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Costs, Compromises And Opportunities:

The Experiences Of Mature Women Students In Flexible Delivered Teacher Education

A Thesis Presented In Partial Fulfillment

Of The Requirements For The Degree Of

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Abstract

This case study research examines the factors that shaped the distance study experiences of eight mature women students who completed a three-year teacher education qualification through flexible delivery at a New Zealand tertiary institution. To obtain perspectives on their experiences as mature students, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the women following their completion of three years of study.

The women encountered challenges in their dual contexts of study and family. Study was a cost to the women's family situations, particularly family relationships. The results convey the compromises the women made in their personal and academic spheres. Overwhelmingly the findings confirm personal and professional opportunities gained from the study experience, including positive outcomes for self and family. Support and connectedness generated new meanings for the women. Experiencing academic success, self-growth and transformation of identity were considered ultimate outcomes of the study experience.

This research enhances understanding of the intersecting aspects of family and study for women distance students. Recommendations have been made for addressing the specific needs and supporting the study experiences of mature women students.

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To the other people, particularly my professional colleagues who listened and guided my thoughts, I am grateful. In line with the messages conveyed by the women in this study I too encountered the constant juggle of study and family to complete this project. My affinity with the experiences of the women students provided a constant reminder of the dual realms of women students' lives, that of study and family.

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