



**“Clearing Them for Learning”:
Exploring the Critical Factors for Success in School-Based Young Mothers’
Education Programs**

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Dedicated to my grandmother

Helen Elms Bryson Stewart

(9 December 1910–15 August 1959),

She did not know where she was from ... but she knew where she was going!

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Abstract

The importance of (re)engaging young pregnant and parenting students with education has been well documented over the past 20 years (Arai, 2009a; Boulden, 2001; Daguerre & Native, 2006; Kelly, 2000; Luker, 1996; Luttrell, 2003; Musick, 1993; Phoenix & Wollett, 1991; Pillow, 2004). This study explores the complexities, challenges and policy tensions of supporting young mothers in their (re)engagement with education and/or training. There is limited research available in Australia on the quality of school-based education programs for young mothers. While teenage/young mothering is a frequently, albeit often narrowly, studied topic, most of the research that is performed in this area is based within the psycho-medical and social welfare disciplines. This thesis sets out to inform education policy frameworks that aim to improve educational outcomes for young mothers through school-based programs.

Two case studies were conducted: the *Young Mothers in Education* program established at Plumpton High School, a Year 7–12 public school in New South Wales (NSW) in 2004; and the *CCCares* program, established at the Canberra College, a Year 11 and 12 public senior secondary school located in the Australian Capital Territory in 2009. Through its analysis of these two programs, the thesis identifies the critical factors for success in delivering education programs for young mothers. However, the research also highlights several macro and micro tensions that appear inherent in school-based young mothers’ education programs that need to be understood by policy actors and policy subjects involved in the delivery of young mothers’ education programs (Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011). These tensions pose ongoing threats to the success of young mothers’ education programs and need to be recognised, understood and continually negotiated by policy actors involved in the delivery of these programs in school settings.

List of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT DET	Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training
AEU	Australian Education Union
AWE	Association of Women Educators’
AYPPN	Australian Young Pregnant and Parenting Network
<i>CCCare</i> s	Canberra College Cares
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
cLc	Connected Learning Community
COAG	The Council of Australian Governments
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australian Government)
HILDA	Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Survey
LBOTE	Language Background Other Than English
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAB	National Australia Bank
NSW DET	New South Wales Department of Education and Training
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

Contents

Certificate of Authorship of Thesis	iii
Statement of Access	v
Statement of Sources	vii
Electronic Copy	ix
Statement of the Contribution of Others	xi
Declaration on Ethics.....	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
Abstract.....	xvii
List of Acronyms.....	xix
Contents	xxi
List of Tables	xxvii
List of Figures.....	xxix
List of Appendices.....	xxxii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Rationale for the Study	2
1.2 Background to the Study.....	4
1.3 Purpose of the Study	4
1.4 Significance of the Study	6
1.5 The Situated Researcher	7
1.5.1 The situated researcher at Plumpton High School.....	8
1.5.2 The situated researcher at the Canberra College.	9
1.5.3 The situated self: ‘Don’t mock, you never know what you might throw’	9
1.5.3.1 Julie’s story: ‘You slut get out of my house’	11
1.5.3.2 Liz’s story: ‘Here one day gone the next’	12
1.6 Theoretical Underpinnings.....	13
1.6.1 The educational research lens.	15
1.6.2 The postmodernist feminist lens.	16
1.6.3 The pro-feminist lens.	19
1.6.4 Social constructionism and social constructivism.	21
1.6.5 Feminist standpoint theory.	23
1.7 Moving from the Term ‘Teenage Mothers’ to ‘Young Mothers’: What’s in a Name?25	
1.8 Overview of the Thesis	26
1.8.1 Chapter 1: Introduction.	27
1.8.2 Chapter 2: Young motherhood and education in Australia.	27
1.8.3 Chapter 3: Methodology.	27

1.8.4 Chapter 4: Plumpton High School: <i>Young Mothers in Education</i> program.	28
1.8.5 Chapter 5: Canberra Senior Secondary College <i>CCCares</i> program.	28
1.8.6 Chapter 6: Studying leadership and program delivery at <i>CCCares</i>	28
1.8.7 Chapter 7: Towards Good practice in school-based young mothers’ in education programs.	29
1.8.8 Chapter 8: Tensions surrounding school-based young mothers in education programs.	29
1.8.9 Chapter 9: Conclusion.	29
1.9 Summary	30
Chapter 2: Young Motherhood and Education in Australia	31
2.1 Introduction.....	31
2.2 A Statistical Profile of Motherhood and Young Motherhood in Australia.....	32
2.3 Statistics on Motherhood outside Marriage	37
2.4 Myths, Misconceptions and Misunderstandings about Young Mothers.....	39
2.5 Teenage Pregnancy and Its Consequences for Young Women	44
2.6 The Discourses Surrounding Young Mothers	52
2.6.1 Psycho-medical discourses and young mothers.....	53
2.6.2 Sexuality discourses and young mothers.	55
2.6.3 Media constructions of young mothers.....	57
2.7 Public Policy Responses to Young Motherhood	59
2.7.1 Policy reports on young mothers.	66
2.8 The Current Policy Context	71
2.8.1 A state-by-state review of current policies.	77
2.8.2 Non-government organisation policy statements on young mothers and education.	82
2.9 School-Level Young Mothers’ Programs in Australian Schools.....	84
2.10 Conclusion	90
Chapter 3: Methodology	91
3.1 Introduction.....	91
3.2 Research Approach	91
3.3 Study Aim and Research Questions.....	93
3.3.1 The research question.	94
3.3.2 The sub-questions.	94
3.4 Research Framework	95
3.5 Research Methodology	98
3.5.1 Collaborative methodology.....	99
3.5.2 Participatory and ethnographic method.	102
3.5.3 Case study process.	104
3.6 Research Principles.....	106
3.6.1 Principles for educational research.	106
3.6.2 Ethical principles and practice.	108
3.7 Conduct of Case Studies	110
3.8 Data Collection Methods	111
3.8.1 The participants.....	112
3.8.2 Performing research with education professionals and program support workers—focus group and interviews.	113

3.8.3 Performing research with young mothers—surveys, focus group and interviews.	114
3.8.3.1 Methods used in the Plumpton High School case study.	114
3.8.3.2 Methods used in the Canberra College case study.	116
3.8.4 Performing research as a participant observer.	117
3.9 Analysis of Data.	119
3.10 Limitations of the Study	120
3.11 Conclusion	121
Chapter 4: Plumpton High School—<i>Young Mothers in Education</i> program	123
4.1 Introduction.	123
4.2 The School and Community in Context	124
4.2.1 Plumpton High School.	125
4.2.2 The origins and development of the <i>Young Mothers in Education</i> program.	127
4.3 Investigating the Impact of the Young Mothers’ Education Program on Participants	131
4.4 Data Collection	132
4.4.1 Ethical considerations for collecting survey and interview data.	132
4.5 Survey results.	133
4.5.1 Descriptive statistics.	133
4.5.2 Where are they now?	134
4.5.5 Summary of Survey Findings	139
4.6 Interviews and Qualitative Responses	141
4.6.1 Educational outcomes.	143
4.6.2 A supportive and non-judgemental environment.	145
4.6.3 Self-esteem, self-confidence, and feeling positive about the future.	148
4.7 Critical factors for success.	153
Chapter 5: Canberra Senior Secondary College: <i>CCCares</i> program	155
5.1 Introduction.	155
5.2 Examining the <i>CCCares</i> Program	156
5.3 The Canberra Senior Secondary College	157
5.4 The <i>CCCares</i> Program in Detail.	160
5.4.1 Physical location.	161
5.4.2 The <i>CCCares</i> program facility.	164
5.4.3 <i>CCCares</i> program in context.	166
5.4.4 The student profile.	167
5.4.5 The Educational program.	170
5.4.6 Staff and funding.	172
5.4.7 <i>CCCares</i> transport program.	174
5.4.8 Enrolment and retention.	174
5.4.9 Academic and social engagement.	175
5.4.10 Student health and wellbeing.	175
5.5 Key Program Features	175
5.5.1 Proactive policy development and application.	176
5.5.2 Holistic service provision.	178
5.5.3 Adjunct childcare.	181
5.5.4 Specialised staff.	183
5.6 What the Young Mothers Say.	183
5.6.1 Place and space.	186

5.6.2 Education and future aspirations.....	189
5.6.3 Life changing.....	191
5.6.4 Relationships.....	193
5.6.5 Activists and rebels.....	194
5.6.6 Perceptions of others.....	197
5.7 Conclusion	199
Chapter 6: Studying Leadership and Program Delivery at CCCares	201
6.1 Introduction.....	201
6.2 Dimensions of Strategic Leadership at CCCares	204
6.2.1 Shared purpose.....	204
6.2.2 Strategic roles.	206
6.2.3 Advocacy.	208
6.2.4 Operational management.	209
6.2.5 Funding and support.	209
6.2.6 Implementation.	209
6.3 Place and space.	211
6.3.1 Teaching and learning in another ‘space and place’	213
6.3.2 Social justice.....	217
6.3.3 Program sustainability.	219
6.3.4 Making a difference.....	223
6.3.5 Partnerships.....	225
6.3.6 Shaping and leading policy.....	229
6.3.7 Curriculum and learning.	230
6.3.8 Resourcing.....	232
6.3.9 On-site childcare.....	234
6.3.10 Staff development.....	236
6.4 The role of ‘grandmothers’: What the volunteers say.	239
6.4.1 Social responsibility: ‘Someone has to do it’	240
6.4.2 Personal connections: ‘I had a friend once’	240
6.4.3 The place to support: ‘Keep going’	242
6.4.4 Shared motherhood: ‘Telling them about my experiences’	242
6.4.5 Perceptions of others.....	243
6.5 Conclusion	243
Chapter 7: Towards Good Practice in School-Based Young Mothers’ Education Programs.....	247
7.1 Introduction.....	247
7.2 A Summary of the Findings from the Plumpton High School and Canberra College Programs	248
7.2.1 Plumpton High School: <i>Young Mothers in Education</i> program.	249
7.2.2 Canberra Secondary College: <i>CCCares</i> program.....	251
7.3 A Model Identifying Critical Factors for Success in Supporting Young Mothers in School-Based Programs.....	255
7.4 Domains of Activity.....	259
7.4.1 Resourcing.....	259
7.4.2 Financial sustainability.....	261
7.4.3 Flexible delivery.....	262

7.4.4 On-site childcare.....	264
7.4.5 Staff development.....	265
7.4.6 Community partnerships.....	267
7.4.7 Place and space.....	271
7.4.8 Policy shaping and leading.....	273
7.4.9 Strategic and distributed leadership.....	275
7.5 Operational Implications.....	276
7.5.1 Program level.....	276
7.5.2 School/college level.....	277
7.5.3 System level.....	277
7.6 Conclusion.....	278
Chapter 8: Tensions Surrounding School-Based Young Mothers’ Education	
Programs.....	281
8.1 Introduction.....	281
8.2 Societal Tensions.....	281
8.2.1 ‘Good mother’ discourses and forced adoptions.....	282
8.2.2 Media constructions of young mothers.....	284
8.2.3 Young mothers: Labelling is disabling.....	285
8.2.4 Young mothers and mixed messages.....	286
8.2.5 The medical ‘gaze’.....	287
8.2.6 The risks of mothering young and the feminisation of poverty.....	288
8.3 Personal Tensions.....	291
8.3.1 Personal communication skills.....	291
8.3.2 Developing group cohesion.....	293
8.3.3 The importance of childcare within the learning space.....	294
8.3.4 Dealing with other agencies.....	295
8.3.5 Student diversity and identity.....	296
8.4 Policy and Leadership Tensions.....	297
8.4.1 Policy lags and overlaps.....	297
8.4.2 Policy versus practice.....	299
8.4.3 Strategic leadership.....	301
8.4.4 Child protection and mandatory reporting.....	304
8.5 Educational and Program Tensions.....	305
8.5.1 Mainstream versus special treatment.....	305
8.5.2 ‘Clearing them for learning.’.....	308
8.6 Conclusion.....	310
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	311
9.1 Introduction.....	311
9.2 Final Remarks.....	314
Bibliography.....	317

List of Tables

Table 1.0 <i>Births to Teenage Mothers: 2009 and 2010</i>	36
Table 2.0 <i>State and Territory Education Jurisdiction Policy Frameworks and Year of Publication</i>	76
Table 3.0 <i>Enrolments, Canberra Senior Secondary College</i>	157
Table 4.0 <i>Media Coverage of the CCCares program 2009–2010</i>	161
Table 5.0 <i>CCCares Program Student Profile 2010</i>	165
Table 6.0 <i>2010 CCCares Program Staff</i>	173
Table 7.0 <i>Main and Sub-Themes from Young Mothers' Focus Group and One-on-One Interviews</i>	183
Table 8.0 <i>Interview Groupings and Identifiers</i>	202
Table 9.0 <i>Themes Identified for Each of the Groups and the Rating of Importance</i>	202
Table 10.0 <i>Sub-Set of Factors Within Domains of Activity for Success in Supporting Young Mothers in Education</i>	257

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.0.</i> The A diagrammatic representation of the thesis theoretical ‘touch stone’	14
<i>Figure 2.0.</i> Trends in Australian adolescent birth rates.	33
<i>Figure 3.0.</i> Births by nuptiality.	39
<i>Figure 4.0.</i> The construction(s) of teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a ‘problem’ via myths, misconceptions and misunderstandings of the issues.	42
<i>Figure 5.0.</i> Research framework for this study.	98
<i>Figure 6.0.</i> Plumpton High School young mothers’ photographs.	126
<i>Figure 7.0.</i> Respondent rating of aspects of the program.	137
<i>Figure 8.0.</i> Three most important features of the program as rated by respondents.	138
<i>Figure 9.0.</i> Canberra Senior Secondary College signage.	159
<i>Figure 10.</i> CCCares program timeline 2000–2011.	163
<i>Figure 11.</i> CCCares program facility site-map, (Freemantle Drive, Stirling ACT).	165
<i>Figure 12.</i> Student responses to flexible learning.	172
<i>Figure 13.</i> Student rating of community agencies and services in the CCCares program.	180
<i>Figure 14.</i> Use of childcare facility in the CCCares program.	182
<i>Figure 15.</i> The school leaders involved in the CCCares program and their key strategic roles.	206
<i>Figure 16.</i> Program manager’s central role in the program.	207
<i>Figure 17.</i> Critical factors for success in supporting young mothers in school-based education programs.	256

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Reports and Research Conducted on the Topic of Young Mothers (2001 to 2011).....	349
Appendix 2: Examples of School-Level Distance Education Programs	367
Appendix 3: Examples of School-Level Programs Delivered in Alternative Setting ...	369
Appendix 4: Examples of Mainstream School Approaches:	371
Appendix 5: <i>CCCare</i> s Program Community Partners.....	373
Appendix 6: Information Pamphlet	375
Appendix 7: Service Delivery Barriers Identified by Loxton, Stewart-Williams and Adamson (2007)	377
Appendix 8: Conferences, Presentations and Reports in the Progress of the Thesis.....	379