lead to social action.

### **6.6.1 Intrapersonal Transformation**

#### **6.6.1.1 Confidence and Self esteem**

The findings of this research have established that indeed distance learning does lead to personal transformation for women learners. This was expressed in terms of increased confidence and self-esteem. The findings showed that once women who had lacked opportunities to learn manage to go back to study, their thinking about themselves changed. They appreciated themselves more and discovered their talents and potential, with the end result that their confidence and self esteem increased. They started to see themselves as people with abilities and self worth. For some, there was the acquisition of a more independent identity, whereby women learners in the B. Ed. programme, psychologically broke away from dependence on men for direction and guidance. This was directly counter to traditional norms, whereby a wife is expected to see herself wholly immersed in the husband so that all her life she remains invisible, something that is traditionally seen as a virtue.

Thus the minimum basic transformation for all the women is increased confidence and self esteem. The opportunity to study, in itself, increased women's confidence. Even those women doing first year of study testified to increased confidence. Even those with no face-to-face opportunities are still getting confident. Hence, the study process helps women to have confidence in themselves, whether there is provision of face-to-face interaction or not. Magdalene Mweru for instance, stated that studying the Coop course helped her reverse the doubts about her capabilities. In the same way, Abbey Gathendu of TEE, too, learned through the study, that she was normal and could perform as well as any other person. For B. Ed. students, just being in the university boosts women's ego. This was so because of the prestige associated with university education. Lydia Mwenge stated categorically that she joined the programme for prestige purposes since she was the only one in her maternal home who did not have a university degree. The B. Ed. women had acquired courage to speak in public and be articulate, both in the private and the public spheres. Thus the acquisition of confidence and self-esteem were part of the self-development that was gained by individual learners through distance learning. This leads me to hypothesize that even crude distance learning enables women to gain confidence and self esteem.

At the public level the ability to address huge gatherings and even to express oneself in public was seen as a new achievement. Even the fact that these women were able to study on their own and succeed, led to increased self-confidence. Mary Mutwa of the Coop programme thought she was a failure, but now she has come to realize that she is capable of succeeding just like any other person. For the TEE women the ability to preach in the church was seen as a sign of increased self- confidence and esteem. Thus for them, the increased confidence and knowledge was to be used in the service of the church and the community. For instance, Beatrice Ambandala stated that: *'this enables church to have many servants... all of us are servants... people see that you are capable.'* Similarly, for the Coop women, the acquired confidence and self esteem and knowledge is not for their selfish ends but to use to serve the community. Magdalene Mweru stated that: *'I am able to express myself in a better way and related with my customers in a more mature way'*. This shows that their priority for studying is to serve the community. This is unlike B. Ed. whose main aim is to acquire high status and be respected more as achievers. It is very rarely that B. Ed. students refer to service to community as a desirable product of their transformation.

Thus for the three groups, self-confidence and esteem is expressed in terms of opportunity to operate in the public sphere. Thompson (1997), too, has stated that once women are enabled, through study, to be visible in the public sphere, they gain confidence and self esteem.

#### ***6.6.1.2 Independent identity***

The findings of this research have shown that it was only the women in the B. Ed. programme who testified to having acquired new autonomy. Emily Munywoki stated that through the study she came to discover that *'I am an individual...'* This was in contrast to the prevailing assumption that women's identity is submerged in the identity of men. Traditionally, a woman is recognized as a daughter, wife and mother and so it was a real shift in thinking that led Emily and others to see themselves as independent individuals. This was a direct attack on prevalent socio-cultural beliefs. It was also a way of asserting themselves and showed that the study experience had instilled in them feelings of autonomy from culture and norms that bound them to a second class position in society. Newman (1993) refers to this discovery as 'self-knowledge'. This refers to a time when the learner comes to re-examine herself and realize that she had been living a lie, by accepting to be a second class citizen and decides to stand on her own and face the world as an autonomous individual. It is no wonder that Emily Munywoki states that *'...life is full with or without him.'* However, this is missing among the Coop and TEE students. The Coop course emphasizes cooperation between individuals so as to tackle different tasks easily. The lack of face-to-face opportunities for the Coop women limited them from experiencing the world outside the home. The church, too, tends to put emphasis on unity and oneness of church members and for these reasons there was no atmosphere for individualism and autonomy. At the same time, the church course upheld Biblical interpretations that place emphasis on women being inferior to men and so it was to be very difficult for TEE women to experience feelings of autonomy and independence.

#### ***6.6.1.3 Rediscovery of talents and potential***

In the process of self-knowledge, the women in this research reported a discovery of possession of great talents and potential which had lain unnoticed for a long time.

This experience was common across the three groups of women. Lilly Muli of the Coop programme thus likened her discovery to '*nikama nimeamka*' (it is like I have just woken up). Joyce Kamba of the B. Ed. course and Jessica Kianda of the Coop course both rediscovered the existence of these talents when they found out that they could combine different roles and still succeed. Taking on leadership roles was also given as a sign of existence of capabilities. Emily Munywoki was able to organize her study group well and this showed her that she had leadership skills. She was also able to play different roles in the church. Abbey Gathendu, too, had rediscovered her long lost capabilities. For her, one of the reasons for joining the programme was to check whether she was as clever as she used to be twenty years ago when she was in school. Once she re-entered education through the TEE programme, she was able to reassure herself that indeed she was capable and that she had a lot of talents which had lain unexploited for the long time that she was preoccupied with home chores, including raising children.

These findings led me to conclude that women's absence from the public arena overshadows their capabilities and that once they get an opportunity to study, all this changes. It also helped me to see the fact that distance learning is an important tool for righting the wrongs that have been committed against women through their continuing exclusion in the public arena. The process of studying itself was an ideal opportunity for awakening women's creativity. These findings further show that distance learning has a great potential in women's transformation and development.

## **6.6.2 Socio-cultural transformation**

### ***6.6.2.1 Identity as an African***

The findings showed that a few women in the B. Ed. programme experienced transformation in terms of appreciation of identity as an African. Joyce Kamba testified that she had started to appreciate things African, including dress, food and language. Lillian Odale, too, stated that she now has more appreciation for those who speak the English language with mother-tongue accent. Both women credited the study of African literature as the source of this new experience. The question that came to my mind is; how do these women appreciate African culture when it is the same culture that has subjected them to second class position and supports the

structures of subjugation? I could see a contradiction in this particular case. It is the same culture that provides the norms that place women in the inferior position and that gives the frames of reference that hinder women's advancement, either through study or social mobility. What they refer to as African culture may not be a reference to traditional culture as such, but the new nationalistic or pan-nationalistic bourgeois ideology that is prevalent among black middle class today. Indeed it is the urban elite who have gone through western education who talk of African culture in this narrow romantic sense because African culture is broader than dress, food and accent.

#### ***6.6.2.2 Reflection on culturally defined roles for women***

Many women in this research were able to reflect on social roles for married women. Jane Mbau of the Coop programme, was able to re-examine herself as a married woman and came to the conclusion that she could still be able to operate in the public sphere and succeed. Initially, she had the view that once she got married, that was the end of her ambition. However, her involvement in the distance learning programme for only three months changed her attitude. She realized that she could combine home chores with studying and succeed. Although she abandoned the course, some years later she was able to join a full time course at the Cooperative College of Kenya, a decision she reached due to the re-discovery of herself through the short period of distance learning experience. Lilly Muli, too, had all along believed that there were limited careers suitable for women, such as dressmaking and secretarial. Since she joined the distance learning programme she sees that women can perform other more rewarding and prestigious functions. Her old mentality was instilled in her through the socialization process, whereby as a woman, she was designated to fit into the less powerful and less prestigious jobs. Such typical thought forms have been transformed and as a result these women can see new opportunities. Jessie Kianda came to realize that the emphasis on gender role differences was based on wrong premise. Initially, she had believed in the superiority of men but when she took the course together with men, she came to see things differently. All this led me to conclude that distance learning can lead women to drop various assumptions, beliefs and norms that placed them in certain career brackets. The act of studying and doing so under challenging conditions leads women to realize that the two sexes have similar capabilities.

### **6.6.2.3 Social status**

This research has shown that once women distance learners experience intrapersonal changes in regard to increased self-esteem and confidence, discovery of talents and capabilities; and once they have acquired better interaction skills and more knowledge, the stage was set for them to be more visible in both private as well as public spheres of their lives, in that they were able to play more prestigious roles than before. The research has shown that the distance learning had a direct impact on the women's interpersonal relations and due to this they were able to be involved more in social activities.

In the private sphere, the findings showed that these women were respected and valued by their spouses more than before. It was clear from the findings that some of the spouses came to appreciate the wife's effort after realizing that the study had brought economic benefits and prestige to the family. Distance learning enabled these women to be highly esteemed and to acquire more positional power both in the domestic sphere. The stories of some of the B. Ed. women showed that the spouses' attitude changed and they were now involving their wives in decision-making more than before. Abbey Gathendu, a TEE student, had stated how her husband had started to see her differently in that he had realized that she was capable of organizing herself. Magdalene Mweru of the Coop programme, too, noted that her husband respected her and involved her more in family decisions.

In the public sphere, the B. Ed. women pointed out that distance learning had given them a new identity as university students (and upon completion as graduate teachers), both of which were positions of high status in the Kenyan society. The B. Ed. women held positions of responsibility upon completion of the course. Some had become school heads, while others had acquired new leadership opportunities in different social groups. The findings showed that Kivanguli, for instance, had become a crusader against female genital mutilation (FGM) among the Kisii community. She also doubles as a peer counselor in area of HIV/AIDS. Other women were able to occupy prestigious positions both at their places of work and the community. Some of the B. Ed. women stated that at the place of work their bosses and colleagues had started to regard them more highly than before. The TEE women, too, got opportunities for their social involvement in the community. These women valued the

new opportunities to preach. They pointed out that they were able to do so with confidence. Abbey Gathendu was able to preach without fear. Anne Njoya was able to give guidance and counselling to school children in the school that she taught. She did this during parade when the headmaster would call upon her to address the school. She had also attended workshops on HIV/AIDS. The TEE course had, therefore, given these women new openings to operate in positions of high status outside the home. Although there were no economic gains from TEE education, at least it raised these women above typical women in the church. The community where these women live regarded them more highly than before they took the course and due to this, they were able to receive more responsibilities. Thus distance learning has provided women with chance to develop a voice in the community. Faith (1988:15).), too, pointed out that through distance learning:

Those who have been denied their history on the bases of sex, race, class and other categories of suppression and subordination would stand strongly together on the new horizon. The ultimate and radical result would be the eradication of systemic and categorical power imbalances and a fuller development of human capacity for excellence.

Thus there was no doubt that study led to higher social status for these women.

### **6.6.3 Political Transformation**

The stories of some women distance learners showed that the hard lives that they lived as they studied had enabled them to see clearly that they lived in an unequal society, in which the pleasure and advancement of men was prioritised. The B. Ed. Students, in particular, faced opposition from different corners, including the family and the community. This experience acted as a catalyst for transformation, in that these women were able to reflect on their predicament and finally design ways of resistance. As students, one way of resistance was to leave the family chores unattended. Emily Munywoki would leave her windows un-cleaned until she completed her homework. Other cases were given, where some women decided to study in secret. Instead of direct confrontation with their spouses, these women decided to make their own arrangements to study. In any case, many of them needed the economic 'umbrella' that the husband provided and for this reason, they chose to do the study secretly. Thus studying in secret was in itself an indication that women

had recognized the importance of education to their economic and social emancipation and that they had realized that as long as they were excluded from education, they remained marginalized from key positions, both in the family and the larger society. The act of studying, therefore, played a great part in the transformation process.

Leaving the homestead to attend the residential sessions created a lot of complications for the B. Ed. women and the ability to manage under these circumstances itself became transformational in nature. Another transforming experience was the financial obstacles that many women in the B. Ed. programme faced. Male students could sell property in order to raise the fees. However, since women owned no property of their own, they experienced financial obstacles. This realization enabled the women to comprehend the dynamics of a patriarchal society, in which they occupied a junior position. Some decided to confront the situation and assert themselves by asking to be given what was rightfully theirs. At the family level, they demanded more recognition. They gained courage to negotiate with their spouses about issues of power in the home. Some insisted on being included in decision making in the home, such as buying of land and property. These are areas where exclusion of women is traditionally common, in that since traditionally women do not own property they are never included when issues related to property are being discussed. These women are saying that they should not be excluded from these forums, since they felt that they contributed greatly to family finance and, therefore, had to be part and parcel of the decisions that concern expenditure.

The Coop women, too, insisted on being part and parcel of family decisions. However, the TEE students did not have the bravery to insist on being included, rather they only stated that *'these days I see him consulting me on issues'*, meaning that these women waited to see whether they would be included or not. This is unlike the other two categories of women who go out and ask for it. For instance Magdalene Mweru of the Coop programme stated that: *'I have to be included,'* whereas, one of the women in the B. Ed. focus group stated that: *'since I chip in my money I have to be consulted on how the money is spent.'* (Esther Ochola). At the public level they wanted to educate their fellow women on the existing inequalities and the ways of combating them.

When they looked at the distribution of labour in the home, most women noticed unfairness. Both B. Ed. and Coop women had realized that there is unequal distribution. Jane Mbau stated that *'when you are doing correspondence course you are added more responsibilities to do. So after work you can see you have too much to do as a woman at a time when these men are just idle.'* In this case, it is the act of studying that has helped her to notice the unequal distribution of labour at the family level. Since women are socialized to do the chores without complaining, Jane's attitude can only be attributed to shifts in her thinking. Many of the B. Ed. and Coop women had the opinion that these duties *'should be shared.'* (Debora Kivanguli). However, many TEE women remained unchanged. Thus Mary Kavinya pointed out that *'women even under these heavy loads of responsibilities you have to survive. They have to struggle and get time to study'*. This shows that she has reached a level where she could see injustice in the way home chores were distributed, but, she did not see that this situation could be challenged and changed. This shows that although TEE study was well organized for face-to-face opportunities, it does not equip women with the ability to critique their world and to change it. The church programme, therefore, came out as a *'powerful protector of status quo'* (McDonald et al 1999: 13). Thus women in the TEE programme have to a large extent accepted the conditions under which they lived in the home sphere. Indeed many did not seem to be aware that they were what they were due to socio-cultural distortions. Some of them were not aware that such distortions existed.

Another realization that formed part of many women's transformation was the fact that women were excluded from holding positions of power in government, cooperative societies and the church. The B. Ed. women had noticed that even in parliament, there were very few women MPs. This meant that women's needs were not well articulated. Joyce Kamba wanted to complete her study and join politics so as to influence the Parliamentary decisions on the status of women. Women ministers and top executives were also few. The Coop women noted same inequalities in the cooperative movement. For Loise Muthinzi, distance learning had opened her eyes to see that in the cooperative management there were very few women occupying top positions and that *'every top position is held by men'*. Such an argument shows that even though the Coop course lacked a face-to-face component it still enabled women

to critique their environment and see the inequalities. Now that she had noticed the general exclusion, her solution to the problem was to encourage '*women to go back to school*' so that they could rise up the ladder. The issue arising from this suggestion is that since men enjoy the privileged position they occupy, how would they give these posts to women if the women do not take social action and demand what is rightfully theirs?

#### **6.6.4 Transformed women promoting social change**

McDonald et al (1990) has established that transformative learning 'is a journey and less of a decision at one point in time... shown to be a process including interaction with others as one learns how to apply new perspectives'. The findings of this research showed that once women distance learners experienced transformation, they now wanted to bring change in society by educating others about their rights and importance of going back to study. The Coop women wanted to educate other women on techniques of running cooperative societies successfully, on the importance of being self-reliant and independent from male power. Lilly Muli wanted to complete the Coop course and look for opportunities to pass her knowledge on to fellow women in the rural areas on initiating and managing co-operative societies. Women in the B. Ed. focus group wanted to go out and educate fellow women on the need to demand their rights. The TEE women wanted to use their newly acquired knowledge to assist those women who experienced problems. Rose Ngundo had testified that she uses her knowledge to help other women '*so that they feel more secure and show the women that they have a role to play in society.*'

In the private sphere, some women had already taken action against their low status. Emily Munywoki had started to challenge her husband's dominance. At the same time, the women had realized that children were socialized to perpetuate women's inferiority and for this reason, they had taken action to reverse the situation. Emily Munywoki had started to create changed environment in her home, by teaching her children about gender equality. She did this by teaching her son to do chores for himself instead of waiting for the sisters to do them for him. Deborah Kivanguli allows her daughters to put on trousers, something that is frowned upon by the community. In so doing, she wants to bring up her daughters with self esteem and self worth. Thus bringing up children differently was one of the actions women had taken.

## **6.7 Economic benefits**

International literature has shown that by giving women a second chance for education, distance learning gives women career and economic benefits (Kanwar & Taplins 2001). This further leads to women's emancipation from dependence on male partners and relatives for financial support. The present research has shown that only two programmes in this study gave women career benefits. The B. Ed. and the Coop course both led to economic empowerment and many women saw the course as a transition to higher economic opportunities. For instance, upon registering for the B. Ed. course, Joyce Kamba received promotion to a primary school headmistress and she hoped that she would get higher promotions when she completes the course. Mary Mutwa from the Coop course, too, received many promotions since she completed the course. Magdalene Mweru received a salary increment when she completed her Coop course. Others who were still doing the two courses had great hopes of getting promotion or new jobs. Such promotions would then lead to improved lifestyles. That is why Florence Mukasa and Emily Munywoki hoped that once they completed the course, they would buy their own cars instead of relying on their husbands. I saw this as a sign that economic empowerment through distance learning has a role to play in women's transformation as it boosts their autonomy and independence from reliance on their spouses.

However, as the research findings have shown, the TEE course did not lead to economic empowerment for its students, especially the women. Naturally, its logic is not geared to economic benefits as its rationale is to prepare people who are already salaried elsewhere to run churches and in this way, relieve the church of the financial burdens of keeping paid clergy.

Since its inception, distance learning has received opposition from academics who argued that, 'no teaching or learning could take place outside the confines of the classroom' (Inquai 1994:9). Whereas educators in secular institutions are slowly changing their opinion on distance learning, many residential theological educators have continued to see TEE as inferior to residential education. This is especially so in the Kenyan context, where TEE has been isolated from residential theological

education. This is unlike Southern African, where a Joint Board validates all theological curricula, whether based on residential or distance learning modes (TEE College 2004).

As the research findings have shown, when the church wants to hire new employees, formally, it sources from the residential theological institutions and male TEE graduates. The TEE women students recommended the recognition of TEE education as a genuine equivalent of residential education. They argued that since they studied similar content, though using different methods, their education should be equated with those trained in the traditional format, so that they could access employment opportunities within the church departments. This would boost their morale, especially since they studied under difficult conditions, by combining studies with other chores both in the home and, for some, the work place. If the church implemented this recommendation then many women would reap economic benefits from their education since they form the greatest percentage in TEE courses. This would also assist in their transformation. Otherwise, as it is, the course leads women nowhere in terms of economic empowerment. My observation shows that many TEE programmes are in conversation with residential theological institutions on the issue of the latter accrediting the former. This process may take a long time since theological educators in the two programmes have worked independently in Kenya. The TEE managers feel threatened by residential institutions, in that they think that the latter would swallow their initiatives and due to their low academic qualifications, they feel that they may not be accepted as part of the faculty once TEE has been incorporated into the mainstream residential colleges. At the same time, the residential institutions have always held the opinion that TEE is inferior to residential education and incorporating it would lead to lowering standards of educations at the institutions. This kind of stand off is not new in distance education as the literature shows that for a long time the academy has doubted the quality of distance education (Mugridge 1994, Inquai 1994). Such a stand limits the economic chances for women to climb economic ladders through TEE, since the gender role expectations do not permit many of them to join residential theological colleges and seminaries.

As stated earlier, TEE is not designed for economic benefits and the students who join it know very well that there are no financial benefits from it. For this reason the much

that can be done is to bring into TEE transferability of certificates into residential theological colleges so that the few TEE students who would like to join residential colleges are facilitated to do so with ease.

## **6.8 Barriers to transformation**

This research has shown that certain conditions act as barriers to the whole process of transformation for women distance learners. Topping this list is the non-feminist pedagogy that is used in the delivery of distance learning courses. Since distance learning involves the study of pre-prepared texts, the language and style used in the construction of these materials would have a far reaching effect on whether the learners get transformed. Research has shown that women are invisible in the study materials (Faith 1988, Matiru & Gachui 1988, Kirkup & Prummer 1990, Dighe 1998). The lack of face-to-face opportunities for Coop women is a further barrier to these women's transformation. Marginalization of women in the management of distance learning programmes has also had a negative impact on women's motivation in that it denied them role models whom to emulate.

### **6.8.1 Non-feminist pedagogy**

#### ***6.8.1.1 Invisibility of women in & male construction of, study materials***

The literature review and the findings of this research have shown that the invisibility of women in the course materials impacts negatively on women's development through distance learning. Since distance learning relies heavily on study materials the way they are constructed and structured influences the learners' psychological development. The findings has shown that the materials used in the three programmes lack women role models in the text, and this impairs women's ability to achieve high levels of transformation. Although my study does not focus on the content analysis of the distance study materials, its findings echo the arguments established in the literature review. What is coming out clearly in the literature and my research findings is that distance study materials are biased and emphasize the distorted cultural stereotypes about women and their capabilities. This would hinder complete perspective transformation in the lives of women distance learners. For distance learning to be a proper site for women's struggle against subordination, there has to

be consciously created materials that depict women positively and that empower them to right the wrongs committed against their advancement and self-actualization.

#### ***6.8.1.2 Lack of courses on women***

Internationally, women distance educators have come together and designed courses that are basically focusing on women issues. For instance, the British Open University women academics came together and designed the course on 'Women in Technology' (Faith 1988). Other ventures in this area have happened in TEE College and the University of South Africa, (UNISA), both of them in South Africa. In these two institutions courses have been designed to tackle women's issues such as Women and Religion, Women's Health, Feminist Media Studies, The Classics and Women Studies, among others (UNISA 2004). Such a move is meant to bring out women's issues from under the tables of academia, where they have been for a long time and to make them visible in the public arena and also to prove to the world that women studies are as important as any other field of study. Such an initiative has not taken place in the Kenyan distance education scene. My examination of the curricula for the three institutions showed that none of the three programmes offered courses on women's studies. Kenya does not yet have courses on women's literature, women's history, women and the Internet, women and art, women and cooperative movement, women and science, women and culture, etc. Distance programmes in Kenya have made little progress in incorporating courses that are women inclusive. Rarely do they encourage the study of literature that is written by women or, in the case of TEE, the study of churches that are founded and administered by women. The OAIC churches in particular have many examples of indigenous churches that were founded by women and still continue to be headed by women; called by the terms 'Prophetess', 'Mothers', 'Sisters', etc. Such omissions are products of male control of both curriculum and materials development for distance learning programmes and have to be countered if these materials are to be used as tools of transformation for women distance learners.

Both the B. Ed. and Coop programmes had not designed specific courses addressing women's issues. This was basically because women have been excluded from management positions in the day to day operation of these programmes. However, some TEE programmes have produced some courses on women, such as, Women in

the Old Testament and Women and the New Testament, which are both offered by the OAIC TEE. However, these courses are constructed by men and so they perpetuate male perspectives about women and uphold the status quo. The church has continued to rely on theologies that are male constructed and uphold women's subjugation. The absence of such type of courses has continued to perpetuate patriarchal hegemony. It also means that there are no forums where women issues are emphasised. There is, therefore, need to have female writers and curriculum developers of distance materials who would ensure that women's study materials are not alien to their worldviews and their needs. The problem is that even if there are many women writers and curriculum designers, as long as their consciousness has not been raised, then there is not much hope for the construction of gendered distance learning materials, that is, materials that would lead the women learners to challenge their subservient position in society. Therefore, the starting point is that women academics in these institutions must undergo transformation first, in order to release themselves from the bondage of cultural norms and expectations and then they would be able to create programmes and develop materials that can act as a 'subversive force', leading women to question their low status in society and take action against their oppression, socially, economically and culturally (Howarth 1991:2). Socially such courses need to lead women to more transformation so as to challenge patriarchal structures that block them from leading full lives, not only in the home front but also in the public sphere of their lives. Such materials would lead women to gain critical consciousness about their social environment and be able to question the structures that block them from advancing themselves and exploiting their potential (Faith 1988). This means that if any meaningful transformation is to take place in the lives of women distance learners then we need to have a critical resource of women as materials and curriculum developers.

There is therefore, need for Kenya distance educators to initiate and implement courses that are empowering to women and that emphasis their vital role in societal development. Distance educators should promote women's studies courses. However, care should be taken so that in the process of incorporation of these courses, we avoid stereotypical courses, such as child-care and home science, as they enhance normative attitudes about women (Howarth, 1991). Distance educators need to play the role of political actors by consciously creating courses and establishing support services that

lead to transforming Kenyan society's attitude to women and that enable women to play a greater role in their own emancipation from socio-cultural and economic fetters. This would lead women learners to not only experience mental shifts, but also to translate these shifts into reality through questioning and taking action on the socio-cultural structures that have relegated them to a second class citizen position in society.

#### ***6.8.1.3 Lack of in-build face- to- face opportunities for Coop women***

The literature review has shown that although distance learning has opened access to education for many women, it combines with traditional gender roles and expectations to confine women to the home (Faith 1988, Howarth, 1991). This becomes particularly so in programmes that use print as a stand-alone medium. Carl (1988) has stressed the need for distance educators to organize distance programmes in such a way that some learning is done in the company of others, in order to cater for women's learning needs. The findings have shown that lack of face-to-face interaction blocked women from completing their course and also from transformation. The story of Jane Mbau showed that due to lack of support and feedback from the institution, coupled with the many home and job related chores she had to combine with the study, she had to quit the course after studying for only three months. Magdalene Mweru further stated that the chance for students to meet together would have enabled the students to know that '*I am not alone in the struggle.*'

By using print alone, the Coop course supports 'the ghettoization of women confined to the home' (Carl 1988). Students are left alone to struggle in a lonely environment. Thus this practice blocks learners from holding dialogue among themselves and sharing their experiences of exclusion and marginalization, a process that leads to perspective transformation. The findings of this research showed that the B. Ed. and many TEE women exploited the opportunity provided by the face-to-face sessions to cross fertilize each other's experiences and by so doing, understand the dynamics of a sexist society and be able to take action about their low position. In particular, the B. Ed. women mentioned how they had come to see the world differently after going through the process of sharing experience. When students accomplish some part of the course work outside the home and in the company of others, each of them acts as a resource for further learning and development (Carl, 1988). One of the conditions that

Mezirow gave as ideal for transformation was 'the ability to reason argumentatively ...and to argue logically from the evidence' (1989:171). Such a condition would only be applicable in distance learning provision with face-to-face interaction.

Thus the lack of interaction led to feelings of isolation and loneliness among the Coop women as chances for peer learning were eliminated. This programme was not gender sensitive at all, as it followed strictly the philosophy of distance education as an independent study which was postulated by Wedemeyer (1988) and Moore (1988), where the student is left alone to interact with the materials. The literature review showed that women distance educators have already claimed that this philosophy is male-centred since research shows that women prefer to study in social environments (Carl 1988, Kirkup & Plummer 1990, Dighe 1998). The lack of face-to-face interactions for Coop women curtailed their ability to experience transformation. Women in this programme were disadvantaged and were crying out for change in the delivery methods so that they could be able to interact, not only with their peers but also with tutors. The focus group stated that they wanted to be invited, like any other students, to attend the graduation ceremony so that they could come into contact with the institution. Others recommended the creation of a magazine that would at least keep the isolated student abreast with news about their fellow students and the struggles they were going through. Such a magazine would also announce the important news from the college, like examination dates and new courses that may have been developed.

The creation of face-to-face opportunities for Coop women would go a long way toward incorporating women-sensitive methods in distance learning. Interaction among students would empower women and by so doing, enable them to question, challenge and take action against the structures that bind them as second class citizens. Creation of such opportunities for interaction would ensure that a pedagogy that takes into consideration women's experience and uses methods, such as life history and role play, would lead to women's empowerment. Such methods and learning styles can only be implemented in a distance learning programme with a face-to-face component. Hence, distance educators in the Coop course need to not only incorporate learner-centred, but also woman-centred approaches that result in real transformative experiences. Such face-to-face opportunities would be ideal places

to utilise a Freirean format of education whose aim would be 'conscientization' that would further lead to resistance and struggle (Freire & Faundez 1989, Burge & Lenksj 1990). Female distance educators have a role to play in helping in the establishment of feminist networks through which women could learn together and play more significant roles in the construction of knowledge and provision of support services for women learners. Such networks would go a long way in humanizing the Coop course and in meeting the learning needs of women.

### **6.8.2 Marginalization of women in management of programmes**

Marginalization of women in the most significant forums in the administration and management of distance programmes means that male constructed knowledge is passed on to the women learners, leading to further exclusion. Women play the role of tutors and part time tutors but they are not involved in decision-making. Thompson (1997), examined adult education in England and noted that women's 'assumptions and experiences are constructed within a context of male values, male definitions and male authority and are then generalized to represent human assumptions and experiences and credited with universal validity and objective truth' (p.44). She further stated that:

So long as the opinion leaders and policy makers in adult education continue to describe the world as though women don't exist, or to associate women simply with domesticity and child rearing, adult education will continue to reinforce inequality between the sexes to the long term detriment of both men and women.

Observation shows that in the B. Ed. programme there were a few token women at the level of material developers and administrators. But this also reflects the fact that the percentage of male lecturers at the university level is higher than that of women. The male top managers do not make a conscious effort to appoint women Principals, heads of departments and directors of schools, in order to bring equity into the management. For instance, recently when the female Principal and the Deputy Vice Chancellor retired, their positions were filled with male colleagues, a situation that led to further marginalization of women from top management positions. The same trend was noticed in the Coop course where only three out of ten materials developers were women. A similar situation was found in the TEE course. Although TEE has a

majority of women students, women have been marginalized from the most significant decision-making forums. Men decide on the TEE curriculum, develop the materials and make the day-to day decisions on running TEE. Thompson (1997) noted the same trend when she examined adult education in England. Her research discovered that, although 'adult education is of course the only sector of education system in which women as students constitute a significant majority', senior positions such as 'tutor-organizer... university lecturer level... and advisory level, are predominantly held by men' (p.15). This trend is persisting in the Kenyan distance programmes, and for this reason, women learners lack women role models for inspiration. This situation leads to further psychological marginalization and exclusion of women. For distance learning to become a tool for transformation, there is a need for more female involvement in important decision-making forums including curriculum development and implementation, material development and programme management. This would provide women learners with role models to emulate.

### **6.8.3 Power: socio-cultural norms and values**

The literature review showed that, socio-cultural factors have continued to block women from re-entering mainstream education, in that cultural norms have continued to confine women to the home, where they are overburdened by domestic and caring roles (Parr 1998; Kanwar & Taplin 2001; Evans 1995). The findings of this research show that, through socialization, Kenyan women are taught from very early age to accept their place in society and serve men (Kibiti 2002, Ekeya 1994). Njoroge (2000) has shown that due to the long experience of violence in their lives, Kenyan women have found themselves with destroyed dignity and self-esteem. This has meant that women have to rely on truth about them that is formulated by others, which is normally distorted. Such dependence on others interferes with women's ability to think critically and act in their social life.

The findings of this research have shown that women who manage to experience perspective transformation live in great risk of isolation from the society they live in. They are given all sorts of names and so they decide to live on their own. Some B. Ed. women recounted how they had lost friends after re-entering mainstream education and were now living isolated lives. They were viewed as proud and anti-social. In the

TEE group there was one single case of Abbey Gathendu, who had problems with her neighbours in that they could not understand why she was involved in study when she was just a housewife. In any case, they argued that TEE did not yield any financial gains. Otherwise the other TEE women had little problems if any. In any case, many people appreciated the TEE course, simply because it was seen as a 'good' course for women, since it upheld the status quo in society, teaching women how to be good and obedient wives. Theological education in Kenya has continued to uphold the traditional belief in the superiority of men. Rarely do Kenyan churches support feminist theology, a theology that seeks to support the dignity of women. In its teachings, the church continues to argue for male dominance, by emphasizing that men are heads and women should just follow. Such teachings have reinforced the cultural norms and by so doing, have colluded with culture to marginalize women further.

When surrounded by a society that believes in the supremacy of men and the inferiority of women, it was very difficult for many distance learners to experience meaningful shifts in consciousness. Women felt inadequate due to the many years of subjugation and due to this; many of them were not able to experience conflict that results from the awareness of contradictions in one's thoughts or feelings, leading to critical reflection on assumptions (Tennant 1993; Mezirow 1989). If women do not reach a point where they realize that they had become distorted selves, then no transformation would occur. Cultural norms and values are so entrenched in people's lives that to break from this bondage it requires a consciously designed feminist political education, both in content and methods.

The issue of women's lower status in the family set up and in the wider society further complicated matters for women. Many B. Ed. women were not able to attend residential sessions due to their gender role related constraints and also their lower status in society. They had to rely on their spouses' goodwill to get permission to be away from the home in order to attend the residential. They also needed to have another female willing to take care of the children as they attended the residential sessions. The findings showed that some women had to carry their children to their maternal homes, where their parents who tended to be more sympathetic to their course, would be willing to remain with the children as the mother went for

residential studies. Esther Ochola, who was a widowed woman, had to look for someone to leave with her children as she went for residential classes. The findings also showed that some women attended secretly, especially when they realized that their husbands were against their study. Of course if a wife had got no financial resources of her own, then she would not be able to attend even in secret.

Some of the learning stories also showed that some women were scared that their husbands could easily end up 'getting married' by the time they came back from residential learning, since some of the in-laws pushed the men to do so, in order to get a wife who did not have educational ambitions. What we are seeing is a situation where, although the residential sessions are important to women's learning, they are also creating problems for many of them. All these problems constrained the open access that distance learning is purported to offer to women. Thus women were expected to conform to gender role expectations and once these roles were not performed, then the equilibrium at home was disturbed. Hence, there was conflict between the private and the public spheres of women's lives. At the same time, the society's negative attitude to women's education further created a negative environment for women returnees to higher education. To succeed as a student one had to break through the many barriers that stood in the way.

However, the TEE and the Coop courses were seen as safe avenues for women as they were not seen as threatening the status quo as the B. Ed. course. This is related to the fact that the Kenyan society for a long time has associated university education for women with rebellion. Observation shows that many men shy away from marrying university graduates as they are said to be rude and always questioning man's position in the home. Indeed Kenyan society plays double standards when it comes to women's education. Young women university students are always threatened that by going to university they minimize their chances of getting married and since women are brought up to think marriage is a priority in life, some of them refuse to venture into university education. Many Kenyan men prefer to marry primary school teachers as they are said to be polite and hard working. Therefore, with this kind of attitude toward university education for women, Kenyan society and especially the spouses, were not supportive of their wives who wanted to venture into university education. This is why one of the women in the focus group pointed out that:

*You know when I was courting my husband he used to say, 'you know I always wanted to marry a P1 (Primary Teacher 1). So he did not know that I wanted to go back to school ... I did not tell him the secret that deep in my heart I wanted to go to the university. So after we got married three weeks ago he started saying, 'now I thought I will keep a P1 in my house, it seems I will have a graduate very soon'... by the way he is a graduate from Kenyatta University. (Focus group, Lucy Nguli).*

Even when they join the university many women tend to avoid science subjects such as chemistry, biology, engineering and medicine since they are brought up to think these are male courses (Matiru & Gachuhi 1988, Muita 1999). The women in this research associated this tendency with the kind of socialization that they had gone through. Florence Mukasa, for instance, insisted that it is men who make women fear and avoid science.

Distance educators have pointed out that through distance learning the educational inequality between men and women is minimized (Dodds 1994, Inquai 1994). However, the findings of this research have shown that women students do not find it easy to register and complete their studies. The research has shown the many obstacles that block women from successful completion and noted that it is only those who are highly motivated who manage to complete their studies. The stories of these women showed that women have got many more hurdles to overcome in order to succeed as distance students, mainly due to the power arrangement and cultural norms and values. Since they occupy lower status than men they find themselves at the mercy of men and so they have to rely on men's good will to get the fees, and permission to attend residential sessions. It came out clearly that some of the women were not able to continue with their studies because of lack of support from their spouses and in laws.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the main issues that arose from the research findings. A comparative analysis of the programmes and the biographies was given. This was followed by an examination of the different forms of provision and their ability to

lead to transformation. It has shown that distance learning can lead to transformational learning; however, learners experienced different levels of transformation. These differences were attributed to the forms and nature of provision that are used, prior education, and the environment under which a particular course was administered. Other barriers to transformation included marginalization of women in the management of the programmes and the socio-cultural norms that paralyse women's ability to reflect on their lives. The next chapter pulls together the issues that have emerged in this thesis and suggests recommendations and issues for further research.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This research set out to investigate the ability of distance learning to transform women learners in Kenya using Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1996). Biographical methods of data collection supplemented by focus group, observation, and documentary evidence were used to address the key questions of this research. The main objectives of the research were firstly, to examine how women's participation in distance learning leads to their transformation, in terms of its effects on their views about themselves and their subordinate position in society. Secondly, to identify the kind of obstacles that women encounter as they study and how they overcome them in order to succeed as distance learners. Thirdly, to establish the socio-economic implications of distance learning for women's lives. Fourthly, to look at the recommendations and practical suggestions that women give for improvement of distance learning so as to make it more responsive to women's needs. This chapter is a consolidation of the major findings of the research. It also presents the recommendations that have emerged from the study.

#### **7.2 Distance Learning and women's transformation**

From a study of three different programmes, the research found that distance learning leads to women's perspective transformation, though not uniformly. This transformation was evident at four levels of women's lives: intrapersonal, interpersonal, changed worldview, and ability to take action. At the intrapersonal level, the research findings show that all the women from the three distance learning programmes studied achieved new self-perceptions, in terms of increased self-esteem and confidence. A few of them had acquired autonomy from reliance on their male and society's given identity. Many women testified that the study had enabled them to discover their own talents and capabilities. Interpersonal transformation was evident through women's ability to play more important roles in the public spheres of their lives and freely interact with other people. Many women also developed new

perspectives to the world around them relating to women's position in society. Some of them were able to reach the level of taking action individually, which is the final stage in Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1990b, 1991, 1996). From this, women are pressing forward to have their presence felt and their voice heard both in the private and public arenas of their lives. At the private level, women seemed to be girding themselves to challenge patriarchy by agitating to participate more in family decision-making. At the public level they are countering oppressive tendencies in the work place and the community, especially by beating all odds to attend distance learning programmes. Therefore, although none of the three programmes has the objective of consciousness raising, there were women who were transformed through the study. The act of studying itself and the fact that women had to overcome a wide range of obstacles in order to succeed are all evidence of transformation.

However, as evident from the discussions reported in this thesis, women from the three programmes experienced each of these levels of transformation differently. Some of the women experienced minimum transformation, particularly, those on the TEE and Coop programmes. The curriculum for the TEE programme tends to reinforce and encourage the present gender stereotypes in society and the church through Bible and church teachings. The TEE women were taught to accept and uphold the current subservient position of women in society and the gender role specification. The Coop women on the other hand, were affected by the structure of their distance learning programme, which does not have face-to-face sessions responsible for much transformation experienced by the B. Ed. women.

I can, therefore, conclude that the forms of provision influenced the level of transformation that women underwent. The women that were exposed to a distance learning programme with face-to-face component emerged with highest levels of transformation; unfortunately the TEE women are not achieving this because of their curriculum, which counters the transforming effect of this learning interaction. It was, therefore, not a surprise that this is the very arrangement, which caused the B. Ed. women a lot of tension at the family and work places. This shows that that the forces against women's transformation are strong, especially the factors which make it difficult for women to participate in the face-to-face sessions.

### **7.3 Obstacles to women's participation and coping strategies**

Although distance learning leads to women's transformation, this would have been much more effective had it not been for barriers which limit women's participation and, therefore, their full transformation through distance learning. The barriers were mainly originating from socio-cultural attitudes to women's education and programme-related barriers. Socio-cultural attitudes refer to barriers related to family responsibilities and the negative social attitudes towards women's education. Programme-related barriers includes women-unfriendly facilities (e.g. lack of crèche facilities for mothers), venue arrangement (e.g. shifting venues), and materials (sexist learning materials); programmes without accreditation like TEE, and without face-to-face arrangement like the Coop programme.

### **7.4 Economic implications of the study on women's lives**

The expectation and eventual attainment of improved economic status was one of the key factors which encouraged women to overcome all barriers in order to participate in distance learning programmes, particularly the B. Ed. and the Coop programmes enabled women to attain economic advancement. For example, some of the B. Ed. and Coop women had received promotion, which was accompanied by salary increments. Those who had just joined the programme hoped that once they completed their studies, they would receive promotions or even change jobs and join private schools, which paid higher than the government schools. Those in the library services hoped to change their career for the better. All these led further to changed lifestyles and improved living standards, both for the women learners themselves and their families. This also helped to support the transformational process which women were achieving through their participation in distance learning.

It was only the TEE programme whose logic was not based on career development and economic gain. The women learners themselves knew that TEE did not have economic benefits to them. However, they were not comfortable with the present arrangement and recommended for the creation of paid job opportunities for TEE graduates. This could also account for the limited transformative influence noticed in this programme.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings and conclusion of this research, the following recommendations are being put forward. Some of these recommendations were presented by the women themselves and supported by the findings reported in this thesis. These recommendations go a long way in suggesting improvement of distance learning offerings for Kenyan women that would lead to perspective transformation

### **7.5 Creation of more distance learning programmes**

Since the findings show that distance learning may lead to women's transformation, it is recommended that more distance learning programmes should be created in order to increase learning opportunities for women.

To support women's transformation these programmes could include women studies courses to help expose women to other successful women, not only in distance learning, but also in other fields. This is because most women reported that seeing or hearing about other successful women was one of the factors responsible for their perspective transformation. Such programmes could deal with issues that address women's needs and that show them successful stories about women who have challenged patriarchy.

Since the findings showed that women with high levels of prior education exhibited the highest levels of transformation, it is recommended here that some of these programmes should be bridging courses which would increase women's knowledge.

### **7.6 Creation and strengthening of in-built face-to-face interaction**

The centrality of face-to-face opportunities in the transformation of women distance learners was highlighted in the research. Therefore, the provision of such opportunities, in the Coop programme and the strengthening of the existing ones in the B. Ed. and TEE programmes would go a long way in creating a conducive environment for women distance learners. Women-sensitive distance learning would include elements that give support to women, bearing in mind the many obstacles that they have to overcome in order to succeed. These programmes would need to have in-built face-to-face support in order to avoid a situation where a segregated form of distance learning makes the home a 'ghetto' for women (Carl 1988). Face-to-face

opportunities would, therefore, 'provide the opportunity for women to meet, to generate their own knowledge and to become their own teachers' and in the process 'check their experience with each other and begin to name the feelings honestly which get in the way of growth and autonomy', (Thompson 1997: 37). Thus the creation of meeting opportunities and expansion of the existing ones would be a key to women's emancipation through distance learning. Therefore, for the Coop programme to be responsive to women learning needs, it has to create face-to-face opportunities in its programme. Distance educators have to think of rearranging these face-to-face meetings in a friendlier manner, making sure that learners play a greater role in the planning stage of the face-to-face meetings.

### **7.7 Encourage more women to take up distance learning programmes**

This can be done through publicising the existing distance learning programmes in all parts of Kenya, including rural areas. This is important because the findings show that even information about the existence of learning opportunities through distance learning was itself transforming. Women reported that they felt excited and relieved when they realised that there were options that fitted the arrangement of their present lives. It enabled them to realise that they could study in spite of their responsibilities. There is, therefore, a need to have an aggressive campaign strategy to disseminate information to all cadres of society about the flexibility of distance learning. The Coop programme, in particular, should be popularised.

### **7.8 Help women overcome barriers to their participation in distance learning**

To overcome the barriers that block women's participation in and transformation through distance learning, the following recommendations are made.

#### **7.8.1 Creation of women-inclusive study materials**

To overcome the problem of sexist distance learning materials, which promote the existing gender stereotypes in society, all the distance learning materials should be revised and new ones developed in order to encourage more inclusive and gender balanced study materials that would promote women's transformation. For example, in the Coop course, a module on entrepreneurship could draw examples with

conscious reference to women, so as to bring in their visibility in the text. Courses dealing with the role of women in the co-operative movement would also be ideal.

#### **7.8.2 Programme fees**

To address the problem of fees, which limits women's participation in distance learning programmes, it is recommended that the institutions offering distance learning programmes should provide scholarships, bursaries and loans. As the learners have recommended, this should involve women academics in these institutions lobbying for funds from both local and international non-governmental institutions that are sympathetic to women's cause.

#### **7.8.3 Creation of women-friendly facilities**

To make distance learning more accommodative to women's needs, there is need for the creation of women-friendly facilities at the residential centres, such as crèche and kitchen facilities for the mothers who bring their small babies with them. There is also need to avail extra accommodation facilities for the mothers who bring child-minders to the residential centres.

#### **7.8.4 Sensitise men and the community about the importance of women's education**

Since many women, especially in the B. Ed. programme, lacked support from their spouses and the community, it is important to sensitise men and the community about the value of mature women's education and show them how giving support to women learners is important. This could be done by the distance teaching institutions sending out its staff to local centres to hold open air meetings, with the assistance of the chief and show the community how women's education could benefit the family and community. This campaign would be more effective if female academics were involved in it since they would be role models. Their presence would show the community that women can also succeed in the public arena and through this effort, change their negative attitudes to mature women's education. These opportunities could be used to encourage Kenyan men to take care of the domestic chores as women go back to study and in this way, they would be playing an important role in the emancipation process of women.

## **7.9 Recognition of TEE Certificates**

This research has already highlighted the fact that in its present format, TEE is not recognised by residential theological colleges and other training institutions, reducing the women learners' self esteem and hence, impacting negatively on their transformation. TEE certificates should be recognised in theological seminaries and other learning institutions in Kenya. The TEE graduates should be allowed transfer of credit to residential theological institutions so that when they decide to join these colleges they do not need to start from the basics, just like those who have no theological education.

## **7.10 Further research**

### **7.10.1 Longitudinal studies**

As noted in the thesis, this research could not trace the individual distance learners from before they joined the programme, during the programme and after the programme due to the time limitations placed by the requirements of a PhD research. A similar study can, therefore, be done using the longitudinal approach, following a few women from before they joined the programme to the time they complete their studies.

### **7.10.2 The transformational abilities of one single programme**

From the study of the three different programmes, the research from these three revealed that certain aspects of distance learning, like face-to-face sessions, contributed much more to women's transformation. This motivates a detailed study of one programme to identify the transformative effects of specific components of the programme, e.g. study materials, face-to-face arrangement, newsletter and other forms of support.

### **7.10.3 Socio-political transformation**

Since the objectives of this research and the operational definitions of the term transformation limited its scope to personal and individual transformation, other research could be carried out to examine broader social and political transformation in the lives of women distance learners.

#### **7.10.4 The impact of the research process**

Also, it would also be interesting to investigate the impact of the interview process on women's perspectives. Did it trigger further transformation and action?

### **PERSONAL CLOSURE**

It is difficult for me to bring this discussion to a closure without putting in my personal feelings. I would like to state that it was indeed a great honour for me to listen to women's learning experiences and to study their transformation through distance learning. This field experience was the most exciting moment for me in this research. I was personally highly inspired by the stories and uplifted by the efforts and strength women put to study under the harsh conditions, in which they find themselves. The fact that I had personally participated in a distance learning programme created an opportunity for a shared dialogue between us. It was very revealing and fulfilling to realise that women distance learners in Kenya experience similar problems and achievements, regardless of their level of programme of study and background.

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## APPENDIX A

### BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Title: An Exploration of Women's Transformation through Distance Learning in Kenya.**

#### *Introduction*

I introduce myself and explain the objectives of the research; give the respondent assurance that identities would remain anonymous.

#### *Part 1: Experiences as a Distance Learner*

1.
  - A. Describe the events that led you to join this distance learning programme.
  - B. Why did you join the course?
  - C. How was life like before and after joining the course?
  - D. What did you have to forgo in order to join and continue studying?
2.
  - A. What are your views on distance learning?
  - B. It is often argued that distance learning adds more burdens to women. What are your views on this?
  - C. Describe your study format: how you managed to combine with other responsibilities.
  - D. Describe your study environment: the kind of study facilities that you have/had?
3. How did the following people feel and react when you decided to join the course?
  - Spouse
  - Children,
  - In-laws
  - Community

#### *Part 2: Transformation- changes that have occurred through distance learning*

4. How has this course changed the way you think about your self as a woman?
  - Confidence, self-worth/self-esteem
  - Ability to play public roles such as leadership positions in co-operative societies, neighborhood associations, religious organizations
  - Organizational skills
  - Manners, attitudes, values
  - Child rearing practices

- How has the course helped you to re-discover things in your life that you do not like?
6. What economic changes have occurred to you after joining/completing the course?
    - Any new promotion
    - New job
    - Hopes for new job etc
    - Buying power
    - Changed life styles
    - Control over your finances and other family resources
    - Having a say on family budgeting, expenditure and investment
  7. What do you see as crucial issues between men and women in our society?
    - Your views on position and treatment of women in society
    - Most serious problems facing women in your community
    - Your views on abusive relationships
    - Your views on domestic chores
    - Your views on the way most men treat their in-laws vs. the way they treat their own parents and siblings
  8. What are your views on women getting involved in politics?
    - Views on Charity Ngilu, Beth Mugo and others
    - Men's views on these women

***Part 3: Recommendations***

9. What advice would you give other women who want to embark on distance learning?
10. Suggest changes that need to be put in place to enable more women complete their studies successfully. Changes at:
  - Family level
  - Institution level
  - Community level
  - Government level

## **APPENDIX B**

### **GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

#### Introduction

My name is Lucy Kasyoka Kithome. I am a student at the University of Natal in South Africa. I take this opportunity to welcome you to this focus group discussion. We are here to talk about the experiences and the transformation process of women students taking distance learning courses. The purpose of carrying out this research is first and foremost to let the world know the kind of experiences and obstacles that you, as women distance learners, go through. The recommendations that you give in this discussion will enlighten distance educators so as they could think of ways of making distance learning more women-friendly.

Tell us your name, where you come from, what you do, when you joined the course, and generally, anything else you would like us to know about yourself.

#### Part 1: Experiences as distance learners

1 Take a few minutes and think about your situation as distance learners and tell us;

Why did you join the distance learning programme?

Why distance learning and not any other method? Is it really the best for women?

Who has an easier time: a man studying through distance learning or a woman and why?

What difficulties do you encounter as you study?

How do you manage to balance the demands of studying, with family and job?

What factors do you think block you from completing the programme?

What is the most challenging/discouraging thing about distance learning? What about the most interesting/encouraging thing?

## Part Two: Transformation (change) Through Distance Learning

Tell me the kind of changes that occur to women's lives after taking a distance learning course? Confidence, self-worth/self-esteem, able to play public roles such as leadership position in co-operative societies, neighbourhood associations, self-help groups, religious organization, able to participate in meetings, decision-making forums and social gatherings

5 What economic benefit do women get after doing distance learning?

Probes

Promotion

New jobs

Better control of their finances

More say in family budgeting

6 After doing the distance programme, how do you see the position of women in your community? How did you see this before?

7 What do you dislike most about the treatment of women by the society?

8 In which ways has this course assisted you to reflect on the situation of women in society?

9 The crucial issues between men and women

What would you do if you found yourself being beaten/insulted/ harassed by your spouse/his family/ community?

How has this course influenced your view on such a situation?

In which ways can you say that you are able to take charge of your life as a woman?

Who should manage family resources? Why?

Who should make decisions about investments at the family level and why?

Who should benefit from the sale of cash and food crops and animals at the family level and why?

What are some of the injustices that you have seen committed against women?

How should the situation be changed?

10 what are the most serious problems that face women in your community?

How can these problems be solved?

What do you think could be the role of distance learning in alleviating these problems?

Are there problems a woman may encounter if she leads her husband in studying?

11 What is your attitude to the chores that women perform in the home?

Do you think there is need for change?

What type of changes would you want to be implemented and why?

12 Since you got involved in distance learning, how has the attitude towards you, from those around you changed?

Probes:

Husband

Children

In-laws

Community

Part Three: Recommendations

13 If you were in charge of this distance learning programme, what kind of changes would you make to enable more women complete their studies successfully?

What would you tell your best friend about this programme?

What changes would you like to be put in place in the particular course that you did?

What changes would you like to be put in place at the family level to enable more women to participate successfully in distance learning programmes?

17 What suggestions would you give that would lead to the improvement of distance education practice in Kenya, so that it could benefit more women?

Our purpose was to find out more about the experiences and the transformation process of women students doing distance learning courses in Kenya. Have we missed anything? Feel free to suggest anything else that you feel we may have left out in our discussion.

Thank you for giving your time and input

## APPENDIX C

### THE INTERVIEWEES<sup>7</sup>

#### The B. Ed. interviewees

Date of interview	Name	Place of interview	Year of study
10 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Ochola Esther	Thogoto	4 <sup>th</sup> year
8 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Mukasa Florence	Thogoto	4 <sup>th</sup> year
24 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Adhiambo Karen	Thogoto	4 <sup>th</sup> year
14 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Kaime Mercy	Thogoto	1 <sup>st</sup> year
6 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Mutambo Evelyn	Nairobi	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
25 <sup>th</sup> February, 2002	Okanga Apia	Thogoto	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
8 <sup>th</sup> March, 2002	Manga Meli	Nairobi	4 <sup>th</sup> year
9 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Kivanguli Deborah,	Thogoto	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
11 <sup>th</sup> July, 2001 (pilot)	Munywoki Emily	Nairobi	4 <sup>th</sup> year
25 <sup>th</sup> February 2002			
16 <sup>th</sup> August, 2002	Mbavu Josephine	Nairobi	completed
20 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Kiveti. Sofia	Thogoto	1 <sup>st</sup> year
24 <sup>th</sup> April, 2002	Kamba Joyce	Thogoto	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
10 <sup>th</sup> February, 2002	Odale Lillian	Nairobi	Completed
12 <sup>th</sup> July 2001 (pilot), 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2002	Mwenge Lydia	Nairobi	Completed

#### The TEE interviewees

Date of interview	Name of respondent	Place of interview	Year of study
10 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Kavinya Mary	Kiambu,	1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> year, Advanced Diploma
25 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Waudu Susan	Nairobi	1 <sup>st</sup> year, Certificate

<sup>7</sup> Copies of the field notes and transcripts in possession of the author

10 <sup>th</sup> August, 2002	Ambandala Beatrice	Nairobi	Course 1 <sup>st</sup> year, Certificate Course
11 <sup>th</sup> June, 2002	Ngundo Rose	Kiambu	1 <sup>st</sup> year, Advanced Diploma, Seminar leader
19 <sup>th</sup> June, 2002	Njagi Jerusha	Siguna	1 <sup>st</sup> year Advanced Diploma
1 <sup>st</sup> August, 2002	Kanini Karen	Nairobi	1 <sup>st</sup> year Certificate Course
25 <sup>th</sup> June, 2002	Gathendu Abbey	Kikuyu	1 <sup>st</sup> year, Advanced Diploma
1 <sup>st</sup> August, 2002 Certificate Course	Mukama Jennifer	Nairobi	1 <sup>st</sup> year Certificate Course
9 <sup>th</sup> June, 2002	Njoya Anne	Kiambu	1 <sup>nd</sup> year Advanced Diploma student

### **The Coop Women**

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Name of respondent</b>	<b>Place of interview</b>	<b>Year of study</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> July, 2002	Mbau Jane	Karen	Dropped out
30 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Muli Lilly	Nairobi,	Beginner
15 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Mary Mutwa	Nairobi	Completed
25 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Faith Nzuki	Nairobi,	Dropped out
11 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Kianda Jessica,	Nairobi,	Completed
25 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Gichere Eliza,	Nairobi	Beginner
6 <sup>th</sup> June, 2002	Ngui Wanja,	Nairobi,	Completed
24 <sup>th</sup> June, 2001(pilot) 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2002	Muthinzi, Loise	Nairobi,	Completed
16 <sup>th</sup> July, 2002	Magdalene Mweru	Nairobi	Completed

## APPENDIX D

### THE FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS

#### **B. Ed. Focus Group**

(9<sup>th</sup> April, 2002, Kiambu District)

- Mukala Anne
- Mutindi Beverly
- Wanjiru Consolata
- Omari Emma
- Kaluki Hellen
- Nguli Lucy
- King'ola Susan

#### **TEE Focus Members**

(14<sup>th</sup> May, 2002, Kiambu District)

- Gathendu Abbey
- Njoya Anne
- Ndotu Annette
- Monze Grace
- Ndonge Irene
- Kavinya Mary
- Kavinya Mary
- Katui Rachael
- Ngundo Rose

#### **The Coop Focus Group Members**

(17<sup>th</sup> July, 2002, Karen)

- Muli Lilly
- Kilomo Maria
- Nzuki Faith
- Mweru Magdalene

- Gichere Eliza
- Mbau Jane